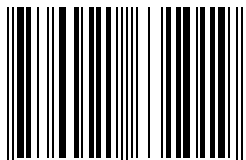
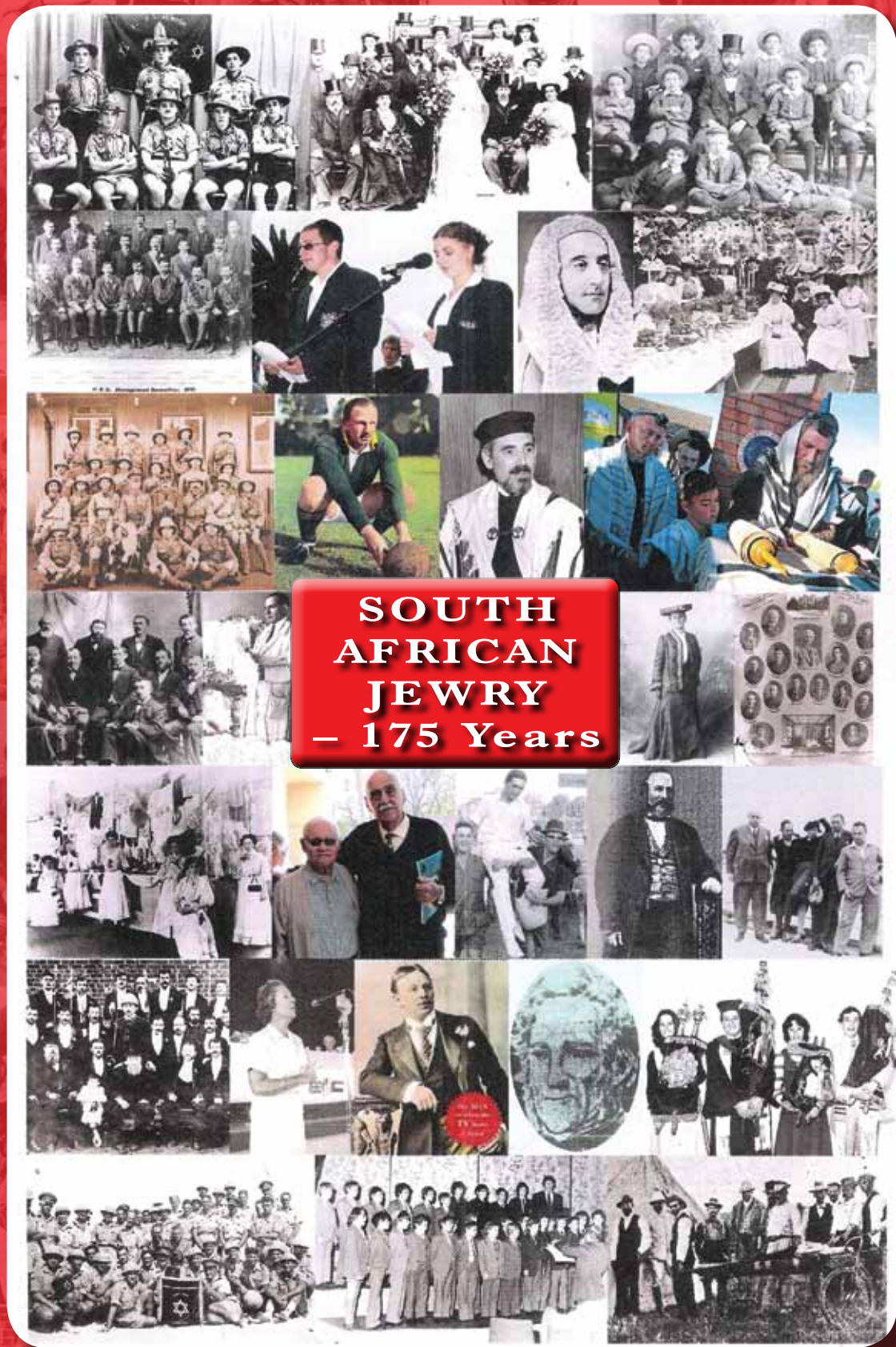


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In publishing JEWISH AFFAIRS, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies aims to produce a cultural forum which caters for a wide variety of interests in the community. The journal will be a vehicle for the publication of articles of significant thought and opinion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

