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# Jewish Report



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Friday, 2 May 2008 / 27 Nisan, 5768

Volume 12 Number 16

## Preparing for Durban II: Arabs ease up on Israel

*OBSERVERS say there's a reason for the relatively tame approach towards Israel during the preparatory meeting on Friday for the 2009 anti-racism conference. With Canada, the US and Israel boycotting the event, the Arab and Muslim world risks driving out more Western nations if they exploit the forum to gang up on Israel, as happened in 2001.* **PAGE 6**

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**THE EXODUS SHIP - SYMBOL OF NEW JEWISH STATE**

Loaded with thousands of European Jewish refugees, the Exodus sailed for Palestine in 1947 under the command of Yossi Harel (inset), who died last Saturday at the age of 90. The ship galvanised support for a Jewish state. (CREDIT: HANS PINN/GPO/BPH IMAGES) **PAGE 7**



**INSIDE BUMPER SUPPLEMENT:  
Israel at 60**

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David Ben Gurion

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## PARSHA OF THE WEEK

# Holy kitchen, holy sidewalk, holy workplace

THIS WEEK'S parsha of Kedoshim deals with a myriad topics, all of which bear relevance to the central topic of the parsha - kedoshim tihiyu - "you shall be holy and sanctified, dedicated to G-d's service".

The parsha deals with intimate matters, marriage, home and family. It deals with monetary matters, commerce and business. It deals with interpersonal behaviour and challenges, with getting along with others and not taking advantage of the "blindness", handicaps and mistakes of others.

It deals with purely ritual matters, with laws of sacrifices and tithes and offerings in the Temple. It is one of the most all-encompassing parshot of the entire Torah, leaving almost no area of human experience and Torah ritual observance untouched.

So, at first glance, it looks like a hodgepodge of different rules, all thrown together, formless and disorganised, unconnected and even unfocused. But that is far from being the truth of the matter.

For the Torah here emphasis-

## PARSHAT KEDOSHIM

Rabbi Berel Wein [www.torah.org](http://www.torah.org)

es the essential wholeness and unity of the Jewish concept of the service of G-d and of human dedication and holiness.

The home, the marketplace, the Temple, the dinner table and the kitchen are all the places of holiness. One who restricts "holiness" to specified places of holiness alone, does the Jewish concept of holiness a great disservice.

The synagogue and the house of Torah study are special places of holiness but they are not the only exclusive places.

Holiness exists wherever Jews apply the holy practices of the Torah in their everyday lives. It is never limited by space, time or circumstance.

This fundamental lesson that emphasises the omnipresence and universality of the Jewish concept of holiness, needs to be repeatedly emphasised in our

personal and national lives.

One of the great goals of both the Chasidic and Mussar movements, in the 18th and 19th centuries respectively, was to spread the idea of Torah holiness into every aspect of human life and behaviour.

In Judaism, it is unthinkable to be a pious person in the synagogue or study hall and a reprehensible person in commercial or interpersonal relationships. I believe that this tawdry situation is included in the famous statement of the Ramban in his commentary to the parsha of Kedoshim that one can be an "obscene person within the confines of Torah".

Anyone who limits Torah holiness to matters of ritual, to the places of the synagogue and the study hall exclusively, enters that obscene, treacherous realm.

The Torah does not grant us the luxury of compartmentalising our lives and our striving for holiness. If schizophrenia is a mental and emotional disease in psychiatric terms, then this is the spiritual version of that same type of disease.

## SHABBAT TIMES

May 2 / 27 Nissan

May 3 / 28 Nissan

### Erev Shabbat

Starts	Ends	
17:19	18:08	Johannesburg
17:45	18:37	Cape Town
17:02	17:52	Durban
17:22	18:12	Bloemfontein
17:10	18:09	Port Elizabeth
18:07	18:01	East London

The Haskala in the 19th century proclaimed that it could produce someone who would be a "Jew in his home and a cosmopolitan human being, a citizen of the world in the marketplace".

The events of the past century have proven that this schizophrenic dream is untenable. Only the whole, holy Jew, who practises holiness everywhere in life and in society, can aspire to fulfil the G-dly challenge of kedoshim tihiyu - "you shall be sanctified and dedicated unto G-d's service".  
Shabat shalom.

Copyright (c) 2005 by Rabbi Berel Wein and Torah.org

## Plett - fastest growing Jewish community

DAVID SAKS

PLETTENBERG BAY is home to one of the country's fastest growing Jewish communities, and in terms of numbers it already has a significantly larger Jewish presence than some of the major urban centres, such as Bloemfontein and East London.

Regular Friday night services, and occasional Shabbat morning, Yomtov and (when minyanim are convened for yahrtzeit purposes) weekday services are held. Aside from this, the community has been relatively inactive in recent years, but this is hopefully changing for the better.

Last month, a large proportion of the community turned out to participate in the consecration of the new Jewish cemetery, the first in the town's history.

Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, spiritual leader to the country communities, officiated at the consecration service. In his address, he praised the community for going to the lengths it did to secure the ground for the cemetery, something that had not been an easy undertaking.

It is over the holiday period that Judaism in Plettenberg Bay, in common with other Southern Cape centres like George, really comes to life. During these weeks, scores of holidaymakers from Johannesburg and Cape Town, many of whom have permanent holiday homes in the area, descend on the town. Much of the funding for Plettenberg Bay's shul, mikveh and hall has come from this source.

For Rabbi Silberhaft, the input of out-of-towners has, in some ways,



Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft and Barry Varkel, chairman of the Greater Plettenberg Bay Jewish Community, lead the consecration hakafot.

been a mixed blessing. While he welcomed the fact that for a few weeks at the end of each year, there was a dramatic upsurge in Yiddishkeit in Plettenberg Bay, the general lack of involvement of the local community in these activities meant that the continuity could not be maintained once the holidaymakers left.

"Visitors should not treat Plettenberg Bay only as a holiday venue, but rather should work together with the local residents as one community in pursuing Jewish activities.

"This will help infuse the local Jewish community with the kind of enthusiasm and commitment to making things happen that can be carried over into the new year," he said.

Rabbi Silberhaft pointed to

George as an excellent example of how out-of-towners and locals had long been working well together for their mutual benefit. For example, the former ran learning programmes between Mincha and Maariv and invited local residents to Shabbat meals.

Initiatives like the establishment of a Southern Cape Jewish Council encompassing Plettenberg Bay, George, Oudsthoorn, Knysna and other centres where there was a Jewish presence, was evidence of the growing strength of Jewish communal life in the region. He believed that the strong and vibrant Jewish communities elsewhere in the country had much to offer in helping those smaller communities to better establish themselves.

## AROUND THE WORLD

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### OLMERT REGRETS GAZA DEATHS

JERUSALEM - Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has rued the killing of a Palestinian woman and four of her children during an Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip.

"Israel feels deep remorse over this tragic event," the prime minister told his Cabinet in broadcast remarks on Tuesday.

The family members in the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun were killed by an explosion on Monday as Israeli forces battled Palestinian gunmen. According to the Israeli military, initial indications were that the blast was caused by munitions that went off accidentally as they were carried by a Palestinian fighter outside the house, but Gaza's Hamas rulers said the building was hit by an Israeli tank shell or Air Force missile.

"The exact nature of these circumstances is still unclear to us," Olmert said.

"Israel's armed forces will carry out an investigation and will publish its findings."

Like Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak, Olmert also made clear that Hamas is to blame for civilian casualties in Gaza because it operates inside populated areas. (JTA)

## UPCOMING FEATURES 2008....

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# Herzlia boasts an active TAC branch

MOIRA SCHNEIDER  
CAPE TOWN

ONCE AGAIN HIV testing has been offered at Herzlia High School through its Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) branch. Head of the TAC committee at the school, Maxine Rubin, said the reason for providing the service through voluntary testing and counselling organisation New Start, was that this remained "the most effective way of portraying the seriousness of the virus".

"Herzlians tend not to think of it as something that could affect them directly, rather it is considered to be irrelevant to their daily lives. By presenting the opportunity for them to get tested, pupils are considering the possibility, possibly for the first time, of having contracted the virus and the potential consequences of their activities," she said.

To ensure maximum privacy and to minimise the chance of encountering peers after the session, all testing was done after school hours and counselling was done in individual rooms, as opposed to last year, when tents were erected in the hall. "We also stressed the weight of the decision to get tested and had notices go out with



Maxine Rubin (head), Dalya Levin and Rebecca Segal (deputy heads) of TAC at Herzlia.

the pupil's reports on which parents were informed of the procedure and had to grant their child consent should they wish to be tested," Rubin said.

"We emphasised that should anybody notice that an individual was upset after a session, they shouldn't assume it was in connection with their results, as the counselling session could have brought up emotional baggage - the pupil may not even have undergone the testing."

Pupils - around 20 of whom signed up for the testing - were allowed to withdraw from the process at any point, or even get their results at a later date if they felt they could handle whatever these may be at such a stage.

## AROUND THE WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

### WRIGHT TIPS HAT TO JEWISH ACQUAINTANCE

WASHINGTON - The Rev. Jeremiah Wright Jr has delivered greetings to a top American Jewish Committee staffer.

Wright, the former pastor of presidential contender US Sen Barack Obama (Democrat Illinois), is on a media blitz countering charges of extremism by Obama's critics.

Speaking on Sunday in Detroit to the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, Wright suggested that he had a broad base of allies in Chicago, where he is based.

Listing his supporters, he said: "I would also like to thank sister Melanie Maron, the former executive director of the Chicago chapter of the American Jewish Committee and the current executive director of the Washington, DC, chapter of the American Jewish Committee.

"I would like to thank my good friend and Jewish author Tim Wise for his support."

Maron at the Chicago AJC chapter organised the city's leg of AJC tours of the United States for up-and-coming European civic and political leaders. The tours were aimed at explaining pluralism, and Maron co-ordinated visits to Wright's Trinity United

Church. AJC staffers said Wright always made sure visitors had a warm welcome.

Otherwise, AJC spokesmen said, there was no relationship between the AJC and Wright, whose past statements attributing terrorist attacks on America in part to US foreign policy have stirred controversy since Obama became a front-runner in the Democratic race.

Tim Wise is a prominent Louisiana expert on white racism. In remarks on Monday to the National Press Club, Wright denied likening Israel's policies to apartheid.

"My position on Israel is that Israel has a right to exist; that Israelis have a right to exist, as I said, reconciled one to another," he said. "Palestinians and Israelis need to sit down and talk to each other and work out a solution where their children can grow in a world together and not be talking about killing each other; that that is not G-d's will.

"So my position is that Israel and the people of Israel be the people of G-d who are worrying about reconciliation and who are trying to do what G-d wants for G-d's people, which is reconciliation." (JTA)

### MOFAZ: ALLIES WON'T OPPOSE RETALIATORY STRIKE

JERUSALEM - Israel's allies would not oppose a retaliatory strike against Iran, said the country's top strategic negotiator with the United States.

"If Israel is attacked by missiles, we will not fold our arms and our allies will not be opposed," Shaul Mofaz said on Monday.

Mofaz, Israel's transportation minister, is in Washington this week to lead the latest round in the strategic dialogue with the United States.

He emphasised that the current strategy to contain Iran's suspected nuclear weapons programme is diplomatic pressure and said

enhancing sanctions were a focus of his talks on Tuesday with the US team led by Eliot Cohen, the State Department counsellor.

