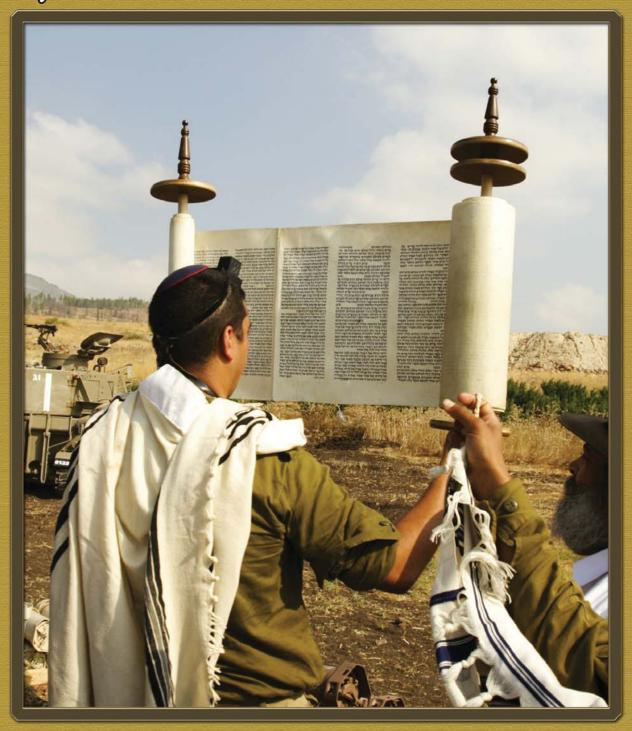
JEWISH AFFAIRS Rosh Hashanah 2011



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OBITUARY

IRVING LISSOOS

*

(David Saks, Editor Jewish Affairs)

Dr Irving Lissoos, who passed away in Johannesburg on 30 July 2011at the age of 74, was a contributor to *Jewish Affairs* of many years standing, writing on such diverse subjects as South African Jewish Nobel laureates, Jewish humor, the Pesach Seder and Jewish roots in Johannesburg. In 2002, he was much involved in an advisory capacity in the production of a special issue on Jews and medicine, to which he also contributed an article on the Jewish role in the first heart transplant operation.

In addition to being a much cherished personality within the Jewish community, Lissoos was highly respected in his profession. As a Specialist Urologist he was, amongst many other things, a pioneer of kidney transplant in South Africa and served as Secretary of the Urological Association of SA. He was in private practice for 38 years and at the time of his passing was still practicing as an Urologist at Milpark Hospital.

Beyond this, Lissoos forged a second 'career' as a lecturer and writer on a range of subjects of Jewish and general historical interest, the diversity of which testified to his erudition and wide-ranging intellectual curiosity. He was much sought after as a speaker at Jewish communal events, and further afield was much involved in broader local heritage initiatives.

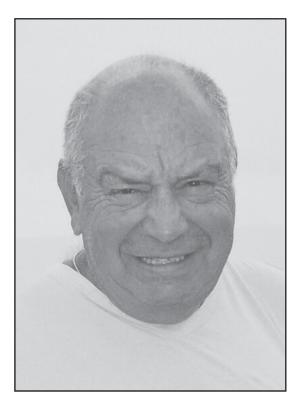
Given his intimate knowledge of Johannesburg and local Jewish history, Lissoos was the obvious choice to deliver the keynote address at the opening of the SAJBD's 'Jewish Johannesburg 120' exhibition in 2007. Amongst other topics he addressed in his public speaking engagements, always with his trade-mark sense of humor and infectious enthusiasm, were synagogues in India, Jewish Nobel prize winners and Jewish cinema. In a more serious vein, he also lectured on the Holocaust and authored a guide to the Haggadah, entitled Seder Beseder. In the Jewish communal field, he was a founding member of Victory Park Synagogue and for many years served the King David schools and Jewish Board of Education in a variety of capacities. His diverse hobbies included making and collecting shofars.

Going beyond specifically Jewish themes, Lissoos was also involved in promoting the general history and heritage of Johannesburg, inter alia through being a guide for both the Parktown Westcliff Heritage

Trust and Soweto heritage tours.

Of his work in the former field Flo Bird, herself a doyen of Johannesburg heritage promotion, wrote, "Your tours were all masterpieces of research and a choice selection of facts leavened with a delightful sense of humor. You gave everyone a sense of adventure and enjoyment in exploring new fields of understanding Johannesburg from different perspectives-murder and mayhem, [Herman Charles] Bosman's Johannesburg, Gandhi, the Anglo-Boer War and your most popular tour - the Jewish contribution".

Lissoos is further remembered as the ultimate family man, one who never missed a school play, sports day or the like and brought every Jewish festival to life in the family home through, for example, animated Sedorim and creative sukkahs. He leaves his wife, Pam, five children and twelve grandchildren.



THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHIEF RABBINATE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

*

John Simon

The office of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain has been described as a "typically English institution which has evolved by a gradual historical process.....out of the Rabbinate of the great Synagogue in London two centuries ago". When the first Hebrew congregation ever formed in South Africa was established in 1841² the Cape had been a British settlement since 1806. The structure of government and society, social conditions and the way of life followed by the colonists generally were all modelled upon the English pattern. The seventeen founding members of the congregation and the few dozen who joined within the next decade or two were predominantly of British birth save for a few merchants who came from Germany. It is not surprising, therefore, that the fledgling congregation looked to the Chief Rabbinate in London for guidance and direction in liturgical and spiritual matters. Both in the formal sense and in practical matters the chief Rabbinate directed the community. It will later be shown that this influence of the Chief Rabbinate waned as the community became quantitatively and qualitatively under the influence of Jews originating from Eastern Europe.

It would not be long, however, before the new infant began to assume some of the semblance of an 'enfant terrible'. It would be a mistake to analyse the relationship between the Cape and the Chief Rabbinate in too simplistic a form. On the one hand, it was the most typically Anglo-Jewish cleric ever to serve the South African Jewish community who described the office of Chief Rabbi as "a dangerous and superfluous anomaly".3 On the other hand, a breakaway community of Eastern European Jews who set up their own congregation because they were dissatisfied with the manners and mores of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation's Great Synagogue looked to the Chief Rabbi in London for assistance in sending them a minister trained at an English university.4 Thus, the relationship expressed itself in differing ways, at different times, and through different personalities.

John Simon is a veteran contributor to Jewish Affairs and a long-serving member of its Editorial Board. This article is based on his paper originally delivered in 1993 at the International Academic Conference "Patterns of Migration 1850 – 1914" under the auspices of the Jewish Historical Society of England and the Institute of Jewish Studies University College, London and published in their booklet containing all the relevant papers.

A brief comparison of the salient dates is useful to illustrate how the development of the position of Chief Rabbi in England over the last 1½ centuries related to development of the South African community. The term of office of Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell (1802-1842) came to an end just after the establishment of the first congregation in Cape Town. Hirschell must be regarded as the very earliest of the "anglicised" Chief Rabbis. Indeed, Roth comments that Hirschell "had hardly been able to keep pace with the anglicisation of the community during his pastorate".5 Hirschell therefore had little, if any, impact on the infant congregation⁶ but the community of barely twenty families nonetheless made offerings to charity when the news of his death reached Cape Town in 1843.7 This indeed is cited by Roth as one of the grounds for arguing that by the time of his death, Hirschell had come to be regarded as the spiritual head of Ashkenazi Jews throughout the British Empire.8

The term of office of Nathan Marcus Adler commenced in 1843. By 1879, his failing health necessitated the appointment of his son, Herman Adler, as "delegate Chief Rabbi". Herman Adler's own term of office as Chief Rabbi commenced in 1891 and terminated with his death in 1911. During the time that Nathan Adler was in active control, the South African community consisted of no more than the Cape Town congregation and a scattering of small communities in isolated country areas. It was whilst Herman Adler held the reins of office, first as delegate Chief Rabbi from 1879 and then as Chief Rabbi in his own right from 1891, that the community grew, developed and expanded, in particular in Kimberley following the discovery of diamonds⁹ and in Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand generally following the discovery of gold.10 In addition, as is well known, substantial numbers of Jewish immigrants came to South Africa from Eastern Europe in the wake of the increase of antisemitism and pogroms in Russia following the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881. We will see therefore that it was during the Herman Adler years that the influence of the Chief Rabbinate grew and reached its apogee, and under his successor Joseph Herman Hertz, who held office from 1913 until his death in 1946, that this influence gradually waned. Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie and Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jacobowitz were regarded with the respect and consideration due to their positions and personalities, but South African Jewry looked elsewhere for spiritual direction and guidance.

The fact that the impact of the office of Chief Rabbi waxed and waned in the manner which has been discussed derived particularly from the fact that there was never any constitutional or formal component in the relationship and also because of the demographic changes which took place in the community.¹¹ The Chief Rabbi exercised a moral authority, but only over those who were voluntarily willing to submit themselves to such authority. So it was that from the very beginning the Cape Town Hebrew, the mother congregation of South African Jewry, submitted itself to the authority of the Chief Rabbi, appointed ministers proposed and recommended by him, deferred to his decisions and sought his direction. However, it was not long before tensions arose in the tiny congregation and these related precisely to issues upon which the malcontents would not accept the authority of the Chief Rabbi.

Amongst the early issues which precipitated a clash between the dissident elements of the Cape Town community and the Chief Rabbinate were the questions of Shechita and cemetery control. In 1887, a controversy arose in the Cape Town Congregation concerning the control of the cemetery. More than forty years earlier, a plot of ground within the municipal area had been acquired by the Congregation and consecrated for use as a burial ground. In 1885, however, the Municipal bye-laws were amended to provide that all cemeteries had to be located outside the Municipal boundaries. A further tract of land was therefore acquired, but the authorities could at first not be prevailed upon to impose binding conditions in perpetuity ensuring that the control of the cemetery would always vest in the Congregation and that persons not belonging to the Jewish faith could not be buried there. The last requirement assumed no little importance because of the growing numbers of the community who were marrying women who were either not Jewish at all or who had been "converted" to Judaism other than in accordance with orthodox ritual. This led to a split in the community because there were some who were prepared to accept the land on the terms offered and administer it themselves without the sanction of the majority and more importantly without the permission of the Chief Rabbi. They became known as secessionists. A letter from Adler to the Cape Town Minister, Rev Joel Rabinowitz, dated 24 March 1887, is instructive both as to the matters dealt with in it and the somewhat magisterial tone adopted by the Chief Rabbi:

I have received a letter from Mr Elsner, the President of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, in which he brings a serious indictment against you in that you have consecrated a portion of the Maitland Cemetery as a Jewish burial place for a congregation which I have not recognised and in conjunction with a shochet whom I have not permitted to act The Executive of the Congregation inform me that they refuse to accept an allotment in the general cemetery for the following reasons:

- a) Because trustees refused to hand over the ground in perpetuity to the Jewish Community and would not give them absolute control over the Ground;
- b) Because there was no guarantee that persons not belonging to the Jewish faith would not be buried there;
- Because there was no Jewish representative on the Board of Trustees for proper separation of the various denominations.

These grounds seemed to be reasonable and in accordance with our law I most earnestly beg you to give the reasons which induced you to act in the manner indicated I was thoroughly displeased with the publication of a pitiful squabble in the *Cape Times*.....¹²

By June, the controversy was still raging and had extended to the issue of *Shechita*. On 30 June 1887, in a letter to Rabinowitz, Adler wrote:

We, my father and I, have given our full consideration to your letter of the 28th April The Congregation were fully justified according to Jewish law in making these two demands As it appears that the portion of the ground allotted to the secessionists was not granted to them for their absolute control in perpetuity, you were not justified in accordance with Jewish law in consecrating it I am grateful of the opportunity of advising you earnestly to use the influence you possess in the restoration of peace and harmony among the Jewish residents in Cape Town I am pleased to learn from you that you have induced the secessionists to desist in partaking of the Shechita of Mr Salom and that they draw their meat supply from the butchery for whom Mr Mizrachi sent out by me, act.13

However irksome the involvement (those on the spot may well have regarded it as interference) of the Chief Rabbi may have been, the fact is that his laudable aim was achieved. A cemetery was consecrated in accordance with Jewish law for the sole use of the Jewish community; the unity of the community was restored and maintained and the integrity of the *Shechita* arrangements was defended.

The authority of the Chief Rabbi in matters concerning ritual slaughter was an issue which frequently arose in places other than South Africa. The matter in fact came before the English courts in the case of Scholtzvs Adler, in which a butcher sued the Chief Rabbi for damages for having declared the meat sold by him unfit to be eaten by Jews. The judgment upheld the authority of the Chief Rabbi in matters of this nature. When Rabinowitz's successor, Rev A F Ornstein, adopted the same attitude in regard to the control of *Shechita* at the Cape, he earned the commendation of the Chief Rabbi. 15

The magisterial and autocratic attitude which has

been seen in the attitude of the Adlers is in accordance with their general approach to the dignity and responsibilities of their office. This has been described by Steven Singer as follows:

The concentration of all Rabbinical power in the office of the Chief Rabbi was little advanced during the middle of the century by Nathan Adler, who from the time of his arrival in England in 1845 devoted much effort to ensuring that no rival could emerge to challenge his authority within the Community. Adler's insistence on being the sole Rabbi in the British Empire led him to oppose the seemingly incontestable right of the Provincial congregations who were far removed from London to select theirown Rabbis to serve under the overall authority of the Chief Rabbi. ¹⁶

Given that the Chief Rabbinate was, as we have seen, a typical English institution which presided over an ecclesiastical dispensation largely fashioned on the Anglican Church and which was therefore shot through and through with English customs and practices, one can understand how it was that the Jews of Cape adjusted without difficulty to this control from London. Yet we find that even in the robust and less polished atmosphere of the Transvaal the measured tones of Imperialism, even if expressed in the Jewish idiom, held sway. In fact the Chief Rabbi's Letterbooks and correspondence files reveal that by 1894, correspondence with Johannesburg had become much more frequent than with Cape Town. The size of the growing Jewish community on the Witwatersrand in turn meant that new problems would be encountered with increasing frequency about such matters as divorce, conversion, funeral customs and the like. All this meant an increasing need for guidance from London; guidance which was needed just as much in the Transvaal Republic as in the Cape Colony. This "little imperialism" attained perhaps its apogee when after the proclamation of the South African Republic by the Boers under Kruger, Adler wrote to a Minister in the Transvaal on 31 October 1989 as follows:" Please inform me for whom you pray in the הנוחן תשועה the Transvaal not forming part of the British Empire?"17

The liturgy followed in all South African synagogues was taken over almost entirely from the English *Minhag*. It must be remembered that all over the world, there was little variation in orthodox liturgy and so even Jews from Eastern Europe would have little difficulty in adjusting themselves to the services conducted by ministers trained in or appointed from London. Almost invariably, the Singer prayer book¹⁸ was used. Except for those who might have brought festival prayer books with them from Europe, it was the so-called 'Routledge' Machzor¹⁹ which was usually purchased and used by South Africa Jews. For more than a century, South African barmitzvah boys recited the barmitzvah prayer composed by Adler. Before

Herman Adler became delegate chief rabbi, he was formany years Minister of the Bayswater Synagogue. Whenever possible, he urged the South African congregations to follow the customs and style of that congregation.²⁰

The authority of the Chief Rabbinate was, however, always stronger and lasted longer in the Cape than in the Transvaal. It must be repeated that the links were never formal or juridical, although sometimes congregations would solemnly write to the Chief Rabbi "formally placing ourselves under your jurisdiction", as did Riversdale to Adler on 5 December 1901. Reports on progress of Ministers and congregations were regularly sent to the Chief Rabbi's Office.²¹ The links were strongest when most urgently needed by the growing South African community. The two single and related events which drastically reduced the Chief Rabbi's influence in the Transvaal were the election of J H Hertz as Chief Rabbi in 1911 and the establishment shortly thereafter of the first Beth Din in Johannesburg, presided over by Rabbi Dr J L Landau. There was a deep and bitter antipathy between Landau and Hertz;²² and once the Beth Din was established and maintained, it was unnecessary for South African Jews to look to London for religious divorces, conversions, etc. A growing band of ministers appointed to the various congregations in the Transvaal ensured that there was a sufficient body of authority which, if not of the highest Talmudic standards, was sufficient to cater for the modest ecclesiastical needs of Transvaal Jewry. While there remained some ministers who chose to continue their contacts with Hertz, either because of their association with him during his Johannesburg days or because they did not get on with Landau, this was never of any significant impact. Finally, the point has to be made that at no time did the Chief Rabbis of England attain in Orthodox Jewry anything of the power and eminence exercised by the great Orthodox giants of Eastern Europe, such as the ChatamSofer, Chofetz Chaim or Chaim OzerGrodzinski.

In Cape Town and Durban, the links were maintained for a longer period, partly because of Cape Town's Reverend A P Bender's personal friendship and loyalty towards the Adlers and later Hertz and also because the colonial atmosphere prevailed longer in the Cape and Natal, and the Jews of the Colony were by and large happy to adapt to it.

The status of the Anglo-Jewish Rabbinate between 1840 and 1914 has been examined by Michael Goulston. This is precisely the period covered by the present paper because, as has been mentioned, the establishment of a Beth Din in Johannesburg shortly after the departure of Hertz, which was followed by the appointment of Landau as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Transvaal, led to the decline of the influence of the Chief Rabbinate. Goulston shows that what the congregations of Great Britain sought in their ministers were "to deliver religious discourses in English.....to act as competent lecturers and teachers to expound the principles of Judaism from the

pulpit in choice and earnest language to have a general education equal to the highest type of his community". ²³ Very different were the requirements of the smaller congregations in South Africa. Thus we find the congregation at Van Rhynsdorp seeking a "qualified *Shochet* who must likewise be a good *Mohel*, teacher and *Chazan*". ²⁴ The Benoni community sought a *Chazan* and teacher and would give preference to a candidate who was also a *Shochet* and *Mohel*: "the type we require is the Russian/ Hebrew scholar with an English secular education ... rather than the English born Jew with a knowledge of Hebrew'. ²⁵ The Muizenberg congregation required "an excellent teacher and powerful preacher". ²⁶

These examples are illustrative but by no means exhaustive. It is clear that these "kolboiniks" ['knowit-alls', or in this context, Jacks of All Trades – ed.] who depended in many ways on the goodwill of their more illustrious colleagues in the large city synagogues came to look less and less to London and more and more to Johannesburg and Cape Town for guidance and direction. By 1913 the South African Jewish Chronicle, in an editorial following upon the election of Hertz as Chief Rabbi, could express the view, "as far as the South African community is concerned, the new Chief Rabbi will have little to do".27 This was even more the case when powerful and highly qualified Rabbis came to occupy pulpits, such as Israel Abrahams in Cape Town (1937) and Louis Isaac Rabinowitz in Johannesburg (1945). Furthermore, whereas many of these kolboiniks were at least conscious of having owed their original appointment to the influence or recommendation of Adler or Hertz, congregations seeking ministers, particularly after World War II, frequently looked to the United States and even more often, after 1948, to Israel.

The Chief Rabbis' influence in South Africa might have been stronger and lasted longer had they had a more sympathetic understanding of the everincreasing numbers of South African Jews of Eastern European background. In 1888, there was a schism in Johannesburg not unlike that which we have seen in Cape Town. Adler wrote to one of the lay leaders discussing the proposed formation of another congregation which "would have benefited those Hebrew residents who are less cultured and unhappily less strict in their commercial dealings". Examples of similar slighting references to Jews of Eastern European background are legion.

Nonetheless, by the time the factors leading to the decline of the Chief Rabbi's influence took effect, the influence of Anglo-Jewry as exerted largely through the incumbent Chief Rabbi had left a permanent and indelible mark on the shape and structure of South African Jewry.

Until long after the war, one hardly ever found in South Africa little synagogues of the "shtiebel" type. Synagogues were as large and substantial as the means of the congregation permitted and basically followed types of architecture adopted in England, especially regarding the internal seating arrangements, the situation of the bimah, wardens'

boxes etc.

There has been a certain amount of speculation as to why the Reform movement came to South Africa comparatively late, i.e. 1933, nearly 100 years after the first Reform congregation was formed. One of the factors frequently quoted is that the South African community from the earliest days of Herzl was strongly Zionistic.²⁹ The influence of the Chief Rabbinate may well have been another factor in disinclining the South African community to accept the principles of Reform. As early as 1903, the *South African Jewish Chronicle* printed in full a trenchant sermon by Adler against Reform Judaism³⁰ and again in 1909, the same journal printed another sermon by Adler entitled "Suicide not Reform".³¹

Even though lay leaders of the various communities were increasingly of Eastern European origin and no doubt mocked some of the fashionable characteristics of the English Rabbinate, they yet felt that ministers trained in England would have a better understanding of the South African community. Johannesburg, and even more Cape Town, resembled London or Manchester far more than they resembled Riga or Ponevez.

Another factor which bears mentioning is that as South African Jews continued their upward social mobility, they found their place in the English rather than the Afrikaans section of the population, and it would therefore naturally be English manners and mores to which they would be attracted.

The ceremonial aspect of religious observance occupied a more prominent part in English practice than in Eastern Europe. The Chief Rabbis were careful to ensure that the South African congregations were furnished with forms of service and suitable prayers for State occasions. The Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887 and the coronation of Edward VII in 1901 were amongst the occasions on which South African congregations led by their ministers recited special prayers and followed an order of service prescribed by the Chief Rabbi. More sombre matters, however, were dealt with in the correspondence between the Chief Rabbi's office and the daughter communities of South Africa. There are frequent enquiries on behalf of the distressed wives and families of Jews who went to seek their fortunes in the gold mines or on the diamond fields, appealing for maintenance or the price of a ticket or in the last resort for co-operation in the grant of a Get. Not all the Jewish immigrants to South Africa were of good character. Many disappeared without trace or took up with unsuitable companions, and indeed there were sufficient of them who engaged in immoral courses to cause concern not only in London but in Cape Town and Johannesburg.³²

In 1920, Hertz embarked upon what was somewhat grandiloquently called in his book commemorating the event "The First Pastoral Tour to the Jewish communities of the British Overseas Dominions".³³ In other countries, this may have sealed "the Status of the office [of Chief Rabbi] as one of Empire-wide significance" as suggested by Roth;³⁴ but in South Africa, it proved to be less than

a complete success. Landau, who by now was Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Transvaal, saw to it that he was out of the country so that he did not have to meet, far less welcome Hertz. The proprieties were maintained and the prescriptive banquets, addresses of welcome and expressions of goodwill were offered and exchanged. There was a particularly warm welcome in the Cape spearheaded by Bender, a great friend and devotee of Hertz. (Bender called Hertz "the acknowledged leader of World Jewry" and Hertz reciprocated by describing Bender as "a most popular and respected figure not only in the Jewish community but also in the general life of the Cape Colony"). The most significant indication of the Chief Rabbi's influence by this time, however, was that his efforts to raise funds for the Jewish War Appeal during his visit achieved minimal success.

There was one consequence of the role created by the British Chief Rabbis for themselves, which in a strange way created a reverse reaction in South Africa. In his review of the status of the Anglo-Jewish Rabbinate between 1840 and 1914, 35 Michael Goulston examined the inferior status enjoyed by Jewish ministers as a combined effect of the autocracy exercised by the Chief Rabbinate and the ignorance and improper conduct of the lay leadership. There was to emerge in reaction to this "oppression" a new generation of ministers, often the sons of those who had suffered under the previous regime, who were determined no longer to endure the slights and inferior treatment, not to mention inadequate remuneration, meted out to their forbears. Some exemplars of this new generation took office in South Africa, notably L I Rabinowitz in the Transvaal and Israel Abrahams in the Cape. Indeed, some of their congregants considered that these incumbents had permitted the pendulum to swing too far the other way and that they and their communities might have benefited had they shown a little more of the human touch. But there can be no doubt that they were inspiring preachers, teachers and administrators and powerful personalities who wielded a strong influence on their communities in religious and social matters; an influence which was mainly to the good and helped to maintain a vibrant and homogenous community.

Yet one more factor must be mentioned, which probably owes a great deal of its prevalence to the fact that South African Jews became accustomed during most of its first century to have a Chief Rabbi to look to. This is the emergence in South Africa of what has become called "the Chief Rabbi syndrome". When the two principal congregations of Johannesburg completed their merger in 1915, it was part of the agreement that Dr Landau would become "Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Transvaal". Most of the Transvaal's congregations recognised his authority as such,³⁶ as did Durban and Bloemfontein and most of Natal. But this aroused fury in the Cape and those congregations which did not recognise the person or the office, particularly when, as was inevitable, Landau was often described in the Jewish press and elsewhere as

"the Chief Rabbi". 37 The same position was held by L I Rabinowitz after his appointment in 1945, much to the chagrin of, amongst others, Rabbi Abrahams in Cape Town, who put in train arrangements to have himself appointed "Chief Rabbi of the United Orthodox Hebrew Congregations of the Cape Province and South West Africa". So their loyal adherents recognised Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz in Johannesburg and Chief Rabbi Abrahams in Cape Town. The Reform Congregation would in turn appoint a Chief Minister. There were never more than 120 000 Jews in South Africa!

This unsatisfactory position came to an end because during the term of office of Bernard Moses Casper as successor to Landau and Rabinowitz, there was no Orthodox Rabbi of equivalent status or personality in the Cape. The lay leadership, perceiving the benefits to be derived from unification, formed the "United Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa" and shortly before his departure for Israel in 1987, Rabbi Casper was appointed as South Africa's first Chief Rabbi. The first person to be appointed to this position from the beginning was Rabbi Cyril K Harris, who took office in 1987 and was generally recognised as leader and spokesman of Orthodox Jewry in South Africa.