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

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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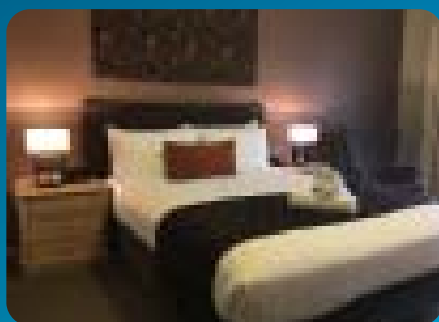
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JEWISH AFFAIRS

VOL. 71 ♦ NO. 2 ♦ ROSH HASHANAH 2016

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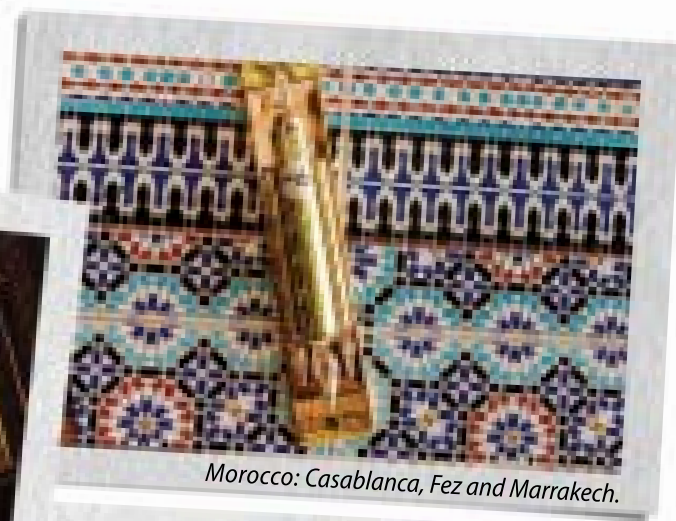
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EDITORIAL - SOUTH AFRICAN JEWRY TURNS 175

*

This year, a number of commemorative events have been held to mark 175 years of Jewish communal life in South Africa. Inter alia, it was the keynote theme of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies Gauteng Council conference, at which the Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth Ephraim Mirvis was keynote speaker. Rabbi Mirvis was himself born and raised in South Africa. He is just one of scores of rabbis of local origin who today occupy pulpits throughout the Jewish world, something that the handful of pioneers who came together to form the first minyan in Cape Town back in 1841 would have regarded as unthinkable.

This Rosh Hashanah 2016 issue of *Jewish Affairs* (which this year itself is celebrating an anniversary, its 75th) is devoted to looking back at the last eighteen decades or so of what SA Jews have accomplished, both as Jews and as members of the greater society. It begins with what is (almost) a year-by-year photographic portrait of how the community has developed, using in the main images sourced from the archives of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and SA Zionist Federation. It is followed by a section looking at some of the main regions where Jewish life developed, viz. Cape Town, Eastern Cape, Johannesburg and the rural areas and smaller country towns. The concluding section looks at specific areas of Jewish endeavour – politics, the rabbinate, law and the arts.

Taken as a whole, South Africa has been good to its Jewish citizens. Even during the pre-World War II period, when antisemitic sentiment reached an all-time high, Jews were never officially discriminated against (albeit that legislation was passed specifically aimed at limiting further Jewish immigration). For their own part, Jews have played a hugely disproportionately large role in the development of the country (even, to a more limited extent, in the sporting spheres. So far as this community is concerned, at least, the old joke about the world's thinnest book being the history of great Jewish athletes has not applied).

South Africa has had a turbulent past, and in the contemporary era continues to be confronted with serious challenges, including widespread poverty and unemployment, social and political unrest, corruption at the highest levels of government and economic stagnation. On the positive side its liberal democratic foundations have stood firm since the memorable transition from white minority rule to multiracial democracy in April 1994. The results of the recent local government elections, in which the political opposition made significant gains and overall gave politics in the country a much-needed shake-up, have also fostered a renewed sense of optimism. As Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein has pointed out, the great thing about democracies is that they are self-correcting; the people at large always have the opportunity of, in a peaceful and orderly fashion, affecting change when necessary, an option denied to those living in dictatorships.

In the 1980s, when South Africa appeared to be in terminal decline, anyone who predicted that thirty years hence, its Jewish community would be celebrating its 175th anniversary would have been regarded as a hopeless optimist. In those days, doomsday predictions over the prospects for SA Jewry were a staple item in the international global Jewish press.

