



Board Chairman
Howard
Feldman hands
over reins
to Howard
Sackstein.
See page 2

South African Jewish Report

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Photo: Ben Kenner/Flash90

Ethiopian-Israeli protest uncovers 'open wound'

When protesters - Ethiopian and others - first gathered in Tel Aviv last Sunday afternoon, after a video showing an Israeli policeman beating an Ethiopian-Israeli soldier went viral, they chanted and held signs as police stood at a distance. As the protest swelled beyond 1 000, they blocked a major intersection and then marched down Tel Aviv's central Ayalon highway. The protesters held signs with slogans such as "Being black is not a crime". Some waved Israeli flags. Clashes began as police cleared them from the highway and violence intensified as thousands of demonstrators filled Rabin Square. Fighting escalated as protesters threw bottles and stones at police and police responded with stun grenades and a water cannon. Pictured is a mounted Israeli policeman trying to disperse the crowds. By the time they dispersed, dozens had been injured – including 56 police officers. Despite their frustrations, protesters still said they feel a sense of belonging in Israel. See page 6.

Why Ethiopian-Israelis took to Tel Aviv Streets

Ethiopian-Israeli protesters chanted slogans when they protested last Sunday in Tel Aviv against a beating of an Ethiopian-Israeli soldier by an Israeli policeman.

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Mcebo Dlamini, Wits SRC's 'Hitler lover', gets the chop

Dlamini, who has been in hot water even before expressing his admiration for Hitler, has been relieved of his position of SRC president for a purported attack on a staff member in February.

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Survé defends anti-Israel claims against his papers

Dr Iqbal Survé, chairman of the Independent Media group, has denied that his papers are anti-Israel and says all his editors have been given instructions to be fair in their reporting.

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Rubinger's photographic images embody the visual memory of Israel

David Rubinger, whose exhibition opens Sunday, was called "the photographer of a nation in the making" by former President Peres.



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Ambassador Lenk hosts Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration

The Israeli Embassy's annual Yom Ha'atzmaut event in Pretoria was again a who's who of the Jewish, and larger, community.

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Whose laws are we following?



Parshat Emor

Rabbi Aharon Rose
Free Agent Rabbi

Our parsha, Emor, opens with the laws that Kohanim must observe. These laws are relatively few (these days) but where they do apply, they grab your attention. Essentially they affect a Kohen when he wants to marry or when he is near a dead body.

These are life events which affect all of us at some time or other and if a Kohen doesn't know what he's meant to do and not to do, all sorts of problems can follow.

Let me give you one example: When a Jewish man and woman get divorced, a document called a "get" is given by the man to the woman, stating that they are divorced. Once

divorced, if they change their minds, even years later, they may remarry, unless the woman has remarried in the meantime.

But when a Kohen and his wife divorce, they may not remarry (a Kohen may not marry a divorced woman, even if she is his former wife) - even if they change their minds a few minutes later.

The Talmud teaches that Kohanim tend to be hot-tempered, so they are more likely to want to divorce in a huff than a non-Kohen. This might create a problem, as you can imagine.

So the Sages intervened and required that the Kohen's divorce document should take much longer to write than a regular one, giving a hot-tempered Kohen time to calm down and reconsider his decision to divorce. After each line is written, the parchment is folded and sewn down, then the next line is written.

I think this is a beautiful example of how

the laws of the Sages are designed to help us handle the challenges of life and of our own peculiar foibles. IMHO, the best description of the purpose of rabbinic laws is to protect us against ourselves. I don't know about you, but I certainly need that!

There is a famous story of a great Sage, Rabbi Yechezkel Landau of Prague (18th century), to whom a wealthy Kohen came and demanded he conduct his wedding with his fiancée, a divorced woman. The rabbi naturally refused.

The man became infuriated (remember that Kohanim tend to be hot-headed) and he told the rabbi that he would do it whether he wanted to or not. So the man went to Empress Maria Teresa, and convinced her to force the old-fashioned rabbi to conduct the marriage.

When the Empress' messengers came, the rabbi agreed - how could he refuse the Empress? The whole city of Prague was

intrigued how the rabbi could obey the Empress, who desired the marriage, and his G-d, who did not.

At the chuppah, when the rabbi asked the Kohen to place the ring on his bride's finger, he told him to repeat the following words: "Behold, you are betrothed to me with this ring according to the law of [Moses and of Israel - omitted]... Empress Maria Teresa." Problem solved.

Shabbat Times		
May 8/ 19 Iyar May 9 / 20 Iyar Parshat Emor		
17:15	18:05	Johannesburg
17:41	18:33	Cape Town
16:48	17:49	Durban
17:18	18:09	Bloemfontein
17:13	18:05	Port Elizabeth
17:05	17:57	East London

Board Chairman Howard Feldman hands reins to Howard Sackstein

HOWARD FELDMAN

The South African Jewish Report is a treasure. It's one of the jewels of our community and nothing gave me greater pleasure, as chairman of the Board, to have had the honour of keeping it safe for four years.

It was not always easy to do so. The paper represents all elements of the Jewish community, from observant to non-observant, from "left" to "right", from young to old and is also read by those who might not be part of our community but have an interest in the news stories and our community.

It is read by South Africans abroad and needs to reflect real and relevant news. Our readers have strong opinions and are informed and they rightfully demand a high standard.

Four years ago the paper was under extreme financial strain. Through the hard work of the fulltime staff, the dedicated editor, initially Geoff Sifrin and more recently Vanesa Valkin, through the dedication of the paper's financial manager Karen Knowles and through the almost obsessive passion from the Board, the paper today is financially comfortable and secure and viable.

As a community paper we are reliant and dependent on the community and I continue to ask our readers

to keep us in mind for advertising, donations and support.

But for me it is time to hand over the responsibility. Howard Sackstein, a committed and dedicated member of the Board and chairman of the fantastic Jewish Achievers event, has kindly agreed to take the baton from me and I am deeply grateful to him for having agreed to do so. It is an awesome position and I am certain that he will take the paper to the next level.

I owe immense gratitude to our Board - Bertie Lubner, Herby Rosenberg, Benjy Porter and outgoing Board, particularly Issie Kirsh and Marlene Bethlehem who have been with the paper almost since its inception. On a professional and personal level, I have much to be thankful for.

I have no intention of parting ways with the paper and will be remaining on the Board specifically involved in the editorial. I am excited to be able to work closely with Vanessa and Ant Katz in this area and continue to guide the paper in this arena.

It remains for me to gingerly but confidently hand the precious jewel to Howard Sackstein and wish him success in this fantastic position.



G-d bless,
Howard Feldman

Lag B'Omer - steeped in history



OWN CORRESPONDENT

According to Jewish custom, the Omer is counted for 49 days between the end of Passover and Shavuot, when we mark the giving of the Torah.

Lag B'Omer is celebrated on the 33rd day of the Omer.

This year Lag B'Omer fell on Wednesday and Thursday of this week but the functions to celebrate the festival took place after the Jewish Report had gone to press and the picture of the big bonfire at Great Park Synagogue will be published next week.

The practice of counting the Omer is derived from counting the days from the barley offering at the Temple to the day of the wheat offering on Shavuot which signifies the end of the period of mourning.

The chag is said to mark a day of respite from a respiratory plague that struck the students of Rabbi Akiva.

The Talmud tells us a renowned teacher of Jewish mysticism Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai died on Lag B'Omer.

Celebrations such as weddings are permitted on this day and it is traditional to gather around a bonfire, or hold picnics, play sport or have other fun events.

World News in Brief

Bibi meets Ethiopian-Israeli soldier beaten by police

JERUSALEM - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has praised the Ethiopian-Israeli soldier who was beaten by police officers for coming out against violence, calling it "true leadership".

On Monday, Netanyahu met with Damas Pakada, whose beating last week was captured on videotape. The attack spurred violent demonstrations in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Netanyahu told Pakada that he was shocked by the beating and that it was unacceptable.

"The police will do whatever it takes to correct itself, but we need to fix Israeli society," Netanyahu said. He called the violent protests a result of "genuine distress".

Netanyahu also told Pakada: "I heard that you said that you are against violence. This is important, this is the statement of a leader. You are an exemplary soldier and you are an example to others."

Police Inspector-General Yohanan Danino apologised to Pakada on behalf of the Israel Police and informed him

that the officer who beat him was fired immediately.

Also on Monday, President Reuven Rivlin said Israeli society had "erred" when it came to the plight of Ethiopian Jews in Israel.

"The protesters, in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv, revealed an open and raw wound at the heart of Israeli society," Rivlin said. "The pain of a community crying out over a sense of discrimination, racism and of being unanswered. We must look directly at this open wound. We have erred. We did not look, and we did not listen enough."

Addressing the demonstration on Sunday night in Tel Aviv that injured more than 40 police and demonstrators, Rivlin made his remarks prior to a meeting with the heads of haredi Orthodox municipalities and local councils.

"Among the protesters on the streets were some of our finest sons and daughters: outstanding students, those who served in the IDF. We owe them answers," Rivlin said.(JTA)

Chabad Nepal at the forefront of relief

In the wake of the devastating earthquake, Chabad in Nepal has taken a lead in relief efforts. Thousands have lost their lives. Many are still missing; buildings and homes stand in ruin.

In a media release, Chabad said this week that its emissaries in Nepal, Rabbi Chezki and Chanie Lipshitz, are "at the forefront of emergency relief and have launched an effort to relieve suffering".

"The Chabad House has become a refuge for hundreds of Israeli backpackers and Chabad is reaching out to the broader community with humanitarian aid. They are the only Jewish presence in Nepal."

Chabad has appealed for funds to help it in its mammoth task and a page has been set up on the Chabad.org platform at www.chabad.org/Nepal. Alternatively you can also make a donation to the Miracle Drive Trust and Chabad South Africa will apply to the Reserve Bank for permission to send all donations to Nepal.

For more information contact Rabbi David Masinter, director of Chabad Johannesburg. Your donation is tax-deductible and all funds will go directly to provide humanitarian relief in Nepal.

Donations may be made to Standard Bank: Sandton, account number 022723218, branch code 051001, reference: Nepal Relief.