The point to note in conclusion, however, is the following: Bender, Rabinowitz, Abrahams, Casper, Harris - all these were products of Anglo-Jewry under the direction and control of the UK Chief Rabbinate. Hertz and Landau were at least products of the best Western European tradition. These were the powerful and influential figures who moulded South African Jewry, a community which still prides itself in being 90% Litvak. The development of South African Jewry has been described as "pouring Litvak spirit into Anglo-Jewish bottles". If so, the shape of the bottles decisively determined the maturation process of the wine. The authority is long gone, but the influence remains.

Notes

- 1 Cecil Roth, "The Chief Rabbinate of England", in Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962, p261.
- 2 For a brief account of the congregation's early history and development,see my article 'The Cape Town Hebrew Congregation: The Early Years 1841-1937', CABO, Vol. 5 No2 1991 (Historical Society of Cape Town).
- 3 Hertz to Landau, 30 January 1914. Landau Archives, Hebrew University, Arc. 798/43/C.
- 4 Letter New Hebrew Congregation to Hertz 12 November 1914. It is interesting to note that amongst those to whom the appointment was offered and whogave it careful consideration was Reverend Dr Daiches. See his letter to Hertz 30 December 1915
- 5 Roth, op.cit.
- 6 Roth (op.cit., p257) is however incorrect in suggesting that "in South Africa with excess of zeal, it was actually considered impossible to establish a synagogue until a scroll of Law had been brought out with the London Rabbi's licence". The newly formed congregation in fact endeavoured to obtain a

- scroll from Frankfurt in Germany, but the latter community declined to furnish one without the Chief Rabbi's licence. See records of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, Manuscripts and Archives Department, University of Cape
- 7 A more unusual tribute to the departed Chief Rabbi was an obituary in High Dutch published in the journal "De Verzamelaar" of 7 February 1843 edited by South Africa's pioneer journalist, Joseph Suasso de Lima, a Jew converted to Christianity.
- 8 Roth op.cit., p257
- 9 In 1867
- 10 c. 1870
- 11 For information concerning population development in South African Jewry, seeA ADubb, 'Jewish South Africans', Grahamstown, Rhodes University, 1977.
- 12 Chief Rabbi's Letterbook No. 96, Letter 1359. For information concerning the records of the Chief Rabbinate cited throughout this paper, see my paper "New Archival Material relating to the Early Development of South Africa's JewishCommunity: Some Preliminary Observations" in R Musiker and J Sherman (eds), Waters Out of the Well, Johannesburg, Library of the University of the Witwatersrand, 1988.
- 13 Chief Rabbi's Letterbook No. 96 Letter 2788.
- 14 Ibid, Letter 498.
- 15 Adler to Ornstein 10 April 1894.
- 16 Steven Singer, 'The Anglo-Jewish Ministry in Early Victorian London' in Modern Judaism, Vol. 5 No. 3, October 1985.
- 17 Adler to Reverend P Wolfers, Barberton, 31 October 1889.
- 18 This book of Daily Prayers was first published in 1890 and by 1961 had gone into 26 impressions. It continues to be reissued and reprinted. It takes its name from Reverend Simeon Singer who prepared the English translation. It is worth noting that on the Hebrew title page appears the words בּוֹלְילוֹכ (according to Polish rite) but this did not prevent the Singer Siddur being used throughout South Africa with its predominantly Litvak make-up almost exclusively until the 1980s.
- 19 This took its name from the publishers Routledge & Sons Ltd. Here again the Hebrew title page bears the rubric בהנמכןילופ.
- 20 Writing to Reverend S Rappoport of Port Elizabeth on the 24 November 1885, Adler remarked ".... You are not required to shape your congregational affairs and mode of worship after the model of a fashion street Havurah, but of the Bayswater Synagogue which is conducted on Orthodox lines and crowded verySabbath with a congregation of intellectual men and highly cultured women" (Chief Rabbi's Letterbook 96 Letter 3842). To Reverend Wasserzug of the Park Synagogue of Johannesburg he wrote: "I should imagine that the service whichsatisfies the cultured congregations of the Bayswater and the Newport Synagogues should also be congenial to the members of your congregation."
- 21 Examples of these are Reverend M H Konviser of Kimberley writing on 23/6/1927, Reverend A Levy of East London writing on 26/2/1924, and the President of the Durban Congregation writing on the 30/6/1905.
- 22 For a full account see my chapter "Pulpit and Platform: Hertz and Landau" in M Kaplan and M Robertson (eds) Founders and Followers: Johannesburg Jewry 1887-1915, Cape Town, Vlaeberg Publishers 1991.
- 23 Michael Goulston, "The Status of the Anglo-Jewish

- Rabbinate 1840-1914" in *Jewish Journal of Sociology* Vol. X No. 1, June 1968.
- Van Rhynsdorp Congregation to Hertz, 8 November 1921.
- 25 Benoni Congregation to Hertz, 5 May 1925.
- 26 Muizenberg Congregation to Hertz 13 June 1930.
- 27 South African Jewish Chronicle (hereafter SAJC),21 February 1913.
- 28 Examples of similar slighting reference to Jews of Eastern European background, on the part of the Adlers, and sometimes even Hertz, and their adherents, age legion.
- 29 When a move started in the early 1930s to introduce the Reform movement intoSouth Africa, the protagonists appealed to the World Reform authorities not to send emissaries to South Africa who were known anti-Zionists. Letters from David Dainow, then Editor of the S A Zionist Record to Miss Lilian Montagu, 2 May 1930 and 4 June 1930, in the Archives of the World Union to Progressive Judaism.
- 30 SAJC, 16 January 1903.
- 31 SAJC, 3 December 1909.
- 32 Adler to Bender 21 March 1889. Further on the subject of immorality and prostitution in the South African community see reference to primary sources in my paper referred to in footnote 12 above.
- 33 Oxford University Press, 1924.
- 34 op.cit.
- 35 See footnote 23, supra.
- 36 But some emphatically did not and in some quarters he was referred to contemptuously as "the Chief Rabbi of Wolmarans Street" where his synagogue was situated.
- 37 The London Jewish Chronicle of 27 July 1928 contained a reference to him assuch, as did the promotional material issued to advertise the launch of the South African Jewish Yearbook under the joint auspices of the South African Jewish Historical Society and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. All this was agitatedly debated in circles and amongst individuals who did not recognise Landau's authority as Chief Rabbi.
- 38 G Saron, 'The Making of South African Jewry' in South African Jewish Yearbook, Johannesburg, Fieldhill Publishing Co, 1965.

THE BNEI AKIVA YESHIVA AND THE FOUNDING OF JOHANNESBURG'S YESHIVA COLLEGE

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David Saks

Beginnings are always difficult, but once rooted in the right soil and if properly nurtured, the smallest seed has the potential to grow into a forest. So it happened that a part-time Torah-learning programme in Johannesburg attended by a small group of interested teenagers with part-time input from a few local *rabbonim* steadily grew over the years until it became today's Yeshiva College, South Africa's first and still by far largest, *Dati* (religious) Jewish day school system that today caters for well over eight hundred learners.

As it grew and developed, Yeshiva College also was involved, directly or indirectly, in the establishment of a wide range of other Torah institutions. Inter alia, the Yeshiva Gedolah of Johannesburg and Yeshiva Maharsha (both of which spawned day schools of their own) and the Shaarei Torah and Torah Academy schools all trace their origins to Yeshiva College initiatives. The success of Yeshiva College consequently mirrors, and is to no small degree responsible for, the strikingly rich and vibrant nature of Judaism in Johannesburg today.

While for many years it was erroneously believed that the establishment of the institution that in due course became Yeshiva College took place in 1952. In fact, one has to go back a few years earlier than that to trace the true beginnings of the institution. Around the time of the creation of the State of Israel, members of the small Hashomer Hadati movement (as Bnei Akiva was known back then) were already talking about establishing a Yeshiva in South Africa. What was envisaged at the time was not another Jewish day school to rival the newly established King David School in Linksfield, but rather a formally constituted programme through which traditional Torah study could take place, either on a full or part-time basis.

The first formal undertaking to establish a Yeshiva was made at the April 1950 Hashomer Hadati conference in Johannesburg when, at the urging of Rabbi Dr Michel Kossowky, a resolution to this effect was adopted. The resolution was ratified

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by the National Conference of Hapoel Hamizrachi. Soon afterwards, a subcommittee was constituted to work on this, comprising Sydney Katz, Issie Shapiro, Zelick Katz, Dave Wacks and Arno Hammerschlag.

A son of the much-revered Rabbi Yitzchak Kossowsky, who had arrived in 1933, Rabbi Kossowsky came to South Africa as a refugee from Europe in the immediate post-war years. He became the first Rosh Yeshiva and was centrally involved in the institution's affairs until his early death in April 1964.

Introducing formal Torah study for the South African Jewish youth in 1950 was a formidable challenge. It was a case of starting up from nothing in the face of overwhelming apathy and sometimes outright skepticism. Hammerschlag, who had fled Germany with his parents in 1936 and had been associated with the Adath Jeshurun community in Yeoville, later summed up the prevailing attitude when he said that the mere mentioning of the word "Yeshiva" was already considered treif ("In those days, if you suggested going to Yeshiva, people thought you were mad"). Both Mendy Katz and Joe Simon (later Yeshiva College treasurer as well as chairman of Mizrachi and the SA Zionist Federation) have confirmed that in certain influential quarters, the Yeshiva venture was received with anything but enthusiasm. According to Simon, one of the main arguments against the establishment of King David School in 1948 had been that Jewish children should rather learn to mix with non-Jews and not become ghettoised. When the Yeshiva appeared on the scene, he said, "the public felt we were regressing to the Middle Ages".

Rabbi Shmuel (Siggy) Suchard, one of the Yeshiva's first *talmidim* and first dean of Menora Girls High1 has a different perspective. Far from being looked down upon, he found that the small group of original Yeshiva learners were regarded with respect and not a little pride by the Jewish mainstream. If the Jewish community was still largely unobservant in the strictly Orthodox sense, it was nevertheless deeply traditional, and manifested a deep sense of loyalty to the Jewish religious heritage.

Given the widespread ignorance and low levels of religious observance in the community, the founders of the Yeshiva were realistic about what they sought to achieve. The institution, at least in its formative years, sought no more than to provide a higher level of Jewish learning than existed in most

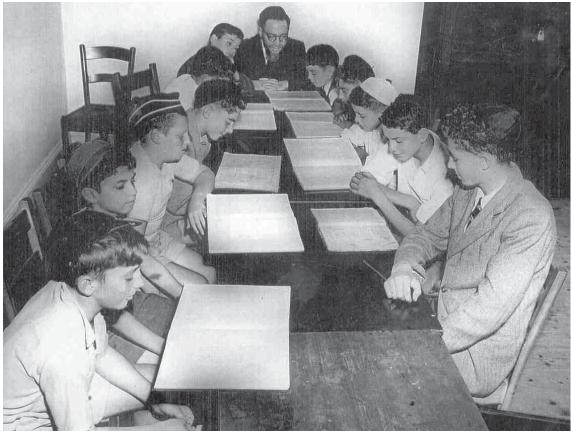
of the local *chedorim* at the time. Establishing a genuine Yeshiva equivalent to those that existed in Israel and the United States was obviously not on the cards for the time being. However, everything is relative. In a country virtually devoid of traditional Jewish learning, the new Yeshiva represented a major step forward for South African Judaism.

The days when Bnei Akiva, as Hashomer Hadati renamed itself in 1952, would be recognised as South Africa's leading youth movement were still a good four decades in the future. The membership was then too small to get what was at the time a revolutionary concept off the ground and outside the movement there was certainly not sufficient interest. Nevertheless, the movement's status as a full-blooded Zionist organisation was essential in garnering support for the Yeshiva at a time when Zionism dominated the Jewish communal agenda. Bnei Akiva today can justly claim credit for being the only Jewish youth movement anywhere to have founded a Yeshiva day school.

By the beginning of 1951, everything was in place for the launch of South Africa's first Yeshiva Katanah. *Shiurim* had already been conducted on an informal basis in the second half of 1950 (given by, among others, Rabbi Michel Kossowsky and Rabbi Baruch Rabinowitz of the Kensington shul) but strictly speaking the Yeshiva only began officially operating the following February. Shortly before the opening, Zelick Katz described the aims and

structure of the new institution. Noting that it would cater for both high school pupils and interested postmatrics, including University students, he then stated what Yeshiva College spokespeople would echo on numerous occasions in the future, namely that the idea behind the Yeshiva was "not so much to produce rabbis as to educate the lay community in specifically Jewish subjects". Why this point would have to be emphasised so often no doubt had something to do with the attitude of the *parnasah*-conscious South African *Baalei Battim* of the day, for whom the notion of learning for its own sake, and not with a view to entering a profession, was still very much a foreign concept.

The Yeshiva Katanah commenced with some forty part-time students divided into four classes, three in the afternoon and one in the morning. A large proportion of the students, but by no means all, were drawn from the ranks of Hapoel Hamizrachi and Hashomer Hadati. Because of the lack of suitable accommodation to house all classes at one central venue, the classes were divided between the Corona Lodge in O'Reilly Road, Berea, and the Beth Hamedrash Hagadol in Doornfontein. They first met in the afternoons at Corona Lodge under the guidance of Rabbi Kossowsky and Rabbi Baruch Rabinowitz. As all *rabbonim* would do during these formative years, both acted in a voluntary capacity. Subjects studied were "Talmud, Mishnah, Prophets, Laws and Customs and Ethics of Judaism".



Shiur at Corona Lodge, Berea, given by Rabbi Michel Kossowsky. From left (clockwise): Pinky Fisher, Eliyahu Illos, Joey Rosenbaum, Mendy Katz, unidentified, Rabbi Michel Kossowsky, Zalman Kossowsky, Irving Lissoos, Ben Isaacson, unidentified, Michael Wolfson

Among the first students were Ben Isaacson, Mendy Katz, Walter Serebro, Baba Davidowitz, Alec Bassin, Mike Wolfson, Pinky Fisher, Joey Rosenbaum, Joe Simon, Natan (Nossy) Super and Eliyahu Illos. Illos, who came to South Africa with his parents from Israel in 1951, remembers that Rabbi Kossowsky taught Gemara, Rabbi Baruch Rabinowitz Tanach and Shulchan Aruch (Chayei Adam) and Rabbi L Singer Mishna. The remaining three groups met at the Beth Hamedrash Hagadol. Joe Simon recalls that he and his fellow Bnei Akiva members walked long distances to attend shiurim. There was no question of any of the students studying full-time at this early stage, but it was stated from the outset that the intention was to develop the institution into an all-day Yeshiva.

As recounted by Mendy Katz, those early Yeshiva bachurim, pioneering idealists as they were, were also very much influenced by the popular culture of their contemporaries and hence existed in two distinct worlds:

Parallel to this world, we had the world of Dandy, Hostspur, and Beano comics, Rockfist Rogan hammering the Nazis, cricket, blazers of Athlone High School, Billy Bunter of the lower fourth and his creampuffs, the bugles and drums of the famous Athlone Band, the songs of Nat King Cole and Dean Martin and Gerry Lewis movies. Our teachers had to put up with all of this

Wolfy Pimstein later recalled that his motivation for joining the Yeshiva had deep Zionist roots. As a *Dati* Zionist, he believed that in order to play his part in the rebuilding of Israel as a Torah-observant Jew, he needed a deeper knowledge of Judaism than what the local *Chedorim* could provide.

Jewish leaders locally and overseas received the news of the first South African Yeshiva "with joy and enthusiasm" according to the *Zionist Record*. Letters of congratulation were received from Israel, the USA and England. One such message came from Chief Rabbi Isaac Halevy Hertzog of Israel: "I sincerely hope and pray that your Yeshiva will produce *Talmidei Chachamim*-distinguished Jewish scholars, who will to some extent fill the awful vacuum which has been created and will play their part both in Israel and in the Diaspora in reviving a true spirit of Judaism".

Mizrachi leader Zeev Gold expressed the hope that the success of the Yeshiva would bring about "the badly needed and long overdue" religious revival in South Africa: "The fact that in South Africa where there is such a great need for a Yeshiva the initiative should have been taken by young South African-born people is extremely commendable and you deserve every blessing", he said. The Yeshiva would be responsible for realising the highest Mizrachi ideal, which was the spreading of the study of Torah. He expressed the hope that the students might one day come to "continue their studies in Zion, where they will play their important

role in the spiritual development of Israel".

Parktown premises, 1953-1956

The first three years of the Yeshiva Ketanah, now called the Bnei Akiva Yeshiva, were spent alternating between temporary premises in Doornfontein and Berea. Clearly, it was not the ideal way to run an institution for which so many had such high hopes, but at this early stage there was no prospect of actually acquiring a property. The solution was happily provided by the Mirkin-Seeff families, who in November 1953 made their spacious home and grounds at 8 Victoria Avenue, Parktown, available rent-free to the Yeshiva. It placed the Yeshiva on an entirely new footing, paving the way for the appointment of a full-time Dean and the enrolment of the first "full-time students" (in the sense that they physically lived at the Yeshiva and attended daily afternoon classes). The one-and-ahalf acre property today forms part of the campus of the Johannesburg College of Education. It had dormitory facilities for full-time students if required.

With the premises issue so felicitously settled, and by now sufficiently established to qualify for a small monthly allocation from the United Communal Fund, the institution was now ready to proceed to the next step, that of establishing itself as a full-time Yeshiva while continuing to provide programmes for part-time students. By mid-1954, plans were afoot to turn the Parktown headquarters into a fully staffed Yeshiva Centre, with live-in students who would continue their secular education at local schools and universities but be based at the Yeshiva and devote a certain number of hours to Talmud and cognate subjects. In July, Rabbi David Sanders arrived to take up the post of dean of the Bnei Akiva Yeshiva. He would hold that position for the next eight years.

Recording Rabbi Sanders' contribution to the growth of Yeshiva College, The Yeshivite of 1978 stated: "His energetic labours yielded remarkable results, and the magnificent complex in Glenhazel that now houses the Yeshiva College is a tribute to his guidance and energy". Like his successor, the future Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi A H Tanzer, and the first Rosh Yeshiva of the College's Yeshiva Gedolah Rabbi Azriel Goldfain, he was a Telz graduate. He hailed from an established rabbinical family, with one grandfather, Rabbi Shlomo Aaron Wertheimer, being a noted Biblical commentator and the other a rabbi in Jerusalem. Still a young, unmarriedy bochur himself when he arrived (he subsequently married Edith, sister of Rabbi Shlomo, Issy and Natie Kirsh), he was passionate, dynamic and deeply committed, probably just the right man at the right time at this pivotal time in the institution's history.

At the time of Rabbi Sanders' arrival, some fifty students were attending the Yeshiva's classes, mainly schoolchildren, but with groups at Wits University and the Medical School as well. Rabbi Sanders was to be assisted by the Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Kossowsky, Rabbi Baruch Rabinowitz, Rabbi Joseph Bronner

and other voluntary lecturers.

In singling out those outstanding individuals who played the leading roles in establishing Yeshiva College and seeing it through the difficult formative years, the name of Rabbi Bronner stands high on the list. Not forgetting Rabbi Kossowsky's crucial pioneering role, cut short by his early death, and the outstanding contribution of many other individuals over shorter periods of time, he was one of an elite handful of dedicated lay leaders who can be said to have rendered the most sustained and valuable service to Yeshiva College over the years. A diamond merchant by trade, his involvement with the institution extended to delivering shiurim, fundraising, serving as chairman of the Yeshiva College council from 1958 to 1962 and thereafter as president into the 1990s. Equally important was the contribution of his wife, Leila Bronner, after whom the girls high school was named in 1980. Among other things Dr (later Professor) Leila Bronner, a lecturer in Hebrew at various institutions in Johannesburg, was the co-founder and first chairlady of the Ladies Committee of the Yeshiva. Dr Bronner was a graduate of the Beth Jacob Teachers' Seminary of America as well as of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Selecting four of the more advanced students, the Yeshiva embarked on the experimental project of a full-time Yeshiva in August 1954. The *Zionist Record* of 26 November of that year features a report and a rare photograph of the Yeshiva in action, showing the four youngsters, Wolfy Pimstein, Eliyahu Illos, Nossy Super and Mendy Katz attending a *shiur* by Rabbi Sanders. It was an image of Jewish youth that few South African Jews had been exposed to up until then outside of nostalgia-generated retrospectives of *shtetl* life. The prevailing image of a Talmud scholar was that of a wizened, white-bearded old man; the Yeshiva was challenging the stereotype.

The four idealistic teenagers, who by committing themselves to a permanent, regulated live-in learning routine on the Yeshiva's premises effectively comprised its pioneering class, went on to follow widely differing career paths. Each, however, remained committed to the Jewish values and ideals that had motivated their decision in the first place. Mendy Katz went into the rabbinate. After leaving South Africa, he learned at the Telz and Baltimore Yeshivot and went on to become Senior Ram at Kfar Ha'roeh, near Hadera.

Nossy Super, who came from a *Shomer Shabbat* home in Warmbaths, went on to teach Hebrew at the Hebrew Teachers' Seminary. Wolfie Pimstein studied agricultural engineering at Pretoria University and Eliyahu Illos studied chemical engineering. Mendy Katz remembers that Illos, a gifted mathematician, was considered "one of the biggest brains" at Athlone and a big catch for the Yeshiva.

For the four live-in students, the day's programme was a lengthy one. After getting up for *davvening* at 06h30, they would attend school in the mornings

(all four went to Athlone Boys High), return to the Yeshiva in the afternoons for lunch, complete their homework (supervised by Rabbi Sanders) and then commence learning with Rabbi Sanders, usually finishing late at night. Several of Rabbi Sanders' talmidim, in a joint letter to the Zionist Record some years later, paid warm tribute to their rebbe's dedication, whether it meant "staying up all night with a sick boy, playing sports or patiently teaching and instilling a love for Torah in children who were raised in an atmosphere quite devoid of Judaism's greatest heritage".

Food was supplied by the Carmel Hotel in Yeoville, on the corner of Muller and Grafton Roads (and which subsequently served for a long time as the premises for the KollelYad Shaul). It was delivered, Illos recalls, by one of the hotel butlers on a bicycle. Illos remembers Rabbi Sanders as "very dedicated, very sincere" and often quite emotional ("he used to cry when we were naughty"). Despite the daunting schedule, the boys' general studies did not suffer. On the contrary, as the *Federation Chronicle* put it in March 1955, since they had been in full-time residence they had "shown remarkable progress in their secular day school work".

Under Rabbi Sanders' tutelage, the boys were introduced to new ways of thinking and behaving. Such concepts as genaivas daas now meant not listening to records in the local store unless one wished to buy them, and going to mixed swimming (once taken for granted) was now no longer acceptable. Though the four boys took their work seriously, there was a lighter side as well. Mendy Katz recalls how he and his fellow students, in honor of their heroes in the Transvaal Scottish Regiment, formed their own "regiment", called the "Yeshiva Scottish". Marches of the Athlone Band like "Cadets" and "Airforce" were sung to words from a passage in the Gemorah in Bava Metziah. To overcome feelings of being out of place at school by their head coverings, the boys hit on the idea of wearing straw boaters with the school band around it, thereby inadvertently starting up a new fashion and reviving an old-fashioned public school tradition.

Shabbat at the Yeshiva was always a special time, particularly after the numbers of full-time residents had swelled to the point where *minyanim* became possible. Mr Seeff had his own Sefer Torah, and the room where it was kept became the *Beit Medrash*. It was a source of great joy to Mr Seeff, who daily would get up when it was still dark and say *Tehillim* until *Shachrit*, to have a *minyan* in his home.

The establishment of a full-time Yeshiva, the first venture of its kind to be introduced to Johannesburg and South Africa, and the appointment of its first dean, was celebrated at the Coronation Hall in Johannesburg at the end of August 1954. Describing the step as a turning point in the life of South African Jewry, Rabbi Kossowsky noted that this was the first time outside the State of Israel that Bnei Akiva had undertaken to create such an institution, and also the first time in South Africa

that a Zionist movement had taken the initiative in forming an educational institution.

Other speakers at the function also stressed the importance of both Judaism and Zionism in contemporary Jewish life. Jedidiah Blumenthal, on behalf of the S A Zionist Federation, extended greetings to Rabbi Sanders. The Zionist Federation welcomed two types of immigration, he said. One was the immigration of Jews to Israel and the other was the migration of people like Rabbi Sanders to South Africa. World Jewry was now recognising the necessity of Judaism, and Bnei Akiva were to be congratulated on their initiative in creating this new institution.

In reporting on the progress of the Yeshiva in November that year, the *Zionist Record* said that Talmud, *Tanach*, "with a fine attention to all the classical and modern commentaries", *Shulchan Aruch* and Hebrew (speaking, reading and literature) were being studied. "Of special interest" was the study of Jewish history, which brought to life "all great Jewish events and personalities of the past. The boy studies the memorable happenings of his people's history and they become the background for his understanding of present-day Jewish problems".

Love of Israel and the ultimate goal of settling there was instilled and inculcated in the students, the Zionist Record report continued. The Bnei Akiva Yeshiva intended serving a three-fold purpose. First, it aimed to "fit out spiritually those of its *chaverim* who wish to settle in Eretz Yisrael so that they may be spiritual as well as physical chalutzim and understand fully the concept of Torah Ve'Avodah". Next, it sought "to produce a well- educated Jewish laity from which will come the future communal leadership of SA Jewry". Only third on the list was mentioned its role as a vehicle whereby "those of its students who are capable and interested in serving the Jewish community to receive that education which will fit them for the role of Rabbi, teacher or shochet".