To illustrate how we were seen back then, the editor remembers how a rabbi taking a beginners Talmud class in Jerusalem posed the hypothetical question, “Now suppose Mr Saks from Johannesburg wanted to sell his house....” and all the Brits and Americans present gave me knowing looks and sniggered. As the grim joke went back then, the definition of a South African patriot was someone who couldn't sell his house.

Perhaps even then there was a tendency both to overstate the extent of this country's problems, and to underrate the ability of its people to overcome them. At any rate, South Africa confounded the nay-sayers by making a successful transition to multiracial democracy.

The 20th Century's turbulent final decades nevertheless did take its toll on the Jewish community, which during that period lost around one-third of its members to emigration. Today, the Jewish population is estimated at being between 70 and 80 000 souls, 90% of whom live in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Despite its reduced numbers, however, SA Jewry in 2016 is experiencing something of a golden age. Never have levels of Jewish learning, identification and general involvement been higher, a fact that other Diaspora communities, most of whom are struggling to turn the tide of assimilation, acknowledge with admiration, and not a little envy. Having reached this milestone, the Jews of South Africa can therefore be forgiven for indulging in a little chest-thumping for all that they and their predecessors have achieved. *L'Shana Haba B'Yerushalayim!*



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A PICTORIAL JOURNEY THROUGH SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH HISTORY, 1841-2016

*



1841

Benjamin Norden, first
President Cape Town
Hebrew Congregation



1842

Brothers Joseph and Adolph
Mosenthal, pioneers of the Cape
wool industry, set up business
operations in Port Elizabeth.



1846

Memorial to Captain Joshua
Davis Norden, killed in the 7th
Frontier War, Grahamstown.



1847

First Sefer Torah, brought to
South Africa by Aaron de Pass



1849

First synagogue, located on
part of today's Parliamentary
Buildings.



1849

Isaac Baumann, first Jew
to settle in Bloemfontein.



1854

Jonas Bergtheil, Natal
economic pioneer and
political leader.



1855

Founding of the Port Elizabeth Hebrew
Congregation



1857

Sophie Levisseur
born in
Bloemfontein



1863
Opening of synagogue in
Gardens, Cape Town



1869
Sammy Marks, aged
25, arrives in South
Africa



1870
Baumann Brothers store, Bloemfontein



1873
Barney Barnato arrives at
Kimberley diamond fields



1874
Simeon Jacobs,
Cape Attorney-
General



1870
Diamond buyers Feinberg and Goldberg,
Kimberley



1877
Opening of Western Road
Synagogue, Port Elizabeth



circa. 1881
Beginning of mass immigration from Eastern
Europe



1883
First shul membership
list, Durban



1884
Founding of Oudtshoorn Hebrew
Congregation



1888
Chevra Kadisha committee,
Johannesburg



1889
Lewis & Marks building,
Barberton



circa. 1890
Smous (Jewish peddler),
Western Cape



1891
Jewish cemetery, Braamfontein,
Johannesburg



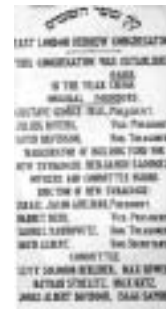
1892
President Paul Kruger at
the opening of the Park
Synagogue, Johannesburg



