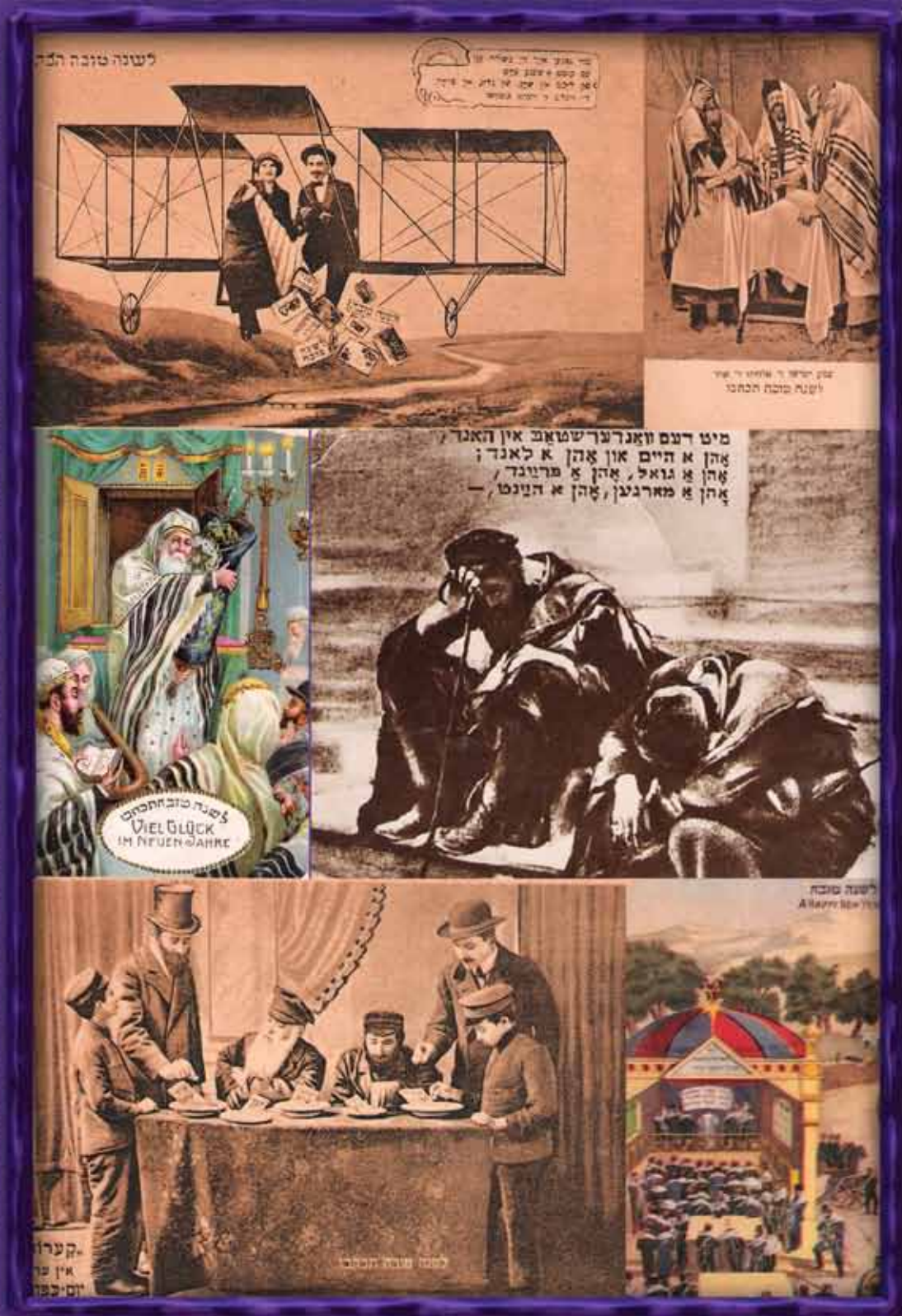


JEWISH AFFAIRS

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Natalie Knight shakes hands with **Mandela** in the Natalie Knight Gallery in 1993.



Susan Woolf
Mandela's Sign



Lena Woolf
Tomato on Robben Island

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JEWISH AFFAIRS

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In publishing JEWISH AFFAIRS, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies aims to produce a cultural forum which caters for a wide variety of interests in the community. The journal will be a vehicle for the publication of articles of significant thought and opinion on contemporary Jewish issues, and will aim to encourage constructive debate, in the form of reasoned and researched essays, on all matters of Jewish and general interest.

JEWISH AFFAIRS aims also to publish essays of scholarly research on all subjects of Jewish interest, with special emphasis on aspects of South African Jewish life and thought. Scholarly research papers that make an original contribution to their chosen field of enquiry will be submitted to the normal processes of academic refereeing before being accepted for publication.

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The SA Jewish Board of Deputies is committed to dialogue and free enquiry. It aims to protect human rights and to strive for better relations among peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds in South Africa.

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However, in keeping with the provisions of the National Constitution, the freedom of speech exercised in this journal will exclude the dissemination of hate propaganda, personal attacks or invective, or any material which may be regarded as defamatory or malicious. In all such matters, the Editor's decision is final.

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ADVERTISING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS – Shirley Beagle

ENQUIRIES beagle@beyachad.co.za

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THE TRIAL IN DUBAI: THE SAGA OF PROF CYRIL KARABUS

*

Michael Bagraim

"Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything truly wrong, he was arrested."
Franz Kafka, *The Trial*

"The freeing of captives takes precedence over feeding and clothing the poor" wrote the 12th Century sage Maimonides. Indeed, he wrote five letters to Jewish communities in Lower Egypt asking them to pool money to ransom Jews captured by a Christian king besieging an Egyptian town. Yet who would have expected that in the 21st Century, Jews would again have to collect money to free a Jewish captive, one held in an autocratic Muslim country in defiance of accepted rules of justice and human rights?

It took far more than five letters to free this particular captive. Twenty-four fat files of letters and media reports, to be exact.

When I was first phoned at three in the morning on 18 August 2012 to learn that my wife's cousin, Prof Cyril Karabus, had been arrested in Dubai, I thought it was probably a visa problem that I could quickly fix up. His family were in shock and highly traumatised, but being a positive person, I tried to calm them down, saying that it would all be sorted out within a few hours after which he would be on the next plane home.

Cyril, his wife Jenny, daughter, son in law and two grandchildren were returning to Cape Town from Canada after attending his son Matthew's wedding. When checking in at Toronto airport, a staff member told him that there was a 'security alert' against his name. After checking with a superior, she came back and told him he was 'free' to board.

In transit at Dubai International Airport, Prof Karabus was in for a nasty shock. His family was ushered through customs to catch a connecting flight home, but he was taken to an airport holding

cell, told he was under arrest and spent the night sleeping on a steel bench in an adjoining room. "We are keeping you because you are a murderer," a customs official told him curtly. He was "totally bloody shocked" and bewildered, too. Cyril Karabus, after all, is a highly respected doctor with an international reputation. He is a professor Emeritus of paediatrics at UCT and former head of the Oncology and Haematology unit at the Red Cross Children's Hospital. As a specialist in both paediatrics and medical oncology, he had taught a generation of medical students at Red Cross. Devoted to caring for children with cancer, he had spent almost his whole life saving young lives, although inevitably and heartbreakingly, nothing could be done in some cases.

Who would have thought that it would take nine months, an international campaign, protests and support from a large number of people - Jewish, Muslim and Christian - before we would be able to get him home? The best description of what he went through can be found in Franz Kafka's book, *The Trial*, about an innocent man arrested and prosecuted by a remote, inaccessible authority.

It took days before we discovered that Prof Karabus had been arrested for murder and forgery. Retired, he had been augmenting his pension by doing locums overseas. Twelve years previously, he had worked at the Sheikh Khalifa Medical Centre (SKMC) in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). There, he had taken over the care of three year-old Sara Al Ajaily, terminally ill with acute myeloid leukaemia. He had no idea that in October 2002 he had been charged in the UAE, let alone tried and convicted in his absence, for her death. No one had told him then or since and the hospital never contacted him. Her father probably laid charges out of anger. He was looking for someone to blame for her death and he chose Prof Karabus, because he was there for her last moments.

Dr. Philip Lankowsky, Karabus' predecessor as Chief of Oncology Paediatrics at Red Cross Hospital in 1965 and an expert witness at several landmark malpractice suits involving childhood malignancies (including leukaemia), has stated that it is 'an unfortunate fact that children with leukaemia often die from the disease, complications of the disease or complications of therapy'.¹

When she was first admitted to the hospital in April 2002, Sara's South African physician,

Michael Bagraim is a Cape Town-based labour lawyer. His many years of Jewish communal involvement include serving as National Chairman and President of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (2003-2007). As Cyril Karabus's attorney in South Africa, he was centrally involved in the global campaign to bring about his release and return to South Africa after his wrongful arrest and detention by the United Arab Emirates in 2012. He thanks Gwynne Schrire and Tony Shapiro for their assistance in preparing this article.

Dr. Lourens de Jager, had given her a two-week course of chemotherapy, starting 24 June. As that treatment did not help, on taking over on 19 September when de Jager went on leave, Karabus gave her more chemotherapy on 22 September and 2 October, over a dozen units of platelets and several units of red blood cells. Between 21 September 21 and 19 October, according to a copy of her medical evaluation provided by de Jager, she developed a brain haemorrhage, and taken, on 15 October to the intensive-care unit, where she died four days later. On 1 November, Karabus's locum finished and he returned to Cape Town. Ten years later, he found himself under arrest for murder and forgery.

Karabus is furious with Emirates airline - he would never have boarded the aircraft had it warned him of the significance of the security alert or that he faced arrest. "They were complicit in having me arrested so they're not a bloody airline, they are a police force", he commented. The airline's head office has ignored requests for comment as has Emirates South Africa, saying that it was a 'legal matter' that had nothing to do with the airline.

Karabus also discovered that in his absence, the Abu Dhabi Court of First Instance had, on 23 March, 2004, found him guilty of manslaughter and forgery for falsifying documents to show he had provided Sara with platelets. He had been sentenced to four years imprisonment and a Dh100 000 fine, to be paid to Sara's family as blood money. He had "wrongfully caused the death of Sarah Abdulla Mohammed as a result of his violation of professional ethics as he failed to give the victim the required platelets precipitating her death as indicated in the papers," the court report said, "On 15 October, 2002, a nurse called Rillin informed Mr Mohammed of his daughter's death as a result of a brain haemorrhage and that the defendant failed to provide her with the required platelets to save her and stop the haemorrhage".

That was rather odd as Sara was still alive four days later. Furthermore, no nurse called Rillin De Liola, had worked with the child. But odd or not, there were two witnesses to those charges - her father, Adel Abdulla Mohammed, 42, a Yemeni working for Albahia Trading and Yehia Rabai, an Egyptian medical examiner.

It was also odd that no attempt had been made to contact Prof Karabus to tell him of the charges or his sentence. Justice usually requires those who are accused to be given an opportunity to defend themselves in court. To quote Kafka again: "These books are probably law books, and it is an essential part of the justice dispensed here that you should be condemned not only in innocence but also in ignorance."

From the airport, Cyril was transferred to two different prisons for the following two nights and then to the Al Wathbah prison. There he remained in the medical unit for 57 days, where he was denied access to a telephone or a razor, and so

had to grow a beard. With the heat reaching 45°, the strain on his health was enormous - he has a pacemaker and a stent in a coronary artery and his 78th birthday was spent there. He passed his time helping some prisoners with minor ailments, reading English newspapers and a book on how babies learn to talk. We were warned by people experienced in the Abu Dhabi legal system that he could spend the rest of his life there, that he would never come out. I heard many terrible stories of non-Emiratis who had been caught up in a dreadful judicial system where there was a total lack of concern for non-Emiratis.

The local Abu Dhabi legal team appearing for Karabus insisted on a retainer deposit equivalent to R1 million for a trial, an appeal and a subsequent appeal. Cyril had no legal indemnity cover, but generous international and local colleagues came to the rescue and lent the money, a la Maimonides' injunction. We also launched some fund-raising events including a packed concert in Cape Town's Baxter Theatre.

At first it seemed best to keep the matter quiet, in the hope that Abu Dhabi, recognising his innocence, would release him sooner than it would if it were embarrassed and needed to save face. Approaches to the Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and her deputies were fruitless - this was consistent with the general reluctance of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) to intervene where it might be thought to be tampering with sovereignty or judicial process. We had no report-back, no suggestions, nothing.

After two months, when I found that the diplomatic and legal process was taking us nowhere, I decided that we would have to tackle it differently - through the Government, through lobbying, and through the power of the press, TV and Internet. I embarked on an e-mail campaign and probably sent out over five thousand personal e-mails, working from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., my legal practice on the back burner. At first, it was difficult to get people interested. I contacted an *Argus* reporter, who was reluctant to take on the story as there was nothing 'sexy' about a retired doctor jailed for manslaughter. I offered her an exclusive on an upcoming labour strike in return for a story and her initial small paragraph was taken up by a Muslim radio station, and then by other media and soon more and more focus was being given to it until the reporter, Nontando Mposo, found herself being called "Mrs Karabus" by her colleagues.

But things started to happen. A Facebook petition and page was set up by Laurence Seeff and Mike Fisher. Without the press we would not have gotten anywhere. The Emirati press gave it little publicity and the facts were often wrong. The fugitive Dr Karrapos's [sic]² was said to have absconded two weeks before the end of his contract and the ages of Sara and 'Karrapos' varied from paper to paper.

An anonymous London doctor who treated the Dubai Royal Family phoned to say that he was going to Dubai, would be dining with the President and would try to help. The very next day Cyril was moved from jail to a medical ward. This he shared with 16 other prisoners, including a foreign psychiatrist accused of dispensing too many anti-depressants and two brothers accused of murder after being involved in a motor accident with a drunk Emirati policeman who had died of a heart attack. None of these had appeared in court nor been granted bail.

Several people urged Cyril to plead guilty, pay a negotiated sum of 'blood money' and secure a ticket home. This he flatly refused to do. He is proud of his well-deserved reputation and would not lie. He would not say "I did wrong" when it was not true, even if it meant a get-out-of-jail card, and when I made that suggestion to him, he basically told me to put it in my pipe and smoke it. His good name was worth more to him than his freedom—that's the type of guy I was dealing with.

"It's absolute rubbish," he told me, "I've been treating leukemia for 30-40 years and I know what I'm doing. The girl was having a relapse when I took over her treatment. Her survival rate back then was about 15 percent at most. I took over when she'd been on [chemotherapy] for about two months, and she was still not in remission, which means chances (of survival) are not great. During the treatment, she had a stroke and died."³

To Professor Heather Zar, Head of the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at the Red Cross Children's Hospital, the notion that Prof Karabus could have been negligent was outrageous. He had a 'sterling reputation', having pioneered treatment access for South African and African children and trained many of the leading healthcare professionals in the field today.⁴

An effort to get Karabus's initial conviction overturned succeeded, but from 3 October he had to stand a new trial for the same charges. These were a) manslaughter for having caused Sara's death by failing to give her platelets, and b) forgery for having fraudulently written out instructions for the platelet administration after she had died. He faced a minimum three-year jail term imposed by a criminal justice system in which the burden of proof lies with the defendant.

To make matters worse, his employer Interhealth Canada denied responsibility for legally assisting him saying it ceased operating the hospital in 2003 and had transferred all records to UAE authorities. Its spokesman said: "The charges which... were brought against Dr. Karabus were brought under the criminal law and the costs of his defence against criminal charges would not have been covered by our or any other medical malpractice policy". He maintained that no claim was made under IC's medical malpractice policy and it was never informed of any complaints. Yet Cyril had a letter from the Hospital director who was in attendance when the patient's chart

was requisitioned in October 2002 and closely reviewed by the police. The former SKMC head of paediatrics told him he knew the police were probing the child's death. SKMC stopped answering our e-mails and phone calls and warned their doctors not to contact us and their e-mails and phone calls would be monitored. Cyril's phone was also bugged.

Shelter Offshore,⁵ an on-line publication for expatriates, has asked whether a tax-free salary in Abu Dhabi was worth the sacrifices concerning lack of freedom and justice that come with it. It described the legal system in Abu Dhabi as outmoded, unforgiving, sexist and prejudiced on many levels, having remained unchanged for many hundreds of years. The legal system did not support modern day Abu Dhabi's values and a massive culture clash existed. This was the massive discrepancy between painting a picture of Abu Dhabi as a free, Western, civilised, open and cosmopolitan society and the actual laws that governed that society that were archaic, antediluvian and downright primitive in some cases. And this is what we were to find in our relationship with the justice system. It made me really appreciate the benefits we have living here in South Africa with our legal system.

Five times Cyril appeared in court to apply for bail. Each time he would be lined up in the prison courtyard in the burning sun, shackled hand and foot, with between 50 - 100 prisoners, waiting for his name to be called.

We were soon inundated with support from many quarters – his friends, his colleagues, his former patients and their parents. UCT Professor of Gastro-Enterology, Prof Solly Marks, suggested that I get in touch with the SA Medical Association (SAMA) and the chairman Dr Mzukisi Grootboom and vice-chairman Mark Sonderup were very helpful. In October SAMA asked the Minister of International Relations and Co-operation to urgently intervene stating that the 78 year old man had repeatedly been denied bail which was inconceivable for someone who could not leave the country as his travel documents had been confiscated and who was unable to access any records to present as evidence in his re-trial. It also launched a petition and approached the World Medical Association (WMA) and through this body, Amnesty International. South African doctors were strongly advised to be aware of the medical liability risks if and when practising medicine in the UAE.⁶

Then I received an anonymous call from London giving me the London number of an anonymous woman telling me to phone her just once, as her simcard would be destroyed immediately after the call. I did, and the next day when the shackled Cyril arrived in court shortly before the court was due to open, the Registrar informed him that bail had been granted.

It took me time to gather from a generous donor the R250 000 bail demanded, so Cyril had

to remain in prison until 14 October. He then needed somewhere to stay and I contacted Solly Marks. Within a few minutes he had phoned back to tell me his colleague in Abu Dhabi, Dr Elwin Buchel, the former head of gastroenterology at the University of Pretoria, would host him in his apartment. Little did they realise that this stay would last for the next seven months. Also very helpful was Rev. Canon Andy Thompson of Abu Dhabi Anglican Church whom Archbishop Desmond Tutu had contacted and who would visit him and sit beside him in court. Sadly, Prof. Marks did not live to welcome Cyril home.

Cyril's daily routine was very boring. There were 13 adjournments. Sometimes the lawyers did not come. Sometimes the translator was not called. Once, no return date was given, so he had to return daily in the hope that the judge, noticing him, would remember to make a return date. The court wanted to see the hospital documents, but after twelve years, the hospital could not or would not find the papers. We wondered whether the mysterious disappearance of the vital supportive notes dealing with the period when Cyril had been looking after Sara had been destroyed – or 'doctored'. No post-mortem examination had been done and the legal advisor to the hospital said the 2003 'in-absentia' court had ordered the hospital records destroyed. The delays were frustrating, agonizing and demoralizing. Even the judge became irritated.

Cyril spent days hanging around in court, but apart from the court and the mosque, there was nothing exciting to see. He was not interested in shopping centres although he did get the opportunity to watch Novak Djokovic in the Mubadala World Tennis Championship.

By November, lobby groups, lawyers and Karabus's family were all critical at the lack of action by DIRCO, beyond basic consular support on a regular basis and visits in Abu Dhabi from the friendly consul Fanus Venter who was a real star for us over there. Fanus visited Cyril in jail and brought him essential medicine. He did so much and it was not as if this was the only work he had to do. His Pakistani driver who drove Cyril back and forth to court was also very helpful.

The Treatment Action Campaign got involved in the scandal of his detention and issued a statement asking for his release: "We are disappointed by the failure of the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation and the South African embassy in the UAE to do anything substantial to secure the release of Professor Karabus." The TAC spokesperson said the SA embassy had done 'almost nothing' to assist and expressed 'astonishment' that the Emirates airline failed to warn Karabus that he was wanted in the UAE. They called on all travellers 'who share our abhorrence for the UAE's justice system to stop flying Emirates and to not visit the UAE'.⁷

One thing that is clear, however, is that DIRCO came relatively late to the party in

attempting to secure Karabus's release through diplomatic means. He was arrested in August but it was not until 20 December that Minister Nkoana-Mashabane wrote to her UAE counterpart expressing South Africa's concern and requesting the UAE authorities to deal with the case in an expeditious and fair manner.

Under Shari'ah law, Karabus needed corroborating evidence (the missing hospital notes) to prove his innocence but the first time our legal team saw the medical file was at the 20 November hearing, three months after his arrest. Conspicuously absent were supportive notes (clinical records, laboratory blood count results, blood bank forms, nursing notes and infusion charts) - everything that was necessary to prove that he had given the child red cell and platelet transfusions. The judge's anger at the prosecution's failure to produce them at two consecutive hearings probably worked in our favour.

Finally, Dr de Jager found a clinical record of Sara's last admission which Cyril had dictated on 29 October 2002, which for some inexplicable reason he had kept all these years. He sent it to him with a document showing that her blood platelets increased from 1000 to 19 000 the day before her cerebral episode – something that only a platelet infusion could have induced. This was proof that the blood transfusion was given and would exonerate him of negligence, but our documents were thrown out because they were photocopies, not the originals and they needed the hospital records, with the clinical notes, blood counts and blood bank records, to confirm it.

The judge asked a Higher Committee for Medical Liability to give its verdict on the case. Cyril's release now hinged on its confirmation that he had given the patient a blood transfusion as her platelet count had risen. We had no say in the selection of the committee, which had neither haematologist nor oncologist (people who would understand the medical records) because there were no such Emirati specialists in Dubai, but we hoped that the medical panel would realise that there was no truth to the charges in what had become, with all the adjournments, an on-going horror story.

Then, on 6 December, the prosecution failed for the second time to produce clinical notes made during the critical two weeks Karabus treated the child. The delay was the result of human error, Abu Dhabi Criminal Court was told, after SKMC staff overlooked a set of medical notes that the Higher Committee wanted to review and use to help make its findings.

For the first time in the nearly four months Prof Karabus was allowed to take the stand. He told the judge that the prosecution's failure to produce the notes amounted to 'an insult to the ruling Sheikh (Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan) and the court'. The judge concurred, and expressed deep dissatisfaction at the on-going impasse which prevented a court-ordered medical

committee from reviewing the case properly. We hoped Cyril would be cleared in time for his grandson's birth at the end of January, but it was not to be.

The DIRCO director-general called in the UAE ambassador on 10 January and issued a *démarche*. "We believe it is in the best interest of all if the professor can be released on humanitarian grounds," said Deputy Minister Fransman.⁸ Note that it was called for on humanitarian grounds, not on grounds of his innocence. But the UAE ignored the *démarche* as it had ignored the petitions, the threats of boycotts and the international protests. With its oil and its money, it was a law unto itself and remained unmoved. Fransman met the UAE authorities on 3 March for further discussions regarding the continued detention of Prof Karabus, with as little response.

One of the concerned people who offered to help was a former student of Dr. Karabus, Dr Iqbal Survé of the Sekunjalo Group, who flew to Abu Dhabi and appealed, via intermediaries, to the crown prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed for help. They say that "it is not what you know but who you know that counts", but the day after a dinner that Dr Survé attended with a high-ranking member of the royal family, the medical committee issued a statement saying that Dr. Karabus had been cleared. Survé had used his knowledge of how things work in the Middle East.⁹

On 19 March, the Medical Committee cleared Dr. Karabus of any wrongdoing in the treatment of Sara, a verdict that was echoed by the Abu Dhabi Criminal Court in April. His R250k bail money was repaid on 6 May and promptly returned to the generous benefactor. At last we could start to make plans to bring Cyril home! We thought we would have him home for Pesach but the battle was still not over because, incredibly, the UAE prosecutors decided to appeal this decision. No reasons were given and it seemed as though he would be remaining there indefinitely.

SAMA then called for a boycott of the UAE by doctors and all health professionals both in terms of working there as well as in an involvement with any UAE linked organization or business. This included the upcoming Africa Health Exposition and Conference. It also called on its members to boycott airlines such as Emirates and Etihad and to sign a petition calling for his release.¹⁰

"The decision by the UAE to prevaricate and postpone the case is disgraceful and inhumane at all levels. The manner in which Professor Karabus is being treated is inexcusable and condemned by SAMA. The aim in this instance is clearly not the pursuance of justice" said Dr. Grootboom. He did not know what to make of the prosecution's decision to appeal Karabus's acquittal. "We're not sure if this is done to spite him," he said.¹¹

Dr Sonderup said: "It just emphasises what it's really about. It is not about seeking justice and closure. It's now torture. If we had a little

army, we'd send them in (to get Karabus). But we don't."¹²

Two weeks went past and the prosecution had still not announced why it was planning to appeal. Pesach came and went. The case was postponed to 29 April to allow the court to "establish the veracity" of a statement by Karabus's lawyers that Karabus had no part in a decision to stop treatment of the child shortly before her death. We were shocked because this should actually be a knowledge of court, not something that needed to be verified. It was known that Dr Karabus was not on duty at the time when the medication to the child was stopped by the neurosurgeon on duty.

Then the case was postponed for another two weeks. This time the reason was that a medical translator was not available - but no one asked for him. It was an absolute travesty of justice.

A WMA council meeting in Bali passed a resolution saying it believed Karabus was being treated in a manner "which fails to meet international fair trial standards and he should be allowed to return home immediately" and "in the light of this experience, the WMA will publish an advisory notice in the World Medical Journal and on the WMA website advising doctors thinking of working in the UAE to note the working conditions and the legal risks of employment there. The WMA will also encourage its 102 member associations, spread across North and South America, west and east Europe, Asia and some African countries, to publish similar advisory notices in their national publications, and publish the advisory in the World Medical Journal."¹³ Dr Grootboom, who was involved in the resolution, said he had been told the association had "never done anything close to this" before. Cyril was touched by the unprecedented advisory of the WMA but was not hopeful that it would have any traction with the UAE authorities.

We started receiving e-mails from medical associations across the globe expressing outrage and backing Karabus' integrity and reputation. These were from friends and family, from strangers, from patients and staff who had worked with him and from professional bodies. As well as from SAMA and WMA they included the British and American medical associations, the SA Haemophilia Federation, the Western Province Blood Transfusion Service, the School of Child and Adolescent Health at UCT, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

I started protesting in the streets outside the Emirates Airline offices in Cape Town. I wrote to international sports stars due to attend sporting events in Abu Dhabi alerting them to Cyril's plight. When the 6th World Congress of Paediatric Cardiology & Cardiac Surgery took place in Cape Town in February, we picketed outside the convention centre in FREE KARABUS t-shirts and posters, receiving media attention. When we learnt that the United Arab Emirates would be competing in the 2013 International Ice Hockey

Federation World Championship tournament in Cape Town in April and it would be covered by Middle East TV channels, we bought tickets for the front row and we sat there with our t-shirts and posters in full view of the cameras. When the security approached us, I took their head around the corner and delayed him in discussion as long as I could to allow our group to get as much exposure as possible. They confiscated our posters but allowed us to remain seated in our t-shirts. One Red Cross paediatrician in our group kept his poster - he had dressed in Emirate clothing and pretended he did not speak English.