US sanctions targeting Iranian banks had been effective, Mofaz said, although they had not killed the nuclear programme. Mofaz also said he opposed returning the Golan Heights to Syria, striking a contradictory note to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's hints that he would contemplate such a concession for peace.

Returning the strategic plateau, Mofaz said, would bring Syria's Iranian allies to the Golan. (JTA)

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## SOCIAL SCENE

Rita Lewis jont@global.co.za



Laureen Shalpid with her mother Sonia Margolias organisers of the event.

# A unique Yad Aharon fundraiser to remember

RITA LEWIS

NOT MANY organisations will undertake to hold an event that is both for adults and youngsters - because, like oil and water, the two do not normally mix. However, the main organisers of Yad Aharon's fundraising breakfast felt differently.

They believe that youngsters should learn, from an early age, the importance of tzedaka - giving charity- and decided to give them an opportunity to do just that; to do something that they enjoyed while at the same time knowing that the money raised would go to help others.

Some R130 000 was raised from the event, proving them right, with one of the main organisers, Laureen Shalpid, saying: "It was the way to go."

Accordingly, therefore, while the women were getting fashion advice and visuals from Nicci Boutique's Nikki Breger and Shirley Lab, and tips on "What to do with your life" by motivational speaker Dr Linda Friedland, some 300 youngsters were having fun creating their own bears in the HOD's second hall in Oaklands.

Under the guidance of Joan Lurie and Batya Aronowitz, 22 madrichot from Beis Yaacov, Yeshiva College and Hirsh Lyons schools assisted the children in "bringing to life" their own individual bears naming them, choosing clothes, dressing them and being photographed with the finished bear.

They will remember their fundraising efforts which helped feed many Yad Aharon food recipients, as every R50 bought three boxes of matzah, said Shalpid

who thanked everyone involved, especially her mother, Sonia Margolias, Ronit Beleli and Kate Gershuni.

Meanwhile, back in the main hall, Breger and Lab were showing the gathering how the right accessories could change the look of an entire outfit.

Various models demonstrated how the latest junk jewellery, together with a matching belt or bag could dress up the plainest of dresses

Alice Friedman who has been with Yad Aharon for some 13 years, spoke of the work of the organisation and how much it, and the need for it, had grown.

A video reiterated Friedman's words and showed the vital work done by Yad Aharon "which makes a difference in the lives of so many".

The organisation "distributes tens of food parcels to hundreds of people" - not only for Pesach, but throughout the year. These are distributed anonymously because the stigma of needing and receiving is often too much to bear.

Guest speaker, Linda Friedland, paid tribute to women who work in communities and those who had helped at this event. She quoted Winston Churchill who said: "We make a living by what we get, but make a life by what we give."

She told the audience that women throughout the world experienced the same issues. Discussing the children's Bear Project, she said the bear was cuddly, a symbol of comfort and caring.

Yad Aharon could be compared to a "bear" - filling what is "bare": empty cupboards, empty stomachs and empty hearts.



Lily Chemel, Caron Melamed, Arlene Sher and behind, Rebbetzen Rochel Goldman.



Susan Mossesson and Debbie Gottlieb.



Guest speaker Dr Linda Friedland.



Yad Aharon's Alice Friedman addressing the gathering.



Limor Raz with Yeshiva College's PR, Cheryl Harton-Hortinsky.



Guest fashionistas Nikki Breger and her mother, Shirley Lab.



Back row: Celeste Tucker, Caroline Meyerson, with daughter Rebecca and Amanda Teeger. Front: Beryl Kark with some members of the Goldstein family, Robyn, Lauren, Gina and her daughter Shaina.



A group of children busy with their bear-making activities.

# COMMUNITY BUZZ

LIONEL SLIER

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lionel.slier@absamail.co.za

## JOHANNESBURG:

From Morris M Freeman

"About Machal 1948. I had been in Zionist circles many years and naturally progressed to the call-up for volunteers for Israel. Boys and girls collected at Bacher's Farm in Johannesburg and had to submit their abilities for use in Israel. Being an instrument fitter I was soon called up.

"We went to Rome by air and by boat to Israel and at first it was quite a shock. Poor administration, food, accommodation, etc. We did settle down and adjusted. Some saw action but some like me, did not. "I was based with the air force.

"For Rosh Hashanah 1948, a call went out for South Africans to meet for a gathering. I do remember Migdal Teperson being quite the driving force for a great party that night.

"By September the war seemed to have petered out and the SA Zionist Federation started sending us home. Some stayed on for many years and I think that they are still there."

Freeman has enclosed the following article from *The Jerusalem Post* of June 2005, written by a fellow passenger, Ralph Lanesman, from which the following is extracted:

"The voyage of the 'SS Fabio' to Haifa from Naples early in September 1948, was not unique for it was one of the numerous voyages that helped to empty the (displaced persons) camps, including 31 South Africans who were coming to join Machal and were learning, albeit second hand, of the conditions under which Europe's Jews had been living for 15 years.

"The ship was a small cargo vessel built in the 1880s and powered by a junk two six cylinder engine. It weighed 400 tons and measured 100 by 20 feet. The ship had been used many times during the days of illegal immigration.

"Feeding arrangements were severely restricted with cooking facilities consisting of an oil drum with a fireplace at the bottom, suitable only for boiling water.

"The staple diet was sardines. After the second day I felt so nauseated that for the rest of the voyage I existed on a plate of macaroni, half a chocolate bar or a quarter pint of fruit juice.

"Sanitary arrangements were extremely primitive. There were quite a few babies on board who had better food and thanks to two South African girls who volunteered to help the medical officer, they were as well cared for as possible.

"The passengers came from 20 countries and had their own stories. There were two young groups on board, one from Hungary and the other from Tripoli of whom 87 had crossed the Mediterranean in a small unseaworthy fishing boat.

"They had no food, sleep or space to lie down. For many this was the second attempt as on the first occasion they had been caught and imprisoned for several months. The Hungarians were mostly young orphans with a number of teachers on their way to a kibbutz.

"The skipper was a 23-year-old Canadian, Willie, who had made quite a few trips. His deputy was a Sabra of splendid physique, a typical example of the new Jewish youth devoted to the cause of Israel. The rest of the crew consisted of Italian seamen.

"Despite everything, (hardships, seasickness, bad weather) the morale was good. At night we would clamber up the fo'castle and sing in Hebrew, English, Yiddish and Afrikaans.

"On the ninth day we were up earlier than usual as we were to drop anchor in Haifa. When we entered Israeli waters the Israeli flag was hoisted by one of our members, Lou Hack. He was killed in action six weeks later while serving with the 7th Brigade of the Israeli Defence Forces.

"It took me a long time to get over the stench of the ship and the feeling of oppression of the mass of people lying

over, around and under me when I slept, but I remember what our captain told us on the first day.

"In the days of Aliyah Bet, the ship (which had since been renamed 'SS Hamored' (The Rebel) carried nearly one thousand passengers and had taken four times as long to reach Palestine.

"How that was humanly possible I do not know, but such were the conditions that the Jews of Europe had to endure to reach Eretz. For my part I have carried with me a glimpse of these conditions for the last 52 years."

\* Aliyah Bet (ha'palah) was the name given to the clandestine immigration of Jews into Palestine after the British in violation of the terms of the League of Nations mandate conditions, stopped immigration of Jews into Palestine.

They had given in to Arab pressure. The Haganah and the kibbutz movement ignored the British ban and arranged clandestine immigration from Europe. The British called them "illegal immigrants". The first ship to arrive under "ha'palah" was the "SS Velos" in 1934 and continued, on and off, until the establishment of the State.

## MOSHAV ILANYA, LOWER GALILEE:

A letter from Joe Woolf September 2007:

"Lou Hack was killed near Kibbutz Elion, some 70 kilometres from the South African Memorial Gardens. I know; I was a member of the same platoon as Lou and only a few yards away on that fateful return march from the deep penetration raid of that night.

"There is a plaque to Lou at the Memorial Garden. He is one of 85 South Africans who at the time of the establishment of the Memorial had given their lives for Israel."

Joe Woolf also sent a review of the book, *South Africa's 800. The Story of South Africa's Machalniks*, by Henry Katzew. Sam Levin's review appeared in *Telved Magazine*, January 1999.

Here are some extracts from that review: "Proportionally none can equal the share of the South African Jewish community. Eight hundred arrived, including about 150 chalutzim on frontline kibbutzim. Katzew completed this task after six years of painstaking research.

"An entire community cannot fail to be impressed and thrilled by this historic drama. It is a remarkable effort made by members of a remarkable community.

"Within its pages an unforgettable story unfolds. South Africa's most substantial pioneering role lay in the setting up of the Air Force and the Medical Corps.

"Lionel Meltzer headed a contingent of surgeons, medical specialists, psychiatrists and nurses and became second in command to the illustrious Dr Chaim Sheba. Professor Jack Penn worked round the clock while operating on the maimed.

"The book is replete with ample photographic coverage and a list of those who served on the front line (1948-'49) and a parallel list of Nahal volunteers who served 1956-1972.

"It features a roll of honour giving particulars of those killed in action or who died in action or on service from 1936-2002 and also lists 18 others who were wounded in action together with two who were taken prisoner-of-war.

"This is a book that should be on everyone's bookshelf."

\* The book can be viewed at Beychad Library but is not for loan.



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### THERAPEUTIC, LEGAL AND SPIRITUAL

Tessa Hochfeld (Social Worker and Researcher, Centre for Social Development in Africa - University of Johannesburg): *Can I Respond Differently? Therapeutic Approaches to Working with Domestic Violence.* Professor Philippa Kruger (Attorney, Wits Law Clinic): *Family Abuse and the Law.* Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein: *Family Abuse - Spiritual Pathways to Healing*

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Mike Judin (Attorney): *'Abuse Proofing' the Professional*

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## OPINION AND ANALYSIS

FORUM FOR DIVERSE VIEWS

## Jewish Report

## Dangerous neighbourhoods

FOURTEEN years into our South African democracy, the wheels are wobbling a bit and the euphoria of the Mandela era has faded. While a huge amount has been achieved - which we too easily forget - the gloomy atmosphere, fuelled by the Eskom crisis, corruption, crime, fuel prices going through the roof, skyrocketing food prices, etc, is palpable today.

Looking back to those earlier years, one thing that we did which will always be to our great credit and made us feel enormously proud, was to dismantle our nuclear weapons capacity - a relic of the fearful apartheid regime.

In hindsight, that action seems today to have been an obvious thing to do: What would a peace-loving country like South Africa, an "example of hope" to other countries embroiled in seemingly intractable conflict, need with a nuclear capacity?

How different is the Middle East. The public disclosure last week by US officials that according to their assessment, Syria was building a covert nuclear reactor with North Korean assistance, is a sad illustration of the difference between our region and that part of the world.

Israeli aircraft last September attacked and destroyed the Syrian facility in a raid that continues to be shrouded in secrecy on the Israeli and American sides, as well as the Syrian side.

According to CIA Director Michael Hayden, the Syrian nuclear reactor would have produced enough plutonium for one or two bombs within a year of becoming operational.

Israel is believed to possess an arsenal of nuclear weaponry, although its existence is purposely kept unconfirmed and ambiguous by the Israelis as a form of deterrence against its enemies.

It is intriguing to speculate whether a time might arrive in the future when Israel will feel safe enough to publicly declare the dismantling of all nuclear weaponry, along with similar declarations by its neighbours.

That does not seem to be anywhere on the horizon. Instead, the region seems to be getting more and more dangerous, with Iran believed to be doing all it can to acquire such weapons, and now Syria caught red-handed doing the same.