The year 1955 began with nine full-time students and by the start of the winter term in April, the number had increased to twelve, their ages ranging from 14 to 17. Students attended various high schools around the city before returning to the Yeshiva, where a full programme including time for homework, recreation and higher Jewish studies had been put in place.

Speaking at a garden party that formally opened the Winter term of that year, Rabbi Kopul Rosen, a prominent UK rabbinical leader and educationalist and one of the first of many world-renowned rabbinical leaders from abroad who would provide much-needed words of *chizuk* (encouragement, strength) for the Yeshiva during their visits, urged the Yeshiva to strive for the highest standards, and not to be distracted by calls to fit in with the way the mainstream community was conducting itself. It was not necessary to be "adaptable", he stressed. A tree was firmly planted and could not be moved, whereas the chaff moved wherever the wind blew it.

In the same way, a person who was adaptable and able to find his place anywhere in reality found his place nowhere. The Yeshiva was "unadaptable" and therefore the criticism which it sometimes received for "not fitting into the stream of life" should not be taken seriously.

Graduation ceremony, December 1956

In December, coinciding with the conclusion of the Parktown phase of the Yeshiva's existence, an important milestone for the young Yeshiva was celebrated when four of the original talmidim departed to continue their studies overseas. They were Siggy Suchard, David Fine, Mendy Katz and Shmuel Himmelstein, the first three going to Telz and the fourth to the Baltimore Yeshiva. At the same time Zalman Kossowsky, Rabbi Michel's son, was going to Ponevez in Israel. He had not been associated very much with the Yeshiva and presumably had studied privately under his father, although during the very early days he certainly attended at least some of the classes. However, he subsequently returned to South Africa, serving as Rav of the Sydenham-Highlands North congregation and teaching in the Kodesh department of the Yeshiva. Rabbis Yitzchak, Michel and Zalman Kossowsky thus had the collective distinction of producing the very first grandfather-to-grandson rabbinical dynasty in South Africa.

Not forgetting several past students, such as Ben Isaacson and Mike Wolfson, who had previously left to study overseas, the foursome were effectively the first graduates produced by the Yeshiva following its establishment on a more permanent, formally constituted basis under a full-time Dean.

At the farewell function for the departing graduates, held on 12 December in the Coronation Hall, Rabbi Kossowsky commented that South Africa had now entered a new era of providing young men of learning. The South African Jewish community had always been generous in its support of Israel and had always been praised as an ideal community, he said, but at the same time it could not be denied that Yiddishkeit was lamentably weak.

"We are now producing our own scholars and learned men. It is a new trend and gives promise of the rich harvest that awaits us in the future" he said.

As always, and predictably in a community where advancing the Zionist cause took precedence over almost everything else, there were others who took a less favorable view. One outraged correspondent to the *SA Jewish Times* (4 January 1957) insisted that the youths should rather have fulfilled the Bnei Akiva ideal by going to Israel instead. Chief Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz, perhaps anticipating such objections, said that America was one of the greatest centres of Jewish learning in the world. He compared the departure of the five *bochrim* to the pre-war practice of American Jews going to study in Europe, after which they would return to enrich American Jewish life:

A Yeshiva is not a professional institution for turning out rabbis. The Yeshiva's role is to do away with ignorance and imbue Jews with a love and knowledge of Judaism. Whatever these boys may decide to do, they will justify themselves by raising the spiritual standard of South African Jewry and, by their example, fervor and love.

Rabbi Rabinowitz continued that the boys should regard their trip as "a sacred mission", following which they would return and make their mission more widespread than it was. With characteristic eloquence, he invoked the example of the Torah giants of the past who had defied the odds to establish thriving Torah communities in the unlikeliest of places:

The terrain here is not easy, but they should keep before them the examples of Rav and Rashi who, facing and overcoming every adverse circumstance, were responsible for Talmudic learning taking root in Babylon and France. These five students from our own Yeshiva represent a sublimation - quantity is being distilled into quality.

More typical of the average Jewish South African's attitude to the Yeshiva of the time was the way the *SA Jewish Times* reported on the farewell function. While dutifully commending the enthusiasm and commitment of the Yeshiva's supporters, there was more than just a hint of damning with faint praise, if not of downright skepticism, in the unidentified correspondent's report:

A spiritually elevating and fervent atmosphere prevailed at the BneiAkiva Yeshiva anniversary reception, which was combined with a farewell to five students from the Yeshiva [Zalman Kossowsky was included here] who are leaving for overseas to further their studies. And they were not just bearded old men and women with



Mendy Katz speaking at the farewell function for the five bachurim who were departing for overseas Yeshivot, December 1956.

From Left: Unidentified, Chief Rabbi L.I. Rabinowitz, M. Katz, Rabbi M. Kossowsky, Rabbi D. Sanders, Rabbi J. Bronner, Mrs S. Gervis, Unidentified sheitels, relics of an irrevocable past, who came to do homage to traditional teaching. There was a healthy sprinkling of youth in the gathering for whom these things are more than an echo from the past. Whatever the intrinsic merit of their beliefs, one could in one moment sense that they are rooted and have a goal in life which is more than can be said of a very large part of the rising generation

The somewhat dismissive reference to "bearded old men and women with *sheitels*, relics of an irrevocable past", and the revealing use of the word "their" (as opposed to "our") beliefs no doubt characterizes the kind of mindset that the Yeshiva pioneers came up against when it came to fundraising and enrolling new pupils.

Rabbi Sanders optimistically declared that people had begun to believe in the Yeshiva as part and parcel of communal institutions in Johannesburg. When he had first arrived two years previously, he said, people had declared that there was no place for such an outmoded institution. That night's graduation ceremony surely had confounded those naysayers.

No doubt all this was true to a degree, but clearly only the first tentative steps had been taken in the quest to create a culture of Torah-learning in South Africa. Certainly, the Yeshiva's small student body had no illusions about the task that lay ahead. Said Mendy Katz: "It is holy work, and we hope to prove ourselves worthy to carry the banner of the Torah. There is still much work to be done. The youth in our midst are growing up bereft of spiritual values. The Torah needs new minds and new energy, in the way a flame must be fed with fuel".

Of the four graduates, the most sustained contribution to Jewish life in South Africa was provided by Rabbi Suchard, both as the first dean of the Menora Girls School and afterwards as the rabbi of the newly-founded Bet Hamidrash Hagadol in Sandton and as a Dayan on the Johannesburg Beth Din. A member of a very traditional Jewish family affiliated to the Berea shul, he had joined the Yeshiva at the start of 1955, boarding at the Parktown premises and attending school at nearby Parktown Boys High in the mornings. Despite the double schedule of secular and religious studies, he still found time to captain the Parktown Boys athletics team for two vears and represent Southern Transvaal as well. At the end of 1956, he was faced with a choice of representing South Africa at the Maccabi Games or going to Yeshiva. He chose the latter. It was not by any means the only sacrifice he was called upon to make. During the first eight of the eleven years he spent at Telz, in the course of which he got married, he never saw his parents once, or even, for that matter, spoke to them on the telephone. The first time he saw his father again was at the bris of his son. This was a common experience for religious children who learned overseas at this time, when regular return visits for Yom Tov (as is common today) were a luxury most parents could not afford.

Rabbi David Fine also spent a number of

productive years in South Africa after returning from Telz in the early 1960s. He served on the Yeshiva College teaching staff and afterwards took up a position as assistant rabbi in Durban. Ultimately, however, he followed his fellow graduates Rabbis Shmuel Himmelstein and Mendy Katz to Israel, where he currently works at Mizrachi Bank in Tel

For the remainder of the decade, the Yeshiva was based in Berea, using the premises of the Berea shul. During that time, the institution was to take the next logical step, that of converting itself from an after-hours, still largely part-time institution to a fully-fledged high school, at which Torah study would be accorded pride of place.

The Bnei Akiva Yeshiva, after seven years of low-key but steady growth, had now entered a new phase of its existence. Henceforth, it would be a fulltime high school integrating both religious and secular studies within a single curriculum. On 15 January 1958, 15 boys arrived at the Berea shul communal hall to commence their Standard Six year. They were the pioneering class of Yeshiva College.

Notes

Now a Dayan of the Beth Din and long-serving Rav of the Sandton's Bet Hamidrash HaGadol congregation.



Four of the five boys who left to study overseas, December 1956. From Left: Mendy Katz, Zalman Kossowsky, Siggy Suchard, Sam Himmelstein

Heaven **Earth**

"We celebrated Pesach/Shavuot ... and now are celebrating Rosh Hashanah to be followed by our fast on Yom Kippur. Let us always remember the connection between Heaven and Earth and continue to study the Torah and being imbued by its wisdom and understanding, right through the year and continue to improve ourselves every year like a spiral going up high."

> Wishing you a good year and well over the fast. **Bonne Annee and Good Yomtov** Yours 'Mon Ami' Geff Geffroy

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WHY KOL NIDREI?

*

Sheila Saffer

It has always puzzled me that Kol Nidrei occupies pride of place in the whole line-up of prayers of our High Holy Days – Yamim Nora'im – the period from our Jewish New Year to the Day of Atonement. Why is this prayer perceived by most to be the focal point of the whole season, one defining and highlighting the awesome moment that ushers in Yom Kippur?

While many of our Jewish community in Johannesburg may not be regular worshippers, the one night they will be sure to come to shul is the eve of Yom Kippur. They would not dream of being absent on this night of all nights. The majority of the community presents itself precisely and punctually for the chanting of this prayer of all prayers.

I remember going as a child all the way up Harrow Road and beyond to the Berea shul for Kol Nidrei night. Of course, those were the days when it was full to capacity – standing room only for me – but no matter. Everyone had to stand for the full hour that Kol Nidrei lasted – with Chazan Mandel (z"l), the cantor, giving forth to the total enchantment of all, especially the 'mevinim af chazones' – the cantorial cognoscenti.

Three times the prayer would be intoned, with the full choir's backing and the tension mounting with each repeated haunting rendition. One could almost sense everyone holding their breath throughout the 'performance'; an almost electric experience - the shul overflowing and all standing silent with suppressed excitement and awe.

I remember the ladies in the front row – the 'ringside seats' – where my mother and aunt always were, together with everyone else, bedecked in their Yom Kippur finest. If you weren't wearing a mink stole, you probably didn't have one. Nothing was too smart for this occasion, the pinnacle of the shul year, Guipure lace and at least pearls, if not your very best diamonds. And of course, there was not a thought in those days about any crime threat outside.

For some perplexing reason, the younger, more attractive women saw this night as a challenge to look their sexiest - toss out all classic notions of any prescribed pristine white! Casting all concepts of *tzinius* (modesty in dress) to the winds, they would present themselves in drop-dead little black numbers with the most daring décolletages - as in later years they would tantalize in the mini-est of minis. Fortunately or unfortunately, there was in those days no *mechitzah* – no dividing screen to obstruct

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the viewing of the magnificent ladies' gallery by the men below, standing resplendent in their shiny white *taleisim*.

When the congregation finally sat down after the full hour, it was for once almost a relief just to listen to the rabbi's sermon and to breathe normally. It was as if Yom Kippur was now officially 'open'.

It seemed clear then that Kol Nidrei was the unquestioned leitmotif of Yom Kippur. What did that mean? And what does it mean? After all, none of us standing there had come to renounce any vows. Did we even notice that Kol Nidrei was being recited before nightfall, before the usual time of evening service? This is because it was in the day, during official business hours, that the judges of old sat in office to do their work, including the annulment of all types of oaths that people had made.

Incidentally, as we stood reciting Kol Nidrei, who knew or even cared what the difference was between oaths, vows, prohibitions, 'konam-vows', or konas-vows'? Well, maybe a few in our shul assembly did – Talmudic scholars like my father praying in the men's section below and his counterparts. For the rest of us, the majority, the relevance escaped us. Why was the Kol Nidrei prayer the central focus of the evening's service when the literal meaning (that is about the renunciation of our vows), if we thought about it at all, was not regarded as applicable?

Predictably, our ever-present detractors have liked to seize on the literal meaning of the prayer to offer it as proof that Jews cannot be trusted to keep their word. Not so, according to our rabbis and sages, who explain that the prescription contained in this prayer for the cancellation of vows refers exclusively to vows made between man and G-d, and is certainly not a formula for reneging on vows made between man and man.

Furthermore, the commentators stress that the recitation of this prayer is to emphasise the extreme gravity that the Torah attaches not only to formal vows and oaths, but to the general concept that one must keep one's word. The prayer, say the rabbis, is to remind us of the importance of scrupulously honouring our commitments.

Others explain the prayer as harking back to some of the darker times of our history, preserving vestiges of the Spanish Inquisition. They refer to the forced converts (variously called *anusim*, Marranos or *conversos*) – members of the Jewish communities of Spain and later of Portugal who were compelled, on threat of death, to take on vows of allegiance to Christianity. Kol Nidrei begs absolution from such forced oaths.

However, the clear inclusion of the Kol Nidrei

prayer in the ornately beautiful Nuremburg *Machzor* (prayer book) of 1331, recently exhibited for the first time at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, is proof that this prayer certainly predated the persecutions and final expulsion from Spain of the Jews by Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand in 1492.

According to Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo, the scholar Joseph Bloch proposed a theory in 1927 suggesting that Kol Nidrei was already instituted in the Seventh Century, when the Visigoths forced Spanish Jews to convert to Christianity. In secret services organised by such Jewish converts on Yom Kippur eve, they would beseech G-d's forgiveness with the recitation of Kol Nidrei to renounce the vows forced upon them.

If the latter were indeed the first group of anusim, Marranos or conversos, we are at present a long way from those days and even from the times of the victims of the Spanish Inquisition. Why, then, are we still reciting this prayer? Is it not an anachronism?

For this reason ostensibly, there have been some rabbis who have condemned its rendition; furthermore, there have been lengthy periods of time when Kol Nidrei had been suspended from the liturgy, only to be restored later to its pride of place in the Yom Kippur *machzor*.

Developing the Marrano line of thought, Rabbi Cardozo accounts for the retention of the Kol Nidrei prayer in current times by proposing that many of us are akin to Marranos even today, in the sense that we adopt false gods or 'take vows', as it were, to strange 'isms' — Socialism, Marxism, Ethical Humanism and other ideologies and philosophies foreign to Torah Judaism. For these sins, he suggests, we come to atone on Yom Kippur when we recite Kol Nidrei and renounce all these oaths of foreign allegiance and return 'home' to the true G-d.

Quite a different perspective on Kol Nidrei was held by Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (z"l), who taught in South Africa over several years. His explanation was drawn from Kabbalistic sources. Just as we are renouncing our oaths, we are petitioning the Almighty to follow suit and declare null and void any promises He has made to destroy us for our iniquities. Here, we put forward a different answer to the riddle of Kol Nidrei.

Kol Nidrei is at the beginning of the Day of Atonement. We have come to be forgiven in the event of our having committed any sins, and because we are hoping and praying for our names to be inscribed and sealed in the heavenly books for a Good New Year. We are assured that Repentance, Prayer and Charity will see us through to such a Year. That is what we are busy wishing everyone else and that is what they are wishing us.

Repentance means acknowledging what we did wrong, regretting it, and undertaking not to repeat it. So what are we thinking? Have we all just come to keep the 'real sinners' company? Clearly, all the material in those long lists – each line beginning with "and for all the sins we have committed by" that we recite with the beating of our breasts – would hardly seem to apply to us!

But, are we not supposed to be more conscious, awake, attentive and active about identifying all the things we have done wrong in the previous year, to have pondered over it in the last forty days, starting at the beginning of the month of Elul? Has it not been incumbent upon us to expose any bad habits we may possess; to remember when we said the wrong thing or when we hurt others; where we failed to help when we could; where we ignored the needy, and forgot the old, the bereaved, the sick and the lonely; when we were tactless, disrespectful, aggressive or nasty, or when we were just a tiny bit lazy or greedy, wasteful or perhaps even lustful?

And what are we supposed to do about it anyway? That is how we are, how we are made, how G-d made us in fact.

So here's the rub: having identified and acknowledged our sins and shortcomings, should we not, in fact, be undertaking to change, seriously, by making a strong commitment to do so? Should we not perhaps be taking a promise to change?

Did we use the word "promise", thereby going to the level of taking an oath?

Yes, indeed, and that is the idea. Maybe we should be making promises, oaths and vows to change specific behaviour patterns, things we have been doing wrong that we have identified, especially over the last ten days of repentance, and in the month preceding that. We have been thinking about all the behaviour that needs fixing. Now is the time to promise to fix it, to reform, to behave properly and to begin to do the right thing.

Can it possibly be that just before sunset Erev Yom Kippur is the exact moment in time that has been designated for us to swear to G-d that we will change for the better; and that Kol Nidrei is the exact mechanism for doing so? This discussion raises two questions: Why do we need to make oaths to change, and if Kol Nidrei encapsulates the formula for change, why is it about the cancellation of vows, and not about making them?

The Ten days of Repentance starting with New Year, brings us to Yom Kippur, which presents us with the final challenge for change. After reviewing our behaviour of the past year we may have identified a problem and decided, 'I really have to go on a diet; or stop smoking; or beating the children; or committing adultery. I really must.' But how do we do it? It is clear that talking or accepting an obligation to do something, or having the best intention, or trying one's best, doesn't necessarily work.

But do we really need to make oaths to modify our behaviour? Surely there are simpler methods, not so radical? Indeed there are numerous schools of psychology and a multitude of systems and techniques developed to address exactly this issue of how to bring about change; so does the concept of taking an oath do anything different or better than can be achieved by all those other approaches?

What is different is that an oath is to G-d, and that makes it serious business. Breaking the oath carries consequences. On a mundane level, we know that in court there are penalties for perjury. On a religious

or spiritual level, we can likewise understand there will be consequences for breaking an oath.

The Torah (Numbers XXX, 2, *Mattos*) tells us, "This is the thing that Hashem has commanded. If a man takes a vow to Hashem or swears oath to establish a prohibition upon himself, he shall not desecrate his word; according to whatever comes from his mouth he shall do". The subject of oaths has been addressed by commentators such as the Rambam. Suffice it to say for our discussion here that we are given to understand that the penalties of breaking a promise are extremely severe.

The threatened consequences are dire - such as to cause our Rabbis to warn us not to go there.

I remember that as a young girl (probably just before Batmitzvah age) my father came to request of me never to make a promise. I hadn't thought about oaths at all at that age, but I seemed to grasp intuitively the seriousness of his admonition. Whatever way I understood it, I certainly respected the solemnity of the injunction and I have never to this point in my life made a promise. This does not, of course, mean that I don't take on and keep commitments just as anyone else does – but I have always taken care not to verbalise anything in the form of a promise.

Similarly, when a religious Jew takes an obligation upon himself that might be viewed as promising something, he qualifies his declared intention with the words "bli neder", literally "without a promise". Nevertheless, he is totally committed to carrying out what he said and fully intends to do it. The bli neder formulation is used as a caveat to avoid the awful consequences alluded to above, that are not generally spelled out.

To put it more simply, what is being suggested is that the Kol Nidrei prayer is a safety net that we

are setting up in case we fail at the important task we are meant to be undertaking. It is about making New Year resolutions as it were, but with one big difference – we are clapping an oath on them.

The cynical may say, "What's the point? You promise and then say 'bli neder', without a promise. You are making vows to change and you say, 'I cancel all vows I may make.' Who are you kidding?"

We answer that the intention is to make a serious and proper oath to G-d, and the Kol Nidrei prayer may be viewed as a protective 'bli neder' format. That is, I solemnly swear to G-d that I will do X, thereby becoming bound to do it, without considering that I have said Kol Nidrei. I have to treat my oath as if there were no Kol Nidrei, no bli neder, no safety net. I must take it with the integrity that befits a real and formal oath. I cannot claim that I did not do the action X because it was too hot, too cold, too wet, too late and the like. Nothing short of an act of G-d should stop me.

The Kol Nidrei prayer may be viewed as representing the intersection of the challenge to change with an affirmation of our Faith.

On Rosh Hashanah, we acknowledge G-d as the King of the Universe: all-seeing, all-knowing and – what we want here – our all-forgiving Father. During the *Aseret Y'mei Teshuva* – Ten Days of Repentance – we are encouraged to hone in on our sins and identify what needs repair or reform. Finally, on Yom Kippur we should be making oaths to G-d to change any behaviour that calls for it.

Viewed in this context, the Kol Nidrei prayer is not something nebulous, nor is it just a nostalgic remnant of times gone by. In truth, it is an eternal gift, a formula that offers a solution to the question of how to succeed in changing one's errant ways in real repentance.

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THE KLERKSDORP JEWISH COMMUNITY: A SHORT HISTORY

*

Peter de Jong

Klerksdorp, it was once believed, would "grow to rival Johannesburg in size and importance". Gold had been discovered in 1886 and the following year public diggings were proclaimed and a mining commissioner appointed. Within weeks, the population of the rustic dorp grew to 3000. Gold was the magnet, the opportunity to accumulate untold wealth the attraction. A certain group of adventurers, who had previously tried their luck on Kimberley diamond diggings, then on the Lydenburg/Pilgrims Rest/Barberton gold diggings, arrived. The common threads were that they were Jewish and that they were 'Masons.'

When this group first came to Klerksdorp is not known. The brothers George and Joseph Horwitz are said to have arrived at the end of 1886. Archive records of the *Zuid Afrikaanshe Republiek* show that M. Nathan, T. Sonnenberg, and F. Kohn had all appealed to the State Secretary to establish themselves as 'market master, auctioneer and doctor' in the district in 1888.² When they formally constituted the "Hebrew Congregation" is not known, but by then a sufficient number had settled for 38 persons to petition the State President of the South African Republic "for land to bury their dead". The cemetery was consecrated a year later on 24 August 1889 by Rev Joshua East (anglicised from Mizrachi).³ It would take another fourteen years before the synagogue was built.

In August 1888, the *Klerksdorp Mining Representative* (KMR) began publication. This newspaper, which later changed its name to *The Klerksdorp Record*, continues publication this day. Newspaper reports and legal notices of establishment or dissolution of partnerships, company reports and community news, are the source of a list of recognisably Jewish names, which by the end of 1889 approached 100. Unless otherwise referenced, this newspaper is the source of all the information contained in this article.

Three characters deserve specific mention. **Charles Sonnenberg** was the acknowledged leader of the Jewish community. He had fought in the American Civil War, made his fortune on the Kimberley diamond fields and been involved with the Lydenburg/Barberton gold rush, before moving to the Klerksdorp diggings. His wife had laid the

Peter de Jong is a long-serving member of the committee of the Klerksdorp Hebrew Congregation, of which he has been a member since 1966. His article on the history of the congregation appeared in the Pesach 2003 issue of Jewish Affairs.

cornerstone of the Kimberley synagogue. Sonnenberg's occupations are described variously as stocks and shares Broker, agent for S. Solomon and Co. and auctioneer. His other interest was Masonry. The 'Charter' meeting of the Thomas Gardner Masonic Lodge (1988) reads like a congregation attendance list: "Bro. Charles Sonnenberg was voted to the Chair proposed by Bro. Rosenstock... that it is advisable in the opinion of this meeting to form a Lodge... seconded by Bro Boaz. Carried unanimously. Proposed by Bro. Levein...to apply for a charter... Seconded by Bro. Walters." After the stock market crash, Sonnenberg returned to Vryburg, where he was elected to the Cape Legislative Assembly as the representative for Paul Sauer's Afrikaner Bond Party.

The Treasurer, Louis Emanuel, had earlier served as Secretary for the defunct Witwatersrand United Hebrew Congregation. Well educated at three universities, he soon became prominent in town affairs. The KMR reported that ".... an urgent need in our town is in the most capable hands of Louis Emanuel". He figured prominently in the affairs of the Stock Exchange and was probably their Secretary. The partnership "De Beer, Emanuel and Company" is prominent in advertisements in the KMR. It must have been a stormy association, for it was dissolved with a great deal of bitterness in 1890, a short time before the collapse of the Stock Exchange. Emanuel was arrested and charged with 'fraud and embezzlement'. Sonnenberg and "another' posted two bonds of £500 each and Emanuel moved back to the Witwatersrand. The reports of the trial intimate that Louis Emanuel did not have much patience with the slower De Beer and often criticised him in front of the staff. A company floated by Emanuel, 'The Klerksdorp Board of Executors', brought the issue to a head. De Beer accused Emanuel of keeping for himself the commission from the sale of shares to Sonnenberg, commission that was due to the partnership. The charges could not have held water because within months of his return to Johannesburg, Emanuel had been elected to the Sanitation committee. The Standard & Diggers News reports, with undisguised glee, a 'tongue lashing' given by Emanuel to Julius Jeppe in a meeting of this Board.

The **Rev. J M East** was born in Palestine. In Cape Town, he served in the dual capacity of "shammus and shochet". There he had met Sophie, a girl so young that the Chief Justice of the Cape Colony had to give permission for them to marry.⁵ In Klerksdorp, he was appointed the Honorary

Minister. Within months of his arrival in Klerksdorp, the *KMR* printed an interesting "Editorial" extolling the virtues of "kosher" meat. He remained after the Stock Exchange crash in 1890 and throughout the Anglo-Boer War. The Commander of the British Garrison in the town was less than flattering in his assessment of East, describing him as "a subordinate Jewish Priest of the lowest rank; employed to prepare Kosher meat. Reported to be anti-British..." Reverend East remained in Klerksdorp until the consecration of the synagogue in 1903. He represented Transvaal Jewry at the re-interment of President Kruger, and went on to become the minister for the Jeppestown Hebrew Congregation in Johannesburg.

