

JEWISH AFFAIRS

Rosh Hashanah 2014



South Africa - 20 Years of Democracy



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JEWISH AFFAIRS

MISSION

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.

JEWISH AFFAIRS will promote Jewish cultural and creative achievement in South Africa, and consider Jewish traditions and heritage within the modern context. It aims to provide future researchers with a window on the community's reaction to societal challenges. In this way the journal hopes critically to explore, and honestly to confront, problems facing the Jewish community both in South Africa and abroad, by examining national and international affairs and their impact on South Africa.

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.

The columns of JEWISH AFFAIRS will therefore be open to all shades of opinion. The views expressed by the contributors will be their own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor, the Editorial Board or the Publishers.

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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Former President Thabo Mbeki speaking at the memorial service for Nelson Mandela, Oxford Synagogue, December 2013.

Original, unpublished essays of between 1 000 and 6 000 words on all subjects are invited, and should be sent to:

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1987



South Africa's first black female CA qualifies at KPMG; Nonkululeko Gobodo qualifies at KPMG

1988



KPMG invests in the CA-Eden Trust; Trust to seek out potential CA's from previously disadvantaged backgrounds (today the Thuthuka Bursary Fund)

2002



KPMG's Independent Transformation Advisory Board; Board established and chaired by Dawn Makhobo

1994



KPMG appoints first black partner; Arvind Hari

2002



KPMG merges with KMMT; The first merger of substance between an international firm and a leading black accounting firm

2003



Appointment of black directors; KPMG admits 50% new black directors

2006



KPMG launches the Growth Acceleration Programme; A transformation skills programme for 20 unemployed B.Com graduates within the tax and advisory domain

2007



Appointment of Moses Kgosana as CEO; The first of the 'Big Four' accounting firms to appoint a black African CEO

2008



Enterprise Development Initiatives; Established an EDI project focusing on technical skills development and soft skills training to small black-owned firms.

2009



KPMG Staff Empowerment Trust; The first of the 'Big Four' accounting firms to deliver equity value to staff and has distributed over R50 million in dividends to over 400 black staff

2010



KPMG achieves AAA level 2 BEE rating; The first of the 'Big Four' accounting firms to achieve AAA rating

2011



Winner of the Support Services Sector at the Metropolitan Oliver Empowerment Awards; Prestigious accolade for progressive transformation activity

2011



Appointment of Tantaswa Fubu as Executive Director, Head of HR and Transformation; The first of the 'Big Four' accounting firms to appoint a black African female as Head of People and Transformation

2011



Appointment of Edson Magondo as Head of Audit The first of the big four accounting firms to appoint a black African as Head of Audit

2012



Awarded Top Gender Empowered Company Award and Financial Sector category Award at the Top Women in Business Awards; Acknowledgement of strides taken by KPMG in the empowerment of women

2012



KPMG launches a transformation goal cascaded to all staff members as part of performance management processes; A ground-breaking performance management goal influencing staff remuneration that entrenches the value of transformation firm-wide

2013



KPMG launches the Prestigious Internship Programme; A public-private partnership to provide employment for 64 graduates

2013



Winner of the Honourary Award in the Consulting industry at the Top Women in Business Awards; Awarded to companies that have maintained and exceeded normal practice over a 10 year period in gender empowerment activities

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY

In September 1993, a prominent newspaper columnist suggested that for most consumers, cellular phones were about as “necessary as the hula hoop, the yo-yo and battery-operated luminous socks” and dismissed them as “executive toys” for the rich.

Fast forward 20 years and the cell phone has become an indispensable tool used by more than four billion people worldwide. In South Africa, there are now more than 60 million of these devices in use and the demand is growing day by day.

The mobile revolution became a reality in South Africa at 05h00 on 1 June 1994 when Vodacom activated the phones of more than 36 000 subscribers for the first time ever. Essentially, it was estimated that the market could potentially grow to 250 000 subscribers. By the end of 1995, this was surpassed with 400 000 cell phones in use in the country. Within four years, Vodacom alone had more than one million customers. Twenty years after the network was first lit up, Vodacom now has over 33 million customers in South Africa.

Vodacom also has a history of firsts. The company was the first in the world to launch prepaid services on an intelligent network platform, making mobile communications accessible to all South Africans. It was the first local network operator to offer services like international roaming, fax and data communication, voicemail, emergency services and a 3G network. In 2012, Vodacom was the first South African telecommunication operator to launch a Long Term Evolution (LTE) better known as 4G high speed data network.

Born into the new democracy Vodacom’s goal has been to provide all South Africans with access to communication services. Delivering on this promise, the company has invested in excess of R70 billion to establish a world-class network that has more than 10 000 towers and covers 99.8% of the population.

Innovative product development that delivers real value to customers is a key aspect of Vodacom’s strategy. To date, the company has a range of integrated postpaid and Top Up plans. These plans include a data allocation as well as SMS and voice minutes. On the prepaid, Vodacom recently launched Power Bundles, which provide customers, particularly those on tight budgets, with exactly what they need, when they need it and at an affordable price.. These bite-size bundles have been highly popular with around half of all prepaid usage now stemming from bundles.

As a proudly South African company, Vodacom is more than just a telecoms operator. Over the past 20 years, Vodacom has been working to address some of the country’s most pressing humanitarian challenges by making use of mobile technology as a basis for innovative solutions. Through its corporate social investment (CSI) division, Vodacom Foundation, Vodacom has contributed over R800 million in community programmes that cover education, health and security. The Vodacom Foundation celebrates its fifteenth birthday this year and is one of the most impactful social initiatives in South Africa.

By providing its customers with the best network, the best value and the best service, Vodacom is committed to continuing to deliver on its core purpose of connecting people, creating possibilities and changing lives for the next 20 years to come.



JEWISH AFFAIRS

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DAYAN RABBI DENNIS ISAACS

Isaac Reznik

Rabbi Dr. Dennis Isaacs - HaRav David Meir ben Yitzhak, of Blessed Memory - was born and educated in Johannesburg. After matriculating, with distinction in Hebrew, he attended the Rabbi Zlotnick Avida Teachers' Seminary of the SA Board of Jewish Education, where he qualified as a Hebrew teacher. Thereafter, he proceeded to London, where he studied at Jews' College for five years and obtained a Minister's diploma, as well as a BA (Hons) from London University.

On his return to South Africa, Rabbi Isaacs served for two years as Assistant Minister to the late Chief Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz, ztl, in the Great Synagogue. He was then appointed Minister of the Cyrildene/Observatory Ext. Hebrew Congregation, where he served for thirty four years.

Rabbi Isaacs obtained *semicha* from the late Rabbi Shlomo Rosenzweig, then head of the Johannesburg Beth Din, Rabbi A Hilewitz, then head of the Hebrew Teachers' seminary, and Rabbi Jacob Newman. He also furthered his other studies, obtaining an M.A. and thereafter a Ph.D degree from the University of the Witwatersrand through the Department of Hebrew under the late Rabbi Prof Dr. Salo Rappoport. In 1970, he was appointed as registrar to the Johannesburg Beth Din and as a Dayan in 1986, and continued to work in that capacity virtually until his dying day.

From his childhood, Rabbi Isaacs dedicated his life to the Synagogue. His knowledge of Judaism, teaching background and ability to articulate and write fluently in English were formidable gifts. In the pulpit, he was supreme, a brilliant orator, and always carefully prepared his sermons. A prolific writer, he contributed to many publications, including to *Jewish Affairs*.

The Johannesburg in which Rabbi Isaacs served as a spiritual leader was far more difficult and demanding than is our community today. This writer spent many hours with Rabbi Isaacs, and both of us had in common an ardent and keen understanding of South African Jewish history. We would spend many hours at his office discussing Jewish affairs, as well as a wide spectrum of other subjects - classical music, art and reading, particularly journals of Jewish interest. All this, along with his writings on Jewish literature and communal activities, testify to the many facets of Rabbi Isaacs' cultural background. He was the epitome of a "scholar and a gentleman", and in all the years that knew him, I never once heard him speak badly about anyone.

Yiheizichra baruch, May his memory be for a blessing and may his life serve as a legacy for all of us.



Afrika Tikkun
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Nelson Mandela

Patron-in-Chief in Memorium



AFRIKA TIKKUN – FROM A SMALL ACORN DOES AN OAK TREE GROW

Ann Harris reflects on twenty years of development: 1994 – 2014

In the exciting days of 1993-4 when the New South Africa burst onto the world scene, Dr Bertie Lubner and the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris found themselves to be of one mind. If the vibrant South African Jewish Community was to find its place in the new democracy and contribute in a meaningful manner to the upliftment of many disadvantaged citizens, it must find a way to share its talent for organisation and its many communal and personal skills.

Nobody should ever think that in the sad days before 1990, the idea of assistance to those who were suffering was unknown. There are many folk of that era who must always be remembered for their personal, corporate and communal help to the poor in that difficult time. But there was no coordinated communal body which showed what the Jewish Community had to offer And so Tikkun, now Afrika Tikkun, was born.

These two indefatigable and ever optimistic founders were soon joined by Herby Rosenberg, Arnold Forman and me in Johannesburg plus Jack Tworetsky and the late Benny Reich in Cape Town, together with a small band of a dozen workers.

But where to begin? The numbers were colossal and the needs manifold.

If truth be told, our first years were simply spent reacting to disaster – collecting basic necessities for victims of flood and fire, poverty and disease. While we tried to look ahead to more ambitious goals, we did not have the experience and expertise to make a meaningful impact. But as the century waned, we began to make strong ties with Community Based Organisations in the townships and working relationships with local, provincial and national government departments. We learned to listen to what was needed and by the turn of the millennium, we knew that our work was to be in the field of holistic family care. What else has given Jewish families strength throughout the ages?

Our beneficiaries recognised and admired that and were happy to work with us.

Today, our six country-wide Centres of Excellence provide family support “from Cradle to Career” – not only feeding and clothing, healthcare and sport, but educational support at all school levels and necessary social intervention for every age group. Our ultimate intervention lies in the training and development of young people, with a view to achieving career readiness, deployment into job opportunities; culminating in financial independence.

The goal of our professional staff is to strengthen communities through strong and caring families. We try to give the same standard of care in the Afrika Tikkun centres as our own community.

So may it be for the next twenty years!



Late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris
Co-Founder



Bertie Lubner
Co-Founder & Chairman



Herby Rosenberg
Executive Deputy Chairman



Marc Lubner
CEO



Arnold Forman
Financial Director

FROM DE KLERK TO ZUMA - SOUTH AFRICAN JEWRY IN THE TRANSITION ERA

*

David Saks

7 May 2014 gave South Africans born after the country's transition to multi-racial democracy in 1994 their first opportunity of voting in national and provincial elections. So far as members of this 'Born Free' generation had been concerned, living in a country where fundamental democratic freedoms are staunchly upheld and unfair discrimination, whether based on racial or other grounds, constitutionally prohibited was something largely taken for granted. By contrast, those old enough to remember the apartheid era, as well as the years of uncertainty immediately preceding the democratic transition, would know how far South Africa had come since then. They would also be far more aware of how fragile were those achievements, and of the truth of the famous aphorism (attributed to, amongst others, Thomas Jefferson) that "the price of freedom is eternal vigilance".

South Africa's first-ever non-racial democratic elections on 27 April 1994 formally marked the passing of white minority control to majority rule. It was the culmination of a process that had begun a little over four years before, when President F W de Klerk turned the political scenario on its head by rescinding the thirty year-old ban on the African National Congress and other political organisations. The abolition of those restrictions ushered in at a stroke a new era of negotiations that for the first time involved representatives of the entire population. The effect was like the bursting of a dam; the ruling National Party quickly found that it could not put the genie back in the bottle even if it wanted to, and gradually became resigned to the role of negotiating itself out of power.

Reactions to the De Klerk revolution naturally varied. Amongst the black population, there was unrestrained euphoria; amongst whites, the mood ranged from cautious optimism to baffled fear and fury. Generally speaking, Jewish reactions fell into the first category, and not just because Jews tended to be on the liberal-left of the political spectrum. By the close of the 1980s, South

Africa's economy was in free fall, with losses to capital flight amounting to several billions each year, international sanctions being stepped up and foreign investment steadily dropping off. Countrywide political unrest was continuing apace, despite crackdowns by the state involving not just the police but the military (in whose operations in the unsettled townships many young Jews, together with other white conscripts, were compelled to take part). As a result, the Jewish population was shrinking rapidly as its younger members in particular departed for safer and more prosperous shores – Australia, in the main, as well as England, Israel, the United States and Canada. The 1970s had been the first decade in a century where Jewish numbers did not increase; the 1980s was the first in which they actually diminished, and by a significant margin. According to the national census of 1980, there were just under 120 000 professing Jews in South Africa; in 1991, according to the findings of a major socio-demographic survey conducted by Allie Dubb, the number had dropped to somewhere between 92 000 and 106 000.¹ Whatever the future might hold, therefore, most Jews welcomed De Klerk's reforms as a step in the right direction.

From a particularly Jewish perspective, the new era did not start well. Fearful of what the changing political landscape portended, white right-wingers countrywide launched a series of demonstrations, in the course of which such antisemitic demonstrations as burning Israeli flags and blaming Jews in general for the selling out of the white race featured prominently. The community also received a jolt from the 'liberationist' camp when the newly released Nelson Mandela was photographed warmly embracing Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat. It was an indication that the Jewish community's longstanding Zionist loyalties would, to say the least, come under pressure in future.

As it happened, antisemitism on the right tended to manifest at a low level following this initial flare-up. The reality was that blacks and 'Communists', however so defined, were the primary bogeymen on the radar of this constituency. After the 1994 elections, the white right was finished as a political factor, and antisemitic activity from this quarter has long ceased to pose any serious threat to SA Jewry. In 1990, however, no-one knew how far this shadowy

David Saks is Associate Director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and Editor of Jewish Affairs. The above article has been adapted from the chapter he contributed to the book Liberation Diaries – Reflections on Twenty Years of Democracy (2014), reviewed in this issue by Naomi Musiker.

constituency might go in its determination to reverse the course of history and cling on to its privileges.



Graffiti on a grave in Bloemfontein's old Jewish cemetery, 2010, a today comparatively rare instance of old-style right-wing antisemitism in post-liberation South Africa.

So far as the Arafat incident went, Jews had to adapt to the reality that the incoming regime would be a great deal less friendly to Israel than they would like, as well as the existence of strong support for the Palestinian cause within those circles. The community also had to pay the price for the close relationship that had emerged between Israel and the apartheid regime in the years following the 1973 Yom Kippur War, something that would naturally be exploited to the hilt by local anti-Israel campaigners. What helped to assuage its anxiety was the ANC's policy, which prevails to this day, of recognising the legitimacy of the State of Israel and of its right to exist within secure borders alongside an independent Palestinian state based in the West Bank and Gaza Strip territories. It further helped that South Africa's transition largely coincided with the launch of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The Oslo Accords, signed a mere six months before the first democratic elections, held out the hope – sadly illusory, as things proved – that just as blacks and whites in South Africa had come together to finally resolve all the issues between them, so were Israelis and Palestinians doing likewise. In reality, there was little coherent basis for comparing the two situations. For those who better understood the complex dynamics of the Israeli-Arab conflict, the collapse of the Oslo peace process in September 2000 and the sustained period of violence that followed it will have come as no surprise. In South Africa, the failure of the peace process resulted in a pronounced hardening of attitudes towards Israel within the ruling party, which in turn led to a number of verbal spats between government and the Jewish leadership. Despite this, the Jewish community's traditionally strong Zionist loyalties have shown little sign of weakening, beyond the emergence from its ranks of a small number of left-leaning dissidents who have involved themselves in anti-Israel activities.



SA Jewry continued to be staunchly pro-Zionist, despite the negative attitude of the ruling party and the emergence of a vociferous anti-Israel fringe from within its own ranks following the collapse of the Oslo peace process. The second picture was taken during the notorious UN World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban in September 2001.

Notwithstanding these early hiccups, the leadership of the major Jewish communal organisations, in particular the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, from the outset took a decision to actively identify with the transition process and to lead the Jewish community in doing likewise. For the SAJBD, this entailed a pronounced departure from its previous stance of political neutrality, for which it had been much criticised by progressive members of the community during the apartheid era. Whatever the failures of the past, it was recognised that the time had come to seize the moment and join with other South Africans in forging a new, and hopefully better society for all. For this, attaining universal democratic rights was just the first step; the next crucial stage had to be to help address the huge socio-economic imbalances in society, the legacy of over a century and a half of white minority domination.

To an extent, the decision of the Jewish leadership to become part of the transition process was aimed at allaying the inevitable feelings of anxiety that were rife within their constituency. Rather than remaining passive bystanders, with all the feeling of helplessness and irrelevance that

this would engender, Jews were urged to become constructive agents in their own destiny. The mere fact of becoming positively involved would act as a morale booster. Certainly, it would be an effective antidote to the mood of fatalism and helplessness that had exercised so baleful an influence during the apartheid era. A positive attitude was needed even after the De Klerk reforms, since during the early 1990s, political violence and economic decline, and with it Jewish emigration, continued apace. Certainly, many Jews welcomed the dawn of a new era and sought to play a constructive role in bringing it about, but others feared that the country's destiny was to become yet another authoritarian, dysfunctional failed state of the type so common in post-colonial Africa.

South Africa's first-ever democratic, non-racial elections on 27-8 April 1994 turned out to be an inspiring success, confounding the doomsday predictions of the Afro-pessimists. The fact that the elections themselves went ahead so peacefully was remarkable enough, but the most miraculous aspect of the transition was that it ended at a stroke the ruinous political violence that had wracked the country for over a decade. This was followed by what might be termed the 'Mandela Honeymoon', a period of general thankfulness and relief amongst whites and non-whites alike that South Africa's seemingly insurmountable racial divisions had at last been resolved and that all now were equal partners in building a better society. The inspiring leadership of Nelson Mandela, who went to extraordinary lengths to reassure whites that they had nothing to fear under black majority rule, was a significant factor in all of this.



President Mandela addressing a meeting of the SAJBD Cape Council, From left, Elliot Osrin, NRM, Michael Bagraim (Chairman) and Jonathan Silke (Chairman Western Province Zionist Council).

Uplifting as the first elections were, in practical terms the hard work really commenced afterwards. The legacy of apartheid included enormous gaps between black and white, both economic and educational. The challenge now was to begin closing those gaps as quickly as possible. During this time, Jewish business leaders became much involved with supporting outreach and upliftment initiatives promoted by Mandela.

The businessman, philanthropist and Jewish communal leader Bertie Lubner, was, with Chief Rabbi Harris, responsible for the establishment of Tikkun (today Afrika Tikkun), a Jewish-headed initiative aimed at assisting those previously disadvantaged under apartheid and which was very much inspired by Mandela's appeal to the Jewish community to assist in this regard.²

These initiatives initially met with some opposition in Jewish circles, given the mounting financial needs of Jewish welfare and other communal bodies. Over time, however, it came to be broadly accepted that concrete actions not just by government but by civil society as a whole were needed to address the legacy of apartheid. Today a wide range of Jewish communal bodies, including synagogues, Zionist organisations, youth movements and schools, include social outreach in the wider community as a component of their day-to-day activities. At the SAJBD's national conference in 2011, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe appealed to the Jewish community to bring to bear its skills and resources to assist in the areas of job creation, education and skills development. The SAJBD responded by launching its 'Jubuntu' project, which documented what Jewish organisations and individuals were doing in these areas and provided practical guidelines as to how the lessons learned through these projects could be replicated and expanded upon by others working in the field.³

Central to the nation-building process was the drafting of a new national Constitution, one whose Bill of Rights would safeguard the hard-won freedoms of the liberation struggle. Civil society organisations were invited to make input into this process, and the SAJBD, through its Constitution and Legislation Subcommittee, became much involved. In particular, the SAJBD emphasized the necessity of the right to freedom of expression being so qualified as to exclude "propaganda for war, the incitement of imminent violence or the advocacy of hatred based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm". This limitation was ultimately incorporated into the relevant clause in the Bill of Rights, and is a crucial component of the legislation prohibiting what is regarded as 'hate speech' in South Africa.⁴ The SAJBD subsequently also made important input into the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000, likewise in the area of prohibiting certain forms of hate speech. It has had occasion to invoke these clauses on numerous occasions in the course of confronting antisemitic discourse in the public domain, including in the media and political arena.

In various other areas of public policy the Jewish community has, at the representative level, likewise sought to play a meaningful part in the formulation of public policy, the fostering of a robust human rights culture and identification with national symbols. Its representatives have been

involved in a range of civil society initiatives, amongst them the Hate Crimes Working Group, the Right2Know Campaign and interfaith initiatives such as the annual Reconciliation Day Interfaith Walk in Cape Town. The countrywide attacks on foreign migrants that took place in the early part of 2008 elicited a swift response from the Jewish community, whose multifaceted relief efforts on behalf of the victims were coordinated by the SAJBD in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.

The SAJBD has also sought to instill a greater identification with South African symbols and holidays. For example, in 2005 it held a commemorative evening to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Freedom Charter and the following year led a Jewish delegation to participate in the 30th anniversary of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. For the 2010 FIFA World Cup, it coordinated an ambitious 'Jewish 2010' project to help community members feel part of the excitement as well as to involve visiting Jewish football fans in local Jewish activities. In the period leading up to South Africa's fifth national and provincial elections, the SAJBD ran a pre-election 'Make Us Count' campaign, a series of public functions, volunteer drives and educational initiatives to encourage Jewish involvement in and identify with both the election process and the marking of twenty years of democracy in their country. The campaign commenced in November 2013 with the launch of a nation-wide voter registration drive, moved on to, amongst other things, the hosting in Johannesburg and Durban of pre-election debates between representatives of the major competing parties and culminated in the assembling of South Africa's first-ever multi-faith, multi-ethnic and transnational Election Observer Team. Officially accredited by the Independent Electoral Commission, the team monitored events at some 260 voting stations in five cities and across three provinces.

Of the Zionist youth movements, Habonim Dror has been especially involved in outreach work in the wider society. While it can be said that Jews



Habonim members who volunteered for the SAJBD election monitoring team at the King David Linkfield Primary School polling station.



Commemorating 50 years of the Freedom Charter, 2005. SAJBD Gauteng Council Chairman Zev Krengel with Northern Province premier, Advocate Ngoako Ramahlodi, and Justice Albie Sachs.



Jewish participants in the 30th anniversary commemoration of the 1976 Soweto Uprising, 2006.

have responded fairly well to initiatives aimed at the socio-economic upliftment of disadvantaged South Africans, a broader identification with the post-liberation national culture nevertheless continues to be lacking. In this respect, Jewish attitudes tend to mirror those of the larger white population of which they are a part.

Since 1990, a process of re-examining the mainstream community's political behavior under apartheid and specifically its attitudes towards the anti-Jews who had been involved in the liberation struggle has been underway. This has taken the form of museum exhibits, academic symposia, panel discussions at national and regional conferences and numerous books and articles. A recent event was a round-table discussion involving SAJBD President Zev Krengel and anti-apartheid veterans Dennis Goldberg, Albie Sachs and Anne-Marie Wolpe held at the historic Liliesleaf heritage site in Rivonia. By no means all community members have been comfortable with all of this. Veteran communal leader Solly Kessler had been one of the more progressive voices during the apartheid era, but one occasion felt compelled to warn against too much "breast-beating and self-flagellation" over past events. Others asked why Jews should be continually excoriating themselves over their collective behavior during the apartheid years when no other

sector of the white population was doing likewise. It was further argued that Jews, as a traditionally persecuted minority who in addition had been targeted by antisemitic measures by the pre-1948 National Party, at least had had something of excuse to remain politically passive.

On the other side of the spectrum, former Jewish activists (few of whom, it should be noted, had ever been much involved in Jewish communal life) objected to what they saw as mainstream Jewry's claiming credit for what they had done to oppose apartheid now that it was fashionable to do so after having signally failed to support them at the time. Such individuals also tended to be far more critical of Israel and of the Zionist ideology in general, which has generated a fair amount of tension within the community.

South African Jews are passionate (to the point, perhaps, of obsessiveness) about recording their own history. Since 1994, a stream of popular and scholarly books has appeared, not only on Jewish involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle (most notably Gideon Shimoni's *Community and Conscience – The Jews in Apartheid South Africa*, 2004) but on such subjects as the legacy of Jewish life in the country districts and the development of Zionism and Judaism in South Africa. In addition, numerous autobiographical works by prominent community members have appeared, including of such former anti-Apartheid activists as Joe Slovo, Ronnie Kasrils, Norman Levy, Lorna Levy, Ben Turok, Rika Hodgson, Baruch Hirson, Isie Maisels and Lionel Bernstein. The same period has seen the establishment of the South African Jewish Museum in Cape Town and of the South African Holocaust Foundation, whose centers in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg communicate to school children and the public at large the dangers of prejudice and the values of tolerance.

The mainstream religious leadership has also sought to become more involved in promoting humanitarian and ethical values in society. Chief Rabbi Harris, whose dynamic leadership during the transition years saw him receive, amongst other things, the OBE shortly before his passing in 2005, continued to play a leading role in this regard. His successor Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein has been involved in high-level inter-faith structures. Amongst other writings, he has authored a "Bill of Responsibilities", which has been widely adopted within the various faith communities. Within the more strictly Orthodox sectors of the community, however, there has been a general turning inwards, and focusing on specifically Jewish communal issues. Meanwhile, Orthodox Judaism's extraordinary post-war revival continues apace, especially in Johannesburg. The strength of traditional religious life and its growing reach into the broader community has been demonstrated by, amongst other things, the enthusiastic response to the annual 'Sinai Indaba', involving an

impressive array of international speakers, and the 2013 'Shabbat Project' in which a significant proportion of the community observed Shabbat according to strict Halacha for the first time. Both initiatives emanated from the Office of the Chief Rabbi. For the more secular/cultural minded, Limmud SA was introduced in 2009 to provide lectures, presentations and debate on various aspects of Jewish art, literature, thought (not excluding Judaism, but including non-Orthodox perspectives), politics and history. Because of its featuring non-Orthodox presentations on Judaism Chief Rabbi Goldstein, with the backing of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues, imposed a ban on Orthodox rabbis participating in Limmud. This continues to generate a fair amount of controversy, although in general the past two decades have seldom seen the kind of confrontations between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jewish groupings as occurred in bygone years.



Participants in the weekly Avos U' Vonim ('Fathers and Sons') post-Shabbat learning programme, Johannesburg.

As the organization mandated to protect the civil rights of South African Jewry, the SAJBD remains responsible for responding to all instances of antisemitism. In this regard, such quasi-government institutions as the SA Human Rights Commission and Broadcasting Complaints Commission of SA have proven to be effective vehicles through which to address these issues. A very positive aspect of South Africa has also been the dramatically low rate of antisemitic incidents recorded annually when compared with figures in other countries, amongst them France, Canada, the UK and Australia. Apart from rarely being much above the fifty-mark, as opposed to averaging over 500 in the aforementioned countries, the nature of the incidents recorded seldom takes the form of physical violence or serious acts of vandalism. That this is so testifies to the strong anti-racist ethos that South Africans have succeeded in fostering post-1994 (although even prior to that it is fair to record that for many years, antisemitic sentiment had rarely translated into actual acts of hostility against Jewish individuals and institutions). It is likewise important that South Africa has adopted a "unity in diversity" approach

to nationhood rather than following a melting pot model in which all ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural differences are subsumed. One of the vehicles aimed at protecting and promoting different forms of group identity is the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Commission, set up in terms of the new Constitution in 2002. As recorded elsewhere in this *Jewish Affairs* issue, the first deputy chairperson of this body was former SAJBD President Marlene Bethlehem.