The reason South Africa could so glamorously do what it did was that it has no external enemies against whom it needs deterrence. Even its purchase of submarines and fighter aircraft in the notorious "arms deal" - increasingly revealed as a scheme designed to feather the pockets of top officials, rather than anything else - seems ridiculous.

Against whom would the fighter aircraft and submarines be called into action? Botswana? Zimbabwe?

Sadly, the Middle East is a fundamentally different place.

## Stopping all the 'senseless killing'

THE KILLING this week of a Palestinian family - a mother and her four young children sitting down to breakfast in their house - during fighting between Palestinians and Israel in the Gaza Strip is another of those incidents which burn themselves into the psyche of anyone who sees the images on television.

It has been said countless times - and it is true - that this kind of tragedy has occurred repeatedly on the Israeli side as an intentional terrorist policy; that when it happens due to Israeli action, it is never intentional and is deeply regretted; that the only way for this to end is for Hamas to stop firing at Israel and make peace; and so on.

Israel is examining the possibility that the explosion that destroyed the house derived not from an IDF shell, but from explosives carried by terrorists operating near the house. An inquiry has been set up.

In the same way that we beat our chests in despair when Israeli civilians are killed in buses, restaurants and other places, we should also do it now and cry out: "How can we stop this senseless killing?"

## Arabs ease up on Israel at Durban II prep

MICHAEL J JORDAN  
GENEVA

ON A morning that began with charges that an Israeli shelling in Gaza had killed four Palestinian children and their mother - typically the kind of event that unleashes a torrent of anti-Israel condemnation at the United Nations - Arab and Muslim diplomats in this Swiss city remained focused on keeping the 2009 UN World Conference Against Racism on track.

The Palestinian delegate, speaking on Monday on behalf of Arab member-states during a two-week "preparation conference", skipped the opportunity to spotlight the plight of his people, instead urging the anti-racism forum to rid humanity of "this scourge in many parts of the world".

Even Iran, which often singles out Israel for vitriol and created the biggest stir by blocking a Canadian pro-Israel advocacy group from attending the conference, seemed rather subdued.

"Certainly we are addressing all the issues of racism happening around the world," a Middle Eastern diplomat told JTA in the hallway. Singling out one "depends on the seriousness and magnitude of the violations".

With Canada, the United States and Israel boycotting the event, they say, the Arab and Muslim world runs the risk of driving out more Western nations if they exploit the forum only to gang up on Israel. That's what happened at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism 2001 in Durban.

Any collapse would mark another humiliation for what some consider the world's foremost anti-racism gathering. Also it would entrench further the notion of UN impotence when confronted with issues of the day.

"There have been quite loud signals from some European capitals that they would reconsider staying engaged in this process," one Western diplomat told JTA, adding that the 57-member Organisation for Islamic Conference "needs us for credibility, or else it'd be just a bunch of guys from the less-developed world talking about something".

That doesn't mean there haven't been plenty of coded references to Israel throughout these sessions, including "colonialism" and

"occupation". Also, the Syrian ambassador referred to those with a "cultural superiority complex" who deny the "right of millions to self-determination".

But that's more or less par for the course at UN forums. Nothing is as overt as at the notorious UN Human Rights Council, or the statement last week by the Libyan ambassador to the UN Security Council in New York likening Israeli actions in Gaza to Nazi-run "concentration camps".

The collegial setting in picturesque Geneva has not dissolved into the wild scene that was Durban, when several thousand nongovernmental activists at the parallel NGO Forum pushed through one of the harshest UN documents ever produced.

That document accused the Jewish state of genocide, apartheid and ethnic cleansing, among other war crimes, and called for boycotts, sanctions and embargoes.

The atmosphere was so toxic in 2001, punctuated by openly anti-Semitic instances, that then-UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson declined to recommend the document to the government representatives, whose own document is often overlooked for being much milder.

This helps explain why Slovenia, speaking in Geneva last week for the European Union, noted the "unacceptable anti-Semitism" at Durban, and prodded delegates to avoid "excessive polarisation" and "singling out (a) specific geographic situation".

It's also why some Jewish activists expressed relief when it became apparent last week that next year's conference would not be held in Durban again, as South African officials seemed to want, but probably on UN turf in Geneva, where several UN agencies are based, or at UN headquarters in New York. No final decision has been made, but one is expected soon.

Nevertheless, this event's most strident critic here - among the half-dozen Jewish monitors and watchdogs who attended - says renewed efforts by the Organisation for Islamic Conference to

redefine anti-Semitism to include "Islamophobia" of fellow Semite Arabs is a slap at Jews and doesn't bode well for next year.

"There's clearly an attempt to give an impression that Durban II will not repeat the mistakes of Durban I, but it's failing," said Anne Bayefsky, a Canadian law professor and director of the Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust at Touro College who has chided the delegates publicly several times.

An Algerian diplomat has led the effort to expand the definition of anti-Semitism. Idriss Jazairy, in describing the desecration of a Muslim cemetery in northern France where headstones were reportedly daubed with swastikas, asked the gathering: "How is this anti-Semitism different from the other?"

No UN diplomat has explicitly condemned the comparison, which activists say diminishes the uniquely Jewish significance of the term.

One Arab-African diplomat, though, conceded to JTA outside the forum that a fine line exists in pushing the link with anti-Semitism too hard: It may dilute what has become a genuine European phenomenon - rising enmity toward local Muslims.

"We wouldn't be helping ourselves because Islamophobia itself needs recognition and visibility," the diplomat said.

Whether that means hatred of individuals or of Islam itself has also become a hot topic. The Islamic conference often notes "contemporary forms of racism", seen as code for post-9/11 anti-Islam expressions such as the anti-Muhammad cartoons in Denmark and a recent Dutch film.

Solutions might include retrograde wording against blasphemy and restrictions on free speech.

We must "avoid giving disproportionate attention to only some topics" to the "detriment of other important issues in this document", diplomat, Dominik Frelih, told JTA.

"We also must not be diverted from focusing on problems faced in today's world by victims of racism." (JTA)

## Are some 'more Jewish' than others?

THE WESTERN Province Zionist Council held their biannual conference shortly before Pesach. One of the sessions was devoted to a discussion between Prof Gideon Shimoni from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Prof Milton Shain from the University of Cape Town and myself.

During question time, a delegate arose to bemoan the fact that there "was no Jew on the panel". Understandably a loud protestation emerged from the audience and the delegate quickly corrected himself to say in effect that he meant Torah Jew.

After a fairly unpleasant exchange I accepted his explanation of clumsy use of speech in the context of being nervous in public. Obviously, being linguistically challenged can create problems of this kind and I understood eventually then and accept now that there was no mala fides in his comment. Freud, however, may have seen this differently.

So, accepting that the speaker never consciously intended to suggest that two hugely distinguished Jewish academics who have devoted their lives to the broad area of Jewish history, politics and sociology and the only sitting Jewish judge in the Western Cape were not Jewish, the question remains: is there a view propagated consciously or subconsciously about a hierarchy of Jews in the South African community.

Significantly, a rabbi rose to his feet after this unfortunate remark, not to assert as I expected the unity of Jews in this town and country, not to affirm the central principle of "each Jew is responsible one for another" as rabbis of yore in Cape Town would have done (I think for example, of Rabbis Dushinsky Z"L, Rosen and Steinhorn) but to administer a short and very elementary lecture about the centrality of Israel to Jewish life, a point already made consistently by all three speakers, and without a



THE JURY IS OUT  
Dennis Davis

trace of an articulation of the essence of Jewish difference in unity.

This is not the first time that this problem has been raised in this newspaper. Not that long ago Mendel Kaplan wrote about the need to curb feelings of Jewish rank or at the very least the feeling induced that some of us are not that Jewish.

I cannot help but wonder what the delegate, whose comment prompted this column and who is a "chozer b'teshuvah" is taught in shiurim that he attends. Is there a subliminal message being conveyed that anyone who does not follow the advocated line belongs in the second league of Judaism?

A friend of mine suggested that it is not subliminal, that the claim that other Jews are not really Jewish, is to be found in conduct that has consistently been followed over the past few years.

When one refuses to participate even by being present when a Reform rabbi forms part of a Jewish event, when a multitude of Jewish expression is characterised as being of another religion but not Jewish, then it is not difficult to see how some may see Gidi, Milton and myself as "non-Jews".

I suppose the only advantage to being classified as of a different religion is then like the Rev Frank Chikane or Premier

Ebrahim Rasool, we may be invited to a dialogue!

We should be clear: allow this myopia to continue and it will ultimately lead to the implosion of the Jewish community in this country. Subliminally some do say: good riddance to bad rubbish, but if 80 per cent of the community are "bad rubbish" because, whether they like it, admit it or not, they do not comply with the Torah Jew test as administered by certain strains of Judaism, what then?

Ironically the following week, the parsha was Metzora. As is our family custom we sat down at the Shabbat table to discuss aspects of the parsha. In the commentary by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (whose web site Covenant and Conversation is a Jewish life saver) the following appeared concerning the question of leprosy and its linkage to evil speech: "What after all is evil speech? Mere words."

"Yet words have consequences. Diminishing their opponents, the self-proclaimed defenders of the faith diminished themselves and their faith. They managed to convey the impression that Judaism is simple-minded, narrow, incapable of handling complexity, helpless in the face of challenge, a religion of anathemas instead of arguments, excommunication instead of debate."

As I have said often in this column, I welcome and salute all those who have created a revival of Orthodoxy in this country. But Judaism has a wonderful, textured and contested tradition that needs to be preserved. Sadly, my children, after listening to Rabbi Sacks and knowing about the Zionist conference, commented: Who believes this approach anymore other than you and Rabbi Sacks?

## OPINION AND ANALYSIS

FORUM FOR DIVERSE VIEWS

# Exodus Commander Yossi Harel, dies age 90

DINA KRAFT  
TEL AVIV

ON MONDAY, a white-haired former shipmate propped a gold-fringed, pale blue flag of the legendary Exodus ship next to the coffin of its commander, Yossi Harel.

A short distance away sparkled the azure Mediterranean Sea, whose waters Harel sailed four times on clandestine journeys between 1945 and 1948. Those journeys brought a total of 24 000 Holocaust survivors to the shores of what would soon become the State of Israel.

Harel, who died on April 26 of cardiac arrest at the age of 90, was remembered as a hero by his former comrades, the Jewish refugees he helped bring to Israel and the leaders of the country.

He was "modest, a brave fighter and a hero who did not seek acts of heroism", said Shaul Biber, a fellow former Palmach fighter.

When he secretly set sail from France on the Exodus, a rickety former Chesapeake Bay steamer originally called the President Warwick, Harel could not have known that the voyage would

become legendary.

The boat left on July 11, 1947 with 4 553 Jewish refugees on board and headed toward Palestine until it was intercepted by British navy vessels. The British commanders ordered that the refugees not be allowed into Palestine, then under British control, and be sent back to Europe.

But the defiant Harel and his skipper planned a daring escape from under the nose of the British destroyer that was escorting them. They shut off the ship's lights in the dead of night and swiftly changed course, heading for Palestine.

The British intercepted the Exodus, hitting the ship's bow and attempting to board the boat. Passengers tried to repel the British forces by hurling potatoes and canned goods at them. A British soldier and three Jews were killed in the clashes, including an American volunteer sailor from San Francisco, before Harel ordered his passengers to surrender.