Survé defends anti-Israel claims against his papers



VANESSA VALKIN

In response to criticism from the South African Jewish community that The Star and Cape Times, among other Independent Media publications, are anti-Israel and critical of South African Jewry, Dr Iqbal Survé (pictured), chairman of the group, told the Jewish Report on the weekend that all their editors were given clear directive to include all points of view and to ensure they did not come across as partisan on any issues.

“We as a group absolutely give voice to everybody,” said Survé. “We don’t have a policy of being pro-Israel or pro-Palestine and we would guard against that.”

The community has been quite taken aback by some recent content, in particular an April 13 editorial in the Cape Times congratulating Iran and the P5+1 nations (China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the UK and the US) for agreeing upon the framework of the nuclear deal.

Eric Marx, chairman of the Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies, pointed out in a letter published in the Cape Times two weeks later: “Many long-standing Cape Times readers have been frankly baffled, not to say even angered, by the overtly partisan stance taken by the paper. Anyone reading the editorial would think that Iran is the innocent victim of an Israeli-led international vendetta.”

The editorial had called the deal “a crushing defeat for the war-mongering Zionist generals who had been hell-bent on bombing Iran’s nuclear capability to smithereens” and concludes with the question: “Can the long night of the generals be far off for Israel?”

This was probably a reference to the “Night of the Long Knives” in 1934, when Hitler ordered the deaths of 85 people deemed an obstacle to his absolute authority, including leading figures of the left-wing Strasserist faction of the Nazi Party and leaders of the paramilitary Brownshirts.

Days later a letter appeared in response to Marx by a C M Mathey, titled “Maybe it’s time for Israel to humble itself”. It called for Israel to “come down to the level of the goyim (the human cattle), as we are all being called” and points to “those horrible pictures of death and destruction in the Gaza concentration camp”.

Mathey’s letter sparked the ire of David Hersch, a prolific commentator on Jewish issues, who sent out an e-mail to a fairly sizeable list, where he wrote that “with the takeover by Iqbal Survé’s Sekunjalo Group, it [Cape Times] quickly plummeted into an intellectual abyss”, which has “fired almost all remaining white journalists, columnists and editors and has become a pro-ANC and pro-Muslim/Islamic propaganda paper. This newspaper group has become the Izvestia and Pravda of the new South Africa.”

The paper, he continues, is “increasingly propagating an Islamic agenda. We could say it is to be expected as the paper is owned by a Muslim, its purchase was funded by Saudi Arabia, The Public Investment Corporation (PIC), I read ANC, is a shareholder, and its editors and staff are mostly Muslim.”

Speaking in response to Hersch’s letter, Survé told the Jewish Report that the letter contained various factual errors. “The funding comes from Sekunjalo. There is no funding from Saudia Arabia” and surmised that the incorrect link to Saudia Arabia was perhaps made because he is chairman of the SA-Saudi Business Council.

Survé said he found Hersch’s letter quite disconcerting and pointed out that he had “incredibly close friends in the Jewish community”. He also noted that he was “instrumental” in helping to get Professor Cyril Karabus out of the United Arab Emirates, where he had been detained for months.

Early last month an article appeared on the front page of The Star with a follow-up article the next day, where three Ethiopian patrons at the coffee shop in the KosherWorld Centre in Glenhazel accused the owners of racial profiling and claimed they were harassed by security.

Readers were vocal in the Jewish Report and on social media that it was puzzling that The Star reporter and photographer just happened to be at the coffee shop to capture the incident. Others questioned how The Star gave such prominence to this incident but gave no coverage to the assault of three Jewish teenagers at The Zone in Rosebank a few weeks prior.

Survé says his advice to the Jewish community is to be extremely proactive and ensure that the editors of the Independent’s various newspapers consistently receive news and opinion pieces from their organisations.

He said that the Cape Town Jewish Board had recently met with Cape Times start with a very positive outcome and added that he would also welcome any opportunity to meet with representatives of the South African Jewish community.

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Mcebo Dlamini, Wits SRC’s ‘Hitler lover’ gets the chop

ANT KATZ

Controversial University of Witwatersrand SRC President Mcebo Dlamini, who expressed admiration for Adolf Hitler on his Facebook page last week, has been removed from his position pending an appeal against his expulsion from the institution for a different matter.

Wits’ legal department has, in fact, investigated three separate complaints against Dlamini this year. His removal related to his being found guilty of misconduct by a disciplinary panel in February for assaulting someone in his residence last year. He was given a sentence of one year suspended exclusion in respect of each charge against him.

The announcement was made after a lengthy meeting between Wits Vice-Chancellor Adam Habib and the SRC extended well into Monday night.

Habib said on Tuesday that Dlamini had been asked to stand down - in terms of the February charge - and not the March or April misconduct investigations which are still to be heard. Although Habib himself would not admit to the charge being due a physically violent incident, he did say that it had been: “a very, very serious offence”.

In terms of the SRC’s constitution, a member ceases to be a member if s/he is found guilty of misconduct by a student disciplinary committee but Dlamini exercised his right to appeal his removal. Habib had agreed to defer the judgement, pending the appeal, provided the review happened within 14 days.

“Unfortunately, this did not happen,” said Habib on Monday. He then met Dlamini on April 22, “and informed him that it was not in the best interests of the university for him to continue to hold office while having a disciplinary finding against him”.

However, the ever-cautious Habib told Dlamini at that meeting that he would allow him an extension until April 30 to make written representations as to why he should allow Dlamini to continue in office. On April 30, Dlamini asked for another extension, blaming the delay on the university’s legal office.

But Habib had had enough. “I believe that this argument is disingenuous,” he said on Monday. He blamed Dlamini for delaying tactics, “[he] did not submit the relevant documentation to the legal office timeously. He then tried to blame the legal office for the delay. This leads me to believe that he is deliberately delaying a final decision until the end of his presidential tenure. To allow this to happen would be

a violation of the SRC constitution and the principle of justice,” Habib emphasised.

And so, “after consultation with the chairman of council... I have decided to withdraw my decision for Mr Dlamini to remain in office,” said Habib in a blog to Wits students on Tuesday.

Habib was adamant that Dlamini’s Hitler comment, although unfortunate and embarrassing for the University, didn’t influence Monday’s decision; the Hitler comments had been passed on to Wits’ legal department for investigation.



On Tuesday morning Habib repeated in a radio interview that he had “publicly rejected” the Hitler episode and sent it on for investigation.

According to Habib, Dlamini, had laughed off his removal and accused the vice-chancellor of capitulating to powerful members of the white community.

Habib said that the Liberation Struggle in the country had long stood against this type of rhetoric. It was like saying Verwoerd was right.

Admitting that the matter had become a public relations embarrassment for Wits, Habib said Wits had tried to mitigate the fallout as much as possible.

He said that all the other members of the SRC had dissociated themselves from the Hitler episode. Habib admitted in his Tuesday interview that Dlamini’s removal would still be subjected to an SRC debate.

He was unfazed, however, when asked what he would do if the SRC voted against his recommendations. The SRC was a democratic body which had to subscribe to its constitution, he said.

“Even President (Jacob) Zuma has to respect the SA Constitution,” he said, confident that the SRC’s constitution would prevail.

Dlamini’s dismissal from the 15-student-member SRC means that a by-election will have to be held. ProjectW, a group of students who controlled the SRC last year and is sympathetic to Jewish community issues and the interests of Israel, was defeated in a highly politicised election for the current SRC by nine seats to six. Were they to win the by-election against the ANC-aligned group, it will give them a closer minority of seven seats to eight and decisions would then lie in the sway of the four Wits-appointed members.

ProjectW also believes that SRC funds were being inappropriately used to create materials in support of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions-SA and Israel Apartheid Week, although Habib said this week that the university has so far found no misuse of funds.

BDS claims hollow academic boycott victory

ANT KATZ

On Monday May 4, the South African affiliate of the US-based NGO, “Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (Israel),” BDS-SA announced with some fanfare that five South African universities’ Student Representative Councils (SRCs) had joined an academic boycott of Israel.

BDS’ resolution, they said, followed South Africa’s “Minister of Higher Education and Training Dr Blade Nzimande’s call and support for the academic boycott”.

University of South Africa, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Durban University of Technology, Mangosutho University of Technology and the University of the Western Cape SRCs have now, supposedly, implemented “an academic and cultural boycott of Israel”. “This day will go down in history,” promised BDS. And then they must have wondered why their historical announcement was not widely carried in the media. SRCs have nothing at all to do with the decision-making processes of universities in this regard.

While they boasted that they were joining “the revolutionary decision by the University of Johannesburg that in 2011 terminated its relations with Israel’s Ben-Gurion University”, that decision was not impacted by any decision of UJ’s SRC.

Despite the call for boycotts, the reality is that the exchange of information and scientific research coming out of Israeli universities is having a very positive impact on South African industry.

When the present Israeli ambassador, Arthur Lenk, presented his credentials to President Jacob Zuma, he handed Zuma a basket of fruit and vegetables grown in all nine South African provinces, with the assistance of Israeli technology and services.

Last month, Prof Ronnie Friedman from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, told Jewish Report that Israeli drip irrigation systems were commonly used throughout South Africa. Other areas of co-operation include crop sciences and seed development and production.

One of the biggest fields of research where Israel is currently assisting South Africa, said Friedman, was with ensuring the survival of bees. “South Africa is losing bees fast,” he said, and this could have a catastrophic impact on the pollination of crops.

The Hebrew University research project is being co-funded by the South African government, local agricultural interests and the Israelis had even raised money from overseas.

Hebrew University, said Friedman, had been tasked with coming up with a solution - something that they were well on the way to delivering.

World News in Brief

Israel’s Gaza-border residents warn that Hamas is preparing for the next war

JERUSALEM - Residents of Israel’s Gaza-border communities are not surprised by reports that Hamas commander Mohammed Deif is alive and back in charge of the Palestinian terrorist group’s military operations, nor by reports that Hamas has resumed building terror tunnels.

“All the residents know which path we’re headed down, everyone sees what Hamas is doing on the other side of the fence, and it’s doing it flagrantly... showing its preparations for the next round of fighting,” Yael, a member of Kibbutz Nirim, told Israel Hayom.

“We live 50 metres from the border - believe me, we have not woken up to something new. This is our reality,” said Roni Kissin, secretary of Kibbutz Kerem Shalom.