1893
Zwartkoppies, home of Sammy
Parks, near Pretoria



1896
Hohenheim, Parktown home of
Sir Lionel Phillips



1898
East London Hebrew
Congregation founded



1900
Jewish ambulance unit,
Anglo-Boer War



1901
Anglo-Boer War Jewish soldiers'
graves, Harrismith



1902
Wedding, Cape Town



1903
Jewish Board of Deputies for the
Transvaal and Natal founded



1904
Opening of Bloemfontein
Synagogue



1905
Talmud Torah, Cape Town



1906
Durban synagogue sukkah



1908
Bnoth Zion group, Cape Town



1909
Johannesburg's
first Jewish Mayor,
Harry Graumann,



1910
Hebrew Order of David committee,
Johannesburg



1911
Founding of Cape Town
Jewish orphanage



1912
Ostrich feather dealer
Samuel Lazarus,
Oudtshoorn



1913
Laying of foundation stone,
Witbank shul.



1914
Jewish soldiers in the Union
Defence Force, World War I



1915
Opening of Great Synagogue,
Wolmarans St., Johannesburg



1917
Isaiah Israelstam,
a founder of the
Communist Party of
SA



1920
Hebrew Amateur Dramatic Society,
Pretoria



1922
'Ochberg Orphans' from Ukraine brought
to SA by Isaac Ochberg



1923
Stellenbosch congregation founded



1928
Jewish Sick Relief
Society, Cape Town



1929
East London synagogue choir



1930
Sons of Zion Society, Queenstown



1931
Opening of Durban Jewish Club



1932
Dr Chaim and Vera
Weizmann visit to
Durban



1933
JHB Rosh
Beth Din,
Rav Yitzchak
Kossowsky



1934
Greyshirts
libel trial,
Grahamstown



1936
German Jewish refugees arrive
in Cape Town on the Stuttgart



1937
Zionist society meeting
Pretoria



1938
Scouting group, Port Elizabeth



1940
Our Parents Home opens in
Doornfontein, Johannesburg



1942
Day of Mourning for victims of
Nazism, Cape Town



1943
South African Jewish soldiers,
North Africa



1944
Allied soldiers' canteen,
Durban Jewish Club



1945
Dr Henry
Gluckman, Minister
of Health



1946
Magen David Adom group,
Port Elizabeth



1947
Jewish volunteers for Israel
in training near Randfontein



1948
King David School founded,
Linksfield, Johannesburg



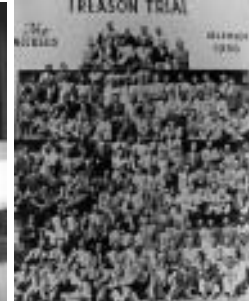
1949
Springbok great Okey
Geffin debuts against
the All Blacks



1950
Yiddish theatre players,
Johannesburg



1953
Helen Suzman
elected to Parliament



1956
14 Jews amongst
activists arrested on
charges of treason



1957
Opening Herzlia High
Cape Town



1958
Dror youth movement
members off to camp



1959
Martyrs' Monument in JHB
West Park Cemetery completed



1960
Miriam Marks School,
Pretoria



1963
Appointment of
Chief Rabbi B.M. Casper



1965
Family Day, Welkom



1966
Confirmation service at Temple Israel,
Johannesburg



1969
Arcadia Children's Home,
Johannesburg – visit of Lady Balfour



1970
Ali Bacher's
Springboks defeat
Australia



1973
Habonim Chanukah
celebration



1977
Bnei Torah ceremony,
Temple Shalom, Johannesburg



1979
Yeshiva College Choir
Johannesburg



1980
Rhodes SAUJS students,
Hillel House, Grahamstown



1981
South African Maccabi team,
Israel



1982
Toy Library Union of Jewish
Women, Durban



1983
Radio 702 founder
Issie Kirsh



1984
702 host John Berks



1988
Sandringham Gardens residents
Johannesburg



1990
Jewish leaders first meeting with
Nelson Mandela following his release



1994
Mandela visits Green &
Sea Point congregation,
Cape Town



1995
Memorial service for Yitzchak Rabin,
Great Synagogue, Cape Town



1997
Anti-terrorism
march, Cape
Town



1998
SA Jewish
Report founded



1999
President Thabo Mbeki
addresses SAJBD national
conference



2000
Opening of Beyachad Jewish
Centre, Johannesburg



2001
Arthur Chaskalson appointed
Chief Justice



2002
Father and Son learning programme,
Johannesburg



2006
March for Israel,
Johannesburg



2007
'Jewish Johannesburg
120' exhibition



2008
Israeli War of Independence SA
veterans reunion, Pretoria



2009
Multi-party pre-election debate,
Johannesburg



2010
FIFA World Cup



2011
Interfaith gathering Gardens
Shul, Cape Town



2012
Herzlia vs Islamia inter-school
football match, Cape Town



2013
"Challas for Madiba"
project, Johannesburg



2014
SAJBD meeting with President Zuma,
Pretoria



2015
Jewish Float
Heritage Day Carnival,
Pretoria



2016
Rally against 'Israel Apartheid
Week', Wits University



2016
Human Rights
Day, Sharpeville



2016
Barmitzvah of Levi Rosenthal, grandson of Dr
Melville Edelstein, held in Soweto on Youth Day



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a community
works together
Amazing
things
happen*



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THE FOUNDING AND EARLY DECADES OF THE CAPE TOWN HEBREW CONGREGATION, MOTHER CONGREGATION OF SA JEWRY

*

Solly Berger

Tikvat Israel - the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation (CTHC) - was founded in 1841. This makes it, after the Sydney Hebrew Congregation, the oldest Jewish congregation in the southern hemisphere.