The refugees were taken to Haifa and put on ships headed back to Europe.

Among those who witnessed

the dramatic scene of the refugees disembarking from the Exodus in Haifa only to be loaded onto three other ships headed back for the continent, were members of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine.

The officials said later that seeing the unfortunate journey of those refugees up close, spurred them to push for a resolution of the question of Palestine and the Jews who wanted to make it their home.

For its role in galvanising world opinion in favour of a Jewish state, the Exodus became known as the ship that helped launch the Jewish state.

The dimensions of its story, including the return of the refugees to Europe and their eventual landing in Germany, was covered widely by the international media. The story was mythologised in the 1958 novel *Exodus*, by Leon Uris, as well as a hit film starring Paul Newman in a loose portrayal of Harel.

For Jews and non-Jews, the book and film painted a romantic, heroic picture of the Zionist cause, doing wonders for the young state's image.



Years later, in the Soviet Union, illegal copies of the book were circulated among young Jews, turning them into avid Zionists. Among them were the leaders of the movement to free Soviet Jews and allow their immigration to Israel.

Harel, who was 28 when he was the Exodus commander, went on to a career in the Israeli army's intelligence corps in the early years of the state. He later went into business and reportedly also worked for the Mossad.

During a visit to Los Angeles in 1948 he met an American woman who would become his wife.

"I saw a man in uniform facing me, impressive and handsome, and I fell in love with him immediately," Julie Harel was quoted this week by the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*. "We were married and since then we were never apart. It's hard for me to imagine life without him."

"His life," she said, "was interwoven with the history of the State of Israel." (JTA)

## AROUND THE WORLD

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### PA TO SHUN ISRAEL'S CELEBRANTS

RAMALLAH - The Palestinian Authority has threatened to boycott President George W Bush and foreign dignitaries who attend Israel's Independence Day celebrations.

Unnamed aides to Mahmoud Abbas told Reuters on Monday that the PA president would consider as "temporarily" persona non grata the dozens of top foreign dignitaries who were expected to visit Israel for its 60th birthday bash next month.

Palestinians describe the 1948 founding of Israel to be their nakba, or "catastrophe", though a UN partition plan - violently rejected by the Arabs at the time - called for a Palestinian state to be created alongside the Jewish state.

Bush is widely expected to use his mid-May visit to push for progress in peace talks between Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. It was not immediately clear how the United States would respond to the prospect of its president being boycotted by Abbas' administration in the West Bank. (JTA)

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**Baxter Concert Hall, Cape Town:** On May 6, Miagi presents Ralf Gothóni (piano), Arto Noras (cello) and Etina Vähälä (violin), playing works by Beethoven, Dvorák and Mozart. (012) 320-5154.

**Cape Town City Hall:** On May 3, the Miagi Festival launches, with a concert conducted by Cem Mansur, featuring Able Selaocoe (cello) and Jannie van Tonder (big band leader). The Miagi Gala on May 8 features Gothóni, Noras and Vähälä. (012) 320-5154.

**Civic Theatre, Braamfontein:** In the Nelson Mandela, "Opera-Mania", until May 4. In the Tesson, "Hoot", until May 18. (011) 877-6800.

**Foxwood Theatre, Houghton:** Elize Cawood and Wilson Dunster in "Dinner for One", May 4 and 11. (011) 486-0935.

**Goodman Gallery, Rosebank:** "Joburg", by David Goldblatt, until May 24. (011) 788-1113.

**Johannesburg Art Gallery, Joubert Park:** Spier Contemporary, until May 31. (011) 725-3130.

**Linder Auditorium, Parktown:** The first week of JPO's second season features Min-Jin Kym (violin) playing Dvorák and Mendelssohn. Conductor: Emmanuel Siffert. May 7, 8. (011) 789-2733. On May 10, Bryan Crumpler (clarinet) and Francois du Toit (piano) perform for the JMS. (011) 728-5492.

**Market, Newtown:** In the Barney Simon, Lara Foot-Newton's "Karoo Moose", until May 18. In the Main Theatre, Wole Soyinka's "The Lion and the Jewel", directed by James Ngcobo, May 8 - June 22 (011) 832-1641.

**Montecasino, Fourways:** In the Studio, "Defending the Caveman" with Alan Committie, until June 1. In the Pieter Toerien, "Chess", until May 25. "Chicago" at Teatro, until May 11. (011) 511-1988.

**National School of the Arts, Braamfontein:** "Festival of Fame", May 5-10. (011) 339-3941.

**Old Mutual Theatre on the Square, Sandton:** Christine Pedi's "Great Dames", until May 10. (011) 883-8606.

**Ritrovo, Pretoria:** Black Tie Ensemble's monthly concert, May 7. (012) 460-5173.

**SA Jewish Museum, Cape Town:** "When Cape Art was Coffee with Joe", an exhibition about Joe Wolpe. Until July 31. (021) 465-1546.

**Victory Theatre, Houghton:** "Rocky Horror", extended by popular demand until July 31. (011) 728-9603.

## Sara Gon is Tararam's new director

ROBYN SASSEN

SARA GON, lawyer and founder of the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra, is the new director of Tararam, the cultural arm of the Israeli embassy. She approaches it with a whirlwind of enthusiasm. Her steering of the JPO was shunted for ideological reasons; last year, she formed Sara Gon Agency cc, focusing on classical music in South Africa.

Gon is an exciting choice. Not a practitioner; armed with her love for music, she brings her human and administrative skills to the arts. "I believe Tararam has the potential to change opinion of Israel, not only held by Jews, but by the rest of the community."

Her first project is the Israeli Film Festival, at the end of May. "In selecting films, I came away with the impression that contemporary Israeli families are dysfunctional, but charming."

"I feel I have chosen provocative, beautiful films which deal with relevant issues. Tararam subsidises the festival, making attendance free, which is why the films are two or more years old."

Gon brings the jazz quintet The Human

Factory directed by saxophonist Avikam Kimelman, to the Grahamstown Art Festival in late June. In August, for the Joy of Jazz Festival, Gon has confirmed attendance of the Israeli Jazz Orchestra, directed by trombonist Avi Lebovich.

Gon's recent Tararam-sponsored cultural tour of Israel set her alight with possibilities: "The Cameri Theatre has created a version of Shakespeare's Hamlet which involves the audience on swivelling chairs. It's a novel idea and works beautifully. Funky dance is very big in Israel. I think South African youth would really respond to it."

Gon is proactive about the possibilities of opening South African audience awareness to Israeli trends, but also in give and take in artistic training.

"Young South Africans must understand they do not have to look to England or the US for artistic specialisation. Israeli culture has a reputation for folksy stuff, and yes, there is folksy stuff there, and South African perform-



Sara Gon.

ance culture is more verbal, but there is visuality and bold experimentation in Israeli work, which distinguishes it.

"Israelis have entertainment strategies in place that really work. They've been writing plays for a long time. Seventy per cent of plays on Israeli stages are home-grown."

"Statistics reveal four million theatre tickets are sold in Israel per year. Comparing the populations of Israel and South Africa embarrasses our respective box office scenarios. It's become

commonplace to bemoan a lack of income in the arts in South Africa and pin it on attitude and a lack of growth or support in this country.

"Israeli theatre was passed on from Yiddish theatre, and the youth of the country has spurred on cultural development alongside the growth of political identity. Israel has turned the arts into something phenomenal with the same financial restrictions as we face in South Africa."

## Miagi Festival: Music is indeed 'a great investment'

PAUL BOEKKOOI

BEING A prominent fixture on the South African music scene since 2001, the International Classical Music Festival of South Africa (ICMF) grew into a new phase of its development some two years ago.

It is now known as the Total Miagi Festival, with the word "Miagi" being an acronym for "Music is a great investment".

This phrase was coined by the internationally known Russian violinist and Unicef goodwill ambassador, Maxim Vengerov.

Vengerov (33) will visit South Africa for a second time to conduct two concerts with the Miagi Youth Chamber Orchestra. Conducting will now be the main focus of his career.

The 2008 Miagi Festival is presented in Cape Town as well as Johannesburg, with the main focus on the mother city. The focus is totally on quality rather than quantity.

The embassy of Finland, apart from the name sponsor, Total, is one of the most important sponsors, since they are Miagi's primary education partner.

Miagi's motto hasn't changed since their ICMF days. They still strive in "uniting the power of classical, indigenous and jazz". All three mainstream musical styles will be well-represented.

Tomorrow night, May 3 at 20:00, the 2008 festival opening concert will be presented in the Cape Town City Hall, featuring the Miagi Youth Orchestra and Big Band, with conductor Cem Mansur, big band leader Jannie "Hanepoot" van Tonder and Abel Selaocoe, the young up-and-coming 'cellist. Entrance is free.

On May 6 three renowned soloists, pianist

Ralf Gothóni, also principal conductor of the English Chamber Orchestra, violinist Elina Vähälä and 'cellist Arto Noras will play trios and duos by Beethoven and Dvorák in the Baxter Concert Hall on the UCT campus.

The traditional Miagi Gala Concert happens on May 8 at 20:00 in the Cape Town City Hall. The same three soloists mentioned above will join the Thikundwi Kha Sialala Venda ngoma drummers and dancers and the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of conductor/composer Hans Huysen. This gala concert is a stimulating and eclectic combination of what Miagi wants to achieve.

Vengerov, Miagi's high profile patron, will be working with and conducting the Miagi Youth Chamber Orchestra during two special events: on May 14 at 20:00 in the Cape Town City Hall and on May 18 at 15:00 in the Linder Auditorium, Johannesburg.

Vengerov will be sharing his thoughts with the audience. The event could be billed as a "master class for orchestra with Maxim Vengerov".

On May 17 the premiere of Isak Roux's distinctly South African jazz gospel cantata Coming Home, featuring local soloists Sibongile Khumalo, Robert Brooks, Sibongile Mngoma and Thinus Maree, the Gauteng Choristers, the Chamber Orchestra of Johannesburg and an all star jazz rhythm section conducted by Kutlwane Masote, will take place at 20:00 in the Johannesburg City Hall.

The final concert of Miagi 2008 will be a concert by the UCT Symphony Orchestra conducted by Cem Mansur on May 20 at 20:15 in the Baxter Concert Hall. All bookings at Computicket.



Maxim Vengerov. (PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY MIAGI)

FELDMAN ON  
FILM

Peter Feldman

## Iron Man

**Cast:** Robert Downey Jr, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jeff Bridges, Terrence Howard  
**Director:** Jon Favreau

Robert Downey Jr, who has resurrected his career, becomes the stylish and witty Iron Man, in this entertaining comic adventure based on a Marvel Comics super hero.

The Jon Favreau production has slick special effects and a sly script that touches on America's problems in Afghanistan and the ethics involved in the arms business. It is one of the few super hero yarns that pushes the political button.

Downey Jr plays Tony Stark, a billionaire industrialist and genius inventor who is captured by insurgents in Afghanistan while

demonstrating his company's latest weaponry.

Injured by life-threatening shrapnel embedded near his weakened heart, Tony is ordered to build a devastating weapon, but ignores the plea. Using his superior intelligence and ingenuity, he builds instead a suit of armour, escapes, and becomes the fighting-fit Iron Man, out for justice.

Gwyneth Paltrow surfaces as Stark's private PA and a shaven-headed Jeff Bridges is the baddie within the company who needs to be taught a lesson.