Member of Knesset Haim Yellin (Yesh Atid), a member of Kibbutz Be’eri, said: “Mohammed Deif, dead or alive, will not stop the countdown to the next war. Terrorism needs to be fought with resolute strength, but at the same time [we need to be] working with world powers, especially moderate Arab nations, to achieve quiet and a diplomatic horizon.” (JNS.org)



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Separating free speech and Dlamini’s love for Hitler



**TAKING
ISSUE**
Geoff Sifrin

What should an institution’s leader do when someone under his authority trashes the ideological values of the institution? Be tolerant and look for the “root causes” behind the behaviour so they can be addressed? Or draw the red line and throw the violator out?

Wits University Vice-Chancellor Adam Habib has taken a stand by officially removing Mcebo Dlamini from his elected position as SRC president for “misconduct”. This comes amid a furore created by Dlamini declaring on Facebook: “I love Adolf Hitler”, which he reportedly defended as follows: “If white people can say they love [apartheid-era prime minister DF] Malan, [Prime Minister BJ] Vorster, [Israeli Prime Minister] Benjamin Netanyahu and Jan van Riebeeck, then I should also be

allowed to say I love Hitler.”

The vice-chancellor’s decision that Dlamini must step down related to a separate matter of misconduct, not his Hitler statement and what Habib believed were “racist comments regarding whites”. However, these would also be looked into.

Anyone who knows Wits from the apartheid days, will remember a robust, proud institution in which the rallying cry for freedom of expression was loud and determined, defying the efforts by the government and the police to stifle it.

Courageous white SRC presidents at the time faced personal dangers for speaking out against racism towards black citizens. Given this history, it would be sad for Wits to stifle anyone’s freedom of expression. Some would argue: So what’s the big deal if the SRC president says he loves Hitler? Maybe he’s just a rebellious young man - the rebelliousness of youth is the engine which drives change in this world.

But it’s ironic how the wheel has turned. In post-apartheid South Africa, a black SRC president now wants his freedom of speech protected so he can sprout racist comments about whites.

Not easy these days to be Wits’ vice-chancellor. Habib cannot solve the “root causes” of the country’s problems - poverty, racism, collapsing school system, chasm between the haves and have-nots and so on. But on his shoulders rests the university’s good name.

The dilemma is not new to him. He came into the position in 2013 when Israel Apartheid Week was being held on campus accompanied by demonstrations about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Not an easy time to start, as he was struck full face with the violent disruption by SRC members of Israeli-born pianist Yossi Reshef’s concert 15 minutes into Beethoven’s Tempest Sonata, after they forced the door.

The incident raised many eyebrows about how such a thing

could happen at this renowned university. A disciplinary process against 11 students was set up.

Since then, Habib has endeavoured to re-establish the dignity and integrity of Wits as a place where different viewpoints can be freely expressed. He said at the time that he intended making it one of the great universities of the world.

People who studied there in the past are not going to tear up the degrees they earned because of Dlamini. But what should Wits alumni, students and supporters do? Walk away and let it become a third rate institution?

A university is a precious thing. Its credibility must be earned over a long time and is hard to regain once lost.

Meanwhile, classes continue at Wits. People who teach there say standards are still of an acceptable level. But a university degree’s

value is influenced by the public image of the institution itself. The public image of Wits is plummeting - along with that of the country as a whole.

Habib disagreed with the argument that the university’s commitment to free speech meant Dlamini should be excused for his comments. “As someone who claims to love this institution, I believe that Mr Dlamini has single-handedly wrought more damage on its reputation than any other person who I can think of in at least the last two decades...”

“This damage has the potential to impact on the credibility of our degrees, and therefore on the employment prospects of all of our students and graduates.”

Removing Dlamini will not solve the root causes behind his behaviour. But it would be a sad day if the university itself became a victim of those root causes.

Community

Rubinger’s photographic images embody the visual memory of Israel

OWN CORRESPONDENT

This coming Sunday, Johannesburg will be privileged to host an exhibition by the internationally acclaimed photographer, David Rubinger, Time-Life magazine’s primary photographer for the Middle East for over 50 years.

Ninety-year-old Rubinger - he will turn 91 next month - who lives in Israel, covered all of Israel’s wars. A media release states that Rubinger’s famous photograph of three Israeli paratroopers shortly after the recapture of the Western Wall in the Six Day War, clambering on top of a British armoured car, to celebrate the UN announcement in 1947 of the resolution to establish the State of Israel, has become the defining image of that conflict.

Rubinger’s career as a photojournalist began with this image, in conjunction with the founding of the State of Israel and he has been reporting on the development of Israel ever since, spending over 50 years as a Middle Eastern correspondent for Time-Life magazine. Rubinger had the unique distinction of being present at most of the epochal moments in the Middle East during the latter half of the 20th century. As such, his images, more than any other, shaped our perceptions of this era.

Former Israeli President and Prime Minister, Shimon Peres,

once described Rubinger as “the photographer of a nation in the making”.

Rubinger, who was born in Vienna in 1924, emigrated to what was then British Palestine in 1939. He served in the British Army’s Jewish Brigade during the Second World War, during which time he bought his first camera - a Leica M1 - in Germany in 1946. He paid the hefty price of 200 cigarettes and a kilogram of coffee for the camera.

Rubinger is held in such high regard in Israel, that he was able to gain unprecedented, intimate access to Israeli leadership and to be present at critical junctures in Israel’s history. His body of work has thus become the shared visual memory of Israel’s short yet dramatic history.

He was awarded the Israel Prize for his services to the media in 1997 - the highest accolade that can be received in Israel. There is a permanent collection of his photographs on display in the Knesset.

- Rubinger’s address on Sunday will be accompanied by an audiovisual presentation of his works. The venue is Beyachad, the time 15:00 and there’s a ticket price of R60. For bookings, call (011) 645-2510.



Wednesday, 20th May 2015 at 8.00pm

Jonathan Jansen

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south african
Jewish Report

We may differ
on strategies, but
not on the goals

For the first time in our history, South African Jewish communal organisations have publicly criticised the Israeli government for denying South Africa’s Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande a visa to visit the Palestinian territories.

“This is most regrettable,” the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the South African Zionist Federation said in a joint statement, noting their “concern” over Israel’s decision. Nzimande was scheduled to leave on April 25 for discussions with his Palestinian counterpart, Minister Khawla Shaksheer and to attend the opening of an African Studies Centre at a local university north of Ramallah.

Nzimande was even angrier with the refusal and called it a “declaration of diplomatic aggression on our government”. He also called on all South African tertiary institutions with academic links to Israel to cut ties.

The incident has evoked strong opinions on public platforms and in international media as well as creating tensions within the Jewish community and outside of it.

It has also raised some difficult questions that we cannot help but ask. Should the Board of Deputies and the Zionist Federation have been publicly critical of Israel? Should they have got involved in a consular issue at all?

Should Israel have refused a visa to a Cabinet minister who was not visiting Palestine on security issues but on educational matters? Is the accusation swirling that Israel acted like South Africa might have during the apartheid era, a fair one?

Whatever shape our critical views take, one thing is clear: both Israel and our communal organisations gave considerable thought to their decisions and acted in (what they deemed were) the best interests of the parties they represent.

Although the Board and the Fed feel an immense loyalty to Israel and are usually protective of it on almost any issue, they believed that Israel had made the wrong decision and issued a call for the two governments to opt for a course of constructive engagement and build bridges.

Faced with groups like the SA Communist Party, Cosatu and BDS South Africa calling on the ANC national executive to ban travel to Israel for government officials, demanding the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador and calling for the National Directorate of Public Prosecutions to prosecute South Africans serving in Israel’s army, can we expect our leadership not to get alarmed?

The organisations truly felt they needed to stand up and call for the parties to resolve their differences as an act of protection for South African Jewry.

Israel also had sound reasons for deciding not to grant an entry visa to Nzimande. Over the last few years, Israel’s representatives in South Africa have attempted to create greater co-operation and dialogue with government here and have pushed for ANC Cabinet members to make official visits to Israel, but have not had the reception they had hoped for.

Last year when Israel obediently granted visas to Johannesburg Mayor Parks Tau and Deputy Minister Obed Bapela to come through Israel to visit neighbouring countries, both of them refused to meet with Israeli officials when they were asked.

Can we blame Israel for, this time, deciding to make a point? Can we expect Israel to meekly play the role of “business class lounge” for ANC officials en route to Israel’s detractors without giving Israel an opportunity for engagement?

What is reassuring is that neither the South African government nor Israel have made public statements on the issue. The two governments have bigger problems to consider than a consular spat like Nzimande’s visa refusal or a futile BDS-led coalition calling for boycotts of Israeli universities. Perhaps we need to see this as part of a circus to undermine Israel and create division in our community.

Let’s not give these voices the satisfaction they are seeking. Both Israel and the local Jewish community are fighting for the integrity of Israel and the Jewish world in the Diaspora. We may differ slightly on the strategy, but not on the goals themselves.

– Vanessa Valkin, Editor



Protesting Ethiopian–Israelis throw rocks and bottles at police trying to disperse them in central Tel-Aviv.

Why Ethiopian-Israelis took to Tel Aviv’s streets

BEN SALES
TEL AVIV

A historically disadvantaged black minority is galvanised when one of its members appears to suffer brutality at the hands of police - and the episode is caught on video. Peaceful mass protests devolve into violence and police cracked down in an attempt to control the crowds.

It’s not Baltimore or Ferguson. It’s Tel Aviv, which was rocked by unrest last Sunday after a video of a uniformed Ethiopian-Israeli soldier, Damas Pakada, being beaten by Israeli police made the rounds online. Here are four things you need to know about the Israeli demonstrations.

A police beating sparked the protests

The video that triggered the Tel Aviv protests shows Pakada holding his bicycle on an empty sidewalk. A police officer approaches him, grabs him, punches him and pushes him to the ground. Pakada then stands up and exchanges words with the officer.

Chanting protesters in Tel Aviv invoked the name of Yosef Salamsa, a 22-year-old Ethiopian-Israeli man who committed suicide last July. Salamsa killed himself four months after police approached him in a public park and accused him of breaking into a house, then tazed him before he was released. The deputy mayor of Salamsa’s coastal hometown of Binyamina, Shlomi Salame, said the police “broke his spirit”, according to the Israeli news website Walla.