Until the 17th Century, the history of Jewry was played out in the relatively confined geographical areas of the Middle East, North Africa and Eurasia. Beyond these regions it did not extend until, on the back of European colonial expansion, fledgling Jewish communities emerged in the Americas, Australasia and sub-Saharan Africa. The establishment of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation was thus part of a relatively recent expansion of Jewry under the aegis of the Dutch and British empires, which saw the first congregations established in North America in the 1650s and 1670s (*Shearith Israel* in New Amsterdam/New York and *Yeshivat Israel* in Newport), in South America in 1685 (*Beracha v'Shalom* in Paramaribo, Suriname), in Australia in 1828 (the Sydney Hebrew Congregation) and in New Zealand in 1843 (*Beth Israel* in Auckland).

In the case of the Cape, though a colonial settlement was founded by the Dutch East India Company in the mid 17th Century, the Company did not allow any form of public worship other than Protestant Christianity. Thus, although some apparently Jewish names do appear in the Company's records, it is clear that Judaism was not openly practised, if at all. The strange irony of these laws was that Dutch Jews, who eventually became the majority shareholders of the Company, never attempted to liberalise them. In contrast, the Dutch West India Company, which controlled the areas of what became New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Delaware, always allowed freedom of worship.

This religious intolerance remained official

policy at the Cape until 1804, when the Company's short-lived successor Dutch regime, the Batavian Republic, inspired by the Enlightenment ideals of the French Revolution, removed the ban on religious freedom. Even then, the number of Jews at the Cape was so small that it was not until the 1830s that economic opportunities were able to draw sufficient Jews from Europe to achieve the critical mass needed to set up a congregation. A first attempt to do so in Grahamstown in 1838 did not get off the ground, while in Cape Town "several ineffectual attempts" were made "to collect a sufficient number of Israelites for the purpose of Divine worship according to the Mosaic Law, wherein it is commanded that no less than 10 Males of 13 years of age can constitute a congregation for general public prayers of Israelites."

In this disappointing situation, the arrival in Cape Town in 1839 of Benjamin Norden, an enterprising and dynamic 1820 Settler from Grahamstown, with a record of public service there, seems to have been decisive in turning things around. On the eve of the Day of Atonement, 26 September 1841/5602, 14 men, 3 boys and, presumably, some women of the Jewish faith (though the male-blinkered records do not mention them) met in Norden's house, Helmsley Place in Hof Street, and held a *Kol Nidrei* service in accordance with the Orthodox tradition. This site today forms part of the Mount Nelson Hotel complex. Eight days later, on 3 October (*Chol Hamoed Sukkoth*), 10 of these men met at the Loop Street house of another of the worshippers, Simeon Marcus, to take their hopeful initiative a step further by establishing the Society of the Jewish Community of Cape Town, Cape of Good Hope, known in Hebrew as *Tikvat Yisrael* ('Hope of Israel'). Very soon it followed this up with regular *Shabbat* and Festival services in the homes of its leading members. The fledgling congregation's other initial step was that standard practice in new Jewish communities, the acquisition of land for a cemetery. Here it ran into Judaism's still twilight status in official circles, for the new Municipality of Cape Town turned down its request for the customary free grant of land

Solly Berger is a long-serving member of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation committee. He was centrally involved in the events commemorating the 150th anniversary of the congregation in 1991 and the centenary of the Great Synagogue in 2005. This article originally appeared in the brochure produced for the latter occasion, and has been adapted for publication in this issue.

for a cemetery and instead required it to pay £10 for a plot on Somerset Road. Miffed at this refusal and at the proximity of the offered site to a slave cemetery - which it supposedly took as a sly reference to Jews being descended from slaves in Egypt - the congregation withdrew its application and instead used funds generated by the sale of land donated to it by an out-of-town supporter to purchase a burial plot in Woodstock. A stone wall was built around the new cemetery and a *Tahara* house erected, thanks to a donation from Norden. The first person to be buried there was one of the congregation's founder members and trustees, the 41-year old Rhinelander Abraham Horn, who died in December 1844. His posthumously-born son, Charles, was the first child whose name was recorded in the new congregation's register of Jewish births, in 1845.