Finally, on 24 April, the UAE lost the appeal, the appeal judge finding Cyril not guilty on all charges. Amazingly the press published the news before the judge had even appeared in court to announce his verdict! Now we could really anticipate having him home soon but his trial by bungling had not yet played itself out. He had to wait for the authorities to get his paperwork done so that he could reclaim his passport. That was sooner said than done and the delays and confusion were very upsetting. He waited five hours at court for his papers and was then told to go to the prison to collect his passport. He waited there for them to find the correct forms and hand them in, but he could still not get his passport because, unbelievably, he was still listed on the UAE database as a “fugitive of justice” and, as we had discovered, the wheels of justice and bureaucracy move very slowly in the UAE.

Database eventually corrected and passport eventually collected, Prof Karabus went to book his ticket home. But Emirates Airlines wanted him to buy a new ticket to South Africa, Cyril, as stubborn as ever, refused - after all it was not his fault that he could not use his original return ticket. He also refused a donation of a business or first-class flight by one of my clients. After a fight, Emirates agreed to reinstate the ticket to Cape Town and he was finally booked on a plane.

But he had not seen the last of the bureaucratic bumbles. His passport visa was wrong. He had been granted a 24-hour visa in August so that his family could travel to their hotel for the overnight layover in the city. Now someone had backdated his date of entry to October, when he got bail – leaving a two month gap which made it appear as if he had stayed in the country illegally from August to October (in jail!). The UAE authorities would not allow him to leave if his visa was not in order. Fortunately the ever-helpful Fanus Venter noticed the error. It was just another UAE botch-up. If it was not for him running around and getting things done, I doubt whether Cyril would have been able to do it. So once again plans to welcome him home had to be put on hold and his ticket postponed until the visa could be changed.

In an article in *Daily Maverick* on 20 May “Karabus case: Totalling up the bill”, Rebecca Davis pointed out that “One positive outcome of the Karabus case ... has been the light it has

cast on the UAE’s medical liability laws. Prior to the case these laws were already the subject of controversy: in 2012 the Dubai Health Authority and the executive committee held talks on possibly amending the legislation. The attention paid to the Karabus case, however, has brought the consequences of the laws for medical professionals into much starker relief – culminating in the World Medical Association advising physicians around the world about the risks of working in the UAE under those conditions. If the UAE wishes to continue attracting world-class medics, it will likely have to expedite its legislative reform in this regard.”¹⁴ His daughter Sarah, also a paediatrician, has warned colleagues using locum agencies employing doctors in foreign countries that ‘they may not assist when it comes to the crunch’.

Davis also pointed out that although the case against Prof Karabus was perceived to be scandalously unjust, she wondered whether DIRCO’s intervention would have taken place to the same extent without the support of the international medical fraternity, the resources to launch a legal battle for his freedom, though much was raised through donations, and the ear of the media. Without these, she concluded, Karabus might still be languishing many kilometres from home (as was the case of so many other unfortunate victims drawn to the honey pots of UAE employment whose plight has been brought to my attention).

The *Shulchan Aruch*¹⁵ states that the freeing of captives takes precedence over feeding and clothing the poor and there is no commandment greater than this. One could not imagine the joy and excitement, the tears of happiness, at the Cape Town International Airport when Cyril’s plane touched down at last before a large crowd gathered to witness the freeing of the captive. There were helium balloons and a minstrel band, “Welcome home Cyril Karabus” t-shirts and people singing *Shalom Aleichem* and the



SAJBD (Cape Council) Chairman Li Boiskin and Executive Director David Jacobson welcome Cyril Karabus at Cape Town International Airport.

presence of the many happy people who had played a role in bringing him back. As well as his family and his grandchildren, Dr Iqbal Survé, who had played a major role was there, as was Deputy Minister Fransman, Dr Grootboom and Dr. Sonderup, members of the Board of Deputies and the SA Zionist Federation, teenagers from Hope (an HIV/Aids NGO), patients, their parents, former colleagues and many many others. The emirate's crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed even telephoned Deputy Minister Fransman soon after the flight had landed to ask if Cyril had arrived safely.

The release of Prof Karabus was due to the help of so many people who assisted during his trial - both legal and bureaucratic - but sadly there is not space to thank them all here. A big thanks is also due to the media for maintaining a focus on Cyril's detention. As well as our local papers we got coverage in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, even on *Al Jazeera*.

Hopefully some positive things have emerged from Cyril's nine-month nightmare trapped in a judicial system in which, to quote Charles Dickens' Mr Bumble, "the law is an ass". It is a bizarre judicial system and there is not much lawyers can do. The international coverage has made it embarrassing for UAE medical institutions that rely on international doctors for their staffing. Prospective doctors are now asking awkward questions on how safe they would be if they worked there. The WMA has not withdrawn its first-ever cautionary notice to doctors warning them to be fully aware of the possible restrictions in foreign jurisdictions and that they must have proper insurance.

I salute the many Muslims who rallied to Prof Karabus's defence, seeing this not as a Jewish but as a human rights issue. Muslim media were very supportive. I had a weekly programme on the local Muslim radio station Voice of the Cape and appeared on Chanel Islam International, Islam News, Islamic TV stations, was interviewed on Pakistani news and on Hindu TV. I hope we shall have other opportunities to work together as communities on the many issues we have in common.



What have I learnt from this? That high salaries can come at great cost and in the UAE come with costs that include lack of human rights and justice. I have learnt that Emirates will not warn passengers in advance that they will be arrested on arrival. I have learnt that Abu Dhabi is so wealthy it feels no need to care about negative public opinion and world disapproval. I have learnt that there are many good people of all faiths, kind, caring and prepared to go the extra mile to help. I have learnt how important it is that the media continue to play this kind of watchdog role, and that we must appreciate the system of law under which we live in South Africa. And I have learnt the happiness that one gets in welcoming home a friend that one had begun to fear would never be seen again.

NOTES

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- 2 "The Abu Dhabi Criminal Court will issue its ruling in the case of South African pediatrician [sic] Cyril Karrapos on 11th October", *Emirates News Agency* 3/10/2012.
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- 4 Chris Bateman, Lack of clinical notes angered UAE judge in Karabus case ... *South African Medical Journal*, www.samj.org.za > Home > Vol 103, No 1 (2013).
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- 6 SAMA - Medical Association issues strong pleas for Karabus release ...www.samedical.org > SAMA News > Media Releases. 08 October 2012.
- 7 Release Professor Karabus Whose Trial Is Today, Treatment Action Campaign, 2012-11-20.
- 8 Times Live Pretoria wants SA prof freed, Philani Nombembe, 11 January, 2013.
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- 10 <http://www.samedical.org/free-prof-karabus.html>; SAMA petition to release Professor Karabus.
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CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM AND ANTI-ZIONISM: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

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David Saks

Up until the end of the last century, it was still not uncommon for the view to be expressed by acknowledged experts in the field that antisemitism was largely a spent force, still present at some level but at worst of no more than nuisance value. As the thinking went, the sobering lessons of the Holocaust had demonstrated all too starkly what baseless hatred of Jews, or of any other group, could lead to. The airing of antisemitic views was now beyond the pale in civilized society, as were any form of official anti-Jewish discrimination. Significantly, in the post-war era the mainstream Christian churches largely distanced themselves from traditional anti-Judaic sentiments within their respective theologies.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, resulting in the emigration of the majority of its Jewish inhabitants and the restoration of religious and cultural freedoms for those who remained, another major force for global antisemitism passed into history. Only in Muslim majority countries were antisemitic ideologies still accepted within the mainstream political, religious and intellectual establishment, but the mass enforced exodus of most Jews living under such regimes in the decades following Israel's establishment meant that very few Jews were directly affected. The launch in 1993 of the Oslo peace process, through which the Palestine Liberation Organisation finally recognized the legitimacy of the Jewish state, held out the prospect of a final resolution to a conflict between Israel and its neighbours that was considered to be at the heart of the upsurge of antisemitism in the Islamic world.

At the end of the millennium, perhaps for the first time since the Roman exile and even before that, the great majority of Jews were living under regimes where they enjoyed equal rights and where discrimination on the basis of race, religion and ethnicity, amongst other grounds, was prohibited. Of the approximately 14 million Jews in the world, over 80% lived either in Israel or the United States, with most of the remainder living in the UK, France, Canada, Australia, Brazil, Hungary, Argentina, Germany and South Africa. All of these countries

(albeit only partly in the cases of Hungary and Argentina) are free and democratic, and opposed to all forms of institutional discrimination.¹ Even in non- or semi-democratic countries like Russia and Ukraine, where there remains a fairly substantial Jewish presence, antisemitism at the official level no longer exists, albeit that it may still occur *de facto*.

All of the above led many to conclude that antisemitism as an ideology capable of inflicting serious harm on Jews had had its day and was destined to remain, at worst, a fringe phenomenon. Nor was this conclusion an unreasonable one in light of most observable trends. Why then, a dozen years into the new millennium, do such optimistic viewpoints now look so quaint, irrelevant and even downright naïve in light of the emerging realities facing world Jewry?

No-one seriously engaged in the monitoring of antisemitism around the world today will deny that levels of anti-Jewish hostility, measured both in discourse and actions taken, have risen consistently from year to year, even in liberal democratic Western societies where most Diaspora Jews live. The crude, in-your-face anti-Jewish prejudice of bygone times is now rarely seen in polite society, yet antisemitism itself has not disappeared. Rather it has mutated to take a socially acceptable form. For want of a better term, this has been termed the "New Antisemitism",² and its central target is not the Jew as an individual but the Jewish State of Israel. Under the guise of anti-Zionism, moreover, classic anti-Jewish modes of thinking are re-emerging, this time within the supposedly anti-racist discourse of the politically correct liberal-left. One way in which this manifests is that while antisemitism will routinely be condemned when it emanates from white right-wingers, it is down-played or ignored altogether when expressed in an anti-Zionist context.

Writing in February 2009 Irwin Cotler, former Canadian Minister of Justice and a world-renowned human rights campaigner and theoretician, addressed the growing menace of what he described as "a new sophisticated, globalizing, virulent and even lethal antisemitism reminiscent of the atmospherics of the 1930s, and without parallel or precedent since the end of World War II".³ The new anti-Jewishness overlapped with classical antisemitism but was distinguishable from it. Cotler subsequently described this 'new antisemitism' in the following

David Saks is Associate Director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and editor of Jewish Affairs. His most recent book, The Great Park Synagogue: A History, 1887-2013, appeared at the beginning of this year.

terms:

...classical or traditional antisemitism is the discrimination against, denial of or assault upon the rights of Jews to live as equal members of whatever host society they inhabit. The new antisemitism involves the discrimination against the right of the Jewish people to live as an equal member of the family of nations - the denial of and assault upon the Jewish people's right even to live - with Israel as the "collective Jew among the nations".⁴

Former Swedish deputy prime minister Per Ahlmark has likewise noted that the new manifestation of antisemitism attacks primarily the collective Jew - the State of Israel: "In the past, the most dangerous antisemites were those who wanted to make the world *Judenrein*, 'free of Jews.' Today, the most dangerous antisemites might be those who want to make the world *Judenstaatrein*, 'free of a Jewish state.'"⁵ What was more, he said, such attacks invariably also triggered off a chain reaction of assaults on Jewish individuals and institutions.

Events on the ground have borne out Ahlmark's words of warning. Today, most Diaspora communities keep detailed records of antisemitic activities in their respective countries, and what this data has unambiguously revealed is that since the turn of the century, there has been a pronounced and consistent rise in antisemitism levels worldwide as measured by hostile acts committed against Jewish individuals and institutions. This upsurge commenced directly in the wake of the collapse of the Oslo peace process and ensuing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian territories commencing in September 2000. The greater proportion of anti-Jewish attacks in contemporary times has in some way been motivated by events in the Middle East.

Antisemitism today – a Global Overview

A report on antisemitic trends in 2012 prepared by Israel's Ministry of Information and Diaspora noted "an alarming rise in the number of terrorist attacks and attempted attacks against Jewish targets and an escalation in violent incidents against Jews throughout the world." There had been a rise in the number of terrorist acts and attempted attacks, primarily by groups which identify with radical Islam and the extreme right. It was further noted that there had been an increase in the number of street attacks and incidents of verbal and physical violence in Europe as well as in Canada and Australia. The following country-by-country summary bears out this analysis:

- **France:** In a report to the government, France's SPCJ Jewish security watchdog said the number of antisemitic incidents was up 58% last year, with 177 violent acts and 437 threats. They included the murder of four people at a

Jewish school in Toulouse and the explosion at the kosher shop, reportedly caused by a grenade. Muslim extremists were responsible for both attacks.⁶

- **United Kingdom:** There were 640 documented antisemitic incidents in 2012, a 5% increase from the 608 in 2011 and the third-highest annual total since records started being kept in 1984. The most common single type of incident involved verbal abuse randomly directed at visibly Jewish people in public. 11% were categorized as "violent antisemitic assaults", less than the 16% recorded in 2011, but still well above the figures noted in previous years.⁷
- **Australia:** There were 543 documented incidents of "racist violence" against Jewish Australians in the period September 2011-August 2012, a 5% rise over the previous 12-month period. These included physical assaults, vandalism and harassment, such as synagogue windows being smashed, physical assaults of Jewish students and people being pelted with eggs and other objects while walking to synagogue.⁸
- **Canada:** According to B'nai Brith Canada's annual audit, released at the end of April 2012, there were 1,297 anti-Jewish occurrences in 2011, only slightly under the previous year's all-time high. 916 were cases of harassment, 362 involved vandalism and there were 19 cases of violence.⁹

How does the situation in South Africa compare with this? According to figures compiled by the SA Jewish Board and Deputies and Community Security Organisation, there was also a rise in antisemitism levels in the country in 2012 compared with the previous year, amounting to about 15%. Whereas in 2011, there were 42 incidents classified as having been antisemitically motivated, in 2012 there were 50. In other words, South Africa's annual totals of documented antisemitic acts over an extended period have in fact consistently amounted to what other major Diaspora communities record in a single month. Only once in the past twenty years has the number of antisemitic incidents reached the hundred mark (in 2009). When one further takes into account that of the fifty incidents logged in 2012, more than one-third were cases of hate mail disseminated by just two individuals (against one of whom the SAJBD has since instituted court proceedings; the other perpetrator's identity is unknown), the relative paucity of actual acts of hostility towards Jews and Jewish institutions in this country is all the more striking.

Likewise in the United States, despite being home to over five million Jews, antisemitism manifests at an encouragingly low level. However, none of this should blind one to the fact that for much of Diaspora Jewry, including smaller communities in the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Italy, the situation is

becoming increasingly uncomfortable. There may no longer be any officially sanctioned anti-Jewish policies in operation, but on the ground, the situation is rapidly deteriorating.

The following were amongst the more serious instances of antisemitic activity in South Africa during the past twelve months:

- *January-October:* An elderly lady in Johannesburg received eight extremely abusive, antisemitic and threatening letters in the course of the year, possibly from a disgruntled ex-employee. Abusive statements included: "Hitler should have used some gas on you to make the world a better place. I hope you die soon".
- *March:* Bloemfontein's historic Memoriam cemetery vandalised, with 78 tombstones toppled and obscene graffiti daubed on the walls of the adjoining Ohel. The graffiti included legend "F*** the Jews" and images of money bags and diamonds, as well as of Magen Davids. Other slogans read "Jews rulle" [sic] and "Jews have the power".
- *June:* A highly inflammatory statement issued by COSATU in response to a march for Israel held in Pretoria by mainly black Christian Zionists. Inter alia, the SAZF was described as having hands "dripping with blood", Israel was said to be "a legalisation of Jewish supremacy to further dehumanise everyone outside their scope of Zionist purity" and Zionism itself was said to refer "to those that believe in a state exclusively for the ruling supremacists at the expense of the indigenous Palestinian people because they view themselves as ordained by God to do all it takes to defend their privileged position".
- A Lyndhurst Jewish resident had his car window shattered by a pellet fired by his neighbour as he was pulling out into the street. This followed a heated argument, in which he had twice been called a [expletive] Jew. The culprit was arrested and charged soon afterwards.

Actions taken by the SAJBD

Legal proceedings were instituted in the Equality Court against serial distributor of antisemitic literature Snowy Smith. The papers were drawn up by the Board's Cape Town legal team. The complaint was forwarded by the Equality Court to Smith, and the matter is being pursued.

From 11-14 December, Broadcasting Complaints and Compliance Committee of ICASA convened a full hearing into the SAJBD's complaint of antisemitic hate speech by Radio 786, a Muslim community radio station in Cape Town. The SAJBD's lead witnesses were Dr David Hirsh (Goldsmiths College, London), Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Professor Milton Shain and Holocaust

survivor Eva Schloss. Radio 786 has now conceded that the things said on the programme were untrue and sometimes antisemitic but still claims it fell within the parameters of freedom of expression. The hearing will resume in 2014.

In the course of the year, the Board provided the SA Human Rights Commission with documentation and other information that it required in preparing its case against COSATU International Relations Spokesperson Bongani Masuku. The SAHRC decided to institute proceedings against Masuku in the Equality Court after he declined to comply with its ruling that he apologise to the SAJBD for antisemitic hate speech in 2009.

A more detailed account of the SAJBD's responses to antisemitic incidents can be read on the Board's website (www.jewishsa.co.za).

Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism: Themes, principles and working definitions

Jewish civil rights organisations around the world, including the SAJBD, Anti-Defamation League (USA), the Community Security Trust (UK), B'nai B'rith – Canada and the Executive Council for Australian Jewry, must in the course of their work define and distinguish between different kinds of anti-Jewish hostility. The following guidelines, which are hereby reproduced in edited form, were compiled by this author in the course of monitoring and documenting antisemitism in South Africa as part of his work with the SAJBD.

Broadly defined, an **antisemitic act** can be said to be: "Any hostile, and usually illegal, act carried out with the intention of inflicting some form of harm against Jewish persons (individually or collectively) or Jewish institutions specifically because they are Jewish".

- Examples of attacks on individuals would include physical assault, threats and intimidation, verbal abuse, hate mail, graffiti on a Jewish home or business and any discriminatory treatment based on religion and/or ethnicity.
- Examples of attacks on Jews collectively would include hate mail sent to institutions, the mass distribution of offensive literature, anti-Jewish boycott campaigns and statements made by public representatives in the public domain.
- Examples of attacks on institutions include acts of vandalism of Jewish installations (cemeteries etc.), graffiti daubed on Jewish communal buildings and hacking into and posting offensive literature on Jewish communal websites.

Antisemitic sentiment includes negative views about Jews and Judaism (whether in the media, literature, political realm and arts, academia and the larger social or cultural

environment) that can reasonably be deemed to be motivated by anti-Jewish prejudice, such as by the type of hostile, denigrating language used and/or by their being based on clearly false premises. Taken as a whole, it would fall into the broad category of 'Antisemitic Discourse', as opposed to actual harmful acts of the type outlined above. In this regard, the situation in South Africa is no better than in other parts of the world.

Types of Anti-Jewish Prejudice

- Conspiracy theories, where Jews are depicted as exercising a malign, covert or at least disproportionate influence in society thereby promoting their own selfish agendas.
- Related to the above, the view that Jews are by nature an untrustworthy, under-handed and scheming people.
- Depictions of Jews as exclusivist and considering themselves superior to non-Jews.
- Portraying Jews and the greater Jewish tradition as being inherently anti-gentile.
- Denial of the Holocaust, whether this takes the form of outright denial, claims that its extent has been exaggerated or minimizing it by misleading comparisons with other, lesser forms of oppression (the last need not be intentionally antisemitic). Accusing Israel of Nazism, amongst other things, thus constitutes a form of Holocaust denial.
- Denial of Jewish history in generally, specific examples being claims that Jews of today have no link, historical, genetic or otherwise, with those of the Bible and denial, explicitly or by pointed omission, the Jewish connection with Israel.
- Malicious representations of Judaism, frequently through incorrect, uncontextualised and often fabricated references to Talmudic and other post-Biblical literature.
- Propagation of negative stereotypes, typically depicting Jews as being stingy, avaricious, etc.

Additionally, there may arise cases of negative sentiment being propagated against Jews unintentionally. For example, when gratuitous reference is made to someone being Jewish when reporting on criminal or other immoral behavior by such an individual, it may be deemed to be antisemitic in effect, if not necessarily in intent.

When Anti-Zionism becomes a form of Antisemitism

Israel is being subjected to a world-wide campaign of denigration and delegitimation.

Because it is the world's sole Jewish majority state, and because Jews are so identified with the land through Biblical teachings in Christian countries, it is not just likely but inevitable that this will both influence and be influenced by traditional antisemitic theories.

Regardless of whether or not the specific accusations are true, anti-Israel propaganda crosses the line into antisemitism when:

i. Jews are held to be collectively responsible for Israel's actions.

Direct cases of this include the proposed march organized by the Muslim Judicial Council on the SAJBD's offices in 2005 in protest against alleged plots to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque; Daubing of anti-Israel graffiti on Jewish communal buildings, such as synagogues; threats to attack Jews or Jewish installations, as occurred during the 2006 Lebanon war and the 2009 Gaza campaign; boycott campaigns against Jewish-headed businesses; unsolicited anti-Israel literature sent to Jewish recipients.

Of particular concern are comments made in public forums suggesting that Israel's actions make Jews everywhere legitimate targets. Examples were common on local Muslim radio stations during the 2009 Gaza incursion, such as "let the Jews take note that if this incessant killing carries on you will be fair game in SA and everywhere in the world"; and "it's time for action...the Muslim is justified worldwide to go out and kill every Jew".

Less clear-cut but still identifiable cases would include public calls on South African Jews to denounce Israel's actions, when other faith or ethnic communities are never similarly called upon to apologise for their co-religionists/ethnic group's actions in other parts of the world. This is both discriminatory and could be regarded as a form of intimidation.

ii. Jewish organisations are denigrated, threatened, boycotted and/or excluded from participating in public events because of their support for Israel

This holds mainstream Jewry to be so tainted by its views on Israel as to justify treating it as a pariah community, including being excluded from participating even in public events that have nothing to do with the Middle East. Direct cases include SAUJS being expelled from the Swaziland Democracy Campaign (2009); calls by the Muslim Judicial Council for Chief Rabbi Goldstein to be expelled from the National Religious Leaders Forum for his opinions on Israel-Gaza (2009); the COSATU-led protest march on the SAZF and SAJBD offices, along with threats and abuse by its spokesperson Bongani Masuku (2009) and COSATU's letter-statement charging that the SAZF was an organization whose hands were "dripping with blood" (2012).

iii. Israel's actions, as well as the Zionist ideology, are depicted as being reflective of the intrinsically racist, inhumane and anti-gentile nature of the Jewish people and culture.

This kind of abuse ranges from the kind of open hatred broadcast on Islamic radio and extreme right-wing websites to more subtle (and consequently more insidious) forms of left-wing antisemitism, such as a suggestion by Guardian columnist Deborah Orr that Israel's trading of a thousand Palestinian prisoners for Gilad Shalit's release was indicative of how Jewish lives were regarded as superior to Palestinian ones (October, 2011). The above-noted 2012 COSATU letter falls somewhere in between. It ostensibly attacks Israel and Zionism, but the evocation of traditional antisemitic tropes is unmistakable ("Their occupation and the theft of the land and natural resources of the indigenous people is nothing but a legalisation of Jewish supremacy to further dehumanise everyone outside their scope of Zionist purity").

Of playwright Caryl Churchill's now notorious 2009 play 'Seven Jewish Children', in which Israeli Jews are depicted as revelling in the wanton slaughter of Palestinian infants, the UK novelist Howard Jacobson comments, "...once you venture on to 'chosen people' territory - feeding all the ancient prejudice against that miscomprehended phrase - once you repeat in another form the medieval blood-libel of Jews rejoicing in the murder of little children, you have crossed over. This is the old stuff. Jew-hating pure and simple".¹⁰

iv. The Holocaust and the history of Jewish persecution in general is misused, often deliberately, in such a way as to cause deep hurt and embarrassment to all Jews.

The Ottawa Protocol on Combating Antisemitism, adopted at the 2011 Inter-Parliamentary Conference for Combating Antisemitism, listed the following amongst the classic anti-Jewish libels in ascendance: The *double entendre* of denying the Holocaust – accusing the Jews of fabricating the Holocaust as a hoax – and the nazification of the Jew and the Jewish people.¹¹

Of this semi-disguised form of Jew-baiting, Howard Jacobson commented (re the Gaza conflict being likened to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising):

Given the number of besieged and battered cities there have been in however many thousands of years of pitiless warfare there is only one explanation for this invocation of Warsaw before any of those - it is to wound Jews in their recent and most anguished history and to punish them with their own grief. Its aim is a sort of retrospective retribution, cancelling out all debts of guilt and sorrow. It is as though, by a reversal of the usual laws of cause and effect, Jewish actions of today prove that Jews had it coming to them yesterday. Berating Jews with their own history, disinheriting them of pity, as though pity is negotiable or has a sell-by date,

is the latest species of Holocaust denial...¹²

In South Africa, an especially crude instance of this surfaced during the 2006 Lebanon war, when Mohau Pheko and Mariama Williams wrote (*Cape Times*, 31/8), "If there is anything good to come out of the recent carnage in Lebanon, it is one simple fact – the Jewish people and the state of Israel have been shown to be who they really are – not special, not chosen by God, not especially victimised, not the most persecuted people on earth...human beings who have the capacity and intention to carry out brutalities and barbarities in all forms".

Likening Israel to a Nazi state is antisemitic in effect, and usually in intent as well, because:

- The sensitivity of Jewish people regarding the Holocaust is well known. 'Rubbing their noses' in it by such wanton comparisons is a cruel taunt, and is intended as such.
- The comparison itself is a blatant untruth, falsely charging the Jewish state with grotesquely inflated crimes that bear no relation to objective realities.
- As noted above, it constitutes a form of Holocaust denial since it has the effect of minimizing the extent of Nazi atrocities.
- It could imply either that Palestinians are completely innocent of any wrongdoing, as the persecuted Jews of the past were, or conversely that the latter were likewise guilty of what the Palestinians are doing and therefore somehow brought their own persecution upon themselves.
- Holocaust allusions sometimes entail accusing Jews of trying to profit from it, i.e. using it as a form of moral blackmail to silence justified criticism of Israel (see 'v').

v. Jews are accused of dishonesty when raising the issue of antisemitism in the context of discussing Israel/Palestine.