But unlike in the United States, where a series of high-profile law enforcement killings of unarmed black boys and men have made headlines, until now there have been no known parallel cases with Ethiopians in Israel.

On Monday, Pakada met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, along with a delegation of Ethiopian-Israeli community leaders.

The protests are also responding to Ethiopians’ systemic challenges

Pakada’s beating triggered the protests, including in Jerusalem several days earlier, but it also unleashed long-simmering grievances in the Ethiopian community. Protesters said they were troubled by lagging educational opportunities, discrimination when applying for government jobs and high rates of Ethiopian-Israelis in military prisons.

Israel has celebrated the approximately 125 000 Ethiopian immigrants who arrived in the mid-1980s through to 2013. And Israel’s government has provided a range of benefits to Ethiopian-Israelis, ranging from free college tuition to lower mortgage rates. But challenges remain.

Ethiopian-Israelis are overrepresented in military prisons and underrepresented at the nation’s universities. And in 2012, the average Ethiopian family’s income was just over

half that of the Israeli average.

“We want to receive rights just as we fulfil our duties,” said Yosi Minyuv, 27, an Ethiopian-Israeli who served four years in the Israeli army, including as a combat officer. “We’re second-class citizens. We want good work and they block us.”

The Tel Aviv demonstration began peacefully

When protesters - Ethiopian and others - first gathered in Tel Aviv last Sunday afternoon, they chanted and held signs as police stood at a distance. As the protest swelled beyond 1 000 people, the demonstrators formed a giant circle, blocking a major intersection and then marching down Tel Aviv’s central Ayalon highway.

Protesters chanted slogans like “Whether black or white, we’re all people” and “Every violent police officer needs to be put away”. They held signs with slogans such as “Being black is not a crime”. Some waved Israeli flags.

Clashes began as police cleared protesters from the highway, and violence intensified as thousands of demonstrators filled the central Rabin Square. Fighting escalated as protesters threw glass bottles and stones at police, and police responded with stun grenades and a water cannon. Demonstrators began to chant “police state” and remained past midnight.

By the time the crowds dispersed, dozens of people had been injured - including 56 police officers. Blood stained the usually tranquil square.

Despite challenges, some Ethiopian-Israelis remain optimistic

Even as protesters vented frustrations, many of them said they felt a sense of belonging in Israel. A large Israeli flag waved over the demonstration’s early hours, and Ethiopian-Israelis at the protest proudly referenced their military service. Protesters said that after serving in the Israel Defence Forces and living in the state as loyal citizens, they didn’t feel the state treated them as they deserved.

“I gave to the state because I’m part of the country,” said Avi Sabahat, 27, who immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia at age four. “There’s some hidden discrimination. It’s in the conscious and the subconscious. There’s been a little improvement, but you don’t feel it. There’s integration in society, but not enough.”

Dana Sibaho, a 29-year-old Ethiopian-Israeli, said that a decade ago, the older generation, who had come to Israel as adults, were too focused on their absorption to demand better treatment from the state. But she said younger Ethiopians, either born in Israel or having arrived as small children, felt empowered to demand their rights.

“Things will change,” she said. “They won’t silence us. Not like our parents, who accepted things. We know what we’re up against. Now we won’t shut up.” (JTA)

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

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

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

HISTORICAL PROOF OF PALESTINIAN ADMIRATION FOR HITLER

While I’m disgusted by the praise for Hitler by Wits SRC President Mcebo Dlamini, one should not be surprised, because the Palestinian relationship with the Nazis goes back a long way.

A set of particularly bloody pogroms spread across “Palestine” from 1936 to 1939, known as the Arab Revolt in which hundreds of Jews were murdered and the Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin also liquidated many of his Arab political opponents. Haj Amin was aided at this time by fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

In exile in Lebanon, Haj Amin deepened his association with Germany and Italy, receiving large amounts of money and arms from them.

The French news weekly, Marianne, quoted several examples of Nazi ideological influence among the Palestinian Arabs: “At Nablus, the Arab population recently received the British troops with shouts of ‘Heil Hitler!’”

A certain German garage in Jerusalem employed only Arab Nazis, who were made to wear the swastika over their buttonholes.

The Arab journals Falastin and Al Difa’a published weekly articles with a racial tendency and frequently reproduced large portraits of various leaders of the Third Reich. They

did not even try to conceal the fact that they had become pupils of the ministry of propaganda in Berlin, according to Marianne.

Hitler invited Arabs to Germany as honoured guests and in the 1938 Nuremberg address he spoke about “the defenceless Arabs in Palestine, left in the lurch”.

An Arab spokesman in Jerusalem reacted promptly by declaring: “Now we are not without friends in Europe; our ultimate success as a nation lies in the hands of Hitler and Mussolini.”

Hitler was regarded by many Arabs across the Middle East as a popular hero and Arab movements based on Nazism were founded in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

Hitler went to Rome, where he received an assurance from Count Ciano, promising to abolish the Jewish national home in “Palestine”.

From there Hitler was set up as an honoured guest in Berlin, where he was installed as “Grossmufti” or “Grand Mufti”.

Haj Amin set up an Arab Legion, to fight as part of the Nazi war effort and organised Muslim Wehrmacht units and a Muslim SS unit in Yugoslavia that was responsible for the genocide of hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, and also Nazi Muslim units, alongside German forces in the

Soviet Union.

His major role was to intercede with Axis governments to prevent the evacuation of thousands of Jewish children to “Palestine”, and redirect them instead to the death camps.

Dieter Wisliceny of the Nazi SS, and a key executioner of the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question”, testified: “The Mufti was one of the initiators of the systematic extermination of European Jewry and had been a collaborator and adviser of (Adolf) Eichmann and (Heinrich) Himmler (Reichsführer of the Schutzstaffel, the SS) in the execution of his plan... He was one of Eichmann’s best friends and had constantly incited him to accelerate the extermination measures. I heard him say that accompanied by Eichmann, he had visited incognito the gas chambers of Auschwitz.”

In a 1974 conversation between Syrian President Hafez Assad and Druze politician Walid Jumblatt, Assad stated that the Arabs “remembered Hitler in a positive way” after which Jumblatt agreed: “At least he saved us from the Zionists... National Socialism should be revered a bit.”

Gary Selikow
Johannesburg

AN ODE TO SOUTH AFRICA’S HARD-WON FREEDOM

Monday we celebrated Freedom Day. It brought us first and foremost the memory of the father of our free nation, Nelson Mandela.

The great Constitution of this country has allowed us Jewish South Africans the freedom to follow our dedication to our faith.

The tiny proportion that we are of this population is (still) a force to be reckoned with.

We are an industrious group of South Africans who make a huge contribution to the economy and also to the wellbeing of all the people.

We thank the Government for adhering to affording us the freedom we enjoy as a minority group. We must be very aware that the hostility of a small group (BDS) towards Israel does not develop into a form of anti-Semitism as is prevalent worldwide.

This Government is going through a very severe economic crisis and must take a tremendous initiative and have foresight to revive the economy and most urgent of all, to tackle the major problem of unemployment and industrial unrest and thus reduce the unacceptable crime and xenophobia which is devastating the very foundation of the freedom we have.

We join this nation in wishing us all a better future with prosperity for all who live here in South Africa. G-d bless a free South Africa.

Harry Israel
Sandringham Gardens, Johannesburg

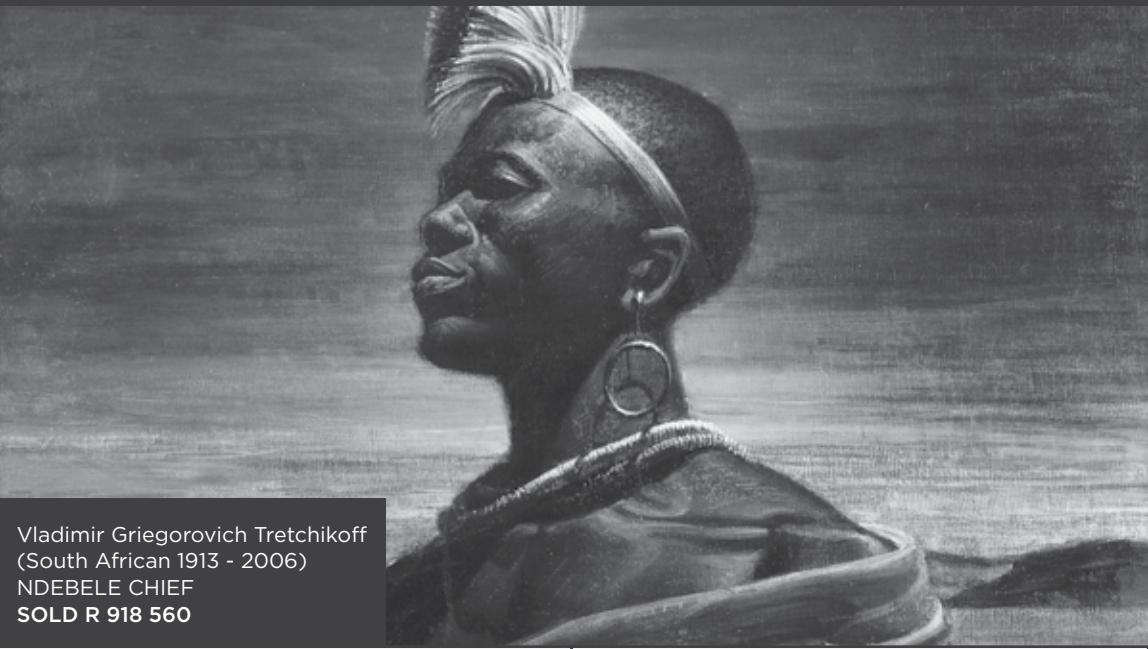
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Ambassador Lenk hosts Yom Ha’atzmaut celebration

**DIANE WOLFSON
PRETORIA**

The Israeli Embassy’s annual Yom Ha’atzmaut celebration in Pretoria was again a veritable who’s who of the Jewish and broader community, including South African government representatives, diplomats, the media and other invited guests, who gathered to celebrate Israel’s 67th birthday in style.