The *KMR* reports the first Rosh Hashanah services to have been held "in a building on the Market Square, the Rev. Pincus officiating". In 1890, the service was conducted "in the side room of Mr. Samuel Nathan's store". From 1891 until the synagogue was built, services were held in the Stock Exchange Building, owned by Mr R. Hanson.⁷

Building a synagogue was always the priority on the agenda. Two conflicting accounts of how the ground was granted to the congregation exist. The story in the KMR refers to a 'one man delegation' sent to President Kruger to resolve a church dispute between two Dutch Reformed congregations. He asked Mr. Shapiro to accompany him "because of his knowledge of the Bible". Shapiro "... used the opportunity to ask the President for ground for a synagogue for the Jewish community". Another version credits Joseph Horwitz with making request, whilst he was on a trip to Pretoria to renew his liquor license. Either way, two erven were granted by the State. The cornerstone of the building was laid in 1902 and the synagogue building was consecrated in 1903. Interestingly, Horwitz's name does not appear on the congregation board. As a POW in the lately concluded war, he had not yet been repatriated from St. Helena

The Jews were a conspicuous and colourful element on the diggings. As with Catholics, they had no franchise in the Republic's Volksraad. Communication with the government was through resolutions at local meetings put to the Potchefstroom Volksraad member under whom the Klerksdorp District fell. Sonnenberg and Rev East had much to say. On the subject of the franchise for Jews and Catholics, Sonnenberg was most vocal in advocating they be granted the vote. Interestingly Rev East, who opposed him, felt such a resolution to the Volksraad would jeopardise "the granting of other rights". The KMR reports "...Sonnenberg thanked the government for remitting the duty on bread ...but thought they should go much further... and do away with the duty altogether". Another of his resolutions was "to urge the erection of suitable public buildingsand provide the Magistrate with more clerks". He also supported the extension of the railway through Kimberley to Klerksdorp and Johannesburg

The congregation engaged in every normal

activity. They were butchers, bakers, shopkeepers, grain merchant, doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, hoteliers and barmen. All can be identified from advertisements in the KMR. The Brothers A and J Bernhard were secretaries and as secretaries of the Klerksdorp Sporting Club were probably Klerksdorp's first 'bookies'. There was a smattering of industry amongst the congregation. Balkind and Kohn were jewellers while Barnie Arenstein had exhibited and won awards for his cigars at the Paris and Berlin Exhibitions. Arenstein set up a manufacturing facility in the town and advertised for youngsters to be apprenticed to him. Most significant was the link with Paul Kruger's industrialist friend Sammy Marks. The 'Agent for the Hatherley Distillery' and Vereeniging Coal were the brothers Mark and Fred Joseph.

Klerksdorp was the very essence of a digger town. Of the 200 new buildings erected, 69 were bars or places where liquor was sold. Jews figured prominently. "Mr. J.H. [Joseph Horwitz] guarantees that persons patronising this hotel [Klerksdorp Hotel] will meet with every comfort and convenience. BEST BRANDS OF LIQUORS ONLY KEPT." A hotel of significance was the Argyll Hotel of Josiah Levine ("First Class accommodation, comfortable single and double bedrooms, large Billiard Room with A1 size table, large stabling and attentive groom in attendance. Only Best Liquors Kept"). It was here that the executive met to conduct the business of the Congregation. The Lindenberg Brothers had listed all the qualities required of "The Central Hotel in the Rietkuil Goldfields near Klerksdorp".

The first recorded birth of a Jewish child that of "a daughter to Mr and Mrs Josiah Levine." The first mention of a marriage is a notice in German, Dutch and English reading, "Theodore Sonnenberg announces to the citizenry of Kaizerlauten, Lich and Klerksdorp, that he and Bertha Bing, daughter of the horse trader Abraham Bing, want to get married to each other". A burial was the first public function at which Rev. East officiated. The ten month-old Simon Lazarus Abrahams was buried on 24 August 1889 in the new cemetery. The *KMR* printed the *hesped* verbatim

All active aspects of community life in Klerksdorp today had their origin in these years. Concern and responsibility for fellow Jews was a given. The *KMR* advertised "A Concert in Aid of the Persecuted Jews in Russia". Fred Joseph, "a man with a fine voice", his wife Mathilda and daughter Nellie on the piano, were frequent performers. They also helped to raise funds for the Anglican Cathedral. Sadly, Nellie later died at the age of ten.

Following on the inaugural World Zionist Conference in 1897, Klerksdorp formed a local Zionist Association the very next year.⁸ Avram Kirson would represent Klerksdorp at the establishment of the South African Zionist Federation in 1905.⁹

Locally, charity was an ad hoc affair. When "the popular Arthur Schiff" was declared insolvent, his

belongings were auctioned and the community raised his fare back to England. The Chevra Kadisha was founded in 1906 and provided a more organised function thereafter.

The Anglo-Boer War split the congregation into factions, some supporting the Republican cause and others the British. For the British, the Gordon brothers appear in a picture of the Town Guard. The only congregation fatality among the Boers was Herman Lindenberg, killed in an attack on a blockhouse outside Kimberley.10 Joseph Horwitz was captured commandeering horses for the Boers and shipped to St. Helena. The occupation of Klerksdorp closely resembles the script of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. It was first surrendered to the solitary Captain Lambart, who raised the Union Jack himself. His supporting squadron was thirty kilometres away in Hartbeestfontein, sent to guide a garrison back into the town. In turn, Lambart left town six weeks later, believing himself to be surrounded by a commando of 2000. Two months later, the British reoccupied the town. It had changed hands three times without a shot being fired.

Notable amongst those who stayed in Klerksdorp for the duration of the war were Rev. East, Wolf Carliss and Maurice Lipman. The latter would later become the Market Master and President of the synagogue when it was consecrated.

Antisemitic outbursts are found in the correspondence to the *KMR*, but these seem to have been the exception rather than the rule. Interfaith relationships were generally cordial. Thus, the side room of Samuel Nathan's store was used by St. Peters Anglican community until they built their church while Wolf Carliss donated the land for the Methodists to build their church as well as the bell for the new Dutch Reformed Church in Newtown.

Jews themselves did not seem to have had the expertise to mine their claims. Herman Abt had to advertise for "an experienced prospector..." to do the job for him. "Claim Jumping" was a problem. At a special meeting Herschel Cohen was "cheered to the echo for his denunciations of the common thieves, robbers, rogues and scoundrels". Less flattering is a letter to the KMR, which stated "We are entitled to a little more than the claptrap nonsense Mr Cohen treated us to on Thursday night". The real value the Jews brought to the diggings was knowledge and experience in raising investment capital for mining. Much of this came from the profits on the Kimberley diamond diggings. Jews were very prominent in the formation of the Stock Exchange. This was "very active at the start, and many a fortune was made or lost with never a sod being turned or a rock broken. While it flourished, over 150 companies, probably all of them mining, were listed. A reckless trade developed in shares and claims, many of which were worthless. Inevitably the bottom fell out of the market at the end of 1889 and by January 1890 the Exchange closed down with brokers and investors alike vanishing into thin air".11 The Exchange had acquired a reputation for "swindlers, cheats, and insider trading". Although six mines continued

production, capital for the further development of the gold field was severely jeopardised for many years.

Prominent amongst those who left were Sonnenberg, Emanuel, and Cohen. Membership of the congregation dropped to forty. One report says there were "...5 families and 20 bachelors, most of whom were barmen".

After the Anglo-Boer War, the congregation grew steadily. The goldfields had never ceased production and after 1945 experienced exponential growth. With this came a new influx of Jews. By 1966, the congregation numbered 200 families.

The Jewish community has always been prominent in the activities of the town. A 1910 photo of the volunteer Fire Brigade shows three congregation members amongst them. A number have served as Town Councillors. Many have served as Presidents and Chairmen of the Lions and Round Table service clubs. Five were Charter Members of the Klerksdorp Rotary Club. A 'Masonic type Lodge', the Hebrew Order of David, operated in the town for a number of years.

In 2011, the population of Klerksdorp is half a million. Gold mining remains the most important industry. The 'Masons' are now almost defunct. The Jews have land to bury their dead. They have built three synagogues in the course of their history in the town, and a *minyan* still congregates every evening for prayers. Moses lived for 120 years. The Klerksdorp Hebrew Congregation has survived for an equal time-span.

Notes

- 1 Thomas Gardner Lodge, Minutes 1888
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RACHEL CLAIN: A JEWISH IMMIGRANT'S STORY

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Edna Bradlow

As Joachim Pinz notes,¹ Jews have always been immigrants, forced at times to leave centuries-old homelands, rebuilding their lives. Rabbonim ensured that Jewish rituals and beliefs continued to be observed even under changed circumstances. This was the experience of my grandmother Rachel Clain (born Sher), who left Telz, the shtetl (village) in Lithuania where she had been born, to come out to South Africa.

The number of Jewish immigrants to South Africa rose from 900 in 1863 to 12 800 in 1893. That was the year my grandfather arrived, to be followed three years later by his family. This huge migration increase between 1863 and 1893 should be taken in conjunction with the situation in Russia which, as will be explained, deteriorated commensurately.²

It is not necessary to trace the origin of the Jewish population further back than 1772, in Poland. At this stage the Eastern European Ashkenazis (westerners) numbered about a million, and were increasingly coming under Russian control. Though these new Russian Jews were, in the early days, on the whole professionals of varying degrees, the tsarist rulers nevertheless discriminated against them. Language was an important issue. The use of Yiddish (a mixture of German and Hebrew) remained the lingua franca for conducting their affairs, spoken by the majority of Jews. This was however, replaced by the use of Russian, and to a lesser extent, Polish and German, in the promulgation of public documents, or the ability to hold the principal offices.³

Hebrew was the Jews' literary language; but by 1850, prose in Yiddish was emerging (in writings such as Sholem Aleichem's). Where Jews formed small town communities, they resuscitated their own traditions, remaining faithful, for example, to their Hasidic (pietist) teachings, and the administration, by secular authorities, of the strict rules of morality. Consequently, the shtetl served to maintain Jewishness;⁴ and 'conversion was an unthinkable alternative'.

But with the breakup and partitioning of Poland at the end of the 18th Century, the tsars forced Jews to settle in their own quarters (ghettos), gated communities in the narrow strip of territory stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea, known as the Pale of Settlement. Physically of small stature, Jews were

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readily identifiable, forced to take names and wear clothing which maintained their segregated existence, and forbidden to move about freely.⁵

By 1897, there were some five million Jews living in the Pale, cut off from the rest of the world and still speaking Yiddish as their mother tongue. Families were crowded into houses (in the worst part of town), which were primitive and rarely clean. Male society was pre-industrial, their cultural premodern, nourished by Jewish sources alone. Prohibited mainly from owning land, exposed to other forms of social and economic discrimination, they made their living by 'trade and artisanship'.6 The shtetl's essential concerns were regarded as, and remained communal. The inhabitants developed an exclusive system of education (which will be referred to presently). They found the Bible 'a solid and enduring source of inspiration' which gave them assurance they were G-d's chosen people.⁷ It took precedence, before enlightened, secularised Jews, over the traditional study of the Talmud (codified oral law). But Jewish piety has two significant aspects8; the home (that is the family-Chaim Bermant's Walled Garden) where live Judaism flourishes; and the synagogue, home of the intellect, where Jews prayed three times a day, and were sustained by the Torah.

Mention of the synagogue, where the traditions (barmitzvah, religious marriage ceremony and so forth) of Judaism are practised, brings Rachel Clain into focus, largely with reference to her personal background. Telz, her birthplace, was situated in the Kovno gubernya (Russian administrative district), from which the majority of South African Jews of Eastern European origin emigrated. Once a great centre of Jewish learning, it contained one of the major yeshivas (Talmudic seminaries), and other educational institutions in Russia in the period 1875– 1941.9 Concentrating, as noted in the *Encyclopaedic* Dictionary of Judaism, 'on the development of acuity in profound logical analysis' students studied 'the Bible, the tractates of the Talmud and the commentaries on both.'10

My grandmother's father was a scribe (*Soyfer*), 'a sacred profession'. In ancient times writing was regarded as a divine institution, and the scribes were trained by the priesthood. In modern times their work involved 'providing the manuscript scrolls of the *Torah* (the sacred scroll containing the five books of Moses)', and biblical passages required for *Mezuzot* (*Torah* verses attached to a doorpost) and *Tefillin* (phylacteries).

'A scribe is guided by strict rules, when writing

Torah scrolls and other ritual texts', which are his chief occupation. 11 He wrote the Torah for those who could not do this themselves. A scribe thus occupied an exacting as well as a sacred profession. He was obliged to purify himself at the ritual bath (mikvah) before starting to write. He was required to say a blessing each time he pronounced G-d's name. His copy of the Torah had to be flawless, for it is against the religious laws to change anything. The letters must be perfect. The page on which the scribe had made a mistake must not be thrown away, but cut out of the scroll, and retained in a special place in the Synagogue.

The top scribes were consequently proud of their workmanship. But the work was slow and costly (both regarding the scribe's efforts and the acquisition of his material). Thus my grandmother as a young girl in Lithuania had been exposed to what might virtually be described as a strict academic environment, even if by emulation.

Conditions in the ghetto, prior to the emigration of her family at the end of the 19th Century, were unstable. 'Periodic natural disasters', such as fires, exacerbated the poverty in which the inhabitants passed their days.¹²

Other urgent reasons existed (and even possibly precipitated) such emigration. Jews in the ghetto could be ordered to move without prior notice, for example; the imminence or length of military service might be imposed precipitately on Jews and non-Jews, but not granted with the same rights as afforded to the latter. Consequently as soon as a Jewish boy had completed his service, he emigrated.

The political and cultural liberalism of Western Europe had not yet replaced the legal discrimination and violence which earned the term 'antisemitism', evident in the Russian attitude to Jews as 'an enemy'. Consequently the continuing harsh treatment meted out to them, particularly in the form of pogroms ('officially sponsored riots following Alexander II's assassination'), or other types of persecution such as that caused by the restrictive May Laws, resulted in huge Jewish emigration figures from Russia. Some two million left before the First World War. They headed primarily to the USA, and to a lesser degree to the pioneering villages of Palestine. ¹³

An alternative existed, and it brings me back to my grandmother's youth. In Lithuania and White Russia, the shtetls' response to the growing hostility developing towards its members, and their exclusion from the state educational system, was that every male be sent to the community 'cheder' (classroom), to learn Hebrew, and thereafter solely to study the *Torah*. (In other words the importance of traditional learning was perceived by Eastern European Jews as a possible response to the increasing popular hostility they were encountering). ¹⁴ This attitude, however, involved an accompanying belief in tsarist benevolence towards practising Jews; an attitude which the 1881 pogroms, and the subsequent May Laws, inevitably proved untenable.

Moreover, the inhabitants of the receiving countries (such as Britain, the British Empire,

Germany and France) to which thousands of Eastern European Jews fled, were frequently critical of the new arrivals. Gradually, however, the latter began 'to lose their 'foreignness', 15 advancing by their own efforts, in the social scale; or failing this, with the rise of industrialisation, becoming trade unionists; and publishing their own newspaper such as the *Jewish Daily Forward* (in Yiddish *Forverts*).

Now I return to my grandparents, and fit them into this background. After marrying in Telz, they went to Manchester, where Rachel's brother owned a raincoat factory. According to the historian Aubrey Newman, these workers used, accidentally, to sniff the glue with which they joined together the seams of the oilskin raincoats, consequently suffering from lung diseases. My aunt maintained my grandfather - a carpenter - had been accidentally hurt at his work. But the glue theory was more probable, and is reinforced by the fact that he was a fairly young manwhen he died during the 1918 flu epidemic.

To repeat; the majority of Jewish migrants to the late 19th Century Cape came from Lithuania, especially from the Kovno *gubernya*, ¹⁶ and were known as Litvaks. Emigration involved difficulties. Departure formalities ranged from processing the requisite exit documents, to sufficient funds to cover the cost of travel tickets for a family.

The Litvak arrival at the Cape had, however, been preceded by about a century when, with the First British Occupation in 1795, Jewish settlement officially began.¹⁷ There were a few Jews (of English origin) among the 1820 Settlers, such as the Nordens; but by 1859, Jewish numbers were only marginally bigger, comprising in the Cape Colony, outside Cape Town, mostly British and German traders, and a handful of professionals.¹⁸The Transvaal Republic soon followed the Cape's tolerant policy until after the Jameson Raid.

Thus, in the decade prior to the South African War, European immigrants experienced no entry restrictions on the whole. But near the turn of the 19th Century, as immigrant numbers were increasing (particularly with the exploitation of Transvaal gold), there was less enthusiasm for the new arrivals (especially the 'pedlar Jews' who tried to sell their products walking the streets). 19 Generally, however, it was the Asiatics who bore the brunt of this opposition. The 1904 Census for the whole of Southern Africa had given the Jewish total as 38101. The immigration legislation of 1913²⁰indicated that government policy still obviously avoided discriminating against Jews. Thus, for example, officials did not refuse to recognise fluency in Yiddish as a suitable language for statutory acceptance. Rather, compliance with the law was the determining

The last lap of the journey out of Lithuania to South Africa was the longest, but gave the least trouble. Received initially in England by Jewish institutions which offered useful advice,²¹ the immigrants proceeded generally in the steerage class of the Union Castle mail ships. This my grandmother did, bringing her four children, Gabriel, Louis, Leah

and Harry (all of them under the age of seven). At the Cape, they were joined by the birth of a further four, one of whom died as an infant, having apparently been dropped by his nurse.

My mother's account of that journey, derived largely from *her* mother's memories, recalled the large numbers of soldiers travelling with them, presumably to reinforce the British Army for the anticipated hostilities against the Boers.

A major problem for Jewish travellers was laying in a stock of kosher food for the large numbers of women and children joining their menfolk who had preceded them, in classic migrant pattern. But as the travellers' numbers increased, so too did the supply of such food.

The statistics for 1906-7 reinforce those of 1904, and show that Jews were increasingly determined to make the various parts of South Africa their permanent homes, not least because of favourable local economic developments (such as the mineral discoveries); and increasing violence in Eastern Europe. This growth in Jewish working class numbers aroused some resentment even amongst secularly educated, middle-class Anglo-German Jews. But gradually, for example in rural areas, Jews began to mix with their Christian neighbours (compared to their formerly purely Jewish business dealings); or went a step further, emulating the social life of earlier Jewish arrivals. Successful migrants like Sammy Marks, who came from the area close to the Prussian border, gave a positive stimulus for other Lithuanians to follow suit. But it took some time before they participated more widely in civic and public affairs. And inter-marriage with non-Jews was not on any significant scale.

An editorial comment in the Cape Times at the time, more or less, of my grandparent's arrival, noted that the poor immigrants aimed at educating their sons in order to give them a better start than they themselves had experienced. My grandmother was an excellent example of this attitude subsequently. The modest income she earned from her boarding house enabled her to educate my uncles: a doctor, at Cape Town University Medical School; a dentist at Liverpool University; a bookkeeper locally; and an embryo lawyer at the Magistrates' Court in King Williamstown. The last, however, abandoned these studies when he misrepresented his age so as to serve in France during the Great War. My mother, Leah, and her only sister, Dinah, both passed Standard Eight at a well-known English language girls' school in Cape Town. Even in their old age they regarded the ability to recite English poetry like the 'Pied Piper of Hamlin'; or enjoy adventure books for English children, particularly those written for boys by G. A. Henty, as the acme of achievement.

Rachel Clain initially ran her boarding house in Caledon Street, District Six. It was a modest part of Cape Town, which was virtually a local ghetto as it was largely settled by Jews, and Muslims. The two groups had few dealings with each other. My grandmother worked harder than my grandfather (reinforcing my belief that he was not a healthy

man). He would meet immigrants at the docks, and take them to the boarding house where they could experience, in orthodox Jewish surroundings (until they proceeded to their final destination) at least an approximation of the lifestyle they had known in the 'old country'.

Thus initially, the lives of these new arrivals revolved to a varying extent, around the existing beliefs and institutions which had been the essence of their shtetl existence. ²² Many paid for their boarding costs with articles brought from their original homes, such as the silver candlesticks given to my grandmother in 1906 by a Mr S. Nathan. However, the inscription on their base('presented to Mrs R. Clain') suggests a gift rather than payment.

In the 1920s, when she no longer ran the boarding house, my grandmother would serve lunches at a charge of one shilling, to Jewish pupils at the nearby South African College School (SACS) and the Good Hope Seminary, whose doting parents in the (mainly northern) suburbs believed they should get a hot meal at midday. Several of these children, as adults, later fondly remembered those modest lunches.

This was only one minor aspect of Rachel Clain's domestic influence, and was probably connected with the need still to raise some income. But in her quiet, unobtrusive way, she was the fulcrum of the family.²³ As noted previously, as the daughter of a soyfer, in her childhood she had probably received a good Hebrew education. But more importantly, she personally fulfilled Hillel's injunction, 'not to do unto others that which was hateful to yourself'. And she practised in Africa the entirety of the pious beliefs and behaviour forged in the Eastern European shtetl. These included respect for the personal feelings and property of others, which subsumed a number of duties, such as tzedakah, that is, the obligation to kindly and positively support the needy with charitable acts. This injunction was to emerge as 'one of the regular duties of our daily life'. In South Africa, it meant my grandmother privately helped a few needy Jewish families with money and other aid. Nor did her behaviour intend to make those less observant or less charitable feel uncomfortable; or intrude on the privacy of the recipient of her help. And true to the traditional dictum that charity should not be 'publicised',24when my grandmother died, none of her family could identify those we labelled in a modest joke, 'grannies customers'.

She too had her little jokes. On Saturday morning, after synagogue, she would sit on the veranda at Gordon Lodge, the old Cape house which the extended family was now occupying, watching my sister and me going off with hockey sticks or tennis rackets, patently intending to engage in some sporting activity. 'Edna' she would say, 'are you going to shul?' And I knew she was simply making fun of us.

On the Sabbath, all the main religious holidays such as Rosh Hashanah (New Year) Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) or Passover, she and 'little' Mrs Zuckerman – her old friend and member of a well-known Cape Town commercial family (and, it might be added, above whom my grandmother, not quite

five feet, towered) - walked from home the couple of miles to the Gardens Synagogue, clinging to each other in the slightest breeze.

As a child I regularly observed my grandmother (on Saturday evening) performing *havdolah*, 'the ritual of separation', which denotes the end of the Sabbath. I now possess the silver candlesticks in which she lit the *havdolah* candles; and I light them at the *beginning* of the Sabbath.

What other recollections return to my mind? She spoke English with a Manchester accent, acquired in Pimlett Street, next to Strangeways goal; tinged very occasionally with a trace of her original Telz speech. But unlike many of her fellow arrivals, she never spoke Yiddish to her family or acquaintances. The exception was when 'Yekka', brought to the early 19th Century house in the Gardens, the eggs and chickens with which he supplied her for the family.

Yekka could not speak English, so none of us wanted to spend any time with him. But he and my grandmother would sit beside each other at the kitchen table, with a copy of Forverts spread before them, discussing, in Yiddish, its contents. Thus I was exposed, at a young age, to the behaviour of a person who never patronised anyone; and my mother learned this behaviour too. Yekka was certainly, in no way, my grandmother's equal; and this set for me, without realising what I was acquiring, a gracious example. Yekka's visits were the only occasions when the world of our immaculate school uniforms, team games and English literature, impinged on the world of the Pale of Settlement, from which the majority of the Jewish immigrants at the Cape, and not least our own forebears, had come.

Thus far I have not described Rachel Clain's appearance. I recall her small stature, dressed always in a plain, somewhat unattractive black garment. Like all Orthodox married Jewish women in the shtetl, she was obliged to cover her head with an equally unattractive wig (called in Yiddish, a *Sheitl*). Once when she was in bed, ill and therefore without her wig, I saw and identified an old lady with a mass of white hair. ²⁵It in no way resembled the usual headpiece, with its severely stitched centre parting.

Her life, as I have previously hoped to suggest in this account, had not been easy. Her sorrows were dominated by the above-noted death of her infant son in Cape Town, and the loss of my grandfather Joshua Simon Clain, who died in 1918 when my grandparents were both about 55. My uncle Bunny (whose name she pronounced with the flat Lancashire vowel), remembered riding his bicycle behind a cart filled with the corpses of those who, like my grandfather, had not survived the flu epidemic; and in the absence of coffins were being conveyed in this somewhat primitive manner, to the Jewish Cemetery in Woodstock.

Today, from an adult perspective, I am aware how deeply Rachel Clain must have suffered on both these occasions. Yet I don't recall ever hearing death being referred to, even with a trace of self-pity. 'Mother', as she was always called by her children, brought up a close-knit, much loved family; equipped

with the qualities required to produce successful human beings in all aspects of their lives.

Notes

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- 23 Edna Bradlow, O! Call Back yesterday, Bid Time Return (Privately printed memoirs)
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ADCOCK INGRAM AND THE TANNENBAUMS

*

Arnold Tannenbaum

When Charles and Tilly Tannenbaum settled in the small town of Roodepoort in the late 1800s, their name was anything but synonymous with pharmacy. They ran a general store. It was their four sons¹ who would change things.

When the oldest son, Hyme, was ready to start work, he was apprenticed to Jack Blair, who owned the E.J. Adcock pharmacy in Ockerse Street, Krugersdorp. Hyme had found his passion and encouraged his younger brother, Jack, to follow in his footsteps. The third brother, Len, soon followed and in due course the youngest brother, Arthur (Archie), also joined Adcocks.