The fact that antisemitism levels have been comparatively low in South Africa does not mean that serious cases of anti-Jewish behavior have been entirely absent. Over the past two decades, there have indeed been a number of such incidents, all triggered by events taking place internationally rather than within South Africa. During the late 1990s, Jewish institutions being amongst those targeted in the spate of terrorist bombings carried out in Cape Town by suspected Islamist militants. In mid-1997, a Jewish bookshop in Cape Town was firebombed because a Jewish woman in Israel had displayed an offensive image of the prophet Mohammed and the following year Cape Town's Wynberg synagogue was bombed immediately after a US bombing raid on Iraq. Since the beginning of the century, fortunately, attacks on Jews have taken less dangerous forms, such as verbal abuse, hate mail and the daubing of offensive graffiti. Jewish cemeteries, particularly in the country areas, are frequently vandalized, although in most cases casual vagrancy or juvenile delinquency rather than antisemitic motives have been the probable cause.

Following the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in September 2000, anti-Israel rhetoric has frequently crossed over into offensive and sometimes inflammatory rhetoric about Jews in general and South African Jews in particular. This has primarily occurred during times of conflict between Israel and its neighbors, such as during the 2006 war against Hezbollah in Lebanon, the three-week war against Hamas and other Islamist groupings in Gaza commencing at the end of 2008 and, in particular, during the latest conflict with Gaza in July-August 2014. The early months of 2009 saw antisemitism in the country reach levels not seen since the 1940s. In January 2009, Deputy Minister of International Relations Fatima Hajaig caused an international storm when she said (to enthusiastic cheers) at a Lenasia protest rally that the Western powers were being controlled by Jewish money power, hence their failure to come to the rescue of the Palestinians. Hajaig was subsequently censured by the Cabinet and compelled to apologise by Acting President Kgalema Motlanthe. Following the elections several months later, she was the only member of the previous Cabinet not to be reappointed. That same year, the SA Human Rights Commission upheld a complaint by the SAJBD of antisemitic hate speech against COSATU International

Relations spokesperson Bongani Masuku. The latter, in a series of inflammatory speeches in the aftermath of the Gaza operation, inter alia said that COSATU would 'make life hell' for any Jews who persisted in supporting Israel and that those Jewish families whose members were serving in the IDF would be especially targeted. Masuku, with the full backing of COSATU, refused to comply with the SAHRC's ruling that he apologise for his statements, with the result that the Commission instituted court action against him. The case will be heard in the latter half of 2014.

If 2009 was a difficult year in terms of antisemitic activity, 2014 has unfortunately been a great deal worse. In July alone, more antisemitic incidents were recorded by the SAJBD and Community Security Organisation than in the whole of 2013, and for the first time, it looks like the final total for the year will not be far off the annual figures logged in other major Diaspora communities, such as Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. In large part, the now ubiquitous role played by the social media has facilitated this unprecedented rise in threats and hate speech against the Jewish community. In response, the SAJBD has laid civil and/or criminal charges against various perpetrators, including against COSATU Provincial Secretary (Western Cape) Tony Ehrenreich. On 13 August the latter, via his Facebook site, described the Jewish Board of Deputies as being "complicit in the murder of the people in Gaza" and went on to write that the time had come "to say very clearly that if a woman or child is killed in Gaza, then the Jewish board of deputies, who are complicit, will feel the wrath of the People of SA with the age old biblical teaching of an eye for an eye".



One of many cases of vitriolic antisemitism disseminated via the social media during the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict. Perpetrators, in the case of the 'Phumza Zondi' above, sometimes assumed fake identities to avoid detection.

If it has been necessary to sometimes adopt a confrontational stance when Jewish civil rights are threatened, the Jewish leadership has nevertheless remained committed to participating in the post-apartheid nation building process, whether in the

constitutional, socio-economic, political or civil society arena. Indeed, it is recognized that such participation helps to build the kind of bridges of friendship and understanding through which the upholding of Jewish civil liberties becomes that much easier.

Notwithstanding all of this, there remains a persistent strain of negativity within Jewish circles, which in turn is reflective of common attitudes within the broader white population. The extent to which the upsurge in violent crime has undermined the community's faith in the future can never be over-stated. Since the early 1990s, South Africa's levels of violent crime have consistently been amongst the world's highest, with statistics relating to car hijackings and home invasions reaching unprecedented levels. A survey on attitudes within the Jewish community conducted in 1998 found that of 267 respondents indicating that they were fairly or very likely to emigrate within the next five years, 211 cited 'personal safety concerns' as being the most, or one of the most important reasons for wishing to do so.⁵ Johannesburg, home to two-thirds of South African Jewry, was especially hard hit. It is certain that had this dire situation not been addressed, the high rates of Jewish emigration in the last quarter of the previous century would have continued, and this in turn would by now have probably reached the point of no return. The examples of once viable Jewish communities in such post-colonial African countries as Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe show that once a Jewish exodus gains a certain degree of momentum, it becomes impossible to halt, let alone reverse. What dramatically changed the situation was the extraordinary success of the Community Active Patrol (CAP), a crime-fighting initiative providing supplementary policing in areas where Jews are concentrated through a partnership between the community and security professionals. CAP was established at the behest of the Office of the Chief Rabbi and the Community Security Organisation (CSO), a Jewish civil defence body set up under the auspices by the SAJBD in 1993. In the beginning, it operated only in the suburb of Glenhazel and adjoining areas in 2006. After the first year, violent crime in the area had dropped by 79%.⁶ Thereafter, the model was progressively implemented in other areas of Johannesburg where Jews were largely based, and with comparably impressive results. The enduring success of the CAP initiative, in short, has transformed the position of Johannesburg Jewry, not to mention that of their non-Jewish neighbours.

Crime, while the most serious concern of the Jewish population post-1994, has not been the only one. Alongside it have gone dissatisfaction over declining public services, high level and now ubiquitous corruption and, in common with other whites, resentment over racially discriminatory affirmative action policies. Politically, Jews

have become progressively more marginalized. Whereas there were nine MPs of Jewish descent in the 1994 House of Assembly (one of whom, Tony Leon, served as Leader of the Opposition in the years 1999-2007), two decades later only the ANC's Ben Turok remained. The entry into Parliament of two new Jewish MPs, Democratic Alliance representatives Michael Bagraim and Darren Bergman, following the May 2014 elections may, however, be the harbinger of a new era in this regard.

Given the strong, and regrettably well-founded perception, regarding the inadequacy of public services, the Jewish community has gone about developing its own parallel institutions in such areas as security, schooling, social services and medical assistance. These have helped to maintain the kind of First World standards to which the community has become accustomed, but the strain it has placed on its resources is considerable. As a result, the sustainability of Jewish communal institutions remains a continued source of concern, and the problem will become all the more pressing should there be a renewed upsurge in emigration. Fortunately, rationalization strategies enabling organisations to share resources and avoid a costly duplication of services have been successfully implemented in all the main Jewish population centres, namely Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria, and even in Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein, where the Jewish population is now fairly small. For example, welfare in Johannesburg now falls under the umbrella of the Johannesburg Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society (Chevra Kadisha) while in Cape Town, all major fundraising takes place under the auspices of a single United Jewish Campaign.

Well over 80% of the youth of the community now attend a Jewish day school, one of the key reasons for and indications of the strength and vitality of Jewish life in the country. This does, however, mean that young Jews only begin to mix with other South Africans when they arrive at university or enter the job market. To at least partially address this, Jewish educators have sought to partner with non-Jewish schools, both at the social and social outreach level, to ensure that at least some contact is maintained. A particularly successful initiative in this regard has been the annual Cycalive event, whereby learners from Torah Academy join with those from other Gauteng schools in cycling from Johannesburg to Durban as a fundraising and friendship-building exercise.

On the threshold of the 1994 elections, it was estimated that the Jewish population had declined by nearly one-third over the previous two decades, and it continued to decline even after the democratic transition. In 1998, a survey of Jewish attitudes towards various aspects relating to South Africa was commissioned. Its results provided a sobering picture of a community whose members, and particularly its youth, increasingly no longer

saw a future for themselves in the country and either intended emigrating or were strongly considering doing so. In his address to the SAJBD on the occasion of its centenary conference in 2003, President Mbeki felt sufficiently concerned to draw attention to this and urge the community to rediscover its faith in South Africa.

In general, reports on the state of South African Jewry in international Jewish publications, backed by the undeniably depressing statistics of the time, adopted a lugubrious view of a community in crisis and on the verge of dissolution. That Jews were perceived to be giving up on the country and moving elsewhere also generated concern locally. As a controversial quip of the times had it, when the Jews start leaving, it means that trouble is coming, when the Greeks do so, it has arrived already and when the Portuguese began leaving, it's too late. Jews were thus represented as being, as it were, the proverbial canary in the mine shaft, a weather vane people whose collective antennae, sensitized by centuries of wondering and persecution, were at some level more in tune with the hidden historical forces shaping the destiny of their society.

In fact, by the time Mbeki made his speech, things were already beginning to change for the better. There had been a noteworthy drop-off in emigration, which has continued to the present day to operate at more or less normal levels (with some immigration and returning émigrés offsetting those losses). An estimated 70 000 Jews remain in South Africa, of whom around two-thirds live in Johannesburg and most of the remainder in Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria. Added to this were the unexpectedly encouraging results of a follow-up survey, conducted in 2005. This time round, a substantial majority of respondents said that they were either "very likely" or "likely" to remain in South Africa in the foreseeable future.⁷

Added to this were the impressively high levels of involvement in Jewish communal, religious and cultural life, something for which South African Jewry had always been renowned throughout the Diaspora and which, if anything, have only intensified in the years that followed. When this is seen alongside the gratifying extent to which Jews remain involved in the general affairs of the country, it can be said that for the Jewish community, the first twenty years of multiracial democracy have been essentially good ones.

Looking back on the past quarter-century, one finds that South African Jews in the main welcomed the political changes of the day and, at least at the leadership level, sought to participate alongside their fellow citizens in nation building, social upliftment and the safeguarding of the institutions of democracy. This continues to underpin how the Jewish leadership sees its role today, twenty years since the democratic transition. South Africa, despite the serious challenges that confront it, remains a politically and economically stable

society, where diversity is respected, minority rights protected and fundamental human rights scrupulously upheld. For Jews, it provides an environment in which Jewish life in all its richness and diversity has been able to thrive, while at the same time allowing them to participate fully in the affairs of the wider society. Nothing, of course, can be taken for granted. Many fear that endemic corruption and mismanagement, not to mention racial polarization and popular anger that characterizes so much of public discourse today may yet scupper the hopes and dreams of those who helped to bring about the democratic revolution. That being said, South Africa has confounded the doomsday predictions of the naysayers many times in the past. With its robust economy, resilient democratic structures, rich natural resources and sophisticated First World infrastructure, there is every reason to hope that it will continue to do so as it begins its third decade of multiracial democracy.

NOTES

- 1 Dubb, A A, *The Jewish Population of South Africa – The 1991 Sociodemographic Survey*, Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, Cape Town, 1994, pp1-3.
- 2 Saks, D, *Jewish Memories of Mandela*, SAJBD and the Umoja Foundation, 2011, vii.
- 3 Some of the main findings of the survey subsequently appeared in the book *Jubantu – Jewish Contributions to Education, Skills Development & Job Creation in South Africa*, written by SAJBD Senior Researcher Steve Gruzid and published by the SAJBD in 2013. Extracts from the book appear elsewhere in this issue.
- 4 See Kessler, S, 'The South African Constitution and the Input of the Jewish Community', *Jewish Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 2, 2000.
- 5 *Jews of the 'new South Africa': Highlights of the 1998 national survey of South African Jews*, Institute for Jewish Policy Research, in association with the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies & Research, JPR Report No 3, 1999, p20.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Bruk, Shirley, 'The Jews of South Africa: Highlights of the 2005 Attitudinal Survey', *Jewish Affairs*, Vol. 61, Rosh Hashanah 2006.

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SOUTH AFRICA'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PESACH NARRATIVE – PERSPECTIVES FROM THE 2014 SAJBD FREEDOM SEDER

Editor's Note: On 3 April 2014, as part of a series of events to mark twenty years of democracy in South Africa, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies hosted political, religious and civil society leaders and members of the media to a special Freedom Seder. The event, held at the historic Villa Arcadia premises, celebrated the twentieth anniversary of freedom in South Africa in the context of the age-old story of the liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. Speakers included legendary anti-apartheid activist Mac Maharaj, former trade unionist Johnny Copelyn, Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein and CNN Anchor Robyn Curnow (who spoke on the scourge of modern-day slavery). Introductory remarks were given by SAJBD Chairman Mary Kluk while SAJBD President Zev Krengel introduced the speakers. The following comprises an edited version of some of these presentations.

Zev Krengel



“The battle of Jo’burg”; “Stockpile mania grips shoppers”; KwaZulu simmers”; “Kissinger team threatens to quit talks”; “IFP not in the election”; “9 killed as bomb rocks Johannesburg”; “Bomb attacks on West Rand taxis”; “Oosterbrook among the slain”....

Where were you twenty years ago? Back then, I was serving as a peace monitor in the townships. I was with Ken Oosterbrook, one of the country’s leading press photographers, in Tokoza the morning he was killed. I remember seeing his body being dragged out at Natspruit Hospital.

What concerns me very much today is that we, as South Africans, do not realise how many people lost their lives, and how much people sacrificed fighting for our freedom. This freedom many people now take for granted, without remembering what their predecessors did to achieve it. We have with us tonight several of those individuals who back then were

making sure that the anticipated bloodbath as suggested by the horrific headlines of the time that I read out did not materialise.

It is often said that we are the ‘miracle nation’, and, notwithstanding that I am a religious man, it is my belief that it was ultimately the South African people who made that miracle come true. Let us not forget what confronted us back then. There were bombs going off around the country two weeks before the elections. Henry Kissinger, the world’s greatest negotiator, had given up on us. Yet we succeeded. Let us not forget the spirit of those times and how far we have come.

Chief Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein



A true democracy is messy. A true democracy is turbulent. A true democracy is a place where the dialogue and the conversation is not always so measured. It can be shrill and effusive. This is enabled by our freedom. In fact, even in the midst of a country confronting allegations of scandals – in the midst of that

is the greatest proof of what our democracy is about. Here we live in a country where there is freedom and democracy, where there are institutions of State that are vibrant, active and robust. The very anguished debates that are taking place are the proof of its vibrancy.

It is this sense of perspective that Passover teaches us and which we hand down to our children. Passover teaches us that we are not just in the here and now. We realize that more than 3 000 years ago G-d took the children of Israel out of Egypt. There is a sense of perspective. Where did we come from? We come from origins of slavery and oppression and that is there to sensitize us to the concepts and the feelings of compassion and human dignity. Passover is about a perspective and about constructing a story, a narrative. It is about seeing the larger picture.

...There is one other lesson that I would like to share this evening. This is about how seven weeks after the liberation from Egypt, the children of Israel were standing at the foot of Mount Sinai. G-d thus teaches us that after liberation from Egypt came the journey all the way to Mount Sinai to indicate that freedom was not the end, but the beginning of the journey. This sends a very interesting message and that is that freedom is also a journey to a set of values. You cannot separate freedom from responsibilities. In South Africa, together with our Bill of Rights enshrining and protecting the human rights of every citizen, we also have the Bill of Responsibilities. According to this Bill – which is not a legal but an educational document - responsibilities come with rights. The message of the Bible is that

G-d took us from Egypt directly to Mount Sinai to say that together with freedom there has to be a sense of a value system of morals, integrity and a system of law and decency. The two go hand in hand. That is the key to our freedom in South Africa today, namely that together with our rights come responsibilities, and those responsibilities devolve upon on each and every single citizen in the country.

Johnny Copelyn



Johnny Copelyn (centre) with Mac Maharaj and Zev Krengel

I remember as a child going with my grandmother to John Orrs, a large department store in Johannesburg, and coming across a black woman with a child in obvious distress. She asked, do you know where there is a toilet for black people? My Gran replied, "I'm not sure, there must be one. Have you tried the basement"? And we left them to their own devices. I learned subsequently that there simply were no toilets for blacks – not in the basement, not anywhere.

Did we have laws for infanticide in Apartheid South Africa? Obviously we did not, but the truth is for all those years one in five black children died before the age of one. What rights did workers have to defend themselves? Firstly, they had no union rights, no rights to collective bargaining. In fact, trade unions were required by law to exclude Africans from membership. When I first started working in the unions in 1974, a booklet was produced for the textile industry by the national productivity institute and I remember reading with amazement that the labour turnover of workers of less than one year's service that year was 119%. Put another way, it meant that of the several hundred workers that were hired, virtually all were fired during the course of the year. People were fired for being slow, for being 'cheeky', for being 'sullen', for being union members - for any particular reason. It was as simple as this: "You're fired, so get out". We also had separate education, and a colour bar that specifically stopped people from getting any training. We did not have a single black electrician, plumber or boiler maker. The first time a blasting certificate was issued to a person of colour was in 1988.

....In the Seder story, it says that G-d hardened Pharaoh's heart, resulting in his having no pity at all despite all the plagues that were being sent down. And the issue is, did we in South Africa find that one way or another our hearts were hardened regarding the suffering that was going on around us? For myself, the most striking fact is that as Jews, as whites in this country, we lived very comfortably, despite all the humiliation we saw around us. I do not say that we did not have any sympathy or any pity, but by and large we were pretty comfortable with the way things were. And it was not only the laws that were like that – we were like that too. I grew up in a house, for example, where our domestic had her own cup – it was an enamel cup, especially for her. Her hands were washing our cups – how else were they going to get clean? – but the idea that her lips might touch our cups was another story altogether.

That is the place where we have come from. So where are we going in South Africa?

In the Torah, Datan and Aviram complain when the Jews, on getting to the first place

on leaving Egypt, find that there is not enough water – moan, groan. They come to the Red Sea and do not know how to cross it – moan, groan. They get to the other side, and being Jews, start complaining about the food...

I think that this story from the Bible leaves us with two points to think about. One, which I have already made, is that what we, as Jews, should reflect on and never forget is how comfortable we were under apartheid. The second point is to recognise that we in South Africa have been blessed with something that was not given to the Egyptians. All free people celebrate when people who were enslaved achieve freedom, but there is another consequence and that is that the slave master is freed from his role as a slave master. In the case of the Egyptians that did not happen.

They continued to own slaves, even though they were not Jewish ones – it was a slave society. They never experienced the freedom that comes to a slave master when the slave goes free. In South Africa, we had a different opportunity. The reason is, we are now able to see how disgraceful apartheid was. There has been a certain upliftment in our own depth of humanity since we are no longer cast in the roles we used to be cast in. The result, twenty years later, is that while we are free to be like Datan and Aviram and moan as much as we like about South Africa's problems, we have also thankfully come to recognise the past as worthy of our contempt, because each of us has been granted a piece of liberation and has become somewhat more human in our country.



The King David Linksfield Primary School Choir singing *Ma Nishtana* and *Meshe'amda*.



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THE FALSE TWILIGHT OF THE TWO SOUTH AFRICAS

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Tony Leon

I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity of presenting my remarks in my home town and at a venue, the Durban Jewish Club, which so framed my childhood and early political career. It was here that I used to play tennis on a Sunday afternoon back as a schoolboy in the 1960s, and it was also here shortly after my election as Leader of the Democratic Party in 1994 that I used to address our members at conferences and where we held our eve of election rally for the Durban municipal elections in June 1996. The Club has thus been a still and enduring centre in a very turbulent and fast moving world, and in my own personal and political journey.

On the subject of this club and this community, just last week I sent a packing case of old press cuttings and speeches to the Institute of National Contemporary History at the University of the Free State, where my political papers are archived. I happened to open one of the albums from 1990, and came across the following invitation card reading: "Durban Women's Zionist League invites you to the 56th Annual General Meeting. Guest Speaker: Mr Tony Leon MP for Houghton. Subject: 'Is There a Role for Jews in South Africa?' Durban Jewish Club, Wednesday 21 February 1990 at 9.30 a.m."

I must have answered the question posed in the affirmative, for here, twenty three-plus years later, we still are and I am still the guest speaker at the same venue to the same community!

You might recall, through the mists of time, what was going on back then and there in February 1990. My address to the Durban Women's Zionist League occurred just three weeks after then President FW de Klerk detonated in parliament a speech of thermo-nuclear intensity on an unsuspecting political

landscape and to an unbelieving world that had long since written off the prospects of a negotiated, peaceful and democratic settlement being possible in apartheid South Africa. As a consequence of De Klerk turning his back on 350 years of South Africa's history, and just ten days before my lesser speech at the Durban Jewish Club, Nelson Mandela walked out of the Victor Verster Prison as a free man after 27 years of incarceration. Those were exciting but uncertain days indeed as we faced history-in-the-making, with no certainty as to how it would unfold and where it would leave the South African way of life.

Reading through the same album, I was curious to see what outcome I predicted back then for this and the larger South African community, as I, a backbench MP then commencing the first of what would be twenty years in Parliament, threw my Sangoma bones and donned the robes of Madame Rose peering into my crystal ball of South Africa's future. Political predictions are always a hazardous business, and most do not read so well later on. As Samuel Goldwyn memorably said, "Always avoid making predictions, most of all about the future".

The same album contained a short report of my Durban speech in the *Cape Argus* of 21 February 1990, under the headline, "Genie Out of the Bottle for Good, says Leon". An extract from it reads:

President de Klerk's reform initiatives would unleash their own momentum and timetables for change, which would probably consign other grand plans and timetables to oblivion in the next few months. In these circumstances it was the duty of a white politician to tell the truth that sooner rather than later South Africa was going to be governed by a government in which the majority of participants were black...

In that, I suppose safe and perhaps inevitable, prediction I was correct. The rest, as they say, is history, and has been our lived reality since April 1994. But it was not always such a certainty that we would be gathered here, in peaceful circumstances, although doubtless in fewer numbers than back then, some twenty three years later.

Tony Leon is a former Member of Parliament who served as leader of the Official Opposition (Democratic Alliance) in the years 1999-2007. From 2009-2012, he was South Africa's Ambassador to Argentina. His latest book, *Opposite Mandela*, is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. This article is adapted from his keynote address delivered on 23 July 2013 at the Council of KwaZulu Natal Jewry Annual Meeting in Durban.

A few years ago, the late Israeli historian and journalist Amos Elon published a book of magnificent and tragic history - *The Pity of it All: A History of the Jews in Germany, 1743- 1933*. You will note the period the book covers, from the entry of the first Jews, under extreme sufferance and prejudice, into Berlin, through to a golden age where Jewish life, letters and civilisation in post-Bismarckian Germany flourished and finally the ascent of Hitler in January 1933, where the book, and effectively two hundred years of Jewish communal life, ends.

This book is unusual because it deals not with the unique evil of the Holocaust, but with the land, language and historical tides which shaped, and ultimately destroyed, arguably the greatest of all European Jewish communities. In his introduction, Elon writes:

Some claim to have discerned an inexorable pattern in German history preordained from Luther's days to culminate in the Nazi Holocaust. According to this theory, German Jews were doomed from the outset, their fate as immutable as a law of nature. Such absolute certainties have eluded me. I have found only a series of ups and downs and a succession of unforeseeable contingencies, none of which seem to have been inevitable. Alongside the Germany of antisemitism there was a Germany of enlightened liberalism, humane concern, civilised rule of law, good government, social security, and thriving social democracy. Even Hitler's rise to power in January 1933 was not the result of electoral success (the Nazi's share of the vote had seriously declined in the Fall of 1932). Rather, Hitler's triumph was the product of backstage machinations by conservative politicians and industrialists who overcame the hesitations of a senile president by convincing him (and themselves) that they were 'hiring' Hitler to restore order and curb the trade unions.

Hindsight is not necessarily the best guide to understanding what really happened. The past is often distorted by hindsight as it is clarified by it ... Fritz Stein the foremost expert on the subject of the assimilated Jews of Germany, has argued that the history of assimilated Jews of Germany was much more than the history of tragedy; it was also for a long time the story of an extraordinary success: "We must understand the triumphs in order to understand the tragedy." We must see the German Jews in the context of their time and, at the very least, appreciate their authenticity, the way they saw themselves and others, often with reason. For long periods, they had cause to believe in their ultimate integration, as did most Jews in Western Europe, in the

United States and even in Czarist Russia. It was touch and go almost to the end.

I am not attempting, obviously, to compare the fate or fortune of this community, in early 21st Century Durban, to the circumstances of the Jewish community in the Germany of eighty years ago and before. However, there are some useful parameters which Elon does provide, particularly when he refers to "a series of ups and downs and a succession of unforeseeable contingencies, none of which seem to have been inevitable."

The same frame, in my view, provides a useful lens through which to view our own "ups and downs" of the two past two decades, and more pertinently posit some thoughts on our future. In both looking back and casting forward, we can agree, with respect to our own country, with Elon's conclusion regarding the triumphant and then tragic history of Jews in Germany that there is no "inexorable pattern" of events, "no absolute certainties" and "no inevitable contingencies."

Shortly after my 1990 Durban speech, I encountered an impressive journalist based in Johannesburg, the bureau chief of the *New York Times*. Bill Keller was to be an eye witness and chronicler for that mighty newspaper of South Africa's transition years from apartheid to democracy, and all the epochal events between those two book-ends of our national story. After leaving South Africa he went on to become editor-in-chief of that global shaper of opinion. Recently, in May 2013, he revisited South Africa, through the pages of the *New York Review of Books*. This was his take on current events here:

If South Africa does not leave you full of ambivalence you have not been paying attention. It is a country where the ruling alliance includes the Communist Party, but the real economic power is capitalist; where corruption is rampant but a vigorous press reports it; where the constitutional court legalised gay marriage and lesbians are gang raped; where the (shopping) malls are populated by a multiracial consumer class, and millions live in shacks. It is inspiring and dispiriting.

Locally, and in similar vein, at the June 2013 Alan Paton Literary Awards ceremony, the eminent Constitutional Court Justice Edwin Cameron eloquently described the duality of South Africa today:

We are now nearly twenty years into our constitutional democracy. Much has been achieved - perhaps more than those of us who tend to worry realise.

Almost all violent crime is down. Compared

with 1994 the murder rate has halved. The government's housing programme has put many millions of South Africans in their own homes. In 1994, just more than half of households had electricity; now 85% do. In 1994, just more than a third of six-year old children were in school; now 85% are. The average black family income has increased by about a third. And, through the system of social grants totalling about R120-bn every year, the very poorest in our country are afforded some elements of a dignified material existence and some access to a measure of social power.

Most importantly, these material gains have been achieved in a functioning democracy. Our polity is boisterous, rowdy, sometimes cacophonous and often angry. That much is to be expected. But after more than two decades, we have more freedom, more debate, more robust and direct engagement with each other - and certainly more social justice than twenty years ago.

But after listing these not inconsiderable achievements, the learned Judge goes on to note that "all is not well". In this regard he cites the evidence which will be well known to members of this audience tonight and to many outside the walls of this hall: a political debate that is "divisive to the point of annihilation"; the prevalence of a "race rhetoric that often substitutes for performance". Gross inequality, largely racially structured, persists two decades on and in other areas, everything from schooling to basic services evinces an "institutional decay and infrastructural disintegration that have reached dismayingly proportions."

Unsurprisingly, last year saw the highest number of service-delivery protests, and nearly nine out of ten of them were violent. More and more municipalities and national departments fail to meet the basic auditing requirements.