David Hirsh has constructed what he calls "The Livingstone Formulation" (after the far-leftist antisemitic former London mayor Ken Livingstone)¹³ to encapsulate this phenomenon:

The Livingstone Formulation is a rhetorical device which enables the user to refuse to think about antisemitism... It sends back a charge of dishonest Jewish conspiracy in answer to a concern about antisemitism.... Firstly, it denies that there is a distinction between criticism of Israel and demonization of Israel.... Secondly, [it] does not simply accuse anyone who raises the issue of contemporary antisemitism of being wrong, but it also accuses them of bad faith [of] a secret, common plan to try to de-legitimize criticism with an instrumental use of the charge of antisemitism. Crying wolf. Playing the antisemitism card.¹⁴

vi. Employing double standards against the Jewish state effectively holds Jews to different, higher standards of behaviour, and portrays them as being uniquely guilty of what numerous other nation states are culpable of, often to a much greater degree.

The Ottawa Protocol on Combating Antisemitism (2011) states the following:

Let it be clear: Criticism of Israel is not antisemitic, and saying so is wrong. But singling Israel out for selective condemnation and opprobrium – let alone denying its right to exist or seeking its destruction – is discriminatory and hateful, and not saying so is dishonest.

Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz succinctly summed up this kind of Jew-baiting when he said, “A good working definition of antisemitism is taking a trait or action that is widespread, if not universal, and blaming only the Jews for it”.¹⁵

vii. The ‘Dual Loyalty’ Canard

Saying/implying of Jews that their first loyalty is not to their country of residence but to Israel is usually antisemitic because:

- Lobbyists for other international political causes are seldom, if ever, so accused.
- It ties in with the above-mentioned negative perceptions of Jews as being concerned only for their own well-being and not of the wider society and of undermining the greater good for their own selfish aims.
- Jews are suspected of having ulterior motives, rather than held to be arguing in good faith for what they believe in.

In South Africa, an egregious recent instance of this form of antisemitism was the response by Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Marius Fransman to criticism by the SAJBD over his alleging that Jews were unfairly benefiting at the expense of Muslims in Cape Town because of the policies of the Democratic Alliance. Fransman accused the Board of being ‘unpatriotic’ and of working to further the agenda of a foreign power (Israel).¹⁶ The SAJBD has since lodged a complaint against Fransman with the SA Human Rights Commission.

viii. Jewish history is denied, either explicitly or by implication, in order to portray Israel as a fundamentally illegitimate, colonialist enterprise and the Palestinians as the land’s true owners who have been dispossessed by Jewish interlopers

Politically or ideologically-motivated denials of well-established facts concerning Jewish

history are a form of antisemitism, the best-known example of which is Holocaust Denial.

Explicit denials of Jewish history relating to the Land of Israel, which often go along with the fabrication of a parallel Palestinian historic tradition, fall into the same category. It can take the following forms:

- Claiming that the Jews of today are unrelated to those of Biblical and immediate post-Biblical times, but emerged later (e.g. the Khazar theory)
- Minimising the extent to which there was a Jewish presence in the land, autonomous or otherwise, prior to the exile.
- Attributing central events, institutions and personalities in pre-exile Israel to a fictitious Palestinian history that has been suppressed (e.g. Jesus was a Palestinian nationalist, the Western Wall was part of a Muslim shrine etc.)

ix. The Good Jew-Bad Jew Argument

Making pointed distinctions between ‘Good Jews’ (who come out against Israel) and ‘Bad Jews’ (the rest) is at least bordering on the antisemitic. It seeks to legitimate denigrating most Jews for their beliefs through invoking the examples of a minority of radical dissidents who endorse extreme anti-Israel positions, as if only these kinds of Jewish views can be considered authentic.

In this regard, David Hirsh comments: “Nazism was an unusual form of antisemitism.... it allowed no exceptions; it allowed no escape for Jews. Most forms of antisemitism haven’t been like that. Christian antisemitism allowed people to convert to Christianity and therefore make themselves clean; also political antisemitism allows Jews to put themselves on the right side of history”.¹⁷

An example: A member of the Muslim community posted the following response on the blog. It’s Almost Supernatural in February 2009: “You posed the question, on your blog, as to if the time is right to leave Non Racist RSA? Well, let me answer that for you..... YES and the sooner the better!!! And like you mentioned: “70 000 minus the 310’ !!!!” (The 310 refers to SA Jews who had signed a petition condemning Israeli for the Gaza incursion).

ix. When Israel’s right to exist is called into question.

This line of attack can entail claiming that Israel’s very establishment was illegitimate and unjust, that it has forfeited its right to exist because of its illegal and criminal actions or a combination of the two. It would seem that only in Israel’s case is its right to exist somehow made conditional on its good behaviour – there are no calls for other countries, no matter how rights-

delinquent they are, to be abolished. Regarding Israel's supposedly illegal origins, there is no question of the passage of time legitimizing its existence, as is the case with other countries that have certainly come into existence as a direct result of colonial conquest.

x. Anti-Zionist Conspiracy Theories

When Israeli agencies, e.g. Mossad, are held accountable for global catastrophes (natural or man-made), this is traditional antisemitism masquerading as anti-Israelism. Examples are the introduction and spreading of the HIV/AIDS virus and plotting the 9/11 terrorist attacks. There is no essential difference between these kind of malign conspiracy theories against 'Zionists' and those that attribute to Jews as a whole a diabolical behind-the-scenes influence in world events. Other noteworthy examples include charges of Israeli trafficking in human organs taken from Palestinians, which veers very close to outright Blood Libel theory.

When is criticism of Israel not antisemitic?

Criticism of specific Israeli policies, foreign or domestic, should not be automatically equated with antisemitism, even if such reproach is itself open to being contested and may well be shown to be unfounded. Some aspects to look out for include:

- Is the criticism couched in measured, non-hyperbolic terms (i.e. the extent of Israel's wrongdoing is not obviously being exaggerated)?
- Are the policies/actions being addressed also subject to opposition from a significant proportion of the Israeli population?
- In tone and content, is the criticism more or less similar to the way other countries are held to account for their actions?
- Are the relevant facts of the matter in question correct? If the writer/spokesperson is relying largely or entirely on biased sources, it raises a question regarding his motives, although even then these may not be specifically antisemitic ones.

If the answer to the above can reasonably be adjudged to be 'yes', then Jewish advocacy groups need not feel compelled to become involved..

In conclusion, perhaps the most effective rejoinder to the assertion that criticism of Israel should not be likened to antisemitism is to concede the point, but then to point out that someone who is unreasonably prejudiced against Israel and Israelis is as much of a bigot as someone who is similarly prejudiced against anyone else. And at the very least, it begs the question as to why, if the accuser is not, as he claims, antisemitic, is the world's sole Jewish majority state being singled

out as an object of special antipathy?

NOTES

- 1 <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2012>
- 2 For a critique of this problematic term, see Judaken, J, 'So what's new? Rethinking the 'new antisemitism' in a global age', in *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 42, No's 4-5, 2008.
- 3 <http://www.jta.org/news/article/2009/02/19/1003117/legislators-say-never-again-to-anti-semitism>
- 4 <http://antisemitism.org.il/article/13572/defining-new-antisemitism-irwin-cotler> Canada / 09-11-2010
- 5 <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-EdContributors/Article.aspx?id=133685>
- 6 <http://www.timeslive.co.za/world/2013/02/20/france-see-unprecedented-rise-in-anti-semitic-attacks>
- 7 <http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/02/07/report-greater-london-area-sees-55-percent-increase-in-anti-semitic-incidents/>
- 8 <http://www.jta.org/news/article/2013/01/29/3118106/anti-semitic-incidents-rise-by-5-percent-in-australia>
- 9 <http://www.jta.org/news/article/2012/05/01/3094391/anti-semitic-incidents-negligibly-down-in-canada>
- 10 *Independent*, 2/2/2009.
- 11 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/inside-politics-blog/2010/11/for-the-record-the-full-text-of-the-ottawa-protocol.html>
- 12 *Independent*, 2/2/2009
- 13 In 2006, instead of apologizing for comparing a Jewish journalist to a Nazi concentration camp guard, Livingstone inter alia wrote, 'For far too long the accusation of antisemitism has been used against anyone who is critical of the policies of the Israeli government, as I have been.' Thus, as Hirsh points out, Livingstone claimed that irrelevant charges of antisemitism were being made to silence criticism of Zionism when in reality he was using anti-Zionist rhetoric to prevent addressing an issue of antisemitism.
- 14 Hirsh, D, 'Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Cosmopolitan Reflections', Goldsmiths College, University of London. The Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism Working Paper Series, Editor Charles Small, Print ISSN: 1940-610X; Online ISSN:1940-6118; <http://eprints.gold.ac.uk/2061/> (2006)
- 15 David Hirsh comments, "Criticism of Israeli human rights abuses is not only legitimate, it is entirely appropriate. Demonization, for example, which singles out Israel for unique loathing, or which claims that Israel is apartheid or Nazi or essentially racist, or which characterizes Israel as a child-killing state, or a state which is responsible for wars around the world, or a state which is central to global imperialism, is not the same thing as criticism of Israeli government policies", ('Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Decoding the Relationship', <http://www.z-word.com/on-zionism/antisemitism-and-anti-zionism/anti-zionism-and-antisemitism%253A-decoding-the-relationship.html>, 2008).
- 16 See author's opinion piece on the affair that appeared in the 19 March 2013 issue of the *Cape Times*: http://www.ornico.co.za/editorialstream/OwnMediaAttachments/2013_03_19_887104.pdf
- 17 Hirsh, 'Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Cosmopolitan Reflections', op. cit.

DOMESTIC ABUSE – A JEWISH VIEW

*

Matthew Liebenberg

The following is a short treatment of a sensitive and painful issue, that of domestic abuse and violence. It is an issue that, unfortunately, the Jewish community has had to confront more and more in the modern era. There remains a pervasive belief that domestic abuse simply does not happen in Jewish homes. When reports of abuse do surface, such cases are viewed as aberrations. There is also great shame associated with a family in which abuse has occurred, which might prevent victims from seeking help. Very often the lay or religious leaders that are made aware of abuse are incapable of handling the situation and may even give advice that exacerbates the problem, such as telling the victim to mollify her (or occasionally, his) spouse.

The inability of some Jewish communities to acknowledge the problem or the fact that in some instances abuse has been ‘covered up’ has led many to believe that Judaism sanctions domestic abuse. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Jewish law and philosophy is unambiguous on the matter: abuse is simply unacceptable and is antithetical to the way in which Jews are meant to live their lives.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski, a leading US rabbinical figure and psychiatrist who founded the Gateway Rehabilitation Centre, has written a ground-breaking book on this subject, entitled *The Shame Borne in Silence: Spouse Abuse in the Jewish Community*¹. I consider this book to be the definitive work on the subject by a religious Jew and much of what follows is dealt with by Rabbi Twerski. The Chief Rabbi of South Africa, Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, deals with this issue in his book *Defending the Human Spirit: Jewish Law's Vision for a Moral Society*², albeit focusing on the specific matter of marital rape. I refer my colleagues, as well as clergy from other religions, to these two outstanding works, where they can find many excellent sources on the matter.

Although spousal abuse can and does happen in both directions, it seems to be more prevalent for the husband to be the abuser and the wife the victim. Thus, for the purposes of this article I will speak of the abuser as ‘him’ and the victim as ‘her’, but the opposite can be true.

What Jewish Law says about spousal abuse

The tone of the relationship between husband and wife may be summarized by the Talmudic

dictum³ that a husband “should love his wife as much as he does himself and should respect her even more than he respects himself.” A husband who seeks to obey this rule could not possibly commit either physical or emotional abuse. Furthermore, as pointed out by the 13th Century Talmudist Ravad⁴, inasmuch as Eve was fashioned out of Adam, a husband must consider his wife an integral part of himself, and care for and protect her as he would any other part of his body. This is similar to the Talmudic observation⁵ that if a person were to feel pain because his left hand was injured, he would hardly strike it with his right hand to avenge the pain it caused him.

Domestic abuse has several manifestations⁶. **Physical abuse** consists of any physical force or intimidation towards another person, such as pushing, hitting, holding down, slapping or scratching. **Emotional abuse** takes the form of cursing, blaming, threatening and manipulation. It includes humiliation and deprivation as well as verbal insults that affect a woman’s self-esteem. **Sexual abuse** may occur between a married couple in the form of marital rape. Many women fail to identify the problem, as they tend to think that it is the husband’s right to have relations whenever he wants. **Economic abuse** is where a woman is totally dependent on the husband for money and finances are used as a form of control or as a means of threatening her.

Jewish tradition addresses all of these areas.

The Torah speaks about several forms of abuse including: financial⁷, verbal or emotional⁸ and physical abuse/violence⁹. Abuse and violence are forbidden by Jewish law against anyone, including one’s spouse and children.

The Talmud¹⁰, in a lengthy discussion on the topic of **verbal abuse**, states: “A man must always be exceedingly careful not to hurt his wife with words, for she [i.e. women] are emotionally sensitive and are easily moved to tears.” As an example we find that the Sages¹¹ criticize the patriarch Jacob’s response to his wife, Rachel, when the latter said to him¹² “Give me children – otherwise I am dead!”, to which Jacob replies, “Am I instead of G-d who has withheld from you fruit of the womb?” He should have been more sensitive to her pain and prayed to G-d that she conceive in the same way his father Isaac had prayed that Rebecca should conceive. Rambam (Maimonides), the great codifier of Jewish Law¹³, writes: “a husband must speak gently to his wife, and should neither be tense nor short-tempered.” One of the Talmudic Sages¹⁴ declared: “A man must be most meticulous in giving proper respect

Matthew Liebenberg is Rabbi of the Claremont Wynberg Hebrew Congregation in Cape Town.

to his wife, because the blessing of the household is by virtue of the wife.”

Regarding **physical abuse**, there are many explicit sources. The 13th Century ethicist Rabbeinu Yona of Gerona states that a Jew who assaults his fellow transgresses two scriptural prohibitions and that “many transgress these prohibitions by hitting their wives”.¹⁵ The Code of Jewish Law¹⁶ is unambiguous in its condemnation of wife beating: “It is a sin for a man to beat his wife, and if he does this habitually the courts can punish, excommunicate and whip him and apply all measures of force until he takes an oath never to do so again. If he violates this oath he may be compelled to divorce her.” A great Medieval authority on Jewish Law writes,¹⁷ “...as with another person whom one is commanded not to beat...even more so with one’s wife, whom one is obliged to honour more than one’s own self.” Furthermore, a husband who injures his wife even inadvertently is liable for damages in accordance with the principle that a person is always responsible for his actions and must pay for accidental injury¹⁸.

Regarding **sexual abuse**, the Talmud¹⁹ and Codes²⁰ proscribe sexual intercourse when one’s spouse is asleep, when either of the couple are drunk or not on good terms with the other and most certainly when one’s wife does not consent to the intercourse or consents due to fear. Thus, marital rape has always been forbidden under Jewish Law long before most Western legal systems recognised such behaviour as criminal. Furthermore, depriving a woman of her conjugal rights is also a form of abuse and is forbidden.²¹

The **financial relationship** between husband and wife is the subject of an entire tractate in the Talmud called *Ketubot*. Judaism was perhaps the first religion or legal system to require every husband to provide his wife with financial protection in the event of divorce or his death. To this day, no Jewish wedding may be solemnised until such time as a valid *ketubah* (marriage contract) has been finalised. Today the *ketubah* is largely ritualistic in nature and Jewish couples will also enter into a civil ante-nuptial contract. The Torah also requires the husband to take care of his wife’s physical needs for the duration of the marriage²². A woman may bring her own estate into the marriage and although her husband may derive benefit from the ‘fruits’ (e.g. the rent of a building) he may not alienate the capital. The Talmud²³ prescribes the proper attitude a husband should have vis-à-vis his financial responsibilities to his wife: “A person should always eat and drink less than which is within his means and should clothe himself in accordance with his means. He should honour his wife and children beyond his means for they are dependent upon him, and he is dependent upon the One who commanded and the world came into being.” In other words, a man should do without when it comes to the honour of his wife and family, and if this means

that he will dress below his level, so be it. This includes providing his wife with fine clothing and jewellery²⁴. A Jewish wife is fully entitled to work and is actually encouraged to do so even if she is wealthy²⁵ since “idleness leads to immorality.” A husband who forbids his wife from working is also engaging in a form of abuse, as is a husband who refuses to allow his wife her own banking account or credit cards.

Misinterpreted Sources

As should be clear from the above, Judaism is unequivocal in its condemnation of spouse abuse. Nevertheless, there are some Talmudic statements/concepts that might be misinterpreted or taken out of context and used by some abusive husbands to ‘justify’ their behaviour:

*A kosher (decent) woman is one who complies with her husband’s will.*²⁶

It should be immediately apparent that this Midrashic statement must have limitations. For example, if a husband were to tell his wife to cook on the Sabbath, she would certainly not be permitted to do so. Doing the will of a husband may not be used to violate any Torah commandment, nor may it be used to violate any Torah ethic. We have already noted the high standards provided by the Torah for respecting one’s wife and that the husband is cautioned to assiduously avoid upsetting or irritating her. The statement of “doing the will of the husband” may therefore not be used as a way to violate the Torah requirement for respect of the wife.

The principle “The ways of Torah are pleasant”²⁷ is applied in the Talmud²⁸ to rule out practices that would be incompatible with this principle. Tyranny in the household is abominable, and would in no way be condoned by the Torah. But what then is the meaning of the phrase? Here, the context is most important. The Midrash is discussing the heroism of Yael, the wife of Hever, who saved Israel in a crucial battle by killing the enemy general, Sisera. Scripture tells how she lured Sisera into her tent, gave him milk which caused him to become drowsy, and when he fell asleep, drove a tent peg into his head. It is upon this episode that the Midrash describes Yael as a decent woman who did the bidding of her husband. What is the relevance of this statement to Yael? The commentary *Meam Loez* states that Hever had a peace agreement with Sisera. If so, then Yael’s action was a clear defiance of her husband’s will rather than compliance! Yael’s heroism consisted of taking the necessary action to save Israel, even though she could have chosen to remain neutral because of her husband’s pact with Sisera. She could have remained within her tent and minded her own business. However, Yael understood that the pact was nullified by Sisera when he went to war against Israel, and that the will of her husband was really that she should

destroy Sisera if she had the opportunity. It was for this reason and in this context that Yael was praised for understanding what Hever would have wanted.

At any rate, the phrase “A kosher woman is one who abides by her husband’s will” is not to be distorted to support tyranny. Exploiting this phrase to justify physical, sexual, or emotional abuse is a gross *violation* of Torah.

*You will desire your husband and he will rule over you.*²⁹

This statement in Genesis follows the sin of Eve and Adam and is directed at Eve and her female descendants. Rabbi Goldstein³⁰ discusses the meaning of this phrase in detail: “Jewish Law’s understanding of the prevailing reality of the world (i.e. the sexual and general oppression of women) is rooted in the Biblical curse addressed to Eve and to all womenkind: ‘You will desire your husband and he will rule over you.’ This curse has affected the course of history, and Jewish Law seeks to soften and mitigate the curse’s harsh effects [my emphasis] because it sees the curse as a reality entrenched in nature. This forms part of Jewish Law’s philosophy, in which man is called upon by God to partner Him in overcoming the natural realities that God Himself put into the world³¹. Thus, the Talmud³² interprets the verse in a sexual sense by saying that it refers to the marital sexual relationship. It sees in this verse the root of the sexual subjugation of women in specific terms of a woman desiring her husband sexually and it being inappropriate to verbally request sexual intercourse. The Talmud therefore links the historical oppression of women directly to sexuality, and in so doing demonstrates Jewish Law’s concern for women’s sexual vulnerability to men. The Ramban expands on this and explains that the root of women’s historical subordination and vulnerability to men is sexual desire. Men have always exercised control over the sexual relationship between themselves and women. He writes that men’s dominance of the sexual relationship led to the enslavement of women and was the fulfilment of the curse in the above verse.

Accordingly, the Torah is not granting licence to a husband to dominate his wife, but is instead stating a curse that mankind must endeavour to mitigate. The very fact that, according to Jewish Law, it is a husband’s obligation to satisfy his wife sexually should be proof enough that Judaism frowns upon men who abuse their natural tendency to dominate in this area³³.

Shalom Bayit (peace in the home)

Rabbi Twerski writes³⁴:

There are those who invoke the principle of *shalom bayis* to justify a wife’s resigning herself to abuse. This reminds me of the visitor to Soviet Russia who was told that the Soviets had already

achieved the millennium, and was shown a lion and a lamb living harmoniously in the same cage. “Amazing,” he said, “How is that possible?” “Simple”, the guide replies, “Twice a day we give him a fresh lamb”. Yes, a wife may preserve peace in the household by silently accepting the control, nay, the tyranny of a power-crazed husband. This is hardly what the Torah wants. The Torah condemns human sacrifice. The Talmud³⁵ cites the verse in Jeremiah:³⁶ “I did not command it and I did not wish it,” to refer to the daughter of Jephtha³⁷, and to the near-sacrifice of Isaac. The latter was meant to test the devotion of Abraham, but was not permitted to go on to actual sacrifice. To say that the Torah advocates a woman sacrificing herself to tolerate lifelong abuse is unconscionable. *Shalom bayis* is indeed a sacred concept, but it is the responsibility of *both* husband and wife to see that this is achieved. It is a mistake to think that the entire responsibility for *shalom bayis* rests on the shoulders of the wife.

Conclusion

In Rabbi Twerski’s view³⁸, rabbis or others in leadership positions who turn a blind eye to abuse are transgressing the prohibition, “Do not stand idly by while your neighbour’s blood is being spilled”.³⁹ The Talmud⁴⁰ interprets this to mean that one has an obligation to divert harm from coming to another person. It further states⁴¹ that “anyone who has the ability to correct a situation and is derelict in doing so, bears the responsibility for whatever results therefrom.” Writes Rabbi Twerski:

There will be those who will say that such subjects should not be aired publicly, and that [it is] a *chilul Hashem*, a disgrace to the sanctity of Judaism, to even imply that Jewish husbands can be wife batterers. I understand that position, but if I must choose between being reprimanded by those who believe that this problem should be concealed or by a wife who has suffered (along with her children) from an abusive husband, and could not receive help because no one believed her, I know where I must make my choice. Battered wives have often turned to their parents or to their spiritual leaders for help. Very often they have been told to avoid disrupting the family unit, to preserve *shalom bayis* (peace in the home), and that things will work out. Parents and rabbis are good and considerate people. They mean well, but they may have no way of knowing that their advice is wrong and could be deadly.

It is the responsibility of religious leaders to put an end to abuse, to assist victims and to address this issue so that abuse is stopped before it even begins.

Notes

- 1 Mirkov Publications, 1996
- 2 Feldheim Publishers, 2006, see chapter 3: Oppression of Women
- 3 *Yevamot* 62b
- 4 Introduction to the book *Baalei Hanefesh*
- 5 Jerusalem Talmud, *Nedarim* 9:3
- 6 *Jewish Life*, issue 46 "Flowers Aren't Enough" by Chandra Serebro
- 7 *Leviticus* 25:14, as explained by the Talmud *Bava Metzia* 58b and *Torat Cohanim* chapter 3:4
- 8 *Leviticus* 25:17, as explained by the Talmud *Bava Metzia* 58b and *Torat Cohanim* chapter 4:1
- 9 *Deuteronomy* 25:3
- 10 *Bava Metzia* 59a
- 11 *Bereishit Rabba* 71:7
- 12 *Genesis* 30:1-2
- 13 *Mishna Torah*, *Hilchot Ishut* 15:19
- 14 *Bava Metzia* 59a
- 15 *Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:77
- 16 *Even HaEzer* 154:3 in the gloss
- 17 Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel, in *Ketubot* 185
- 18 Code of Jewish Law, *Choshen Mishpat* 421:12. The actual wording is where he harms her during sexual intercourse.
- 19 *Nedarim* 20b and *Eruvin* 100b
- 20 Rambam, *Hilchot Ishut* 15:17 and Code of Jewish Law *Orach Chaim* 240:3
- 21 See Code of Jewish Law, *Even HaEzer* 76:11 and Rambam, *Hilchot Ishut* 14:7. See also Rabbi Goldstein, *Defending the Human Spirit*, pp182-91
- 22 *Exodus* 21:10 as explained by the Talmud *Ketubot* 47b
- 23 *Chullin* 84b
- 24 Commentary of Maharsha ad loc and Rashi to *Sanhedrin* 76b
- 25 *Mishna Ketubot* 5:5 according to Rabbi Eliezer
- 26 Midrash, Judges, Chapter 5. For a full discussion, see Twerski, *The Shame Borne in Silence* pp62-4.
- 27 *Proverbs* 3:17
- 28 *Sukka* 32a and *Yevamos* 15a
- 29 *Genesis* 3:16
- 30 Goldstein, pp178-180
- 31 Talmud *Shabbat* 10a; *Sefer HaChinuch* # 2
- 32 *Yevamot* 62b and *Eruvin* 100b
- 33 For a full discussion of Judaism's view regarding Conjugal Rights see Chief Rabbi Goldstein's *Defending The Human Spirit- Jewish Law's Vision For A Moral Society*, pages 182-191
- 34 *The Shame Borne in Silence*, pp 66-70
- 35 *Ta'anit* 4a
- 36 19:5
- 37 *Judges* 11:30-40
- 38 Twerski, p3
- 39 *Leviticus* 19:16
- 40 *Sanhedrin* 73a
- 41 *Shabbat* 54b



PROJECT

Shalom Bayit

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HOW JEWISH ARTISTS PORTRAY NELSON MANDELA

*

Lana Jacobson

In his foreword to *Jewish Memories of Mandela* (published by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the Umoja Foundation in 2011), Ivor Ichikowitz wrote:

The Jewish connections in the story of Nelson Mandela are quite remarkable... Jews were part of Mandela's life from the time he first came from rural Transkei to the city of Johannesburg and embarked on a career that would change this country forever. In good times and bad, danger bordering on despair and the ultimate triumph, his Jewish friends and colleagues were at his side... They have come together in identifying with Nelson Mandela's journey through life and are today united in their support and admiration for everything he represents.

There is indeed an ongoing relationship between the South African Jewish community and Nelson Mandela. His iconic status has now been visually explored in a major art exhibition, *We Love Mandela: Art Inspired by Madiba*, curated by Natalie Knight and sponsored by entrepreneur Alan Demby. 22 artists from the Cape to Limpopo Province exhibit their art which has been inspired by Madiba. In addition to the organizers, eight of the artists are Jewish. Demby offered Knight the opportunity to showcase her annual Mandela exhibition at South Africa House in London. They discovered that they had a mutual passion - both loved Mandela.

We Love Mandela: Art Inspired by Madiba previewed at the Peacemaker's Museum and the Stephan Welz Gallery. Both venues are part of the empire being forged by Demby at the Nelson Mandela Square in Sandton. The show opened on 18 July 2013, Mandela's 95th birthday, and ran until the end of August. The London show which is the start of a global tour (2-16 October) takes place at South Africa House, Trafalgar Square.