With so many Tannenbaums, the small pharmacy in Krugersdorp had to expand. This is the story of that expansion.

Hyme Tannenbaum was blessed with a special gift. He could recognise success and had an instinctual feeling about potential areas for new pharmacies. He bought some existing pharmacies and established new ones all along the western reef, from Johannesburg to Carletonville. He also instituted the idea of co-ownership, offering the manager appointed to run the pharmacy a half share in the business. The manager made no initial payment for this share. He was paid to manage the business and his 50% of the profits was used to purchase his share.

Hyme was a giant among men, a paternal figure, loved by his staff. He was impulsive and sometimes made dreadful mistakes, but his impulsiveness was tempered by a natural humility.

In his entire working career, Hyme lived in a small house at 34 Burger Street, close to the centre of Krugersdorp, and for years, his office was in the bottom of a lift shaft. He also drove the smallest of Ford cars, the Anglia. He drove fast and collected so many speeding tickets on his way to visit his brothers in Johannesburg that he eventually realised it would be easier and cheaper to hire a driver. The new driver looked at the Anglia and refused point blank to drive it. Hyme was forced to buy the next car in the Ford range - a Zephyr.

Hyme hated ostentation. He never wore a tie and

Arnold Tannenbaum, the son of Jack Tannenbaum, qualified as a pharmacist in 1948 at Durban Technicon. He was involved in various aspects of the pharmaceutical profession, including in retail, research, and imports-exports, over the next thirty years. In 1978, he obtained a BA degree from UNISA, and has since been involved in the field of alternative healing.

usually didn't bother with a jacket, preferring to work with rolled up sleeves. Generous to a fault, he was typically quiet about his generosity, preferring to be an anonymous donor. In fact, many pharmacists owe their success to the help Hyme gave them, and many partner managers became wealthy men as a result of joining the Adcock family business.

When he qualified **Jack**, the second Tannenbaum brother, was sent to manage Keatings Pharmacy in Pretoria Street, Hillbrow. It was not a very busy pharmacy, so Jack began looking for ways to exploit the time on his hands. In 1925, Hillbrow and the adjoining suburbs housed several nursing homes. Jack approached the matrons of some of them, offering his services as dispenser and medical supplier. In a short time, he had gained the custom of the Norman, the Joubert Park, the Frangwen and the Esselen nursing homes. Keatings had become a very active business.

Jack soon found other business opportunities. Doctors practising in the nursing homes would read about new medications in overseas medical journals and ask him if these were available. Instead of simply giving up on the request when local sources were unable to supply, Jack wrote to the overseas manufacturers, not only ordering supplies, but offering to become the South African agent for the company concerned. In this way, Keatings obtained sole rights to distribute the products of some of the largest overseas pharmaceutical manufacturers, including Abbott, G.D. Searle and Baxter in America, Organon in Holland and Chinoin in Hungary. Jack also gained the franchise for the Belgian company Gevaert, manufacturers of X-ray films and all photographic supplies.

Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, the Hungarian agency Chinoin sent their medical man Dr Bondi Janovics, a brilliant doctor and medical scientist, to assist Jack in the sales of their product. For two months, he battled to get South African doctors to prescribe Chinoin products, but was not very successful. His results hardly covered the expense of his visit.

Jack was ready to send Bondi home, but Bondi refused to go. By then, Hungary was under the shadow of Nazi Germany and Bondi would rather have starved in South Africa than return to his homeland. Jack asked Bondi for a plan of action, and Bondi said he could make pharmaceuticals in South Africa. In those days, other than dispensed liquids, hand rolled pills, hand-folded powders and cachets, all pharmaceuticals were imported. There were no locally made injection ampoules, no tablets, no

capsules and certainly no intravenous drips. Bondi approached his compatriot, the chemical engineer Kuno Hoffer. He was in the same position, having being sent to South Africa to open a factory producing chloride of lime. This project had never gotten off the ground, and Kuno was also left stranded, not wanting to return to his homeland.

As Jack's business expanded, he had purchased the house next door to Keatings, using the main rooms for storage and as an office. Jack put Bondi and Kuno on the payroll and set them up in the kitchen to experiment and eventually manufacture pharmaceuticals. The two men duly went on to accomplish all kinds of things. They went to the abattoirs to collect glands and livers, thereafter making a liver tonic called Bethtone, manufactured injections of pituitary extract and even considered making insulin. Things looked so promising for the Hungarian venture that Jack built a small factory in the quiet southern suburb of Ophirton.

In 1939, Bondi and Kuno gave Jack a birthday present - a box of ampoules containing Ethyl Chloride. This was an anaesthetic manufactured by combining ethyl alcohol with hydrochloric acid. It was a volatile substance that had to be packed in sealed glass containers, with a spray nozzle. The Ethyl Chloride plant at the factory consisted of six huge vessels bubbling away, with tubes collecting and freezing gas. This was the first really big venture of Saphar, as the new laboratory was now called.

The Hungarians were willing to tackle anything and everything. They even grew penicillin mould and made eye drops and ointment. Tablets quickly became a big business, with Saphar making tablets for several overseas companies. Bondi's wife Susie, a qualified pharmacist, was put in charge of the ampoule division, which soon developed a large repertoire of injectables, including dental cartridges. Within five years Saphar had become a big business.

Keatings' Baxter agency, acquired in the middle 1930s, was also doing well. Large quantities of onelitre bottles of intravenous solutions were shipped by sea – and during the war, several consignments were lost when a ship was torpedoed.

Shortly after the war ended, Bondi and Kuno visited Baxter in Chicago and asked for permission to manufacture the solutions in South Africa. Bill Graham, president of Baxter and a good friend of Jack Tannenbaum, laughed at the audacity of the two Hungarians. The manufacture of intravenous solutions required many specialised skills, which few companies could supply. Baxter had not given anyone the right to make their products. How could they even think of talking to someone in a place as obscure as South Africa?

Bondi and Kuno were blessed with irresistible continental charm. They were also supremely confident in their ability to meet any challenges in this specialised process. To everyone's surprise but theirs, they were given the contract. Baxter and Keatings formed a new company called Keagrams and Baxter agreed to supply material and men who would travel to South Africa and install a plant to make the precious solutions. Within six months, Keagrams was in full production, and several formulations of locally made Intravenous solutions were available to the medical profession. After just a few years, Saphar/Keagrams had grown so large that new premises had to be found. A large plot of ground was purchased in Aeroton and a new plant built.

Jack was a gentle man, loved by all who knew him. He, too, was a father figure to the staff. There was something special about this paternalism, something which has been lost in the hard, competitive climate of today's world. People loved their work and their bosses.

Len Tannenbaum, affectionately known in the family as "Long Len" to distinguish him from a first cousin with the same name, was the third brother. Long Len was sent to manage Fred Ingram, the new pharmacy in Hillbrow. Under his guidance and initiative, Ingram's became the largest pharmacy in South Africa.

Long Len even had the audacity to open a night service, much to the chagrin of his colleagues and



The four Tannenbaum brothers and their wives, 1960: From left, Leonard, Jacob ('Jack'), Jeanne (wife of Len), Sarah Phyllis ('Sally', wife of Jack), Pauline ('Polly', wife of Hyme), Rachel Regina ('Reggie', wife of Arch), Hyman ('Hyme'), Arthur ('Arch').

competitors. There were restrictions on the products which could be sold after hours. The front shop had to be closed and only dispensary items could be sold, but even this did not discourage him.

A few months before the outbreak of war, Long Len experienced something that would make a huge impact on Adcock Ingram and the way South Africans dealt with dry, chapped and itchy skin. The following, in Long Len's own words, is the story of how this came about:

Little Hans Rose, podgy, short, ruddy complexion, haunted eyes and an engaging smile, stood at Long Len's front counter in the pharmacy in Hillbrow. Long Len asked what he could do for him.

"My name is Hans Rose. I left Germany two weeks ago and I must get work. I am twenty-six years of age and a German-qualified chemist." The year was 1937 and Hans had just managed to slip out of Hitler's grasp.

"Well Hans, what can you do or make?"

"Anything in the pharmaceutical field – creams, face powders, rouges, lipsticks, lotions – you name it."

"Hans, look at my hands!" This was Johannesburg in mid-July. Long Len could not 'take' the cold. His hands were chapped and bleeding, despite the fact that they had a generous coating of the then most popular skin cream. "Can you give me soft hands?"

"Yes, I can, if you will help me."

"What do you want?"

"Give me a note to the wholesalers, Sive Bros. & Karnovsky, and ask them to supply me with my requirements. I have very little money and promise you that I shall pay back every penny." Long Len went into his dispensary and wrote an appropriate note to the wholesalers.

At eight-thirty the next morning, little Hans, almost doubled over, came in carrying a huge black pot filled almost to the brim with a white glistening cream.

"Hans, this cream does not smell of anything."
"I can make it smell of whatever you like."

Long Len's mind was working at a rapid pace. In a drawer in the dispensary was a large quantity of red and white coloured labels. Old man Ingram, long deceased, used to sell a liquid cream called 'Ingram's Camphor Cream', which had been off the market for many years.

"Camphor? How terrible! It will never sell."
"Hans, camphor it is and nothing else, do you understand?"

A messenger was sent to help Hans carry the pot back to his room. At midday, Hans returned. The smell of camphor filled the atmosphere from a hundred yards or so.

Long Len found a four ounce jar, which he filled with cream. The Ingram's Camphor Cream label fitted like a glove. The ready-made instructions described the usage of the cream. Long Len dabbed a large portion of cream into one hand and then massaged it well. "Hans, it feels like a winner!"

Len began marketing the cream, sending it to nurses working in the nearby hospitals and employing door-to-door agents. Soon, the demand had overwhelmed Hans's ability to make the cream and production was moved to the company's factory in Krugersdorp. However, Hans wanted to work for a pharmaceutical manufacturing company and Len eventually helped him get a job with one. Len continues the story:

At about eight-thirty the next morning, a beaming Hans Rose walked into the pharmacy. In one hand he held a bunch of red roses, and in the other an envelope.

"The roses are for your good wife and the envelope is for you."

Long Len accepted both gifts and wished him a very successful future. When he opened the envelope, he found that it contained the formula for Ingram's Camphor Cream and the method of manufacture. A short note said that Hans promised he would never use that formula again and wished them every success with the cream.

Archie, the youngest Tannenbaum brother ran the wholesale division of E.J. Adcock. He supplied all the company's shops, including the shop in Welkom. Wholesale branches were opened in Welkom, Klerksdorp and Pretoria.

The years 1949-1978 were extremely profitable. The business expanded by way of acquisitions like ML Laboratories, as well as diversifying into over the counter products (Crowden products), retail photographic stores (Etkinds) and discount toiletries (French Hairdressing).

The 1970s were politically damaging for the company. Hyme Tannenbaum had died and the other brothers were getting on in years. The riots in the townships made life very difficult for the managers and there was a move by important personnel to leave the company and the country. It was a good time to be out of South Africa.

Adcock Ingram was not an easy company to sell as it was highly specialised and technical. Fortunately, Rudi Frankel of Tiger Oats couldn't resist a good buy and a deal was consummated whereby the Tannenbaum family sold their interest in Adcock Ingram to Tiger Oats.

Jack Tannenbaum stayed on as Chairman of the company and new people were recruited to manage its affairs. After Jack's retirement, the company maintained a room honouring its original founders, but even that has now been dismantled. Today, a search for the name 'Tannenbaum' on the Adcock-Ingram website doesn't return a single match.

Notes

1 There were also three girls

JEWISH THEMES (AND THEIR ABSENCE) IN JAMES A. MICHENER'S IBERIA, POLAND AND THE SOURCE

*

Colin Plen

My friend Solly Yellin, of blessed memory, was a voracious reader. When he heard that the great writer James A. Michener had written a book about Poland, he waited excitedly for it to arrive in South Africa. He read *Poland* right through, very quickly, and then, very disappointed, remarked, "Anyone who can write 1000 pages about Poland and not mention the Jews must be very ignorant..."

However, one cannot write off an author like Michener as ignorant, unless 'ignorant' is defined as "one who ignores some facts". Then I read a book called *Iberia* by the same author. Fortunately for my research purposes, it included an index. In 818 pages, there are only thirteen entries listed under 'Jews'. I had to start agreeing with Solly Yellin. Then I read *The Source*. This tells of an archaeological investigation of a mythical *tel* in Israel, and the resultant story is a deeply thought out story of many of the problems of that strip of land, Israel, from its prehistoric days almost to the present. Reading it led to my changing my views once more and to start considering why Michener wrote as he did.

Most of Michener's stories follow the same pattern. He begins with a period before history began and shows how the land came to be formed, as he did in *Hawaii* and *Caribbean*, and goes on to introduce characters in the very early days, through periods of history, linking up the characters by imaginary relationships, until fairly recent times. He wrote huge panoramas, including *Space*, *Texas*, *Chesapeake Bay* and *The Covenant* (about South Africa) down to fine detail like *Sayonara* and *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*, which are essentially love stories.

Michener was born in 1907. His parentage is not recorded as he was adopted and brought up by a foster mother in the Quaker faith. His first book was only published after he was forty. He made up for it by having more than forty titles published thereafter. One of his first books was *Tales of the South Pacific*, which was used by Rodgers and Hammerstein for the very successful Broadway musical and film *South Pacific*. For this novel, he received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. His last book, *Recessional*, was published not long before he died, aged 90, in 1997.

Jews began living in the Iberian Peninsula around

Colin Plen is a past manager of the Zionist Record and spent some years in publishing on the South Coast of Kwazulu-Natal. He lived in Johannesburg for many years, inter alia working as an insurance broker, and today he lives in Durban. the time of the reign of King Solomon, when trading took place between the various parts of the Mediterranean coast and Israel and Phoenicia. We understand that the Jews were living in Spain before there was a Spanish nation (or a Portuguese nation in what was to become Portugal), that Jews wrote the poetry of the area in a language still being invented. It is believed that Barcelona and Toledo are derived from the Hebrew, with Barcelona meaning son of Colona, and Toledo meaning *Toledot* - Generations. As the country developed, its commerce developed under the hands of the Jews and under the various rulers - the Visigoth Christians, the Moors and then the Catholic Christians - Jews were always there to guide and to lead commerce and finance. There was anti-Jewish feeling with all the rulers, and attempts were made to reduce their influence, but right until the final edict of expulsion of Queen Isabella in 1492, Jewish men and some Jewish women, dominated Spanish commerce. Even after Jews were evicted from Iberia, many powerful members of the Church and commerce were still of Jewish origin. This lasted for more than 200 years, as the records of the Inquisition show.

In *Iberia*, however, Michener only states that Jews lived there from the 700s and were badly treated. He does not give the credit to the Jews that their history in Iberia warrants.

Jews came to live in Poland under the protection of King Boleslaw III in about 1098, according to the Encyclopaedia Judaica. While the Jewish religion flourished there, Jews developed trade and commerce. They traded into what was to be Russia and the surrounding countries and their trading brought wealth into Poland. The Polish rulers realised the value of the Jews and to a great extent protected them from Christian outbursts. At the same time, while the leaders of the Church sided with the rulers of the country to protect their financial interests, the lesser clergy continually stirred up hatred against Jews and there were many pogroms over the years. But Michener only mentions some individual Jews, without mentioning the great assets that the Jews brought into the country.

In *The Source*, Michener shows the development of religion, from his own perspective. He shows how the early cave people first worship the sun and the seasons, and the rain, and then gradually began to worship a single idol which eventually comes to be Baal. Over the years, the people go through the stages of a Moloch, a fiery child eating god in various

forms, and eventually come to the realization that there is an all-powerful, invisible God. The Jewish religion is formed. With it come breakaways and divisions, but it is always advancing. He goes into wonderful detail about the Rabbis in Safed writing the Talmud and gives examples of the minutiae that they argued about, giving both the good and the bad sides of the developing religion.

Michener then tells a story of how the Christian religion started and grew, and writes candidly about the errors made by members of the various Church groupings. He records how the Egyptian Christians were antagonized by the Turkish Christians, who were in turn antagonized by other groups because of disagreements over what constituted Christ's human and godly proportions. All this led to internecine killing sprees between these groups. Michener relates the story of the Crusades and how these went from being an idealistic religious mission to becoming a killing frenzy, in which some Muslims, but a lot more Jews, Christians and other innocent bystanders were killed and which finally degenerated into a total waste of time, money and manpower.

Michener writes about the source that was Tveryah (Tiberias), where Rabbis met to discuss the Talmud. He cites several examples of the kind of discussions that took place, and treats them with great respect and admiration. He then goes on to show how, with the Roman conquest and their subsequent laying waste of the land, the group of Rabbis was forced to move to Babylon to continue

their work.

Next, he goes on to explain how his mythical city of Makor was involved with the new Islamic army and how, while Akko was destroyed by one part of the army of Islam, Makor was conquered in a peaceful manner by another section of that army, and the two sides were able to co-exist without war.

Michener then continues with a description of the Rabbis at Safed. Again, he describes the kinds of arguments and discussions that they had and treats these, too, with respect, sensitivity and, apparently, knowledge.

The book concludes with an account of the fighting during the 1948 War of Independence. It depicts Israelis of differing religious outlooks combining to win the battle for Sefad, where the Arab forces, although defending an impregnable British-built fortress, flee from the area because they had been promised the chance to return with the victorious Arab army and choose their booty.

At all times in *The Source*, Michener gives a fair opinion of the Jews and their victories and defeats. This begs the question as to why he failed to mention the value that Jews brought to Spain, Portugal and Poland in his books on those countries. Did he delegate the necessary research to underlings and then skim the best of this for his books on Poland and Spain-Portugal, without considering transferring the knowledge that he displayed in one book into the others?





SEA POINT, SWAPO AND THE KING DAVID SCHOOL BUS

Born in the Boland, and long before his distinguished career in Jewish communal affairs, Michael Schneider, Secretary General Emeritus of the World Jewish Congress, played a dramatic but little-known role in the anti-apartheid struggle, culminating in a hair-raising escape from South Africa in 1964. The following interview with him, conducted by Steven Gruzd, Senior Researcher and Diplomatic Liaison at the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, took place on 22 July 2011, shortly before Schneider's visit to South Africa to take part in the SAJBD national conference on 27-28 August.

Q: When do you think your political consciousness about apartheid was first awakened?

A: I can clearly remember two traumatic experiences. The first was when I was when I was growing up – I was about 11 or 12. My family owned and ran a hotel in De Doorns in the Hex River Valley, northeast of Worcester, about 90 minutes outside of Cape Town. The canteen served drinks to the local colored community. I remember that *vaaljapie* – very cheap, newly-pressed raw young wine often mixed with sediment – was ninepence a glass, and sherry was a shilling. I used to watch the barman pour from decanters in this tiny canteen that was always packed with colored farmworkers.

A man went to the counter to buy his *dop* when someone started shouting, "Kaffir! Kaffir!" The barman picked up a leather whip, a *sjambok*, off a hook, and lashed out at this man. He caught him in the face. All the poor colored workers roared with laughter as this black man's public humiliation. He caught my eye. He looked pained, bewildered and utterly helpless, not angry or hate-filled as I expected. That was just the way things were. I've never forgotten that look. And I thought to myself, "This man is a stranger in his own country!"

The second incident took place several years later, when I worked in the dispatch department of my uncle's electrical wholesale business in Doornfontein in Johannesburg. A huge coil of cable came in, and we needed all hands on deck to move it. I went up to John, the invoice clerk, who was African – a lovely man, I used to give him my old work shirts – and said "John, come and help me." One didn't say "please" to black people in those days. He replied calmly, "No. I am not a laborer. I'm an invoice clerk." I got angry, and screamed, "If you don't, I'll fire you!" He got up, and started moving the coil. I had asserted my whiteness over his blackness, and he had no choice but to kotow. But he never, ever looked me in the eye again.

I was profoundly affected, perplexed, as to why we as Jews in South Africa, whose grandparents and parents had fled pogroms in Lithuania, lost loved ones in the Holocaust, were now acting like a "master race" as white people, over millions of others.

Q: Why do you think your opposition to apartheid took such a radical form?

A: As a teenager, I had a strong Jewish and Zionist identity. I was the national treasurer of a youth movement, the Young Israel Society and we went to camp in Lakeside near Muizenberg. I remember playing rugby matches against Betar. Then, when I was still working for my uncle in Doornfontein, in my early twenties, before I made my way back to Cape Town, I was recruited by people connected to the ANC. Our group was later called the African Resistance Movement (ARM), and I was trained on how to knock down electricity pylons. We made a solemn pledge not to target civilians, not to hurt people. My garage in Sea Point had all the equipment - detonators, plastique explosive, gelignite. We once knocked out five signal points on the suburban commuter train line between Cape Town and Simon's Town, bringing Cape Town's commercial district to a complete standstill.Unfortunately, towards the end of our operations, when we had all left the country or were in prison, John Harris was ill-advised that he should plant bombs and then call the police to defuse them. But this bomb exploded and killed an old lady. 1 John was caught, tried and hanged.

Q: I heard you were called the "White Pimpernel", and one escapade involved the King David School bus?

A: Well, I'm not sure it was the "White Pimpernel", but some newspaper reports did call me the "Pimpernel" because I had evaded a city-wide dragnet. Before I escaped, some jobs I took on were for the ANC. I was approached and asked to "borrow" the King David school bus, to transport 20 African nurses to the newly-independent Tanzania, as a present from the ANC.

With a forged letter ostensibly from SA State President CR Swart, I was disguised as an Anglican priest, and we picked up the nurses in Sophiatown in Johannesburg. An ANC member and I took the King David school bus to the Bechuanaland border (this was before Botswana became independent). We

were met in the middle of nowhere – there was a table and tablecloth, and they sang *NkosiSikileli' iAfrika*. I believe three of the nurses eventually married Tanzanian cabinet ministers. I also heard they couldn't believe that I *wasn't* a real priest! We drove back to Jo'burg and got the bus back in one piece before school opened on Monday morning. The school was an unknowing fellow conspirator.

Q: Tell us about your dramatic evasion of the Special Branch of the police.

A: One night in 1964, I was returning to my flat in Sea Point. When I walked into the front entrance of the building, there were two huge guys in raincoats. They looked strange, and I feared they were from Special Branch. I think they must have been just waiting for me to open my apartment door, to be sure it was me. I went to the first floor, and left the building via the back entrance. I walked onto Main Road Sea Point, and got a friend to drive me to Caledon Square. It was clear that the game was up. We had evaded capture for so long because the police did not suspect that most of us were white people. One of our members had been arrested and had cracked under severe pressure. He later turned state evidence and gave names and addresses including mine. I checked into the Tudor Hotel in Market Square for the night. There was a huge manhunt for me in Cape Town.

I planned to head for London where I knew it would be cold, so the next day, I went to buy a coat - maybe that was my Jewish grandmother's training - and bought a plane ticket to Jo'burg. At the entrance to the plane was another huge Afrikaner policeman. As I passed him to board the gangway, I realized I'd left my brand new coat on the chair. I was scared, but was not going to leave that coat! So I risked going back to fetch it, and boarded the plane to Johannesburg, where I was met by other ARM operatives. I saw that my cousin Ruben Mowszowski, another person associated with the ARM, was on the same plane. His family was at the departure gates, wide-eyed and in a white fright! He later made his way to Australia and is now a journalist back in Cape Town after decades of exile.

Q: How did you eventually escape from South Africa, and get to England?

A: Rosemary Wentzel – who later was tricked into a meeting with the Special Branch and dragged back to South Africa – drove us across an unguarded border to Swaziland. There I was met by a lawyer named Robin Scott-Smith, who put me up with a Polish aristocrat in Swaziland. I became the foreman to prune 8000 apple trees on his farm. I learned about growing apples from him and from a horticulture book! I spent six months there.

I cannot reveal the details of how I got back to Pretoria – I have promised people not to reveal their names. A "friend" provided me with a fake passport and then drove me across another unguarded border to Bechuanaland and provided me with a scooter, which I drove to Francistown. I've never been very good with directions, and came to a crossroads with no idea which was the right way! Luckily, I guessed correctly.I checked into a hotel and met some young British girls who were working in Bechuanaland on a programme similar to the US Peace Corps. They put me in touch with a British administrator, who found out I had a fake SA passport, and could potentially cause huge embarrassment.

Eventually, I was picked up in huge truck with 50 guerrillas from SWAPO (the South-West African People's Organization, the Namibian liberation movement). They were en route to Kasane, separated by a 400-metre ferry ride across the Zambesi River to Kazungula, the border crossing into Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia). The SWAPO guys were off to Tanzania to be trained. There was huge debate around me – it was unheard of that a white man could be anti-apartheid in those days, and many suspected I was a spy for the SA government. Eventually, their leader swung them into taking me across the river. I agreed to pay a £50 fee to SWAPO when I arrived in London.

On the ferry, again, there were two white men, almost certainly Special Branch, who had caught up with me and were there to kidnap me. As I was in the company of the SWAPO guerrillas, they left me alone and turned back on a returning ferry.

At the border post, I caught another lucky break. The official stamping us in went to the toilet, so I quickly stamped my own passport and entered Northern Rhodesia. I boarded a train to Lusaka with my scooter, where I avoided the amorous advances of the train's male customs official. I sought refuge at the British High Commission in Lusaka. They put me in prison for a few days, as they feared my being kidnapped again, and the Zambia Home Affairs Minister came to see me. I was helped by someone who bought me a ticket to London via Kampala in Uganda. At Heathrow, I applied for political asylum - the official seemed to be expecting me. I then spent a few days in Brixton Prison. I was released, and given £15, compliments of Her Majesty's Government, in an envelope at Holburn Bridge.