Cameron concluded this list of lamentable failures and shortcomings with this warning: "Not unconnected with the accounting chaos, the tide of corruption washes higher and higher. It threatens to engulf us. The shameless looting of our public assets by many politicians and government officials is a direct threat to our democracy and all we hope to achieve in it."

To many, the culture of high minded civic aspiration that characterised our struggle for racial justice and our transition to democracy seems distinctly frayed, if not in tatters."

What are we to make of these essentially two South Africas, identified by an eminent foreign journalist and a distinguished local jurist? In truth, we live in both of them and there is enough evidence to point to our country either becoming a fast tracked success story of the future or a failing state, remembered for the big things it got right two decades

ago, but for the many things which have gone wrong since then. Perhaps the truth lies in both directions, a sort of "schizophrenic republic" (as James Baldwin dubbed the USA) with islands of success and achievement afloat in a sea of sleaze and dysfunctionality.

Late last year, my wife Michal and I returned from three years abroad as South African Ambassador to Argentina and surrounding countries. The advantage of my appointment as President Zuma's emissary abroad was that it allowed us to look at South Africa from a distance and to swap my previous job of selling the opposition to South Africans for the task of selling South Africa to the South Americans. 'Distance', as Queen Elizabeth once observed, 'lends enchantment.' I sincerely believe that we never sold out on any core principles, but do believe that our service proves that your party identity is irrelevant when it comes to serving your country.

My recently published book *The Accidental Ambassador - From Parliament to Patagonia* chronicles our adventures in the land of the Gaucho and Evita, a country of even more extreme contradictions than South Africa. Just one example of this is the presence in Buenos Aires of one of the largest and certainly most thriving Jewish communities in the world, numbering some 175 000, which after 1945 had to co-exist with a host of high-end Nazi war criminals, from Joseph Mengele (who was never apprehended) to Adolf Eichmann, who famously was.

Aside from observing the similarities and differences between two societies, separated by their turbulent histories, the South Atlantic Ocean and the Spanish language, the most striking takeaway feature of Argentina is the important, baleful lesson it offers us here at home: You cannot live in the past. Argentina in the 1930s was one of the ten largest economies in the world. It was a time when the expression "as rich as an Argentine" echoed across the grand salons and estates of Europe, most of whose countries were considerably poorer and certainly less democratic than this famed home of endless Pampas, whose grasslands back then produced most of the world's beef and much of its cereal.

Today, Argentina is in free-fall. Its economy is considerably smaller than South Africa's, and it is by any measure far worse governed and less democratic than we are; it is also the world's poster boy for spectacular economic folly. In my book, I identify the fault line which runs through Argentine politics. I called my chapter on it, 'Vote for a Better Yesterday' - an accurate and sad diagnosis for a country which still adjudicates political decision making through the lens and memory of President Juan Domingo Peron, who died in 1974, and his second wife, Evita, who died

in 1952! Living on past glories relieves you of having to make the tough choices going forward. It might help win elections but, as Argentina's case proves, it beggars the future.

What suggestions can I then make about our own situation here in South Africa and ensure we do not be remembered for the big things which we got right twenty or more years ago and also for the considerable failures which we have witnessed since the golden years of the Mandela presidency? Will we continue to make down payments on the past or will we make a pact for the future?

If you go back to the list enumerated by Justice Cameron, you will see that many, although certainly not all, of our post-1994 achievements have happened in arenas outside the ambit of the state or government. Although government has in fact delivered many services and entitlements to the poorest and most marginalised, it has failed in other key areas of state performance, from providing certainty to the investor community and so creating conditions for sustainable growth and employment, to achieving good and balanced labour relations and basic, never mind good, maths and science education to the next generation. It is easy, but in my opinion, wrong to see in this state-failure the failure of our country.¹

Indeed, the sun may have set on many of South Africa's historical accomplishments - achieving a democracy on the stony soil of racial conflict and giving the world the example of a rainbow nation - but in some ways this is a false twilight. Left often to our own devices, we discover that in the process our own devices are still considerable. Just look at the performance and benchmarking of our private sector, which despite rather than because of government interference, achieves some of the top positions on global surveys for its regulation, efficiencies and performance. Just look at the international achievements of Durban born entrepreneurs such as Stephen Saad and Martin Moshal, to mention just two high achievers in the hyper competitive world markets in which their businesses operate. Think of how our positioning on the southern tip of the African continent, the world's fastest growing economic region, is a net plus today, in terms of teeming future markets; whereas when I grew up here the same continent was a byword for conflict, disease and poverty.

But to live in South Africa today requires us to be in South Africa, not just physically, but mentally, spiritually and politically. Too often, particularly in minority communities, there is a tendency to be a bystander and not an 'upstander' in charting the country's progress. It is a case of politics and civil engagement being 'their' responsibility and not 'our' concern or obligation. And so because some of us adopt

what I call 'the half a loaf' attitude of living in the country but not in a civic sense being engaged with it, our commitment - no less than our expectations - is half baked.

Frankly, as an English-speaking Jewish South African from Durban I was, objectively, triply disqualified from assuming the leadership of a major political party twenty or so years ago. In the days of white politics, it was assumed that only an Afrikaner could lead a political movement, and since 1994 it was assumed that only a black person could lead an opposition party. I do not claim any exceptionalism for myself, except to note that if I had concentrated on my adjectival limitations, instead of my 'South Africaness', I would never have entered, let alone got going, in the arduous arena of South African politics.

Nearly ten years ago, in December 2004, I addressed a meeting of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies in Cape Town. The atmosphere there was certainly a lot cooler (or hotter, I suppose) than it is here tonight. For I went there to criticise the Board, not to praise it. An account of this meeting appears in the excellent work, *The Jews of South Africa* by Professors Milton Shain and Richard Mendelsohn (Jonathan Ball, 2008).

I explicitly said that the Board back then was practicing what I termed "the creeping politics of influence" with the then government. It went cap-in-hand to seek favours, and I asked the question: "It is unclear why the leaders of the Jewish community should feel that they have to 'ask favours' from anyone at all ... the security and entitlements of this community are not a privilege granted by the government or the ruling party or (any department of state). These are constitutional rights."

My rather robust views did not find favour back then with this community's leadership, who preferred a path of quiet and non-confrontational engagement with the authorities. I was therefore genuinely pleased when Mary Kluk of Durban assumed, in more recent times, the national leadership of the Board and began to advance the interests of the community in a more forthright fashion. The BDS (Boycott, Disinvest and Sanction) campaign against Israel, for example, called for a variety of responses. Mary and her colleagues did not simply "go along to get along". They confronted the one-eyed and one-sided attitude and standpoint of the South African government with a variety of responses - public, legal and, where necessary, confrontational. That is why the 'labelling' of products from the Occupied Territories by the Department of Trade and Industry was pursued by the Board in the public arena in a more effective fashion than we witnessed in the past. May this be the hallmark of community leadership going forward.

In 2004 Natan Sharansky, the former

Soviet dissident and political prisoner who became a political leader in Israel, published a major work on freedom entitled *The Case for Democracy*. In the book he elaborates, with passion and clarity, that freedom is rooted in the right to dissent, to walk into the town square and declare one's views without fear of punishment or reprisal.

For the many things that have gone right and wrong with South Africa since our first steps toward becoming a free society back in 1990, Sharansky's universal observation that "the democracy which sometimes dislikes us is a much safer place than the dictatorship which loves us" must serve as our guide into the future. We must use that 'safe place' to stand up for the values which matter and the causes which endure to this community and, beyond it, for the interests of all freedom-loving South Africans.

NOTES

1. I am indebted to my 26-year old Israeli-South African stepson, Etai, a South African citizen by choice rather than birth, for this observation.



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TEN YEARS ON THE CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC COMMISSION

*

Marlene Bethlehem

On 1 January 2004, I commenced my first term as the Jewish community representative on the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Commission (CRL Commission). Established in mid-2003 in terms of Act No. 19 of 2000, the purpose of the Commission is to safeguard the rights of South Africa's many diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groupings and to build bridges of friendship and understanding between them. I was formally nominated to represent the Jewish community on it by the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris and the SAJBD, and was one of seventeen commissioners chosen out of some 300 nominees. Shortly thereafter, I was appointed by President Thabo Mbeki to serve as its first Deputy Chairperson¹ during my first five-year term (2004-9) and in all served on the Commission for ten years and one month, completing my second term at the beginning of 2014.

Although appointed on a full time basis, other commitments prevented me from taking on this role, and hence I opted to serve on permanent part time basis, coming into the office every Monday and Tuesday. Personal responsibilities included arranging for the official CRL Commission launch at its Isle of Houghton premises, chairing the Programme Committee, convening both the Task Team for Staff Stabilisation and the Human Resource Team and arranging team-building exercises.

One of the Commission's most memorable early achievements was to bring about reconciliation between the San and Nama in the Kgalagardi (Kalahari), who had been bitterly divided for over a century because of an incident in which 34 Nama children of mixed descent were murdered by the San. Another, later, accomplishment was being instrumental in ending the practice of using existing graves for new burials without first obtaining the permission of the relevant families. As a result of a lack of space for graves in KwaZulu-Natal, a practice of burying people

on top of one another, without proper public consultation, had been instituted by a certain municipality. The Commission was able to deal successfully with this problem, with the result that the Premier of KZN instructed the municipality not to continue such practices. This was also made a national order through the SA Local Government Association (SALGA).

During my first term, I inter alia participated at an event at Tel Aviv University celebrating ten years of democracy in South Africa, attended the 4th World Congress of Rural Women in Durban, presented the Jewish perspective on a University of Johannesburg seminar on the role women in religion and served on the Gauteng Provincial Steering Committee organising the Africa Day celebrations. On being successfully nominated for a second term by the SAJBD, I was elected chairperson of the Commission's Public Education and Advocacy Section 22 Committee. It was as part of this committee that I was most able to fulfil the mandate of a Commissioner and place issues of national concern in the public space for discussion. Seminars were run on such themes as slaughtering rights (in which Rabbi Anthony Gerson was brought in to give a Jewish perspective), virginity testing, public holidays for minority religions, corporal punishment in the home (with Rabbi Jonathan Fox and Chevra Kadisha social worker Zoe Cohen representing the Jewish community) and Rastafarian rights. A particularly fraught issue was that of initiation in the schools, which continues to result in scores of deaths each year because of inexpertly performed circumcisions. In this regard, I worked closely with both Chief Rabbi Goldstein and world-renowned virologist Prof Barry Schoub regarding the Children's Act, which impacts on such issues. Other sensitive matters addressed included witchcraft killings, the prevention of teenage pregnancy, violence against the aged, the status and protection of sacred sites in South Africa and forced marriages versus the Ukuthwala custom (described as "a form of abduction that involves kidnapping a girl or a young woman by a man and his friends or peers with the intention of compelling the girl or young woman's family to endorse marriage negotiations").

Marlene Bethlehem is a veteran of over forty years of Jewish communal service, including being the first woman to serve as national chairperson of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (1995-9). She is a long-serving member of the editorial board of Jewish Affairs.



Marlene Bethlehem representing the CRL Commission at the launch of the annual Cycalive event, where learners from Torah Academy and other Gauteng schools cycle from Johannesburg to Durban as a community building and fundraising exercise.

During my two terms of office, I represented the Commission at a wide range of local and international forums. These included meetings of South African Women in Dialogue, the South African Human Rights Commission, Independent Electoral Committee, National House of Traditional Leaders, Commission for Gender Equality, the 4th World Congress of Rural Women (held in Durban, 2007), the Lwlapanda Business Intelligence Institute and the African Ombudsman association. I delivered papers at a number of other events, including at the Lebach Institute for Jewish-Arab Coexistence through Education at Tel Aviv University (entitled “Changing Intellectual Landscape”), a Sukyo Mahikari Organisation symposium (“Early Childhood Development as a Nation Building Mechanism for Future Leadership”), a Johannesburg University Seminar on the Role of Women in Religion, where I presented the Jewish perspective, and the Union of Jewish Women International Seminar. I further participated in meetings with delegations from China, including the Cultural Affairs Department, of the British Council Human Rights Commissioners, from Angola, the Human Rights Commissioner from Ghana and the Charge D’ Affairs from Singapore. Inevitably, there were setbacks and disappointments as well. The biggest disappointment for me was the refusal of the plenary to allow my research on the “Role of Sport in nation Building” to be published, although I had obtained permission before I embarked on the contents.

Many important lessons have been learned over the first ten years of the Commission’s existence, and these can and must be utilized for the progress and continuity of the CRL Commission going forward. The Constitutional mandate of the Commission continues to be as

important today as it was when the Constitution was adopted in 1996. Cases of hate speech and lack of tolerance continue to be on the nation’s agenda. The importance of the development of diminished heritages is underscored by our turbulent history. Society needs to pause and think a little more carefully before swinging into self-righteous condemnation of other people’s cultural traditions and beliefs. There are no ‘superior’ or ‘inferior’ traditions. They’re just different. We must try to find ways in which to reaffirm the value of indigenous faiths and to make people aware of them. Rigorous interfaith dialogue is required. We must not be afraid of focusing on issues that divide us, but at the same time must debate them with honesty and respect. Finally, involvement calls for honesty, openness and above all, a readiness to compromise.

Looking back on my ten years with the CRL Commission, while there were inevitable disappointments along the way, it was a wonderful learning and growth experience for me personally and a great privilege to have been able to represent the Jewish community. Not only was I able to make friends all over the country, but it made me, in a very meaningful sense, truly feel like a complete South African.

NOTES

- 1 Dr Mongezi Guma was Chairperson.

Do you have old wrist
and pocket watches?

•

Sporting memorabilia?

•

Old Badges, documents,
militaria or postcards?

•

**See Collectors
Investments,
Page 61**

EXPERIENCES OF A '2nd INNINGS 'GRANNY'

*

Honey Gluckman

For many years, I have been a 'granny' for children at two Primary Schools and one High School in Gauteng. This is a programme initiated by the Social Services Department of the Chevra Kadisha, through which retired persons in the community (not necessarily teachers) volunteer for an hour or more per week to act as grannies for children who, whether for academic, language or emotional reasons, need extra attention. To date, 12 schools and some 70 volunteers have joined the programme. I have been involved since 2000.¹

This has been teaching at the coal face. The children I have interacted with are mostly black. The ones I requested needed help in speaking and understanding English. They all struggled with reading and with basic arithmetic. Almost all were nice kids, although many were undisciplined and some were wild. Since I was known as 'Granny Honey', and grannies are supposed to be warm and supportive, I had to restrain my sometimes furious reaction to their 'naughtiness'.

My lessons consisted of playing Language Skills games. I started creating these games when I realised that my adult learner at that time simply did not know how to ask questions and instead of saying, "What is the time?" would intone, "Time is?" To get him to ask questions as a necessary part of the game, I used as my model a modified form of the well-known parlour game, Twenty Questions. Gradually I included other skills, such as scanning, reading aloud, note-taking and using logic to find an answer. An incidental objective was to learn more about animals (Animal game) and Plants (Plant game). I had all the facts checked with experts in those fields and laboriously constructed each game by hand.

Filled with confidence because I thought I knew what skills and knowledge I wanted pupils to acquire, I started to use the Animal

Game. It was then that I first became bemused by the reactions of children. Why? Because I had forgotten that I did not know what Grade Seven pre-teenagers wanted. After the one team asked only two or three questions from a Question Card, they would correctly guess the name of the animal on the Game Card held by the opposing team. At first I was filled with admiration for their knowledge and skill in logically working out the correct animal on the basis of so few answers. Then the truth struck me. Each Game Card, consisting of twelve simple sentences, was illustrated with a picture of that particular animal. Once the light shone through the thin cardboard held by the one team, the wise guys from the opposing team were able to see that picture. I instructed the holder of the Game Card to hide it on his lap. He did so but bent and mutilated what had taken me hours to construct. Later I revised the Animal and Plant games and enclosed them in a plastic cover with another piece of thin cardboard behind the printed card to frustrate the cheaters.

My second surprise was the reaction to the Game Card describing an Owl. The final question on the Card was "Are you afraid of this animal?" Most of the children throughout the years answered with an emphatic "YES!" When asked why, they stated either that seeing such birds brought bad luck, or they presaged a death of a loved one. "But an Eagle Owl once perched on a tree in my garden for many days and no bad luck or death followed," I protested. Whereupon various children would emphatically quote examples of how owls had brought bad luck to their families.

This brings up a moral dilemma. Do I, as an educator, much less a 'granny', have the duty or even the right to question what I regard as superstitions but which may be cultural or even religious beliefs? Two of my adult learners, one an intelligent woman, begged me to chase away that menacing owl; the other, a semi-literate man, asserted that evil witches exist and that witch doctors were superior to medical doctors. Was I right to deride these beliefs when many ideologies and religions that can be subject to criticism are respected and even devoutly followed? South Africa is a multicultural society. Should I not equally respect the cultural beliefs of those I interact

Honey Gluckman is a former lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies at JCE, now the Education Faculty of Wits. Her subjects included Philosophy of Education, with an emphasis on Critical Analysis. She is today part of the 'Granny Program' run by the Chevra Kadisha, assisting young black learners in acquiring language skills using educational games she has developed.

with? My philosophical meanderings have led me to this tentative conclusion: I will respect the religious creeds of those, for example, who will eat only Kosher or Halaal food. I would definitely try to dissuade those who believe it is acceptable to burn witches, kill owls or buy powdered rhino horn.

Yet another surprise occurred when my Grade 6's were playing the Plant game. The chosen card featured a Lemon. It was described as 'being round or oval with a nipple or bulge at one end.' As I always do with unfamiliar words, I asked if they knew what a nipple was. They shook their heads so I pointed to where my nipples are and asked them to point to their own nipples. They did so and then started to giggle uncontrollably. Bewildered, I asked why they were laughing. Pointing to the picture of the bulge in the lemon, I said "Can you see that this looks like a nipple?" I was met with more giggles from the two girls and two boys. Thinking that they were embarrassed by the idea of my mentioning that part of my body, I sententiously launched into a speech explaining that all body parts are natural and have important functions, particularly a woman's nipples, and should be spoken about without embarrassment. At the word 'nipples' the laughter started again. As I drew breath to continue with my homily, Nonto spluttered out, "But nipples is such a funny word!" That shut me up.

While typing this, I was about to add that children can be so silly at times. Then I remembered the principal of my school many years ago, introducing a guest lecturer with these words. "This is Mr. Foot. He will be talking to you about...." I can't say what his topic was or what he said in his speech because at the words, "Mr. Foot" I felt bubbles of laughter gathering in my ten year-old body and forcing their way upwards. No matter how hard I tried, my giggling was uncontrollable. Mr. Foot! So easily we forget that children are not undersized adults but have their own way of relating to the world.

In the Animal Game, the card for a Man always elicited great interest. Once the group had discovered that this mammal had two legs and the sound he made was talking, they had no trouble in guessing a Human Being. But for this card I had included simple drawings of the conception of a baby from fertilisation of the egg by sperm, through the growth of the foetus, to birth. They were fascinated by this and after initial embarrassment looked closely at the pictures and threw out question after question.

This proved to be a good topic to stimulate the *asking* of questions. As many educationists have pointed out, the art and science of questioning, as opposed to giving predetermined answers to a teacher's queries,

is an essential key to gaining knowledge. Very young children instinctively know this and incessantly ask questions but, sadly, this skill is often knocked out of them as they progress in school. Thus, when Jacob asked me what sperm was, having previously told them not to be ashamed of talking about their bodies, I for one wild moment considered saying "Sperm is contained in the semen of a male which he ejaculates from his penis into the vagina of a woman he is having sex with." Then hypocritical sanity prevailed. Besides that doesn't really explain what a sperm is, so I muttered something about tiny cells and turned thankfully to Mary whose hand had been waving wildly in the air in her eagerness to tell us about her new-born baby sister.

After inventing the Animal and the Plant game, I realised that I had to have some way of teaching phonics and spelling. Unfortunately, English has different ways of spelling the same sound. So I made up a whole lot of cards based on the card game of Happy Families. Then I put each member of a particular family on a different card and gave them a family name like Green Queen for the twelve different ways to spell EE sounds or Lord Norman for the ten different spellings of OR sounds. Each player was given seven cards each and had to negotiate with another player to get a full house of no more than two families. After testing out the game with my grandchild, I felt confident of its success with the Grade Seven children I was helping.

Or so I thought. But to my surprise, for a few anal retentive children it didn't work. What mattered to them was not winning, but preventing their opponents from winning. So they would hold onto cards they didn't need, because by handing them over, their opponents would be able to get a full house. When I softly pointed out that they had lost an opportunity to acquire their own full house, I would be met with a condescending smile. I obviously knew nothing about how cards should be played. I gave up.

Many years later I was given Grade Five groups and I had to work hard to get them to understand how to play this game. For example, I spent quite a few minutes with Pindi. I asked her which family of the cards she held had the most members. "Ben the Best," she replied. "Good", I said, "Do you have any other family with more than one member?"

She looked at her cards: "Strong Tom". "Right. Now which cards do you hold that you don't want?" She pointed to Sad Sam. "Okay. Now ask Dina if she has a card that will grow the members of bigger families you already have." Said Pindi, "Dina, do you have Sad Sam?"

"Yes," said Dina. "Will you give it to me in exchange for Ben the Best?"

I had the same reaction from Nandi. This time I tried a slightly different tack:

"How many cards do you have for Strong Tom?"

"Three".

"How many for Green Queen?"

"Two".

"Good. How many for Lord Norman?"

"One"

"Good. Now do business with Lerato".

"Lerato, do you have Lord Norman?"

I crushed an impulse to scream. Was it my fault that these two children could not play properly? Was I using language that they could not understand? Perhaps I was talking too quickly. Yet they seemed to understand most of what I asked. What was I missing?

On one occasion, the children had to explain the meaning of 'brooch', a word that does not follow any spelling rule. I told them a story about Ellen, whose mother wanted to buy her a birthday present. They looked at necklaces, which hang around one's neck, bracelets that fit around the wrist and brooches that are pinned onto one's clothes. Ellen chose a brooch and pinned it onto her blouse. Then I asked, "What is a brooch?" Angel shot up her hand, her face split in a wide beaming smile: "A necklace," she shouted triumphantly.

Am I expecting too much?

The children also played a basic arithmetic game I had invented many years before, when my same adult learner struggled to add on the 10% for General Sales Tax. When the tax was raised to 14%, my heart sank and I knew I had to produce a game that taught basic arithmetic in a fun way. I made it a competition between players using cards with different numbers of squares on them that could be concretely counted. I included dice and a timer and a marker in the form of a coin that had to be moved along the card according to the throw of the dice and the calculation to be done, whether addition, subtraction, multiplication or division

The children all loved playing the game, but I was horrified to see that while they could add simple numbers together, the multiplication could only be done by laboriously counting fingers. I found this lack of multiplication skill in all grades. When I queried this with a teacher, I was informed that children were required to be able only to work out the answer by constant adding, but were not expected to learn the tables off by heart. The mental arithmetic I had been drilled in was no longer used.

Vusi, in Grade 6, had problems in basic arithmetic. I thought at first that, like the other children, he had not been expected to learn tables by heart. But when faced with working out 3×5 , even using his fingers to add $5 + 5 + 5$, he would struggle to get the

answer. So I brought him a packet of beans, drew Plus, Minus and Equals signs and asked him to take a handful of beans, put them to one side, then take another handful of beans, and put the plus sign between them. Then he had to count the first pile, write down how many there were, then the second pile, write down their number, put the two piles together, count them all and write the answer down next to the equals sign. After demonstrating this, I asked him to show me what to do. Vusi went through the procedure correctly, but when it was time to add the two piles together, he came up with the wrong answer. My heart sank. Obviously the child had not even mastered the one-to-one correspondence necessary for being able to count.

This was a problem for far too many of the children I interacted with. What worried and upset me was that these children were in Grades 5, 6 or even 7. How did they get so high up if they could not even add $28+3$ and get the right answer? Again after querying this, I was told that by order of the Education Department, only a few children from each grade were permitted to fail. The rest had to be promoted to the next grade. The result? Children with hardly any concept of basic arithmetic were being promoted into high school. No wonder the numeracy rate of South African children is so abysmally low.

Many years ago, I read a science fiction short story about a world in which citizens were forced to rely completely on calculators. One person decided to teach people how to add, subtract etc. His motto was "Each man his own calculator." If I remember correctly, he was put to death.

Participating schools also have problems in accepting grannies. One is finding venues for them to teach in. At first, I was given various rooms on the south side of the building, where during winter time, I actually felt glacially paralysed by the time I had been there for three hours. So when I was told that I could now use an abandoned house situated at the far end of the main school, I grabbed the dilapidated room facing north and declared that I was happy to teach there, sagging ceiling, broken doors and floors and all. It was warm there, so when the children arrived late, I simply read my newspaper until they came.

But often they didn't, so I would go looking for them. This involved a five minute walk and a climb up a slight slope to get to the upper level. Then I would stride towards the school hoping to see a teacher I knew so that she could send a child to fetch my absent kids. Eventually, some of my loiterers would come strolling out towards me. I would ask where the others were, and send one of them to fetch the missing children. Then I would return to the house and wait.

And wait. Twenty minutes into the lesson, I would see them. Would they be hurrying to get to me? Of course not. I would see them running, but backwards and forwards as they happily wrestled with one another. On finally storming into the room, they would promptly hide in the empty cupboards. Grannies aren't supposed to scream, so I would 'calmly' ask them to sit down. By the time they did, my one hour activity had been reduced by half.

The nice thing about helping at my second school was that I never had to wait more than five minutes for my four or five pupils to arrive. But one day, the children did not arrive at the appointed time. I went looking for them and spoke to their teacher, who reluctantly released them. A few weeks later, they simply did not come and eventually I left. The next term, I spoke to the liaison teacher about this and she assured me that coming to my classes was important for the pupils. However, two weeks later, I got a strange message via one of the children: "My teacher said to tell you that we will be late." On being asked why, she replied that they had to stick their tests into their books. I was bewildered. Why did it have to be done at that time? Nevertheless, I said nothing and some 15 minutes later, the group arrived. The following week, I again received a message from one of the children saying they would be late because "something urgent had to be done." This time, one of the senior teachers who overheard this said snapped, "Tell your teacher it can be done later and come to granny."

I began to get uncomfortable. Obviously this woman resented the children being with me. Once more, I approached the liaison teacher, who assured me that she would speak to said teacher since it was important that the children come to me and she must accept that. But why did she resent me? Because I was white? Because the children liked coming to my lessons? Because she felt I was undermining her? I hoped it could be sorted out. I am a guest at the school and though most of the teachers greet me happily enough, I still do not want to alienate any of them.

Nor did I want to alienate any of the pupils when they used unacceptable language. When I was a child, I was taught that there were certain 'rude' words that one did not speak aloud. Even today, I feel uncomfortable when I hear or read these words. Not so the children in my groups. On one occasion, they rushed for the door or a window, frantically waving their hands in the air. When I asked what was going on, one of the girls pointed disgustingly at a boy and accused him of the dastardly crime of polluting the air. It is possible that such words are common usage, so I replied, "So?" and told them to sit down. They reluctantly did so, still attempting to waft

away the offending smell.

It was different at the second school. Dina who is large and fat but very enthusiastic, asked if she could go to the toilet. I said, "You can go at break in a few minutes." She replied, "I want to fart, so can I go outside now?" Taken aback, all I could do was nod. A few weeks later, Thabo, a sweet boy from a different class said suddenly "May I move away to fart?" I hastily gave him permission and he went to the other end of the classroom. This asking for permission makes me wonder if this school has such a rule and if so, how is it worded and how is it communicated to the children?