Even before this, however, in June 1844, the first Jewish wedding in the Cape had taken place, between Amelia Marcus and Michael Benjamin. The alliance encountered a problem, primarily because no marriage officer existed in the Jewish community. It was resolved by requesting the Senior Colonial Chaplain of St Georges Cathedral, the Rev George Hough, to solemnise the marriage in a manner that would give no offence to Jewish religious susceptibilities. This arrangement received the consent of the Attorney-General, and all mention of the Holy Trinity and anything else objectionable to Jewish feeling was omitted. Thereafter, *Mincha* was read and a second marriage ceremony carried out, this time 'according to our ancient Law of Moses and of Israel'.¹

By 1847, the congregation's membership had grown to 28 and, with the encouragement of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, it was decided that the time had arrived to take the further steps of engaging a rabbi and securing a permanent place of worship. However Simeon Marcus, one of the pillars of the congregation, strongly disagreed, feeling that the community could not afford the likely expense, and accordingly resigned, taking with him his two sons and son-in-law. For a short period, he conducted his own separate services and Cape Town had two *minyanim*.

Meanwhile, led by Norden, the rest of the congregation set about raising the necessary funds to achieve their two goals. They did not limit their appeal just to Cape Town nor to Jews only. Within a year they had raised enough to purchase a house in Plein Street, but changed their minds when more suitable premises were found on the corner of St John's and Bouquet Streets in Gardens, across the road from then under construction St Mary's Cathedral. The two

houses and adjoining store on the site were bought for £800 - this time the transfer fee was waived, suggesting that Judaism had at last been officially accepted as a legitimate religious denomination by the state - and the larger house was refurbished to form the synagogue.² The building was formally consecrated on Shabbat eve, 15 September 1849, by the congregation's first minister, the 46 year-old Reverend Isaac Pulver from Cheltenham, London, who had arrived the previous month.

The little synagogue served the congregation for the next 14 years, but this turned out to be a period when the 'Hope of Israel' flickered uncertainly. Falling membership and ructions, both internal and external, threatened to overwhelm the tiny congregation during these years.

Strife arose almost as soon as the new shul was opened. Benjamin Norden became deeply involved in the Anti-Convict Crisis of 1849-50, taking up a stance which won him great popular hostility, to the point of his being stoned by a mob in the street. By extension, this ill-feeling spilled over to his congregation, and a policeman had to be stationed in front of the shul during services to prevent any disturbances. The congregation was anything but supportive of Norden's actions and, under the name of its president, placed the following notice in the press to distance itself from him:

No member of the Jewish persuasion with the exception of those already known have acted against the wishes of the people of this colony, nor have been implicated in anyway whatsoever to thwart any steps taken against the introduction of convicts. Though some malignant persona, out of mere malice, are exciting the public mind to condemn a whole community for the unworthy act of one or two, for conclusion I beg to say on behalf of the Jewish community, that they are grateful to their Christian brethren for the benevolence shown towards them in contributing so liberally to their cause.³

Nor was the financial situation comfortable, resulting in various methods being employed to raise income. The committee devised a Code of Laws (113 of them), whereby fines were issued for various transgressions. For instance: Taking off the *talith* or talking during the Services - 2/6d; Disturbing meetings - 5/-; Ignoring a notice to attend a *Minyan* - 5/-. This code of conduct irked many but was accepted until the congregation's finances had improved sufficiently by the 1870s for it to be shelved.

The keeping of *kashrut* was a problem too.

Reverend Pulver, who was also a *shochet*, performed the *shechita* with a butcher's help. The problem of finding enough customers for purchasing the *kashered* meat made the exercise uneconomical, however. This produced friction between the minister and his congregation, leading to a split among the members. Added to a meagre salary and a barren Jewish environment in which to raise his children, it was too much for Pulver, who resigned after only two years. "My principal reasons for wanting to leave this congregation," he wrote in despair, "are first, that I cannot get *kosher* meat; secondly, that I cannot as a Jewish parent bring up my children in a place where so little regard is paid to the principles of our Holy Religion; and thirdly, that notwithstanding nearly two years' trial to live as economically as possible, I could not make my income meet my expenses".⁴

Most debilitating of the problems facing the small congregation, however, was the loss of members through death, departure and lack of interest, and for several months at a time during the 1850s, no services could be held for want of a *minyan*. More than once in these years there was serious discussion about dissolving the faltering congregation, but the stronger personalities prevented this. At one of the few well-attended services, held in 1858, the son of Michael and Amelia Benjamin (the couple married in the two successive ceremonies back in 1844) celebrated the congregation's first *Barmitzvah*.