After a choir from King David Linksfield Primary School sang South Africa and Israel’s national anthems, Ambassador Arthur Lenk welcomed the large crowd with thoughts for the people of Nepal in the wake of its devastating earthquake.

He conveyed in his message that South Africa and Israel had more in common than met the eye. Both had recently held democratic elections, neither of which had received much media coverage internationally. Both countries hoped for more moderate, stable governments; both believed in a two-state solution and both condemned terrorism.

During the past year there had been a substantial number of Israeli visitors to South Africa and vice versa. South Africans attended Agritech in Israel and Israel was bringing technology and training to South Africa.

Links between the police forces of both countries had grown and great strides had been made in cultural co-operation, with Israel having taken

part in the Dance Umbrella, Op-pikoppi and a book festival recently.

Ambassador Lenk proposed a toast to continued friendship, co-operation and success with South Africa.

Representing the South African government, Roy Setlhapelo, director of the Levant (area including Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria) at the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, said it was an honour to be part of the 67th celebration of Israel’s National Day of Independence and he conveyed good wishes on behalf of the government and people of South Africa.

Setlhapelo said it was on a day like this that one needed to pause for a moment and look back at the history of diplomatic relations between the two countries, beginning in 1949 when Israel established a consulate-general in Pretoria and upgraded it to an embassy in 1974.

South Africa established a consulate-general in Tel Aviv in 1972 and upgraded it to an embassy in December 1975.

He added that the interaction between South Africa and the Jewish community had started in the 1920s when Jews had arrived in South Africa from central and eastern Europe. Many of them had become prominent and had contributed significantly to South Africa’s development.

“During our struggle against



Ambassador Arthur Lenk and Roy Setlhapelo, director of Levant, at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation.

apartheid, many South Africans of Jewish origin took part in the liberation struggle. We pay tribute to the Jewish men and women who made countless sacrifices in order for us today to enjoy our freedom.

“We are equally happy that South Africa was one of the countries that voted in favour of the creation of Israel in the League of Nations. Furthermore, South Africans were part of the international volunteer group that fought to defend the newly-created State of Israel,” he said.

On South Africa’s concern for developments in the Middle East, Setlhapelo said it was natural that South Africa remained concerned about

those developments, particularly the pursuit of self-determination by the Palestinians.

The South African government remained concerned about the continued conflict between Israel and Palestine, which last year escalated into the 51-day war in Gaza.

“We remain convinced that for both Israel and Palestine to be at peace, the two-state solution, that is the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, existing side by side in peace with Israel within internationally recognised borders, based on those existing on June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, must be implemented.”

He expressed the hope that following the successful elections in March in Israel, a new unity government that would pursue the two-state solution, would be established.

He also expressed the South African government’s appreciation for the warm hospitality accorded to special envoys to Israel and the Middle East - former Minister Zola Skweyiya and former Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad.

Setlhapelo said he hoped that such courtesies would be extended to all South Africans and their leaders, should they wish to travel to Israel and concluded by wishing Israel the best for the future.

SA community’s traditional ‘warmth’ not misplaced

SUZANNE BELLING

The South African Jewish community has a reputation of being one of the warmest and most hospitable in the world. But, with all the media hype surrounding xenophobia, the question was posed by the SA Jewish Report: Is our community welcoming to Jews who move here from other countries?

While obviously not experiencing xenophobia, has there been a display of coolness or even hostility towards most Jewish immigrants to South Africa or have they been brought into the fold without reservations?

Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, CEO of the African Jewish Congress, says South Africa has seen a stream of Jews from Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and other sub-Saharan African states where there was trouble, “but the Jews were never persecuted” in those countries. “Jews never fled because they were Jews, but because of civil war and instability in those regions”.

They were welcomed wholeheartedly by South Africans and taken into the fold of synagogues, schools and welfare bodies.

Two people who left the poverty and uncertainty of Zimbabwe were Peter and Hermoine Sternberg. Hermoine was originally South African and settled in Harare when she married Peter, who for many years was president of the Zimbabwe Jewish Board of Deputies. He is currently a vice-president of the African Jewish Congress.

“We have been living in Sea Point for the past nine years and moved when things in Zimbabwe became very bad. I still travelled between the two countries for business for several years.”

The prospects for the Sternbergs were good. Because Peter has a sister, Judy Kaplan, living in Cape Town, Hermoine had friends from her earliest years here and the couple knew many

people through their regular holidays. “We found ourselves very welcome.”

Having held the position of national president of the Union of Jewish Women in Zimbabwe, Hermoine easily secured a job as executive secretary of the UJW in Cape Town.

“We had no problems,” says Peter, “But we found South Africans naïve about Zimbabwe. We had no anti-Zionism and no anti-Semitism there. In general, they have the wrong impression.”

Dan Brotman, executive director of the South Africa-Israel Forum in Johannesburg and formerly head of media and public affairs at the Cape Council of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, says: “I came to South Africa with one suitcase in 2010 and I never left”. He stayed because he met and married a South

African, from whom he is now divorced.

Having lived both in Cape Town, where he felt comfortable because of the smaller Jewish community, and Johannesburg, which he found very welcoming, he says: “In Johannesburg I was invited out for every Jewish holiday and every seder and made to feel part of the community.

“In general, people in Johannesburg are friendlier than Cape Town. I think it is because people from all over move to Johannesburg whereas Cape Town has a small-town mentality.”

Brotman, originally from Boston, US, has also lived in Israel, but intends becoming a South African citizen in 2018.

Alexander Fine, an IT specialist from Russia, moved from Israel with his wife, Naomi, and



Petter and Hermoine Sternberg, former Zimbabweans, now living in South Africa.

children to Johannesburg in 2012. “We had an excellent reception,” he says. “We were welcomed like olim chadashim (new immigrants).”

Being an observant Jew, Fine set about finding a place, within walking distance from his home, where he could daven. He immediately was included in the Chabad community, with advice from Rabbi Ari Shishler and other rabbis and leaders.

“We go to the Hama’or Centre in Fairmount. The congregants were very warm and welcoming, as were Rabbi Levy Wineberg and Rabbi Berel Rodal.”

Andrea Kuti left her native Hungary 14 years ago to travel and study. At a conference in London, she met young Rabbi Greg Alexander, son of Carol and Peter Alexander from Johannesburg. The couple got married and after continuing their travels, settled in Cape Town, where Rabbi Greg is the spiritual leader of Temple Israel.

“As a woman trained and passionate about Judaism and community, I wish there were more inspirational career opportunities in the community for women to pursue,” she says.

She has found an outlet in holistic midwifery “which is rarely found in South Africa” and is pursuing her studies in this field. Otherwise, she finds her congregants and the community warm and accepting and she aims to bring about further understanding of gender issues among South African Jews.

Rabbi Sa’ar Shaked, of Beit Emanuel, Parktown, says that apart from the fact that “I have an accent” and “there is tension between the Progressive Jews and Orthodoxy”, he feels he and his wife, Sharon, and family have been welcomed by Johannesburg Jewry with open arms since their arrival here from Netanya, Israel three years ago. He and his family have had “the most amazing treatment,” he says. “My aim is to bring more diversity and to attract more Israelis into the community.”

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Front: Aviel Abrams; Yishai Basserabie; Akiva Goldstein; and Jacobs Sacks. In the vehicle: Idan Blumenthal; Eli Cohen; Benjamin Miller; and Saul Joseph.

The fallen Jewish soldiers did not die in vain

OWN CORRESPONDENT

The Yeshiva College Informal Education Department, or YID for short, is dedicated to the field of experiential Jewish education.

YID gives learners the opportunity to explore Judaism in a safe and dynamic Orthodox environment.

For Yom Hazikaron, together with Yom Ha’atzmaut, some of the most important days on a Jewish day school’s calendar, YID hired a military grade armoured vehicle and parked it in the parking lot. The significance of this was explained to the learners, that it is on this day that Jews remember those who gave their lives for the sake of their safety and to ensure that Jews have a Jewish state.

Sydenham Pre-Primary opens its heart

SUE BENJAMIN

The parents at Sydenham Pre-Primary once again extended their generosity - this time for the victims of the recent xenophobic attacks. Much needed items such as food and toiletries were collected.

Pictured are Kayley Kushner; Amy Levin; and Netanya Broido.



Theme of freedom resonates at Parnassus Farm

OWN CORRESPONDENT

A five-day retreat/Shabbaton at Parnassus Farm in Magaliesburg over the Freedom Day weekend for pupils of Torah Academy Boys’ High School - from grades 7 to 12 - highlighted the theme of freedom for the Jewish people and for South Africa.

“We discussed the values of freedom,” said Rabbi Yossi Chaikin, principal of TA Boys’ High School, who accompanied the learners on the trip. Dean of Torah Academy, Rabbi Dovid Hazdan also attended as well as Rabbi Motti

Hadar, principal of TA Primary School, guest rabbis and kodesh teachers.

“The programme was a mixture of education, fun, sport, hiking and swimming, as well as daily and Shabbat services,” Rabbi Chaikin said. “It was living Yiddishkeit.”

At the retreat the focus was on team building, leadership, increasing the school’s spirit and unity and strengthening bonds between the teachers and learners.

Pictured are the boys on top of the mountain, with Rabbi Hazdan (second from left) and Rabbi Chaikin (right).



It’s buckle-up the right way for the little ones

OWN CORRESPONDENT

On Friday April 24, Minnie Bersohn Nursery School held a Car Seat Clinic and safe2go came to check the children’s car seats in their parents’ cars.

It was a very successful morning. Many parents whose children’s car seats were checked, found that their car seats were not actually placed correctly. The professionals were able to help them and many parents felt relieved and satisfied with this safer outcome.

From this exercise the parents came to realise that car seat safety starts with them:

- Don’t allow your child to unbuckle their seat restraints.
- Don’t allow your child to dictate where and how they want to sit in the car.
- Don’t allow your child to travel unrestrained, no matter how short the trip.
- Don’t ever allow your child to sit in the front seat of your car.
- Don’t forget to have your car seat checked regularly, especially if your vehicle has been in an accident.



Pictured are Theresa Hamman (head of safe2go); Asaf, Mia and Noa Sirton; Greg Sochen (CSO); and Tye and Nicky Kaplan.