Despite liaison teachers thanking volunteers for the valuable work they do and insisting that the children have benefited from our help, I still feel frustrated at the end of the year because we get no individual feedback. Did we really help the children? Which children benefited from our visits? Which did not?

Here is an example of one child with whom I had no success at all. I will call her Pretty. She was an unpleasant girl aged about eleven or twelve and was part of a group of six from Grade Six that came to me for an hour every week. Pretty was aggressive and disruptive and fought with every other pupil, reaching across and snatching their belongings and interrupting when they spoke. She refused to do anything I suggested and paid no attention to what I said.

With some small knowledge of child psychology, I tried everything I could to get her to cooperate and take part in the language skills games being played. Nothing helped.

Finally, I gave her two pieces of paper and asked her to draw her family on the one piece, and write about them on the other. She drew nine people; two were very large figures whom she wrote were getting married. Pretty herself was drawn as big as them, but her mother was very tiny, as was her father, though slightly larger than his wife. Large flowers were dotted throughout the page and rain drops covered everything. At the bottom was written 'A Rainy Day Today'. What was more interesting was what she wrote on the second page: "I love all my family I have. I love all of them and they love me all. I love them (repeated seven times to the bottom of the page, followed by "The end of my family"). When I showed this to a colleague, she said, "Those aren't raindrops. They are tears." I felt for Pretty, but was unable to get through to her. Since every lesson was an exhausting fight, I told the liaison teacher that I could not cope with her and she was withdrawn from the group.

Here, however, follow some instances where what I did may have had some effect.

Vuyo was a boy in Grade 6. He was able to answer many questions that the other children

could not. He was keen and interested, but struggled to read. For half the year, I tried to help him but with three other children in the group, this was difficult. Eventually I went to the liaison teacher and said I wanted to take Vuyo for an individual half an hour reading lesson after the others had left. She informed me that he was very backward and would be going to a special school the following year. I protested that he seemed to be intelligent and keen to learn, so she agreed to my suggestion. His own teacher, however, said he could not come to both sessions. I accepted this but the next week there he was at the group lesson and he stayed for the reading lesson. 'What will your teacher say?' I asked. He ignored the question and continued to come for both sessions.

He loved the lessons and refused to stop reading when I said the time was up. In the few months we were together, he was able to go through four reading books in the series I was using and to recognise various phonic combinations. But then the year ended and I did not see him again. Success? I don't know. He certainly could not read at Grade Six level (very few of the children could). But I do know that he was able to read what he could not before and that he loved doing so.

Malusi was in Grade Seven. He was naughty, disruptive, and difficult to control. He came late to lessons and often ignored what he was asked to do but would cheerfully agree to behave when I remonstrated with him, and tried to convince him of the educational consequences of his behaviour. However, the following week he was back to his usual cheeky disruptiveness.

At the end of the year assembly for all the children and the teachers, prizes were given out and small gifts were given to us volunteers. When my name was called, the principal stepped back and said, "Malusi has asked if he could give you your gift." I was surprised but there he came with a shy smile on his face. "Malusi," I said, "I am going to give you a big hug," which I did to enthusiastic applause from the children. He handed me the gift and went back to his seat. Maybe I did get through to him.

Zanele was about 15. She was a French-speaking immigrant from an African state and was given to me in the belief I could help her improve her reading and her English, since I had some knowledge of French. Zanele was sullen and uninterested. Sometimes she would come to a lesson, but not often. If she was there, I attempted to help her, but got nowhere.

One day she pitched up. I had with me the Pirate reading books that I always use to teach reading. I gave her Book Seven from the series and told her to read to herself until I was ready for her. After ten minutes she looked

at me but I said she must go on reading. This happened several times. I watched her closely until I saw that she was no longer looking up at me but had become engrossed in the story. When the bell rang, she reluctantly closed the book. "Did you enjoy it?" I asked. She nodded hesitantly. I thought no more about her.

At the end of year assembly, I was once more called up to receive my small gift. As I turned to go back to my seat, I saw Zanele walking up to the platform. She climbed the few stairs, came straight to me and handed me a wrapped gift she had obviously bought for me. She said nothing and walked down again. The gift was a cheap ornament, but the thought was beautiful.

For this example, I was of indirect help. There was a young girl, Thlogi, aged perhaps ten or eleven, in my Grade Five group. Her clothes were ragged and during winter all she had to keep her warm was a very torn cardigan. She was able to do the sums for the Arithmetic Game, but after her turn her head would go down on the table. For months I ignored this, but eventually when everyone had left I asked her why always put her head down. She replied that she was always tired. When I asked why, she said she didn't know but that her mother had taken her to a clinic to find out. Obviously, the clinic could not help since she was still tired. I then asked what time she went to bed, and on being told ten o'clock, asked why she did not go earlier. "I have to do work for my mother" she said. I was dismayed to learn that she got up at five, since her mother required her to dress the young children and do other things. I did not know the situation at her home so I did not want to judge her mother. Instead I asked if she slept well while in bed. "No. I often wet my bed and this wakes me up." She replied. Really concerned now, I asked whether something was worrying her so as to cause this bedwetting.

"Yes. They all tease me and my mother shouts at me."

"Who teases you?"

"My uncle."

With the plethora of paedophile cases constantly being reported, I felt a shiver of alarm.

She added, "And my mother often hits me. With a feather duster." I was afraid to ask which end she used.

I reported the matter to the vice principal who agreed there was a problem. Later that morning, he brought Thlogi's teacher to me, a young pleasant-looking woman. I told the story again and she thanked me. A few days later, a poster was put up outside the Media room, advising children who were being sexually abused to report the matter and gave the necessary phone number.

Was my suspicion correct? Whatever the case, after the holidays, Thlogi came bouncing into the room and happily greeted me. Afterwards, I asked her if she was getting enough sleep, and she nodded, saying that now she was going to bed at nine and getting up at seven. She also no longer was wetting her bed and no longer worried about the 'teasing'. Obviously someone had interceded on her behalf. But she still puts her head down on the desk.

The Granny Program has also led to indirect benefits. My daughter and I were discussing discussed what we were doing for Mandela Day, and my ten year-old grandson asked what he might do. Since he was a good Chess player, I undertook to speak to someone at the school to see if he might spend 67 minutes teaching four children how to play that game. This was arranged with a senior teacher, who was thrilled by the offer. Eventually, the 67 minutes spread out to an hour every week for eighteen months to date, and the four children became over forty children who could now play Chess. Again I realised how from small beginnings, many benefits can flow.

For this concluding granny experience, I am going to use the real name of the pupil. Arnold Malamba, a small boy, aged about eleven, wandered into the school and asked in halting English to be allowed to learn. He had no papers, had never been to school, and could neither read nor write, nor work with numbers. He was an immigrant from an African state. His father had been murdered and his mother had dumped him and gone with his sister to France, leaving him behind in the care of some people. She promised to send for him but never did. The principal took him in and asked me to help him. He was put into Grade Two and came to me for three periods each week. During those periods, along with his Grade Two teacher, I attempted to teach him to read. At the end of the year he was promoted into Grade Four. In the following year, I took him alone for an hour every week.

His questions astounded me. He asked about the workings of his body, about the sun and moon and stars, about God. I abandoned the elementary reading books I had been using and brought instead a simply-written Science Encyclopaedia and my grandson's Magic Bus books which deal with scientific matters in a simple but humorous way. He would ask to take a book home, then laboriously copy out a whole article then try to read it to me. This, in his second year of schooling. At the end of the year, he was promoted to Grade Six.

The following year Arnold, now much taller, reappeared in one of my groups. I protested he no longer needed me, but he said he wanted to come. Then he disappeared for a few weeks. When he came back he told me that he had

had a problem. His mother had not sent his 'guardians' any money, so they had kicked him out. Social Security had then taken him to a Street Children refuge. He was there for a while until his mother once more sent money to his guardians. Then he again disappeared from my group.

At the beginning of the final term he came again, waited for the others to leave, then told me he was being sent to Cape Town. He was very unhappy. He did not know why he had to leave, or whether he was going to a house or a shack in a squatter camp. He did not know with whom he would be staying or whether he would be able to go to school. I gave him my address and phone number and asked him to write and tell me his news. Afterwards, I realised he might not even have the money to do so.

Much later, I was idly paging through the children's exercise books in which they did work for me, and I found the following in his book, obviously written during that class.

Dear Granny Hanny,

I would like to say thank you for everything you have taught me these three years. You have taught me things no one ever did. Now is time to say goodbye. I will miss you. Bye. Love you forever.

From Arnold.

I wept. I wept for a young boy, my grandson's age, who in his short life had known only tragedy and abandonment and later, the indifference of guardians who even begrudged him the food he ate. All the children in the school knew him as a role model because he had fought so hard to learn, to become someone. Yet now, he was once more being thrown out, discarded. I have not heard from him since.

A little while ago, I sent a message to an Arnold Malamba on Facebook. There was no reply. And that is why I have given his full name in the hope that someone reading this might know someone who knows someone who could tell me where Arnold is.

NOTES

1. For obvious reasons, I have not identified the schools concerned in this article, while changing the names of the children featured.

Shana tova umetuka



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GENERAL J C SMUTS' ADDRESS TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, NOVEMBER 1919

*

Bernard Katz

On 3 November 1919, General Jan Christiaan Smuts gave an address to the Jewish community at a reception held in his honour at the Johannesburg Town Hall. Smuts had become Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa three months prior to this following the death of General Louis Botha. In 2013, I was fortunate to purchase at an auction an 18-page pamphlet containing this address.¹ It is, in my view, a most remarkable speech. The emotion, inspiration and quality of the content and language are still evident 95 years later.

The following article quotes liberally from the address, while also featuring commentary on certain matters of interest. The pamphlet includes audience reaction, and this has been retained in the quotations used to illustrate the mood and excitement of that occasion.

General Louis Botha

Early in his address, Smuts paid tribute to the recently deceased Prime Minister. He referred to his efforts regarding the Polish Minority Treaty, signed in June 1919, which served to protect the rights of Jews and other minorities and which later became a template for subsequent treaties imposed upon the new and expanded states of Eastern Europe:

The Jews of South Africa owe very much to him; he was a great man with a great heart.... believe me that in the days gone by no man has done more for the Jews (Cheers.) At a very critical stage of the Peace Conference he happened to be Chairman of the Polish Committee and dreadful things were happening in Poland, dreadful things, and I remember how one morning ... he came with burning indignation to me and told me of the story of Pinsk, one of the most disgraceful things that has happened in recent years. Pinsk was taken by the Polish Army, the Jewish population of Pinsk was collected, and after they had been collected the women and children and the old men were marched out and the rest of the male population were lined up against the walls to be shot, and many were actually shot. General Botha, who was Chairman of the Polish Committee at that stage, was not the man to leave matters there. He went to the

Supreme Council and he represented to them that it was impossible for him to continue as chairman of the Polish Committee under those circumstances. (Loud cheers.) His feelings of indignation were shared by the other members of the Supreme Council and instructions were immediately given for the drafting of the treaty for the protection of minorities in Europe, which you know of. And the day that the Peace Treaty with Germany was signed, on that very day and on that very occasion in the Hall of Mirrors, this treaty for the protection of religious and national minorities in Europe was also signed. (Cheers.)one of your most powerful advocates, one of the men who insisted that the treaty should be signed, was your own Prime Minister, General Botha (Loud and Prolonged Applause.)"²

I have not been able to find further details of Botha's role in this treaty, but certainly both he and Smuts were amongst its illustrious group of signatories, which included Woodrow Wilson, Lord Balfour, Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau.

Offer of Command of British Forces in Palestine

Smuts referred to the offer by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George in May 1917 to take command of the British Forces in Palestine:

I didn't want to accept that, as I had had enough of fighting. After so many years of commanding in all sorts of campaigns I thought that I could probably be of more service and do more useful work at the centre of things. And so I declined to seek military glory in Palestine. But you can readily understand, ladies and gentlemen, how an offer like that, pressed upon me repeatedly before I finally declined it, brought home to me more than ever before the consideration of Palestine and of the Jewish question generally.³

Smuts' biographer W.K. Hancock writes that the idea greatly appealed to Smuts, but he dropped it, giving the very good reason that he

could not rely on any consistent support from Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, once he got there.⁴ In a letter to Botha, Smuts wrote that it would be wrong to Palestine unless the operations were “treated as first class campaign in men and guns.”⁵ Robertson had also made it clear to Smuts that in the view of the War Office Palestine was an obsession of the Prime Minister’s and at best “only a sideshow.”⁶

Sarah Gertrude Millin, in her biography of Smuts, relates that he “did both want to go, and not to go, to Palestine. To this day he asks himself whether he should (‘To have entered Jerusalem! What a memory!’), or should not (‘Yet everything was happening in London’) have gone.”⁷

Had Smuts taken up the offer, it would have been he not General Allenby who entered Jerusalem after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire.

Balfour Declaration and Zionism

By refusing the Palestine command, Smuts remained in London and became a member of the War Cabinet under British Prime Minister Lloyd George. This resulted in his playing a role in the Balfour Declaration:

After I had refused to go to Palestine I became a member of the War Cabinet and was really at the centre of things. And then began this movement in favor of a Declaration on behalf of Palestine as the future home of the Jewish race. (Cheers.) The idea of course originated with Dr. Weizmann and the other leaders of the Zionist movement. They approached certain members of the Government. Dr. Weizmann, who was a friend of mine, approached me and pressed me very strongly, and I told him of the promise I had made on my sick bed at Irene, and that I had to carry out that promise, and, ladies and gentlemen, I did my best to carry it out. (Cheers.) The matter was one of extreme difficulty and intricacy and delicacy, too. Palestine, as you know, is a country largely inhabited still by the Arab people; very few Turks, but mostly Arabs. And besides, at the time that this movement started in favor of declaring Palestine as the Home of the Jewish people, it was still very strongly held by the Turkish Armies. It seemed somewhat premature, to say the least, to make a declaration such as we were pressed to make. But all great things in the world are done in faith, and we acted in that spirit. We believed in the victory of our cause, we believed that the day would come, and, was not far distant, when Palestine would be set free from the oppression of the Turk, and when a promise

to the Jewish race could be fulfilled by us.⁸

In his autobiography Chaim Weizmann describes his first meeting with Smuts during World War I: “I had gone to his office with a letter of introduction....I was received in the friendliest fashion, and given a most sympathetic hearing. A sort of warmth of understanding radiated from him, and he assured me heartily that something would be done in connection with Palestine and the Jewish people....He treated the problem with eager interest, one might say with affection.”⁹



Field-Marshal J C Smuts (right) in London to attend the 75th birthday celebration of Dr Chaim Weizmann, 1949.

Gideon Shimoni writes that little is known of the exact part played by Smuts in the drafting of the Balfour Declaration. Neither the Smuts papers nor the Weizmann papers shed any light on this matter.¹⁰ He quotes Leonard Stein’s judgement, “though he must rank among the architects of the Declaration, his contribution was not of quite the same order as that of Balfour, Milner or Lloyd George,” noting that Stein nevertheless cites the view of Smuts’ son and biographer that here, as in most things, his father had “exerted his influence in the background.”¹¹

Smuts remained committed to the contents of the Balfour Declaration his entire life. According to Hancock, he regarded the creation of a Jewish National Home as being one of the outstanding results of the Great War and one of the greatest acts of reparation in the history of the world.¹²

In 1930, Smuts and Lloyd George were the only two surviving authors of the Balfour Declaration and Smuts persuaded Lloyd George to join him in protesting against the MacDonald government’s “incredible breach of faith” in regard to it.¹³ In 1946, by which time he was the sole survivor amongst the drafters of the Declaration, Smuts again aggressively defended the Jewish people’s right to a National Home.

Early support for the Zionist cause

Smuts' support of Zionism predated his involvement with Weizmann and the Balfour Declaration:

I remember ...after I came back from East Africa and was lying ill in my house, Mr. Nathan Levi came to me with the resolutions passed by the Zionist Federation: I gave him my assurance that whenever I had the chance, without knowing that I ever would have the chance, I would help Zionism. It was like one of those blank cheques that politicians sometimes sign. I said "certainly, I shall do my best, if I have the opportunity, to further these resolutions of the Zionist Federation." I did not know that I would have to honor that cheque, and that the day would really come when I would be in a position to help to carry out the aspirations of the Zionist community all over the world. (Cheers.)¹⁴

Nathan Levi, an observant Jew and a Zionist, immigrated to South Africa from Holland in 1896 and became a journalist on the Transvaal newspaper *Die Volkstem*. He was also responsible for authoring the first biography of Smuts. Levi was well known to Smuts and accompanied him on his general election campaign in 1915. He reported that Smuts was "au fait with the subject" and that it required no persuasion to convince him of the merits of Zionism.¹⁵

For Smuts, one of the great "Gentile Zionists", the true solution to the Jewish problem was "the undoing, the repairing of the great wrong that was done to the Jews 2,000 years ago. (Loud applause.)"¹⁶

Visit to and description of Palestine

One of the more moving sections of Smuts' address was his description of Palestine. Shimoni writes that his descriptions of the Holy Land in speeches to Jewish audiences were "difficult to match for sheer love and intimacy of detail."¹⁷

Ladies and gentlemen, during the War I had the privilege to go to Palestine.... I then had the privilege, which to me was an inestimable one, of seeing that country, of travelling over it and learning to know its physical conditions, and of seeing with my own eyes what I had read and heard of since I saw the light of day. And I assure you I speak no words of exaggeration when I say that when I arrived in Palestine in February, 1918, it seemed to me almost as if I was once more in South Africa. It was the only part of the world away from our

own Continent which appealed to me as having something African about it. There once more you had that wonderful air, clear, keen, distinct; you could see without difficulty, in those February days, almost a 100 miles away. Whereas in Europe your vision is mostly limited by five or six miles of distance, in Palestine and on the Mountains of Judea you could see almost any distance just as in South Africa. I breathed that keen air, I saw that distant vision, I thought of my own country, and I could understand how it was that Jews love South Africa so much. (Cheers.) Palestine is a forbidding country, just as the Karoo is a forbidding country, but with my African heart that wild country appealed to every fibre of my being, the air and the spirit of Palestine penetrated me. I saw practically the whole of Palestine in that clear light from two points. One point was about 15 miles north of Jaffa, a little eminence where we surveyed the lines of the enemy Armies. And standing there one after-noon I could see before me practically the whole of the land of the Jews in days gone by. Looking to the left I saw the Mountain of Carmel spread out before me. I saw the breakers of the Mediterranean foaming at the foot of Carmel. I saw those wonderful hills before me so full of Bible history. And then there was a dip, and then another line of mountains began which were the Mountains of Judea. Looking through that dip I saw in the distance the land of Galilee, the highlands and the hills of Galilee spread out before me. And looking to the right of the dip the whole country of Judea, right on to Beer Sheba, lay spread out before me. I do not think in any part of Europe it would have been possible to see so much country from one point of vantage. And on another occasion I was standing on the Mount of Olives, and I was looking over the whole country once more. I saw the whole Jordan Valley stretching out before me in one of the most wonderful panoramas it is possible to see. Nothing is more grand and majestic than the Valley of the Jordan and the Dead Sea as seen from the Mount of Olives with that wonderful mountain of Moab towering above the valley on the other side, with the peaks of Pisgah and Nebo and Beth-Peor. Further to the north I saw in the far distance one mountain after another rising in the Hauran. Hermon itself was not visible. But I saw the Hauran country rising in tiers of mountains in the distance. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I thought I was once more in South Africa, I thought I was standing again on some point of vantage in South Africa and was looking over my native land. I could feel,

looking over Palestine there that day, that there was a great spirit in that land. I could feel how that apparently deserted country, so forbidding and grand, gave birth to the greatest religion on earth, the loftiest religious spirit in history, and to one of the most wonderful peoples, perhaps the most wonderful people that the world has ever seen. You do not get really great things from prosperity. In the fertile parts of the world there could not possibly have been born that great spirit which you see in the Bible, that great religious literature which you find in the Bible, or that indomitable spirit of the Jewish people. It required something rugged, something terrible to have bred and to have created that literature and that spirit, which has been perhaps the most powerful influence in the history of the human race. (Cheers.)¹⁸

A settlement established with the help of the SA Zionist Federation, Ramat Yohanan, in the Valley of Zebulun below Mount Carmel, was later named in honor of General Smuts. In 1960, the Smuts Forest was established in the Judean Hills through the Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael.



Establishment of the Smuts Forest in memory of J C Smuts, 1960

British Mandate

Smuts and Weizmann were of the shared view that the principle of British fair play would ultimately result in justice prevailing:

...I am giving away no secrets when I say that it is looked upon as a settled policy that the mandate for Palestine, the old historic Palestine, is going to be given to the British Empire. (Loud and prolonged applause.)...

The problem there is one of great delicacy, because a large Arab population is still living in Palestine. You have a minority of Jews there, and the policy that will have to be promoted and fostered in future will be

the introduction of larger and ever larger numbers of Jews into Palestine. (Cheers.)...I know of no people in the world, and of no Government in the world, better equipped by its large experience with all races and all parts of the world, to deal with a problem, like that than the British Empire, and the British Government. (Cheers.)¹⁹

As we know, this initial enthusiastic support for the British Mandate over Palestine did not last and the relationship between the Jews in Palestine and the British ultimately ended in conflict.

On the Jewish people

Smuts' attitude towards the Jewish people was formed by his Calvinist Afrikaner background and the Afrikaners' initial positive view of Jews based on the Old Testament:

I do not think there is any record in the whole history of the human race which compares to that of the Jewish people.... You have not been absorbed, you have not been merged, and you have not lost your identity, but through all tribulations and persecutions, through all the vicissitudes of human history you have survived. You have survived, and the day will come when the words of the Prophets will become true, and Israel will return to its own land. (Loud cheers.)²⁰

Although Smuts was a man of action, he was also a man of contemplation and a philosopher:

I look forward to the Spinozas and the Maimonides's of the future. I do not see why not, because the race is there, the character is there, the spiritual flame is still burning strong in you. I must admit that in recent centuries it has been deflected a great deal into other channels, that the spiritual force and vitality of the Jewish people has very often been turned into other channels, and nowadays you have the reputation of thinking more of the material than of the spiritual, more of money making than of the great spiritual values of life. But I am sure that that is only a temporary phase and a phase which can be explained and entirely explained by the historic circumstances under which you have lived for many centuries amongst the nations of Europe. There is no reason why Israel should not come back to her great historic mission, why Israel should not hold aloft once more the banner of the spirit among the other peoples of the earth. That was your mission in the past; I hope that will

be your mission in the future. (Continued applause.)²¹

Hebrew education in South Africa

Smuts concluded his address on a mildly humorous note.

I have in years gone by felt that there is something in Judaism in this country which is worth preserving, and worth carefully looking after. When I was Minister of Education in the old Transvaal Government before Union, I was sometimes pressed by my Jewish friends to do more for Jewish education in this country. And I appeal to Dr. Landau here tonight to say whether I did not do my best — (cheers) — I did my best for your children, as I did for the children of my own people, in this country. — And as a result I have been told that Hebrew is better taught in the Jewish schools of Johannesburg than in almost any other part of the world. (Laughter.)²²

I conclude with a few references to Smuts and Zionism:

- “...one of the most outstanding ‘Gentile Zionists’ whom the Zionist movement has ever known.” (Gideon Shimoni)²³
- “Two days before polling day, he had announced South Africa’s recognition of the State of Israel. That announcement, some people said, had lost him many votes; but he never repented it.” (W K Hancock)²⁴
- “The Jewish National Home, remained, as it had always been, one of his great causes” (W K Hancock)²⁵
- “Pre-eminent among South African non-Jewish pro-Zionists stands the name of Smuts....he showed himself a constant and powerful friend, whose advice advocacy and influence were always given without stint, and often without any solicitation.” (Gustav Saron and Louis Hotz)²⁶
- “General Smuts has been acclaimed as one of the architects of the Jewish State.” (Saron and Hotz)²⁷
- “...perhaps the greatest friend we have ever had in the Gentile world.” (Morris Kentridge)²⁸

And finally in the words of Smuts himself:

- “The older I get, the more of a Hebraist I become. They knew God, those old Jews. They understood the needs of the soul. There is no literature like the great psalms. Then comes Isaiah. I put the Bible above Shakespeare, who has, to me, the deficiency of being without religion.”²⁹

NOTES

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- 3 Ibid, p7.
- 4 Hancock, W.K., *Smuts, The Sanguine Years*, 1870 – 1919, Volume 1, Cambridge University Press, 1962, pp. 433-434. quoting L.S. Amery.
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- 15 Shimoni, op cit, p 274 quoting Levi, Nathan, Jan Smuts, London, 1917.
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- 21 Ibid, pp14-15.
- 22 Ibid, pp17-18.
- 23 Shimoni, op cit, p293.
- 24 Hancock, op cit, p519.
- 25 Ibid, p447.
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- 28 Kentridge, Morris, *I Recall, Memoirs*, The Free Press Limited, 1959, p425.
- 29 Millin, op cit, Volume 1, p22.

Do you have
old banknotes?
Tokens? Medals?
•
Old Silver, Gold and Copper
Coins?
•
World or SA Coins?
•
**See Collectors Investments,
Page 61**

FROM VILNA TO CALVINIA - 'A KLEIN HISTORY, MAAR 'N LANG STORIE'

*

Shirley Klein Kantor

Calvinia¹ is the place of my birth, the place of my childhood, my first experience with death, the ancestral burial site and my chosen burial space. By digging up and into my past, a narrative emerges which questions family mythology, self and memory. The narrative explores relationships between the different communities in Calvinia around the middle of the 20th Century.

As early as 1891 Jews had moved there – a contemporary report stated that “In Calvinia, Prince Albert, Swellendam, Stellenbosch ...and similar dorps, there are likewise many well-to-do Jews.” The graves of my grandparents, who came from Vilna, Lithuania, Max and Anna Klein, and those of my parents, Bennie and Sylvia Klein, born in South Africa, are in the tiny Calvinia Jewish Cemetery, ‘The Home of the Living,’ according to Hassidic Jews. My father and mother owned a shop, B. Klein, *groothandelaars*. I feel so happy at the sight of our shop sign, still in Calvinia.

My father was the last Jewish man to be buried in Calvinia, in 1958, and my mother’s ashes were put to rest there as well. I too

wish to be buried in Calvinia. In 1953 my brother, Max, was the last Jewish boy to have his barmitzvah in the Calvinia Synagogue, now transformed into the Calvinia Museum.

While researching my own family history, I perchance came upon what later proved to be a very important document. My lecturer, Andrew Lamprecht, suggested that the University of Cape Town Library for Rare Books and Manuscripts would be a good place to start my research. Here, much to my surprise, I found my mother’s signature on a faded piece of paper: A contract between the last few remaining Jews of Calvinia and the Calvinia Municipality, dated 1960. The municipality would be given the synagogue, gratis, to establish the Calvinia Museum, on the proviso that they took good care of the Jewish Cemetery in perpetuity.

I wondered if they had kept to their side of the bargain. I had not been to Calvinia for about 15 years and had little desire to go back ‘home’ after my last experience there with the police.

In 1985, my husband Brian and I took our sons, Charles and Daniel, to Calvinia on a pilgrimage. It was September. It was spring. Carpets of orange ‘gousblomme’ were everywhere, even on the pavements. I got up just as the sun was peeping over the Hantam Berge to take a walk down memory lane with my camera while the kids were still asleep.