Demby's connection to Mandela is through gold medallions. A chance opportunity to trade three Kruger Rands when he was a young man in the army led him to buy out the SA Gold Coin Exchange twenty years later in 1992. Demby opened his first retail coin shop in Sandton City in 1995 and he now has 35 shops (called Scoin)

throughout SA and one in London. He comments, "I wanted to democratize coin buying. In previous years dealers treated clients like suspects instead of prospects".

The Mint of Norway created the Nobel laureates programme in 1995. Some ten years later, the South African Gold Coin Exchange secured the worldwide marketing and sales rights. The worldwide sale of Nobel Laureate medallions in gold, silver, platinum and palladium now exceeds 100 000. Demby gives a percentage of the profits to the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the Nobel Institute and Liliesleaf. He proudly talks of attending three Nobel Peace Award ceremonies, and meeting and sharing the same dance floor with Michelle and Barack Obama and the King and Queen of Norway. Perhaps his proudest moment was when he presented Aung San Suu Kyi with her own Nobel Laureate gold medallion (see below).

In line with the Nobel awards, Demby created the Peacemakers Museum in Nelson Mandela Square in Sandton to honor South Africa's four Peace Prize laureates. This is the only museum in the world situated in a shopping mall.

It was a short step to combining coins and art and in 2012 Demby bought Stephan Welz & Co, the auction house which was established 45 years ago. With this synergy in place he approached Natalie Knight, who was in the process of curating a major Mandela show for the Origins Gallery at Wits. This was the follow up of the Mandela@94 show held in the same venue in 2012, where George Bizos shared his memories of Mandela.

Knight was concerned about Mandela's state of health and the show at Wits was cancelled. Several of the 22 artists had already completed their work and she regarded Demby's offer as serendipitous. A show was planned for South Africa House in London in May, but this was also postponed as Mandela's health deteriorated. It was only after discussion with the Centre of Memory at the Mandela Foundation that they received a positive directive to hold the exhibition on 18 July. The Centre of Memory also supplied some photographs of Mandela for the show.

The work of the eight Jewish artists in the exhibition varies considerably in style, medium and content.

Dean Simon is known in the Jewish community through his recreations of *shtetl* scenes. He has the remarkable ability to draw a scene with such detail that it could be a photograph. As the first Jewish war artist, he captured events on the border

Lana Jacobson is a journalist and author with 25 years of experience in the media across the board. She has written for popular magazines, most newspapers, and corporations, as well as ghost written books.

of South West Africa which were impossible to photograph. He has produced many works about Mandela, and the work on this show is one of the most controversial. It is based on the composition of *The Last Supper*. Simon depicts Mandela in the central role, surrounded by peacemakers of various eras, as a rebel and freedom fighter against oppression. He has made an edition of fifty prints, each signed by Mandela (the Mandela Foundation owns one of these). He is currently preparing a major one man show accompanied by a book.



Dean Simon: 'Last Supper'. The figures in the work are Nelson Mandela in the middle. To his left are Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks (The African American Civil rights leader, as Mary Magdalene), Robert Sobukwe, Haile Selassie. Behind them are Oliver Tambo and Steve Biko. To his left are Gandhi and Desmond Tutu, behind them are Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Albert Luthuli. Explains the artist, "the figure of Judas has been left incomplete as it could be filled by any one of a number of corrupt leaders who came before, who are in power now and unfortunately will be in power in the future."

Simon's hyper- realistic style in stark black and white is in direct contrast to Susan Woolf's work, which is an exuberant burst of color. Woolf is working towards a PhD based on her codification of taxi hand-signs for both sighted and blind people in Gauteng. Mandela's fist is not an aggressive one – it has become known as the symbol of *amandla*, which incorporates power and peace. Woolf has also depicted the clenched hand in a manner which, when printed in a raised form, can be 'read' by blind people. She met and was photographed with Mandela at the Mandela@90 exhibition held at the Constitutional Court, recalling of that occasion, "Even at 90 years old, Madiba's warmth, inner strength and generosity of spirit is something I experienced in his presence. It is easy to be inspired by a man who has such conviction, stands steadfastly by what he believes to be right, but also has a capacity for kindness, forgiveness and acceptance of others."

Mandela's name Rolihlahle literally means "pulling the branches of a tree" (or, colloquially, "troublemaker"). Several of the artists on the show, including Loren Hodes, have used the metaphor of a tree to describe Madiba. Says

Hodes, "Both Nelson Mandela and the African Baobab (the Tree of Wisdom) are iconic and larger than life, legendary in their own but similar ways. Unique in Africa and the world, both are repositories of strength and of hope. Symbolic of growth, of life and renewal, unceasingly strong and consistently able to overcome, endure and to thrive in the midst of the bleakest of environments. They do not withhold or discriminate. Larger than life, the baobab dominates the African landscape as Nelson Mandela dominates the minds of all who strive for justice and equality. Majestic, noble and dignified, the baobab, a symbol of Mother Africa, has its partner in Tata Madiba".



Loren Hodes: 'Tree of Life'

Lena Woolf (no relation to Susan Woolf) is an occupational therapist by profession. Lena has a love of nature and plants. She creates her tribute to Madiba in a series of delicate hand painted etchings, and depicts the tomatoes, onions and chillies which Mandela planted on Robben Island.

Mandela recalled in his autobiography *The Long Walk to Freedom* that "a garden was one of the things in prison that one could control." Mandela shared the produce with the warders. He was very upset when "a particularly beautiful tomato plant... began to wither and decline and nothing I did would bring it back to health. Sometimes there is nothing one can do to save something that must die." Woolf draws the tomato plant with sensitivity and delicacy. She provides a way to explore some of Mandela's emotions during his prison ordeal.

Zapiro, aka Jonathan Shapiro, is South Africa's best known political cartoonist. He became an anti-apartheid activist in 1983 and was detained by the security police. He is currently editorial cartoonist for the *Mail & Guardian*, *Sunday Times* and *The Times* and has won many national and international awards. Zapiro's acerbic cartoons go for the jugular. His cartoons on Israel have been vicious and have upset the Jewish community. By contrast, his works of Mandela have shown that it is not necessary to be nasty to be funny. His obvious regard for Mandela is seen in many of his cartoons. For example, he comments on Mandela's humility in 'Icon? Aikona!' and gives Mandela a quasi-biblical status when he 'splits

the Sea'.

Len Sak began creating political cartoons for the *SA Jewish Frontier* (1956 – 1964) and at the same time was working for *Bantu World*. He also created a weekly cartoon called Saklines for the *Sunday Times* before going to work in London for *The Observer*. He is the creator of the character JOJO, which is still remembered by his black readers with great affection. JOJO was the mouthpiece of the urban black man, a moral character concerned with the effects of smoking, alcohol abuse and drunken driving. After 1976, JOJO began to reflect more political comment. Sak was a sharp critic of South Africa's domestic policy and spoke out against injustice and in support of a new democratic South African society. In 1985, SABC TV 2 featured JOJO in a 52 episode weekly series with a live Zulu sound track. In addition to his humorous work, Sak illustrated various books. He particularly enjoys drawing for black readers, finding it a challenge to depict and interact with a culture so different from his own. He caricatured Dr Verwoerd with venom, comparing him to Frankenstein. The works on the show relate to the Mandela era, published in the Sowetan between 1990 and 1994.

Michael Meyersfeld is a photographer of note. His work is stark, sometimes somber, and contains lonely and edgy imagery. Meyersfeld has won numerous awards, the most recent being a gold at the London AOP awards in 2012. Although he has not produced a portrait of Mandela, his photograph of *The Mandela Bridge at Night* is a symbol of the way in which Mandela was able to bridge so many disparate elements.

Eric Sher is a graphic artist whose reconstruction

of Mandela's offices at Chancellor House on the corner of Fox and Becker streets was published in *Jewish Memories of Mandela* (p11). In 2008 his father Norman, an attorney who worked in the same building as Mandela and befriended him, took him to Chancellor House. The building was completely dilapidated and Eric recreated it based on his father's description. Chancellor House was restored in May 2011. Prints of Sher's work are displayed at the Apartheid Museum, Constitutional Court, Robben Island and Wits. The original drawing of the building is in the current London exhibition. Sher has also captured other places which have played a central role in Mandela's life, namely Liliesleaf and Robben Island.

It is fitting to conclude with the insights of South African Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein with regard to the overwhelming universal response to Mandela, the man who has declared that he is not a saint:

Amidst societies which idolize the powers of the body, Nelson Mandela attests to the enduring power of the soul, the power of principle over expediency, of giving over grabbing, of enduring values over momentary selfish pleasure, of the path to real happiness which only truly comes from living with moral purpose.

Nelson Mandela was a beacon of hope in the dark days of Apartheid. He remains a beacon of hope. The global romance with Nelson Mandela is a sign of hope for humanity; we are still moved by heroes of the spirit.



Michael Meyersfeld: 'Mandela Bridge'

A woman with dark hair and a grey t-shirt is sitting on a grassy field, looking up and smiling. A young child with dark hair, wearing a floral shirt, is sitting next to her, also looking up and smiling. Several bubbles are floating in the air around them. The background is a blurred green field with some yellow flowers.

Investing money is simple.
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Wishing you a year of purpose, meaning and fulfilment.
Shanah Tovah.

ZIONIST RECORD ROSH HASHANA 1953: ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE

*

Gwynne Schrire

Knowing my fondness for old things Mervyn Smith, Hon. Life Vice-President of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, gave me a copy of the 104-page 1953 Rosh Hashanah edition of the *Zionist Record*, found in a shop on the Garden Route. Reading it sixty years later with the benefit of hindsight, I found it fascinating - both for the similarities and for the differences.

In 1955, the *Zionist Record* was one of four Jewish weeklies, many monthlies and lavish Rosh Hashanah annuals. The community also supported a weekly and a monthly Yiddish newspaper. Today we have one national weekly newspaper, the *SA Jewish Report*.

In 1953, the Jewish population of South Africa was 110 000 out of a total population of 12.6 million, of whom only 2.6 million were white – it is amazing that with those figures the five-year old Nationalist government thought it could rule the country - and it is even more amazing that they managed to do so for 46 years. In July 2012 there were 70–75 000 Jews out of an estimated total population of 48 810 000.¹ Of these 50 000 lived in Johannesburg, 16000 in Cape Town, 2000 in Durban and 1000 in Pretoria – nine-tenths lived in the four larger urban centres, the balance in smaller cities and towns.²

The 1951 census established that 60 847 Jews lived on the Witwatersrand and 20 446 in Cape Town - nine-tenths lived in the 18 larger urban centres with only about 4000 in the small villages or farms. The migration from the platteland to the urban areas was already underway. This was apparent from the article by Rabbi JH Newman, *Our Country Communities*. The Board of Deputies, he wrote, had established a National Country Communities Committee to organise religious life. There were 35 rural communities that had a Jewish community large enough to maintain its own communal life. There were 70 “problem communities” in the Union where Jewish residents numbered between five and twenty families, too small to be able to support themselves as communities, too large to be

allowed to disintegrate. More than 150 possessed fewer than five Jewish families - fifteen years previously half of these had supported synagogues and congregations with ministers. Rabbi Newman noted the almost complete absence of adolescents and young people, dispatched to boarding school in larger centres, leaving a rural community composed of elderly Yiddish speaking parents.



Herzlia School in Cape Town (established 1940)

This movement has continued with country communities closing down as the children, followed by the parents, move to the big cities where their children can attend Jewish schools and the families can live a richer Jewish life with the availability of kosher food and more diverse cultural and religious opportunities. Instead of 35, there are now 19 communities able to sustain their own communal life, the 70 “problem communities” of between 5 and 10 families have decreased to 31 and those with fewer than five families have shrunk from 150 to 11.³ This shows that there are still a considerable number of Jews living in rural districts despite the constant haemorrhaging to the cities and overseas. Today the focus of the country communities rabbi has changed considerably. He has evolved from being a community’s to an individual’s rabbi, visiting the Jewish families in their homes instead of conducting services in minyan-less synagogues.⁴

The State of Israel had been established a mere five years previously and the Holocaust and the miracle of the establishment of the State were still fresh in the minds of people. *The tragedy of Latvian Jewry: Nowhere has the slaughter been so merciless as in Latvia; of the 100,000 Jews about 1,000 remained alive*, written by Isaac Levinson, was illustrated with a group photo taken in 1923 of Isaac and fellow Zionists in Ludz, Latgale,

Gwynne Schrire is Deputy Director of the Cape Council, SA Jewish Board of Deputies. She is a regular contributor and a member of the Editorial Board of Jewish Affairs and has written, co-written and edited various books on aspects of local Jewish and Cape Town history.

surrounding the visiting Vladimir Jabotinsky.

Elias Gordin, who had been a social worker for the Joint Distribution Committee, told an exciting story of his participation in an Aliyah Beth expedition. Six cartons of cigarettes paid for the border guards to turn blind eyes while 60 young people from the DP camps were smuggled into Italy. A little later they confronted a group of Italian policemen who thought they had caught contraband smugglers, but after appealing to their consciences and their dislike of the English, the party was allowed through. Gordin later heard that their boat was intercepted and forced to go to Cyprus. They reached Israel in time to participate in the War of Independence.

Another slice of forgotten trivia appeared in the reminiscences of I Zadikoff of Johannesburg *When Herzl passed through Dvinsk*. After hearing a rumour that Herzl's train would be passing through, Zadikoff interrupted a meeting with the news and an excited crowd of students rushed to the station to await the arrival of the great man. They escorted him to the station cafe until the Czarist police arrived, shouting "Jewish meeting!" Herzl returned to the train promising to visit Dvinsk another time, waving his hat to them as the train left. This was in 1903, fifty years previously. "It was a scene which I shall never forget to the last day of my life", Zadikoff concludes.

Israel in 1953 was still struggling to cope with a flood of penniless refugees from concentration camps, DP camps and Arab lands who were pouring into a new state lacking industry, amenities and infrastructure. In the article *In search of stability, a survey of the Israel scene in 5713*, David Marmor noted that Israel now had 1 500 000 Jews, having had an unprecedented influx in the previous five years of 700 000 immigrants from more than 60 countries. (To compare, by Rosh Hashanah 2012, Israel contained 5 978 600 Jews (75.4%) and 1 636 600 Arabs (20.6%) in a total population of 7 933 200.⁵)

Bananas and citrus were being exported, great strides had been taken in irrigation projects, the first shipment of phosphates had been undertaken, tyre and rubber factories had begun production and the foundations for a prosperous chemical industry had been laid. President Chaim Weizmann had died and Yitzhak Ben Zvi elected the new president. (The Rosh Hashanah journal carried a feature on his wife.)

Albert Einstein had been offered the presidency after Weizmann's death and an article *Why Einstein Refused the Presidency* quoted his letter of refusal which said, "I have neither the natural ability nor the experience necessary to deal with human beings and carry out official functions." It continued: "My relationship to the Jewish people has been my strongest human attachment ever since I reached complete awareness of our precarious position among nations."

David Marmor further reported that Japan and Burma had established diplomatic relations with

Israel which the USSR had severed - and then reinstated. Marmor added that there had been no change in Israel's main foreign policy problem - namely peace with the Arab States. Israel's position that the primary prerequisite for peace was direct negotiations with the Arab states had gained much support in the General Assembly of the United Nations, but a draft resolution calling the Arab States to enter into direct negotiation for a settlement of their outstanding differences failed to get a two-thirds majority.

Nu? What's new?

Does the World Owe an Apology to the Arabs? asked Cape Town-born Abba Eban, then Ambassador to the United States, "Not even at the height of its power in the days of the Caliphate did the Muslim world possess such elements of power, status and prosperity as those which the western world had put into its hands". He pointed out that there were now eight sovereign states in the Middle East, not one of which had had its freedom four decades previously. "Escaping the long colonial struggles which bore down with heavy weight on other peoples, the Arab sub-continent was rushed through its period of tutelage with headlong speed and in some cases before the completion of its political maturity." Eban regretted that the Arab refusal to reach a peace settlement was so persistently maintained and asked why American support for Arab independence in eight countries should merit praise while American support for Israel's independence justified resentment: "The free flow of influences, ideas and commerce across the peaceful Middle East would contribute to the strength of the region as a whole."

As far as the Palestinian refugees were concerned, Eban believed that as the Arab governments had created the problem and had the capacity to solve it, these should do so. "If Israel, with its small area and limited resources, could create homes for 750 000 destitute immigrants, it is at least 100 times more possible for the Arab States, so much more lavishly endowed, to find homes for an equivalent number of kinsmen. If only the will exists." He continues, "International influence is still unable to liberate us from illicit blockade and from constant eruptions of murderous violence on our frontiers. The contribution we can make towards the restoration of peace must be conditioned by our basic care for our territorial integrity and our survival and security."

It is tragic that despite many wars and the passing of six decades, Abba Eban would probably have expressed similar thoughts today.

Sixty years on, that poorly developed country ranks 17th among 187 world nations on the UN's Human Development Index, which places Israel in the category of "Very Highly Developed". Israel has become a technologically advanced market

economy with a rapidly developing high-tech and service sectors. No longer is it just bananas and citrus. Cut diamonds, high-technology equipment including metal products, electronic and biomedical equipment, processed foods, chemicals, transport equipment and agricultural products are the leading exports. Israel is a world leader in software, telecommunication and semiconductor development. The high concentration of high-tech industries in Israel, backed by a strong venture capital industry, has given it the nickname 'Silicon Wadi', which is considered second in importance only to its Californian counterpart. Israel had been invited to join the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and had signed free trade agreements with the European Union, the United States, the European Free Trade Association, Turkey, Mexico, Canada, Jordan, Egypt, and the Mercosur trade bloc - the first non-Latin-American country to do so.⁶

The new year annual had an alarming picture by Annie Shulman of how *Travelling through Arab Lines We Visited Mount Scopus*. Flanked by Jordanian soldiers, they joined a monthly convoy to relieve the Israeli police guarding the university on Mount Scopus, driving with shuttered windows, enabling the driver to see only a few inches of road ahead.

Established in 1925, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem had received strong support from South Africans. Idel Schwartz, founder and later president⁷ of the Cape Town Dorshei Zion Society, had attended the opening and donated a chair of Post-Biblical Hebrew Literature. Isaac Ochberg, famed for bringing 200 Ukrainian orphans to South Africa in 1921, had donated money for extensions and scholarships. Tragically, during the War of Independence attacks were carried out against convoys moving between the Israeli-controlled section of Jerusalem and the University. One of these killed 79 Jews, including doctors and nurses going to the university's Hadassah Hospital. The campus was cut off from Israeli west Jerusalem and Jordan denied Israel access to Mount Scopus, except for these monthly trips to change the guard.⁸

Shulman found the university overrun with weeds, a place of desolation, the windows cemented with bricks for protection from shelling. She wandered by torchlight though the library catacombs with its many shelves of valuable books - founded in 1920 the library was the oldest section of the university and its collections of Hebraica and Judaica the largest in the world. The archaeology department, filled with valuable artefacts, could itself do with an excavation, the abandoned study of its President, Prof J Magnes, was in a state of chaos with dead flies and desiccated moths, a disconnected telephone hanging lifeless. They visited the Hadassah Hospital, its expensive equipment lying unused. She returned in the convoy with excited young

policemen delighted to be returning home, filled with sadness at the arrested growth, stunted development and enforced stagnancy she had witnessed on Mount Scopus compared to the progress and achievement everywhere else in the country.

Today, with four campuses including Mount Scopus, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is no longer desolate and weed filled. In 2012 it was ranked overall the 52nd best university in the world in the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities, 16th in Mathematics, 27th in Computer Science and 44th in Business/Economics. The Center for World University Rankings ranked it 22nd best in the world. A survey by *The Scientist* magazine ranked it as the 9th best university to work in, and the 2nd best outside of the United States.⁹

Of interest is the fact that the University of Johannesburg, in the news for eschewing ties with Israeli universities, did not qualify for the Shanghai list of the top 500 universities and, compared to Hebrew University's ranking of 175 in the Webometric World Excellence listing, ranks 2223.

The annual contained eyewitness reports by visitors to Israel - on a crowded bus ride; on whether Israelis take holidays (outings and children's camps); on trying to play cricket on the beach; *On the Building of Timorim* on a new site; on *Television in Israel* by Percy Baneshik (TV only came to South Africa in 1976); on four months spent lecturing anatomy to the inaugural anatomy department at the Hebrew University's new campus to a keen class of 54 students, most of whom had arrived as refugees. Hebrew was their common language but not one in which the guest lecturer, Dr M Arnold, from Johannesburg, was fluent. The article *The only Ghetto character still remaining in Modern life is the Shadchan* by David Dainow, for over twenty years the editor of the *Zionist Record*, claimed that *shadchanim* in Israel were planning to form a union, join the Histadrut and secure a law ensuring that no rabbi would marry a couple without receiving proof that the *shadchan* had been paid. Dainow published *Our Shadchan: A Humorous Satire* the following year.

The leader article by the editor, *When Israel Rallied to the Defence of a Jewish Community*, focused on the Slánský trial and the storm of protest that had erupted in practically every country: "The cry of 'let my people go' was uttered with a sense of pride, in the full knowledge that there was a place on earth ready and willing and capable of receiving them. It placed the entire issue in a new perspective and reasserted the importance of Jewish statehood."

An important principle had become established - that Israel would rally to the defense of Jews wherever they might be attacked. Unlike in Nazi Germany, there was now a State of Israel willing to take in refugees.

The 1953 show trial of Rudolf Slánský, General Secretary of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, and 13 other Communists (11 of them Jews) accused of participating in a Trotskyite-Titoite-Zionist conspiracy was the result of a split within the Communist leadership, and was part of a Stalin-inspired purge both of 'disloyal' elements in the Communist parties, and of Jews from the leadership of Communist parties. After torture the victims confessed to all crimes - 11 were executed and three sentenced to life imprisonment. After Stalin's death in March 1953, the harshness of the persecutions slowly decreased, and the surviving victims quietly received amnesty one by one. In 1968, the Czechoslovakian President awarded medals to nine of the defendants - the honour came too late for the six executed recipients.¹⁰

Who knows the name Slánský now? One forgets how rapidly events overtake each other and Today's News becomes Tomorrow's Fish Wrap.

Also of historical interest was an article by Dr S Rappaport on *What the Hebrew Newspapers Said about the Boer War: Gallant Boer Republics vs. the British Empire*. Rev Solomon Schechter, discoverer of the Cairo Geniza, lecturer in Rabbinics at Cambridge and father-in-law of Cape Board of Deputies founder Morris Alexander, walked out of a Cambridge service when prayers were offered for victory, saying, "The less G-d Almighty knows about this dirty business the better for all of us."

The first page of the Rosh Hashanah annual contained a three-quarter page advert for the Jewish National Fund. The SA JNF was continuing with the second stage of the mighty Huleh reclamation project and had "undertaken to convert 60 000 dunams of disease-ridden swamp into rich pastures to feed Israel's ever growing population". It also aimed to purchase 200 000 dunams of abandoned Arab lands from former owners and plant millions of trees in the Martyrs Forest to perpetuate the memory of the six million victims of the Holocaust.

This brought back memories as a child in Kimberley, listening to my mother, very involved in Zionist work, collecting money for the project. The swamp, breeding grounds for malaria, was drained by the JNF between 1951 and 1958 and the completion of the massive project was greeted with much pride unhampered by the knowledge of problems emerging only later.

Water polluted with chemical fertilizers began flowing into Lake Kinneret. Soil, stripped of natural foliage, was blown away by strong winds, the peat of the drained swamp ignited spontaneously, causing underground fires difficult to extinguish and the disappearance of the lake led to the disappearance of its endemic fauna including the Huleh painted frog. In 1963, a small area of recreated papyrus swampland was set aside as the country's first nature reserve and reflooded. In the early 1990s as a result of heavy rains part of the valley was flooded and

the flooded area left intact. The new site has become the stop-over for an estimated 500 million migrating birds that now pass through the Huleh Lake Park every year travelling between Africa, Europe, and Asia. The cherry on the top was the reappearance in November 2011 of the painted frog, classified as extinct in 1996.¹¹

A review on *South African Zionism in 5713* by A Mureinik, press officer of the SAZF, commented on important discussions between the Board, the SA Zionist Federation and the Boards of Jewish education resulting in a resolution on education with special reference to Jewish day schools. He mentioned the Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations - mass functions were held in all large centres with hundreds having to be turned away from the Johannesburg City Hall. 2000 youth had gone to Zionist camps and 700 children had attended a JNF youth rally. A combined Hachsharah farm was opened at Ogies, a photographic exhibition in the Johannesburg public library helped to publicise tourism and there was to be an exhibition of Israeli products at the Rand Easter Show - blissfully free of the future BDS intimidation. The Johannesburg Women's Zionist League had 42 branches and the passing of Jacob Gitlin, leader of Western Province Zionism for many years, was noted.

The paper reported that there were 375 Zionist societies, including 87 youth societies. The SAJBD had 327 affiliated organisations, including 147 Hebrew congregations, 52 philanthropic bodies, 32 Zionist bodies, 24 women's societies and 28 miscellaneous organisations, with the



Ark of the old St. John's Street Synagogue, Oudtshoorn, now preserved in the town's Cultural History Museum.

Zionist youth groups affiliated en bloc through the Zionist Youth Council.

The New Year magazine contained annual reviews of the Zionist activities in the provinces, each surrounded by advertisements from those communities. *Impressions of a visit to the Oudtshoorn community* by Monty Mann¹² was flanked by advertisements from tobacco manufacturers and leaf tobacco dealers; from *Mementoes of Oudtshoorn* which advertised ostrich feather industries, manufacturers of ostrich feather evening cloaks, ostrich feather evening bags, fans, earrings, club rosettes – their main money spinner could be guessed from their telegram address – *Dusters*; from *Oudtshoorn Footwear Manufactures* which was represented all over South Africa, Rhodesia and South West Africa. (Oudtshoorn, Mann reported, had a happy relationship between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations.)

A nameless “correspondent” in his report *Accent on Youth – Natal Jewry in 5713* wrote that “Pietermaritzburg members showed no great enthusiasm for religious or cultural matters but had a fine sense of communal responsibility for the IUA and UCF collection” and Durban had set up a youth commission and established an embryo youth centre with weekly youth services in the synagogue and a new nursery school.

L Leibowitz in *Eastern Province Jewry 5713* reported that, no longer satisfied with local speakers, the Eastern Cape was threatening to reduce their campaign contributions if they did not get the Chief Rabbi or prominent overseas speakers. They had welcomed the visit of the captain and crew of the *SS Haifa*. Paul H Ebsstein in *Bloemfontein Jewry in 5713* stated that they enjoyed the visits of the Mobile Film Unit and wanted more films from the SAZF. The first Maccabi bowls tournament had been held in Bloemfontein and the social highlight had been the visit of Larry Adler, the American harmonica player, to raise money for the Huleh reclamation scheme. (Adler had also visited Kimberley where my mother, the local convenor, asked him to sign my autograph album!)