Yom Ha’atzmaut at Herzlia a unique experience



TRACY KLASS

United Herzlia Schools in Cape Town assembled all their pupils, from grade 1 – 12, and their staff, at the Van Riebeeck Field in Highlands this year, to celebrate Yom Ha’atzmaut and also to film the closing sequence of their 75th anniversary video. Herzlia turns 75 this year.

It was no easy feat to co-ordinate a shoot with over 1 400 pupils and 200 staff members from five different campuses!

The Middle and High School pupils buddied with the primary school learners and escorted them to their places on the field. The “75” had been marked out and the dimensions checked with a drone.

“In the end it was a wonderful morning,” said Geoff Cohen, director of education for UHS.

The filming by producers and directors Aaron Turest-Swartz and Sean Levin was undertaken with two drones and a crane for the aerial shots and a stills photographer on a cherry picker.

Ambassador Arthur Lenk guest speaker at KDVP

HANNA BEN-MOSHE

On Thursday April 23, King David High School Victory Park celebrated Yom Ha’atzmaut with an illustrious guest, Israel’s Ambassador to South Africa Arthur Lenk, who addressed pupils and staff. Ambassador Lenk spoke about the contribution of Israel to South African agriculture and medical development and emphasised the importance of the connection between the two countries.

The learners danced and sang to Israeli music on the field and enjoyed falafel and shwarma, celebrating the existence of the Jewish State and its growth and achievements. Happy 67th Birthday Israel!



Community Voices

Blade’s visa denial under the loupe

The denial of a visa by Israel to Minister of Higher Education Blade Nzimande to visit Ramallah via the Jewish State has sparked controversy in the Jewish community, with the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the SA Zionist Federation issuing a joint statement criticising Israel for its decision. The SA Jewish Report asked members of the community in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban to give their opinions on Israel’s decision to withhold the visa and the wisdom of the statement of the Board of Deputies and the Zionist Federation.



Durban businessman and community leader **Sidney Lazarus** felt Israel had made “a big mistake” in not granting the visa. “They should have liaised with the Board and Fed and a think-tank should have been put in place. This puts us in a bad light and could do damage to the Jewish community. Israeli Ambassador Arthur Lenk should have discussed it and averted a problem.” Lazarus felt the action would give fuel to organisations such as BDS-SA. He supported the joint statement of the Board and the SAZF.



Capetonian **Jenny Harris**, a consultant and mediator, said there was no reason for Nzimande to go through Israel if he wanted to visit Ramallah - “he possibly did that to cause embarrassment. Why should Israel receive a person so adamantly against the Jewish State?” Regarding the statement of the Board and the Fed, Harris felt that the two organisations “have not reacted with enough courage”.



Cape Town management consultant **Stephen Rothgiesser** says: “On the basis of the Minister’s recent quotes and stance towards Israel, I deem it is not in the interests to grant a visa to such an outspoken critic of its policies and laws.” Rothgiesser said he understood the statement issued by the Board

and the SAZF as “it might be politically expedient to support the South African government in its stance. However, I don’t believe that such a position is in the interests of long-term peace in the Middle East.”



Marc Lubner, CEO of Afrika Tikkun and former chairman of the SA-Israel Chamber of Commerce and the Smile Foundation, supports both the SAJBD and the SAZF statement. He does not agree with the denial of a visa to the Minister. “There is nothing to gain by closing doors. There is an old Chinese proverb which says you should keep your friends close and your enemies closer.” Lubner felt more thought should be given to the relationship between South Africa and Israel as certain actions could serve to further reduce links between the two countries. “One has to work with what exists and avoid what doesn’t exist. We cannot force change; we have to influence it.”



Ann Harris, acting president of the African Jewish Congress, feels it was wrong to withhold the visa “because he [Nzimande] can say whatever he wants to, whether he is here or there”. The joint statement of the Board and the Fed was, in her opinion, “the right thing to do”.

The Jewish World

in seven seconds

Halaal rules rule

MIAMI - Walmart has caved in and is now including meats that have been slaughtered according to Islamic halaal rules after a Miami University petition pressured the major corporation. The petition, created by Oxford assistant professor Tareq Hasan Khan and the Muslim Student Association of Miami University, actually only garnered 50 signatures. - JewsNews

Holocaust denier libel case to hit big screen

LONDON - In 1996, British Holocaust revisionist David Irving sued Deborah Lipstadt, author of Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth & Memory, for libel. The case closed in 2000, and six years later, Lipstadt published History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier, which depicts her legal battle with Irvin - which she won. A movie is to be made of it. - The Scroll

Carter’s angle on ME peace

JERUSALEM - Former US President Jimmy Carter has called Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal a strong proponent of the peace process and said he wasn’t meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu because it would be “a waste of time”. Carter met with PA President Mahmoud Abbas but didn’t meet with Netanyahu or President Reuven Rivlin. - Times of Israel

Jewish soldier saved Fischer’s life

MELBOURNE - Former Australian deputy prime minister and Vietnam war veteran, Tim Fischer, has revealed that Jewish soldier Bob Edelman saved

his life on the battlefield. Addressing people at the Victorian Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen & Women (VAJEX) Centenary of Anzac commemoration, Fischer said: “I particularly salute Bob, because the truth of the matter is that Bob saved my life.” - Australian Jewish News

Islamic suicide bomber trainer accidentally blows up entire class

SHILOH - In Baghdad, a terrorist who was in the middle of conducting training for future militants, accidentally blew up an entire class, killing 21 of his students, and himself. The group was part of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria that has been participating in a string of attacks in the United States. - JewsNews

Barbra’s dog bites flight attendant

WASHINGTON DC - Samantha, singer and actress Barbra Streisand’s dog, hit a sour note with a flight attendant that ended in stitches. According to the report, Streisand was on a private jet with Samantha heading to Washington DC when the dog bit the attendant. – Kveller

Israeli restaurant named best restaurant in UK

LONDON - The Palomar in London, which belongs to owners of Jerusalem’s famous Machneyuda restaurant, was recently described by British GQ magazine as having “the most chutzpah of any food and drink establishment operating in the country right now”. - YNET News



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Chaiyanu – providing hope and love for cancer sufferers



The Chaiyanu group went to the home of Ingrid and Stanley Seeff on Monday April 27 for dinner. There was an African theme and they were entertained by The Drum Cafe. The group, this year made up of boys, had a wonderful time playing the drums. Rabbi Yossy Goldman also gave them a message of strength, addressing them in Hebrew.

SHIRA DRUION

Chaiyanu is an Israel-based organisation that endeavours to support children who are suffering with cancer as well as their families. The organisation has 27 active programmes including an annual pilgrimage to South Africa called the Hope Tour.

This tour takes children on a dream holiday so that when they return home, they are stronger and more energised to forge on with the challenges of their treatments. This year, 17 participants and their madrichim made up a group of 40 strong, which included South African volunteers.

The group visited Cape Town, Johannesburg and Zebula Bush Lodge near Bela-Bela and relished in the magic that an authentic African experience is all about. American-born Rabbi Yaakov Pinsky, director of Chaiyanu, said: “The people of South Africa created magical moments for the Chaiyanu children.

“They provided them with hope and love which are both so necessary for them and which in some ways can have a far more powerful impact than chemotherapy. We have witnessed this with past participants being more resilient when they return to Israel to continue with their treatments. The South African community gave the Chaiyanu children who live in the moment, the greatest moments of their life.”

On the trip the group experienced an exciting daily programme of events; dinner parties at generous local Jewish families who welcomed them into their homes and an inspirational Shabbos at Ohr Somayach Savoy, which was, many claimed, a highlight of the trip.

Josh Benjamin, former head of SAUJS Cape Town and tour leader on the programme, said: “Chaiyanu was a powerful experience. The tour was designed to give the kids light-heartedness, happiness and celebration in order to uplift them - so that when they returned to their unpleasant treatment back in Israel, they would have something positive to hold onto.”

The Hope Tour also allowed the South African Jewish community to bear witness to the tremendous courage of a group of young people who display an indomitable resilience and tenacity in their fight against cancer.

Why are SA young blacks embracing anti-Semitism?



BARBARIC YAWP
David Saks

Earlier this week, it was officially announced that Mcebo Dlamini had been relieved of his position as president of the Wits SRC, and removed from the SRC itself. Understandably, it has been assumed that Dlamini’s recent “I love Hitler” Facebook posts, along with his (somewhat contradictory) accompanying observation that all whites, but no other races, apparently, have an “element of Hitler in them” was the reason for his dismissal.

Actually, Dlamini was removed after having been found guilty of previous offences, including assaulting a senior staff member last year. It is not unlikely, however, that his Hitler remarks put paid to any further efforts on his part to delay his removal through lodging technical objections against the disciplinary process.

What bothers me is that while the pro-Hitler and anti-white comments have been thoroughly denounced by the university and in the media, practically no mention has been made of the lengthy record of anti-Semitic statements made by Dlamini over the past eight months or so.

For example last year, as reported in this newspaper, he claimed in the SA Human Rights Commission hearings into university transformation that Jewish students at Wits were being given preferential treatment because of Jewish financial contributions at the university. Following his being found guilty of misconduct by Wits earlier this year, he attributed the decision to the “Zionist-controlled Wits Legal Office”.

Even worse were his “Hitler” posts which, although not reported on in the media nor condemned by the Wits leadership, featured enthusiastic endorsements of the propositions that Jews were the killers of Jesus and that Hitler had done what he did because he was aware of what kind of people they intrinsically were.

Added to this, naturally, were the usual hysterical libels against Israel, to which was added the remark that Jews really loved Hitler, since if not, why did they insist on emulating him? Vicious stuff, all in all, and presented with unabashed glee.

It would be comforting to simply conclude that Dlamini is an unrepresentative crank who somehow insinuated himself into a leadership position, but that would be self-delusory. In reality, his malignant notions about Jews are surfacing more and more among young black South Africans.

During my nearly 20 years at the SAJBD, variations on the well-worn theme of “Hitler was right to kill the Jews - pity he never finished the job” were until recently confined almost entirely to white right-wingers and hardcore Islamists.