It was then that I was detained at the police station for five hours, without being granted permission to contact my family. My crime was taking a photograph of the façade of the police station. The building, with its twin glass doors framed in wood and curvaceous brass handles, was a place where as a child I had lots of fun, sliding on my bum along the highly polished red cement prison passages, amusing myself talking to the prisoners while my father drank coffee with his good friend, Captain Botha. Unbeknown to me, it was an offence to take photographs of public buildings or railway stations under the conditions of the then State of Emergency.

This experience tainted my feelings about Calvinia. The repeated questions of the ‘sersant’ who interrogated me for five long hours about my family and the nature of my ‘business in Calvinia’ are to this day clearly imprinted on my mind....



The former Calvinia synagogue, now a museum (Courtesy: SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth)

Shirley Klein Kantor has an M.A. degree in Fine Art from the University of Cape Town (2005). Entitled ‘History, Memory and Identity’ - ‘A Klein History, maar n Lang Storie’, this focused specific attention on Calvinia, a small village in the Karoo. The lives of her parents, Bennie and Sylvia Klein, and their relationship with the broader community formed the core of her visual and theoretical research.

'Wie was jou ouers en ken jy nog mense in Calvinia'.

I had to think hard - almost twenty years had passed. A name of Meneer Anthonissen flashes through my mind. His son Kobus, the naughtiest boy in my sub-A class, was my best friend. He dials Anthonissen's number. It's 6am!

He says, *'Jammer, Anthonissen, staan net gou, gou op....., kom maar sommer in jou pijamas,..... ek wil dat jy vir my iemand kom identifiseer'.*

I still feel the relief at the sound of 'Sersant' van der Westhuizen words when he told me that he would not destroy my photographs, and *dame jy kan nou gaan.lady you are free to go.* However, smiling cynically, he added, *'maar dame, moenie verbaas wees as jy weer van ons in Kaapstad hoor nie'.*

From that moment, Calvinia was no longer the idealised place of my childhood.

A few years ago my sister, Elaine, told me about a painting she had seen in a Cape Town art gallery by a British artist who comes to South Africa every year to paint the beautiful old buildings of our 'dorps'. The painting she referred to was of a building in Calvinia, which I recognised as Berman's old shop, which now curiously had our late father's shop sign, B.KLEIN. GENERAL DEALERS ALGEMENE HANDELAARS positioned above the door.

We were both intrigued, as the building was not the old shop we knew. It transpired that the sign, though displayed on the wrong building was authentic, rescued from a rubbish dump in Calvinia by Alta Coetzee.

The British artist told me that the building in question was no longer a shop, but the studio of a papermaker. I was astounded. I am also a papermaker. There are so few papermakers in South Africa and the co-incidence of a papermaker's studio in Calvinia which displays B. Klein's shop sign was overwhelming. Who was she, and what were her papermaking techniques?

I was keen to share ideas with her and see her paper. I developed a compelling, somewhat irrational urge to meet her and started planning a visit to Calvinia immediately. I also wanted to visit the Jewish cemetery to see if the Calvinia Municipality had kept its promise.

August is the time for the renowned *'Calvinia Vleis Fees'*. People come from all the surrounding villages, Klaver, van Rhynsdorp, Clanwilliam, Williston, Middelpoort (the birth place of Sir Anthony Sher) and to my surprise, busloads of people from as far afield as Cape Town. I packed examples of my artworks on paper and went back to Calvinia.

There were thousands of people in Calvinia and the air was thick with smoke and the aroma of *'braai vleis'*. A noisy helicopter was continuously circling overhead and I noticed an

unusual number of police. I felt ill at ease. I found a bed for the night with a nurse who lets rooms. The windows and doors were burglar proofed. How things had changed. During my childhood, we left front and back doors open during the hot summers.

First to visit the papermaker. I knocked a few times. I could see bits of handmade paper on the table. I was excited though all was eerily quiet. She had gone to the *'vleis fees'*. I planned to return later. But there was no need to. Sadly, she had been brutally murdered the day before by rampaging teenagers, who had been amputating the front legs of sheep and chose her as their next victim.

I passed the show grounds, the venue for the *'vleis fees en boere musiek'* on my way to the cemetery. Dark clouds of smoke from the braai permeated the still, hot air.... I walked into the cemetery slowly. I missed my parents.

To my dismay, the beautiful, statuesque Victorian gates of the Jewish Cemetery were hanging off their hinges. Bones, bottles and beer cans were all over the place. The fence, once the boundary between Jewish and Christian cemeteries and now rusted and scattered in pieces, said it all. The graves, many unmarked and sunken, seemed undisturbed. The solitary 200 year old pine tree, still beautifully, growing next to my dad's grave provided the only shade. Its strong, old roots seemed as a cradle around the Klein graves.

So that was drought-stricken Calvinia, August 1999.

I came back to Cape Town to continue my studies. I could not concentrate on my own work. I realised that I had to do something about the cemetery. I phoned the Calvinia Municipality and spoke to Deon Engelbrecht. He was not aware of the contract but would look into it.

Much to my relief, he phoned me the very next day. He had found the contract and seen the cemetery. He apologised on behalf of the municipality, undertook to raise the matter at the next Council meeting and promised to take personal responsibility for cleaning up and replacing the fence around this small plot of ground, now totally surrounded by the *'Calvinia Begraafplaas'*.

Fencing in the Jewish cemetery made no sense to me. I decided that we should not replace the fence. The Jews and Christians got on well during their life-time so why a fence? Surely it would be more appropriate to plant trees to demarcate the boundary, thus shading the graves of Christians and Jews? This would enhance the beauty of both cemeteries.

I went back to Calvinia. I met Deon. He had kept his promise. The fence was gone and the Victorian gates were repaired. However, I was surprised to find two newly dug graves in the cemetery.

Whose graves were these? The last Jew had left Calvinia almost fifty years before. I am the only person I know who wants to be buried in Calvinia. When I told my brother he tried to dissuade me. "Who wants to *shlep* your dead body all the way to Calvinia, of all places? It's a crazy idea. And besides, it will be very expensive".

I stared at the two graves, the one, closed and covered with a mound of golden brown dry clay, the other, empty, neatly bricked inside, waiting. I became most concerned. Back to Deon. Who is buried there and why the empty grave? Fortunately, there was no record of any recent burial in the Jewish cemetery. It transpired that with the removal of the fence, the boundary between the two cemeteries disappeared. It is customary in Calvinia to prepare graves well ahead of time, as there is no refrigeration for cadavers. Because of extreme temperatures, the clay Karoo soil is terribly hard and it can take up to a week to prepare a grave...

I returned to Cape Town and told a friend of mine about the empty graves. She responded that whosoever takes care of a Jewish cemetery is blessed. I should thus consider myself blessed that my work has already been done for me and leave it at that. And so the graves wait patiently.....

When September comes again, for my birthday and Yomtov I will return to Calvinia

to the graves of my ancestors with joy. I will take delight in the twenty-one palm trees, planted and irrigated by an underground watering system by the municipality to replace the boundary fence. I look forward to thanking Deon personally for honoring a promise to the departed and dispersed Jews of Calvinia. Together we will further enhance the cemetery by planting flowering plum trees, so much loved by my mom, between the palms. By next spring, the sweet nectar of their pink blossoms will attract new life to 'The Home of the Living'.

Calvinia continued to haunt me and consequently the practical body of work for my Masters degree took the form of an installation. The dimly lit room comprised a collection of sixty colour images dealing with memory and identity, printed on French archival paper, eight glass vitrines edged in wood containing religious books and other objects pertaining to Jewish life and two videos: an interview with Calvinia residents who knew the Klein family filmed in Calvinia; a more abstract video of an archaeological excavation in the Calvinia cemetery. The 70 *taleisim* of all sizes, some mouldy with age, displayed, hanging in dimly lit rows was the central exhibit, strongly evocative of lives lived and lost, in South Africa and the Holocaust. Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft and I are now negotiating with the Calvinia Museum to place my art work on permanent exhibition and recreate the Ark, as there is very little evidence of the strong Jewish presence that once existed in Calvinia.

Perhaps one day the story of Jews in Calvinia will be more than twenty one palm trees and 'hopefully' a well-cared for cemetery.

NOTES

- 1 The history of the Jewish presence in Calvinia, and other small towns in the vicinity, is recorded in Volume Two of *Jewish Life in the South African Country Communities*, copies of which can be obtained through the SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth (enquiries: museum@beyachad.co.za).



Part of the refurbished Calvinia Jewish cemetery
(Courtesy: SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth)

20% Discount
on early bookings
at Protea Hotel
President.

See details
on Page 1

EXHIBITING OUR PAST — KLERKSDORP, POTCHEFSTROOM, MUIZENBERG, HOTELS AND MORE

*

Joy Kropman

A hundred years ago, Jewish communities were spread throughout South Africa. There were Zionist societies in 300 centres - from Aberdeen, Amersfoort and Alice, to Zastron, Zeerust and Zalolo; even in tiny, out of the way dorps such as Bodenstein, Beitjiespoort, De Post, Ezelback, Greatberg Siding and Immigrant's Siding.

In almost all towns and even the smallest settlements, Jews played a major role in the economy as small shopkeepers, hoteliers, tradesmen and professionals. Some did not live in the towns but owned land or had a concession or business which brought great economic benefits to the area.

Life in the small towns was never easy, especially for those newly arrived Yiddish-speaking immigrants who had few friends and little money. Nevertheless, those born in the platteland and who came as young adults most often recall this time with great warmth and fondness. Living in the country was a time of peace and tranquillity. People slept with doors and windows open. Children could walk to school or take their bicycles to the village. There was a great sense of community, where everyone knew everyone else. Jews supported the *kerkbazaar* and the Christians supported the Zionist balls.

I have noted with sorrow how these rural communities, with their once active Jewish communal life, have shrunk as the children have left for the cities or greener pastures overseas. As just two of many examples, there are today perhaps ten Jewish people in Potchefstroom and sixty in Klerksdorp, whereas during the peak period of settlement, there were respectively 100 and 180 Jewish families in those towns.¹

The 12th Century Spanish Jewish poet Yehuda Alcharizi² wrote, "I hurried to guard a stranger's vine/ And yet in my haste abandoned mine." I did not want our warm memories to disappear in the haste to grasp the apparently more flourishing vines of the wider world. Precious documents, photographs and memories have been taken to foreign shores.³ I came to realise how vital is the recording and preserving of our history, and so became involved in documenting the role Jews played in 'platteland' photographic exhibitions.

This is a record of exhibitions on aspects

of Jewish life in the South African country areas that I have been involved in or curated over the years.

Klerksdorp (1989)

The Klerksdorp Jewish community, from which I hail, lives in one of the oldest white settlements north of the Vaal River and is one of the oldest organised Jewish communities in the former Transvaal.⁴ In 1989, I became involved with the community when the centenary of the establishment of the first Jewish congregation in the town was marked with a reunion of current and former members and a photographic exhibition. Many people generously assisted in translating the latter idea into a reality. Material was gathered over a period of eighteen months, and over a thousand photographs arrived from all over the world. This is when my interest in documenting the history of Jewish life of the country communities began.

The history of the Jewish presence in Klerksdorp stretches back to 1886, when gold was discovered in the area. Within weeks, the population had grown to 3000, with impoverished Jews joining the ranks of diggers and speculators, merchants and bottle store owners. Three years later 38 Jews, calling themselves the Hebrew Congregation in Klerksdorp, asked the government for land for a cemetery. The same year, 1889, they established a Zionist society. When the first rabbi, Rev Mizrachi (who anglicised his name to Rev East), arrived in 1893, there were twenty Jewish bachelors in Klerksdorp.⁵ The first shul service was held in the stock exchange building, and eventually a shul was built in 1902. The community also organised a well-patronised concert in aid of persecuted Jews in Russia.⁶

By then Klerksdorp, had 69 liquor establishments. The Klerksdorp Hebrew Congregation held their meetings in Joseph Horwitz's Klerksdorp Hotel, which guaranteed "Best brands of liquors only kept". Horwitz would get his liquor from Kroonstad, where there was a depot for Cape wines and brandies. To bring it into Transvaal, he had to pay a hefty duty, while no duty was payable for bales of grass or animal forage. So crates of

liquor were labelled 'bales of grass'. Back in Klerksdorp, these were carefully opened and if by a miracle some hay had changed into bottles, Mr. Horwitz would pour the contents into barrels.

Among the well-known Jewish personalities who lived in Klerksdorp are the Radio 702 chat show host John Berks, the athlete Sol Sandler, who won first place in Israel in the 1950 Maccabi Games, and the Subel family, who were synonymous with the Subel Soccer Team that played against numerous teams in the country. 'Luries' was the town's first jewellery store, opening in 1922. Harry Lurie was the only practicing watchmaker. At that time, a complete clean and overhaul of a watch cost five shillings. Apart from keeping an eye on the time, Mr. Lurie would also test the eyes of the residents, as there were no registered opticians.⁷



Maccabi gold medallist Sol Sandler

Potchefstroom (1992)

A few years after the Klerksdorp centenary, I was asked to organise a second exhibition, for the centenary celebration of the role of Jews in Potchefstroom. It was to be a small project, but soon hundreds of photographs had flowed in, together with records of family trees, newspaper articles and personal memoirs. It all developed into an exhibition which took

38 panels to display. As people wandered between the stands and recognised the faces of their friends and family – some no longer with us – they wiped away their tears.

When a Jewish man died in July 1880, Mr. Hirschfield and Mr. Davies went to the Commissioner for Potchefstroom to ask for a "small piece of ground next to the churchyard for the purpose of a cemetery for Israelites to bury the man who had died that morning." Permission was immediately granted. Two of the founding members of the congregation were the Aronsteins from Lithuania, who bought the Central Hotel in 1896. Other early settlers were the Levys, who in the 1890s worked for Sammy Marks at his Hatherley Distilleries, die Eerste Fabrieken. The first factory to distil gin and whisky in the South African Republic, the latter had been opened by President Kruger in 1883. Levy then moved to Potchefstroom to run transport to Ventersdorp and Lydenburg until the completion of the railway line.



The Levy Family, Potchefstroom

Then there was the story of the top hat. The *volksraad* was due to hold a meeting in Potchefstroom, and President Kruger was advised to address them wearing a top hat. The only top hat in town belonged to a Mr. Silver, chairman of the Potchefstroom shul. Mr. Silver duly loaned his hat to the President. After that, whenever he went to Pretoria on business, he was expected to pop into the President's house to have a cup of coffee.

You can see the sort of forgotten stories that are unearthed from such an exhibition. We featured, for example, the honoured memories of Lionel and Bertha Bloch, who were killed in Israel fighting in the 1948 War of Independence. From the *smous* – the quintessential wandering Jew – who paved the way for the commercial expansion, to the business magnate, from the humble shopkeeper and the beloved family doctor to the famous scientist or parliamentarian – we found Jews and their descendants spread all over the South Africa and the world.

My aim with both of these exhibitions was to reach as many current and past Potchefstroom

and Klerksdorp Jews as possible so as to gather their memoirs. My hope was that these would capture the history and highlights, the achievements and significant movements in the town. How excited ex-Potchefstroomers like Natie and Issie Kirsh were, and how meaningful it was for the few residents who remained! And how rewarding it was for me personally to hear Mrs. Green say, "We were a forgotten little group, and this celebration made us feel important and alive again – thank you."

Holocaust

One of my most humbling experiences was to curate an exhibition of memorabilia from local Holocaust survivors, many of whom shared their stories. This was exhibited as an ancillary exhibition for the Ann Frank in the World and Children's Art from Terezin exhibitions in 1994 and 2000 respectively.

One lady gave me a glove she had saved when she worked in an arms factory as a prisoner during the war. Another loaned the exhibition a music satchel that she managed to salvage and use as a talisman in the various prisons she had been in. As a child, she had been hidden by her music teacher. A third lady brought out a handkerchief she had been given by her father, together with his watch, as he was being dragged away by the Gestapo. These stories will be with me forever.

Jewish Country Hotels (2000)

An exhibition that gave me great satisfaction was that on Jewish-owned hotels, held under the auspices of the SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth. It was compiled together with Yvonne Jawitz.

Many stories are told about the early hotels in South Africa. Each would employ a runner or tout to meet the incoming trains and recommend their own hotel. Imagine the voices: "Masonic Hotel!", "Royal!", "Commercial Hotel!", "Grand Hotel!" Travellers were piled onto a horse drawn bus seating eight people with the luggage on top. Runners could make or break the hotel as could the chefs – mainly black chefs, who were trained by the *baleboste*. Indeed, it was



Table-settings in a typical country town hotel

largely the hardworking wife of the hotelier who was responsible for a hotel's success.

A significant aspect of Jewish country life was the legendary Jewish hospitality.⁸ In some hotels, Fridays were taken over by the cattle farmers coming to town for provisions and a meal and to stock up with liquor. People would come from far and wide for the special Sunday lunch that cost three shillings (half-pence for children).

The busiest nights were Mondays and Thursdays, when the dining room was filled with travellers. The latter often formed rotating poker schools, playing each night and sometimes through the night. Often the hotelier – much to the disgust of his wife – would enthusiastically join in. Touring theatre companies and sports teams were very welcome guests because they ate – and drank – so much. Often the hotel was a place of celebration of weddings, barmitzvahs and special dinners; when a show came to town, it would be overflowing.



The Royal Hotel, Hermanus. Bridal couple Morris Silke and Lena Stockman pictured in front of the hotel in 1904. The proprietor Mr David Allengensky, is standing on the extreme left of the balcony, while Rev. Bender is seen between two other top-hatted gentlemen.

These hoteliers of an earlier generation lived in their hotels and treated their passing guests as if they were old family friends. For many a weary traveller, the roads were long and hard. The hotels were the haven where they received hospitality, warmth and kindness and were provided with the best table of home-cooked food.

The Jewish hoteliers exhibition grew and grew. And so did the *verribbles* from people whose hotels we had left out – and did not know about! People came forward with information of relatives and friends who had owned or managed hotels. Almost no village was without a Jewish-owned hotel. The exhibition was displayed several times in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Eventually, it was taken over by the Cape Town Jewish Museum, where it was re-designed and exhibited for nearly six months.

Muizenberg (2010)

From hotels, the natural next step had to be an exhibition on our favourite holiday spot, Muizenberg. *Memories of Muizenberg* travelled from Cape Town, where it was on display both at the SA Jewish Museum and the Casa Labia in Muizenberg, to Johannesburg where it was exhibited at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre, and to Israel, London and Australia (Melbourne, Sydney and Perth). Each locale had overwhelming amounts of visitors - beyond anything envisaged.

Memories of Muizenberg means something different to each of us: those genuine Muizenbergers who were fortunate to breathe that healthy *luft* as they were growing up in the village; the Capetonians to whom every Sunday all summer long the golden sands of Muizenberg beckoned and the 'Vaalies' and the stream of other holiday makers from up country, from as far afield as Rhodesia and the Congo, who invaded for a few months each year, adding their own flavour to the little town. This exhibition sought to bring to life the summer holiday at the seaside.



Jewish holidaymakers, Muizenberg, 1925

It was amazing how many people were interested in the early history the exhibition captured. Of great importance to the development of the holiday resort was the completion of the railway line in 1883, which signalled the beginning of a new wave of prosperity. Summer residents included Sammy Marks, Sir Abe Bailey, the Oppenheims and Cecil John Rhodes (who died in his beach house, now a museum, in 1902). Olive Schreiner was a regular visitor⁹ as was Rudyard Kipling.

The wooden pavilion was built in 1911 and demolished in 1929 when a new one was completed. A promenade was designed in such a way that together with the pavilion and the bathing boxes on the beach front a wind-free beach was created - the Snakepit.

By the 1920s, Muizenberg was no longer a little village but a growing town. In the 1930s through to the 1950s, there was a huge influx of Eastern European Jews, and there were about 600 Jewish families living



Fishing boats on Muizenberg beach, circa. 1900

in Muizenberg supporting four women Zionist branches and a synagogue (built in 1924). Local and touring companies put on Yiddish plays at the Muizenberg Pavilion in summers. Once Harry Turok, the front of house manager, approached a woman sitting on a bench on the beach front, trying to drum up business for a Shalom Aleichem play. "Would you like to enjoy yourself?" he asked. To his dismay, she grabbed her sunshade and hit him over the head.¹⁰

The invigorating sea airs prompted the British army to establish a camp for convalescent soldiers. Muizenberg beach became the destination of choice for bathers. Hotels sprung up in the area, many Jewish owned such as the Marine and the Park. Farmer Pecks Inn was later called The Grand Hotel, and it stood on the site of today's Cinnabar Flats. Later, the Bay View, Scowens, Alexandra, and Park hotels were built.

Haim Pogrand recalled an era when "Two shillings covered a train trip to Muizenberg for a day of unparalleled swimming and fun. A return ticket - half fare costing all of nine pence by courtesy of the SA railways: '*alle stasies na Simonstad*' - took an hour and both the old Cape Town and Muizenberg stations provided their varying fascinations".¹¹

At Muizenberg, men strolled and discussed business, women sat on the beach dressed in the high fashions of the time, children played at the water's edge, fishing and sailing toy boats on the vlei, and teenagers flirted in the Snakepit. It was there that beach bats, touch rugby and *bok bok* were played and young people sunned themselves using Brylcream and olive oil. Dates were made for a night out - to the bop floor, to the Milky Bar and the Vic Davis Show, to Norman's Café and the Empire Bioscope - and a walk on the promenade, touching the end for good luck. It was here that numerous romances started, many of them resulting in marriage. There was a lot to do in Muizenberg in the summer time: dances at night in the hotels, a bandstand next to the pavilion. Surfing had taken off with six foot-long wooden surfboards.¹²



The famous Muizenberg 'Snakepit', December 1953

Until the 1950s, Muizenberg was South Africa's premier holiday resort, but the short season and increasingly more sophisticated demands of prospective guests meant that the aging hotels could no longer compete with modern Durban hotels. One by one, they were forced to close down.

Mervyn Rosenberg recalled the unspoilt and uncomplicated childhood he had had: "It was not a wealthy community; our parents were generally first generation South Africans, but it was a rich community, rich with love and respect. We felt blessed - we were living 365 days a year in this special place."¹³

There were those very special moments when we were looking for memorabilia and were offered treasures, like the crockery of the Balmoral Hotel, or the fine bone china tea service lent by a lady Rosalie Wolpe, aged 100. The tea service had belonged to her mother, Eva Goldman, who used it in the tea room she operated before 1914 to support her family when her husband left her. Her tearoom was so smart, she imported waiters from Durban for the summer season. People from as far afield as Sea Point motored for three hours on a Sunday afternoon to have tea and cake (price: four-pence).

And so we built an exhibition, which became a rich tapestry of many stories, pieces of information, photographs sourced from family albums, libraries and newspapers, sewn together with love and dedication over many, many months by a team in an attempt to capture and document the Memories of Muizenberg. The little brownie box photos were enhanced and enlarged, some to even three and eight metres.

The journey to compile the exhibition was not always smooth sailing. There were frustrations and various *verribbels*. Can you imagine when a prize photo of Mrs Chaim Shmerel - fifty years younger and fifty kilos lighter - in a bathing costume, was not displayed but her cousin's photo was!

Over the years, I have been involved in a number of other exhibitions. These include 'Well Known Jewish Personalities' (1996, researched together Franz Auerbach and displayed at Pretoria University), 'Jews in the Anglo-Boer War' (1999, researched by David Saks and displayed at Museum Africa), the Union of Jewish Women Golden Anniversary (2000) and 'Glimpses into the life of the Cape Country Communities' (2005, under the auspices of the SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth.)

Forming committees and including volunteers to assist with the various exhibitions, no matter how menial the job might have been, gave many people a new interest and sometimes even changed their lives. This, for me, was another most rewarding aspect of the work.

The SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth is doing a sterling job publishing books recording the story of Jewish life in the country communities, but sometimes the communities themselves want to recall their Jewish past. The exhibitions compiled were not designed to be a comprehensive guide, but to give visitors a glimpse into the life of these smaller communities and to pay tribute to their past and the memories of their families.

We need to remember that Jews played an important role in the life of South African small communities and towns, and that without a record the memory of their contribution will fade to distant reminiscences of "*lank gelede was daar baie Joodse winkels hier.*" That is why it is so important to keep your photographs and your memorabilia - with a note on the back giving the names and dates. People think that they won't forget, but they will!

Many people today have become interested in their roots, and are compiling family trees. Your photographs and memories are so valuable. They tell your story, your history, reminding you of your past, and telling your children and grandchildren where you came from and who you are.

The great sage Chofetz Chaim, once said that, "Jewish communities are like points of light on a darkened map and the stronger the Jewish commitment and consciousness at the place, the brighter the light." Sadly, the lights in many small communities have faded, but one hopes that through our efforts, we can, in our memories and those of the generations to come, keep the flames burning.

- *The writer thanks Gwynne Schrire for her assistance in editing this article and the SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth for encouraging Yvonne Jawitz and myself to research and compile the Hotel exhibition. A particularly big vote of thanks to those who contributed material and played a part in helping to compile the exhibitions.*

NOTES

- 1 Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, County Communities Rabbi, personal communication, 7 February 2011.
- 2 Yehuda Alcharizi (Judah ben Solomon Harizi, 1165–1225), was a rabbi, translator, poet and traveller.
- 3 Marcia Leveson, Foreword, *Jewish Life in the South African Country Communities*, SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth, Vol III, ppix-xiii.
- 4 Peter de Jong, 'The Klerksdorp Jewish Community: A Short History', *Jewish Affairs*, Rosh Hashanah 2011.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Probably in aid of the 1903 Kishinev pogrom victims.
- 7 De Jong, 'The Klerksdorp Jewish community'.
- 8 Leveson, M, Foreword, *South Africa Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth Vol III*, ppix-xiii.
- 9 Olive Schreiner, Letter to Isie Smuts nee Krige, "Do come down to Muizenberg this summer. I have taken a room at Schmitt's Cafe at Muizenberg for January & February.... Do take a house at Muizenberg so that I often see you & the children. I am sure you will find the air much more stimulating & nice at Muizenberg than at St James. You must take the house at once for they are going fast." Thursday 19 October 1912, National Archives Repository, Pretoria Smuts A1/194/10/59
- 10 Gwynne Schrire, 'Abiding Yiddishkayt: Rochel Turok', *Jewish Affairs*, 1996: 51;4.
- 11 Haim Pogrand's words were used in the text of the Memories of Muizenberg exhibition.
- 12 Wrote Agatha Christie, "The surf boards in South Africa were made of light, thin wood, easy to carry, and one soon got the knack of coming in on the waves. It was occasionally painful as you took a nosedive down into the sand, but on the whole it was an easy sport and great fun" (www.theguardian.com, 29/7/2011).
- 13 Mervyn Rosenberg, speech at the exhibition opening.




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THE COUSINS ZANGWILL, EDER AND COWEN - THE CAUSES THEY CHAMPIONED AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTION

*

Gwynne Schrire

In a book of Anglo-Jewish letters from 1158 to 1927, published in 1938, is a letter from the British novelist Israel Zangwill.¹ He was writing to Monty Eder, giving him the name of someone to look up in Johannesburg - a Wolf Myer or Myers. Zangwill is well known, but who were Monty Eder and Wolf Myer and what connection did Zangwill have with South Africa? The investigation of this relationship uncovered some interesting stories.