The companies advertising also showed the changes the decades had made and covered a wide range of occupations, many kosher butcheries; “*Campbell’s Tea Lounge* next to Empire Theatre, a well-known rendezvous of the Jewish community”; sweet manufacturers; *Sterilised Milk Pty Ltd* manufacturers and distributors of pasteurised milk in sterilised bottles - something we now take for granted; manufacturers of paper products, cardboard boxes and suitcases; Bag Merchants; *Express Coal Agency* for all classes of coal, firewood, smithy, coke and anthracite; many furriers; clothing factories including Cape Town’s *Maccabee Clothing Limited*; *Maison Champagne* continental ladies hairdressers; *Aybeecee Agencies* in Bulawayo and *I Lubner Manufacturing Upholsterers*.

Sephardi Hebrew pronunciation had not taken hold, judging by an advertisement for *Grand Mousseux Champagne*, reading *Leshona Toiva Tikoseivu*. Rabbi Sher, chairman of the Ponevez Sick Benefit Society placed an advert as did the Hebrew Order of David which had a full page Rosh Hashana greeting from its 22 branches. Throughout, the magazine is lavishly bedecked with advertisements - product of a keen Zionist support and an energetic advertising department.

The publication concludes with fourteen pages of New Year greetings starting with Aberdeen, Aberfeldy and Aliwal North through the alphabet to Vanderbijl Park, Van Dyk’s Drift, Vereeniging, Victoria West, Viljoenskroon, Vryheid, Warmbaths, Willowmore, Witbank, Zandvlakte and Zoekmekaar (where Mr and Mrs Rudolph Israelsohn and Miss Dora Cohen of Glasgow Scotland extended heartfelt greetings for the New Year to all relatives and friends at home and abroad and wished them well over the Fast).

Some of the controversies in the community today were alive and well sixty years ago. Rabbi Kossowsky writes about *The Batmitzvah Controversy*. He opposes them for a number of reasons, including the social aspect and that they might prove to be the thin edge of the wedge separating the demarcation between the orthodox and the reform services. He brings the subject of mixed choirs into his argument: “The fact that some Orthodox congregations introduced [batmitzvahs] was no reason. The Yeoville Synagogue, which is undoubtedly an Orthodox Synagogue, had a mixed choir for many years and consecutive rabbis were powerless to do away with it until an opportune moment arrived for its abolition. [This] should constitute a precedent for doing away with bat mitzvahs.”

Another point of dissension, dating back to 1912 if not earlier, was the difference between Cape Town and Johannesburg. In *This is Cape Town – not Johannesburg*, Golda Myburg writes, “I had not been very long in Cape Town before I became aware of a strange imperviousness to any ideas or points of view emanating from Jewish communal circles in Johannesburg... In many ways communal workers are more receptive to modern ideas than their Johannesburg counterparts... It has succeeded in drawing a relatively high percentage of young people into her communal institutions... The differences are one of the most serious obstacles to national unity as anyone who had attended a nation-wide conference will know... Johannesburg has been too much inclined to assume a dictatorial air and to ride roughshod over the opinions and wishes of other communities. It seems to me that the only safeguard of harmonious relations among our various Jewish communities would be to ensure that all organisations are constituted in as democratic a manner as possible so as to allow full participation and free expression of opinion by all sections.”

Apart from the enormous positive strides Israel has made economically and socially, little appears to have changed *vis. a vis.* its relations with its Arab neighbours. However, sixty years has made an enormous difference to the position of the South African attitudes to Israel under the ANC government. Although for some years the National government prevented money being sent to Israel as punishment when Israel voted against it at the United Nations, it never reached the level of vituperative condemnation seen under the ANC regime, some of whose tripartite members, like COSATU, view it as a white colonialist, racist apartheid oppressor to be isolated and overthrown.

An article by *Zionist Record* journalist Karl Lemeer¹³ *The Afrikaner's Interest in Israel: An Outstanding Feature of 5713*, expressed the belief that Afrikaners had rediscovered Israel as a result of the visit there by Prime Minister DF Malan and Dutch Reformed Church ministers. His relief at the discovery and apparent acceptance by the Afrikaners was driven by the Jewish community's memory of their antisemitism so recently discarded. In 1937, the same Dr D F Malan had said, "We are not race-haters, but antisemites. We shall follow the same course as Germany, Austria and Italy, and we shall deal with the Jews in South Africa as the above-mentioned countries." Antisemitic opinions had also been expressed in the past by Minister of Economic Affairs Eric Louw, as well as by Members of Parliament B J Vorster, Dr Verwoerd and Dr TE Dönges; three years later Grey Shirts founder Louis Weichardt became a senator. Even Nazi Robey Leibrandt, sentenced to death after landing secretly in South West Africa from a German submarine, was pardoned when the National Party came to power. An admiration for Jewish achievements in Israel would counter such prejudices.¹⁴

Lemeer saw the golden jubilee of the SAJBD as another milestone. He believed that the celebrations had had an important impact on the relations between Jews and non-Jews, with almost 200 non-Jewish guests at the golden jubilee dinner (including the Governor-General, Minister of Transport and prominent personalities). As a result, "the work of the Board has become widely known in non-Jewish circles throughout South Africa... Among non-Jews the Board's stature and prestige has grown immeasurably and with it the esteem in which the Jewish community's contribution to the commercial, industrial and cultural life of this country is held."

Unfortunately, changing political realities has resulted in a changed perception of Israel, with the ANC government preventing official visits to Israel, even if the visitors would benefit from the knowledge gained. The Israel apartheid slander and the propaganda and political activism of the BDS movement has impacted on the government's attitude towards Israel and might affect the future ability of South Africa's Jews to maintain their beliefs in Zionism in comfort.

Interestingly, only one article touched on the problems of living under apartheid. This was *South African Jewry in 5713: Few Worries but Many Perplexities* by E Tannenbaum, although to be fair the *Zionist Record* was a Zionist annual whose raison d'être was promoting Zionism. By 1953, the National Party had passed a whole raft of discriminatory laws, all invisible to readers of the annual.¹⁵ When Dr Malan gained power, he had issued a statement saying that "both he and the Government stood for a policy of non-discrimination against any section of the European population in South Africa" and he looked forward to the time when there would be no more talk of the so-called "Jewish Question" in the life and politics of this country.¹⁶ But he only mentioned the European population. He and the government certainly stood for discrimination against the majority of the population.

Tannenbaum does not list discrimination among his few worries, being more concerned about the perplexity of constructing an effective programme for the youth. But the subject was of concern to the *Zionist Record*. Despite his silence on the apartheid iniquities in this Rosh Hashanah article, Karl Lemeer had a regular weekly column in the *Zionist Record* where he discussed without hindrance his views on the situation in South Africa: "I used my column to embrace all groups – oppressors and oppressed", he wrote in his book *Apartheid and Survival: A Jewish View* published in 1965 under his real name Henry Katzew¹⁷ and in which he criticised the SAJBD for its "very real failure... to abandon all discussion on the very real problems of South Africa... A Jew or a body of Jews, without a conscience, is plain nonsense."¹⁸ He continues, "For years my column in the *Zionist Record* has been the only expression of writing in the Jewish Press on the problems of our country... I cannot accept discrimination on the basis of race or colour... The two forces – the Afrikaner's struggle for survival and the Black man's demand for free opportunity – are not irreconcilable... The politicians cannot be the architects of White survival."¹⁹ He doubted whether a group's survival could ever rest on legislation or manipulation. Differences were not dictated by colour of skin. Lemeer/ Katzew became the editor of the *Zionist Record* in 1968.

In his article Tannenbaum wrote that the liberal found himself in an anomalous position because his major preoccupation was the advancement of the non-Europeans and as a result there was a tendency for the Jewish liberal to devote himself exclusively to causes outside organised Jewish life. Many such people were lost to the Jewish community, some of whom in other situations would be the Jewish leaders of the future. (This alienation was to become a major problem for the community.)

This concern is reflected in additional sins suggested for consideration on Yom Kippur: "The sin, to be concerned only with Judaism and not

with all humanity, or to be concerned only with all humanity and not with Judaism.”²⁰

Reading the journal left me with a feeling of deep sadness. Joy at the expansion and development in Israel, sadness that peace was still not attainable. Joy that the South African Jewish community was still viable, sadness at the contraction of Jewish influence in South Africa and most specifically at the attitudes taken towards Israel by the ANC government - attitudes marked by double standards and hypocrisy.

In his *South Africa's Brave New World: The Beloved Country Since the End of Apartheid*, RW Johnson comments that, oddly, despite the fact that less than 2% of South Africa's population are Muslim, there was a strong Muslim presence in foreign affairs and it was hardly an exaggeration to term South Africa an enemy of Israel.²¹

How this will play out in the next sixty years remains to be seen.

NOTES

- 1 South Africa Demographics Profile 2012 www.indexmundi.com/South Africa; Source: CIA World Factbook accurate as of July 19, 2012
- 2 David Saks, South African Jewish Board of Deputies, pers. comm, 22.1.2013
- 3 Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, County Communities Rabbi, personal communication . 7 February 2011.
- 4 Rabbi Silberhaft, personal communication, 9 January 2012.
- 5 Yoni Dayan, 'Population Nears 8 Million Ahead of Rosh Hashanah,' *Jerusalem Post*, 12 September, 2012. Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (September 11, 2012). Latest Population Statistics for Israel (September 2012), www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society.../newpop.html.
- 6 CIA World Factbook accurate as of 19 July, 2012, and Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia. Mercosur is the Southern Common Market comprising Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela and Bolivia.
- 7 Gwynne Schrire, 'Avram Meir Solomon, Abba Eban and Early Cape Zionism', (*Jewish Affairs*, 2003;58,1)
- 8 After the unification of Jerusalem, following the Six-Day War of June 1967, the University was able to return to Mount Scopus, which was rebuilt.
- 9 Hebrew U. is 9th-best university to work in the world: Survey of academic institutions puts Jerusalem landmark among the elite JTA, August 3, 2012.
- 10 Slánský trial From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia.
- 11 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hula_Valley Cached - Similar.
- 12 Mann had been the editor of the bilingual *Oudtshoorn Coerant* and visited Oudtshoorn for an IUA campaign.
- 13 Karl Lemeer was the pen name of Henry Katzew (1912-2008) who had a regular South African scene column in the *Zionist Record* and later also wrote for *Rand Daily Mail* and *Sunday Beeld*. A theme that interested him was the place of the Afrikaner in South Africa. He looked to Israel as a possible model, but in later years grew increasingly uneasy at political developments in both countries. He published *Solution for South Africa: a Jewish View* (1956) and *Apartheid and survival: A Jewish View* (1965). In 1968 he became editor of the *Zionist Record*. (Of interest is that these biographical details came from the UCC Palestine Solidarity Campaign's Palestine Information with Provenance website cosmos.ucc.ie/cs1064/jabowen/IPSC/php/db.php?auid=34240)
- 14 The Minister of Economic Affairs was now Eric Louw, who in 1937 had tried to introduce an Alien's Amendment Act to deprive Jews of the rights to practice certain trades and professions. B J Vorster was interned in Koffiefontein during the War for his pro-Nazi Ossewabrandwag involvement. Dr Verwoerd and TE Dinges had tried to prevent the immigration of German Jews, protesting at the arrival of the *Stuttgart*. Louis Weichardt who had founded the Grey Shirts had been congratulated by the National Party secretary on "the service" that he had "done to the nation for drawing the attention of the people to the Jewish problem," a service "which deserves recognition and perpetuation."
- 15 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), Immorality Amendment Act, Population Registration Act, Group Areas Act and Suppression of Communism Act (1950), Native Builders Workers Act, Separate Registration of Voters Act, Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act and Bantu Authorities Act (1951), Native Laws Amendment Act and Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act (1952) and Public Safety Act, Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, Bantu Education Act and Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (1953).
- 16 Berger, N, *In those days, in these times*, Johannesburg, undated, p154
- 17 Henry Katzew, *Apartheid and survival: A Jewish View*, Simondium, Cape Town, 1965, p22
- 18 Katzew, H, op cit, p21.
- 19 Katzew, H, op cit, pp 107-108.
- 20 Israel Aharon Ben Yosef, *Judaism as a Festive Way of Life: A Rabbi's Reflections on Jewish Holidays*, Hartung-Gorre, Konstanz, 2012, p52.
- 21 RW Johnson, *South Africa's Brave New World: The Beloved Country Since the End of Apartheid*, Penguin, London, 2010, pp321, 329.

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JOHANNESBURG'S MOTHER SYNAGOGUE – 126 YEARS YOUNG

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David A Sher

The Great Synagogue in Wolmarans Street, Johannesburg, can be seen as being reflective of and formative in the history of the Johannesburg Jewish community as a whole. The synagogue traces its roots as far back as the founding of Johannesburg itself. On 10 July 1887, in Mr Barnett Wainstein's shop on Market Square, it was decided, after the first recorded Jewish death and burial¹, for "the present meeting to form itself into the Witwatersrand Goldfields Jewish Association". Rev. Joel Rabinowitz, then fortuitously working in the town, led Johannesburg's first official High Holy Day services, held, with 500 worshippers, on 19 September 1887 at the Rand Club. In January 1888, the congregation purchased two stands in President Street and its synagogue, declared "the most pretentious one of the kind in this part of the world"², was opened on 22 September 1889 by its new minister, Rev. Mark L. Harris.

The first significant secession from the congregation took place in 1891, with East European Jewish immigrants breaking away because they found the service too anglicised³. Their own style of worship, moulded in Lithuania, had been too uninhibited and brief for them to feel at home with the rather lengthy, formal service that manifested itself in President Street. Eventually, the newcomers finally built their own synagogue, named the *Beth Hamedrash* ('House of Learning') in Fox Street in 1893. This doubled as a *cheder* and house of study of the Talmud and scripture.

Another schism occurred when a group more entrenched within the congregation felt that Rev. Harris, was too much of a 'reformer' in his approach, which allowed *halachically*-questionable innovations including a 'mixed' choir to be introduced⁴. The congregation committee was also horrified at his collecting money when officiating at funerals and *Brit Milah* ceremonies⁵. As a result, in December 1891, 150 of the founding and most wealthy members (including Sammy Marks) broke away to form a new congregation, named the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation (JHC), under the leadership of Emanuel Mendelssohn⁶.

The parent congregation changed its name to the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation (WOHC), and struggled on. President Kruger granted the JHC four stands on the corner of Joubert and De Villiers streets, near the original Park Railway Station, on which to build their synagogue. Known as the Park Synagogue, this was an Italian Renaissance building seating 800 people, decorated in a light blue and gold, with a beautiful cupola.

In 1898 the WOHC appointed Rabbi Dr Joseph Herman Hertz – then only 26 years old – as its minister. Hertz held a B.A. from New York College (1891) and a Ph.D. from Columbia University (1894). He also concluded a course of Rabbinical studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, receiving that hallowed institution's very first Rabbinical Diploma. He subsequently served New York's Syracuse Hebrew Congregation before coming to Johannesburg.



Rabbi Dr J L Landau, Chief Rabbi United Hebrew Congregation, 1915-1942

David Sher is a student at Shaarei Torah Yeshiva in Manchester. His family has a long history of involvement in the United Hebrew Congregation. This article is adapted from his book on the history of Johannesburg Jewry, to appear shortly.

In 1903, eager not to be outdone, the JHC brought out Rabbi Dr Judah Leo Landau, primary minister of the New Congregation in Manchester, to be its rabbi. Rabbi Landau produced several Hebrew literary works and was appointed as Professor of Hebrew at the University of the Witwatersrand (founded 1896). Both Hertz and Landau were vociferous in their Zionism, with the latter being the vice president of the SA Zionist Federation and a founder of the Jewish Board of Deputies.

The background of the two congregations meant that some attempted to deepen communal schisms by provoking the two Rabbis against each other. This is clearly demonstrated in a spate of communication between Rabbi Landau and the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Dr N M Adler. Evidently, Rabbi Landau had not given an encouraging report on the state of affairs because Dr Adler wrote to him in relation to Dr Hertz, "it grieves me greatly that harmony has not yet been established." He also made the pointed observation in somewhat of a classically Jewish 'mussar' (religious rebuke) style; "I can conceive no greater injury to the interests of religion than when members of a community find that the leaders wrangle instead of straining every nerve for the advancement of the Holy Faith and *Kiddush Hashem* (Sanctification of G-d's Name)⁷".

In 1913, preparations were made, due to increasing numbers of congregants, for the erection of a new synagogue for the JHC. It was to be the largest Judaic structure on the continent.

Setting the Style of the Synagogue in Johannesburg

Siegfried Raphaely laid the foundation stone of the JHC's new synagogue on 3 September 1913; after a year of construction, on 23 August 1914, Rabbi Landau officially consecrated the ornate new building. Sammy Marks had provided the building's bricks and was honoured at the opening ceremony by presenting Rabbi Landau with the keys to the building. Swiss architect Theophile Schaerer had designed the imposing building to represent Johannesburg Jewry's growing sophistication. Three arched doorways in an impressive redbrick facade marked the entry to a capacious vestibule.

Four years prior to the synagogue's opening, the congregation had received the saddening news that their first indomitable President, Emanuel Mendelssohn, had died, aged 61⁸. His memory was now honoured with a marble plaque gracing the vestibule and an associated Biblical quote. A matching plaque was placed on the other side of the vestibule acknowledging the 'eminent services' of the tireless Dutch communal activist, Jacques Klisser. An immense main sanctuary of the building seated over 1400 people - 880 men, and 550 women. It consisted of an impressive and soaring space, offset with a gold Star of David in the middle of the dome. A set of leaded-glass arched windows running around the base of the dome lighted the interior. The dome itself was colossal, within which the women's balconies



Ark of the Great Synagogue (courtesy Rose Norwich)

sloped downwards. The ground floor consisted of a charcoal painted wooden floor in small graded steps, with nearly 900 mahogany crafted pews. A magnificent pair of tablets with the Prayer for the Royal Family (donated by Mayor Harry Graumann) were now moved from the Park Synagogue and placed in the new building, where they remained for many years. The proposed construction of an assembly hall was not executed in view of World War I, however, and at the war's termination, the scheme was abandoned. The synagogue's imposing structure set the style of future Johannesburg synagogues.

Since 1905, there had been fruitless deliberations between the WOHC and the JHC regarding their amalgamating. Rabbi Hertz's departure to assume a ministerial position at the *Ozar Yisrael* Congregation in New York in 1911 and the decaying state of the President Street Synagogue presented an opportunity for the two congregations' rapprochement after 24 years. After lengthy negotiations, an agreement was reached whereby, on 30 May 1915, the United Hebrew Congregation (UHC) was formed, with over 400 foundation members⁹. The second Park (later renamed Great) Synagogue on Wolmarans Street became the UHC's principal house of worship.¹⁰ It was the first in South Africa whose Ark was orientated in the halachically correct manner - facing north, towards Jerusalem; other synagogues in the country faced east, the correct direction for the East European houses of worship. Thenceforth, all synagogues were constructed according to *halachic* dictates, taking their lead from the construction of the Great Synagogue.

On 13 July 1914, the recently united congregation adopted its Constitution and by-laws. The primary objects were: "(a) To establish and maintain a Synagogue (b) provide properly qualified officials and carry out all matters connected with the observances of the Jewish religion and rites; (c) unite...[all] Congregations and Institutions in South Africa; (d) establish a *Beth Din*, and extend its influence...amongst our co-religionists and (e) "establish a school or schools for the proper and efficient teaching of the Jewish Faith and doctrines, Hebrew language, literature and history". All of these represented the desire of the Congregation to act as the recognised implement of the city's entire Jewish community.

Any primary minister to the Congregation would be expected to "hold the Rabbinical Diploma and a University Degree." The minister, acting in his capacity as Chief Rabbi, would deliver "sermons, lectures, classes," and "supervise all Ritual, Institutions such as *Shechita* and *Mikwah*," as well as acting "as superintendent of the religion classes and other educational institutions of the Congregation". The list went on: "He shall supervise the *Shochtim*, *Chazonim*, and all teachers" and, unbendingly, "He shall attend Divine Service on Sabbaths and Festivals in his official robes."

The most arduous responsibility, however, fell on the 'First Readers' or 'Readers' who would "conduct Divine Service" and would have to be able to act as "*Bal Korah*" and "*Bal Takia*," and, when required and when authorised, as *Mohel*. These should "assist at the solemnising of marriages, officiate at funerals, and the setting of tombstones," and "visit the sick and dying", and where appropriate, to "visit hospitals and prisons". Additionally, they had to attend houses of mourning, be in attendance when the religious rites were performed to the dead, attend synagogue five minutes before the commencement of prayers, and "appear on all necessary occasions in their clerical dress." The exhaustive list went on: they would need to "prepare the sons of Members for their Confirmation ('barmitzvah')"; assist in religious education, "supervise all the *Sephorim*" and be prohibited from engaging "in any business undertaking whatever". A 'Beadle' (to be clad in "becoming attire"), 'President', 'Chairman' and selection of 'preachers' would be appointed by the Council and honorary officers.¹¹ The synagogue's protocol was undoubtedly based on the highly anglicised version of Britain's United Synagogue, and the fact that many later congregations adopted almost identical constitutions reflects to what extent the UHC set the tone for future synagogues.

The *nusach* or rite was stated as *Ashkenaz* in accordance with *Litvak* tradition, but in fact, the congregation followed the developing *Nusach Anglia* or English Rite¹², best epitomised in the Singer Prayer Book and the Routledge *Machzor* (Festival Prayer Book) of which both were used in the Park Synagogue and subsequently by the UHC. Evidence of the long reaching consequences is the fact that most large congregations used these prayer books for many years; they are still in use today¹³.

It was upon this convoluted amalgamation that Rabbi Landau was proclaimed Chief Rabbi of the UHC in 1945, with two secondary ministers - Reverends Samuel Manne and W Woolf. Any potential rivalry for this position was mitigated by Rabbi Hertz's departure and upon Rabbi Landau's later appointment as Chief Rabbi of the Federation of Synagogues, which encompassed all the Johannesburg and Reef Congregations. Rabbi Landau was eminently suited to this new office and exploited it to the full on behalf of his community. He played a foremost role in aiding the *Chevre Kadisha*'s efforts to establish kosher kitchens at the Johannesburg General Hospital and, most notably, in the formation of a much-needed *Beth Din* (Jewish Ecclesiastical Court) in 1915. The establishment of a *Beth Din* is further testament to how the UHC served as a base for other offshoots of orthodoxy across the city. By now, gentile and Jewish leaders alike informally considered Rabbi Landau as leader of all South African Jewry, despite competition in Cape Town in the person of Reverend Alfred Bender of Gardens Synagogue. Rabbi Dr. Dennis

Isaacs recalls how once when Chief Rabbi Landau "...was very ill and was confined to bed in the apartment he occupied in a block of flats across the road from the Great Synagogue, a whole section of the street was cordoned off and straw strewn over the street so that he should not be disturbed by passing traffic."¹⁴

The Chief Rabbis

The most self-evident way in which the Great Synagogue played an important part within the wider community is that it was the seat of the Chief Rabbi. Rabbi Landau's work has already been described and the congregation itself valued him immensely. For his 70th birthday in 1936, it presented him with a new motorcar and published a volume of some of the sermons that they had been privileged to hear from him for 22 years. In 1947, five years after his death, it was decided to pay tribute to him by endowing a Dr. J. L. Landau Chair of Hebrew at the University of the Witwatersrand.

In 1943, the Council invited 36 year-old Rabbi Dr. Major Louis Rabinowitz, minister of the Cricklewood Synagogue in London, and Senior Jewish Chaplain of the Eighth Army in the Middle East to visit the congregation as soon as he could receive leave from the army. Rabbi Rabinowitz was appointed in a meeting that was also noteworthy for the decision that henceforth the synagogue would no longer be known as the Park but as the Great Synagogue. Rabbi Rabinowitz arrived in 1945 and, in morning dress and top hat, was inducted in a spectacular ceremony on 6 March. However, the community was unprepared for his passionate insistence on authentic Judaism. Intimately involved in all Jewish communal endeavours, he would insist on all functions, and particularly communal receptions, being held under the auspices of the Beth Din.

Rabbi Rabinowitz's ardent Zionism endeared him to his community. When British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin was impeding the creation of a Jewish State,¹⁵ he was both forceful and unequivocal in his opposition. During a lengthy speech (he was noted for his excellent oratory), he famously tore off the medals he had been awarded during the war and flung them to the ground!¹⁶

It was not only in Jewish matters where Rabbi Rabinowitz's fearless character found its expression. He was strongly opposed to the apartheid system and through his sermons demanded that Jews, who had known far worse, not be silent in the face of such vicious racism. He immigrated to his beloved Israel in 1961, leaving the post of Chief Rabbi vacant for two years.

In 1962 Rabbi Bernard Moses Casper, Dean of Students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, visited the Great Synagogue over the High Festivals and created a most favourable impression with the worshippers; it



Rabbi Dr L I Rabinowitz, Chief Rabbi United Hebrew Congregation, 1945-1961

was decided with wide acclamation in 1963 that the congregation would accept him as its Chief Rabbi. Rabbi Casper had served as a British army chaplain from 1940-1946. He was Senior Chaplain of the Jewish Infantry Group, serving in Egypt, Italy, Belgium and Holland from 1944-1946. His exploits and service in the Jewish Brigade are well documented. He had also served as minister at the Higher Broughton Synagogue in Manchester.

The new Chief Rabbi was less fiery than Rabbi Rabinowitz, once remarking that he only fought "if he had a chance of winning". It was during his tenure that what was termed a 'concordat' was secured with the Reform community, in terms of which their respective leaders would cooperate on all communal matters apart from spiritual ones. Rabbi Casper was known as a finer orator, and sensitive to all; his kindness extended to his Kenyan domestic help, for whom he attempted to find a suitable job with the Chairman of his Council before his departure.¹⁷

Prior to his appointment as South Africa's Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Cyril K. Harris had been minister of London's St John's Wood Synagogue, a military chaplain and director of the Hillel Foundation. On 28 March 1988, he was inducted as Chief Rabbi by Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, at the Great Synagogue. Over 3000 people were in attendance, including many gentile communal officials. As Rabbi Harris later recalled, "...the amazing thing was the number of people... The

huge Wolmarans Street Synagogue was teeming and there was the electric atmosphere of a state occasion. Those who could not get a seat, and there were hundreds who came along for the rare spectacle...sat in the aisles with dozens squashed at the back¹⁸". Rabbi Harris was noted for being 'the right man in the right place at the right time¹⁹'. He involved himself whole-heartedly in the country's transformation from apartheid to democracy, had a warm personal relationship with Nelson Mandela and was instrumental in the establishment of Tikkun (now Afrika Tikkun) to help impoverished blacks. Notably for the Great Synagogue, he now diverged from tradition by not confining himself to it as its official minister; he was also the last Chief Rabbi to be inducted at the venue.