Now, as can be seen on university campuses, in the social media and on radio phone-in shows, they have for the first time become commonplace in the black community, particularly among the youth. What is more, it all happened so very suddenly; there was nothing gradual or incremental about it.

Last year’s Gaza conflict appears to have been a watershed event. It was as if the war provided a licence for people of all races and creeds to unleash a torrent of pent-up hatred against the Jewish people - the local community, as well as in Israel and elsewhere.

A sample: “Hitler was right to kill these cockroaches”; “we will approach President ZUMA and demand that he investigate the SAJBD for blood money that it gets for killing Christian children and trading their body parts”; “the Jews must decide NOW if they are SA patriots or murdering mob sleepers on our shores”; “How many bricks, how many roads, did Jews build in SA? None! Queens and kings in my country of birth!”

Even prior to Gaza, however, the rhetoric was progressively worsening. There were calls for Wits to be freed from the “tentacles of Zionist money” (this from the SRC, please note - well before Mcebo Dlamini appeared on the scene), and of course, the now notorious “dubula e Juda” (Shoot the Jew) chants outside the Wits Great Hall a couple of years ago.

Cosatu, to my mind, lurched into open anti-Semitism years ago with statements like “Their occupation and the theft of the land and natural resources of the indigenous people [of Palestine] is nothing but a legalisation of Jewish supremacy to further dehumanise everyone outside their scope of Zionist purity”. July, 2012).

It is in this atmosphere that members of a black student movement in the Western Cape could deposit a pig’s head in a Woolworth’s store with the explicit purpose of sending a message to “the people who will not eat pork”, and genuinely feel they had done something very clever.

Likewise, it could result in the SRC at the Durban University of Technology demanding of their vice-chancellor that as part of boycotting “genocidal” Israel, all Jewish students at the university should be “de-registered” (meaning expelled), and feel that they were not doing anything at all wrong.

To my mind, this abrupt lurch into classic anti-Semitic modes of thought by many young blacks is not really about Jews and Israel/Palestine (when is this sort of thing ever really about them?) but about the progressive unravelling of the democratic, non-racial ideals with which the new post-apartheid society was launched.

Who of us that experienced that transition and the hopes it occasioned, do not feel repelled and distressed by the raw hatred that South Africans of all races now routinely express against one another?

It continues to be remarkable, therefore, that when it comes to direct anti-Semitic behaviour - assault, verbal abuse and the like - South Africa continues to record such low numbers of incidents when compared with other Diaspora communities.



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Jewish Achievers nominations open

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Nominations for the 17th annual SA Jewish Report’s “Absa Jewish Achiever Awards” are open and the 2015 event is sure to again up the ante.

The annual fundraiser culminates with a gala banquet which is, without question, the highlight of the Jewish Johannesburg social calendar. The glittering dinner honours members of South African Jewry who have excelled in business and the humanities.

Nominations are open to the public and all nominations should be sent via e-mail to nominations@SAJewishReport.co.za - see more on www.sajr.co.za - and anyone can nominate anyone.

The closing date for nominations is June 26.

The judging, especially in the audited business categories, has been described by many top financial people in the know, as the most rigorous and credible business awards process in the country.

Nominations should include:

- The nominee’s name, telephone number and e-mail address;
- The award for which the nominee is nominated;
- A short motivation for the nomination.

The Business and Entrepreneurial awards are judged by a panel of independent business people, financial journalists, stockbrokers and Absa representatives. The results are all audited by PKF accountants.

The Jewish Report humanities awards are:

- The Lifetime Achievement Award in hon-

our of Helen Suzman, awarded to a Jewish person who has contributed in an extraordinary manner, in their specific field, over a lengthy period;

- The Community Service Award, going to a Jewish person who has served the Jewish community with remarkable distinction;
- The Arts, Science, Sports & Culture Award, going to a Jewish person who has excelled in any of these spheres;
- The Chivas Humanitarian Award in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, awarded to either a Jewish or non-Jewish person who has contributed substantially to the betterment of the lives of the people of South Africa.

The four Jewish Business Awards are:

- The Absa Listed Company Award, going to a Jewish person in a senior leadership position within a listed company who has achieved great success worthy of recognition;
- The Absa Unlisted Company Award, going to a Jewish person who is in a senior leadership position in an unlisted company and who has achieved significant success worthy of recognition;
- The Absa Entrepreneur Award, going to a Jewish person who has shown enormous entrepreneurial flair and business innovation;
- The Creative Counsel Young Jewish Entrepreneur Award, which recognises entrepreneurship in young Jews aged 30 or younger.

The black-tie awards evening is replete with music, comedy and a sparkling array of the who’s who of South African Jewry. There is



no other event in the social calendar which attracts as many high profile individuals as the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.

Past winners read like a who’s who:

Winners of awards include Brian Joffe (Bidvest), Adrian Gore (Discovery), Raymond Ackerman (Pick n Pay), Asher Bohbot (EOH), Alec Wapnick (Octodec), Gill Marcus (Reserve Bank), Brett Levy (Blue Label), Steven Joffe (Gold Reef City), Philip Krawitz (Cape Union Mart), William Kirsh (Prime-dia), Herschel Mayers (Discovery Life), Sean Melnick (Peregrine), Abe and Solly Krok (Krok Brothers), John Copelyn (HCI), Arthur Gillis (Protea Hotels), Jeff Zidel (Resilient Properties), William Kentridge (Artist), Danny K & Kabelo (Shout Campaign), Phillip Tobias (Paleoanthropologist), Ina Perlman (Operation Hunger), Johnny Clegg (Musician), Dr Ali Bacher (Cricket Administrator) and Pieter-Dirk Uys (Comedian and Satirist).

The awards, in the past, have also honoured both President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu for their contribution to South Africa.

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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

After xenophobia, now time for introspection

With calm now having largely been restored in those areas of the country that were recently so hard-hit by xenophobic violence, the focus now is on finding ways to meaningfully address the underlying socio-economic ills that generated the unrest in the first place.

South Africans, our own community included, came forward in their numbers to provide crucial short-term assistance to victims of the violence. The challenge now is to facilitate their reintegration into the communities from which they were originally hounded, and for that a broader vision for social upliftment is needed.

To this end, the Board is partnering with SA National Civic Organisation (Sanco) in a project that aims not just at addressing the needs of the foreign nationals who were victimised, but also those of the wider community in areas where they live. Through initiatives such as this, it will hopefully be possible to prevent the recurrence of such tragic social upheavals, which cause such profound harm to the fabric of our society.

This week, Wits student leader Mcebo Dlamini was formally compelled to step down as SRC president, and vacate his position on the SRC itself. His removal was not, in fact, on account of his having declared on Facebook that he “loves” Adolf Hitler and that every white person had an element of Hitler in them, but for previous offences, including assaulting a senior staff member.

The matter of his “Hitler” remarks has since been referred to the Wits legal office for investigation. Shocking though the comments were, and particularly because they emanated not from an ordinary individual but the elected representative of the Wits student body, we have been encouraged by the appropriately emphatic manner in which Wits Vice-Chancellor Prof Adam Habib has repudiated them.

In addition to his written communications to the Wits community, Prof Habib reiterated his sentiments in a radio dis-



Above Board
Mary Kluk
National Chairman

cussion, which he participated in along with SAJBD National President Zev Krengel.

What came through very clearly was that in lauding Hitler, as well as making racist comments against whites, Dlamini had violated the fundamental values of Wits University.

He further stressed that those holding leadership positions in an organisation, could not make controversial public statements - particularly ones that might well be anticipated to bring that institution into disrepute - and then claim to have simply spoken in their “personal capacity”.

When you hold office in an organisation, as I myself know very well, you are associated in the minds of the public with that body, and hence have a responsibility to weigh one’s public pronouncements carefully. Put another way, one of the prices you pay for holding office is that when it comes to speaking in the public realm, you no longer can claim to have your “own opinion”.

At the time of writing, the announcement of a new Israeli government is expected within the next 48 hours. As with all new beginnings, this represents a time for new ideas and fresh opportunities. We wish the incoming new administration all success, and hope to see in due course the emergence of a new era of dialogue and engagement between its members and our own government.

If we can draw a lesson from recent events in this country, it is that while there should always be room for robust disagreement, this must always be accompanied by a willingness to listen to opposing views and a sense of respect for those who hold them. It is this essential civility that has largely disappeared from public discourse in our country. All of us, starting with our own everyday interactions with our fellow South Africans, have to do whatever we can to bring it back.

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

This column paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Yad’s ‘Soup for the Soul’, a warm, nourishing tribute



David Kroll (holding box); Caron Chait; Brenda Bernitz; Wendy Zinman (in centre dishing soup); Hazel Litvin; Tracy Stollard; Jody Eberlin (dishing soup); and Gavin Goldberg (holding cups).

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Tuesday May 5 saw the opening of “Yad’s Soup for the Soul”, a bi-weekly soup kitchen serving nourishing kosher soup with a sandwich or pie, to recipient families and any other members of the community in need.

Yad Aharon and Michael is a registered non-profit organisation, founded 18 years ago which feeds over 550 families - more than 1 500 people - every week.

It also caters for Jewish festivals in order that no Jewish family goes without the traditional foods for the chagim.

Their food hampers include “dry goods”, comprising basic foodstuffs. The organisation fulfils the mitzvah of chesed and shows that the experience of giving is also, in effect, receiving.

Yad Aharon and Michael said in a media release: “Tuesday was positively ‘lebedik’ at 21 Main Road, Rouxville, with people popping in throughout the day to show their support, make donations and enjoy a sponsored cuppa-hot veggie soup.”

When Wendy Zinman heard that “Yad’s Soup for the Soul” was about to simmer, she approached Alice Friedman, MD of Yad Aharon, with the request that it be named after her late mother, Rhona Goldberg, obm.

“It is no coincidence that they opened on

May 5 - corresponding to what would have been Wendy’s mom’s 70th birthday.”

Being the largest and longest-standing food gemach in Johannesburg, Friedman is certainly at the forefront when it comes to identifying additional nutritional needs for recipients. The soup kitchen was born from this research and the final push came after hearing a story from a Yad recipient who paid regular visits to eat at a church’s soup kitchen.