First, here is the letter, dated 2 September 1896:

Dear Monty

...Have I told you that there live amid the brutality of Johannesburg, a couple of Jews whose acquaintance is worth making - a Mr & Mrs. Wolf Myer (or Myers), she is a cousin of Amy Levy,² nee Ada Saunders? I am not friendly with the husband else I would give you an introduction, but it should not be difficult for you to know them, especially as they complain of lack of intelligent society. She is very charming, a poetess suppressed in a mother of two infants. He has a watch-making establishment or something of that sort, was once at Cambridge. They are now in England but are returning in October. I met a small sister of hers near Dover who is developing in the same direction - poetry, not infants...

As to Leah³ coming out, I have been told that by reason of its dust-storms, Johannesburg is the worst possible place for Leah's lungs whereas Natal would be favourable. However, on this point you are the best authority as you would not ask her to come out if it would kill her off. I should like her to go out if possible. I am not myself in the best of health though it is rather deficiency of vitality than any positive illness. I seem to have exhausted

the first spurt of energy & perhaps only a very long rest or a complete change of conditions can give me my 'second wind'...

Father⁴ is, as you know, living in Jerusalem, & by latest accounts seems to be praying happily there.

Israel Zangwill (1864-1926) and his cousin Montague David Eder (1866-1936) shared digs together as university students. They and another cousin, Joseph Cowen (1868-1932), were children of Russian immigrants. Israel's father⁵ was a peddler, a yeshiva student who had fled to England to escape a death sentence.⁶ Montague's father was a well-to-do shipping merchant and Joe's was a pawnbroker. The English-born cousins, all clever, articulate and with a firm Jewish identity, responded to the poverty and snobbery around them by developing a strong social conscience. All found a home in the developing Zionist movement. Zangwill in his writings championed Jewish and liberal causes from the women's movement to human rights, from the exploitation of workers in the Belgian Congo to the genocide of the Armenians. Eder's concern for the plight of the poor led him into socialism, radical politics, medicine and psychoanalysis. Psychoanalyst Ernest Jones wrote of him that he "would sacrifice all he had, time, money, labour and health, without a moment's reflection, not only for social, but also for any personal causes that engaged his sympathy."⁷ Cowen represented the Sheffield Hebrew Congregation on the Jewish Board of Deputies and was a close friend of Theodore Herzl, who appointed him the guardian of his only son, Hans.

Israel's father sent his son to the Jews' Free School in Spitalfields, East London, which offered both secular and religious studies and provided its pupils with clothing, food, and health care. Lord Rothschild offered to be his patron, but Zangwill did not want to be beholden to a benefactor.⁸ When he finished school, he taught there part-time while studying in the evenings at the University of London. Aged 18, he published a novella with a fellow student-teacher, Meyer Breslar, about market days on Petticoat Lane, called *Motso Kleis* (Matzo Balls). The school was embarrassed, the unfortunate Meyer was dismissed and

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Zangwill was ordered to stop publishing.⁹ When he graduated in 1884 with a BA with triple honours in English, French and Mental and Moral Science, he was appointed as a teacher at the school.

Montague's father educated his son privately in London, Belgium and Germany. He became friendly with his cousin Joseph when they were at school together. When Monty finished school, he joined his father in business. When his father died in 1886, leaving him comfortably off, he stopped working and, as a committed socialist, devoted himself to social issues affecting Jewish and Irish workers caused by years of economic depression.

Trafalgar Square was seen symbolically as the point at which working class East End and upper class West End met, and was a popular site for demonstrations. On 13 November, 1887, Monty, Zangwill's future step-mother-in-law, and 10 000 other protesters took part in a mass demonstration organised by the Social Democratic Federation, the National Secular Society and the Law and Liberty League, to protest the government's handling of the Irish situation. The marchers, approaching Trafalgar Square from different directions, were confronted by 2000 police and 400 troops in what became known as the 'Bloody Sunday Riots'.¹⁰ Many demonstrators were badly hurt - 200 were treated in hospital, three were killed and Monty was left with a scar on his forehead.¹¹ After that experience, he decided he could best help the poor by becoming a doctor and enrolled at the University of London, sharing a bohemian apartment in Bloomsbury with Israel.¹²

Israel continued writing and resigned after another disagreement with the governors of the school. (Later the school named one of its four houses 'Zangwill'). He wrote for the weekly Jewish Standard and became editor of the comic magazine *Ariel*, or *The London Puck*. In 1891 he published his first novel, *The Bachelor's Club*, followed by *Children of the Ghetto* (1892), which brought him instant international fame. Then followed *Ghetto Tragedies* (1893), *The King of Schnorrers*, *Grotesques and Fantasies* (1894), *Dreamers of the Ghetto* (1898) and other novels, plays, poetry and essays.

Monty graduated at the University of London in 1891 with a B Sc. and from St. Bartholomew's Hospital in 1895 as a doctor - after four attempts - perhaps much of his study time had gone on his commitments as secretary to the Bloomsbury Socialist Society and member of the Independent Labour Party and the Fabian Society.

As for his cousins, Joseph Cowen became a prosperous blouse manufacturer and married Monty's sister. He became a member of the Anglo-Jewish Association and was on the Board

of Directors of the London *Jewish Chronicle*. Zangwill became a popular speaker on Jewish issues and was a member of the Chovevei Zion society, of "Wanderers of Kilburn"¹³, a group of London Jewish intellectuals that included Dr Solomon Schechter, the discoverer of the Cairo Geniza. The latter's daughter, Ruth, was to marry Adv. Morris Alexander of Cape Town, a founder of the Cape Jewish Board of Deputies and later a member of the Union Parliament.

In 1895 Zangwill, by then regarded as the foremost Anglo-Jewish author of his generation, had a visitor. He wrote: "One day a black-bearded stranger knocked on my study door like one dropped from the skies and said 'I am Theodore Herzl - help me to rebuild the Jewish State.'"¹⁴

Zangwill introduced Herzl to potential supporters, presiding over a meeting he addressed at the Maccabean Club, London, on 24 November. The following year, he joined him in a 'pilgrimage' of English Jews to Palestine and helped him found the World Zionist Organization. He took Joseph Cowen with him to the first Zionist congress, where Herzl's impassioned speeches made a deep impression on them. Significantly, Cowen wrote, "For the first time in my life, I heard Jews who did not apologise for being Jews, who did not seek to excuse themselves in any way, but who were seemingly proud of the fact."¹⁵ Joe started touring Jewish areas of England, giving talks promoting Zionism and helping found the Zionist Federation, of which he became President in 1911. He was Director of the Jewish Colonial Trust from its foundation in 1899 until his death. Herzl referred to Cowen and Zangwill as part of his corps d'elite. He took Joe with him on his visit to Constantinople as the guest of the Sultan, Joe's British passport serving as an indirect guarantee of safety for Herzl. Joe regarded his friendship with Herzl as the greatest thing in his life and his name was one of the last things Herzl muttered on his deathbed.¹⁶

As for Monty, he qualified as a doctor in 1895 and married Florence Mary Herring, daughter of Captain Stephen Murray of the Indian army. Unfortunately, Florence was already married when he met her and adultery and divorce were frowned upon in Victorian England. For five days in November 1895, their affair hit the media. It was alleged that Florence adulterer had been involved with Mr Herring and his new wife in an alleged insurance fraud. Herring was accused of overvaluing a yacht and deliberately destroying it; Monty was cited as a co-conspirator and also charged with being involved in fraud in relation to the house he shared with Florence.¹⁷ Details of Florence Herring's divorce case, described by the judge as 'shocking and repulsive', were

splashed across the papers. The case against him was not proved, but such publicity would not enhance the reputation of a newly qualified doctor. Thus, Dr and Mrs Eder moved to Africa, settling in Johannesburg, where no one would have heard of them. It was a city of gold and doctors were in short supply.¹⁸

As the letter already quoted shows, Eder and Zangwill kept up a correspondence. According to an article on Eder by Mathew Thomson, "(l)etters from South Africa to Zangwill reveal Eder as a man who was disillusioned with his youthful political idealism, but also with medicine, keen just to make his fortune. He now cared not about 'psychology or sociology' but 'the narrow instincts of class', or as he put it in another letter, 'fat dinners, fat wives, stalls at the theatre, trips to Brighton or the equivalent, long morning sleeps and half-crowns to beggars'.¹⁹

Did Monty Eder, now called David Eder, look up Wolf Meyers? We do not know, but the Johannesburg Directory of 1890 does list under 'Watchmakers and Jewellers': *W. Meyers, 1177, Jeppe Street. Johannesburg.*²⁰ It would be interesting to know if Meyers left any descendants in Johannesburg.

Jewish Johannesburg was divided between the more modern Anglo-German Jews and the religiously more traditional Yiddish speaking East European Jews, with each group disdaining the standards and practices of the other.²¹ In 1896 a Zionist Society was established – the Chovevei Zion. Whether Eder had anything to do with this is not known but Zangwill was a member of the London Chovevei Zion and the Johannesburg Chovevei Zion wrote to him for advice on how to operate.²² As Eder was living in Johannesburg at the time and knew Zangwill's address, this is possible.

Monty was leaving behind social and personal problems but going to a town with social and political problems of its own. The arrival of thousands of fortune hunters into a conservative puritanical rural country aroused xenophobia and these 'Uitlanders' faced much opposition from the Transvaal government. In August 1895 they handed a petition, signed by 32 479,²³ to President Paul Kruger outlining their grievances, which dealt with unfair taxation, voting and citizenship rights.²⁴ "Go back to your people," Kruger told them, "and tell them that I shall never give them anything. I shall never change my policy. And now let the storm hit."²⁵

The storm hit soon after the Eders arrived with the ill-considered Jameson Raid, in which Dr L S Jameson, with the connivance of Cecil Rhodes and the support of Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies,²⁶ invaded the Transvaal from Bechuanaland in an attempt to overthrow Kruger. It was a fiasco and Jameson and his conspirators were captured.

These events were to lead to the South African War in 1899. By then the Eders had left the goldfields, although Zangwill retained his interest there.

One of Zangwill's stories, 'Anglicization',²⁷ is set against the background of the South African War, as is the *Mantle of Elijah*, a political novel that attacked jingoism and might have been intended to counter the accusation that cosmopolitan Jewry were behind the war. The book was the fourth most popular book out of 38 in a January 1901 Bookman list.²⁸ Not only was South Africa one of the countries Zangwill contracted with the Romeike press cutting agency to collect every mention of his name in its newspapers,²⁹ but he also mentioned it when an Australian newspaper interviewed him in 1903: "The Dreyfus case, South Africa with its menace of the Jewish capitalists, were in the air, demanding his attention. For Zangwill there was no overlooking them or the problems they involved."³⁰

This was a reference to the influential antisemitic reports emanating from Johannesburg-based JA Hobson, a *Manchester Guardian* reporter who believed that the Jewish capitalists on the Rand wielded inordinate power, controlled the mining industry, the dynamite industry, illicit liquor traffic, the press and the share market and persuaded Britain to embark on the War.³¹

For Dr Eder, it did not take long for Johannesburg to lose its attraction. Maybe it was the brutality, the lack of intellectual society, the dust-storms. Maybe it was the Uitlanders' grievances and political uncertainty and the threat of war with England. As a socialist, despite his disillusioned letters, he may have disliked the materialism of the wealthy landlords and the conditions of the workers. Perhaps he did not find Wolf Meyers and his poetic wife congenial, or perhaps his reputation had followed him. Whatever the reason, their stay in Johannesburg was short and in 1898 they moved to Columbia, where Monty's uncle James Eder was a pioneer of the sugar industry. There, Monty obtained a doctorate in medicine from the University of Bogota, but still could not settle down. The Eders returned to England, then went back to South America in 1901. In 1902, Monty was the Medical Officer in a poor Cumberland mining village. In 1903 he joined the Bolivian army as a non-commissioned military surgeon, planning a career in tropical medicine. He expected to set up a model hospital but found himself, in the midst of a civil conflict, employed by an Anglo-American concession-hunting rubber expedition examining indigenous beetles, butterflies and flowers.³² He was believed to have been in danger of starving to death, of being eaten by cannibals and of being spy.

In the meantime Zangwill, a supporter

of votes for women, had married suffragette Edith Ayrton in 1903. Like Florence, she was not Jewish, but had a Jewish step-mother and was a writer and feminist. They joined the Women's Social and Political Union. Criticised for supporting the militant tactics of its 'unwomanly' members, Zangwill responded that "ladylike means are all very well if you are dealing with gentlemen; but you are dealing with politicians". They helped form the Jewish League for Woman Suffrage "to demand the Parliamentary Franchise for women, on the same terms as it is, or may be, granted to men." The members disrupted Shabbat services in London synagogues, demanding both religious and political suffrage for women, and had to be forcibly removed. The Anglo-Jewish press called them "blackguards in bonnets".³³

In 1901, Herzl decided to solicit the financial help of Cecil John Rhodes.³⁴ Herzl asked Joseph Cowen to arrange a meeting. Max Langerman, a prominent Johannesburg pioneer and communal leader who had been involved with the Uitlanders and in the Jameson Raid, was proposed as a go-between, but Cowen persuaded English journalist WT Stead to do so. Herzl carefully drafted a letter that would flatter Rhodes,³⁵ which Zangwill translated into English. Joseph was to deliver it, but Rhodes died before that could happen.

In September 1903, on his return from the Sixth Zionist Congress,³⁶ Zangwill reported to the English Zionist Federation in London that he had met South African Jews and received mandates from Jews from Cape Town and that although the South African millionaires were comfortable enough, yet it was a South African Zionist millionaire who had furnished the money to produce a great Hebrew Encyclopaedia. The name of the South African millionaire was not disclosed but this was possibly a reference to the encyclopaedia on Jews and Judaism (*Ozar ha-Yahadut*)³⁷ planned by Ahad Ha-Am to foster the educational work which he considered a prior condition for settlement. A sample with four articles was published in Warsaw in 1906 but garnered little support.³⁸

At this congress, Secretary of State Joseph Chamberlain suggested that Great Britain might provide land in Uganda as an alternative to settling in Palestine.³⁹ Herzl wrote that "Cowen ... and Zangwill danced an Indian war dance" when he told them of a bill Chamberlain and Lord Lansdowne had introduced in Parliament. "When the Uganda plan was put to Herzl by Mr. Chamberlain, Herzl bombarded men with cables, letters and messages – to ... Cowen, Zangwill ... urging negotiations and new combinations."⁴⁰ The East European Jews refused the suggestion, calling Herzl a traitor,⁴¹ but Zangwill returned convinced. He stopped writing and gave up seven years to search for a territory to serve as an autonomous

Jewish settlement and lecturing around Britain advocating this. He established the Jewish Territorial Organisation (Ito) which looked for suitable territories in Argentina, Australia, Canada, Iowa, Mesopotamia, Nevada, Paraguay, Rhodesia, South Africa, Tripoli (Cyrenaica) and Uganda.

An American newspaper reported on 2 December 1904 under the heading 'Israel Zangwill who favors colonizing South Africa', that "Israel Zangwill, the famous Jewish novelist, playwright and essayist is much interested in the project to colonise the Jews of Europe on a tract of land in South Africa donated by Great Britain. His present visit to America is partly for the purpose of arousing interest here in the plan."⁴²

The requests for land in Canada, Australia and South Africa⁴³ were not favourably received and as Cyrenaica forms part of Libya, it is just as well that they were unsuccessful. In South Africa the Territorialists, as they were called, found support from the Anglicised assimilated anti-Zionist Jews. By identifying with Ito they could express their concern at the persecution of East European Jews while confirming their loyalty to England. Three months after the conference, a branch of Ito was established in Cape Town by David Goldblatt,⁴⁴ with anti-Zionists like the Rev Bender of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation and Hyman Liberman, the first Jewish mayor of Cape Town, as its honorary presidents. A branch was established in Johannesburg in 1905 with Alfred Cohn as chairman.⁴⁵ Zangwill accepted an invitation to visit South Africa in 1905 to attend the SAZFC conference, but had to cancel.

Up until this point, Eder had been a sceptic – as a socialist, he had distanced himself from Zionism and had accepted Marx's dictum that the solution to the Jewish question was bound up with the dissolution of capitalism, as is clear in correspondence with his cousin. He certainly had little hope that the Jews he had seen in South Africa would abandon capitalism,⁴⁶ but his work among the poor Jews in the East End of London made him sensitive to its need. Cowen claimed that Eder became a Zionist through him. Eder joined the Ito council and Zangwill sent him to Brazil in 1907 to investigate purchasing land for a Jewish settlement, and in 1908 to West Africa and Cyrenaica as part of an Ito contingent.

Eder became a school medical officer in Poplar, London, where he tackled the ill health of Britain's poor. He founded and edited *School Hygiene*, the first medical journal in Britain devoted to the health of school children, and designed a scheme for 'The Endowment of Motherhood'. He helped establish the London Labour Party and travelled across England lecturing, not on Zionism like his two cousins,

but about the need for social and economic justice. He became a regular contributor on medical subjects in the radical periodical *The New Age* where he met the school-teacher wife of the drama critic Dr Leslie (later Lord) Haden Guest. Edith Guest was 'the New Woman personified': a vegetarian, who walked around in flat heels and an Egyptian jibbah and was the daughter of Maximilian Low, a Jewish stockbroker with six sons and five daughters.⁴⁷

Eder ran off with Edith and the abandoned Florence committed suicide. Edith divorced Dr Guest and married David in 1909. Always open to new ideas, David's life was shaped by his desire to play an active part in bringing about a fairer society. He then eagerly embraced the revolutionary new field of psychoanalysis,⁴⁸ travelling to Vienna to be analysed by Freud, who sent him to Viktor Tausk. He and Edith entered courses of analysis with Carl Jung and Ernest Jones and Edith had affairs with Jones and H.G. Wells.⁴⁹ David was the first doctor in England to practise psychoanalysis, was a founder member of the London Psycho-Analytical Society, acting as its first secretary and in 1912 set up a psychoanalytic clinic in London, but also worked in another clinic as a 'poor man's doctor'. Maybe his interest in psychoanalysis was linked to a mood disorder – this could account for his impulsivity, his enthusiasms and his frequent changes of jobs and countries – in a letter to Zangwill discussing depression, he commented that the normal advice of a change of scene did not necessarily provide the opportunity 'to get away from oneself'.⁵⁰ Zangwill's letter to him also hints that Zangwill had a tendency to depression.

When the 1914 War broke out, David joined the British Army and served in the Royal Army Medical Corps in charge of Malta's psycho-neurological department. During this time, he developed ideas about post traumatic psychosis, which resulted in a book, *War-Shock*. That year, Joe became friendly with Chaim Weizmann when Joe, the President of the English Zionist Federation, offered him the presidency.⁵¹ Joe, David and Mrs Weizmann helped Vladimir Jabotinsky try to recruit a Jewish battalion, hoping that would increase Jewish post-war influence. When formed, the Zion Mule Corps was active in Gallipoli.⁵²

Zangwill by now was considering a population transfer in Palestine, although it was never Zionist policy. If the Boers had migrated to the Transvaal, he argued, why could the Arabs not realise that such a migration, for which they would be fully compensated for by the Zionists, would be in their best interest?⁵³ Chloe Veltman wrote that when Zangwill gave a speech or published on any topic, his words sparked debate on both sides of the Atlantic. British society looked to him as the

authoritative voice on all things Jewish and she quoted Edna Nahshon as calling Zangwill the Elie Wiesel of his day.⁵⁴

Then came the Balfour Declaration. Joe, Weizmann and eight others participated in a conference leading up to the Declaration.⁵⁵ Even Zangwill was an active campaigner, speaking at a 1917 public meeting in the London Opera House to celebrate its adoption. Weizmann wrote, "Zangwill was, or had been a Zionist. In the early days of the movement Herzl had leaned heavily on him and he had made a great impression at one of the first congresses... Zangwill's understanding of Zionism was subtle, his devotion substantial. Yet... he broke away to found his Jewish Territorial Organisation... Zangwill never got over his rift with us... In 1917 he indicated the possibility of a rapprochement. His Territorial Organisation had become meaningless, and he dissolved it that year. However, there was one fortunate result to our negotiations – the accession to our forces of Dr M D Eder, the distinguished psychiatrist. Zangwill himself remained outside, his attitude critical and unhelpful."⁵⁶

Although Israel was outside, the other two cousins were definitely inside and they were sent in 1918 by the British Government as part of an eight-member Zionist Commission under Weizmann to survey the situation in Palestine and prepare recommendations for applying the Balfour Declaration.⁵⁷ The Eders remained behind – David was optimistic and foresaw close co-operation with the Arabs with Palestine eventually part of a Federation of Middle East states.⁵⁸ Edith joined a Women's Representative Committee with Rebecca Sieff and Vera Weizmann to plan a programme for women and children with funds they intended to raise.⁵⁹ The following year Edith, Rebecca Sieff, Dr Vera Weizmann and Miriam Marks founded WIZO in England. Edith was elected onto the WIZO's executive and became vice president of the Federation of Women Zionists.

The Eders moved to Palestine, living on an orange farm, where he served as a political officer and doctor for the Zionist Commission and helped in the absorption of the first groups of immigrants of the Third Aliyah, displaying great understanding for their pioneering spirit. From 1921 to 1927 he was elected onto the Zionist Executive in Palestine as diplomatic representative – Joe was a member of the Zionist World Executive. In 1921 David went to the Soviet Union to try (unsuccessfully) to get them to recognise the work of the Zionist Organization. This was facilitated by the Soviet government's representative in Britain, Maxim Litvinov, who had married Ivy, the daughter of Edith's brother. (Litvinov had been appointed by Lenin and was then appointed by Stalin as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs – until Hitler came to power and his Jewish

ethnicity became an obstacle. He was replaced by Molotov whom Stalin directed to 'purge the ministry of Jews' and was murdered on Stalin's instructions in 1951.)⁶⁰

Weizmann appreciated Eder's abilities greatly and wrote about him in his autobiography:

The burden of this side of our work – and it was a heavy one – fell almost entirely on Dr David Eder. Superficially you would have said that there could hardly have been found a less suitable man for the job. He was Western by birth and upbringing, a scientist, Western in outlook, leftist in politics and almost entirely ignorant of any of the languages in current use in the old Yishuv. But these handicaps were purely superficial, and he overcame them. What mattered was his real kindness, his tolerance and humanity, his eagerness to understand the other's point of view, and these qualities soon gained for him the deep respect and affection of even the most recalcitrant among them. To nobody but Eder would they open up, he seemed possessed of some sort of intimate personal magic which charmed away their fears and suspicion... He took charge of the Commission. Although our relations with the military administration were in the hands of Jabotinsky, it was Eder's authority which expressed itself in the commission and, whenever difficulties arose... it was he who was called in to straighten matters out. It is remarkable that though in private he was at times temperamental and affected a gruff manner, he remained to the outside world a model of patience and forbearance. He always gained his point by persuasion and never resorted to threats or bluster... He was a tower of strength to us in those days. He understood the British better than most of us, was always able to reason matters out, to explain difficulties, and to advise"⁶¹

With those qualities, he must have been a superb psychiatrist. One of his patients, writer Ethel Mannin, wrote, "He knows all there is to know about human nature... He did not acquire this knowledge merely by reading textbooks... He knows the human mind because he has himself endured fundamental experiences, pain and conflict, and in his wanderings in all parts of the world come into contact with all kinds and classes of people."⁶² Sigmund Freud told Edith's sister, Barbara Low, herself an analyst, that Eder represented "a rare blend of intrepid courage and an absolute love of truth, together with tolerance and a great capacity to love."⁶³

The Eders spent eight months in Budapest while David was being analysed by Sandor Ferenczi. Back in England, he became a

prominent member of the Jewish Health Organisation and president of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain. He wrote many articles and served on the editorial board of *New Judea*, the paper of the World Zionist Movement and worked on behalf of the Hebrew University (which launched an appeal on his death to establish a memorial library in his name). With the rise of Nazi Germany, Germany started persecuting Jews and preventing them from ob he helped hundreds of Jewish refugees find medical positions in England and the Commonwealth.⁶⁴ Young refugees from German and Austrian *hachsharah* camps were placed on the David Eder farm bought in 1935 in Ringelstone, Kent, so that they would qualify for Palestinian agricultural visas. (Teddy Kollek was sent there in 1938 to work with the Habonim members.)

The first of the cousins to die, of pneumonia in 1926, was Zangwill. This followed a depressive illness for which he was hospitalised, probably brought on by the lack of success of recent plays and the furore that erupted after a speech he had given in America criticising the Zionist leadership. His funeral was conducted by visiting American Zionist leader Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and president of the Zionist Organization of America. He had been probably the best known Jew in the English-speaking world at the start of the 20th Century, with his friends including H. G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, and Arthur Conan Doyle.

In 1932, Joe Cowen visited Palestine and sent a telegram to Durban where Weizmann had taken ill while on a Keren Hayesod tour.⁶⁵ It stated that he was very pleased with what he had seen, the Jewish position in Palestine was as solid as the rock of Gibraltar and he was thinking of moving there.⁶⁶ Shortly after he came back, Joe died. The day after Weizmann returned from South Africa a memorial service was held with eulogies from Weizmann and David Eder. Four years later, Weizmann was to speak at David's funeral after his death from a heart attack.⁶⁷ Tributes were received from his friends who included Albert Einstein, H.G. Wells, Rebecca West, D. H. Lawrence and Sigmund Freud (who described him as a pioneer figure in three of the great modern movements of his age: socialism, psychoanalysis and Zionism).⁶⁸

In his article on Eder, 'Socialist, Psychoanalyst, Zionist and Modern Saint', Mathew Thomas makes the interesting point that "in the shift from political and social to cultural history we have become increasingly interested in connections between political, social and intellectual movements, less tied to histories of institutions, more interested in ideas, and more open-minded about which ideas mattered."

The three cousins are ideal subjects because they were wrapped up in political, social and intellectual movements. Causes were important to them. Ideas mattered. Activism mattered. For Zangwill it was feminism, Jewish and social causes round the world and Zionism. For Eder it was education, sex reform, feminism, socialism, psycho-analysis and Zionism.⁶⁹ For Cowen it was Jewish causes and Zionism.

Cowen's comments about meeting people who were not ashamed to be Jewish indicates that their commitment to Zionism and other isms might reflect a response to feelings of rejection experienced as Jews who did not fit into the British class system, despite their undoubted abilities, and an according rejection of the beliefs of that society and a concomitant desire to create a homeland where Jews could live free from prejudice. Zangwill had a complex relationship to his Jewishness,⁷⁰ and both he and Eder broke from convention by choosing non-Jewish wives.

This examination of the lives of Zangwill, Eder and Cowen also reminds one how interconnected our world was even in the 19th and early 20th Centuries, before air travel and the Internet. Zangwill's letter to Eder has thrown some light onto these cousins whose involvement, while intimately connected to the early history of Zionism, had ripples extending into South Africa.