Chazzanut and the Great Synagogue

Johannesburg has long been regarded as being one of the great centres for *Chazzanuth* (cantorial renditions). This has its origins from the very opening of Wolmarans Street, in a ceremony featuring Rabbi Landau and Cantors Revs. Hirschowitz and Samuel Manne. The latter was the first truly eminent Cantor in the city, and thereby initiated the famous Johannesburg cantorial tradition²⁰. Choral services were held in both original congregations, but it was at the Great Synagogue that great emphasis was placed on the choirmasters. Such choirs accompanied all services and in addition would often appear above the Ark when weddings were solemnised.

Chief Cantor Pincasowitch replaced Rev. Manne. He was replaced on his resignation in 1927 by Cantor S. Rabec, who was replaced in turn by Chief Cantor S Inspektor in 1930. The latter had just flown in from Europe by aeroplane, something then noteworthy in South Africa with its yet undeveloped aviation. He had to be settled in hurriedly, since he had arrived on the eve of Rosh Hashanah and had to don his white robes almost immediately! Perhaps it was due to this insistence of high-quality cantorial services that other congregations laid emphasis on their *chazanim*. The Beth Hamedrash Hagodel, for instance, appointed Cantor Berele Chagy, one of the world's most eminent cantors, in 1932²¹.

In 1936, Israel Alter was appointed as Chief Cantor of the congregation; he was to hold this office for over 25 years. Cantor Alter was appreciated by all sections of society, and former worshippers recall trekking from beyond the outer reaches of Doornfontein to hear his superb renditions²². The Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, Israel Brodie, once remarked how, 14 years later, he retained a 'vivid impression' of the service in the Great Synagogue, which he felt was "beautified by the rendering of the prayers by *Chazzan* Alter²³". In 1961, he moved to the United States.

The Great Synagogue also had exceptional

choirmasters. In 1963 Rev. Abram Mordechai Himelsztejn became choirmaster, having been prominent in the congregation for some years. Born in Warsaw, he practiced under such important European choirmasters as A. Davidovitz of the Zalman Nozhik Synagogue and David Eisenstadt of the Tlomztzka Street Synagogue. Anybody familiar with the world of *Chazzanuth* will be impressed to note that he conducted the choir accompanying performances by Cantor Gershon Sirota. Himmelsztejn held positions as choirmaster at Cape Town's Tifereth Yisrael Synagogue in Roeland Street in 1936 and in 1942 began a lengthy service with the UHC, initially at the Yeoville Synagogue and later at Wolmarans Street. He stayed in this position for over 25 years. Rev. Himelsztejn brought fame to the Great Synagogue when he published two books of *Chazzanuth* compositions: *LaChazan* and *Lamnatzeach*; these are still sung today by cantors the world over. Many cantors graduated from the Great Synagogue Choir to become outstanding *Chazzanim* in their own right. Cantor Avron Alter, grandson of the aforementioned Israel Alter, studied under the baton of Rev Himelsztejn as a choirboy and is now Chief Cantor at the Sandton Beth Hamedrash Hagadol.

Another fine *Chazzan* based in the Great Synagogue was Cantor Johnny Gluck, who performed such compositions by Cantor Josseleh Rosenblatt as *Ki Lekach Tov* and *Vesechezenoh* as well as Yiddish folk songs and opera arias. He conducted many weddings alongside Rabbi Casper and the Great Synagogue Choir with Gus Levy²⁴; sadly, he died at a young age. His death led to another prominent event for Johannesburg as a whole - the foundation of the Johannesburg Jewish Male Choir in 1985. This enthralled audiences to this day at events in Johannesburg, Jerusalem, London, New York, Sydney and other important cantorial centres.

The Great Synagogue: Dedicated Service

The Congregation had fine records so far as communal service was concerned; in 1923, it mourned the loss of Rev. Manne who had served for almost 24 years. 1925 saw the introduction of Gershon Grosberg as the second reader and choirmaster; this position he was to hold for thirty years. Another lengthy service of a different variety came to an understandable demise before the war - the old organ of the synagogue, in service since 1891, was replaced in 1939 with an electric organ.

In 1942, the congregation's Annual Report mentioned the formation of the Ladies Guild and also sadly noted the death of Chief Rabbi Lindau after a protracted illness. This was another example of lengthy service; Dr Landau had guided the spirituality of Johannesburg Jewry for almost forty years. A mass meeting was organized in the Synagogue with a stirring memorial service

conducted by Rabbi Dr. A T Shrock, minister of the Yeoville Synagogue and Rabbi Isaac Kossowsky, the *Av* (Leader) *Beth Din*.²⁵ The Report noted Rabbi Shrock's unstinting service upon the Chief Rabbi's illness. Later, Rabbi A H Lapin was appointed to aid him at both the Yeoville and Wolmarans Street synagogues. Rabbi Shrock's service was long-standing as was Rabbi Lapin's, who served well into the latter years of the century²⁶.

The congregation's record for extended service was evident during 1947 when the Great Synagogue's Beadle, N Hurwitz, retired after twenty years' service. On 13 July 1953, Herman Baranov, Secretary to the congregation, celebrated forty years of service; sadly he died only a week later. Rev. Grosberg marked his 28th anniversary as choirmaster and second reader in May 1956; he had built up a choir that was "of the best in the country"²⁷.

Links were continued at the Synagogue in 1962 when Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz's son, Jimmy, was appointed as children's leader and Chief Cantor Alter's son Eliezer as second reader after their fathers' departures.

Special Services

Apart from setting the tone of religiosity in the community, the Great Synagogue also hosted many important events, some of them seminal in the development of Johannesburg Jewry. In November 1923, for the second time in the history of Johannesburg's synagogues, a mayoral service was held at the Park Synagogue (as it was still called) in honour of councillor and mayor-elect M J Harris; the first such service had been held to celebrate Mayor Harry Graumann's appointment in 1910 at the JHC. The occasion was made even more moving because the new Mayor was the son of Rev. M L Harris, one of Johannesburg's earliest ministers, who as late as 1926, continued to conduct the children's service at the Hebrew High School over the Days of Awe. The Synagogue continued to be the main venue for any Jewish related event and its splendid interior saw many other mayoral services.

The congregation's prominence as a representative of Johannesburg's Jewry was evidenced by the participation of Zionist leader Dr Chaim Weizmann and Dr Alexander Goldstein at the synagogue's services in 1932. The anglicised synagogue ensured that Johannesburg Jewry would retain its loyalist allegiance: the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935 saw a mass thanksgiving service held in the Park Synagogue with 4000 people crowding in to witness the service conducted by the Cantors and combined choirs of the Park, Berea, and Beth Hamedrash Hagodel Synagogues. The latter were large congregations in their own right and once again, their attendance in the Park Synagogue is a testament to its dominance and determination

that the service would be on par with that of London's finest²⁸.

The synagogue's members, many of them European-born, were no doubt concerned at the growing unrest in Europe, with news of the *Anschluss* being sombrely received. Growing unease meant that the Jewish community decided to hold an intercession service on behalf of 'Sufferers from the Nazi Attacks on Religion and Human Freedom'. This took place on the fast of 17 Tammuz, corresponding to 17 July 1938.

A Special Service of Intercession and Prayer for the Success of the Allied Arms and the triumph of Justice was held at the Park Synagogue, on 24 May 1940, a day designated by King George VI as a national day of prayer. According to the Council of the Congregation this was "one of the most impressive services ever held in that synagogue. At least 3000 people attended and many hundreds could not gain admission." Rev Dr Schrock officiated and Chief Cantor Alter and Cantor Backon, assisted by the Park Synagogue Choir under the conductorship of Mr Grosberg and accompanied by organist Esme Ratzker, led the service. The SA Jewish Ex-service League organised a parade of their members and there was a large number of Jewish soldiers in uniform. (Over 10 000 members of South African Jewry volunteered for service during World War II).²⁹

On 2 December 1945, for the first time in the Transvaal, a Jewish service was broadcast from a synagogue. The occasion was the annual Hanukkah service held in association with the SA Jewish Ex-Servicemen's League. It was the first service since the conclusion of the war, which had decimated the family of many members. For the first time in South Africa, the Ark was opened by a Cabinet Minister, Minister of Health Dr Henry Gluckman, thereby showing the congregations growing national influence.

The fact that the Great Synagogue represented South African Jewry in the country's largest town was made clear in 1947 at the Diamond Jubilee of the congregation, with a special service held at the synagogue on 2 July 1947. This service was broadcast and was followed by a reception at the Johannesburg City Hall, with Prime Minister Jan Smuts as guest of honour. The gathering included high-profile members of the Jewish community, members of the judiciary of the city, national government, church and the press. Evidence of the importance of the Great Synagogue's celebration was made abundantly clear when the Prime Minister deemed the occasion prominent enough to include in his historic broadcast address his proposed solution to the Palestine problem, in which he had been much involved, having encouraged the Balfour Declaration many years earlier.

Some of these events were formative both spiritually and politically. It was only natural that the key event for Johannesburg Jewry in 1948, the service of Dedication and Intercession for the

Welfare of Israel following the establishment of the Jewish State, was held at the Great Synagogue. Many hundreds were unable to gain admission. Although similar services were held in the other two UHC synagogues (Yeoville and Oxford), it was from the Great that all radio stations broadcast the inspirational service rendered by Chief Cantor Alter. On this occasion, a formative aspect of Johannesburg and indeed South African Jewry took place, for it was decided that the service would be conducted in the *Sephardit* or Modern Hebrew pronunciation, one that radically diverged from the pronunciation of virtually all Johannesburg Jewry, who followed the Ashkenazi, *Litvak* pronunciation. This change initiated by the Great Synagogue was introduced into the United Hebrew Schools of Johannesburg and remains the form of pronunciation in synagogues across Johannesburg and in the King David Schools to this day.

During 1952, a most moving memorial service was held upon the death of Dr. Chaim Weizmann, first President of Israel and a tireless worker for Zionism who had counted several prominent South Africans as his closest supporters. Support for Israel did not suggest any lack of loyalist inclination; during 1953 another very well attended service was held to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The Great Synagogue also served as the venue for celebration of communal achievements and another notable ceremony took place in 1958 when the synagogue honoured the 70th anniversary of the Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society.

Being representative of the community also had its downside; one night in January 1961, huge damage was suffered by the Great Synagogue structure when the eastern part of the building was blown up, considerably damaging the interior. Despite exhaustive investigations by police, the culprits were never found.

Spirituality and Relocation

“During the last 25 years the Jewish community has grown stronger and stronger, both financially and spiritually. A number of synagogues have been added to our Great Synagogue which still forms the pride of the Community, but it is most gratifying to be able to state that all synagogues are in an almost flourishing position, each contributing towards the spread of Judaism.” Thus opened the Chief Rabbi’s message in 1942. Rabbi Landau was pointing to the increasing numbers of Jews under his jurisdiction and was also hinting at the need for a more Torah-orientated community, the absence of which had long been a source of much pain to him. Most encouragingly, a new *Chevrá Mishná* (‘Society for Study of the Mishna’) had been instituted at the Yeoville and Park Synagogues.

The Council of the Congregation reported that 244 marriages had been solemnised during that

year and that a ‘Seyfer Torah’ had been donated to the Lusaka Jewish Refugee Settlement “in compliance with an urgent request.... for the High Festivals”. The formality of the synagogue was also observed when the council informed the congregation that they had abolished the “antiquated practice” of ‘Synagogue offerings’ which was the traditional rounds made during services collecting money for charity.

1942 was also the year in which the proposal was made for the erection of a synagogue in the Houghton-Saxonwold area; this would eventually be known as the Oxford Synagogue; the third synagogue of the United Hebrew Congregation after the Yeoville Hebrew Congregation had been erected in 1923. Other later offshoots were the Sandton and Randburg congregations.

In 1952 part of the *Simchas Torah* service at the Great Synagogue was conducted with senior youth members of the children’s service acting as a choir. The Chief Rabbi hosted a fancy-dress Purim party at his home and a demonstration Seder was held for the children. The practice of encouraging children to participate in the service remains an integral part of services within the Union of Orthodox Synagogues today.

The synagogue was also the setting of numerous customs that still characterise the Jewish community; in 1958, the first annually celebrated bat-mitzvah ceremony of the King David High School was held. Shortly afterwards a service for the Jewish Ex-Servicemen’s League in commemoration of those who had fallen in both World Wars and in the Israeli War of Independence took place.

The congregation celebrated *Tu b’Shtat*, the New Year for Trees, on 5 February 1958 in a most original way when Ds J.M. Du Toit presented an olive tree grown from Israeli cuttings to the Great Synagogue. An innovative ceremony was held for planting the Biblical trees on the grounds of the Synagogue, with children reciting appropriate scriptural verses in Hebrew, Afrikaans and English.

The congregation noted with pride that the Great Synagogue had served as a training ground for Rabbis Sydney Katz in Pretoria, Dennis Isaacs in Cyrildene and Ben Isaacson in Bloemfontein and Rev. Abner Weis in Durban; something indicative of the synagogue’s influence across South Africa.

As the congregation celebrated its Golden Jubilee year in 1964 it was noted that in order for the synagogue to be successful a conscious effort had to be made “to bring the influence of the synagogue, on the social and cultural as well as the religious plane, into the homes and lives of its congregants, for the modern synagogue cannot remain static in its attitudes in a rapidly changing world.” And so the synagogue continued its tradition, with Hillbrow remaining an area populated by Jews.

During Rabbi Harris’ tenure as Chief Rabbi,

the community was changing. The *baal teshuva* movement was making its mark on the city and many young Jews now felt the attraction of observing Judaism in a more fastidious fashion. Chief Rabbi Harris jestingly referred to Johannesburg as the '*ir hakodesh*' (holy city) and in this context it is understandable how the UHC appointed Mr Samuel Sher as Chairman of the Council in 1987. The new chairman, a regular worshiper at Wolmarans and Senior Warden at Oxford Synagogue, also maintained warm friendship with the *haredi* headship, including Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch³⁰. More than once, he was importuned by members and ministers of the UHC to ask Rabbi Sternbuch to tone down his *shechita* (ritual slaughter) programme.

However, as Jews slowly moved northwards and as Hillbrow degenerated during the 1980s, weekly attendance diminished (though the High Holy festivals still attracted numerous worshippers). In 1988 Rabbi David Hazdan became the synagogue's minister, walking 10km home every Friday night from an area that had become progressively unsafe and from a service with worshippers at times equal in number to the choir. Debate began about relocating the synagogue, and despite understandable resistance and after several unpleasant incidents, the congregation began to identify a site for a new synagogue.

In November 1994, after celebrating its 80th birthday, the Great Synagogue closed its doors with an emotional concluding service; the despondency was relieved by the possibility of relocation. A *minyan* was held at the Rabbi's home on Currie Street with a little synagogue built, accommodating 120. On the Days of Awe, the congregation rented the Transvaal Automobile Club Hall, erecting facades depicting the old synagogue. This arrangement continued for five years.

Efforts to relocate the congregation were frowned upon in the mid-1990s, with some maintaining that with a dwindling Johannesburg community, the community would flounder. Rabbi Hazdan, with a group of resolute congregants, fought this view. On Rosh Hashanah, 1997, he preached that "...If you reach the point that you've written off this Jewish community... we have to move into a tranquil surrounding to make the death palatable and less painful and nurse ourselves through the final moments. But if we believe that there is a chance to make a difference and mobilize forces and not see ourselves as a dying community, there is a completely different set of circumstances...we have to put on our '*trackies*' and become an environment that is actually going to give life."³¹

By the High Holy Days of 2000, the community had succeeded in constructing an elegant synagogue in Houghton Estate, which eventually filled its 650 seats. It is a popular synagogue; by Rosh Hashanah 2007, fifty seats were added with

an overflow of sixty people.

It recreates some of the old synagogue's ambiance through the original fittings, including the chandeliers, candelabras, *bimah*, pulpit, pews, clock, *ner tamid* and foundation stones of Johannesburg's earliest synagogues³², yet incorporates new elements, such as stained glass windows by Judith Mason, designer of the Constitutional Court's windows.

What has been left behind

Despite the relocation of the Great Synagogue's congregation and many of its fittings to a safer district, the edifice on Wolmarans Street remains. The plaques commemorating the work of Jacques Klisser and Emanuel Mendelssohn, the Ark and women's gallery seating remain intact, despite its latest use as a house of worship and partially a chicken takeaway³³. It is critical that measures must now be taken to ensure that the edifice becomes a protected structure, particularly in light of this magnificent building's vital link to Johannesburg Jewry's rich past. Noting Hillbrow's inexorable decline, it was incontrovertibly prudent to relocate. Nonetheless the new synagogue, handsome though it may be, is not the same gargantuan edifice as the former synagogue. This was witnessed by the fact that the inauguration of Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein was held in the Sandton Synagogue rather than in the Great Park Synagogue because of its greater seating capacity. The spirit, however, lingers on in Houghton Estate; congregants at the new synagogue admit that there is an aura of the old and the congregation remains committed to its history. It formally celebrated its 100th birthday as the successor to the Great Synagogue in June 2013.

As has been noted, the Great Synagogue influenced every aspect of Johannesburg Jewish life, including synagogue architecture, the prayer book used, style of worship and customs, the cantorial tradition and even the way Hebrew is pronounced. It has trained ministers across the country and been the scene for Johannesburg Jewry's proudest moments. Truly a testament to the community as a whole, it is a monument at risk that now needs to be safeguarded.

NOTES

- 1 The first death was of the German AFW Rosettenstein on 12 May 1887. It spearheaded the need for a consecrated Jewish cemetery; this led to the founding of what is today's Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society (*Chevre Kadisha*).
- 2 *Standard and Transvaal Mining Chronicle*, 24 September 1889. 'Pretentious', it should be noted, was not here used in a derogatory sense.
- 3 Such schisms occurred many times during this period in other areas of the world including Great Britain, also by Eastern European Jews, some of them originating from Lithuania.
- 4 See *In Search of a Minyan* by Kaplan, Mendel (Private

- Distribution), Author's Private Collection.
- 5 WOHC minutes, 30 March 1891; 5 April 1891; 5, 8 November, 1891. SAJBD Library. Other monetary 'requests' by Harris are noted in the minutes.
 - 6 Mendelssohn had also been president of the Witwatersrand Goldfields Jewish Association, founded four years previously. He was proprietor of the *Standard and Diggers News*, an important newspaper of the period.
 - 7 Archives of the Chief Rabbinate, London, letter book 98 letter 217
 - 8 Mendelssohn died on a sea voyage from England, where he had settled in 1904. It is believed his death may have been precipitated by a fall from a tramcar several weeks earlier.
 - 9 UHC foundation members included Siegfried Raphaely, Max Langermann, Sir Lionel Philips, H Graumann and Jaques Klisser: *Constitution and Byelaws of the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg*, 13 July 1914.
 - 10 As a gesture of unity it was specified that the Foundation Stone laid "on the site for a Synagogue [of the WOHC's new building], in End Street", would be placed on the new synagogue's facade. Ibid
 - 11 Ibid
 - 12 This rite continues to produce its own *siddurim* (the latest Singer's Siddur appearing in 2006) and *machzorim*, keeping alive the "centuries-old tradition that is *Minhag Anglia*. See Rosh Hashanah (2011) and Yom Kippur (2012) *Machzorim*: Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks; Koren Publishing, Jerusalem, 2011, 2012.
 - 13 Based on interview with former UHC officials re the synagogal rite and author's visit to several UHC synagogues, including the Oxford and Great Park Synagogues, which use the *Authorised Daily Prayer Book*. Other Singer Prayer Books marked as originally belonging to the deconsecrated Berea North Synagogue and Great Synagogue were also noted. The Artscroll *siddur* came into fashion only in the late 1980s.
 - 14 Isaacs, D, 'South Africa's Chief Rabbis', *Jewish Tradition*, Shavuot, 2004.
 - 15 Amongst other activities, he allowed the deportation of Holocaust survivors to Cyprus and on one ignominious occasion to Germany itself.
 - 16 Interview Mrs L Zimmerman, who was present as a representative of the Zionist youth movement, Habonim.
 - 17 See note 28
 - 18 Autobiography Chief Rabbi Cyril Kitchener Harris, *For Heaven's Sake: The Chief Rabbis Diary*, Goodwood, Western Cape, 2000.
 - 19 Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks, *UOS Tribute to Chief Rabbi Harris*, September 2004.
 - 20 He had served as a cantor to the WOHC for several years before the amalgamation of the two congregations.
 - 21 For a very expensive monthly fee. See *Selected Sermons and Addresses* Hirsch, W, St Anne's Press, 1948: Timperley, Altrincham. (No longer in print) Authors Private Library
 - 22 Interview with Mrs. K Stahl; the Stahl's were religious German Jewish immigrants to Johannesburg.
 - 23 *Great Synagogue Golden Jubilee Commemorative Brochure*, UHC (1964), SAJBD Library.
 - 24 Recollections of worshippers in the 1970s and 1980s. Levy, alongside his regular work at the Berea Synagogue, also occasionally directed choirs for the Great Synagogue.
 - 25 A close friend of the Chief Rabbi, a measure of his eminence was that he was married to the sister of Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, spiritual leader of religious orthodoxy and Av Beth Din of Vilna (*Jewish Tradition*, Passover 2007).
 - 26 Evidence viewed by Rabbi Lapin's signature at the foot of the *Kethuba*, (matrimonial consecration certificates). He was respected by the highly religious Jews living in Yeoville, and often ministered at the Great Synagogue, solemnising marriages (interviews and authors viewing of old *Kethuboth*).
 - 27 *Great Synagogue Golden Jubilee Commemorative Brochure*, UHC.
 - 28 As related by a former congregational activist, who mentioned the example the synagogue took from London's United Synagogue.
 - 29 See the *25th Anniversary, Semi-Jubilee Celebratory Pamphlet of the United Hebrew Congregation*, United Hebrew Congregation, Johannesburg: (1940)
 - 30 Sher financed the construction of Rabbi Sternbuch's Torah Centre in Yeoville and Rabbi Aaron Pfeuffer's *Yeshiva Maharsha* of Glenhazel, alongside his regular philanthropic work.
 - 31 See article 'Getting the Seeds to Take Root Again', *Jewish Tradition*, Rosh Hashanah 2008.
 - 32 Such as those of the President Street Synagogue, the WOHC's foundation stone from End Street and the JHC. The latter was re-laid by Anthony Raphaely, great nephew of the Siegfried Raphaely, who originally laid the stone at Wolmarans Street.
 - 33 Visit by the author to the deconsecrated synagogue. I thank Mrs S Manning for guiding me through the building and obtaining permission to do so from the staff working there. Her recollections of worship in the synagogue were also informative. *Halachic* guidance should be sought for visitations to the site due to the recent use of the building as a church, with a Christian expression being painted beneath the Ark's *Sheviti* verse.



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JOHANNESBURG'S BETH HAMEDRASH HAGODOL AND ITS LEGACY

*

Rose Norwich

Following this year's centenary celebrations of the Great Synagogue in Wolmarans Street, it is now more generally known that the first congregation to be established in Johannesburg was the Witwatersrand Hebrew Congregation. It was formed in 1888 and built the President Street Synagogue, opened in 1889. Recently, the foundation stone of that building has been placed into the front wall of the Great Park Synagogue in Houghton, along with the other stones of subsequent congregations to commemorate those earlier buildings. The well-known Saron & Hotz history *The Jews of South Africa* includes a chapter on 'The Transvaal Congregations' by Chief Rabbi LI Rabinowitz, who remarks on "other congregations springing up" from this congregation.¹

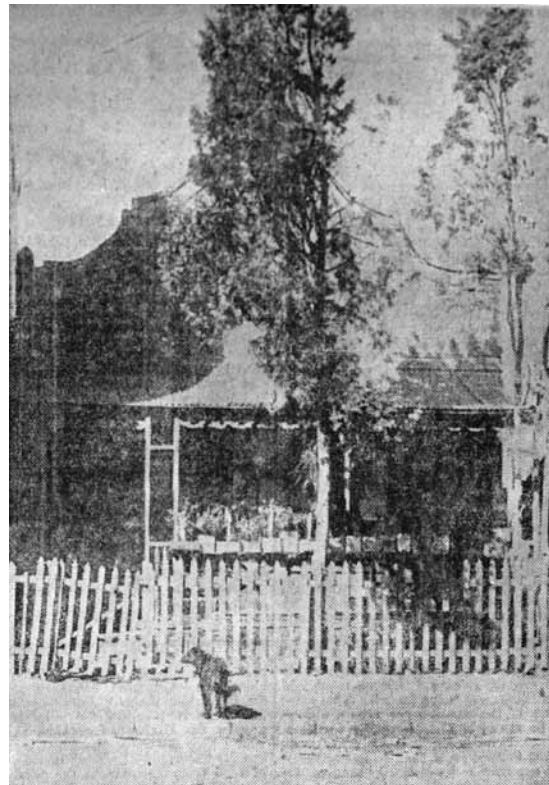
In a 1949 article on the early years of Johannesburg Jewry Samuel Rochlin, a prominent figure in South African Jewish historiography, described how soon after the founding of the Witwatersrand Hebrew Congregation it split, with many of its members moving away.² He was referring to the well-known split which occurred in December 1891 and lasted until 1915. At the time it caused many members of the congregation to leave to form the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation (JHC) and build the Park Synagogue. Those who left on that occasion were unhappy with the reappointment of Rev Mark L Harris. This story has been told many times recently and is described in detail in the new hard cover book by David Saks on the Great Park Synagogue, published this year.³ The President Street and Park synagogues catered largely, but not exclusively, for German and English Jews, who were the first to come to Johannesburg and the Reef to make their fortunes following the discovery of gold.

There were actually two splits from the Witwatersrand Hebrew Congregation in 1891. This article is about the first such split, which occurred shortly before the JHC was formed. This

split was for ideological reasons.

The Eastern European Jews, immigrants from Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, did not feel at home in the rather formal atmosphere of the President Street Synagogue. The service was also not considered sufficiently orthodox by them. The history books tell us that those who left felt that the President Street Synagogue was "too English". Gwynne Schrire, a frequent contributor to these pages, is currently writing a book about her great-grandfather, Yehuda Leib Schrire, who was too religious for the community at the Park Synagogue although he had been employed there as a kosher slaughterer and Kashrut supervisor in 1892.

The forebears of South African Jewry are largely those who came to the country from Eastern Europe. These were the members who left the President Street Synagogue on this occasion and formed the new Johannesburg Orthodox Hebrew Congregation (JOHC) in 1891 in Ferreirastown.⁴ The JOHC rented the residence of Harry Filmer at 42 Fox Street for a few years until their own premises were ready.⁵ They used the Filmer house from around 1891–1893.



The first JOHC synagogue in Fox Street

Rose Norwich has researched and published widely in the field of little-known South African history. An eminent architectural historian, she is the acknowledged authority on the history of early Johannesburg synagogues. Her many years of Jewish communal involvement include serving as President of the Union of Jewish Women and as co-coordinator of the current SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth research project on Jewish life in the South African country communities.