I was then met by someone who took me to see Sam Nujoma, SWAPO leader in exile and later Namibia's first president. I thanked him for the role played in my escape by his guerrillas, but I was embarrassed that I was not able to pay the debt of honor of £50 to him. I have not seen him since. I intend to visit him some time and to personally hand over the money!

Q: How then did you start your long career in Jewish communal affairs, and do you think that your experiences in South Africa influenced you?

A: Penniless in London, I started to look for a job. I had a choice between running a Quakers community centre or working for the London Jewish Welfare Board. The latter offered me £75 a year more, so that settled it! The rest, as they say, is

history!

I've been involved in international Jewish public service for over 40 years now. I worked for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in Iran during and after the Khomeini revolution, and in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia during the Communist era. In 1983, they sent me to Ethiopia to establish welfare and development projects for that country's Falasha population. I served as the JDC's CEO from 1990 to 2003, and during my tenure, the Joint returned to the Soviet Union after its expulsion by Stalin in 1955. When the Soviet Union fell, we established an aid project for 250 000 impoverished elderly Jews, half of whom were former victims of Nazi persecution. We were also engaged in a decade-long series of rescues of Jews under duress in Iran, Syria, Yemen, and Bosnia. The Joint played a significant role in Operation Solomon which led to the airlift of 14000 Jews from Ethiopia to Israel. I'm convinced my training and experience in South Africa made me the right guy for the right job at the right time! I later became CEO of the World Jewish Restitution Organisation. And I have just retired as Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress. That is another story for another time.

Q: Any final thoughts?

A: Yes. I am not one of those who believe that the SA Jewish Board of Deputies should have been much more active in politics, to speak out against apartheid. Why point a finger at the Jews – what about the other white minorities, like the Italians, Portuguese or Greeks in South Africa? As whites we were all guilty of complicity and we all benefited

from our whiteness. You have to look at the circumstances – our grandparents had escaped the Bolsheviks and the Nazis, their relatives were obliterated in the Shoah, and BJ Vorster, South Africa's second prime minister [after SA's becoming a Republic in 1961] had spent World War II in jail for his pro-Nazi activities. There was fear of yet another persecution.

I was in Venezuela a while back and met with President Hugo Chávez, where ugly state-sponsored antisemitism is rife. We managed to establish a formal connection between the local Jewish community so that they can air their concerns. I take the same attitude – it can be dangerous for the Venezuelan Jewish communal umbrella (the CAIV) to get involved in politics. Yes, individuals can and should criticize what's happening, but not in the name of the communal infrastructure. I saw this in Iran—the regime insisted that local Jews demonstrate in public with banners denouncing Israel—especially after an Israeli military operation, or face prison or even worse. They had no choice.

Finally, I really do not want to be made out as a big Jewish hero, and frankly I am not seeking the limelight and am a little embarrassed. Many of my colleagues spent years in prison. Others who cracked under pressure of beatings by the Special Branch have spent their lives with spirits broken and under a cloud of shame.

Notes

1 The incident occurred at Johannesburg's Park Station on 24 June 1964. For reasons that have never been established, telephonic warnings conveyed beforehand to the authorities to enable them to clear the area were ignored.

Jewish Affairs

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A TALE OF TWO TOWNS: THE 1947 ROYAL TOUR OF SOUTH AFRICA

*

Gita Gordon

The latest royal wedding has brought back memories of another royal occasion, in a time and place far removed from 21st Century London.

At that time I was three years old, so perhaps "memories" is the wrong word. The memories are those of my mother and grandmother, told and retold to me countless times, of the Royal Visit of King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and the two young Princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret, to South Africa in 1947.

My mother has always begun her the story with, "The Queen passed right in front of me, so close, I could see her beautiful complexion."

At that time, my mother was the doctor's wife in Thaba N'chu, in the eastern Orange Free State. My parents had spent the war years in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth, where my father served in the army as a doctor, while my mother volunteered as a nurse for the Red Cross.

Perusing the *Friend* newspaper one day, my mother saw a notice that the Royal Family would be visiting Bloemfontein. Red Cross volunteers were to form the guard of honour at a garden party in the grounds of the town zoo.

My mother immediately penned a letter reminding the Red Cross of her war services, and requesting the opportunity to participate in the royal event. To her delight, she was accepted and, leaving behind her husband and two small daughters, she travelled about a hundred miles along a dusty road to help welcome the Royal Family.

My mother still smiles as she recalls the excitement of seeing the two princesses, and how beautiful they were, and the lovely smile of the Queen, adding that upon her return home to Thaba N'chu, she found it difficult to concentrate on her everyday duties.

Her mother Becky, my grandmother, experienced the royal guests in a quite different manner.

At that time, my grandmother was living in Clocolan. I remember the central square, and the town hall that showed films once a week, and the four general dealer shops, and the chemist and the two Greek-run cafes.

As grandmother told it, one night the train carrying

Gita Gordon's articles and stories have appeared in Jewish newspapers and publications throughout the world. Her books include: South African Journeys (Judaica Press - Hebrew translation, Temurot, Jerusalem Publications), Flashback (Shaar Press), Mystery in the Amazon (Jerusalem Publications) and Scattered Blossoms (Hamodia Publications).

the royal entourage through the vast territories made its way en route to Ladybrand. While there were stops scheduled at a number of small stations on the way, according to her, Clocolan had not been designated for this honour. My mother says now that it was on the schedule, but after searching the Internet without finding any reference to Clocolan in the Royal tour, I remain faithful to my grandmother's account of the story.

In Clocalan in those days, when we made phone calls, we would turn a handle on the phone, and a woman on the other end of the line would ask to whom we wanted to be put through. The conversation would then go something like this: "I want Mrs Venter, the one who is a teacher." Instead of connecting the call, the operator would reply, "She isn't home right now. She went visiting. Try again in about an hour."

So, in the late hours of this particular summer night, when the royal train suddenly came to a halt at the Clocolan station (a deserted spot about four miles from the town), the station master naturally telephoned his wife to inform her of the momentous event. His wife just had to call her friend to let her know, and the lady on the telephone exchange also called a friend, and very soon a lengthy procession of cars began winding its way in the silent darkness towards the tiny station.

The station master looking out across the veld saw with alarm the twinkling stream of car lights heading towards him. He called the village policeman for help. By this time, a number of the villagers had arrived and, being quite excited, they made rather a noise, rousing the Queen from her sleep.

Now according to my grandmother, who heard it from her friend, who was in turn a friend of the station master's wife, when the Queen asked what was happening, and it was explained to her that the villagers had come to catch a glimpse of the royal train, she sent a message to the crowd gathered outside that everyone should return to the village and wait at the Town Hall. Her Royal Highness then woke up her family and they all dressed up in suits and hats and drove, at midnight, down the dusty road to the Town Hall, where by now practically the entire town was assembled.

My grandmother had found herself a good spot, right at the front. She exclaimed, as the Queen passed directly by, "Oh, but what beautiful eyes you have!"

The Queen stopped, and looked into my grandmother's blue eyes and responded, "But you have beautiful eyes too."

Then the Royal Family walked into the Town

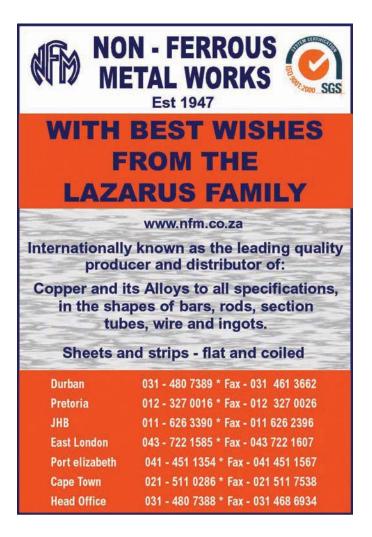
Hall, and onto the platform and the hall filled up and I suppose there must have been speeches of some sort, but as for my grandmother, all she could tell me about were her words to the Queen and the Queen's words to her.

My grandmother' beautiful blue eyes sparkled as she told the story. Her face lit up with pleasure as she recalled the events, so fresh to her even though they had taken place long ago, before one of the princesses became the next Queen.

Now, as a grandmother myself, I think of a woman sleeping after an arduous day of duties and long-distance travel, and who will be facing more of the same the following day and the one after that. Yet she realizes how disappointed people will be that the train stopped at their station, and they were not able to see the Royal Family. So she wakes up her equally tired husband and children, sees that they dress in an appropriately Royal fashion, and is driven with them through the cold night air to give pleasure and excitement to these villagers, her people, in this small isolated place in Africa.

How times have changed! Cell phones and video calls are "in", and the old-fashioned phone with a handle to make contact with the telephone exchange lady are things of the distant past. Today I watched archive newsreels of that Royal tour on my computer (though not the midnight stop in Clocolan), followed by clips of Kate and Harry's wedding. The Princess Elizabeth, who accompanied her parents in the Bloemfontein zoo and the little town hall in Clocolan, is now a Queen who has just rejoiced in her grandson's marriage.

So much has happened in South Africa since those days when the Royal train wound its way through the country, to continue on to the then Southern and Northern Rhodesia. But that selfless and truly royal act of the Queen Mother and her family, on that long ago night in a small Free State hamlet, is a reminder to me that a kind deed is never forgotten.





LOVE IN THE SHADOW OF JIM CROW

*

John Yarbrough

Amma and I fell in love. Amma had just gotten her first full-time job as a checkout clerk. She was eighteen. I had just been hired as a part-time sacker. I was sixteen. It was 1962 in the segregated Texas City of Fort Worth. Amma was black. I was white.

When I asked Amma for a date, she quickly agreed, then hesitated and asked, "But where will we go?" I hadn't considered that potential roadblock. I only knew that Amma smelled like clean clothes just taken from the line on a sunny day with a gentle breeze. After a few minutes consideration, Amma came up with the perfect venue – a drive- in movie.

I parked my pea green 1953 Ford sedan near the concession stand. Rolling the window down, I placed the speaker on the edge of the glass and fitted it snugly in place. There was only an inch or two of open space above the window. But in Texas, in July, the mosquitoes are hungry, and Amma flashed a bright smile when I pulled out a spray bottle of repellent.

A few minutes after the movie started, Amma slid over close to me and whispered in my ear,

"Did you bring some protection?"

"Uh, no," I replied, "this being our first date and all."

"Not that kinda protection, you ninny. I mean like a knife or a gun," she said and dug two fingers into my ribs.

"Ouch. Sorry. I don't think we'll have any problems," I predicted in a hopeful voice.

No one bothered us, even noticed us, and I kissed Amma for the first time. Later, we went to a nearby Dairy Queen, used the drive-up window, and sipped sweet strawberry shakes on the way home.

In retrospect, we should have known things would not go on smoothly for long. The local schools were segregated and only recently had businesses begun removing 'white' and 'colored' from above restrooms and drinking fountains. I was in the eleventh grade and had no black friends or schoolmates despite my love for Amma.

The supermarket that Amma and I worked for was part of a small chain. The reason she had been hired was because the neighbourhood in which the

John Yarbrough is an award-winning poet and short story writer and a frequent contributor to Jewish Affairs. store was located was changing from white to black residents. The owners were under pressure from customers to hire minority workers. The decision to hire Amma was more related to store profits than racial equality.

A few days after our first date, Amma was picked up at work by her three brothers. I was working late on a clean-up crew and happened to glance out the big plate glass window on the front of the store. Amma was pointing at me out to her brothers standing outside their old Studebaker. The brothers' stares sent a shiver down my spine. The next day at work, I asked Amma what she'd told her brothers.

"Oh, they just wanted to see my boyfriend," she said with a big smile

"Well, they looked like they wanted to kill me," I said.

"They do," she said, matter-of-factly, "but they won't because they know it would make me angry."

"I wouldn't be too happy about it either," I replied.

"Relax, they're harmless. It's my daddy you ought to be concerned about," she said. Then she burst out laughing at the startled look on my face.

"A joke?" I asked.

"Of course," she said, still laughing.

Unfortunately, there was nothing funny about what happened on our second date. Realizing the same movie was on at the drive-in, we considered other places we might go and both feel secure and have fun. Amma got a twinkle in her soft brown eyes.

"What could be safer than the zoo in broad daylight on a Wednesday afternoon?" Amma asked. "There's the mini-train ride, bumper cars, a Ferris wheel, and the animals to look at. No one there but kids with their parents."

And a trio of white teenage thugs, as it turned out. I noticed one of them looking at us while we were nearing the entrance sign that read, "The Fort Worth Zoo, Fun For Ages 2-92." I felt Amma's hand squeeze mine tightly.

"Just ignore them," I said as they approached.

But we never made it inside the zoo. "One of the monkeys get loose?" a pimple-faced

Elvis wannabe said with a sneer on his face.

"Looks like maybe three escaped," I said.

"Smart ass," the creep replied. "We know you're kind, you're a n- - - lover."

I wished I had the protection Amma had mentioned on our first date. Before I could formulate any plan of action, two sets of arms grabbed mine, and the leader pounded at my face.

"Now your eyes are as dark as your girlfriend," one said and the three left laughing as I sat on the ground.

Thankfully, they didn't lay a hand on Amma. She cried all the way back to her house. I forgot about telling her how great she'd looked that day in her red polo shirt and white shorts. I could only imagine how I looked to her with a bruised and bloodied face.

That night I decided to talk to my dad about everything. To this point he had no idea I had a black girlfriend. After I laid it all out including the reason for my battered head, my father looked at me sternly and said, "Son, I don't condone what those boys did, but I think you know the Bible warns against racemixing."

"Where?" I asked arrogantly.

"In the Ten Commandments between not stealing and not doing something else," he said.

"It's not in my Bible," I said.

"Then you're using the wrong version," he replied, then stomped out of the den and went to his room.

So much for getting any sympathy, much less advice from Pops. Outside of Amma, there was no one who understood how I felt. I was sure Amma faced the same dilemma.

Our third date had to have no serious problems or the relationship was doomed, I reasoned. Who wants to go on a date, be called names, threatened, and face possible violence? I came up with the perfect plan. Since we were both off on Sunday, what could be safer or more romantic than a picnic? And this time, just in case, I would bring protection. I strapped a sixinch hunting knife in a leather sheath to my belt.

Amma was watching for me out her front window. When I pulled up, she was out the door in a flash carrying a straw picnic basket. She looked beautiful in a yellow sun dress and with straw hat tilted on her head. She jumped in the car and gave me a peck on the cheek. But all day she seemed distracted.

We were sitting on a blanket under an old pecan tree near a stock tank on my uncle's farm located fifteen miles north of Fort Worth. My uncle lived in the city and rarely came to the country anymore.

I brought sodas in an ice chest, along with a

bakery purchased cherry pie. Amma had filled her basket with ham sandwiches and cole slaw.

"What is it?" I asked as I popped the tops on a couple of sodas.

"What's what?" she asked, but she looked at her knees when answering.

"Something's on your mind. Be honest with me," I said.

"Fine. I've been transferred to another store. I got the call last night, she said.

"Us?" I asked.

"What else. Everyone is against us except us. Can we really be okay alone, without friends or family supporting us? She asked.

"Why can't they just leave us alone? I asked.

"I don't know, but they can't or won't," she said.

"What do we do now?" I asked.

"Cool it. Not see each other for a while. Find out how important this is. Discover if we can be happy apart," she said.

"How long?" I asked.

"Six months, a year, I don't know," she said.

"Six months," I said, "but I can tell you now, I'll be miserable. You too, I hope."

Six months later I walked up to Amma's front door and knocked. Her youngest brother answered the door.

"And you want what?" he asked.

"Is Amma here?" I asked

"Amma doesn't live here. She lives with her husband. She got married about a month ago," he said with a smile.

The front door slammed in my face.



DR SCHRODINGER'S CAT

*

Sandra Braude

My arrival in Israel was something of a culture shock. Things here are very different from Sydney, where life can be described as first-world-laid-back. It's nothing like that here, where the atmosphere and everything about the place is frenetic middle-eastern. In the first place the environment, which has an aged look about it, is totally different, and that's just the beginning

It was on the buses that the difference first struck me. I'd been shopping at the local centre and, carrying my parcels, went to take the bus home. A man, bearded, with side-locks, and dressed in orthodox Jewish garb – black trousers, long black coat and black hat – looking as though he was straight out of 'Fiddler on the Roof' - was sitting at the bus stop. When I sat down next to him he jumped up and moved away.

After a while the bus came. I was used to Sydney buses, which stop close to the pavement and where, when the front door opens, the bus kneels to make it easier for seniors like me to climb on. After this the driver processes my ticket, and waits for me to sit down before closing the door and gently drifting off on his way. Not here though!

As I clambered onto the bus, clutching my parcels, the driver slammed the door shut and shouted, 'Shvi!' Shvi!' - 'Sit! Sit!' in Hebrew. Then he took off like a bat out of hell, the vehicle rocking and rolling as it wheeled round the many bends in the road. At every stop the doors opened and hordes of school-kids shoved their way onto the soon over-crowded bus, and pregnant women and mothers with prams climbed in the back door, until there was hardly room to stand, let alone sit. The kids pushed and shoved and grabbed whatever seats were available. They sat on the steps and the package racks; swung from the ceiling straps, and jabbered away happily like a pack

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of baby mynah birds. Three young girls put their feet on the seats. 'Seats are not for feet,' I told them. 'Please take yours off.' The feet went down. The feet went up. 'Seats are not for feet,' I said. 'Please take yours off.' The feet went down. The feet went up. 'Seats are not for feet,' I repeated. 'Please take yours off. The feet went down. The feet went up. At that moment I admitted defeat. It was a hopeless battle. Had I asked them to respond to the fact that their shoes were soiling the seats, the answer would doubtless have been, 'So? Who cares?' And they might have been right.

And so the bus wended its merry way through the districts of Bet Shemesh, an ancient Biblical town, which has seen Canaanites, Philistines and ancient Hebrews; and where Samson loved and was betrayed by Delilah; and where David slew Goliath. Today Bet Shemesh is set to become the third biggest city in Israel. The lower parts are largely secular, with residents coming from many parts of the world – America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa polyglot people, speaking Hebrew, English, French, Russian and Amharic. Where they come from can be recognized, not only from their languages, but their dress codes: western clothes; high Russian boots; white caftans; women with head-scarves, and men with small crocheted skull caps.

As the bus rises towards the Rama, i.e. the high parts, the pattern changes, and suddenly Yiddish is heard, for the people who live here are extremely religious and regard Hebrew as lashon ha Kodesh, the holy tongue, for use in prayer and not everyday life. Here the garb becomes more specific. Like the man at the bus stop, the men here wear black from top to toe, with knee-long coats, even in summer. They virtually all wear black hats rather than skull caps. Boys over the age of thirteen dress the same way, for they are already considered as having entered Jewish manhood, and can take their place in the community of prayer. Here all the men are bearded, and many wear long and meticulously curled side-locks, for the religion forbids the shaving of facial hair, and there are certain sects that wear the most beautiful streimels - fur hats. The dress is reminiscent of 18th Century Poland, from which many of these people derive, and it is certainly not suitable for the at times unbearable heat of the Middle East. But the logic behind it is understandable, seeming to be a desire to build a bridge from the present to a past that was hugely destroyed by the Holocaust. The people who live here seem almost to be a reincarnation from that past.

As with the men, there is a great similarity in the dress of the women, who virtually all wear black, including little girls. The outfits are long, loose-fitting and enveloping, intended to hide all shapeliness of the figure. Hair is completely covered, with not a strand sticking out. The intention is modesty, for beauty and charm are regarded as being inner qualities, and not for show to the outside world. There are certain differences in the dress of various groups, but they are so minor that only the truly initiated can perceive them.

And so the bus continues upwards, with passengers ascending and alighting until the end of the journey is reached at Ramat Bet Shemesh Aleph, which is mainly Anglo-Saxon, and which is where I live. I climb down, and make my way home through the fruits of the area – the young children who fill the streets, and who indeed constitute the beauty of the place. For this is a young area, and family life is the most important thing of all here.

When I arrived in Ramat Bet Shemesh seven months ago I was newly out of an unfortunate marriage. I'd never thought that this would happen to me. Divorce was not a thing to be aspired to, or to be proud of, but there are times when it cannot be avoided and this was one of them. I accepted the situation, and appeared before the Sydney *Beth Din*, the Jewish Law Court, to accept my Jewish divorce. And I have to acknowledge that that facilitated my entry into Israel.

The divorce hearing was held at the Great Synagogue in Elizabeth Street in Sydney, in a dark and airless room, where the curtains were drawn and the lights dim. I imagined it to have been similar to a scene in the Middle Ages. Three stern rabbis sat behind a table, while several other men clustered about.

'Good day, Mrs Gordon,' said one of the men at the table, obviously the senior member of the group. 'Do you know why you are here?'

'Yes' I nodded.

It seemed superfluous that the Chief Rabbi – because that was obviously what he was – should have to explain the situation to me, but that was what he then did.

'Your husband has just appeared before this court. He has stated that he wishes to be divorced from you, and that this is his own decision. Do you wish to accept the divorce, and is this your own decision as well?'

'Yes.'

'Very well. Please stand in front of me and answer all the questions I ask you with a simple yes or no. Then I shall write the divorce document, and hand it to Rabbi Moses, who is standing here instead of your husband. He will hand it to you, and you must accept it in your cupped hands.'

I did as I was told, accepted the document in cupped hands, raised them to the ceiling, tucked the document under my armpit, turned and walked to the door, then walked back.

The Chief Rabbi took the document from me and slashed it with a knife in three places. He looked up.

'Very well, Mrs Gordon. You are now divorced. After a period of three months you will be accessible to any man, except for a Cohen. Do you understand?'

'Yes. Thank you.'

I turned and walked out of the room. So, this was freedom. This was the way the world ended – not with a bang, and scarcely with a whimper.

'Marry again?' I asked.

'Yes, said my friend. 'Now you can marry a black cat.'

'What?' I was not sure that I had heard correctly. 'A black cat?'

'Yes. A black cat. I'm sure you'd do very well as a wife for one.'

I bit my lip and thought. This was something that had never crossed my mind. But who knows? A new country, a new culture, new possibilities. I remembered reading about a woman in America who had married her cat. The ceremony was held in a little chapel in Reno, and it appears to have been quite legal. The bride wore white, and the cat – a Persian of the highest pedigree – sported a black satin tuxedo, white bow tie and top hat. Perhaps such a marriage would also be suitable here in Israel, where it is not regarded as appropriate for a woman to live alone.

Although the thought was initially quite disconcerting, I began to take it seriously. I was lonely, and could do with a partner, and somehow a cat seemed to fit the bill. On the whole I preferred dogs, but certainly cats are less of a nuisance. Dogs make a lot of noise and disturb the neighbours. They bounce all over the place, bring muddy feet into the house, and demand constant attention. Cats, on the other hand, are clean and quiet. They eat minimally and daintily, attend to their own ablutions, and keep the place free from mice. They also have about them an inscrutable air of mystery, something that I find attractive. So I decided that I would look around for a suitable cat, and would approach my rabbi for advice when it came to the marriage.

There was certainly no dearth of potential applicants for the position. Every time I went out into the street I ran into cats – hundreds of them. They streaked past me; sat on walls, leered down at me; and picked through the garbage cans for food. One little ginger cat with a gammy leg sat begging for scraps at the bus stop. And once I came across an unnerving episode of what appeared to be a gang rape, where the female lay crushed on the pavement, whilst eight feisty males squawked and scrabbled for her favours. None of these were what I wanted. Street cats were clearly not for me.

It was for this reason that I decided to consult an

expert on the matter. After all, it is an established tenet in the Jewish world that people seeking partners should consult a *shadchan* or matchmaker, and after asking around I learned that the man most knowledgeable about cats was Dr Schrodinger, and he fortunately did not live far away from me. I phoned him, told him that I was looking for a black cat, a male, the finest of the species, and that I had heard that he was a specialist of the feline species.

In response he laughed, a dry little cackle. He voice sounded old, his accent German. He assured me that he was very fond of cats, had many of them and made a study of them. He would be happy to meet with me, show me his cats, discuss things with me and help me in any way he possibly could.

The next day, impelled by a certain excitement, I rose early breakfasted, sparsely, dressed, and made my way down to the bus stop, where I boarded a number 14 bus. After a twenty minute drive we arrived at the old town of Bet Shemesh. Here many of the residents are Russian, Ethiopian or Moroccan, but although I was usually captivated by their dress and their accents, my mind was on cats. The place where I alighted was down at heel and rather seedy. There were a few shops there. Clothes were set out on the pavement in a colourful display. There was a small *makolet* or supermarket, the dark interior of which did not look particularly inviting. Outside a small coffee shop two men sat playing backgammon, whilst puffing away at *nargillahs*.

I walked down the road until I came to the street I was looking for, then turned left into what was little more than a winding lane. A few steps further, and I found myself before a ramshackle old house, with SCHRODINGER hand-painted on the name plate. I pushed open the rickety gate, walked up the overgrown path and knocked three times with the tarnished brass knocker.

After a few moments footsteps echoed inside, and the door opened to reveal a tall, bent, old man. He wore old-fashioned, gold rimmed spectacles, and was neatly, if shoddily, dressed.

'Mrs Gordon?'

'Dr Schrodinger?'

'Come in,' he said, throwing wide the door. His handshake was surprisingly strong for a man of his age.

The room into which he led her had heavy, wooden furniture. A large metal box stood in one corner.

'Is this furniture from Germany?' I asked.

'From Vienna.A long time back. Now, young lady, I believe you want to know about cats. Come. I will show you mine.'