NOTES

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- Israel's sister, one year older than him.
- His father Moses, supported by Israel, moved to Palestine where he died.
- From Ridenichki, Latvia.
- <http://www.jta.org/1926/08/03/archive/all-jewry-mourns-death-of-israel-zangwill-famous-writer-and-defender-of-his-people#ixzz2b0VMDTI7>.
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- Veltman, Chloe, "Melting Point", *Tablet Magazine* – Jewish News, www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/theater.../melting-point 10 March 2006
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- Bloody Sunday (1887) - Wikipedia, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloody_Sunday_\(1887\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloody_Sunday_(1887))
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- This group later formed the core of the Maccabaeans and the Jewish Historical Society of England.
- Schneiderman, Harry, op cit.
- <http://www.jta.org/1932/06/14/archive/a-great-servant-of-the-movement-and-his-people-dr-weizmanns-tribute-to-joseph-cowen-at-london-mem#ixzz2Z0QPr0eC>
- Dr. Siegmund Werner, who aided in nursing Herzl and as editor of "Die Welt" was close to him, in describing Herzl's last hours, wrote: From time to time he mumbled in his sleep. Then he straightened up again and stared at me. "Did you inform Cowen?" I answered "Yes". <http://www.jta.org/1932/05/26/archive/death-of-joseph-cowen#ixzz2ZnMmuKCC>
- The details of the Herring v. Janson and others case are accessible in reports in *The Times* between 7 and 15 November 1895. See Thomson, op cit.
- Thomson, Mathew, op cit.
- Ibid.
- Johannesburg Directory, 1890, Dennis Edwards & Co. With thanks to archivist Naomi Musiker, Beyachad Archives, 29 April 2013.
- The arrival of Yiddish-speaking religiously orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe from the early 1890s created serious tensions within the Johannesburg Jewish community. The English-speaking Anglo-German Jewish pioneers regarded the newcomers with disdain as primitive and dirty; the newcomers thought the English Jews ignorant and assimilated. When the Eders arrived there were three synagogues - the Witwatersrand Hebrew Congregation's President Street Synagogue (opened in 1889), the breakaway Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation's Park Synagogue (opened by President Kruger in 1892) and the Johannesburg Orthodox Hebrew Congregation (opened in 1893), known as the *Griene Beth Ha-midrash*. The first two were attended by modern, Anglicized, middle class Jews, the latter by Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jews.
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- Saunders, Christopher (Ed), *Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story*, Readers Digest, Cape Town, 1988, p237. Chamberlain ensured that he escaped the ensuing witch-hunt by getting himself elected to the committee established to determine the extent of his involvement. Called 'The committee of no enquiry', he was found to be blameless.
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- 31 Shain, Milton, *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa*, Witwatersrand University Press, 1994, pp41-3.
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- 37 A%ad Ha-Am - Jewish Virtual Library www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/.../ejud_0002_0001_0_00569.html
- 38 M. Lan, Encyclopaedias, in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol 6 Di-Fo, Encyclopaedia Judaica, Jerusalem, Israel, 1972, p731, column 2.
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- 43 Schneiderman, Harry, op cit.
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- 46 Thomson, Mathew, op cit;
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- 48 Eder, (Montague) David - Oxford DNB; www.oxforddnb.com/templates/article.jsp?articleid=61592&back
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- 50 I thank psychiatrist Dr Ashley Robins for his insights.
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- 70 Eder had no children. Zangwill had three including a daughter who was institutionalised for a mental condition. His son Oliver Louis Zangwill FRS (1913 – 1987) was an influential British neuropsychologist and Professor of Experimental Psychology.

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SOMEONE ON THE CEILING

*

Charlotte Cohen

I loved visiting my grandmother when I was a child. The reason was simple. She spoiled me rotten: She took me to matinees. She played rummy with me. She made me French- toast and soles fried in butter. She sewed dolls-clothes for me on her treadle Singer sewing machine. And she let me dress up in *her* evening clothes and wear her jewelry.

And I would sing and play-act in front of her and she would tell everyone she met how absolutely wonderful I was – in front of me!

And I would bask in her adoration of me.

As fate would have it, I came to live next door to my grandmother when I was 18 years old. She still continued to speak *about* me in front of me, but now, her comments were always directed to someone who appeared to be somewhere on the ceiling.

When I walked in, she would turn her eyes upwards to the ceiling and sigh: “Another new dress! She’s got a wardrobe full of clothes! Does she need *another* new dress?!”

Once when I said to my mother that I didn’t know what to wear, my grandmother looked up to the ceiling, and remarked very dryly: “If she *only* had a black dress and a white dress, she’d know *exactly* what to wear.”

The news of my impending marriage was met with great misgiving: “She can’t cook! She can’t sew! She can’t clean! All she can do is dress up!” she informed the person on the ceiling.

“Well,” she said, shaking her head dubiously, “I wish them both luck! *She’s* in for a big surprise! And he’s in for a *very* big surprise!” she ended ominously.

Actually my grandmother was right. Except that it turned out to be more of a shock than a big surprise.

All attempts at maintaining any sort of ladylike demeanor vanished when she saw the first batch of biscuits I baked.

She stared expressionlessly up at the ceiling. “They look like burned pieces of rubber sprinkled with, I don’t know, what on earth could it be...?”

“Who are you talking to about my biscuits?” I demanded. “I absolutely *hate* it when you do that! When you talk *about* me, in *front* of me

– to someone who isn’t even there!” ... and with that, I flounced out of the room, taking my – well, *I* called them biscuits anyway – with me.

Once my children were born, my grandmother’s sense of right and wrong knew no bounds. Everything she did was right; everything I did was wrong. She complained bitterly about the plastic pants (*‘pilchers’*) which was put over the nappy for extra protection. “Those pants are making marks on his legs!” she admonished as she pulled the nappy out of the *‘pilchers’* – thereby ensuring that the mattress would also become sopping wet.

There was no end to it: A steady barrage of comments, criticism and complaints directed to the ceiling about my mothering skills preceded my children wherever they went.

“The child is skin and bone! He’s half naked! He’s got no colour! She hasn’t even put a jersey on him! The child’s turning blue!”

“You just said he had no colour.” I said. “Now you say he’s turning blue. Well, blue’s a colour, isn’t it?”

My grandmother looked straight up at the ceiling. “She thinks she’s so smart! She thinks she’s so funny! If she would rather put a jersey on the child instead of always trying to be clever, then everybody would be happy! That big mouth of hers is going to get her into trouble one day!” she predicted ominously, “And then we’ll see how pert she is!”

We never know when it is the last time we will experience something ... There seems to be no transitional period in our lives. It is usually *one* event which suddenly catapults us from one stage to another; *one* event which changes our lives forever.

Life irrevocably shifted gear for me with the death of my mother.

I was thirty-something. My grandmother was eighty-something. I had lost a mother. She had lost a daughter.

There was no one else to break the news to her.

I did something I had seen an old family doctor do many years before. I went to my grandmother and told her that my mother had taken a turn for the worse, following it with: “I am going to phone the hospital now to find out how she is.”

I went to the phone, which was in another room, and pretended to dial a number ...

Charlotte Cohen is an award-winning short story writer and poetess, whose work has appeared in a wide variety of South African publications since 1973.

It allowed my grandmother a few minutes to prepare herself for the news that was to follow.

I returned to her room, put my arms around her and started crying.

"Granny" I said. "She's gone."

In that imperceptible moment before I felt her small body sobbing in my arms, whilst I, in turn, wept on her shoulders, she seemed to sense that what I had done, had been done in order to protect her. In that same moment, just as a baton is passed from one relay runner to another, we both knew that the reins of responsibility would be handed to me.

Very often, the thing that irritates us the most is the thing we miss the most: My grandmother never spoke to anyone on the ceiling about me again

You know, I really missed her conversations with the ceiling about me - and still do.

You see, my grandmother's remonstrations had kept me securely in the role of a 'child-woman'. Suddenly I had been catapulted into a pit-stop between a husband and children on one side and a frail, elderly grandmother on the other - all of whom needed care and attention. I had been hurled forward to occupy my mother's place as the intermediary between four generations. It wasn't easy...

They say that children never listen to their elders, yet never fail to imitate them.

When I was a young mother, The Beatles had a profound effect on male-gendered children, no matter how young. As soon as they could talk, it was an echo of Samson: "Don't cut my hair!" Straggly shoulder-length hair had replaced the traditional short-back-and-sides.

I was incredulous when my son returned from school.

"You didn't have a haircut!" I exclaimed. "I

can't believe it! You've been warned that if your hair is more than three centimetres over your collar, you're going to get into trouble!"

"No, I'm not!" he said. "You see, if I tuck the back of my hair into my collar, and push my fringe into my cap, no one can even notice it. And anyway, I think it looks sexy."

"Sexy!" I exploded. "What are you talking about?! You look absolutely disreputable!"

I rolled my eyes heavenwards in total exasperation.

"Can you believe it?" I asked. "I gave him the money to have a haircut. He had it in his pocket! And I wonder if it's still there now?! But did he go?! No!! Of course he didn't!! He actually *wants* to look his worst! And he's been warned! He's going to get into trouble! But will he listen? No!! Because he is so stubborn! You might as well be talking to the wall!!"

My son stopped in his tracks.

"What do you mean, 'You might as well be talking to the wall?' You *are* talking to the wall! And I absolutely hate it when you do that! When you talk about me, in front of me, to someone who isn't even there!" And with that, he turned on his heel and marched out of the room.

In the silence that followed him, a person with an incredibly nice face, who seemed to be looking down at me from the ceiling, gave me a long, slow wink.

My grandmother's face was implacable. Not a muscle moved.

It was an expression that reflected her satisfaction that I had finally become acquainted with her old friend up there on the ceiling ... someone in whom I could confide ... someone who was always there to listen with a sympathetic eye and an understanding ear.

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LIBERATION DIARIES: REFLECTIONS ON 20 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY

*

Naomi Musiker

Liberation Diaries: Reflections on 20 Years of Democracy is a collection of essays by fifty diverse South Africans 'from all walks of life' who reflect on South Africa's process of democratization and transformation since the demise of the apartheid system. According to the editor, Busani Ngcaweni, the idea for the book was first conceived in 2013, the centenary of the 1913 Natives Land Act, a legislative measure which 'balkanised South Africa, eventually turning the black majority into subjects with no land rights and the white minority into citizens who owned the majority of the land and the wealth beneath it'. The compilation of this volume coincided with the death of Nelson Mandela, first President of a democratic South Africa. It was therefore decided to extend the scope of the book to an overview investigation of the twenty years of democracy since 1994 as a tribute to Mandela's humanity and leadership.

The main aspects covered and analyzed are the progress in achieving non-racialism and national unity, the advances in non-sexism and women's rights and the establishment of a true democracy so that South Africa, so deeply divided over centuries was able to embark on a policy of national reconciliation and development without retribution. The contributors are mainly members of the government and civil service, civil rights activists, researchers and academics.

The original editorial plan was to arrange

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the essays by theme. This idea was abandoned in favor of alphabetical arrangement by surname of author. The editor admits that a division by theme, though attractive, was problematical because there would have been a 'disproportionate allocation of essays under certain themes, while others would have featured no more than two or three essays'. Alphabetical arrangement presents certain difficulties for the reader as there is no connecting narrative, cohesion or link between the various essays. Often, essays dealing with important aspects such as education and health are scattered throughout the book, separated by vast passages of text dealing with other subjects. This is disappointing for those anxious to have a comprehensive picture of what has been achieved in various fields during the twenty years of democracy since 1994. This is compounded by the lack of an index and comprehensive bibliography. There is considerable variation in referencing systems although the brief was to use end notes, not formal academic reference systems.

Despite the intentions of the editor, there is a certain bias of choice in the selection of contributory themes. Aspects of development such as agriculture, health policy, education, employment and business development could have been expanded to provide a more overall survey. For example, there is an emphasis on tertiary and university education at the expense of primary and secondary education. (Mpho Tshivase: 'In Education, Money still matters'. Siphon Ngcwangu: 'Higher education and training 20 years into democracy'). It would have been useful to know what is being done to remedy the problems of primary school education from the point of view of the educator.

In view of the fact that the Land Acts were the springboard of apartheid legislation, the reviewer feels there should have been more contributory essays on the subject of agriculture. The subject is discussed at length

by Professor Herbert Vilakazi ('Breaking the post socio-economic impasse'), who considers that "the underdevelopment of African rural communities - and their off-springs in urban areas - is now the heavy drag that is pulling down the entire South African economy". He goes on to propose that an Agricultural Revolution is needed in South African rural areas, maintaining that the error in present day governmental policies is to encourage the production of successful individual commercial farmers in order to create a black middle class at the expense of the small subsistence farmer. Vilakazi laments the continued existence of communal land under the sovereignty of traditional leaders where the rural poor are forced into self-subsistence agriculture with no help of bettering their condition. Quoting examples of the Agricultural Revolutions which occurred in England, France, Russia and China he advocates a similar process for South Africa. He is particularly impressed with the Chinese rural model of the post 1978 era initiated by the Deng reforms, which resulted in the production of food for over a billion people and the creation of subsidiary non-agricultural economic activities in rural areas.

It would have been interesting to have other points of view on the subject. For example, are there any instances of black commercial farmers who have brought benefits to their impoverished districts?

Sweeping reforms in rural areas potentially impact on deeply engrained traditional customs. Lawrence Matemba describes one such experience as a trainee Catholic priest confronting community protest at Thembalihle Township in Vrede, Free State, where he witnessed the clash between African tradition and Christianity over the question of the chief's right to have more than one wife. Another aspect, discussed by Nkululeko Nxesi, is traditional initiation in democratic South Africa. This custom was abused by the apartheid government as a "training ground for cheap labor". In the post-apartheid era it is controlled largely by "young people who do not have the much needed experience and knowledge". Various corrupt procedures have had disastrous consequences for many initiates. The support of traditional leaders is needed to uproot these malpractices.

As in the rural areas, the rising black urban middle class comes in for a great deal of criticism by several writers (Evan Mantzaris: 'The black middle class: Food for thought on goodness and greed'; Zuki Mqobomba: "Excuse me Miss, I'm Khanyi Mbau: The post-apartheid cultural schizophrenia"). The views expressed are closely linked to criticism of government failings and nepotism. Perhaps a more balanced view would have been to provide representatives of the black middle class with an opportunity

to counter the accusations of materialism, indifference, subservience and self-enrichment leveled against them. There are examples of entrepreneurs who have benefited the lives of the poor and provided employment and training to many unemployed workers.

Many of the contributions regarding democratic progress in South Africa are based on the personal experiences of writers. Of interest are the views of the young, post-apartheid generation including students and second-generation exiles returning to South Africa. Despite the benefits of education and overseas experience, not all are fully satisfied with what has been achieved in the new South Africa. Many have struggled to obtain financial support during their tertiary education period and cannot find satisfactory employment thereafter. Others consider that the dream of a democratic South Africa has not been fulfilled (Zosa de Sas Kropiwnicki-Gruber: 'Reconciling myths and realities: The return of second-generation exiles to post-apartheid South Africa'; Amanda Dlamini: 'I write for the invisible ones'; Mzukisi Qobo: 'Memory, race and denial: the unfinished journey towards restorative justice'). Sakhiwe Kokela ('To be young and hopeful in a democratic society') describes the use of illicit drugs such as *woonga* among the younger generation which has a disastrous effect on victims with resultant crime and violence. This problem has escalated to an alarming effect since 1994.

The greatest sense of achievement and purpose occurs with those few who have reached their goals after great struggle, such as the women who have achieved success in the diplomatic service (Nomfanelo Kota, 'Twenty years for women cadres in diplomacy'), or have participated in the National Development Plan (Josephilda Nhlapo-Hlope, 'To me, freedom means hope and opportunities').

There are quite a number of essays dealing with the experiences of women in the new South Africa. These vary from a sense of frustration (Matshepo Seedat, 'My miniskirt, my freedom'), to an optimistic view of the future for women in the workplace and in the professions (Khanyisile Kweyama, 'Coming full circle: my diary of liberation in corporate society'). Kweyama was the first black female to hold the position of Executive Director of Anglo American South Africa.

An interesting view is expressed by Dr Edith Phaswana, in her essay on transformation in South African universities. She regrets the increasingly reported incidents of sexual harassment at universities and the fact that twenty years into democracy the participation of black and women academic staff has not increased much, particularly at senior management level. This is particularly disturbing when women occupy senior positions and

unconsciously or consciously perpetuate the system of male domination.

Cheryl Uys-Allie, film maker, maintains that liberation is based on economic freedom and that the power of women acting collectively and mobilizing actively should be Africa's agent of change. In South Africa, while there has been a significant accommodation made for women in leadership positions, both in business and government, the statistics of rape, domestic violence and abuse are unacceptably high ('Changing narratives of race in the new South Africa').

Nomonde Xundu, who now serves as South African Health Attaché in Washington, provides a fascinating account of her role in Public Health in the early years of the AIDS epidemic from 1996 to 2011. She pays tribute to Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang for the help and encouragement she received during this period. Jean Elphick, national manager of Afrika Tikken's empowerment programme for children with disabilities, has given an inspiring description of the work achieved at Madwaleni District Hospital in the former Transkei and at Orange Farm north of Sebokeng.

Some writers express concern about the prevalence of ethnic divisions in South African society (Jeffrey Mathete Sehuma, 'The unrelenting specter of ethnicity in South Africa'; Dan Tlhabane Motaung, 'Nationalism in post-apartheid South Africa: Observations'). Raymond Parsons seeks to remedy this situation through cooperation by means of social-economic dialogue. To this end he is a great proponent of NEDLAC, which was set up in 1995 and the resultant National Development Plan (Social Dialogue in South Africa).

The views of the English and Afrikaans minorities of South Africa are not prominent in this volume. There are few examples of individuals overcoming the racial divide and co-operating harmoniously to produce the kind of society so passionately advocated by the inspired leadership of Nelson Mandela. David Saks has provided an excellent overview of the post-1994 contribution of the Jewish community to South Africa's transition from white minority rule to multiracial democracy, mainly from the point of view of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies. It's a pity that more is not included about the role of Jewish activists, many of whom were members of the Communist Party of South Africa, who made great sacrifices to further the cause of democracy. It would have been gratifying to mention the role of Rusty Bernstein and Alan and Beata Lipman, who were among those

responsible for the compilation of the Freedom Charter, while distinguished jurists like Justice Arthur Chaskalson and Albie Sachs ensured the establishment of the Constitutional Court.

A rather sour note is introduced by Chengiah Ragaven ('Meditations of the geopolitics of South Africa's freedom'). A former SRC activist of the University of Natal-Non European Section, he departed for London in the 1960s where he carried out ANC propaganda and received various degrees from Oxford, Cambridge Sussex and Durban-Westville, becoming vice-rector at the Durban University of Technology after the unbanning of Mandela. During his student years, he was influenced by speakers such as Kadar Essack who berated the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) as a liberal, albeit non-racist movement representing the elite of the South African white English and Jewish society, whose parents and grandparents were the 'owners of the means of production'. Ragaven expresses deep disappointment in the condition of South Africa after CODESA. He blames various foreign agencies for the failure of CODESA, including the World Bank, Wall Street, the IMF, Washington, Brussels, the CIA and Mossad.

Ragaven has great admiration for Muammar Gaddafi, whom he lauds as a great African nationalist. He supports the view that the CIA, Mossad and Britain trained the Sanussi as Jihadists to cause the revolution which overthrew him in order to control the wealth of Africa.

Ragaven's views are thankfully in the minority. The book is largely free of such diatribes and the various writers attempt on the whole to be more balanced and objective in their opinions.

The pervading mood of disappointment and criticism may be due to the fact that the book was written too soon after the establishment of the democratic dispensation. Twenty years is a short time in the history of a nation. If, for example, the history of Johannesburg had been commemorated twenty years after 1886, it would have been a story of a nation still devastated by the Anglo-Boer War and by the onset of economic depression. Fifty years later, Johannesburg was commemorated as the 'City of Gold', in a handsome volume, lavishly illustrated. However, today many would maintain that this wealth was unevenly distributed.

Liberation Diaries: Reflections on 20 years of Democracy; edited by Busani Ngcaweni. Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2014.

OPPOSITE MANDELA: ENCOUNTERS WITH SOUTH AFRICA'S ICON

*

Ralph Zulman

Tony Leon requires little introduction. A lawyer and attorney, he lectured in Constitutional Law at the University of the Witwatersrand, and served on the Johannesburg City Council before entering parliament. There he served for twenty years (1989-2009), for thirteen of them as leader of the Democratic Party and Democratic Alliance, the country's opposition party. His party leadership commenced in May 1994, within days of Nelson Mandela's inauguration as president. Leon also played a key role in the negotiations that led to the birth of a democratic South Africa.

After standing down from the party leadership in 2007, Leon was awarded a Fellowship to the Institute of Politics, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard, and in 2008 was a Visiting Fellow, Cato Institute, Washington DC. In 2009, President Jacob Zuma appointed him as South African Ambassador to Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, where he served as head of Mission in Buenos Aires until October 2012. Following his return to South Africa, he became executive chairman of Resolve Communications (Pty) Ltd., a weekly columnist for Business Day newspaper and a consultant to business in South Africa and overseas. He also lectures both locally and abroad.

Throughout his career, Leon has actively associated himself with the Jewish community, frequently addressing gatherings of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies. His previous books are *Hope & Fear - Reflections of a Democrat*, *On the Contrary - Leading the Opposition in a Democratic South Africa* and *The Accidental Ambassador-From Parliament to Patagonia* (the last two of which were reviewed by this writer in previous issues of *Jewish Affairs*).

His latest book is very timely.

Opposite Mandela commences with an appropriate quotation from Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte: "It was not the Roman army which conquered Gaul, but Caesar: it was not the Carthaginian army which caused the Republican army to tremble at the gates of Rome, but Hannibal; it was not the Macedonian army which reached the Indus, but Alexander."

Mr Justice Ralph Zulman, a long-serving member of the editorial board of Jewish Affairs and a frequent contributor to its Reviews pages, is a former Judge of the Appeal Court of South Africa.

The Introduction features an interesting and insightful picture of Mandela. Leon describes a visit he had from Mandela in December 1998, when he was at Johannesburg's Milpark Hospital for a coronary bypass operation. Prior to the visit there had been an exchange between Leon's party and the African National Congress (ANC), in which the former was described as being a 'Mickey Mouse party'. Leon rejoined by saying that if he led a Mickey Mouse party "Mandela must lead a Goofy government". When Mandela arrived at the hospital to visit Leon he knocked on the door to Leon's and called out from the other side of the door, "Hello, Mickey Mouse, this is Goofy. Can I come in?"

Leon describes this as something that "characterized the essence of Mandela and the relationship that he had with the political figures of his time, and a throng of humanity beyond the confines of government and party politics." Mandela led by example. He claimed no monopoly of wisdom on key issues and sought a range of views and voices "beyond the party faithful and his inner circle". Leon remarks that it was precisely this that was the reason that he enjoyed access to him, as Mandela "seemed to relish an outsider perspective."

In 2013, the Democratic Alliance (DA) began a 'propaganda exercise' and was determined 'somewhat clumsily', to use Leon's words, to lay claim to the Mandela legacy. Accordingly, photographs of Mandela with Progressive Party (a predecessor movement) stalwart Helen Suzman were displayed with a text that "neatly suggested that the opposition's roots lay in the same struggle as Mandela's."

The heading to Chapter 1 is 'Release', referring to Mandela's unconditional release from imprisonment following on a dramatic announcement in parliament by President FW de Klerk. Leon had some days earlier (1 February 1990) taken his seat on the backbench. He had been seven years old when Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964.

Shortly after Mandela had moved into Leon's Houghton constituency, Leon received a dinner invitation from him. This is the subject of Chapter 2. When Mandela moved into the area, Leon had written him a note and sent a chocolate cake welcoming him to Houghton. Mandela phoned to say how touched he was

to receive the cake and to have such an energetic representative in parliament, adding that he was sorry that he could not attend the constituency report-back meeting to which he had been invited. He was, however, keen to meet - hence the subsequent dinner invitation. Ken Andrew, Zach de Beer and Leon duly attended the meeting. Leon had never met Mandela previously. When he entered the room, his famous warmth and conviviality took all of them, "all suited out for the occasion, feel immediately at ease."

At a meeting in Durban earlier that day, Leon had made certain remarks, which were quoted in a single paragraph of the afternoon edition of *The Star*. Mandela, after warm greetings, proceeded to say that while he understood Leon's perspective, he wanted to explain the ANC's viewpoint: "Thus began a relationship that continued and strengthened over the next seventeen years". Mandela then inquired about Leon's father (a retired judge in Natal) whom he knew from a standoff at the University of Natal. The inquiry related to events that had occurred four decades earlier.

Some twenty months passed before Leon again met with Mandela. Between the two meetings "South Africa went about dramatically reinventing itself." That 'reinvention' is dealt with in Chapter 3. It concerns the complex, important and crucial question as to who would appoint the Constitutional Court judges who would test and interpret South Africa's new constitution.

Chapter 4 deals with Codesa and the uneasy relationship between De Klerk and Mandela, "who like feuding conjoined twins, were unhappily joined at the hip and by a process that both needed to succeed", to use Leon's graphic phrase.

'Democratic Alternative' is the title to Chapter 5, which deals with the Codesa negotiations. Leon refers to an offhand informal remark made to him by Sheila Camerer in which she said that she was there to give away the family silver. The remark was picked up by a sharp-eared *Sunday Times* reporter. The words were splashed on the front page of the paper's next Sunday edition.

In Chapter 6, Leon describes how just two days before Mandela's first address to parliament on 22 May 1994 "a shell-shocked and diminished party council" elected him as the acting leader, later that year confirming him in the position. The following chapter relates an incident one morning in May 1995, when he was summoned by President Mandela to Tuynhuys. Leon faced 'a full frontal attack' from Mandela, which revealed an aspect of the Mandela that Leon had not experienced first-hand until then. It concerned a stand that he had adopted in a controversial affair involving the ANC.

'Forced Marriage' is the title of Chapter 8. The 'marriage' was to Gencor, sealed with a cheque for R250 000 for the opposition to the ANC. Leon relates that a friend in the ANC had informed him that in Mandela's eyes, De Klerk had become proxy for much of the anger he felt, and managed "so masterfully to mask from view towards the group and community FW came from."

The author reveals in Chapter 9 that there was a third party to the marriage - Prince Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi. He was a friend of Leon's father when Leon grew up in Durban. Buthelezi's new perch as Minister of Home Affairs secured him an office, ironically, for a short time in the HF Verwoerd Building. The relationship between Madiba and Buthelezi was always ambivalent. In Chapter 10, Leon tells of an urgent telephone call he received in Switzerland from Mandela while he was celebrating his father's seventieth birthday. It concerned the DP's proposal to nominate Professor John Dugard to the soon-to-be-established Human Rights Commission instead of Helen Suzman. He also discusses a spat between Dennis Davis (whom he describes as a 'protean intellect') and Professor Barney Pityana (who once accused Davis of being a racist).

'The Temptation', the title of Chapter 1, refers to an offer by President Mandela to Leon of a cabinet position. Leon after some deliberation declined the offer. Helen Suzman was among those who advised him against acceptance. His party also rejected an alliance with De Klerk, the then leader of the opposition.

In September 1995, Mandela wished Colin Eglin and Leon a happy Rosh Hashanah (Chapter 12). He had to be reminded that although Eglin had represented Sea Point in parliament, which was largely Jewish, he was not Jewish himself. Mandela had a "generous spirit of inclusivity" and an "ability to reach across the divisions of language, race, religion, politics and culture to make the 'Rainbow Nation'" (a phrase coined by Archbishop Tutu). Rather like Ronald Reagan, he had "the brilliant ability to paint the board canvas on which he wanted his administration to be portrayed and remembered by posterity, and he certainly omitted no colors or shades from his palette." There was also "a degree of shrewd political calculation behind his grand gestures." Mandela used his power of patronage to reward old enemies. Leon got to know General Constant Viljoen, leader of the right-wing Freedom Front. He had an "iconic status on the white right", and the two were seated next to each other on the parliamentary benches reserved for the leaders of smaller parties. Viljoen drew a sharp distinction between "his admiration for Mandela and his fundamental disagreement with the ANC". Mandela always "maintained a lively interest" in Leon's romantic attachments urging him to

change his single status and to 'get married'". He was then involved in a serious relationship "with a bright and beautiful Israeli divorcee, Michal Even-Zahav". In December 2000 he married her. Mandela was among the first to congratulate them when they met the day after the wedding.