## My Blueberry Nights

**Cast:** Norah Jones, Jude Law, Natalie Portman, David Strathairn, Rachel Weisz  
**Director:** Wong Kar Wai

"My Blueberry Nights" splutters its way across the screen as we undertake an emotional journey with a disenchanted young New Yorker, Elizabeth (singer Norah Jones) doing a bit of intense soul searching after a broken love affair.

Along the way she spends time in a couple of cities to absorb the atmosphere and meet some of the inhabitants, none of whom are very appealing

and all loaded down with baggage.

Hong Kong writer and director Wong Kar Wai, in his first English-language film, loads his production with moody music, and dreamy, slow-motion shots as he colours in his characters.

It's a dreary business meeting these people; Jeremy (an improbable Jude Law) in New York, who runs a diner and tries to comfort Elizabeth with helpings of blueberry pie and wise words; the alcoholic Memphis cop (David Strathairn) drowning his grief in booze over the failure of his marriage to femme fatale, Sue Lynne (Rachel Weisz) and Leslie (Natalie Portman with blonde curls), a compulsive gambler who ropes Elizabeth in on a Las Vegas high stakes game.

David Strathairn is touching as the hopeless drunk, but Weisz's role is thankless, and both are stuck in a cliché. Elizabeth recedes into the background as the troubles of others eclipse her own.

Nora Jones is too bland to carry the movie as it meanders into regions of heartache and pain, an arc that becomes even more insufferable the longer the journey proceeds.



## TAPESTRY

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# Now this stupendous, vibrant masterpiece available in English

*Everyday Jews: Scenes From a Vanished Life* by Yehoshue Perle (Yale University Press, R379,95)

REVIEWED BY GWEN PODBREY

IN 1935, Yehoshue Perle - a Polish Jew who had earned the opprobrium of his fellow writers by hawking cheap, sensational (but highly lucrative) serialisations for the Yiddish daily, *Moment* - released this first of a three-part novel.

The work was poorly received, probably because of Perle's unpopularity among both the Left (whom he criticised for their secularism) and the Bundists (who were scandalised by its raw, unabashed eroticism).

No less a personage than Isaac Bashevis Singer trashed the novel on the grounds that it "lacked a theme" - thus entirely (and perhaps deliberately) ignoring the inherent greatness of the work.

On many levels, *Everyday Jews* closely mirrors Perle's own childhood. Set in a nameless Polish provincial town in the early 20th century, and narrated by 12-year-old Mendl, it explores the daily existence of a small, close-knit Jewish community in which his family plays a central role.

These characters have none of the romanticised colour and charm of Sholem Aleichem's people: instead, they are bent low by the many hardships that assault them.

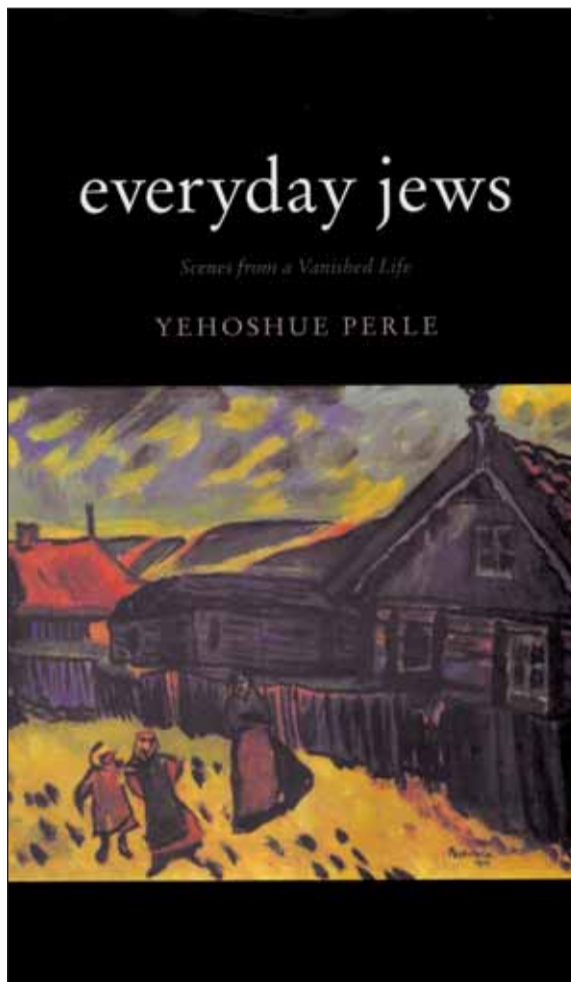
There is, of course, grinding poverty. This, in turn, brings perennial illness: in fact, the novel opens with the death of

Mendl's half-brother, a calamity that drives a further wedge between his parents' already strained relations. Both Frimet, Mendl's mother, and his father, Leyzer, have grown children by former spouses.

Frimet, hankering after the opulence of her first marriage, in which she lived in a house "with real brass handles on every door", leaves her husband and children. Only the realisation that she has nowhere else to go reconciles her to the drudgery of her life.

Yet part of Perle's genius lies in the continual shifting of his characters' perspective and, with it, their moral profile. As further events overtake Mendl's family, in the form of a succession of visits from relatives and boarders - most of whom wreak havoc through acts of treachery, lechery, selfishness or stupidity - Frimet's pretensions give way to nobler impulses, including genuine tenderness.

There is Hodl - a loathsome, malicious harridan - who rents a room with the family for some months, and spends them "chewing oranges and slurping soup with chicken wings" while Mendl and his parents watch on hungrily; there is Toybe, Leyzer's youngest daughter, who falls



pregnant out of wedlock; then there is Mordkhe-Mendl, who - without a penny to his name - contrives to buy a huge estate using fraudulent promissory notes.

And there is young Oyzer, whose elegance, good looks and superior education gain him the upper hand when he and Mendl compete for the affections of the delectable Rukhtshe.

However, Oyzer's victory is short-lived: before long, the girl elopes with her mother's lover, taking with her all the utensils, clothing and money in the house.

Venality, coarseness and meanness are seldom far away. However, there are also moments of beauty and reprieve: a revered teacher who instils in Mendl an awe and love of Torah; a kindly, well-to-do uncle - the secretary of the local Jewish Society - who helps the family avert impending financial ruin; a kindly, perceptive grandfather.

Pervading all of them is a bristling carnal energy: this is a community whose traditions and faith only barely manage - and sometimes fail - to contain their sexuality, as rape, incest and seduction vie with propriety. These are people whose meannesses and privations sharpen their tongues, harden their hearts and distort their boundaries.

Without exception, Perle's characters are consumed by a restlessness that drives them to disrupt, again and again, their hard-won security. Frimet repeatedly demands that her family move house; likewise, cousins and friends are in constant domestic or emotional upheaval. Their only stability to be found lies in the structures - and strictures - of religious ritual.

The superb translation of

Maier Deshell and Margaret Birstein captures all the delicate nuances, bitter-sweet humour and vibrancy of Perle's text. Mendl's maturing voice, and the boy's gradual understanding of the values he has been raised to embrace, are never obscured by the tragicomic events around him.

And just beyond the narrow confines of this intense, frenetic community lies the unspoken - but continually sensed - hostility of the gentile townsfolk, whose crucifixes, blonde daughters and sunburnt peasants present barriers which Mendl regularly encounters.

The Jews of the town are constantly reminded - either implicitly or explicitly - of their inferior status in the eyes of those living just a few streets away: "Behind the windows of my grandparents' house, and surrounded by a black iron fence, stood the Bernardine church, a red-brick structure, with elongated, dark windows and high arched doors... bright, fiery glow blazed from the roof and the cross, and was reflected in the windows of the houses across the way."

The menace hinted at in such passages was prescient indeed: in 1943, having survived the Nazi deportations of Warsaw Jews to Treblinka, Yehoshue Perle and his son, Lolek - together with some 1 800 other Polish Jews - fell for the German ruse of "emigration to Switzerland" and, on October 21 boarded a train which took them straight to the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

In his foreword to the book, David G Roskies notes the rapturous reception which a 1992 Hebrew translation of *Everyday Jews* enjoyed among Israelis, who were enthralled by the novel's avant-garde realism and modernity. Now English readers, too, can - at long last - marvel at the masterpiece of a stupendous literary talent.

## This dame is something else!

Show: *Great Dames*

Cast: Christine Pedi and Matthew Ward

Venue: Old Mutual Theatre on the Square, Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton

Until: May 10

REVIEWED BY PETER FELDMAN

CHRISTINE PEDI is an extraordinary performer who blows into Gauteng like a breath of fresh air. Rarely have I seen a one-woman show exhibiting such exhilarating theatrical dimensions.

Watching her on stage is like hearing a spirit medium channelling different disembodied entities, judging by the volume and diversity of voices of famous personalities that emerge from her mouth.

One minute you hear the clipped English tones of Dame Judi Dench in the song "Why Can't the English" and later you listen in disbelief at the distinctive vocal textures of Ethel Merman, Sarah Brightman and Barbra Streisand. They are all there, these divas, amazing talent brought vividly to life through the unique vocal styling and patter of Pedi.

Pedi, already a shining star in



Christine Pedi in "Great Dames". (PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY BUZ PUBLICITY)

the American music comedy firmament, has the capacity to take a familiar song from a Broadway production and provide a hilarious comic slant to it.

Listen to her Liza Minnelli doing a take-off of Abba or variations on the number "I Will Survive" and you soon realise that

Pedi is in a class of her own.

She oozes personality and has an easy rapport with her audience. Backing her on piano throughout is Matthew Ward, who soon becomes a personality in his own right, tinkling away at the ivories and providing a foil to some of her quips. He is an excellent pianist.

One of the show's highlights - and there were many - was her special rendition of the haunting anthem "I Dreamed a Dream" from *Les Misérables* in which she addresses the problems of lengthy Broadway productions and over-emotive performers.

Her rendition of a revamped and hysterically funny "Lady is a Tramp" was superb and the number, "Shape of Things", allowed us a peep at how Jane Austen would visualise today's society.

"Great Dames" is an uplifting show, full of spirit and song, and deserves to be seen by a wide audience. Pedi perhaps best sums up her kind of show with a story about a member of the audience who once said of an interpretation: "You did everything about her that I hate."

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## LETTERS

The Editor, Suite 175, Postnet X10039, Randburg, 2125 email: carro@global.co.za

**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

**Guidelines for letters**

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

**CLARIFYING MY VIEWS ON JIMMY CARTER**

FOR SOME reason I was misquoted regarding my latest letter, asking why (former President Jimmy) Carter was shunned by Israel:

1. I wrote that, as far as I know, Carter never sought war or a total economic embargo against any country which, according to reliable historians, was a reliable ally of the Allies during the Second World War and whose people (of countries Carter never bullied), when occupied by Nazi Germany, saved Jews and Allied airmen.
2. I wrote that, during Carter's US presi-

dency, the Cold War didn't officially end (though it obviously ended afterwards), and therefore, Israel could then be presented as a reliable ally of the US for some kind of a positive cause (according to people who don't want, or didn't want to be ruled by a Communist government).

The way I was quoted on this point can give the impression that I tried to justify continuing a Cold War mentality, which is certainly not the case.

**Avner Eliyahu Romm  
Cape Town**

**OVERWHELMING RESPONSE TO RUGBY NOSTALGIA**

IT WAS most interesting for a sports enthusiast such as myself to note the response to my piece of rugby nostalgia. The fact that SAJR saw fit to feature a response in your editorial (March 28, "Rugby - a game for a nice Jewish boy") bears testimony to the huge influence that sport and rugby in particular has on our daily lives.