He pointed to cats that stretched languidly about the room, naming them as he did to. They were all beautiful, sleek, well cared for. It was clear that Dr Schrodinger had a great fondness for them.

'Do you like them? Does anyone catch your eye?' he asked.

'Would you be prepared to sell them?' I asked. He shook his head. 'I do not sell my cats,' he said, 'but on rare occasions, I am prepared to part with one, if the situation warrants it. Well?'

I hesitated. 'Actually,' I said, 'I'm looking for a black cat.'

'A black cat? A familiar?'

'I am no witch,' I said.

'No. I can see that. It was just a joke, perhaps not in the best taste. I have only one black cat, and he is not for the giving.'

At that instant a huge, gorgeous cat with silky fur as black as jet crossed my path. He turned, his undulating tail held high, and looked at me with hypnotic, emerald eyes. Purring loudly, he walked towards me and rubbed against my leg.

'You are favoured,' said Dr Schrodinger, in a tone of surprise. 'Mephisto does not take to most people. He is my favourite, and has great insight. Here, Mephisto!'

The old man reached out with his arms and the cat jumped gracefully into them snuggling against his neck.'

It was moment of intimacy, and to hide my embarrassment, I pointed to the metal box and asked, 'What's that?'

'A steel box,' said Dr Schrodinger.

'What's it for?'

He smiled. 'It is a conundrum. It has its own reality.'

'Would you tell me?'

'Of course. There's a cat inside the box. There is also a vial of hydrocyanic acid, and a small amount of a radioactive substance. If just one atom of that substance were to decay, then the vial would break and the cat would die.'

'That's horrible,' I gasped.

'You may think that,' said Dr Schrodinger, 'but it's really nothing more than a conundrum, something to demonstrate what reality is. It's an intellectual exercise really, and we don't even know what is in the box. Is there actually a cat in the box, and if there is, is it dead or alive? Or is it dead <u>and</u> alive?'

'I have to go now,' I said'.

'I'm sorry if I have upset you,' said Mr Schrodinger. 'But there is always this question about reality. No-one, not even Einstein, has ever understood what I'm trying to say.' He closed his eyes and stroked Mephisto with sensitive, loving fingers.

Picking up her handbag Fay hurried from the house and up the winding lane to the bus stop.

'Why did I ever go there?' she thought. 'Whatever made me think about cats, and particularly black cats? Well, that's over for ever now.'

She climbed into bus number 14 that rocked and rolled its way back to the heights of Bet Shemesh, the House of the Sun. She stared moodily and almost unseeingly out of the window at the groups of people on the pavements – at the women, with their uniform head-scarves and shapeless dresses; and at the bearded men, dressed in heavy black suits and wearing either black hats or fur *streimels*. And in a flash the meaning of the conundrum became clear to her.

It was not a black cat that she was after, but a BLACK HAT!



THE FINKLER QUESTION

*

Michael Belling

Antisemitism isn't funny, but *The Finkler Question is*—it is comedy in the classic sense where the jester, with deadly serious intent, uses humor to put important matters in perspective, tells jokes to drive a point home and is funny in illustrating the consequences of how people respond to situations.

It might seem surprising that a work dealing with overtly Jewish issues - antisemitism, Jewish anti-Zionism and self-hatred - could make the shortlist for a prestigious international literary award, let alone win the 2010 Man Booker Prize for Fiction. Yet, the sheer brilliance of the writing, outstanding characterization, wit and often hilarious comedy makes *The Finkler Question* exceptional, fully deserving the prize and the accolades it has received.

The three main characters approach the issues very differently. Julian Treslove is a would-be Jew, trying to make sense of what it is to be a Jew, but also a "humiliating capitulation to the gods of failure". Sam Finkler, an old school friend of Treslove's, is a successful writer of pop philosophy books (*The Existentialist in the Kitchen, The Little Book of Household Stoicism*), who is full of "confidence, such certainty of right", a vociferous and very public Jewish anti-Zionist. Libor Sevcik, at almost 90, is forty years older than the other two, their former teacher, a pre-war Czech Jewish refugee who made a successful career as a showbiz celebrity interviewer, taking his central European Jewishness with him wherever he went.

The interaction of the three men – alone and lonely – is central to the story: Finkler and Libor recently widowed, while Treslove has had a life of serial disastrous **relationships** with women.

Finkler was the first Jew Treslove met, successful, extrovert, clever. "If this is what all Jews look like, Treslove thought, then...Finkler was a better name for them than Jew. So that was what he called them privately – *Finklers* – giving the novel its title, rather than *The Jewish Question*.

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Finkler and Libor frequently **argue** about Israel and Zionism. "'Here we go,' Finkler says whenever the question of Israel arises, "Holocaust, Holocaust,'...and Libor, in his turn, retorts, 'Here we go, here we go, more of this self-hating Jew stuff,' even though Treslove had never met a Jew, in fact never **met** anybody, who hated himself less than Finkler did."

Finkler has declared his feeling on a national radio broadcast, when he stated, "'In the matter of Palestine...I am profoundly ashamed." This leads to letters of support from like-minded Jews, whom Finkler gladly leads, suggesting the name for the group, ASHamed Jews, a capital letter allusion to the Jewish past. They write in a letter to the *Guardian:* "Far from hating our Jewishness...it is we who continue the great Jewish traditions of justice and compassion."

Some of them retain some vestiges of Jewish observance, others do not: "Those ASHamed Jews who were only partially ashamed – that is to say who were ashamed, qua Jews, of Zionism but not, qua Jews, of being Jewish – were permitted to put their mortification into abeyance on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Hannukah, etc, and would resume again when the calendar turned secular."

Finkler, surprisingly, has his Jewish epiphany during a debate on Israel with Jewish establishment representatives on Israel. He and his female colleague spoke. "The community Jews were no match for her. Which wasn't saying much. Had they been the only speakers they'd still have contrived to lose the debate."

However, during question time a non-Jew in the audience poses a question to one of the Jewish panelists, which Finkler quickly steps in to answer:

"How dare you, a non-Jew...even think you can tell Jews what sort of country they may live in, when it was you, a European Gentile, who made a separate country for Jews a necessity?...So what empowers racists in their own right is to sniff out racism in others? Only from a world in which Jews believe they have nothing to fear will they consent to learn lessons in humanity. Until then the Jewish State's offer of safety to Jews the world over – yes, Jews first – while it might not be equitable cannot sanely be construed as racist."

From that day, Finkler falls out with his fellow exponents of Jewish ASHamedness with regard to the proposed academic boycott.

The other side of the issue is presented most often through Treslove, Libor or the writings of Finkler's late wife. One example is an anti-Israel play, *Sons of Abraham* (an allusion to Caryl Churchill's notorious *Seven Jewish Children*, performed in London and the United States recently): "*Sons of Abraham*, like much else of its kind, was a travesty of dramatic thought because it lacked imagination of otherness, because it accorded to its own self-righteousness a supremacy of truth, because it mistook propaganda for art, because it was rabble-rousing."

Another is: "Jews would not be allowed to prosper except as they always had prospered at the margins, in the concert halls and at the banks....Anything else would not be tolerated. A brave rearguard action in the face of insuperable odds was one thing. Anything resembling victory and peace was another. It could not be borne, whether by Muslims for whom Jews were a sort of erroneous and lily-livered brother, always to be kept in their place, or by Christians to whom they were anathema,

or by themselves to whom they were an embarrassment."

Apart from the Jewish-Israeli argument, which make this book almost required reading for anyone interested in the modern antisemitism and so-called anti-Zionism, Jacobson brings his characters alive, sometimes within a line or two. Thus, Libor takes a rather vacuous woman on an unfortunate dinner date for company over a meal. They discuss political leanings. "Fortunately, Emily wasn't a Jewish leftist. Unfortunately, she wasn't anything else. Except depressed."

The humor jumps off most pages.

"Hephzibah didn't so much cook as lash out at her ingredients, goading and infuriating them into taste. No matter what she was preparing she always had at least five pans on the go, each of them large enough to boil a cat in."

Brilliant writing, a superb command of the language, intellectual challenges, insight and just plain intelligence make this a marvelous read.

The Finkler Question, by Howard Jacobson, Bloomsbury, New York, 2010, 307pp

EMBRACING HOUT BAY - A HISTORY OF THE DORMAN FAMILY'S CONTRIBUTION TO ITS DEVELOPMENT

*

David Scher

Hout Bay is an enchanting town and fishing harbor, nestling in a lush hill-bedecked valley of the Cape Peninsula. It is justly regarded as one of the most beautiful sites in South Africa. With its stunning mountain setting, its entrance guarded by the oft-photographed Sentinel peak, Hout Bay draws thousands of visitors to its shores.

Edited by Gwynne Schrire, a seasoned and prolific historian, writer and researcher on local, family and Jewish history, *Embracing Hout Bay* highlights the immense contribution of the Dorman family to the development of the town.

When Simon Dorman, aged forty-seven, first visited Hout Bay in the early 1890s, he found a small community of fisherfolk around a beautiful bay and small-scale farmers in the adjoining valley. For Simon, Hout Bay seemed the ideal place to live in and to raise his six children then living in distant Lithuania, where poverty, persecution and pogroms

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overwhelmed Jewish life. In December 1897, Simon's wife Sarah, and their children began a lengthy and protracted journey to the tip of far-flung southern Africa. Their journey and Simon's struggle to establish himself in their new surroundings are graphically and movingly recounted.

From an entrepreneurial point of view, Simon Dorman was remarkably innovative and daring. Together with his son, Barney, he moved from running a shop to vegetable gardening. When customers would chat to them about their fishing successes, they decided to try their luck in this industry. Apart from dispatching fishing crews, they established a smokery to smoke fish their boats caught. Their difficulties were legendary. Even taking the fish to the market posed severe problems. As Barney later recalled, "the roads were so bad it was very difficult to come through without getting stuck. When the wagons would get stuck so badly we had to take things up by fish cart. Transport in those days was either by horse or by mule. There were no trains and no trucks. We used to take the fish.... using a wagon with four horses if the load was big, and a cart and two horses if small. When the motor cars started we changed to those".

As the Dorman fishing business expanded, and their fish sheds grew in size, so their competitors threw obstacles in their path. Some local farming families, who wanted to monopolize the industry, tried to prevent the newcomers, Simon and Barney, from increasing their fishing operations by preventing them from enlarging their sheds.

Only an appeal to the Resident Magistrate saved the situation. In the event, the Dormans prospered and farming, dairy and assorted property interests were added to their portfolio.

Sadly, the family's path to success was not always easy. As far back as the 1920s, there was conflict within the family over business interests, and although settled out of court, the wounds ran deep. The most serious conflict revolved around the estate and bequest of Simon Dorman's younger son, Alfie, who died in 1948. Having no children of his own, Alfie had wanted to leave his fishing business to his nephew Harold, the only adult male Dorman descendant in the family. However, due to Harold being subject to a ten year business restraining order, Alfie, on legal advise, amended his will in favour of Harold's son, Stanley, effectively making seven-year old Stanley, the owner-in-waiting of his fishing business.

By 1965 Stanley, armed with a Bachelor of Commerce degree, was ready to take a closer look at Chapman's Peak Fisheries, which his Uncle Alfie had bequeathed to him seventeen years earlier. It was in a parlous state. Morale among the skippers and the crew was low, the boats were old and in a state of disrepair and the company itself had large bank overdrafts and unpaid accounts. The harbor was also effectively controlled and monopolized by South African Sea Products Ltd (SASP), a fierce rival. As if that was not enough his father, who had managed the company until then, was himself struggling with his debt-ridden farm, Oakhurst, When Harold died in 1968, Stanley was already in the hot seat, fighting to save Oakhurst from bankruptcy, while endeavoring to revitalize the ailing fishing company.

It says much of Stanley Dorman's pugnacious character, financial finesse and courage that, despite knowing little about the fishing side of the business, he was able to make a success of his inheritance.

One of the most disheartening episodes in the book is to read about the vindictive machinations of an established competitor, SASP, who used every trick in the book to ruin Dorman's company. They tried to prevent him from obtaining bait and ice, then fuel, then accommodation for his fisherman, then repairs and spares for his boat. They even attempted to boycott the catches his fisherman off-loaded.

Much of the source of this campaign came from SASP's senior manager, Abe Wisenberg, who coincidentally was married to Alfie Dorman's niece Sylvia (daughter of his sister, Bertha). Wisenberg harbored a huge resentment against the Dorman family. The origin of this resentment lay in Alfie's distant will. He bore a huge grudge that it was Stanley and not himself or his wife Sylvia who had inherited Alfie's Chapman's Peak Fisheries. This was despite the fact that Alfie had bequeathed to his

sister Bertha and her daughters £500 each, sizeable amounts of money for those days. Even in his eighties, Wisenberg harbored a grudge about his wife's uncle's choice of beneficiaries in a will drawn up half a century previously! A defamatory remark made by him in December 2000 to Stanley's son Lance required and got an immediate apology.

By the late 1970's, the fishing industry had taken a serious downturn. Tuna had virtually disappeared and hake and kingklip had become scarcer. The situation was exacerbated by cash flow problems, fuel price hikes and crippling overheads. A joint venture with Leo Raphaely and Sons (Pty) Ltd, an international commodity/shipping organization, had turned sour. Chapman's Peak Fisheries, the company that Stanley had struggled so hard to establish, faced ruin. In a series of measures designed to save the situation, a cluster of workshops on Lot Fifty was put up for auction. There was no interest. All fishing companies were under pressure and saw no potential in them.

A desperate Stanley thought of a new venture. Since a 1974 trip to San Francisco, he had become fascinated by waterfront projects. He refined his ideas by visiting waterfront projects in cities like Baltimore, San Diego, Boston and Vancouver. Could an unwanted Lot Fifty workshop on the wrong side of Hout Bay harbor be converted into a waterfront development with shops and restaurants similar to those he had witnessed overseas? A tourist emporium lying adjacent a white sandy beach, near the yacht club and accessible to fishing boats, seemed attainable, even if it was a financially risky undertaking.

So was born the famous Mariner's Wharf of Hout Bay - Africa's (and the Southern Hemisphere's) first harbor-front emporium. Opened by J.W. Wiley, the then Minister of Environment Affairs and Tourism on 22 November 1984, it has proved an enormous success with its host of freshfish and live lobster markets, nautical gift and souvenir shops. At the height of the tourist season, many thousands of visitors, local and overseas, visit the emporium. The jewel of the emporium is the Wharfside Grill Seafood Restaurant. A visit to the Restaurant is an extraordinary experience. At the entrance is a striking figurehead decorated with a section of jute rope bought at a naval auction. All the dining "cabins" have maritime appellations with their own specific character (for example, the Foredeck dining area, the Queen Mary dining cabin, the Union Castle dining cabin, etc). Seafaring items ranging from large-mesh fishing nets to original lifebuoys to mail ship menus, adorn the dining

A remarkable item on display is an 8-foot-1-inch builder's model of the *Pendennis Castle*, the Union Castle liner on which Stanley and his wife, Pam, had met in 1966. In November 1996, during an unscheduled visit to New Bedford in Massachussetts, US, Stanley and Pam stumbled upon a vaguely familiar ship's model in an antique shop. In Schrire's description: "Close inspection revealed it had been

repainted, and peering out of the stern under peeling paint Pam could just decipher the letters 'is'. Without disclosing its particular secret, which would then have pushed-up its price, Stanley negotiated the price down, bought it, and had it shipped back to Cape Town, together with a levy of American lobster traps, buoys, etc. When the ship's model was stripped of its paint, the 'is' was revealed to indeed be part of the full name of the *Pendennis Castle*".

From his schooldays, history has had a fascination for Stanley Dorman. In particular, the history of Hout Bay was very real to him, living as he did with its past all around him. It was not surprising, therefore, that once Mariner's Wharf was up-and running, he should turn his attention to preserving the historical heritage of Hout Bay. Thus it was that during the 1980s, Stanley started restoring the Victorian Cottages of the fishermen for whom he had so much respect and affection. Stretching half a kilometer along the Main Road, these restored cottages in the appropriately named Fisherman's World now house a plethora of studios and workshops for a variety of arts and crafts. Among the restored Main Road cottages are Homeleigh, the former Post Office from the 1930s, the old Dorman and Son shop, which is semi-attached to the 1912 house which Barney and Tilly Dorman moved into after their wedding, and even a Norfolk pine tree, reputedly planted by Simon Dorman's wife, Sarah, during the 1890s. Stanley Dorman's contribution to the restoration and preservation of historical Hout Bay has been enormous. As Pam Wormser, curator for many years of the Hout Bay Museum wrote: "What a comforting thought to know, that in you, Hout Bay has a benefactor - someone who not only owns part of its past but who also cares for it and best of all wants to preserve it."

Speaking at the launch of *Embracing Hout Bay* on 10 June 2010, Schrire noted that Stanley Dorman had "changed the face and future of Hout Bay and South African tourism forever" through his establishment of the now world-famous Mariner's Wharf and Fisherman's World. She opined that it was the success of this venture that had in fact encouraged the later development of Cape Town's renowned Victoria and Alfred Waterfront.

It is difficult to speak too highly of this outstanding book. Superbly written with lavish evocative photographs and illustrations, it is an absolute treasure. For those interested in Jewish entrepreneurial and family history, and in local Cape history, this moving family saga represents a major contribution and deserves a wide readership.

Embracing Hout Bay: Over a century of making things happen from Dorman & Son to Mariner's Wharf and Fisherman's World edited by Gwynne Schrire, Fisherman's World (Pty) Ltd, Hout Bay, 2010, 184 pp. The book is available at Clarke's Bookshop, Cape Town, and The Bay Bookshop, Tobi Information Centre and Mariner's Wharf, all in Hout Bay.

THE EICHMANN TRIAL

*

Ralph Zulman

Deborah E. Lipstadt is the Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. She is best known for her successful defence of a libel action brought against her by the Nazi sympathizer David Irving. Her books include History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving, Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory and Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust. 1939-1945 Holocaust, 1939-1945.

Lipstadt's most recent book is *The Eichmann Trial*. It is relatively brief (237 pages) and concise compared to the monumental work by Gideon Hausner, who prosecuted Eichmann and whose 528-page *Justice in Jerusalem: The Trial of Adolf*

Judge Ralph Zulman is a former justice of the Appeal Court of South Africa and a senior office bearer of many years standing on the SA Jewish Board of Deputies. He is a frequent contributor to and long-serving member of the editorial board of Jewish Affairs.

Eichmann appeared in 1966.

The book is divided into five parts: an Introduction, 'The Eichmann Trial' (six chapters and a conclusion), Notes, a Chronology and Acknowledgments.

The introduction commences with a reference to a ghoulish and failed attempt to display in a permanent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum tons of hair "harvested" from Jewish women at Auschwitz by the Nazis. This hair had been sold to factories that produced blankets and water-absorbent socks for U-boat crews.

Lipstadt recalls her childhood memories of the trial, including of a photograph on the front page of the *New York Times* showing Eichmann in a glass booth on the opening day of the trial.

During the trial Eichmann, wrote a memoir. After his execution, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion agreed, at the suggestion of prosecutor Hausner, to seal the manuscript in Israel's National Archives. The memoir reveals a man who considered his Nazi leaders to be his "idols" and who was fully committed

to their goals. He never showed any remorse for his deeds. Lipstadt makes the trenchant point that without antisemitism and centuries of persistent hatred of Jews, the Third Reich would have found it impossible to "mobilize hundreds of thousands of people to despise, scapegoat and ultimately participate in the murder of European Jewry".

Of the Irving libel trial, the London Daily Telegraph declared in a lead editorial that it had "done for the new century what the Nuremberg tribunals or the Eichmann trial did for earlier generations." In a number of important ways, though, the Irving trial in London and the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem were diametric opposites. The most obvious difference was that in Jerusalem, an actual a Nazi was the defendant whereas in London it was a Holocaust historian who was on trial. There was a more striking contrast. In Jerusalem, testimony by the victims constituted the central element of the prosecutor's case. In the London case, survivors were not used as witnesses. Lipstadt was inundated with offers from survivors to testify, but their testimony was "eschewed for strategic reasons".

The introductory chapter concludes as follows: For the sake of her readers and herself, a historian must acknowledge their presence [past events] and try to ensure that they clarify, rather than cloud, her understanding. And so, with my own encounter with history, the law, the study of Holocaust, and raw anti-Semitism as a backdrop, I began to explore what happened in Jerusalem five decades earlier.

In the first chapter the author traces, in fascinating detail, how Eichmann' whereabouts in Argentina were established. She is critical of Simon Wiesenthal, who unjustifiably claimed to have played a pivotal role in locating him. She goes so far as to accuse Wiesenthal, however well meaning, of being guilty of a "fraudulent effort" in his seeking "to elicit non-Jewish interest in the Holocaust" through broadening the number of Nazi victims to include, in addition to the six million Jews, some five million non-Jews, even if this meant "falsifying history." In her view, "Wiesenthal's historical intervention obscures, if not denies, the true nature of the Holocaust" and his "invented equivalencies....rode roughshod over the history of Nazi policy during 1941-44."

Lipstadt also dismisses, to a lesser degree, the role claimed by Tuvia Friedman in finding Eichmann. Ultimately, she attributes the latter accomplishment to "amateur sleuthing and dumb luck", which she goes on to describe in detail, ending with the part played in his eventual capture in Buenos Aires by Mossad.

Unbeknown to the Israelis, Eichmann's capture had not been the total success they assumed it to be. The Argentinian secret police were apparently aware of the operation and one wonders why they did not abort it. Lipstadt suggests that perhaps they were relieved that Eichmann "was being taken off their bands"

A bizarre incident, described by Malkin, one of Eichmann's captors, is mentioned. Malkin escorted Eichmann to the toilet and waited outside. After a few minutes Eichmann called out, "Darf ich anfangen?" ("May I begin?"). Only when told that he could did he begin to move his bowels. Hearing of this, one of his interrogators, wondered if such a man could possibly have "decided the fate of millions of my people".

Chapter Two deals with the details of getting Eichmann out of Argentina to Israel. In Chapter Three, the practical matters relating to the trial are recounted. These included the choice of the prosecutor. Hausner, who eventually took on this position, had recently become Attorney General. He was an accomplished commercial lawyer but one lacking experience in criminal law or courtroom protocol, and many Israelis hoped that he would appoint a prosecutor with the necessary experience in this regard. Instead, he insisted on taking the job himself.

The choice of the judge to preside over the trial had to be dealt with. According to Israeli law the choice should have been in the hands of Benjamin Halevi, president of the Jerusalem District Court where the trial was to be held. He had, however, presided in 1954 over the trial of Israel Kaszner a Hungarian Jew who had negotiated with Eichmann to exchange Jews for trucks and who had sold places to Jews on a train to enable them to reach safety. Despite urgings, Halevi refused to step down. A compromise was reached. The Knesset stepped in with a law providing that in capital cases, a High Court Judge should preside to be joined by two District-Court Judges. This allowed Halevi to participate, but not preside in the trial. Judge Moshe Landau was named as the presiding judge. Halevi nominated himself and Judge Yitzhak Raveh as the other two members of the tribunal. All three were German Jews who had received their law degrees in Europe prior to immigrating to Palestine.

The choice of the venue for the trial had to be decided upon. Jerusalem's court rooms were small, shabby, and not equipped with press quarters. Teddy Kollek, then head of Ben-Gurion's office, was charged with finding an appropriate venue, and selected Beit Ha'am a cultural centre then under construction. Its theater was transformed into a courtroom, "replete with a glass booth for the defendant and compartments for hidden television cameras."

Meanwhile, another drama was occurring near Haifa in the Yagar Prison. This large complex had become a holding place for one man – Eichmann. Several guards were assigned to watch over Eichmann and to prevent him from attempting to harm himself. A mound of documents was assembled, including the record of the entire Nuremberg proceedings. Relevant documentation was also obtained from various countries. However, the USSR and Britain refused to provide the documents requested from them.

Eichmann's chief interrogator was Captain Avner Less, a German Jew who had immigrated to Palestine in 1938 at the age of 22. To his surprise, and that of his police colleagues, Eichmann spoke freely, inundating them with details about the Final Solution.

The remaining issue was the most important of all. What would the scope be of the crimes that Eichmann was to be charged with? Rachel Auerbach of Yad Vashem assisted Hausner and placed considerable material at his disposal, inter alia statements from survivors. However, Hausner and Auerbach had a problem in that Eichman did not play a role in all aspects of the Final Solution. Nonetheless, the indictment which Hausner eventually issued took exactly that approach. It charged Eichmann with the "implementation" of the Final Solution, committing acts of "extermination" on Jews in Poland at death camps, murdering Jews in the USSR with the Einsatzgruppen, imposing sterilization and abortions on Jews, forcing Jews to live in conditions that were "likely to bring about their physical destruction", creating mechanisms to plunder Jewish property and causing the death of thousands of Jews in forced-labour camps, ghettos and transit camps. He was also charged with dispatching tens of thousands of Gypsies to be murdered. At Nuremberg, the murder of the Jews had been an example of crimes against humanity. Here it was the centerpiece.

The prosecution proposed to call a number of witnesses who had no connection with Eichmann. Some legal experts considered their testimony highly prejudicial and legally irrelevant.

The trial proper is dealt with in Chapter Four. It commenced on 11 April 1961. The new cultural centre was packed for the occasion, with over 700 people filling the room. Newspapers world-wide carried news of the event. American television networks broadcast special telecasts. There were more reporters in Jerusalem than had gone to Nuremberg. The Israeli authorities distributed daily bulletins in English, French and German on the trial. Numerous journalists from Yiddish newspapers challenged the Israelis for not making the bulletins available in Yiddish which, they reminded them, was the language of Eichmann's victims.