Chapters 13 and 14 are brief. They relate to some of the foreign personalities Mandela met with, including Fidel Castro, Iranian President Hashemi Rafanjani and President Clinton. Mandela told Leon that that in his first year out of prison he was able to raise R66 million for his party from African leaders alone and other fund-raising activities. He was able to raise R18.5 million via a trust in five years between 2003 and 2008. Interestingly, even at this time unattractive squabbling by Mandela's family members over his estate were in evidence. After his retirement, Leon met Mandela at his impressive private residence in Bishops Court, bought from former Old Mutual Boss, Mike Levett. Mandela boasted laughingly that he had bargained him down on the price.

In Chapter 15, the author reveals Mandela as being prone to cronyism. Three examples given are where Mandela backed "the wrongdoers and ignored indeed undermined, his famous commitments to transparency and democratic accountability." These concerned HIV/Aids and Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Dr Allan Boesak, who embezzled R3 million intended for the poor and Stella Sigau's dealings with Sol Kerzner. The approval by Mandela's cabinet of the controversial Arms Deal is also referred to.

Chapter 16 records instances where Mandela's "dazzling persona gave way to irritation and even anger". One such case concerned Bishop Desmond Tutu. His dealings with his former wife Winnie are also referred to. Chapter 17 concerns an attack on Leon's father, Judge Ramon Leon, a judge in the Natal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court. He had sentenced Andrew Zondo to death, the sentence arising from Zondo's conviction of murder without extenuating circumstances regarding the planting of a bomb in a shopping centre in Amanzimtoti two days before Christmas 1985. Five people were killed in the attack. The judge regarded the death sentence with 'a visceral dislike'. After his retirement he became a leading campaigner for its abolition (this eventually happened in 1995).

Jessie Duarte, then a member of the ANC provincial executive in Gauteng, attacked Peter Leon, the author's brother (then leader of the opposition in the Provincial Council), saying that he was the son of a 'hanging judge'.¹ Duarte's attack was amplified by Mandela's close friend, Fatima Meer. Leon met Mandela at his home to complain about the attacks. He handed Mandela a copy of Judge Leon's

judgment in the Zondo matter underlining the portion dealing with the lack of extenuating circumstances. Mandela read the judgment very fully and in silence. Leon pointed out that that if attacks on individual politicians via their familial links were to take place there would be no end to the matter. Mandela said that there was no need to labor the point and that government's view on Judge Leon was "quite different from that of the two individuals". He then rang Cheryl Carolus, then the deputy secretary general of the ANC, summarised the purpose of Leon's visit, and instructed her 'pretty firmly' that the attacks had to stop as they were 'wrong' and 'unfair'. Less than three months later, at Leon's fortieth birthday celebrations, Mandela was seated next to Judge Leon. They had a warm discussion but neither raised the question of the Zondo judgment.

'Road to Mafikeng' (Chapter 18) deals with Mandela's address at the ANC Congress in December 1997, something Leon describes as "the low-watermark of his presidency". Leon nevertheless states that "it remains incontestable that as president he transcended the narrow partisan and racial divisions of South Africa."

Chapter 19 deals, inter alia, with Mandela's eightieth birthday party in July 1998 and his taking leave of parliament. On the latter occasion Leon made a most moving and warm speech. He said that there were three categories of great political leaders. The first were the great and the bad, such as Hitler and Stalin, the second the great and the good such as Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt and the "third category of also good, but of a leader born with a special kind of grace, who seems to transcend the politics of his age. This is a very small category and in fact I can think of only three such men in this century - Mahatma Gandhi, the Dalai Lama and Nelson Mandela." He added: "My respect and admiration for him is unconditional. He graces this House. He graces this country. He graces humanity." Referring to President Mbeki, Leon remarks that early on in his era "even his famed mentor would feel the icy blast that emanated from his successor."

Leon describes the 'hard-fought election in June 1999, when his party supplanted the New National Party as the official opposition in parliament and the ensuing eighteen month alliance with that party. He describes the alliance as a marriage of "both unequal and incompatible partners". The NNP leadership deserted the party and made common cause with its historic enemy, the ANC. The ridiculous policy of Mbeki in regard to the issue of the effective treatment for HIV/AIDS is described in some detail. Leon speaks of relationship with Mbeki as "acid, rather than as a spoonful of sugar". He refers to the *Sunday Times* description of Mbeki as "Teflon-coated in contrast to the

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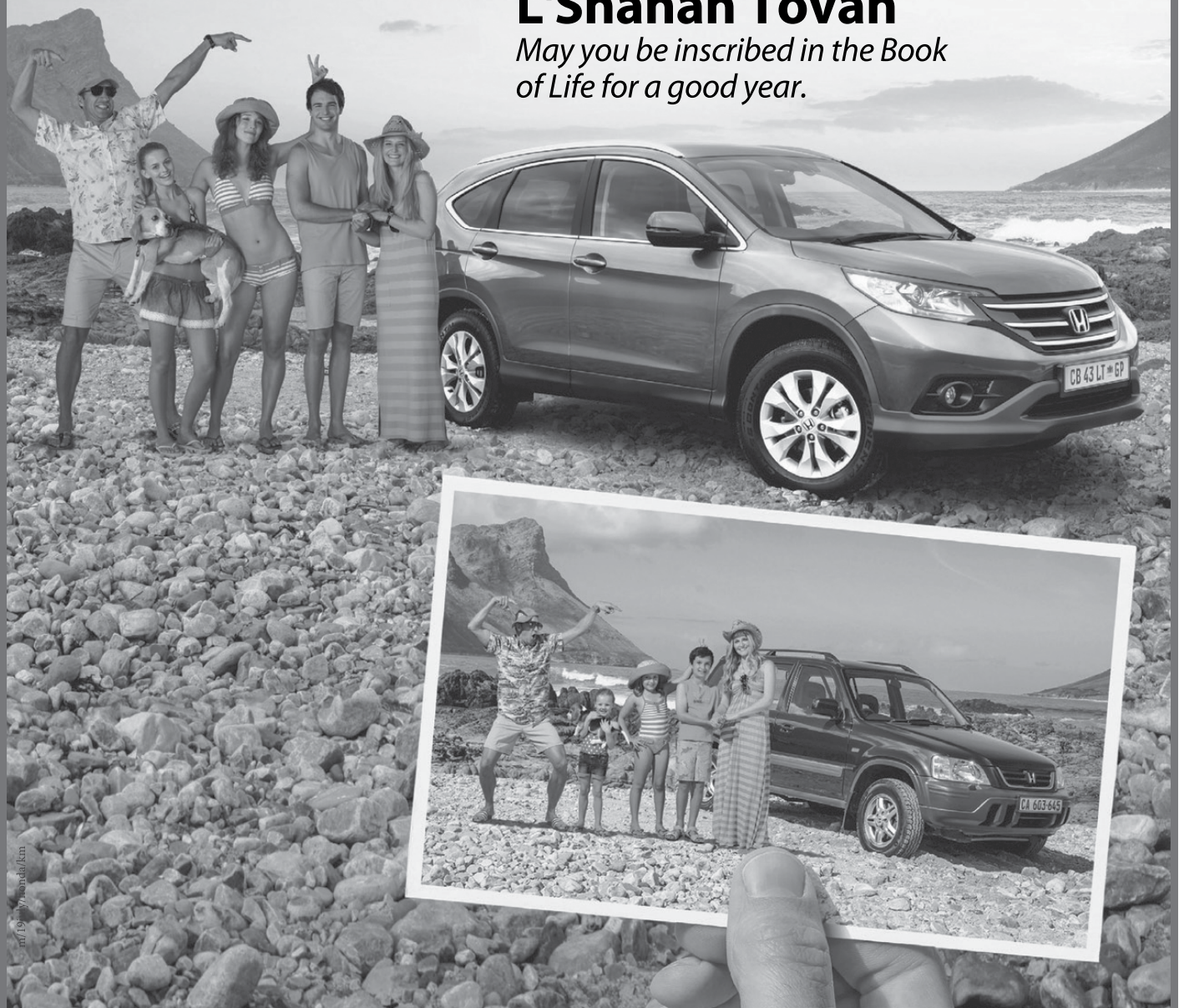
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‘Velcro man’, to whom nothing sticks”. Unlike Mbeki, Mandela admitted that he had made a mistake in neglecting the HIV/AIDS issue.

In September 2002, in a visit to his Houghton home, Leon asked Mandela whether, given the depths to which opposition relations had sunk, he had any practical advice as to how they might be restored. His then ‘bewildering’ response was that Leon “must seek the advice of JZ [Jacob Zuma] – he’s the key man in the party and the government”. At this meeting, which was to be a private one, Mandela nevertheless introduced Leon to ‘a phalanx of reporters and photographers “as ‘a proper democrat and there should be dialogue at all levels of our country”. These remarks were obviously aimed at Mbeki. Leon had not envisaged that at the ANC conference in 2007, Mbeki would be resoundingly defeated by Zuma, whom Mandela years before had said was “the key man in the party”. Within months Zuma was President of South Africa. Leon describes his ascent to office as “a Houdini-like escape from the coils from court procedures and multiple corruption charges”.

Chapter 21 (‘Finale’) describes Leon’s last face-face encounter with Mandela in December 2004. At this stage, his physical frailties were more apparent than ever. There was a discussion of American presidents. Mandela was particularly scornful of US President

George W Bush. He “wistfully observed” that former President Reagan, who he had hoped to meet after his release from prison, was one of the few people who refused to meet with him. In early December 2006, after Leon’s announcement that he would soon stand down as leader of his party, he received a call from Mandela, who said, “Tony, you will be missed much more than you might realize, because you have played such a very important role in our country... much more than you will ever read about.”

Opposite Mandela shows a unique insight into previously unexplored aspects of the presidency and leadership of Nelson Mandela, and is a must for all those interested in the period in South Africa’s political history that it covers.

Opposite Mandela - Encounters with South Africa’s Icon by Tony Leon, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg & Cape Town, 2014, 243pp.

NOTES

- 1 On 12 July 2014 the same Jessie Duarte, now ANC Deputy Secretary-General, issued a statement comparing the Israeli’s to Nazis and of being responsible for ‘barbaric attacks on the defenceless Palestinian people of Gaza’. Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein said that her comments were ‘replete with malicious and shameful lies’.

LIFE UNDER WATER

*

Marcia Leveson

Ken Barris has written an extremely satisfying novel of life in the 1960s in Port Elizabeth. It is seen through the eyes of the three young Machabeus brothers, living a suburban life in a middle class, not all that religious, but very consciously Jewish family. In the present literary climate this novel is surprising because it is a straightforward story, telling of the inner workings of family with virtually no contact with politics or a wider world, not even with girls. There are no dark,

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 Wits University. She has written extensively in the area of South African fiction and edited a number of anthologies of fiction and poetry.

hidden secrets, no interaction with black people, hardly even with servants; and the Gentile world out there is peripheral. And it is very easy to identify with the family dynamics and the trajectory of the protagonists.

Ken Barris writes like a poet, with an eye for detail and the apt and appealing phrase, and a style that is lucid and accessible. He conjures the scene, seemingly effortlessly, whether under water, bracing against the Port Elizabeth wind battering the ugly apartment buildings, or the boys’ childish pranks and awkward interactions with each other or at school, concealing the craft that goes into rendering daily happenings meaningful. Family conflicts, stretching down the generations, are played out against the backdrop of a very ordinary but instantly recognisable place and time.

In its seeming simplicity, this story

nevertheless captures - as old photographs do - hidden or half-forgotten moments. If a deeper meaning is intended in the naming of the characters who belong to the family Machabeus - and making an ironic reference to the Maccabees - this is unnecessary to the enjoyment of a novel. It is true that Barris's fictional family belong to a world which has almost completely disappeared - and perhaps that is indeed the historical connection.

Barris's novel is therefore universal but also a very Jewish book, and an important contribution to our literature and to our understanding of Jewish life in a particular time and place. It can simultaneously be read as a timeless take on adolescence and more importantly, I think, it should be valued as a much needed evocation of a neglected corner of South African life.

Ken Barris, *Life Under Water* Kwela, 2012.

ISRAEL - RECLAIMING THE NARRATIVE

*

Gary Selikow

For the Jews, the past decade has been deluged with antisemitic invective, which has poured from Islamic and leftist faucets. These sources include most of the international media, the extreme Left, the United Nations, much of the European Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, Third World regimes and university academics and have been perhaps the bitterest since the fall of the Third Reich. This malevolence extends to all continents.

Universities around the world have become cauldrons of the most uncompromising hatred of Israel, with the feverish participation of some radical pro-Palestinian Jews. The global media in large part does its best to paint the beleaguered nation of Israel as an aggressor and human rights abuser. In doing so, they use the most sophisticated as well as the most blunt propaganda tricks, while showing not the slightest sympathy for the six million Jews of Israel who are threatened with genocide and targeted for so long by sustained murder and terror. Those who identify as Zionist and love Israel are being put through difficult times in a world where Zionism and support for Israel is taboo. It is all too fashionable and PC to express the most vitriolic hatred for Israel and Zionism, and woe to anyone who suggests that this prejudice against Zionism and Israel might just have some connection to Antisemitism.

That is why Barry Shaw's *Israel - Reclaiming the Narrative* is so important, and necessary. As the author writes, "This prosecution against the fraudsters, liars, hypocrites and their

helpers who have led a deceitful campaign against Israel is an attempt to assist Israel in gaining its rightful place on the high ground of public opinion..." The book, Shaw stresses, is *not* a defense of Israel. There is no reason, he believes, that Israel, forced to fight for survival and its legitimate place in the world, is required to apologize. Rather, it is a prosecution against those who demonize, slander and try to isolate and harm the tiny Jewish State. Thus are the perpetrators, their hypocrisy and network of lies exposed. In the first chapter ('If you're going to boycott Israel, do it properly'), Shaw details just how much science, technology and medicine that the world relies on today is a direct result of Israeli achievement and innovation. The very systems behind the computers we use including Microsoft and the Pentium chip technology were developed in Israel as was the original instant messenger system. The proponents of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), if they were really and truly boycotting everything Israeli, would have to throw away the very tools they use to spread their agitprop.

Shaw asks why, if it is legitimate to boycott Israel for calling itself a 'Jewish State', BDS is not boycotting the forty members of the United Nations that formally include the word 'Muslim' or 'Islamic' in their countries names. And how, Shaw asks, can Israel be a 'racist' state when it airlifted tens of thousands of Ethiopians to safety in Israel.

The founder of BDS, Mustafa Barghouti, has said himself that the aim of BDS is the 'euthanasia of Israel'. Nazi Germany also began its campaign to annihilate the Jews of Europe by economic boycotts of Jewish businesses.

Gary Selikow is a media activist, and a frequent contributor of book reviews to Jewish Affairs.

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Today's boycotters do not wear brown shirts but *kefiyahs* and red, white, green and black colors, as they go about intimidating shoppers and shop workers in London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Sydney and Cape Town not to buy or sell Israeli goods. They also seek to prevent countries from using Israeli scientific and medical innovations that can improve or save lives. (Locally, anti-Israel academics prevented the University of Johannesburg from cooperating with Israel on a water sanitation project, thereby denying many local South Africans access to clean water).

The author points out the hypocrisy of those who claim to be against war but only oppose the actions of one side in a war - those defending themselves and not those who target women and children on the other side. He shows how no other country in the history of warfare has gone to such lengths to avoid harming its enemy's civilian population. Colonel Richard Kemp, a former commander of British forces in Afghanistan, said as much to the UN Human Rights Council: "Based on my knowledge and experience I can say this; the Israeli Defense Forces did more to safeguard the rights of civilians in a warzone than any other army in the history of warfare."

In another noteworthy chapter, Shaw pens a 'Letter to a Pro-Palestinian Human Rights activist', in which he asks:

Why have you not expressed your outrage for other far more critical human rights disasters as I have done. I understand you like political adventurism, like flotillas to free Gaza. Why have you not joined a flotilla to feed and care for the thousands of dying children in Africa?... what is it about the Palestinians that gets your juices flowing over all other humanitarian tragedies? Could it be that you cannot incriminate Israel in human rights crimes perpetrated in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Burma, Russia, China, Pakistan, Turkey, Kurdistan, Cuba, so these abusive regimes do not get you emotionally involved?

Shaw addresses the hypocrisy of those who fail to condemn Palestinian rockets fired at civilian population centers in Israel, but raise a clamor when Israel responds. He further points out the genocidal intentions of the Palestinians, inter alia quoting Yasser Arafat's statement following the murder of 21 Israeli teenagers outside a beach-side disco in July 2001 by a Palestinian homicide bomber: "We will not bend or fail until the blood of every last Jew from the youngest child to the oldest elder is spilled to redeem our land."

Again and again, the author shows how Israel is the victim of one of the greatest frauds

in human history. He asks why, since Israel has recognized the rights of the Palestinian Arabs to self-determination, the latter refuse to recognize Jewish self-determination in Israel? His firm view is that Israel need not yield an inch more of territory to Palestinian Arabs until they recognize Israel's right to exist and cease their violence and incitement.

Another chapter details the fraud of the so called 'Palestinian refugees', in which Shaw looks at the many real refugee crises that have not been kept alive by UNWRA, as well as the approximately 800 000 Jews expelled from Arab lands who are never mentioned. The latter are the forgotten refugees, forgotten because Israel received them, absorbed them and provided them with housing, education, medical facilities and employment.

At the end of the book, Shaw includes 'Inspiring Speeches' by those who speak truth to power, people like the redoubtable Melanie Phillips and Pastor John Hagee. In a 2010 speech at Palm Beach Florida, Hagee said, "As a free man, I take pride in the words 'I am an Israeli'. When an international body ignores the world's genocides, massacres and racism to attack Israel, we must stand together and proclaim as one body, 'I am an Israeli'. When college professors teach lies about Israel and students loudly call for Israel's destruction, we must proclaim 'I am an Israeli'."

Phillips makes the illuminating point that the main problem in the West is the intelligentsia: "Bigotry is now correlated with education and class. The lower down the educational and social scale, the more people are sane and realistic and decent about the Middle East and the threat from the free world by radical Islam. But as soon as you get people who have been through higher education, you find that so often they're the ones who are bigoted and irrational about such matters".

Israel – Reclaiming the Narrative serves notice to the sundry Islamists, far-leftists, academics, demonizers, sociopaths and boycotters that there will always be those like its author who will challenge and expose their lies and propaganda campaign against the Jewish State.

Israel – Reclaiming the Narrative by Barry Shaw, published by Barry Shaw, 2011, 320pp.



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new POETRY

From a Rwandan Survivor to the Jewish Community

Oh yes, Understandable, it happened yesterday!
You have reasons to love and like yourself,
because you were hated for no reason
If nobody was hated without reason, he/she won't
know how to love him/herself
If you were not treated unjustly, you won't know
to treat yourself justly

We have to remember and DEFY our past while
at the same time moving forward
We have to DEFY our horrible past and work for
tomorrow' success
Your loved ones wanted to see a new moon of
success
But not all were able to

Those who do or don't want our success are not
that important
What is important is the time we have now to
become ourselves
There will always be a light for our future!
Don't forget - with support and unity, tomorrow
is in our hands
"IF GOD IS IN OUR SIDE, WHO WILL BE
AGAINST US"?

Ernest Safari

SEASIDE COTTAGE

Not a mansion, just a house
Not a house, more like a home
Not a home, a place to be
To rest, to eat, beside the sea

A place to walk
And talk and play
A place to dream
A place to stay ...

No rush, no fuss, no frantic pace
Somewhere just to be yourself
A haven in a busy world
A moment free from time itself.

Charlotte Cohen

The Promised Land

Craggy and lined, his face revealing the stormy
tumult of life —
Sun scorched, rain ravaged, emotion bludgeoned
—

The Sabra's gaze embraces the horizon.
Only eyes betray the futility of unrequited
adulation,
The land is not his — he is the land's.
Twenty, thirty, forty million years,
Before puny man first drove fingers through her
thick, rich loam,
She nurtured leafy growth of boundless variety.
What need had she of human devices? What need
of science?
She is nature's child who must return to her mother
Should abuse drive her tenant from the common
home?
Man cannot destroy the land unless he first
destroys himself.

The farmer's eyes speak of love;
Scorned, yet he indulges his scornful mistress.
His face, lined, speaks eloquently of hardship
endured,
Each furrow tells a tale etched by time:
A fiery fever that takes a wife — a child,
Here a drought; there a flood — a dry, dust-bowl;
a sea of mud.
Each event its footprint leaves — to craggy head
each story cleaves.
Just the eyes o'er brimmed with love for soil
beneath and God above.

Rodney Mazinter

Bagpipes Anyone?

Shot in the dark but worth a try
How many bagpipers are here
Or have you heard a pipes shrill cry
Secretly wishing it elsewhere

How about lending me a pair
A pipers pleasures pipes to find
New or old I'll supply the air
As that buzz shall settle my mind

See I have an idea to play
Yours or his pipes to a fun tune
And please spare me on Purim day
Knowing I may appear the loon

Oh I hope I'll some pipes locate
Where Oh Where before it's too late!

Jp Burke



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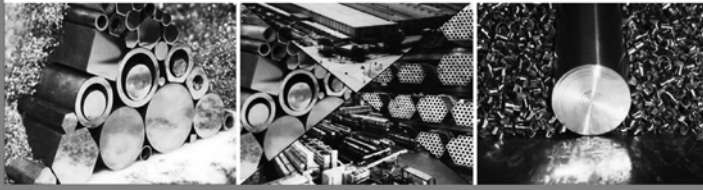
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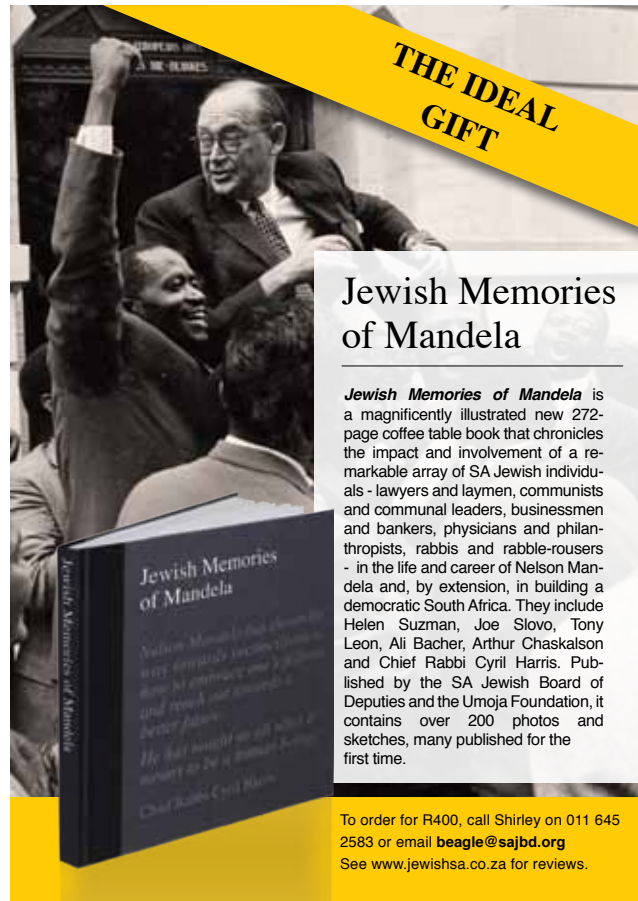
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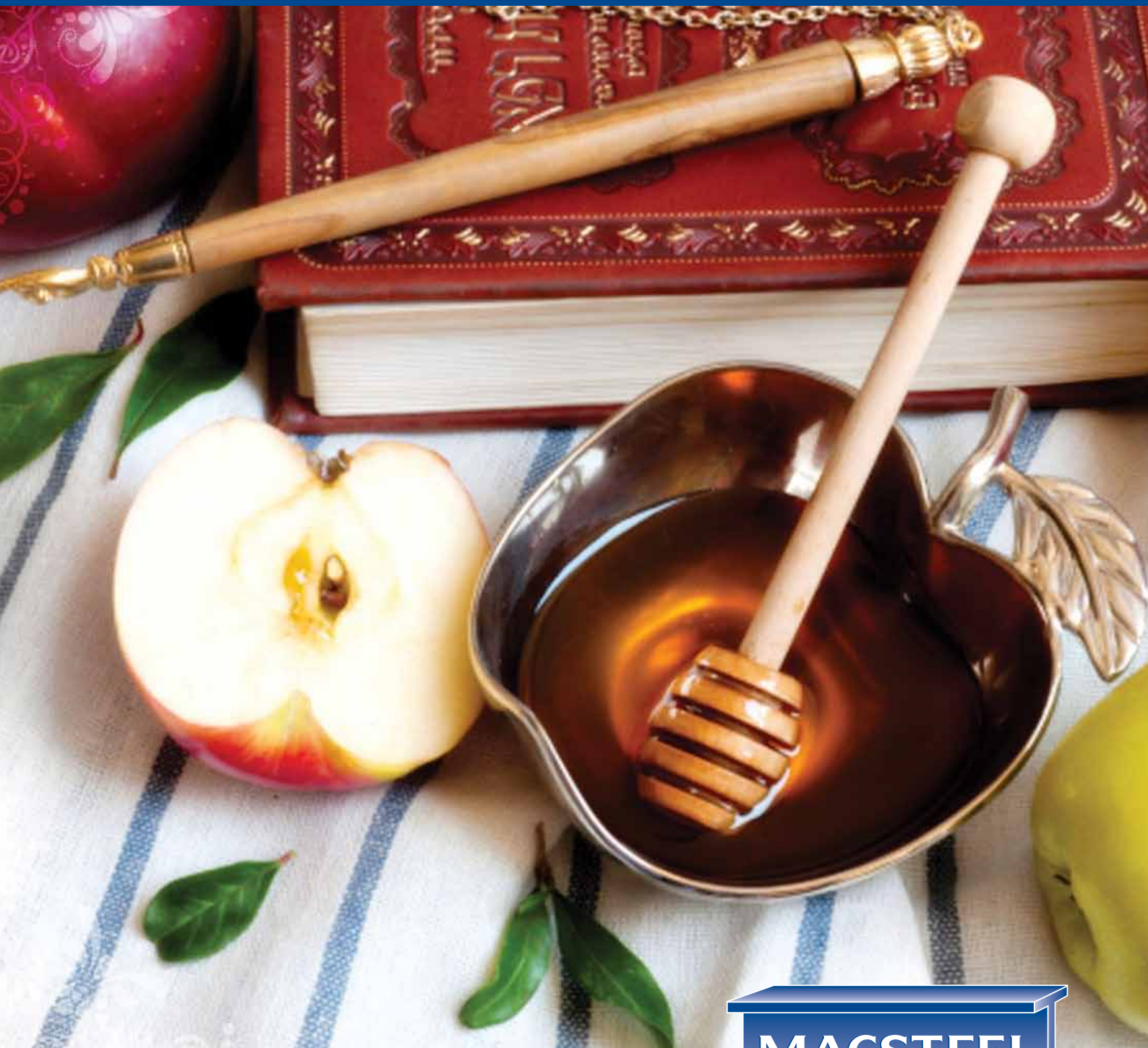


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