From 1859, the efforts of the few stalwarts to keep the congregation going were powerfully supplemented by those of the vigorous and charismatic man eventually appointed to succeed Pulver, the 31-year old Reverend Joel Rabinowitz, formerly of the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation. Rabinowitz did not spare himself in his efforts to breathe new life into the ailing community and, inspired by his enthusiasm, positive outlook and extraordinary fundraising ability - he was known both within the community and without as 'The Great Beggar' - the congregation grew in numbers and financial strength. He raised funds for the underprivileged and the needy and formed the Jewish Philanthropic Society, which in later years became the present Board of Guardians, and had the energy and the drive to visit Jews living in the outlying districts of the Colony.

On behalf of the struggling congregation itself, Rabinowitz issued a clarion call to his co-religionists throughout the Colony to rally to the support of the Mother Synagogue to save it from having to close its doors. So successful was this appeal that by 1861 he was able to declare that the time had come to replace the dilapidated and cramped

Bouquet Street shul with a proper, custom-built synagogue. Swept up by his enthusiastic vision, the committee was quickly persuaded and later that year it bought, for the sum of £2200, a property for a new synagogue higher up St John's Street. In designing it, the architect, James Hogg, 'supposedly' made a careful analysis of Solomon's Temple in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, and incorporated features derived from this study in the final plan. The new building was formally consecrated on 13 September 1863 - *Erev Rosh Hashanah* - and served the congregation for the next 42 years until being replaced by the Great Synagogue in 1905. Today, it houses the entrance to the SA Jewish Museum complex.



The second synagogue built by the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation. It was opened in September 1863 and served the congregation for the next 42 years.

From this buoyant beginning, the congregation never looked back, growing by leaps and bounds on the back of a wave of Jewish immigration. The earliest of these immigrants were young men drawn to southern Africa by the diamond and gold rushes of the 1870s and 1880s. They included such personalities as Samuel and Isaac Marks, Isaac Lewis and Barney Barnato, all of whom joined the congregation and attended services when in Cape Town.

Far more numerous and ultimately more significant in their impact on the CTHC was the second component of this influx of Jews, those 'Great Migration' Jews from the Lithuanian and Polish territories of the Russian Empire after 1881. Many of these

remained in Cape Town after disembarking there, and joined the CTHC, despite its very alien English atmosphere under Rabinowitz's unbending successor, the Reverend Abraham Ornstien.

Others trekked into the interior to sell their wares to the farmers as *smouse*, and in many instances established a store in the middle of nowhere, which became a trading centre for the surrounding farming community. Villages and even towns developed from these humble beginnings, a good example being De Aar, established by the Friedlander brothers, father and uncle of a later president and trustee of the Great Synagogue, C.K. Friedlander. There was also Garies in Namaqualand, founded by Maurice Eilenberg, who subsequently also moved to Cape Town where he became president of the Congregation and a major benefactor. As these two examples suggest, in the absence of congregations in these remote rural areas, many of these immigrants became 'country members of the CTHC. With this surge in membership, the congregation prospered. Gas lighting was installed in the synagogue, which itself had to be enlarged. A *mikvah* was built. A second minister, Reverend F. Lyons was appointed and he also became the *shochet*. By 1891, there were nearly 1000 Jews living in Cape Town.

The following is an illuminating word-picture of the local scene in 1891 from the pen of a contemporary Capetonian:

Touching our co-religionists in Cape Town, they are a fairly representative and industrious body. We worship in a bijou synagogue, which pretty as it is, is indescribable architecturally, although it has some pretension to the Byzantine. Our noble selves may be described as consisting of two classes, those who attend shul and those who don't. There are three sections - so to speak - among us. The highest are big shopkeepers, the second are the small shopkeepers and the lowest - well, we have no lowest. The conditions of life are eminently comfortable, and existence is not a very difficult problem with the majority.