I would like to respond to some of the letters printed.

Justin Sher, (April 4): Yes, my good friend, Syd Nomis did indeed earn 25 consecutive caps. This by the way was a SAJR misprint as my figure was always 25 caps. Bernard Lapidus, Toronto, (March 28): The perception that Cecil Moss earned Springbok colours while representing Western Province is incorrect. Moss when selected against New Zealand in 1949 was at the time playing for Berea Rovers and Natal.

To Bruce Lynn of Toronto (March 28): Both my records, nor those put out by Transvaal Rugby Union, reflect Peter Chiat as having represented Transvaal at senior level.

Michael Levenstein, (April 4): Having spent many happy plays alongside cricket grounds in the company of Henry Joffe

watching our sons in action, the conversation invariably turned to rugby and rugby history. Henry represented Orange Free State and later Wits University, but unfortunately never played for Transvaal at Currie Cup level.

As for the Kaminer brothers playing alongside each other at centre: Yes they did for Wits at club level but never for Transvaal at provincial level. Joe played for Transvaal in 1958. Louis unfortunately was not a provincial player.

I am now aware that Gus Ackerman was Jewish.

As for Mannie Zar, records do not reflect him as having represented Transvaal at Currie Cup level.

To Lauren Kier: We look forward to your son, Lance progressing beyond the sevens format and making his mark in the 15-man game, which is the yardstick by which rugby players are ultimately judged. Good luck.

The response to this topic has been outstanding and informative and I intend following in similar vein concerning cricket and football.

**Dave Berkowitz  
White River**

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION MUST BE ACCEPTED - PSYSSA**

I'M RESPONDING on behalf of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) to a letter promoting reparative therapy (aka conversion therapy) offered by an American organisation, JONAH (Jews offering new alternatives to homosexuality) for the treatment of same-sex sexuality, that appeared in a recent edition of the *Jewish Report*.

As we know, non-discrimination on the basis of same-sex sexual orientation and gender is guaranteed in the South African Constitution. However, within many religious contexts in South Africa and elsewhere, same-sex sexual orientation is still regarded as a sin or an affliction needing vigorous treatment.

Same-sex sexuality is, however, not a psychological disorder.

The American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) declassified same-sex sexuality as pathology in 1973, more than 45 years ago.

It is important to note that the initial scientific view of same-sex sexuality as "psychopathology" was not informed by actual scientific evidence, but by prevailing societal values and beliefs.

Although exposure to prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation may cause acute distress, there is no reliable evidence that same-sex sexual orientation per se impairs psychological functioning.

Now "officially" seen as a sexual variation rather than a problem, same-sex sexual orientation itself is not a condition to be treated. Treatment of lesbians and gay men based on the medical model has had limited results when "heterosexual shift" was the goal.

In fact, since 1990, reparative therapy is strongly discouraged by the American Psychological Association (APA), and others, due to poor prognosis, the ethics involved in trying to change a trait that is not a disorder and that is vital to a person's identity, and because such a prac-

tice can do more harm than good.

Instead, practice guidelines for psychologists advise working towards acceptance of sexual orientation.

The disciplines of psychiatry, psychology and social work have an ethical and moral obligation to formally reject the mental disorder conception of same-sex sexual orientation.

Internationally and in South Africa, psychology recognises the APA as a leader and trendsetter. While the APA was the first psychological association to formally adopt LGB-affirmative psychotherapeutic guidelines, national psychological associations in several European countries, as well as the UK and Australia, have since followed suit.

PsySSA participates in the International Network for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns and Gender Identity Issues in Psychology (INET), composed of national, multinational, and international psychological associations and hosted by the APA.

INET, among others, has as an aim to increase the number of national psychological associations that formally reject the mental disorder conception of homosexuality and that promote mental health practice that is affirmative of LGBT people.

PsySSA therefore also does not condone or support the use of reparative therapy.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasise that the message that same-sex sexual orientation is officially considered a normal variation and that minority status does not imply inferiority ought to be consistently and unambiguously conveyed to the general public and client populations.

**Dr Juan A Nel  
Clinical and Research Psychologist  
Director: Unisa Centre for Applied Psychology  
PsySSA representative on INET**

**SAJR REKINDLES SO MANY FOND MEMORIES**

AS THE co-ordinator of the King David High School Class of 68 reunion, I have been receiving correspondence from 143 former Davidians who live all over the world.

We are having our reunion in Jerusalem from July 11 to 13 and it has been the most wonderful experience to be communicating with people who still, 40 years down the track, think of King David High School Linksfield so fondly. (see ww.classof68-reunion.com)

However, I am writing this letter for two reasons. The first is that I have only just read the obituary (July 2007) of Nili Amiel z"l who was both my teacher and mentor.

Nili taught my parents Frank and Becky Jame z"l at the ulpan in Netanya when we attempted to make aliyah in 1961. On our return to South Africa she taught me at King David.

Later when I became a teacher at King David she became my mentor, continued to be my teacher and remained a very close

and dear friend. Nili's inspiration was one of the main reasons that I became a Hebrew teacher myself and I was so very sad to read of her passing. The picture with her grandchildren so gladdened my heart.

I left South Africa 18 years ago and while I have been back many times, one hears so many negative things that in one's mind one thinks of a dying community. However, reading your newspaper made me realise how wrong and misguided this image is.

It is with a sense of nostalgia and pain that I think of the wonderful and vibrant Jewish community and the life that I left behind. While I might live in greater physical security, nothing can replace the wonderful Jewish life that I gave up in South Africa and the great people that I left behind.

**Auryt Jacobson  
Sydney  
Australia**

**JEFFREY KAGAN REMEMBERS THE LAST SEDER**

IT WAS the second night seder for my wife's family, but this was a seder with a difference. It would be the last time this family would be spending a seder together.

Had somebody died? Well, in a sense, yes. But this death has another form. It is called emigration.

Within a few days of the ending of the seder, my wife's niece and her family, consisting of her husband and their two young boys, would be emigrating to the new Promised Land, Australia. Each family member left the dining room at different times during the seder to deal with their sorrow.

This is not a new phenomenon for this family, but this time it is the next generation. This time it is the children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, great-nieces and great-nephews.

In generations to come, when the family history is told in the USA, Canada and Australia, will those of us left behind even be remembered by name?

For this family, the Festival of Freedom in 2008 focused entirely on the word freedom.

Liberation from what? For those of us who live in Johannesburg the answers are particularly well known and documented. We live with the contempt, the dishonesty, the disrespect, the arrogance, the entitlement, the disregard, the insensitivity and the revenge on a daily basis. Actually, on an hourly basis!

These parents have chosen to liberate themselves and their children from the fear and lawlessness that has engulfed their suburb and countless other suburbs.

They wish to be free of the brutality among South Africans that defies any sense of com-

passion or morality. They need this freedom. They are debilitated by its absence in their lives. They owe it to their children and to themselves.

How many families are at present acting out this heartbreaking scenario? Alas, it would appear that many of us are grappling with the unexpected consequences of liberation. What does one say to those whose family and friends have been raped, tortured and murdered?

What do I say to these two grandfathers and the rest of the family? How much do I share with a six-year-old cousin? How do I console my wife, who thinks this is all so unfair and so wrong?

This wonderful Jewish family, immersed in belief, tradition and ritual, will never be the same. This family, and so many others of which I am aware, is changed forever.

I shall never forget the faces as the seder came to an end. Nobody in this family wants to hear about 14 reasons to stay in South Africa, as expounded by certain rabbis. Nobody in this family wants to hear about feeling "cock-a-hoop" about South Africa, as recently expressed by Michael Bagrain.

This family, a representation of so many others, is shattered, traumatised, disfigured and enraged.

We will survive our loss, grief and anger. We will miss these four people every day of our lives. So many families are experiencing the same emotions. We know we are not alone.

**Jeffrey Kagan  
Parkhurst  
Johannesburg**

**IS THIS A CASE OF SHEER HYPOCRISY?**

I FAIL to understand why it is that these people in the Jewish community who in their South African supremacist way criticise people who wear Australia hats and seem to hate the Australians, fail to write in condemning ads urging immigra-

tion to Australia and why some of them still want to live there themselves. Hypocrisy?

**Dovid ben Menachem Mendel  
Johannesburg**

**AN AMERICAN PRESIDENT FOR SALE**

IF I understand the letter from A E Romm (April 25) correctly, he feels that Israel has treated former US President Jimmy Carter badly. I would then urge him to read a very interesting article by the well-known and respected Harvard law professor, Alan Dershowitz, titled "Ex President for Sale", an article that I would be happy to send on to him, and anyone else that may be interested.

I would also mention that Dershowitz was previously a very strong supporter of Carter, and was active in his election as president, so he can hardly be regarded as prejudiced.

This article at some length points out just how beholden Carter is to Arab oil money, from which he, his family peanut farm and various foundations that he is linked to, received many millions of dollars.

His close friendship with Sheik Zayed and his foundation, both noted anti-

Semites, and from whom he accepted a very large award, while the Harvard University refused on principle the two million dollars that they were offered.

The Carter Centre for Human Rights, also beholden to Arab oil money, is blind to all the human right abuses in the Arab countries, China, North Korea, Iran, the Sudan and Syria, and is mainly concerned with the so-called abuses of Israel, so for this and other reasons, one can understand why he was not welcomed with open arms in Israel.

His claim also that it is Jewish money that influences American foreign policy, is also a rather anti-Semitic smear which shows his true feelings.

Other enlightened reading on the former president would also be the book by Steven Hayward, *The real Jimmy Carter*.

**Eric Rosendorff  
Johannesburg**

## COMMUNITY COLUMNS



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Avrom Krengel  
Chairman

## Reflecting on a vibrant, pulsating Israel at service

We have catered for everyone and we look forward to presenting an entertaining and sophisticated show for your enjoyment and delight. Eight hundred youngsters from the Jewish day schools will be participating in the show; there will be professional singing, Israeli dancing, Israeli music, Israeli food, wonderful rides, fun and games for the little ones, and a grand surprise which will remain a secret until revealed during the celebrations.

Israeli advances in science, technology, medicine, agriculture, environmental and ecological fields and education, speak volumes about a people determined to succeed in life against all odds.

Israeli culture embraces huge strides in art, music, dance, theatre, archaeological discoveries, a free media and excellence in sport. Health and social services are among the most sophisticated of all the Western countries; the very high standard of education is the envy of many more established countries; the currency is stable and the economy is flourishing; the cities are vibrant and exciting; and the quality of life, which is what draws so many olim to the country annually, is indisputable.

All this in 60 years? Yes, all this in only 60 years! A nation of pioneers, of men and women who worked the land and planted orchards and vegetable gardens, who gave themselves body and soul to building a society that today ranks with the most sought-after - this is Israel 2008; Israel where democracy flourishes; where freedom of all religions is a given; where free speech and the freedom of the media are jealously guarded; where women have more rights than anywhere else in the Middle East and in many other societies; and where there is equality and opportunity for all.

So, come and join us in wishing Israel a very happy 60th anniversary. We look forward to seeing you all there on Wednesday May 7.

## WIZO and the Israel Prize

we have done, what we are doing and what we will continue to do.

I know you are as excited as I am and that all of you and your predecessors and founding mothers will be standing on the stage with Helena Glaser, president of World WIZO, when she receives the Prize on your behalf.

The year 2008 is a milestone one in WIZO's history and Israel's 60th anniversary will indeed be a day to remember, bearing the ultimate gift for WIZO, its federations and chavrot.