In February 1893 Samuel Nathanson, Bernard Wainstein, Jacob Kark and Symon (Chaim) Kuper, all Trustees of the JHOC, bought a site in Fox Street in their own names for the sum of £550.⁶ This was Stand 18 Ferreirastown, purchased from the original owner of the property since the proclamation of the suburb, Elizabeth Phoebe Doble. There was a small house on it, perhaps one of the usual houses of the time. It was a single storey building with a central passage and rooms on both sides. These trustees virtually donated the property in 1895 to later trustees of the same property, by charging only £5 for the ground and building.⁷

AP (Paul) Menze, who had come to the Transvaal from Germany in 1885, was appointed to do the alterations to the house. One of the partners of Menze and Brauer who submitted the original drawings for the Park Synagogue, he had not been considered sufficiently qualified to complete that building but was appointed as Clerk of Works at the time and asked to find a proper architect to finish the job. At that stage Menze had found John Frederick Kroll, an accomplished German architect who had been in South Africa since 1881. He completed the Park Synagogue, its school and the Minister's house.

Paul Menze appears to have managed this small job of altering the Fox Street house, making it into a place of worship, quite well. He demolished the front portion of the interior walls, leaving two small rooms at the back of the building which were probably used for classrooms. A staircase was erected on the side to reach the small women's gallery above. In order to accommodate this and to give sufficient headroom he added 0.6m to the height of the walls, put on a new corrugated iron roof and included a roof light.⁸ The new hall formed was 11.3 metres long by 8.5 metres

wide. The JHC community paid for the erection of the first public *mikveh* in Johannesburg, which was placed behind the small house on the rear boundary of the property.⁹

On 1 December 1892, Menze submitted the plans to the Johannesburg Council. These are fortunately safely housed in Museum Africa (erroneously called "The Jewish School", which caused much difficulty in recognising them). On 1 February 1893, the building was completed. The Beth Hamedrash, according to the *London Jewish Chronicle*, was "a large room, capable of holding 250 to 300 worshippers, with white washed walls, a small gallery for ladies on one side, the Almemar (Bimah) in the centre, the Ark in the East, and was furnished with wooden benches. Only the actual necessary requirements were provided, nothing was spent on superfluous decoration".¹⁰

The building was completed and officially opened on 1 February 1893, when the scrolls of the law were carried from their former place of worship in Filmer's house to the new building.¹¹ Both Mark Harris, Minister of the President Street Synagogue and Harris Isaacs, Minister of the Park Synagogue, took part in the consecration service.

The following description of the activity in the building was given in one of the local newspapers:

It was open from early morning till late at night. As soon as a sufficient number were present, prayers were read. When these were finished room was made for a batch of newcomers, who went through an exactly similar ceremony. This procedure was repeated an indefinite number of times every dayThe study of *Torah* seemed to be part and parcel of existence, and groups were collected in different parts of the building studying *Talmud* or *Mischna*.....¹²



The second Beth Hamedrash synagogue, in use from the end of 1912 until circa. 1947

The congregation used this building until the number of immigrants increased to such an extent that it was unable to contain all the worshippers. Eventually, in 1906 the congregation had saved enough money to buy, for £3000, the stand next door.¹³ It was several years before they started building the new synagogue on the two stands. The old building was demolished in 1912 when the new building was started. It is probably at this time also that the *Sunday Times* article on "Vanishing Johannesburg" carried the only photograph of the first Beth Hamedrash. Although it is a very poor photograph, it appears as if the front of the building had a gable end. Perhaps in later years a further extension was carried out.¹⁴ The *mikveh* was the only building which remained after the small building was demolished.

J F Kroll was appointed to design the new Beth Hamedrash. He had become the man who supposedly "knew about Jewish buildings"; by this time he had also designed and completed the Fordsburg Synagogue, opened by Max Langerman in 1906.¹⁵

A search revealed no plans in the City Council's records. But in Museum Africa, in the same place where the plan of the little house was kept, there was a lovely original plan drawn by Kroll himself, showing his design for this new building. The plan shows the ark facing north and so we know that it was designed around the same time as the Wolmarans Street building, which was considered the first building to have a north facing ark. Chief Rabbi Dr JL Landau, of the Park Synagogue, had pointed out the fact that all previous Johannesburg synagogues had the ark facing east as if in Europe. The ark pointing north towards Jerusalem was in the contract for the Wolmarans Street building.

Kroll submitted his plan in 1912 for the building, to cost £6,000, and the foundation stone was laid by IW Schlesinger on 9 June 1912.¹⁶ It was officially opened on 8 December 1912 by Gustave Imroth, an important Jewish Randlord, and consecrated by Rabbi Landau.¹⁷

The plans for the synagogue in Wolmarans Street, designed by Theophile Schaerer, had been submitted to the City Council in February 1913. The foundation stone was laid on 3 September 1913 by Siegfried Raphaely¹⁸ and the building was opened on 23 August 1914 by Rabbi Landau.¹⁹ The two buildings were built virtually at the same time. However, nobody today remembers the Beth Hamedrash in Fox Street because it was destroyed without record. What a shameful situation!

The story of the construction of the Beth Hamedrash and some of the history of the building was published in my article on early synagogues in the Pesach 2003 issue of *Jewish Affairs*. Present-day readers then probably learned about this building for the first time. There is no photographic record of the interior and it is not possible to reconstruct how it looked inside. The plans, however, show quite clearly the

rectangular space for men. The women's gallery was comparatively small and stretched across the rear of the building. It was placed over the prayer or class rooms below. The main hall was 23.7m x 15.8m and seated 470 men and 214 women.²⁰

Even the company that demolished the building kept no records of it. This is especially sad as it was the lovely Anglo-American Corporation buildings in Fox Street that replaced it. The curator of their archives was shame-faced that such a thing had happened. Fortunately, CA Stoloff had taken two photographs of the exterior before it was demolished (in c1947). We are greatly indebted to him for otherwise there would have been no visual record of its outside appearance. It was a building greatly loved by its congregation and was affectionately known as the Greener Beth Hamedrash. Rabbi Moshel Friedman, a most learned man, remained in office there for many years. He served on the Beth Din with Rabbis Landau and Lipschitz.

The congregation also had a very active Talmud Torah. In 1916, it purchased two stands only one block from the synagogue at the corner of Fox and Maclaren Streets, Marshallstown, to build a Talmud Torah.²¹ It was here that the Jews who had come from Eastern Europe sent their children to learn Hebrew and Jewish religious studies.

But as the years progressed the community began to move out of Ferreirastown to Fordsburg and further afield to Doornfontein, where there was water. The numbers had diminished to such an extent that at a meeting of the school on 17 June 1928, a decision was taken 'to move to a more Jewish populated locality'. The following year, the school was sold to New Mines Ltd for £7000.²² The money received was used to buy stands in Doornfontein for a total of £3900.²³ This is where the Beth Hamedrash Hagodol was built.

It is interesting to note that while the minutes of the synagogue changed from being written in Yiddish to English in 1912, for the sale of the school all the documents were written in Yiddish and had to be translated by a sworn translator.

In 1947, the Anglo-American Corporation started to buy up all the land in the block in Fox Street for a new headquarters. The two stands on which the synagogue stood were part of the property they wanted and were transferred to the First Johannesburg Orthodox Hebrew Congregation (FJOHC) for ease of selling.²⁴ At this time, there was an unpleasant dispute between some members of the congregation and the Beth Hamedrash about the ownership of the buildings. This was eventually resolved after taking the matter to court. The Fox Street property was sold for £110 000²⁶ and the building was demolished in 1947.

The *Gevra Mischna U'Gemara* (Brotherhood Society to study the Oral Law) had started at the synagogue in 1892 and was the oldest Jewish cultural society on the Reef.²⁵ It moved

to Doornfontein into a separate building on the site in Saratoga Avenue when the next synagogue was built there.

Sadly, the Beth Hamedrash building no longer exists and while present-day Johannesburg Jewry celebrated the centenary of the Wolmarans Street Synagogue, none of them remember the lovely building in Fox Street. The synagogue in Wolmarans Street was sold and could not be demolished because of the ban on the demolition of buildings older than 50 years by the then National Monuments Council – now SARHA. Those requirements came into existence well after the Fox Street building was destroyed.

The new Doornfontein Beth Hamedrash Hagodol was built and designed by Saul Margo and functioned in Saratoga Avenue from 1931 to 1953²⁶ at the same time as the Greener Beth Hamedrash was still functioning in Fox Street. In 1953 they amalgamated completely when all the worshippers moved to Doornfontein. In 1949, the FJOHC purchased a small house for services in Yeoville. This remained in use until it was gutted by fire in 1998.²⁷

As the years passed, Doornfontein was no longer a residential suburb and people were leaving for the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. The Doornfontein Beth Hamedrash Hagodol closed. In 1980, the buildings were sold to the Radha Saomi Association Beas for £60 000²⁸ and the money from the sale was later used to build the Beth Hamedrash in Sandton. The Beth Hamedrash Hagodol building is presently used by the Technical College in Doornfontein.

In 1986, for the 100th anniversary of Johannesburg, the Federation of Synagogues plaqued the site of several old synagogues, including the one in Fox Street. Unfortunately, the latter's site was incorrectly plaqued, with the wrong name of the congregation and wrong stand. Whether it was corrected in response to the ensuing protests is not known.

The building of synagogues follows the formation of Jewish communities, and when the congregants move away the buildings become redundant. In large towns and cities they are often destroyed and the site used for more modern buildings. In country towns, when there are no more Jews to look after them, the buildings are often used for completely different purposes or demolished.

At present, there is almost nothing left in Johannesburg to save. In the central city, only the Poswohl Synagogue remains, and even though it sports a National Monument plaque it has been desecrated on several occasions. All the synagogues in Doornfontein, except for the Doornfontein Synagogue of 1905 (the 'Lions Shul') have been destroyed. There used to be nine buildings in the area. The Malvern Synagogue is a church. The Bertrams Synagogue is used as a home. In the Southern Suburbs, the tiny Turfontein Synagogue in Hay Street has gone though various

usages according to who is the owner. Only the Rosettenville Synagogue is still the same small beautiful building, thanks to the family who have looked after it for years. In recent times newer buildings, such as the Yeoville and Berea synagogues, have fallen into disuse and need to be protected.

It is too late now to save most of the early synagogue buildings, but let us not be so negligent in the future. A major building like the Greener Beth Hamedrash can never be replaced. It should never have been demolished without leaving any trace.

NOTES

- 1 Saron, G. & Hotz, L, *The Jews of South Africa, A History*, Cape Town: Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1955, p169.
- 2 SA Rochlin, 'Formative Days in Johannesburg Jewry', *SA Jewish Times*, 11/7/1949.
- 3 Saks, D, *The Great Park Synagogue, 1887-2013 – A History*, published by the Great Park congregation, 2013.
- 4 Saron & Hotz, p169.
- 5 'Vanishing Johannesburg', *Sunday Times*, 26/5/1912, p25.
- 6 Deed L3/93 records the purchase of the Stand 18 Ferreirstown in 1893.
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- 8 See dissertation 'Synagogues on the Witwatersrand & Pretoria before 1932' by Rose Norwich, p109.
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- 19 See printed announcement of inaugural meeting of the UHC. New Synagogue Wolmarans Street, 23/5/1915, Cover.
- 20 See plan of 1/5/1912 in Museum Africa, Johannesburg.
- 21 Deed F1568/16 records purchase of Stands 877 and 878 Marshallstown for £1250.
- 22 Deed F1641/29 records the sale of Stands No 877 and 878. No future religious buildings could be built by the purchaser.
- 23 Deed F3473/29 records purchase of six stands in Doornfontein.
- 24 Deed L289/35 and L290/35 records transfer of stands to the new congregation.
- 25 *SA Jewish Times*, 8/2/52.
- 26 Deed L43/49 records transfer of FJOHC to Anmercosa Land and Estates Ltd for £110 000.
- 27 Deed L249/49 records purchase of house in Yeoville for £5000.
- 28 Deed T20156/79 records sale of seven Doornfontein stands to the Radha Saomi Association Beas.

Shana Tova U'Metuka

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MOMMY'S STORY

*

Riva Morgenstern

We lived in the town, where life was more civilized and “up to date” than in the rural *shtetl*. My memories of that time – seen through the eyes of a small child – are sparse, unrelated and in no particular sequence. Sometimes I wonder whether these tableaux really correspond to what existed there at the time or whether it is all a figment of the imagination.

I recall neat cobbled streets with rows of double-story timber or brick houses, long windows with soft lace curtains billowing out in the breeze. Our apartment was on the first floor of such a building. I remember the staircase leading up to it, though not the layout of the rooms.

The furniture was imported and beautifully made. The sideboard was my particular love, as it was such fun playing with the little pull-out trays operated by little knob handles. But by far the best toy was the telephone in my father’s study. It consisted of the receiver mounted on a wooden box and was operated by a little handle, which proved quite irresistible to us children (much to the chagrin of the exasperated operator!)

I can still see the beautiful green-shaded lamp on my father’s large desk and my mother’s sewing-table which stood in front of the window in the nursery. Once, my mother sat me down on it to try on shoes. As she pressed the shoe onto my foot, I leaned back, the catch sprang open and the casements swung outward. I fell back with my head out of the window and would have gone headlong into the courtyard below, had not my horrified mother held for dear life on to my knees. I was to have another narrow escape some time later, when we were visiting my grandparents in the *shtetl*.

We used to go there for our summer holidays. I clearly remember the first time we left for

the country. I walked, little, excited, confused, between my mother and father among the unfamiliar bustle on the platform in the unfamiliar darkness – during the long summer days we had become accustomed to going to bed at twilight. The huge dark steam locomotive with the enormous wheels was hissing impatiently on its tracks, raring to go.



The author, left, with her sister, Hadassah (Eddy).

My grandparents lived in a large timber double-story house in the centre of the *shtetl* off the market place. On the ground floor were the shop and a separate entrance to the reception rooms. The first floor contained the bedrooms and a drawing room, which was furnished in the most extraordinary style – red plush upholstery in silvered ornate frames. The table and occasional tables were all executed in this metal filigree. To us children, it was the last word in elegance. There was a *succah* at the back which was operated by opening panels in the roof, and the attic built into the steep pitch of the roof, which was our favorite retreat, particularly during a storm when the raindrops came thundering down onto the roof.

The garden was at the back: a flower patch full of dahlias (I recall we used to pick the last faded blooms of autumn – sweetpeas, nasturtiums and pansies — to decorate the *succah*); an apology for an orchard – a little pear tree, an apple tree and some red currant bushes; a storeroom and beyond that the vegetable patch – sunflowers, cucumbers, radishes, spring onions. Then the ground fell away through fields covered with clover to the river, which wound its way through the meadows of the valley.

Usually, it was a clear and sparkling little stream running over pebbles. Tiny fishes would disport themselves in the water with little jerky swimming movements and we used to try to catch them in a strainer. When the mill was working, however, and the weir was running, the current

Riva Morgenstern, formerly Borkowf, was born in Lithuania in 1925 and came to South Africa in the 1930s. She studied Architecture at Wits University, obtaining a B.A. Arch, and became the first woman in the country to attain a Diploma in Town Planning. In 1950, she married fellow-student Jacques Morgenstern, with whom she established the award-winning architecture practice Morgenstern & Morgenstern. She died in Israel in 2011. This memoir of growing up in Lithuania was submitted for publication by her daughters. Most of the text is written in terms of ‘we’, to reflect the experiences both of Riva and of her elder sister, Hadassah (Eddy) Sacks, a former editor of Jewish Affairs.

was quite strong, and the river ran high. On one such occasion, when I had waded too far, I was knocked down by the swiftly running water. I clearly remember myself on hands and knees on the river bed – dizzy, confused, with the water rushing over me – not struggling or making any attempt to save myself during that brief moment, till my mother pulled me out.

Sometimes aunts and cousins would join us during the summer months and on such occasions, the upstairs the upstairs rooms were turned into dormitories with beds and mattresses. We used to try to sleep during the hot summer nights tingling with the unfamiliar sensation of sunburn.

The *shtetl* was built-up along the lines of a medieval village – an agglomeration of little dwellings and shops nestling below and dominated by the church and its spire. This was situated on the hill in its own grounds surrounded by a sturdy, battered perimeter wall.

The Lithuanians were devout Catholics and staunch church-goers. They brought gifts and flowers to the church and lovingly maintained many holy shrines scattered along roads and farms. At Easter time they walked to and from church with burning censers; at Christmas time they enacted the nativity in the church. At such times Jews felt very conscious of their hostility – Jews and Christ-killer were synonymous to them.

Below the church was the market place, divided by bollards down the centre used for tethering horses. On market days the horses and carts laden with dairy produce, vegetables, seasonal fruits, chickens, livestock, etc. filled the market place. There was butter wrapped in cabbage leaves, eggs in wicker baskets.

After trading, the farmers shopped, drank and visited friends. Most Jewish families had their stalwart Lithuanian friends and customers, who came to chat and joke. But already an uneasy antisemitism made itself felt and there was a movement about to encourage farmers to patronize Lithuanian rather than Jewish shops. Sometimes young people were set upon by antisemitic youths, though no one was seriously hurt.

Some market days several times a year were like fairs. They attracted farmers from far and wide in all the most outlying districts. On those days, kiosks would spring up and there would be side shows and beggars and blind people, in addition to the agricultural produce. This was for us a most exciting happening. My mother used to keep us out of the way lest we should be bitten by a horse, something she had suffered as a child. On such days there was often rowdy drinking, fighting and feuding among the peasants and farmers.

I do not recall exactly when my father left – I remember printing my name laboriously in Hebrew — רבקה — at the end of my mother's letters to him, but during that time we remained with my grandparents.

There was much poverty and hardship among

the Jews of the *shtetl*; in the large families with many children malnutrition and T.B. Most people were religious but some were really ultra-orthodox. *Erev Shabbat*, the old frail rabbi would walk through the *shtetl* and people would know it was time to close their shops.

In summer, during the long Shabbat afternoons, young people, including my mother's younger brothers and sisters, would walk out to the woods, while the older set slept or learned. One Saturday afternoon, a fire swept the village; fanned by a strong breeze, the flames leaped from one timber house to the next. It had all started with the one-horse fire brigade. The impudent fire-chief had been cleaning the engine and smoking a cigarette, when a flying spark ignited the petrol. By the time the fire engine from a neighboring *shtetl* was brought in, there was nothing left to save. People tried to salvage what they could by throwing furniture, clothes, featherbeds into the street. The young people came rushing back to witness the destruction of the village and to help. It was hopeless. My mother took us out of the heat and smoke and pungent smell of burning wood to a sparsely wooded copse by a stream and from there we watched each home with a lifetime's work, investments and belongings falling to ashes. My sister and I waded in the brook, not understanding the full import of the tragedy before our eyes.

Years later in school in South Africa I was to write an essay on "A Fire" on "An Adventure" and I wrote about the above experience. My teacher, thinking it was an exaggerated figment of my imagination, made fun of it in front of the class – hoped we had not "caught cold" wading in the stream etc. I did not defend myself but I was deeply hurt and I never mentioned the episode again!

For medical or dental care and even shopping, my mother would take us to the neighboring town of Telz, which was a world renowned seat of Talmudic learning and *yeshivot*. To me it seemed like a very *big* city; the shops were so pretty; red blood oranges displayed in the fruit shops and so much traffic in the streets.

To get there we would take the one and only taxi from the *shtetl*, a large six-seater car with a canvas roof that was folded down. The roads were not suited to motor traffic and we always used to get car sick from all the movement and bouncing. Memory is a strange phenomenon. Much of what I have written must have been absorbed into my being to become a part of me, unlocked by an unexpected key doors suddenly open onto long lost vistas. When I saw the film 'Dr. Zhivago' I saw again the scenic beauty I had seen as a very small child; the deciduous trees, the lilacs, the dappled meadows.

My grandfather had the toboggan made for us by a blacksmith – a mild steel frame with a timber slated seat. Above the seat was a hard steel guard rail to prevent us from falling off. I remember the woolly boots we wore and jelly

bag caps with pompoms at the end – the warm mittens and scarves and red noses! Darkness fell early and as the village lamps were lit one by one – we used to return home to the warm chimney piece and hot cocoa.

Pesach time and spring was the most exhilarating and exciting time of year. However, the thick, slippery mud churned up by the horse-drawn traffic on the unpaved streets was a constant nightmare, in spite of stepping stones, sand and other make-shift remedies.

Before we left to join my father, we moved to a near-by town where my mother's elder sister lived. Her husband, my uncle, was a bank manager and my aunt was a great socialite and hostess, full of *joie de vivre*. She was always in demand for all community work, functions, fund raising, entertainment. Much later we learned that during the Holocaust, disguised as a Lithuanian peasant-woman, she would go into the town for provisions and to obtain provisions for the whole community. From one such expedition, she and her youngest daughter never returned. Her two elder daughters returned from their work to an empty house.

The Jewish community here was a young vibrant, active one – very Zionist- orientated. There were always meetings of different factions, which my mother often attended, and which we often left hurriedly when tempers ran high and people became abusive. Many *chalutzim* were leaving for Palestine ...

Antisemitism was more pronounced here too, and one night we experienced a pogrom. Lithuanian youth beat up Jewish youths, ran through the streets with iron bars, breaking windows and battering doors. All night long our family remained apprehensively behind locked doors, waiting for daylight. I am ashamed to admit that I slept through it all. My uncle, who was a very nervous man, kept on insisting that I be awakened lest we had to flee, but tucked away in a small internal room I heard nothing and slept the sleep of a child. My mother was loath to wake me unless it became imperative. I think I have lived all my life with guilt feelings over sleeping though such a horror.

The following morning everyone was haggard, weary, subdued with sleeplessness and worry. Charges were laid and police conducted a pro forma enquiry calling for evidence. The more public spirited ones came forward to accuse – in the vanguard my aunt.

When they did not visit my grandparents, my aunt, uncle and family would take a house in the country for the summer – like the Russian *dacha*. From there my uncle would commute to his work and only take a few days' holiday. But for the women and children it was one blissful time of leisure and pleasure, picnics in the woods, inhaling the health-giving aroma of the coniferous pine forests; mushroom picking, blackberries, wild strawberries, cranberries.

We would bathe in the clear running streams, fringed by weeping willows or gather sour-leaves in clearings surrounded by birch trees and maples. Sometimes the rented farmhouse would have an apple orchard, gooseberry and red or black currant bushes and superb raspberries. Surrounding farmers would come selling baskets of red or yellow cherries and little yellow mushrooms, used for an excellent soup.

I don't remember the parting, when we left the Old Country. It must have been traumatic, since partings then were forever. I just remember my aunt's tear-stained but composed face at the window. I think the train took us to Kovno and thence onward through Europe. I must have been hard for a young woman to leave her whole family and past life and to travel with two small children through a troubled Europe to a distant strange land. I remember how nervous she was when we passed through Germany. At the station buffet, we saw three young schoolboys give the Hitler salute. My mother insisted we stay in the compartment. Finally the train pulled out of Germany, and we heaved a sigh of relief.

The trip was long - train, channel-boat, castle-liner. Finally, we arrived in Cape Town and were reunited with my father. His family had settled in South Africa before I was born. When we arrived, we learned that my paternal grandfather and passed away. I had never met him.

Reunited, we all started a new life with a new challenge, hardships and modest triumphs. Who would have dreamed then that our whole family back in Lithuania would be all but wiped out? My mother never got over the loss. Only the two nieces were saved; they settled in the United States. We never traced any other member of our family. They must have all perished.

For ourselves, we tried hard to push our past into the background, to adapt to the dress and manners of South African school girls and conform to local customs. We grew up. But we were like cut flowers with no roots. Could we call ourselves Lithuanians — we were never really part of its culture — or South Africans? Essentially, we were like all Jews born in the Diaspora.



Riva and her sister in later life

THE TEN QUESTIONS

*

Charlotte Cohen

'The Ten Questions' was conceived when Aidan was seven-going-on-eight. Although he is my progeny, I am dispassionate when I say he was – and still is – cute, clever, gorgeous and talented. He is also extremely focussed, innovative and resourceful – and particularly when it comes getting his own way.

Aidan: 'I'm starving! I really need an ice-cream.'

Me: "Aidan, you've just had an ice-cream."

"Yes, but that was a cone. Now I need a cup."

"But it's still an ice-cream, Aidan. You can't have two ice-creams."

Pause.... Then he plays his trump card: "It doesn't say that in The Ten Commandments."

In fact, "It doesn't say that in The Ten Commandments" was becoming his stock answer to manipulate getting whatever it was he wanted – or didn't.

Much like the first bubble that appears on the surface of the sauce when it reaches the right temperature, and with added sprinklings from my own experience (instead of wrangling with a seven year-old how the words 'Thou shalt respect thy mother and father' includes 'obeying thy elders and teachers') – I heard myself deflecting his exhortation by saying: "It's not The Ten Commandments, Aidan. It's 'The Ten Questions!'"

And with that, 'The Ten Questions' took its first breath.

From the enormous storage vault of the subconscious mind, constantly filled and refuelled by every word, nuance, action, thought and awareness we have ever experienced (and which we are miraculously able to retrieve and restore into consciousness when required), 'The Ten Questions' was also prompted by a recent assignment by our writers' club to present something inspirational.

Because it had left a lasting impression, I revamped an analogy from Og Mandino's 'University of Success'. In it, Calvin – not knowing where he is, or sure whether he is dead or alive – is being questioned by a man with a check-list about the details of what he had done with his life. The core of the questions was whether Calvin had made use of the 'gifts'the 'creative talents' he'd been given. (Incidentally, the important 'messages' relayed at the end of this were a) control your

own life. You weren't designed to be 'led', b) take all your energy and talent – and share it and c) your only limitations will be those you place upon yourself.) This correlation, couched as it was in question form, also provided the conception, creation and germination for 'The Ten Questions' – and to which, after having uttered those fateful words, I was committed.

Because its importance had been impressed tonally to Aidan, I carefully started considering what would appear on this list of 'moralities' – simple enough to be understood by a child; yet relevant enough to be remembered.

As many 'questions' as possible were assimilated, put into categories and, with Aidan's assistance, selected as being the most basic and significant. (One of the 'questions' Aidan proffered was "Did you have manners?" As we were already over the limit, we decided that, as it showed respect, it formed part of the first question.)

'The Ten Questions' was then transferred from paper to P.C. memory and, more particularly, for the attention of our conscious minds and into the archives of our subconscious minds.