“The concept of a soup kitchen certainly tugs at peoples’ heart strings and donations from Jewish Johannesburg have already been overwhelmingly positive.” In addition, the response from the kosher restaurants, bakeries and delis has been encouraging, with the launch sponsored by a variety of outlets and schools and future soup kitchen days are pre-booked by individual donors.

“Yad Aharon appeals to everyone to get involved and come to the party (or rather the ‘kitchen’), with many affordable options from the basic “Sponsor-a-Cup” for as little as R18 to “Sponsor-a-Day” for R1 800.

The project managed by Jody Eberlin from Yad, has as its ultimate goal to offer a balanced meal in a congenial “restaurant” atmosphere, capturing the welcoming, comforting and compassionate ambience which remains synonymous with the much beloved “Yaddies”.



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Today, Friday (May 8)

- UZLC hosts Prof Tshilidzi Marsala on "Modelling Interstate Conflict". Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Contact: Gloria 072-127-9421 or (011) 485-4851.

Sunday (May 10)

- Second Innings hosts Michael Sieff, CEO, Chevrah Kadisha, on "Almost Everything You Want To Know About The Chev". Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Cost: R20 members, R30 visitors (incl tea and light refreshments). Contact: Linda Fleishman (011) 532-9701.
- Big Band Music Appreciation Society meets at St John's College Auditorium,

Houghton. Time: 14:15 sharp. There'll be a short DVD on a selection of Big Band performances followed by an audio programme presented by Ian Young, "These are Some of my Favourite Swings". A DVD will be screened, "Best of the Big Bands - Artie Shaw and Friends. Enquiries: Marilyn 072-243-7436 or Jack 082-450-7622.

Monday (May 11)

- UJW adult education division hosts Dr Anthea Jeffrey, head of policy research: SA Institute of Race Relations, speaking on "Shifting from Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) to Economic Empowerment of the Disadvantaged (EED)". Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. For more information contact: UJW office (011) 648-1053.

Tuesday (May 12)

- WIZO Women Inspired and Dermalogica present a morning on skincare and face mapping, with a talk by an expert therapist and free goodie bags. Venue: Rosebank Mall, Dermalogica Concept Store. Time: 11:00 to 12:30. Please be there by 10:30. Cost: R150 (incl tea & cheesecake). Limited seats. Bookings: Nadine (011) 645-2515 or Joceline 082-441-4375 or Leslie 083-456-3911.

Wednesday (May 13)

- UJW CT's adult education division hosts Rowan Polovin on "Israel the Innovation Nation". Venue: Stonehaven, Sea Point. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Cost: R20. Enquires: (021) 434-9555 (until 14:00)

- UJW Johannesburg holds its 83rd AGM. The venue is UJW House, 1 Oak Street, Houghton at 10:00. Guest speaker Justice Sharise Weiner on "Xenophobia and the Jewish Experience". RSVP: Ann (011) 648-1053 or e-mail: ujw@mweb.co.za

- JWBS hosts its 43rd Annual Golf Tournament at the Killarney Golf Club. R850 per player or R3 400 4 ball. Shotgun start. Contact (011) 485-5232 or Gloria@jwbs.co.za

Thursday (May 14)

- Greenside Shul is hosting Hugh Raichlin who is speaking on "The Sephardi Communities of the World". Time: 19:30. Contact: Lara on (011) 447-3729 for more information.

Like a good red, Marlene matures well with age

OWN CORRESPONDENT

The number one court at Parkview Lawn Tennis Club, one of the oldest tennis clubs in Johannesburg, is named after Eric Sturgess, one of the greatest male tennis players in South African history. It was on this court that Bethlehem, partnered by her daughter Lael, won their fifth ladies doubles club championships last week.

"It is such a privilege and a pleasure to play with my daughter", says Marlene, who is also in the club's singles final, to be played next weekend.

Marlene will be 75 in June. When she was ranked 1, Sturgess had asked her to partner with him in the mixed doubles at the South African Open, a memory she greatly cherishes.

Sturgess was also a member of Parkview and was club champion several times during the 1940s and '50s. He passed away in 2004, after winning 11 South African singles titles and being three times runner-up in major grand slams,

In 1947 and 1951, he reached the men's singles final in the French Championship and in 1948, he reached the finals of the United States Open. He also won two Wimbledon mixed titles.



Community stalwart Marlene Bethlehem - who is chairman of the club - and her daughter and doubles partner, Lael.

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Join the conversation

The SA Jewish Report website is updated 24/6 and every content item is open to user comments. For obvious reasons all comments require moderation for ethical and legal scrutiny to screen out hate speech, anti-Semitism, etc.

Users may comment anonymously or in their own name - but anonymous comments attract more severe scrutiny in moderation. Every story, as illustrated here, will either identify the number of comments that have been made, or in the case where none has been posted

yet, it will invite users to "Go comment".

The hot topic this week has been the issue of whether Jews can be both Orthodox and gay. Users who are unable to find any story on the Home Page can always go to the website's main tab called "LATEST" and work backwards through every one of the over 10 000 content items published on www.sajr.co.za.



MMA law splits NY Jewish community

JACK MILNER

A group of prominent Jewish leaders in New York have caused a stir by calling for the ban on mixed martial arts (MMA) in the state to remain in place.

Until now, the fight against legalising MMA, which has been banned in New York since 1997, has focused mainly on criticism that the sport is barbaric, anti-woman and anti-gay - claims league officials vehemently deny.

This is the first time Jewish leaders as a group have weighed in and it has left Jews on both sides of the debate.

The group of Jewish leaders wrote an open

letter to “friends of the Jewish community”. It was sent to state lawmakers and appeared in Jewish publications, highlighting the fact that the Abu Dhabi government owns a 10 per cent stake in the sport’s biggest league - the Ultimate Fighting Championship.

The letter points out that Abu Dhabi is part of the United Arab Emirates, which the Anti-Defamation League has rated as one of the most anti-Semitic countries in the world.

“This is a country that refuses to recognise Israel as a nation, refuses to allow Israeli citizens to travel in their country, and has banned the teaching of the Holocaust in their schools,” the letter states.

“At a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise, we cannot stand by while (New York State capital) Albany cuts a deal with a company whose profits will go directly into the hands of an enemy of Israel. It is our hope that New York will continue its proud tradition as a staunch friend to the Jewish community by rejecting the legalisation of mixed martial arts and saying no to a company and country that is clearly no friend of Israel.”

A television ad with a similar theme will run in the near future.

Ultimate Fighting Championship officials fought back by saying Abu Dhabi is not only

Jew who is a co-sponsor of the mixed martial arts legalisation bill, said: “It offends me that there are those who will use any excuse to play politics with our economy. This is just another tactic by the opposition to cloud the real issue.”

The state Senate has passed an MMA legalisation bill the past five years, only to see it die in the Assembly.

Ironically in South Africa we have quite a few very successful exponents of MMA.

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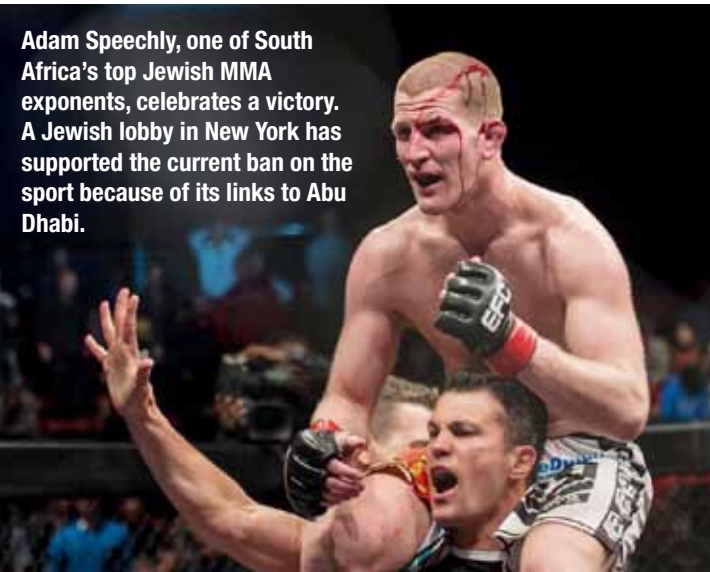
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Adam Speechly, one of South Africa's top Jewish MMA exponents, celebrates a victory. A Jewish lobby in New York has supported the current ban on the sport because of its links to Abu Dhabi.



The ride and fall of the Jewish boxer

JACK MILNER

While doing research for another article, I came across the name of Harry Isaacs, a Jewish boxer who fought in the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam. He won a bronze medal in the men’s bantam-weight division and to date, Isaacs remains the only Jewish South African to win an Olympic medal.

While trying to find out more on Isaacs other than his medal, all I discovered was that he died in 1961 at the age of 53. I came across a book written by Allen Bodner, an attorney from New York and son of Leo Bodner, a boxer and professional manager, about the rise and fall of Jewish boxing in America. Bodner conducted research and produced an illuminating book called: “When boxing was a Jewish sport”.

The book is about Jewish boxing and the contribution of Jews to American boxing. Bodner certainly is right when he complains that American Jewish historians have ignored the subject of Jewish sport in America. He had interviews with 31 famous Jewish boxers, managers and promoters. Some were

legends in the 1930s.

Among those interviewed were his father, Leo Bodner; Julie Bort; Danny Kapilow; Herbie Kronowitz; Artie Levine; Al Ried; Maxie Shapiro; Allie Stolz; Vic Zimet; Charlie Gelman; Bernie Friedkin and others.

Bodner highlighted a hitherto unknown fact that, in the 1920s and 1930s, Jews were the major source of boxing in America. Those were the days of the struggle of the American Jews in the urban ghettos against poverty and anti-Semitism.

Boxing was for many kids a way out, to ease their inferiority complex of being immigrants and members of an ethnic group before the process of the melting pot made them part of the broader community. Boxing operated without anti-Semitism; it was open to immigrants. By the 1950s, this phenomenon almost suddenly disappeared. In other ethnic groups, the process of decline was a gradual one: Irish, Italian, Puerto Rican... The disappearance of Jewish boxing was drastic , perhaps because the sons of those Jewish stars refused to follow their fathers’ tradition.

Also, the parents told their kids: “Move on, go to college, be a doctor or a lawyer.”



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