In selecting these women's organisations, the Prize committee praised their contribution to "turning the State of Israel into a world leader in the area of promoting the status of women".

In the course of activities that World WIZO supports, the bar-/batmitzvah programme is one of the most heartwarming and rewarding programmes. If not for our combined help, hundreds of youth and their families would not have the opportunity of participating in rewarding and meaningful celebrations.

This year the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel, WIZO is planning a very special celebration for its youth and have launched the Israel@60-WIZO Bar-/Batmitzvah campaign.

A widower father said: "This is a very special day for me and an honour to accompany my son to his barmitzvah. I could never have been able to do this by myself. WIZO has helped me to bring happiness to my son and to the members of my family who came especially for the celebration."



**ABOVE BOARD**  
Zev Krengel,  
National Chairman

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

**MAINTAINING** A democratic society means sometimes having to steer a reasoned middle path between conflicting rights. One especially difficult area is navigating between people's right to freedom of expression and the equally crucial right of people not to become the targets of hate speech, be this based on race, religion, ethnicity or any other unreasonable grounds.

When addressing instances of alleged anti-Semitism, the Board has always to make a properly-considered judgement call. It is not possible - or even desirable - to take action on every case where anti-Jewish sentiments are expressed.

There are degrees of offensiveness. Someone may make a remark that might plausibly be regarded as insensitive to Jews, but which is not really serious enough to justify lodging a formal complaint or demanding a retraction and apology.

Sometimes, a private letter pointing out the problem might be enough. At other times, however, one sees cases of people abusing the right of freedom of expression to attack Jews and Judaism in a manner that clearly crosses the line. This requires a tougher response.

Last week, the Board took action in such a case. Certain members of our community drew our attention to the fact that many of the comments posted in response to an article on the *Mail & Guardian* Online Thought Leader pages were blatantly anti-Semitic.

We found this to indeed be the case. One respondent in particular to the article (written by a member of the Jewish community and entitled "Let's talk about the Jews") submitted multiple postings trotting out virtually every classic anti-Jewish

## Confronting anti-Semitism on internet

canard in the book.

These included accusations that Jews manipulate world events for their own selfish ends and to the detriment of the rest of humanity, are filled with hatred for all non-Jews (something reflected in their religion) and use their malign influence to control the world media.

Anti-Semitism was depicted as a logical, and justifiable, response to the behaviour of the Jews themselves.

We brought these concerns to the editor of the *Mail & Guardian* Online, providing a detailed analysis of why such postings were unacceptable, even in a forum where diverse views are encouraged. I am pleased to report that he agreed with us and removed the offending material in its entirety.

Reaching out to African Jewry

The Board is responsible for the running of the African Jewish Congress, an umbrella representative body for the sub-Saharan African Jewish communities. Headed by our own Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft (who combines these duties with his role as spiritual leader to the country communities in South Africa), this body has been of considerable assistance in helping our fellow Jews across our borders in keeping the wheels of communal life turning.

Rabbi Silberhaft's letter in last week's issue showed, the AJC has been of particular assistance to our embattled Zimbabwe brethren. I commend the AJC on all their excellent work in this regard, as well as those generous donors from within our community who have helped ease the burden of the very courageous Zimbabwe Jewish community during these very difficult times.

## AROUND THE WORLD

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### BARRAGE OF ROCKETS HITS SOUTHERN ISRAEL

JERUSALEM - Palestinian terrorists on Monday fired a barrage of rockets and mortar shells on southern Israel. The barrage of at least seven rockets and nine mortar shells began in the morning hours before seven people, including five members of a Palestinian family, were killed in the Gaza Strip while the Israeli army was targeting two Palestinian terrorists.

The attacks intensified in the hours following the Israeli strike. One rocket

landed near a home in the Negev town of Sderot, one landed near a school and another caused a fire near Kibbutz Gavim in the Sha'ar Hanegv Regional Council. Several people were treated for shock.

Hamas' armed wing claimed it fired three rockets at Sderot, a frequent target of attacks, in response to the death of the family in Gaza's Beit Hanoun area. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the mortar attacks. (JTA)



**WIZO South Africa**  
Jane Levitas

A column of WIZO South Africa

WE AT WIZO South Africa have some wonderful and outstanding news to share with our membership and the public.

Three major women's organisations are to be the recipients of the prestigious Israel Prize, as part of the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel.

We are proud to report that WIZO will be one of the recipients in recognition of its work to improve and advance the community and society in Israel.

The Israel Prize is an award handed out by the State of Israel to citizens or organisations that have displayed excellence in their fields, or have contributed strongly to Israeli culture. The winners are selected by committees of judges who pass on their recommendations to the education minister.

The Israel Prize is presented annually on Israel's Independence Day in a state ceremony in Jerusalem, in the presence of the president, the prime minister, the Knesset (Israel's legislature) chairperson and the Supreme Court president.

Receiving the Israel Prize is the highest recognition any Israeli individual or organisation can aspire to. Receiving the prize obviously makes the award and the recognition that comes with it even more important.

Every federation and chavera of WIZO, is an equal partner in this outstanding achievement and WIZO milestone. We in WIZO South Africa can all be proud of what

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## YOUTH TALK

Shelley Elk jewishreport@yahoo.com



Tlakie Maloka (coordinator of the Soweto Epilepsy Organisation) and her husband Godfrey, on behalf of Soweto Epilepsy, accepting a donation from the UHS, with Ronit Janet, madrichot, and some of the batmitzvah girls in the UHS programme.

## Fun and laughter in making challah

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHELLEY ELK

IN A fun-filled day, over 70 girls from the United Hebrew Schools' (UHS) batmitzvah programme, and Emunah Ladies Beit Midrash Learning Programme, took part in an "Amazing Race" recently.

Ronit Janet, educational director of UHS, organised the event and madrichim from DIJE, and volunteers, facilitated the race. Inspired by the TV programme "Amazing Race" and Outdoor Jewish Experience (OJE), the event was adapted to suit the younger girls.

Batmitzvah girls from the Emunah Ladies Beit Midrash batmitzvah programme, were also invited to participate in the "Amazing Race". Nine teams were formed and given clues to find ingredients to make challah. Going from "station to station", collecting clues, solving riddles, finding objects or ingredients for making challah, saw the girls riding on razor scooters, and rowing in boats on Zoo Lake.

The culmination of the event involved checking the eggs, putting ingredients together, and then braiding challah. The first team to finish braiding their challah, won.

Janet said the event was designed to bring the girls together, to have a great time and to learn about the three mitzvot pertaining to women: neiro, challah and mikveh.

Through the day's activities the beauty of the mitzvot of lighting candles, making and taking of challah and the mikveh, were explored.

Tlakie Maloka on behalf of the Soweto Epilepsy Organisation, accepted the dough, as a gift from the UHS, at the end of the day.



Shiara Berriman and Cayla Jacobs "Amazing Race flour girls".



An "Amazing Race" team of participants, out on Zoo Lake, "finding" one of the ingredients.

## Food parcels for Ithute School

MICHELLE KAPLAN  
PHOTOGRAPHS: JUDY WINER

KING DAVID Primary Linksfield has adopted the Ithute School in Alexandra township next to Sandton as their sister school.

Some of the activities planned for the year include an activity day with grade 5 learners of both schools and a shadow-work programme where Ithute School teachers will work and share ideas with King David teachers.

The teachers involved in the outreach council visited Ithute in the April holidays.

Wednesday is "bring an extra sandwich day" at King David. Here we have Gaby Ferreira (media liaison), Shannon Rabinowitz (secretary), Adam

Surmany and Brandon Davis (chairman) of the outreach council collecting and packing clothes and sandwiches which went to Ithute School.



## Janet makes batmitzvah programme even more relevant and fulfilling

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPH BY SHELLEY ELK

A LOVE for Jewish education and a desire to have a lot of fun is what prompted Ronit Janet to become involved in the United Hebrew Schools (UHS) batmitzvah programme.

Janet, who has a BA, H Dip Ed, and MA in English from Wits, was a madricha at DIJE and Bnei AKiva for 10 years. She assumed the position of director of education at the UHS in January this year and heads up the batmitzvah programme, in association with the Department of Informal Jewish Education (DIJE), under the direction of the Office of the Chief Rabbi.

Part of her work involves "continually updating the syllabus, thereby exposing the batmitzvah girls to information according to their life experiences and what I believe they can learn the best from".

The UHS batmitzvah programme has been run for many years, initially as part of the cheder programme. In 2006 the syllabus was revamped by Rebecca Sarchi and Tova Goldstein, under the directorship of Rosie Hollander "to make it more 'relatable' to the girls".

She says the programme "deals with contemporary and relevant issues, including faith in Hashem, relationship to Hashem, parents and friends, kashrut and Shabbos, great Jewish women of our history, and our homeland, Israel".

Activities include learning through various modalities; visual (drawing, pictures); tactile (clay-work); audio (rapping); and gestural.

As director of UHS Janet also organises the end-of-year ceremony as well as the meetings which are held two to three times a year.

"The Amazing Race", held recently, was the first meeting of the year. Other meetings scheduled for the batmitzvah group are a breakfast with the chief rabbi, and a third project, the chesed programme.

Over 100 girls, mainly comprising learners from the King David Schools, are participating in the UHS programme. In



Ronit Janet, director of education at the (United Hebrew Schools) UHS, heads up the batmitzvah programme under the direction of the Office of the Chief Rabbi, Dr Warren Goldstein.

August the batmitzvah girls will be assessed and towards the end of the year, between September and November, each shul will have a celebration (on different dates, allowing the batmitzvah girls from different shuls to attend their friends' celebrations).

At the celebration the batmitzvah group will present on something they have learnt during the year as a group.

Janet said that "so far the programme has been well received, with positive feedback from the teachers. The kids are loving it; they find it very informative and enjoyable, which is encouraging other girls to join."

Janet told Jewish Report that the girls meet every week for shiurim at their shuls. There are eight participating shuls in the UHS programme, namely Great Park, Sydenham Highlands North, Greenside, Linksfield, Sandton, Waverley, Pine Street, and Pretoria shuls.

\* To find out more about the UHS batmitzvah programme, contact Janet on (011) 480-4734 or e-mail: dije7@sabje.co.za

## YC girls visit aids orphanage

LISA HIRSCHOWITZ, GABRIELLA TOBIAS  
AND DAVIDA ARONOWITZ

RECENTLY THE grade 10 girls of Yeshiva College in Johannesburg, made a long awaited visit to the "Fountain of Love" aids orphanage in Katlehong.

Prior to the visit, the girls divided themselves into four groups and each group

entertained some of the children.

When they arrived, the girls were greeted by singing, dancing and a lot of happy faces! There were even more children than usual because the kids were on school holidays.

The Yeshiva College activities were a huge success "and a great time was had by all!"



Ricky Attia, Camilla Dissler and Tali Bloom of Yeshiva College share a happy pose with some of the children from the aids orphanage, "The Fountain of Love", in Katlehong.

# Schools take part in lion decorating project

SHELLEY ELK

LIFE-SIZE Lions of Judah grace the grounds of 18 schools in Port Elizabeth, Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg, in preparation for their roles in celebrating Israel's 60th birthday. The 18 schools have been invited to participate in a South African Zionist Federation's project, encouraging their learners to decorate the Lion of Judah, expressing the theme of Israel's 60th birthday.