The Presiding Judge, without any introductory remarks, read the indictment to the accused in Hebrew. Over the coming months additional languages, including German, Yiddish, Hungarian and English, were used in the courtroom.

Eichmann's lawyer, Robert Servatius, rose to challenge the proceedings on various grounds among them the judges themselves. He argued that as Jews they were incapable of remaining impartial in a case that involved the Final Solution. Hausner rebutted the objections drawing on international legal principles, as well as examples of American and British case law and the United Nations that stipulated that Eichmann should be tried in Israel. He ruled that Israel was not doing anything contrary to the will of free nations.

Finally on the fourth day, after the court had first been called to order, the judges rejected Servatius' objections. Hausner then completed his opening address which he had begun earlier. He invoked, inter alia, the biblical story of Cain and Abel as well as Emile Zola's remarks about the French army's antisemitic treatment of Captain Alfred Dreyfus.

Hannah Arendt dismissed his speech as "cheap rhetoric and bad history", but others were transfixed. The Israeli writer Haim Gouri saw the lawyer who had tried everyone's patience with endless legal precedents as being transformed into "a great figure of lamentation" while the *Washington Post* described Hausner's opening address as a "mighty chronicle" that held the packed courtroom in the grip of compulsive attention". Notwithstanding this praise, there was no doubt that Hausner got much of the history wrong. Eichmann, although he played a key role in the Final Solution, did not control it. However some elements of Hausner's depiction of him were quite accurate.

Hausner had prepared a list of more than one hundred survivors who were to be called as witnesses. Most of them had no direct link with Eichmann. In addition, there was a most damning source of evidence against Eichmann, namely a history of the Final Solution in which he sought to exonerate Hitler which he himself had written while in Buenos Aires.

The first witness called was Police Inspector Less. He told how Eichmann had described preparations that had been made for gassing Jews and how civilians with pliers moved among Jews pulling gold-filled teeth. The next witness was the renowned historian Salo W Baron of Columbia University. He provided a "dizzying array of facts and figures" about European Jewish life that had been destroyed. Eichmann's career as a Jewish "specialist" was then tracked through various witnesses. A procession of the further witnesses, including survivors, is then described in harrowing detail in the next 78 pages of this chapter (pp69-147).

In Chapter Six, the author deals trenchantly with the comments and criticisms of Hannah Arendt, who she describes as "the product of a highly acculturated upper-class German Jewish family in which she claimed that the word 'Jew' was never spoken". Lipstadt contends that "One cannot and should not draw a direct line from Arendt's view of the Eichmann trial to those who berate Jews for making too much of contemporary anti-Semitism".

Lipstadt concludes the book by stating that the trial's impact extends far beyond Eichmann "and his nefarious deeds". The trial and the debate that followed "inaugurated a slow process whereby the topic of the Holocaust became a matter of concern not only to the Jewish community but to a larger and broader realm of people". She recounts meeting a Rwandan survivor who told her that he wanted to tell his story so that people could listen to him and other survivors. Future generations who were not there must remember and those who were there must tell them about what happened.

There are detailed notes on each chapter of the book. The Chronology starts with the birth of Eichmann on 19 March 1906 in Solingen, Germany, and ends with a reference to the International Tribunal

for the former Yugoslavia, in which two Bosnian Serbs were found guilty of committing genocide in Srebrenica in 1995 and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In reading this riveting book, I could not help being struck by a contrast. This lay in the way Israel handled Eichmann as compared to how America dealt with Osama bin Laden. After capturing Eichmann, Israel transported him to Jerusalem. There, he stood trial from 11 April 1961 for some eight months, was found guilty and sentenced to death on 15 December 1961. An appeal was rejected by Israel's High Court on 29 May 1962. He was executed at midnight at Ramle Prison on 31 May 1962. In the case of Bin Laden, American operatives (the Seals) captured him in Pakistan on 2 May 2011 and summarily executed him there. Surely Eichmann, who was indirectly responsible for the murder of six million European Jews was no less a criminal than Bin Laden who was indirectly guilty of the murder of 3 000 people in New York. Did Israel behave correctly by putting Eichmann on trial, finding him guilty, sentencing him to death and only then executing him rather than summarily executing him when he was captured as occurred in the case of bin Laden? I leave it to the reader to ponder the answer to this thorny question.

As pointed out on the dust jacket of the book, the trial "has become a touchstone for judicial proceedings throughout the world" and "offers a legal moral and political framework for coming to terms with unfathomable evil. Lipstadt infuses a gripping narrative with historical perspective and contemporary urgency".

Franklin Foer, in his review of the book in the *New York Times* wrote:

Lipstadt has done a great service by untethering the [Eichman] trial from Hannah Arendt's polarizing presence, recovering the event as a gripping legal drama, as well as a hinge moment in Israel's history and in the world's delayed awakening to the magnitude of the Holocaust ... Her conclusions about Eichmann in Jerusalem are rendered calmly and with devastating fairness.

I cannot put the matter better.

The Eichmann Trial by Deborah E. Lipstadt, Schoken Nextbook.Schoken Books, 2011, 237pp

SOUTH AFRICAN ODYSSEY: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BERTHA GOUDVIS

*

Reuben Musiker

'I sometimes wonder if the world has ever seen more startling changes in so short a time as those which have followed in such rapid succession within my own lifespan: two world wars, the conquest of the air, the most amazing discoveries and inventions, and nowadays even the threat of nuclear fallout to extinguish life on earth".

These words, written by Bertha Goudvis in her old age, are a fitting summary of the events which she describes so lucidly and vividly in this reconstructed autobiography, which has been assembled from various typescripts and extracts from publications. The editor, Marcia Leveson, is to be congratulated for assembling these fragments into a compelling narrative, which not only covers the life of Bertha Goudvis but provides new insight into the life of South African Jewry during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. The book contains a

Reuben Musiker is Professor Emeritus of Librarianship and Bibliography, University of the Witwatersrand. He has published widely on issues of Jewish and general interest, is Library Consultant, SA Jewish Board of Deputies, and has served for over thirty years on the editorial board of Jewish Affairs. useful glossary and index. A more comprehensive introduction, explaining the socio-historical background to the period covered by the narrative, would have been a welcome addition as would footnotes explaining the historical significance of many towns and personalities mentioned in the book.

As a child of barely five years old Bertha, together with her mother and sister Clarice, set off from Dartmouth in 1881 to join her father, Jacob Cinamon, in South Africa, where he had gone two years earlier to seek his fortune. During the last two decades of the 19th Century, many immigrants were similarly tempted by the lure of diamond and gold discoveries in South Africa, but few attained the good fortune of the promised El Dorado. Bertha described her father in these words: 'He was honorable and hardworking and of a sanguine and speculative disposition, although in the end he lacked the flair for success -he never knew when to sell in time'. He was also 'a born autocrat who was convinced that all he did was for the best, but many, including his elder daughter, resented his dominance with some bitterness'. Of all the characters in the book, Jacob Cinamon is perhaps the most clearly defined and described. His growing family led a peripatetic existence, transported wherever the possibility of fame and fortune was rumored to exist.

Bertha herself was an extraordinarily precocious and gifted child with remarkable powers of observation. It is clear that she never enjoyed a normal childhood and was much in the company of adults. Speaking of the period during which the family resided in their first home in the village of Burgersdorp, Bertha writes of her mother, 'She said in later years that she had made me old fashioned before my time because she needed companionship and I had a lively mind'.

Like many women of her generation, she received little formal education, yet from the age of five she was able to read fluently and during her childhood eagerly devoured whatever books she came across. She recounts that while on a visit to relatives in Pietermaritzburg, her aunt took a dislike to her precocity and forbade her to read the novels in her bookcase, putting them on the top shelf out of reach. 'But when she and Mother went out together, I climbed on a chair and stood reading until the creak of the gate warned of their return.' Possibly, this early acquaintance with literature and the fact that her father accustomed her from childhood to his views on religion, politics and general topics also fostered her powers of observation.

Bertha provides fascinating accounts of the various small towns encountered during the family's endless wanderings. These included Burgersdorp, Middelburg in the Transvaal and, most interesting of all, Barberton. She was particularly adept in her descriptions of personalities. Her first journalistic effort was published in the *Daily Graphic*, a London publication, and was a graphic description of her experiences during the Matabele Rebellion that occurred during the family's sojourn in Bulawayo. She was then scarcely twenty years old. A remarkable feature of this account was a shrewd description of Cecil Rhodes.

After her marriage to Leigh Goudvis, Bertha moved with him and their growing family to Lourenco Marques and subsequently to Durban and then Vryheid. In the role of hotelier's wife, she encountered many interesting personalities. Her most memorable experience was a meeting in Lourenco Marques with the former president of the South African Republic, Paul Kruger, who presented her with a valuable autographed photograph of himself.

The journalist career of Bertha Goudvis began in the 1920s while she was resident in Vryheid. She supplemented the family's meager income with contributions to the *Natal Mercury* and she also worked at the Johannesburg-based newspapers, *The Evening Chronicle* and *The Star*. In this respect, she was something of a pioneer and innovator, as journalism at this time was mostly a male profession and women were relegated to writing on social columns. She describes an interview with the editor of *The Evening Chronicle*, Herbert Clayton, in which he stated that 'the paper could not yet afford to

employ a woman on the staff, the social work being done by someone who was glad to supply reports in exchange for tickets'. Eventually, Clayton was prevailed upon to 'entrust me with a variety of jobs, even including the reporting of political meetings.' For these meetings, lacking a knowledge of shorthand, she relied on her prodigious memory. She also wrote special articles and a weekly interview with a theatrical or music hall celebrity. During the decade 1950-1960, she was asked to supply a weekly column of Jewish interest for The Star. She decided to call it 'Jewish Notebook' and wrote under the pseudonym 'Daniel' (choosing a male name because she wished to write about matters of general interest and not be confined to descriptions of social functions). During this period she met many Jewish celebrities, including Dr Chaim Weizmann and Chief Rabbi Dr JL Landau. Bertha became a close friend of the Chief Rabbi and his wife. Together with Mrs Landau, she was one of the founders of the Johannesburg Women's Zionist League and was honored at the 1952 annual general meeting of the League by the presentation of a certificate for eighteen trees.

Bertha Goudvis wrote that she always cherished the hope that someday her plays and stories would win her recognition as a South African writer. Her opportunity arose after she had been commissioned to write articles and sketches on Jewish life for the Zionist Record, edited by Jack Alexander. One of these sketches of Jewish life, entitled A Husband for Rachel, was produced by Bertha herself at the Jewish Guild Theatre. Other one-act plays followed including Aliens, The Way the Money Goes, Patriots and Sergeant in Charge. In 1929, she was persuaded by an Italian musician, Signor Angelo Casiraghi, to write the libretto for a musical comedy entitled This production enjoyed Sunshine Land. considerable success on its first performance at the Standard Theatre. Unfortunately, the libretto was subsequently lost after the departure of Casirighi for Italy.

In 1949, Bertha's novel *Little Eden* was published to great acclaim. This was followed by the publication of a collection of her short stories, including *The Mistress of Mooiplaas and Other Stories* – all of which had originally appeared in *The Outspan* magazine under the editorship of A Wells. Bertha said of *Little Eden* that it was based on her experiences and observations during her stay in Louwsburg, a tiny village on the outskirts of Vryheid. In the same manner, the short stories written for the *Outspan* were based on the kind of life she had known from childhood. "The reader will see that I had learned to write by trial and error, and at best could only tell a round unvarnished tale."

From 1956, onwards Bertha made the first attempts to work on her autobiography. An early draft appeared in *Jewish Affairs* in April 1956. This was followed by an excerpt entitled 'Pages from an Unpublished Autobiography: President Kruger in Lourenco Marques', which was published in the *South African P.E.N. Yearbook 1956-1957*. Other

autobiographical extracts were included an article entitled 'What Life has Taught Me', *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 April 1956, and in a publication entitled *Textures, No.4: Special Bertha Goudvis Issue*, University of the Orange Free State, 1987.

The question arises as to why Bertha Goudvis encountered such difficulty in completing her autobiography. A possible reason might be deduced from the following statement:

My own life has inevitably been so closely bound up with that of my family that it has been hard to tell my story without more frequent mention of its members. But their wish for privacy must be respected. My daughter, like my sister, has been insistent on this point. No such restriction applies to my father, however, who died long before this book was contemplated. He was such a character that, when I spoke of him last year to someone who was interested in my early life, she exclaimed, 'What a man! You could write a book solely about him...'

It is interesting to know what personal philosophy motivated Bertha Goudvis throughout her long life, in which she endured many losses, including the death of her closest family members. 'It was my fate to live on and even to survive my sister'. In 1956, when she was eighty years old, she was asked by the *Rand Daily Mail* to spell out what life had taught her. Here are the main points of her reply:

Life has taught me not to be dogmatic, and to refrain from interference with the lives of others. .. I find that I am less easily shocked today than I was in my twenties, or even in my thirties... I no longer believe in Utopias, for there is something in errant human nature which militates against them. Nevertheless, I have seen in my time a vast improvement in living conditions for the majority, and opportunities made available which were hitherto denied... Although the years have

tamed my early socialistic fervor, I still believe in the Welfare State, but it must be a free and democratic one... It is better to laugh than to cry, and a gust of laughter may sweep away those hurt and angry feelings which so often spoil a good relationship... When I was young, I believed that once women were emancipated they would change the world. This illusion was soon shattered. I still believe that emancipation is right and necessary, for time has proved the truth of Olive Schreiner's contention that changing economic circumstances at forcing women out of the home and into the labour market.... Women have gained the franchise and greater freedom, but they have not combined to save the world from war or any other evil, for they are swayed by the same hatreds, passions and prejudices as men...

In 1964, she declared that it was 'time to bring down the curtain'. Her death occurred in 1966 during a visit to the Cape Town home of her nephew, Mr H H Michaelis.

Bertha Goudvis is recognized as a pioneer South African literary figure. Many of her short stories continue to be reproduced in anthologies, including Michael Chapman's 'Omnibus of a Century of South African Stories' (2007). Tributes have been paid to her by scholars such as Shirley Kossick of the University of South Africa. In 1983, Marcia Leveson of the University of the Witwatersrand presented a paper on her work at the Grahamstown Association of University English Teachers of South Africa Conference. This paper was included as a chapter in the anthology, 'Women and Writing in South Africa' (Heinemann, 1989). Leveson's final tribute was the preparation of this autobiographical work, which Bertha always called her *South African Odyssey*.

South African Odyssey: The Autobiography of Bertha Goudvis, edited By Marcia Leveson, Picador Africa, 2011



If I forget thee, O Jerusalem...

Garden of Gethsemane Holy Wailing Wall Temple site of Solomon Holding in their thrall

DID Mary live in Bethany? Mohammed's steed rose Where? Where ARE the Walls of Jericho? DID Joshua conquer THERE?

These we yet may query Tho' sites beyond compare But what we KNOW and CHERISH Jerusalem IS THERE!

Rosemary and lavender Olive-tree and pine Golden light, Eternal might Jerusalem is MINE!

Haifa's Baha'i Temple Panoramic View Beauty of Mount Carmel Sea of deepest blue

Tel Aviv - metropolis -Breathless, glittering, brash Ancient Port, sea-resort Living's glitz and dash

But Jerusalem-the-Golden Its magic pink-hued hills Its highways and its byways Its Holy aura thrills

The New submerging Timeless Old? It glitters not - yet purest Gold The gold of Age The gold of Light The gold of Faith The gold of Might

I touch the whorls of ancient vine Proud ancestor of sweetest wine On champagne air I, hungry, dine Jerusalem is Mine!

Annette Dubovsky

Late harvest memories

Late harvest memories time-drenched and ripe. An autumnal blaze alive in the grape's core. The frozen shadows of winter are still hidden beneath the ageing fruit. Every poem seeped in love is a last poem...

Bernard Levinson

Yom Kippur

Where are you going to break the fast? What are you wearing? Who have you asked? Familiar questions to the ears Of conversations throughout the years

Lest we forget we go to pray
To cleanse our souls from evil's way
To look inside and introspect
Yet how many really take time to reflect

Wondering what the fashion dictates The Prado Bag, ongoing debates Year in year out it's all repeated Is the object thus not defeated!

Be at one Search deep within Ask forgiveness for each sin Be good to your fellow man See beyond the 4 wheel van Live each day as a true mensch Then Yom Kippur is less intense.

On Kol Nidrei the book is sealed We repent and ask to be healed From ways that we have erred and scarred Yet it's all been printed on the big score card

We beat our chests and say Al Chait Yet speak of news We just can't wait The affair the divorce Whose gone machullah Left the country Was it Cohen or Miller!

Make it different just for once Cleanse your soul and pray for peace That mitzvoth be on the increase It doesn't matter who looks fat Whose botox didn't take Just remember why you're here For Yom Kippur's sake.

Bev Moss-Reilly

The Burgers in Vegas

Were thick and juicy in the 60s
The fries were hot and crisp
The shakes stood tall and sweet
Everything was better, different
From places like Fort Worth
Especially the change lady at Slots-R-Fun
She was forty, I was twenty
In Texas we'd have met stares
From strangers, family, friends
But things were better, different
In Vegas I kept saying, hoping
One night I took her home
And the look on her daughter's face
Told us both that things
Were not so different in Vegas

John Yarbrough

The Wise

On the hills above the sea, wild mauve geraniums bending in the breeze like the elderly, with flexibility, above the stiffened branches of youth and immaturity

Freda Freeman

Heidelberg Road

The highway traffic suddenly stops A long queue ahead the driver sits & stares

The sky is blue
On his side tall tress
The euclypti erect
In different shades
Numerous narrow tips
are powder puffs.
Nearby the turn
A stately willow tree
In a shallow ravine

No hurry now No flights to catch As white clouds enlarging accrue fluff. Traffic trickling No chase or haste.

Boy Flying

boy of five grinning in the sun leaps into the air and rises like a hawk

gliding past the cities floating through the trees awestruck and dazzled

higher make it higher faster make it faster squeeling with delight

hands clapping wings flapping satisfied with flight

descending in a slow and stately ruffle of feathers

in sleep billions are falling millions are tumbling out of bed once I used to fly

a distant voice cries out to me you there with scorched receding hair keep my hawk alive!

Ben Wilensky

The driver waits listening to inner debate As poetic words relate taking shape.

The police cordon moves slowly away the traffic streams and rushes on

The driver's late He turns the key Switches on the wipers It starts to rain

What to say about long delay? Back at work He'll explain.

Ben Krengel



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READER'S LETTER

*

I found most of Chuck Volpe's well-written article, "Antisemitism and...." In the Pesach 2011 issue both factually correct and containing an excellent analysis. What disturbs me is the implication that he wishes Israeli policy to be based on what is best for his public relations efforts with the South African non-Jewish community, without due consideration of what this would probably do to Israel security.

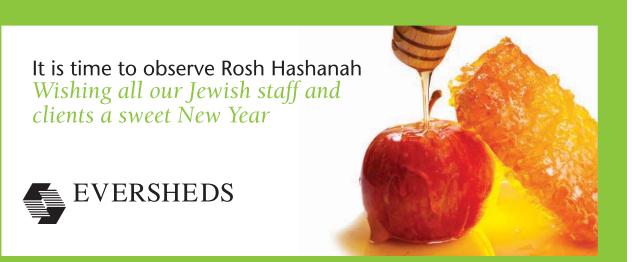
Israel has defined itself as a democratic Jewish State, much as England is an English/Anglican-Communion democratic State. Judaism (yes, there will always be some disagreement as what Judaism is) is the State Religion of Israel, much as Anglican Christianity is of England (and the last Lambeth Conference showed there is some disagreement there, also.) But the rights of non-Jews, both citizens and foreigners, are respected in Israel, much as the rights of non-Christians, both citizens and foreigners, are respected in England.

Arafat did not accept that definition, and his successor, Abbas, refuses to accept that definition. Arafat threw out the mild Jordanian textbooks and replaced them with Saudiprinted books inspired by and quoting from Nazi texts. And Abbas continues this "education," and proclaims to his own people that eventually all the Holy Land will be under Palestinian Arab control. Hamas, controlling Gaza, openly attacks civilian targets in Israel whenever it seems advantages, still holds GiladShalit captive, and vows the destruction of Israel. It is also clear that the personal freedom of the average person in Gaza today is far more restricted that it was under Israeli rule. Gaza free from occupation? If it were not for current support by Iran and certain European countries, Gaza would not be ruled by Hamas. And much of the world seems to buy the false terrorist promulgated history of the conflict and insist Israel return to indefensible borders and wage ethnic cleansing against its own people in areas that much of the world define as "occupied," but which have always had Jewish settlements except for the years 1948-1967.

What is needed is a realization that the promulgation of terror, which the support of terrorists both within the PLO and Hamas brings about, results in increased worldwide terror, not just terror against Israel. It can even result in terror against Arab states, and has in the past.

Further, it must be recognised that a Palestinian State can be worthy of support only if it allows Jews and Christians to live in it both as citizens and as visitors (just as Israel extends such rights to Muslims and Christians).

David Lloyd Klepper Jerusalem



As one of the world's leading law firms, we wish all our Jewish clients and staff in South Africa, and around the globe, Shana Tovah and well over the Fast. May you have a sweet New Year filled with health, peace and prosperity.

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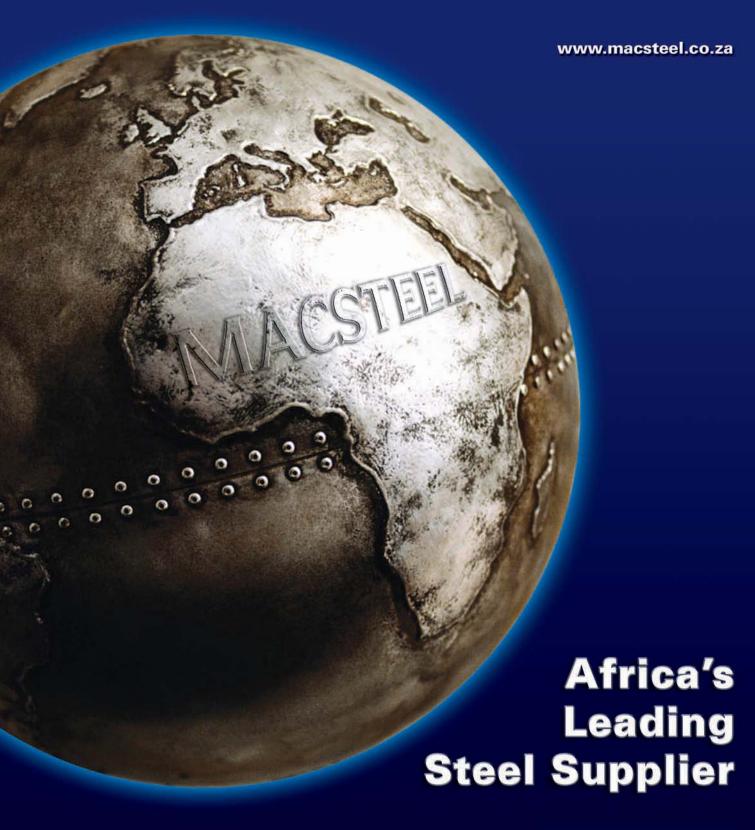
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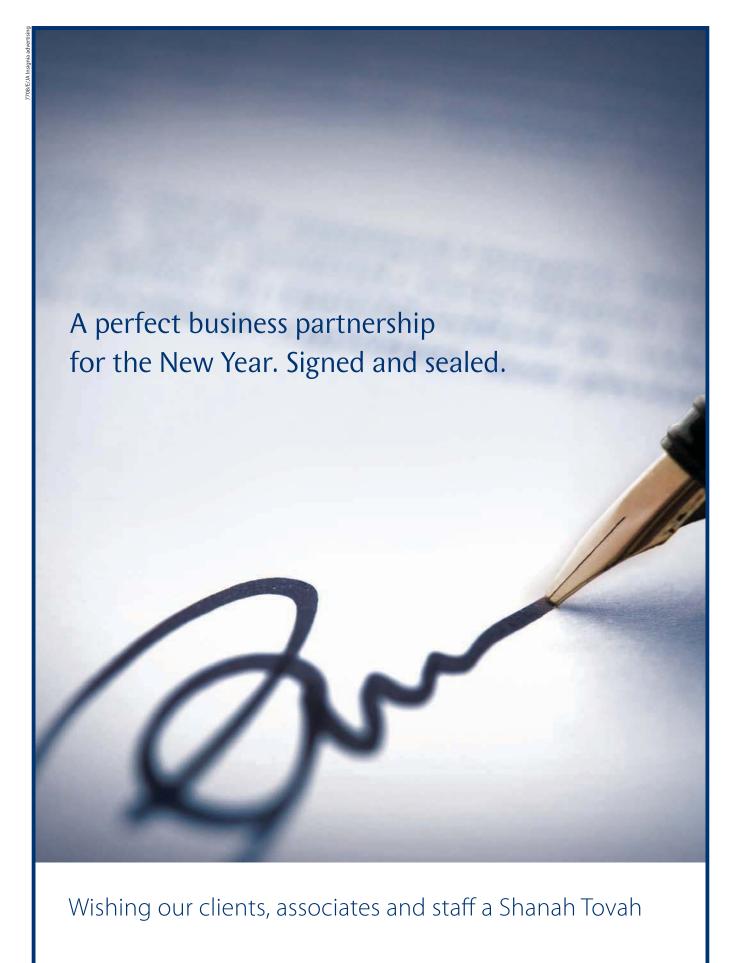


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