The Ten Questions

1. What 'good and kind things' did you do – without being asked?
2. What 'good and kind things' did you do for the planet? *Answer: Reduce, Re-use, Recycle etc.)*
3. Did you use the 'special gifts' – the talents you have been given? Did you practise and 'polish' them?
4. Did you listen to the 'inner voice' – your intuition, your conscience, your logic? – or was it drowned out by what other people were telling you to do?
5. Did you show courage? Did you stand up for what was right? Did you stand up for yourself? Did you stand up for a friend?
6. Did you try your best? ... (The question is not whether you *were* the best.)
- 7 (a) What was good about making a mistake? (b) Did you take responsibility for making a mistake? (c) If you made a mistake and you hurt someone by it, what did you do?
8. Did you make the most of opportunities?
9. Did you use your imagination? Did you wonder why? ... and how? ... and whether? ... and what if?
10. Did you remember to say "Thank you"? Were you grateful? Did you 'count your blessings'?

A friend remarked recently that so much is

Charlotte Cohen is a frequent contributor of essays, poems and short stories to a wide range of South African publications, both Jewish and general.

coming at us today, so many e-mails, SMS's, so much to read and digest, that anything in point form is much easier to absorb. Perhaps because 'The Ten Questions' is a short simplification of principles, it is easier to remember.

They say: 'The best way to learn is to teach.' What I didn't expect, though, was how 'The Ten Questions' would influence and reverberate on my own thinking. Relevant idioms, quotations and examples keep presenting themselves: "A mistake is only a mistake the second time you make it", "If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door"...

It produced a profound change in mind-set: I found that I was able to apologise much more easily - even if what occurred had been careless or inadvertent; that I was reminding myself; to 'listen to the little inner voice'; to 'stand up for myself'; to say 'thank you' and to keep going.

One day, while driving, I suddenly thought: "You're a fine one! You're asking Aidan how many 'good and kind things he does without being asked'. But how many do *you* do? ... Excluding supporting charities or fund-raisers, how many opportunities does one actually have in our daily routines to do a 'good and kind thing without being asked?' We go through our lives doing the same old things we always do, and the same things we ought to do ... Unless perhaps we start consciously looking for the opportunity.

As I emerged from the supermarket, a delivery truck driver asked me if I knew where a certain farm stall was.

"You're way off course," I said, "It's on the Main Road towards Wynberg. You're on the Lower Road. You're nowhere near it."

He stared at me.

"Look," I said, "I'm going to the Main Road. Follow me there. When we get to the robots, I'm turning right: You turn left. ... Okay?"

He followed me until we reached the robot.

As we waited for the traffic lights to change, the question about the 'good-and-kind-things-without-being-asked' surfaced. What if I took him to the farm-stall? It was only a few minutes out of my way. ...

It was a momentary decision: I turned left.

When we reached the farm-stall, I hooted to indicate he had reached his destination. As he slowed down to park, he started hooting and blowing kisses and shouting thank you. The workers in the back of the truck were smiling and waving vigorously. With no financial gain or outside recognition, I drove home elated - on top of the world. Even thinking about it now, gives me the same feeling: ... of satisfaction, well-being, feeling good about myself. No money can buy that. I learned that doing a kindness, unasked for and of one's own volition, is 'soul food' ...

We learn by teaching. We also learn by listening, reading and observing. But even more so, we need to think about what we are absorbing - and what we are imparting. 'The Ten Questions', attempts to incorporate as much

morality as possible. But it doesn't end there. As we progress from one circumstance to another, we build on our experience.

By contrast, just as two events led to compiling 'The Ten Questions', two events subsequent to writing it, made me realise, as the penny dropped, that every coin has two sides.

The first was that I had voluntarily done something *extremely* 'good-and-kind'. (It did not fall into the realm of donating money or services anonymously - or directing a truck driver to his destination). However, it was only three days later, after questioning whether my gift had been received, that I received a 'thank-you'. I found myself disappointed, hurt and more than slightly peeved - despite receiving profuse thanks later; and it had certainly produced no euphoria. In fact, it was contrary to the advocacy that doing an unasked-for kindness brings the greatest happiness; yet, conversely, reinforced the point in 'The Ten Questions' about remembering to say 'thank-you'.

Secondly, falling under the umbrella of coincidence, and contained in the question "Did you wonder why and how and if ..?" during the following week, from four completely different sources, I encountered exactly the same message:

It was referred to in Chief Rabbi Sacks' farewell speech. It was quoted in a recorded debate with atheist, Christopher Hitchens. It appeared in a well-known on-line post and was repeated in an inspirational e-mail. It was cited as 'the basis of ethics'; the core of 'the Torah, all morality, and all ethical religions'. Google refers to it as 'The Golden Rule' ('the ethics of reciprocity') saying that all versions of the maxim have one aspect in common, applying it to psychology (empathy), philosophy (being another 'self'), sociology (treating all people with consideration) and religion (of which it is an integral part). It is: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Reading these words over and over (and in a way, relating them to 'The Ten Questions'), it appeared as if the emphasis lay more on the words: 'Do unto others ...'. What followed: "... *as you would have them do unto you*" almost took a supporting role. (Maybe that is why the word 'you' is mentioned twice - to remind us of our importance as well.)

The realisation became a bit of a wake-up call: Sometimes it is *you* who should be apologised to - or thanked. Sometimes it is *you* who has been disappointed, discouraged or wronged. The words "...as you would have them do unto you" stresses that you are worthy of the same courtesy and respect you are hopefully extending to others. What you expect *of yourself*, expect *for yourself*.

And although 'The 10 Questions' does remind one to 'stand up for oneself' and 'listen to the little inner voice', perhaps particularly in this context, it needs to be expanded upon.

"Life is not the way it's supposed to be. It's the

way it is.” Not everyone out there is principled, making the right choices or living according to the tenets implied in ‘The Ten Questions’.

As we sift through the plethora of information that comes to us, *we also need to sift through what is worth keeping and what should be discarded...* (“Did you listen to your intuition, your conscience, your logic”- or was it drowned out by what other people were telling you to do?”)

From: ‘Treat others as you would have them treat you’.

To: ‘Don’t expect anything and you won’t be disappointed’.

From: ‘I was lucky to be born into a really poor family. It gave me the inspiration to work harder, to explore new opportunities and a drive to action and achievement’

And: The story of two brothers: one a respected mayor of a town; the other a jailed criminal. Both were interviewed to determine what influences had caused their lives to turn out so differently. The mayor answered: “My father beat us; my mother was an alcoholic; my sister a prostitute - what else could I be?” The jailed brother answered: “My father beat us; my mother was an alcoholic; my sister a prostitute, what else could I be?” It’s all comes down to choice: Just as we decide what to accept or how to think, so there are people who enhance our lives and add worth and happiness to it – and people who don’t. I was amazed at how ‘The Ten Questions’ had kicked in. Once again it had altered my perspective and turned my discomfort at not having received a timely ‘thank-you’, to thanking providence for a) being in a position to have done the good deed; b) doing it voluntarily and c) choosing to change my reaction. *(It was a debit to her account that she had to be reminded to say thank-you).*

To come back to the beginning and Aidan’s ‘come-back’ after being told he could not have a second ice-cream (despite what I said to divert him), it actually *does* ally itself more with The Ten Commandments. However, the difference lies in that where ‘The Ten Commandments’ was given as mandatory, ‘The Ten Questions’ refers to choice and how we choose to think. ...

There were also other ‘question/choices’ to be considered at the time: ‘Did you understand the difference between the value of price and worth?’ ... ‘How did you deal with disappointment or discouragement?’ ... ‘Did you find a good balance between work and play; between being alone and with people?’ Yet, once again, thinking it through, the idea of ‘balance’ may not apply to everyone. We are all individuals with unique choices. Highly successful artists, sportsmen and academics, do not always lead a ‘balanced lives’ according to accepted norms.

I thought Aidan would be better off and better able to mull over and decide on these when he was a little older.... As for now, Aidan (nine) knows ‘The Ten Questions’ and understands them.

And by writing them and making these thoughts tangible, it has also added an outstanding dimension to my own life.

I hope ‘The Ten Questions’ gains in value as Aidan gets older and provides him with a yardstick on which to base judgments and make decisions. I hope also that as he progresses through life (an unpredictable and strange adventure where things have a way of playing out that we cannot foresee), he will be able to add considerably more to them.

Maybe one day, we might both have learned enough to start assembling a few of ‘The Ten Truths’ or even ‘The Ten Answers’

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THE ACCIDENTAL AMBASSADOR: FROM PARLIAMENT TO PATAGONIA

*

Ralph Zulman

The appointment of Tony Leon as South African Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay by President Zuma in 2009 came, politically speaking, as somewhat of a surprise. As leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance, Leon had been a strident and forceful critic of the South African government.

Outside of his political career, Leon was an attorney of the High Court of South Africa and a former lecturer in Law at the University of the Witwatersrand. He was a frequent and popular speaker at functions organized by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies. Today, he lives in Cape Town with his Israeli-born wife Michal, and currently writes a weekly column in *Business Day*. His previous books are *Hope and Fear: Reflections of a Diplomat* (1998) and *On the Contrary Leading the Opposition in a Democratic South Africa* (2008). The latter received the Recht Malan Prize for the best non-fiction work in South Africa in 2009. I was pleased at the time to review both of these books for *Jewish Affairs*.

The Accidental Ambassador: From Parliament to Patagonia deals with Leon's retirement from active political life into public service as an ambassador. In it, he deals critically with what may be described as a crash course on "how to become an ambassador" and the "strange stance and contradictions of South African foreign policy and life in Argentina". He relates his entertaining experiences of "cultural immersion and the foibles of diplomatic life" (an amusing incident relates to an account that the South African Embassy received for the repair of a lift which had been damaged because it was overloaded with visiting South African rugby players!), but also deals with "more serious reflections on misgovernance, eccentric economic populism and politics in his home and host countries."

Mr Justice Ralph Zulman is a long-serving member of the editorial board of and regular contributor to Jewish Affairs.

Leon's account of his meeting with Professor Alan Dershowitz before he took up his diplomatic posting is most revealing. This took place at the grand Harvard Club - in earlier years, I suspect it was a place where Jews were not welcome. The dinner meeting happened to take place during Chanukah, and in the course of it Dershowitz took out a small portable menorah and proceeded to light some of the candles. Writes Leon: "I was amazed, perhaps even a little embarrassed but beyond perhaps a raised eyebrow or two, the other diners seemed to regard this outsized demonstration of religious affirmation as perfectly normal. To my somewhat more understated sense of religious identity, the incident seemed entirely emblematic of the title of Dershowitz's autobiography, *Chutzpah*."

The Accidental Ambassador consists of a Preface, Abbreviations, thirty six Chapters, a Postscript, an Appendix, Acknowledgements, Notes, Index and details about the author. Running to 281 pages, it is sprinkled liberally with interesting photographs. Although brief Chapter 27, entitled 'The Nazis', is of interest in regard to the attitude of the then Argentinian regime to Nazi refugees such as the notorious Eichmann and Mengele. 'Michal's Must-See' list in the Appendix provides a useful guide to those intending to visit Buenos Aires. There is scant reference to any dealings which Leon might have had with members of the large Jewish community of Buenos Aires, which I found strange.

On balance, I agree with Ray Hartley's assessment of the book as being "an engaging read, which brings fresh perspective to post-apartheid South Africa and diplomacy."

The Accidental Ambassador: From Parliament to Patagonia by Tony Leon, Picador Africa, 2013, 256pp

A QUIET KIND OF COURAGE

*

Marcia Leveson

In terms of South African Jewish writing, this is a book I have been waiting for. Although Anthony Schneider immigrated to America at an early age and is therefore not strictly a South African author, and although the Jewish component in the novel is quite slight, yet it encapsulates so well the principle themes that have engaged contemporary South African writers that it can surely be included under that umbrella.

Perhaps because the acceleration of crime and the effects of affirmative action have cast doubt on their presence and future in the country, many South African Jews – like their forebears – have once again picked up their packs and emigrated. Consequently the Jewish population has halved, although paradoxically writing remains vibrant. Jewish writers tend to deal with issues plaguing their community as a whole, especially the search for a new stability and a new identity to respond to a changing South Africa and to changing global issues. One senses in the writing a pervasive sense of displacement. And since about 2004 this has meant dealing with issues of memory, history and race. Often writers hark back to memories or imaginative recreations of the *shtetl* and of emigration to South Africa. And for some it is the new remigration that concerns them – whether to the USA, Israel, or more frequently to Australia.

A Quiet Kind of Courage picks up many of these strands and seamlessly gathers them together in one single novel.

The plot centres on Henry Wegland, who was born in Lithuania and immigrated to England. The childhood of a little Jewish boy in Liverpool is something new in our writing and wonderfully evocative. He moves to South Africa, grows up under apartheid, and becomes involved as an activist in the liberation struggle of the sixties. In fact he is a “kaffirboetie” – that well-worn South African literary stereotype. His idealistic and rather naïve participation will test his values and change his life. He is forced to make the choice to go into exile in America, taking his wife and son with him. The reader becomes involved with

the aging Henry’s displaced life “on the other side”, with his assimilated son, daughter-in-law and grandson.

Then there is a parallel story of the journey of the grandson, Saul, back to South Africa, to make a documentary and to explore some of his grandfather’s history. Here Saul has to confront present day violence while unfolding hidden aspects of his grandfather’s story – his camaraderie with the black people and his forbidden love affair.

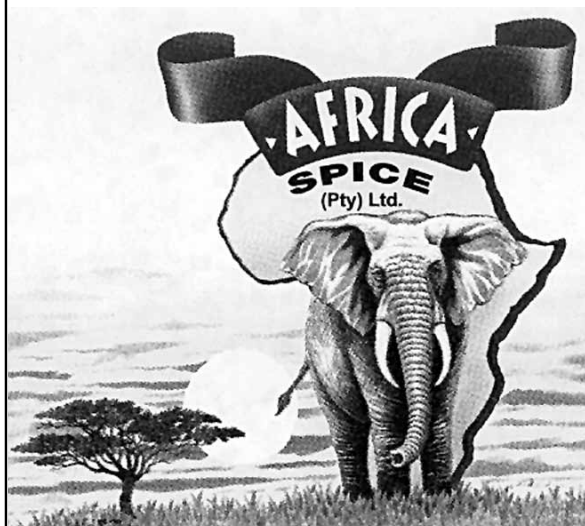
Because Schneider himself is the son of those who immigrated to America, the perspective of the young Saul has the stamp of authenticity and is refreshingly that of the younger generation looking in. Further, the recreation of the involvement of the young people of the sixties in the struggle and the way in which some real life personages are woven into the tale gives it a texture of faction, almost of history. The superior quality of the writing and the political concerns bring Gordimer to mind here, and indeed Schneider acknowledges that he learned a lot from reading her work. The pacy and compelling double narrative, the acute insight into human emotions and the lucid prose are all hallmarks of superior fiction.

A Quiet Kind of Courage by Anthony Schneider, Penguin Books, 2013.

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Dr Marcia Leveson, a long-serving member of the editorial board of Jewish Affairs, is a former Professor in the English Department and currently an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of the Witwatersrand. She has written extensively in the area of South African fiction and edited a number of anthologies of fiction and poetry. Her most recent book, South African Odyssey – The Autobiography of Bertha Goudvis, was reviewed in the Rosh Hashanah 2011 issue of this journal.

WHAT'S LEFT?

*

Gary Selikow

Nick Cohen comes from a left-wing family. His great-grandparents fled from the Tsarist Empire at the time of the pogroms, but their son, his grandfather, revolted. He became a Communist and married outside the faith. "My father was brought up with no connection to Judaism and, inevitably, so was I" he writes.

In his influential *What's Left?* (subtitle: *How the Left Lost Its Way*), Cohen recounts growing up in a doctrinaire leftist home where his mother had trouble searching the supermarkets for 'politically reputable citrus fruits' boycotting Spain and Portugal for their right-wing authoritarian governments, South Africa because of Apartheid, the USA because she did not like President Nixon and Israel because of the alleged 'occupation' of the West Bank and Gaza. He himself was deprived of watching Disney movies (being adjudged 'rubbish from Hollywood corporations') and even the popular 'Beano' book was banned from his childhood home because it was printed by DC Thomson, a non-union firm. As Cohen says, "I come from a land where you can sell out by buying a comic, I come from the left".

Cohen's beliefs were reinforced, of course, by Margaret Thatcher's rule of Britain and war against the country's working classes, but he began to question left-wing double standards with regard to not speaking up against Communist regimes for human rights abuses while excoriating right-wing governments for the same thing. He still believed until the 2003 Iraq war that the left would always stand up against Fascism, but his paradigm shift came during that war when the bulk of the British left came out in support of the totalitarian and murderous Saddam Hussein.

Of course, speaking up for Israel's right to exist or suggesting Israelis are entitled to human rights does not make one popular today with the post-modern left. Cohen writes how when he stood up to the left on their Israel-hatred, he was accused of 'being a Jew' or having married 'a hard right Jewish woman' (his wife is in fact a liberal Catholic).

As Cohen says, "Although I want to see every Israeli settlement on the West Bank dismantled, it was clear to me that when Hamas fired thousands of rockets into Israel it had declared war and had to accept the consequences. I would not have thought that five years ago. You do not need me to add that mine is a minority point of view among liberals, and that British Jews are living through a very dangerous period. They are the only ethnic minority whose slaughter official society will

excuse. If a mass murderer bombed a mosque or black Pentecostal church, no respectable person would say that the "root cause" of the crime was an understandable repulsion at the deeds of al-Qaeda or a legitimate opposition to mass immigration. Rightly, they would blame the criminal for the crime. If a synagogue is attacked, I guarantee that within minutes the airwaves will be filled with insinuating voices insisting that the "root cause" of the crime was a rational anger at the behaviour of Israel or the Jewish diaspora".

I was delighted to find through this book that there are writers who feel like me about the moral rottenness of the post-modern left. Like Cohen, I supported the war to free the Iraqi people from the genocidal tyranny of Saddam Hussein, a cruel despot who had killed with chemical weapons thousands of Kurds and Shia Marsh Arabs. I was incredulous and angry that millions marched around the world to protect this modern day Hitler, claiming they were the custodians of human rights and peace. As the author shows, the leftists who opposed the Iraq war simply refused to talk to the actual Iraqis, those who were jailed and tortured and who saw their friends and family murdered by the Baathist regime. After the war, these same leftists refused to help build a new democratic Iraq or to have anything to do with Iraqis building their new country.

I am not, in my own estimation, a conservative. Rather, I support the values of the old social democrats and social liberals of the 1950-70s, such as Harold Wilson and the old UK Labour Party and the creators of the social market economy such as Ludwig Erhardt in West Germany. At the same time, I despise the hypocrisy and nihilism of the post-modern left, whose proponents do not care about class equity in its real sense, or human rights or gender rights but simply, as Cohen demonstrates, support anything nihilistic and anti-Western. *What's Left?* is an erudite, witty and penetrating work and a must read for anyone wishing to understand the anomaly of the modern left and human rights.

What's Left? How the Left Lost Its Way by Nick Cohen, Harper Perennial, 2007, 256pp.

READERS' LETTERS

*

Thank you for including my translation and notes on Nehemiah Levinsky's story 'Children' (Kinder) in the Pesach (2013) issue of Jewish Affairs.

It seems that when the footnotes were compiled into a list of endnotes, aspects of the formatting became corrupted, rendering some of the entries incomprehensible. I would be pleased if you could include the following corrected version in the next issue of Jewish Affairs:

1. נחמיה ללעוויןסקי, די רעגן האט פארשפּעטיקט – דערציילונגען פון דרום אפריקע. יאהאנעסבורג/בלומפאנטיין, פארלאג "משפּחה". 154 ז"ו.
2. The first attempt at a Yiddish cultural journal (Dorom Afrike) began in December 1922 and closed in August 1923.
3. CJ Ginsberg, "Forty years of Dorem Afrike and Yiddish Kultur in South Africa", in Journal for Semitics, Vol.20, No. 1, 2011, p51.
4. Dovid Wolpe, "N. Levinsky un zayne rasn-dertseylungen", Dorem Afrike, June/July, 1959, pp16-17.
5. Ibid.

Cedric Ginsberg
Johannesburg

I would like to acknowledge and thank Cedric Ginsberg for all his help with the translation and interpretation of the poems of David Fram, as featured in your Pesach 2013 issue. His vision, commitment and passion for Yiddish in general and for my project in particular made it possible for me to complete it and achieve a quality befitting the material.

Hazel Frankel
Johannesburg

I feel very lucky to be able to read your magazine cover-to-cover in the Hebrew University Library. The Chanukah 2012 issue is outstanding. Chuck Volpe's 'Lies, Delusions and Jews' is such a great piece of work that I truly wish it would be part of every Jew's education, whether secular or religious. It certainly should be required reading for every USA Reform Rabbi! I hope that you and the editors of Commentary can provide an arrangement where it can be republished in their on-line magazine, despite its length.

However, I do need to point out that the decision by Islamic thinkers 800 years ago "to abandon a burgeoning interest in science and philosophy and take refuge in fundamentalist religion" was not universally applied, and in many Arab societies, Jews were able to live comfortable and normal lives. The real turning point was when the British Colonial officials decided to do their best to undermine the Balfour Declaration and appointed Amin Al Hussein as Jerusalem Mufti. His influence was great, not only in the Holy Land.

Babs Barron's article complements Chuck Volpe's, and her prescription for change is the right one, possibly the only right one. It would be wonderful if South Africa's political and Anglican religious leaders read Benji Shulman's Zionism in District Six and Other Stories of Africa and Israel'. I hope and pray that at least some will. The memory of the righteous is a blessing, and biographical articles as Hazel Frankel's 'Sarah' contribute to our blessings for those intelligent enough to devote the time to read. 'A Just Society...' demonstrates ways that South African Jews can and do continue to contribute to the country's welfare, without compromising with the antisemitic cancer within that society. I wish that the excellence of the colour covers could also be applied when presenting such compelling artwork.

I had forgotten I. B. Singer's background, and was delighted with the short Gloria Sandak-Lewin mini-biography. The Heifetz story needs one comment: After Strauss's death, it has been revealed that he was not really a Nazi, and that behind the scenes he did try to help certain Jewish musicians, on occasion successfully.

David Saks' review of Genesis and Genes expresses the outlook of most 'Modern' or 'Centrist' Orthodox teachers, whether they are Rabbis or other teachers of religion or scientists and engineers. Without reading the book, it does appear that this outlook has done much to shape my own life. I sometimes wish the term 'Relevant Orthodox' be used!

My earlier comment about the relationship between Muslims and Jews equally applies to Simon-Sebag Montefiore's book on Jerusalem and Gary Selikow's review. It must be difficult for any Britain, even if Jewish, and certainly not antisemitic if not Jewish, to fully understand the tremendous guilt Britain has for bringing strength to Islamic fundamentalism, just as the British population still has not understood its government's role in creating the conditions that led to Hitler's rise and in closing gates that would have saved so many Jewish lives. Many of these Colonial and Foreign Office officials could easily have served as 'Eichmann's Men' (reviewed by Ralph Zulman) if they had been born German instead of British. And many British and many others apparently have not learned that when you encourage Arab antisemitism (the BDS crowd, the BBC, the Guardian and other media distorters), as well as such events as the 2001 Durban charade) you also encourage hatred and its resulting violence against the minority Christian populations.

David Lloyd (ben Yaacov Yehuda) Klepper
Jerusalem

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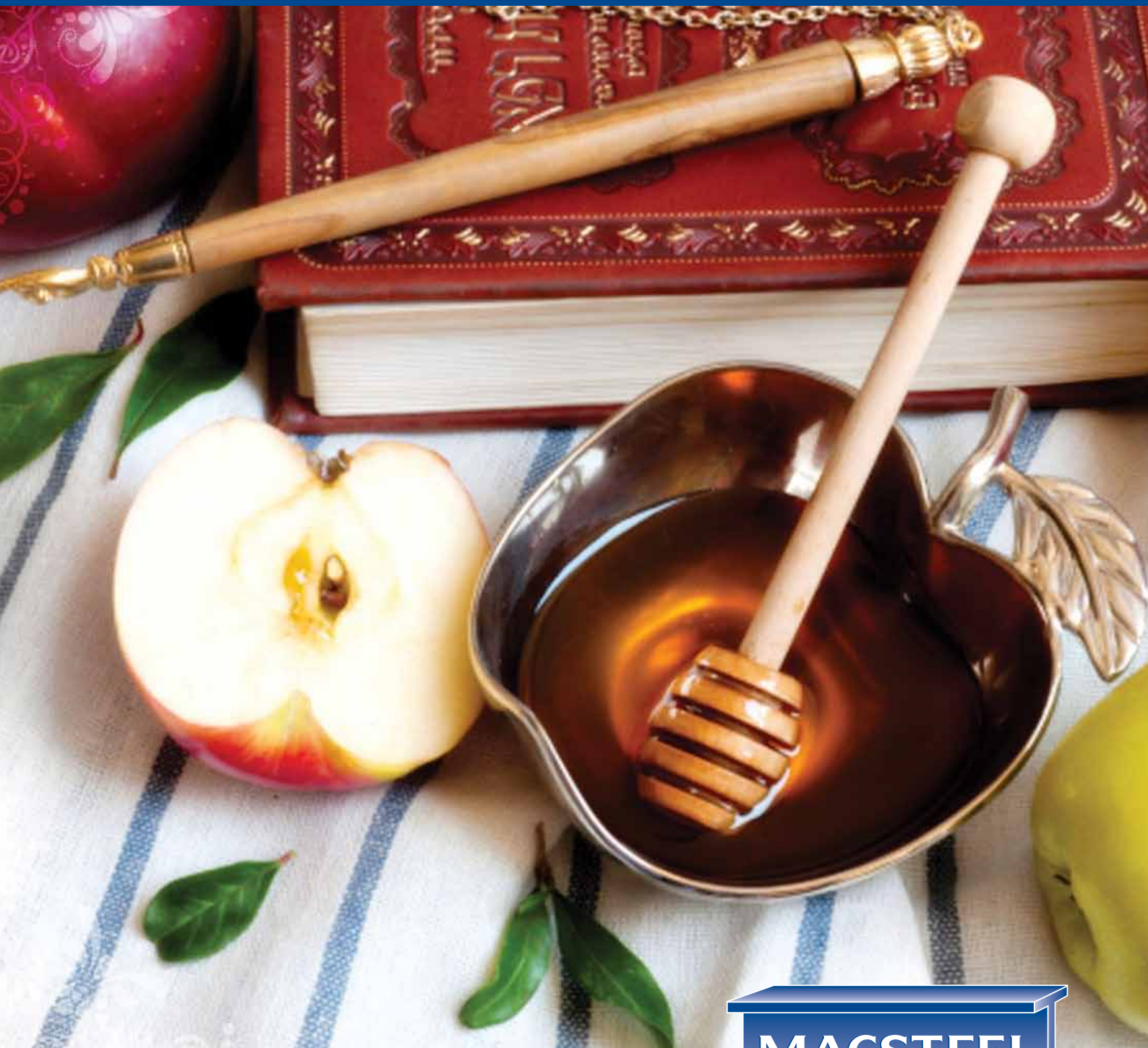
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