SAZF, the driving force behind the project, commissioned Lee Murgatroyd in Johannesburg, to sculpt the Lions of Judah for the schools.

Bev Goldman, head of public relations at the SAZF, told *Jewish Report* that Isla Feldman, director of SAZF had come up with the idea, with Feldman saying it was a wonderful way of getting the schools involved in the Israel at 60 celebrations, at their level.

She added that SAZF had been in discussions with the schools and art departments, and they were keen on the idea; it was also a way of making it part of the curriculum.

Esty Aharoni, education officer for the JNF, an integral part of the project, explained that the "lion was a symbol, for the tribe of Judah, of heroism in Jewish history; a symbol found for example on the Holy Ark, Torah and Channukiah".

Added Aharoni: "Israel had an exhibition a few years ago, using the lion as a symbol and based on that we came up with this idea and have given freedom to schools to decorate the lions any way they want, with colours, sticking, mosaics; it is up to the children and art teachers in each school."

Weighing in at 50 kg each, the lions are blank canvasses on which learners are invited to express the theme of "Israel's 60th" birthday.

Murgatroyd said the lion prototype was made of polyurethane foam, coated with a type of plaster of paris, and then sanded repeatedly, before being cut into pieces. Rubber and fibreglass moulds were made over each piece. When that was ready each lion was manufactured in three separate pieces which were then joined together. The finished lions were made out of fibreglass (with a metal insert in the tail).

"We coated the lion with a primer which

allows for almost any medium to be used for decoration."

Goldman told *Jewish Report*: "The final products will be judged in June/July, with four provincial winners, and from those, one overall winner will be selected."

The winner's work will be exhibited in SAZF's Israel-related art exhibition at Beyachad from September 5 - 18. Judges are Lee Megatroyd, Natalie Knight and Isla Feldman.



**A majestic Lion of Judah, sovereign over all he surveys, presents a "blank canvas" for creative inspiration, standing beside the lion is Esty Aharoni (JNF Education and Youth Officer) (PHOTOGRAPH: LEE MURGATROYD.)**

# On the good ship 'Cultural Fellowship'

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

CAPE TOWN

PHOTOGRAPH: OMER RABIN

TEN ISRAELI teenagers - five Muslim and five Jewish - recently paid a visit to Cape Town as part of the Sailing Together initiative, the third such interaction arranged by the South African Jewish Maritime League and the Israeli group representing the youngsters.

The project uses the medium of sailing to promote cultural fellowship across nations in conflict, and aims to close the divide among Israeli Muslim and Jewish children who grow up in an environment of mis-

trust of the other, according to a media release.

The teenagers, who hail from across Israel, spent nine days in the Western Cape pursuing their common passion for sailing. They also participated in projects with South African children of diverse cultures.

The South Africa Jewish Maritime League, founded in 1938, aims to stimulate interest in maritime activities among Jewish people as well as the previously disadvantaged youth of South Africa with whom it has been involved through upliftment projects. It has also provided bursaries for maritime training and sponsorships to encourage sailing.



**Muslim and Jewish Israelis who are part of the Sailing Together initiative, visited Robben Island on a recent trip to Cape Town.**

# Merle Kaplan is 'Social Worker of the Year'

RITA LEWIS

FOR SOMEONE who has herself been the victim of violent crimes on several occasions, the idea of Merle Kaplan's working as a social worker for Nicro (The National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Integration of Offenders) was really a matter of putting her money where her mouth is - in the literal, hands on sense.

But to be voted Social Worker of the Year 2007/8 by some 250 people, was somehow a payback for all the horrors that she had been forced to go through.

Kaplan, who has an honours degree in social science, is a qualified worker at Nicro and the managing supervising social worker based at Ikhaya LeTemba - Place of Hope - in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, which is a one-stop centre for "Survivors of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault".

It is a flagship project of the government's integrated quality social services strategy and the prevention of violence and abuse of women and children.

She said that at the end of last month a conference was held under the auspices of the Department of Community Safety at Ikhaya LeTemba for all the stakeholders.

At the end of the conference a vote was taken for the "Social Worker for 2007/8" and Kaplan was voted in to receive the award. During the conference, some 250 people had been asked to write out whom they were voting for and why and the result was announced at the conference.

Kaplan said she could not have been more surprised but said she loved both the work and the people at Nicro who were extremely hard-working and very loyal to her.

Kaplan was born in Bloemfontein where she went to school and graduated from Rhodes in 1974.

She said that in her Nicro unit they only dealt with female victims while the Teddy Bear Clinic dealt with the boys.

The victims come from across the board - of different ages, colours and creeds.

"They come in after they have been raped or attacked and we are the first people to see them."

Although now based in Braamfontein, the original set-up had been started in 2001 in Germiston and then dealt with probations etc. Some four years later the organisation



**Merle Kaplan whose award for showing the best managerial and people's skills within Nicro (The National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Integration of Offenders) came as a huge surprise.**

diversified and worked with youth in conflict with the law.

In 2005 she was promoted to manager of the social workers at the Nicro unit based at Ikhaya LeTemba where she has four social workers, 15 volunteers, a volunteer co-ordinator and some six students and interns under her.

Nicro not only offers support to those direct or indirect victims, but also to family members, those who have witnessed a crime and others in distress because of related issues.

Nicro offers support services at police stations, at magistrate's courts, at community centres and at their own offices in all nine provinces.

Kaplan can be reached on (011) 242-3000.

## AROUND ISRAEL OPENS KEY ROADBLOCK

### THE WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

JERUSALEM - Israel has opened a key roadblock in the West Bank.

The military roadblock outside Nablus was opened on Monday, some five years after it was built in a bid to limit Palestinian terrorists from travelling freely out of the city.

The move came after Quartet envoy Tony Blair met Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak to press for an easing of conditions in the West Bank, where Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas is trying to assert control.

Military officials said the Nablus roadblock would remain open as long as the security situation allowed. (JTA).

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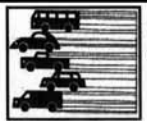
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# SA's Caminsky wins World Tenpin Masters

GUY, WHO topped the South African Ten Pin Order of Merit last year, had three times reached the quarterfinals of the tournament, but he had never progressed further.

But this time the 30 year old came from behind to win the trophy in a thrilling final as he defeated 2006 champion, American Chris Barnes, 526-517. In doing so in front of a packed crowd at the Barnsley Metrodome,

Guy became the ninth different winner of the tournament, and over and above the thrill of victory, walked away with the winner's cheque of £30 000 (about R480 000).

Guy says winning the 2008 World Tenpin Masters fulfilled a childhood dream. "As a kid you dream about that moment when you strike out and win a tournament. It's everyone's dream and when I struck it I was over

the moon.

"This means the absolute world to me to get this title. It's going to be huge for the sport back home and hopefully more guys from there will come and travel overseas. For me, I will treasure this moment for the rest of my life.

"It was not until the final shot in the second game that I thought I could win the game."

Guy trailed by 258-249 at the halfway point but took the lead for the first time in the seventh frame of the second game and then held his nerve to clinch victory.

Barnes led by nine pins at the end of the opening game and following a further four frames, the American extended his lead by one further pin. However, the turning point came in the seventh frame when the American spared.

Guy followed that up with a strike of his own as he went in front for the first time in the final and then showed what it meant to him by screaming out to the crowd.

Barnes maintained the pressure by continuing to hit strikes and it became a question of whether Guy could hold his nerve.

With three balls left, he needed two strikes and punched the air in delight as he got the first of them. A strike with his next

ball would give him the title.

It was successful and Guy jumped for joy as he had achieved his ambition of winning a major bowling tournament.

"He (Barnes) left a wobbling fourth pin in one of the frames and if that had fallen he would have been the champion. He did not give this victory to me; I had to go out there and earn it. He's a true champion and unfortunately one of us had to lose.

"Before I went into the final I just thought: 'I hope it's a good one' because I didn't want to go down as the worst finalist ever."

American Barnes had been the favourite to win after impressive performances throughout the three-day tournament, including the best individual score in the competition's 10-year history.

But it was not to be for Barnes in the final, who admitted the South African deserved to win.

"I gave it everything I had but he threw a world-class double in the 10th frame and not many people could do that," said Barnes.

"I made him show up and that's all I wanted to do but he showed up like a champion. It feels terrible.

Although he was born in Durban, Guy is now based in Johannesburg.



Anton Marcus salutes the crowd as he storms to victory in the \$5 million Dubai Duty Free at Nad Al Sheba last Saturday night.

## Anton wins Dubai Duty Free

**JACK MILNER**

MANY PEOPLE thought it was an impractical move to bring Anton Marcus to Dubai to ride Jay Peg in the \$5 million Dubai Duty Free at Nad Al Sheba last Saturday night. Although he knew the horse well he had never ridden at the track and that could cost the South African-bred horse the race.

But those who said that, forgot one thing: Anton is not only one of the best jockeys in the country, but also in the world and he rode a masterful race on the son of Camden Park to win the richest turf races on the planet behind this year's Arc de Triomphe in spectacular fashion.

Herman Brown had seen his charge Linnigari charge late for second in last year's Dubai Duty Free - this year his heart rate must have soared high into the red zone as his charge Jay Peg regained the form he had shown when winning the Cape Guineas and Cape Derby and beat off one challenge after another as he led virtually throughout to post a mighty victory.

This was a real family victory, wrote Robert Garner, who was in Dubai for the meeting. Basil Marcus, seven-time champion jockey in Hong Kong during a star-studded career in the saddle before becoming a trainer at the Cape, picked Jay Peg as a yearling and trained him before his charge went to Brown to campaign internationally.

Eldest brother Selwyn Marcus is a part-owner with Marsh Shirliff, Etienne Braun and Paul Loomes, and youngest brother Anton rode him.

And full marks to Anton. He didn't muck about from No 14 draw and soon had Jay Peg in front and setting a stamina-sapping pace. There's no way you go start to finish unchallenged at this level and the vultures were circling Jay Peg 400m out with first Vodka and then Darjina heading him.

To heighten the drama, the saddle

slipped on Jay Peg and Anton came perilously close to falling as he leant further and further left and wielded the whip right handed in the drive to the line.

Jay Peg was all courage and fought off Djarina to give Brown his first Dubai World Cup night winner by half a length with Archipenko only a neck back in third. He smashed the 1777m record in the process, cutting out a scorching 106,20 seconds.

The connections went wild with joy and who could blame them with a first prize of \$3 million - a cool R24 million at the current exchange rate.

"He likes a scrap and I wasn't worried when other horses went past him," said Anton.

"It's a very proud day because my brother Basil used to train this horse and my older brother Selwyn owns a share."

Brother Basil, who went to Dubai to watch the race, added: "I loved Jay Peg from the moment I first saw him and bought him for R130 000 as a yearling. Anton rode an awesome race."

Interestingly enough it was also a good night for South African Jewish owners. Other than Selwyn Marcus, Lionel Cohen had a great win when his filly, Sun Classique, which he owns and bred in partnership with Warne Rippon.

Sun Classique won the 2400m Sheema Classic. Trained by Mike de Kock and ridden by Kevin Shea, the South African filly was well placed from the start and made an early dash for the line, getting to the front 600m out. The opposition chased hard in vain and Sun Classique went to the post to score by 2,75 lengths from Hong Kong challenger Viva Pataca.

"What a moment," said Cohen. "We wanted R300 000 for her as a yearling but I don't think the bidding got to R100 000, so we took her home," added Cohen who more recently turned down an offer of \$3 million for the four-year-old filly.

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