Without egotism, we can claim the proud distinction of being a quiet, law abiding body, all more or less hard-working, following our respective pursuits with earnestness, if not with equal aptitude and results.... It is whispered that the royal road to 'society' is through the Cathedral. Hence a few, whom we can well spare, prefer society to the synagogue. Our Minister, the Rev. A F Ornstein, is a popular man amongst all sorts and conditions. He is distinct a *Chazan*, an intelligent lecturer,

and thoroughly broadminded, in fact he is the right man in the right place..... The class who go to shul are honestly Orthodox, the Reform Movement not having gained ascendancy here yet.....⁵

In this booming environment, the congregation was able to expand its activities into Jewish education, and Rabinowitz's twice-a-week classes for children in a room attached to the shul were by 1879 able to expand into a full *cheder*. Ornstien, who had long experience as a schoolteacher and headmaster in England, took this project even further, by establishing his own full-time Jewish school in 1884. This drew pupils from near and far as it had a hostel for boarders. By 1894 it had 80 pupils. After Ornstien's death in 1895, it rapidly declined, and in 1896 was entirely superseded by the foundation by the congregation of its own Cape Town Hebrew Congregational Public School on the site of Hope Mill at the top of The Avenue. The driving force behind this initiative was Ornstein's successor, Reverend Alfred Philipp Bender. Supported by such luminaries as Cecil Rhodes, Jan Hofmeyr and various churches, it flourished, and by 1902 it had 500 pupils in its high school and separate junior school.⁶ It was eventually taken over by the Cape School Board and lost its character as a Jewish school, eventually closing its doors in 1920. Reverend Bender proved to be an outstanding orator and scholar, and was soon also appointed as Professor of Hebrew at the South African College, the predecessor of UCT. However, though his Cambridge-polished erudition and very English demeanour might have been tailor-made for the Anglo-Jewish ethos of the CTHC, it gave him little appeal among the Lithuanian and Polish immigrants who had been streaming into the city since the 1880s. To them, he and it were alien, and the majority were disenchanted by the haughty treatment they received from the congregation, known to them, disparagingly, as the *Einglische* Shul. The culture that they brought from *der heim* was different and the feeling of *landmanschaft* - the people from the same shtetls - encouraged them to set up their own congregations from 1895. To name a few - the ultra-orthodox Beth Hamidrash in Constitution Street (1901), to become in later years the Vredehoek Shul; the New Hebrew Congregation (1895) in Roeland Street, later to move to Schoonder Street; the Ponevez Shul (1904) in Vandeleur Street, later to move to Maynard Street; the Chabad Congregation (1897) in Buitenkant Street, afterwards in Virginia Avenue and today in Arthurs Road, Sea Point, though no longer a *Chassidische* congregation; and

many other *shtieblach* in rented rooms.

To this swelling community, the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 added thousands of Jews, uitlander refugees from the Transvaal Republic, who temporarily doubled the local Jewish population to 10 000. Their sudden arrival in Cape Town in October 1899 raised many problems, for many of them had nothing but the clothes on their backs. Led by Bender, the congregation and the rest of the Cape Town Jewish community helped feed and house them. Their presence also put further pressure on an already overcrowded shul, and during the High Festivals there was not enough seating to accommodate them. A Joint Festival Services Committee was formed comprising three representatives each from the CTHC, the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation and the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation. The Good Hope Hall was utilised for overflow services. Similar arrangements were also made at the Sea Point Town Hall. Rabbi Dr Hertz, minister of the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation, preached at both centres, while Reverend Bender also officiated at several overflow services.

The St John's Street shul was by now bursting at the seams and, at the end of hostilities, plans were drawn up to build the Great Synagogue. The new shul, with sufficient seating to accommodate 1500 persons, was designed by the architects Parker and Forsythe and built for the princely sum of £26 000. It was formally opened on 13 September 1905 by CTHC President Hyman Liberman, who at the same time was also Mayor of Cape Town, the first Jew to occupy this office. The little community's standing in the city had come far indeed since the Municipality of Cape Town had refused its application for a free grant of land for a cemetery 63 years earlier. 1905 thus forms an end and a beginning of an epoch in the history of the CTHC and of Cape Town Jewry.



Dignitaries gathering for the consecration of the Great Synagogue, 13 September 1905

In conclusion, an interesting assessment: Had the immigration of Jews ceased in 1860, little might have remained of the early communities in South Africa. Indeed, today there are no Jewish descendants left of the men who founded *Tikvat Israel* in 1841. Those that arrived in the mass migrations in subsequent years brought with them an organised entity with warm-heartedness, generosity and practical-mindedness. All combined into a culture that has endured and made the South African Jewish community a special segment and influence in the world of Jewry.

NOTES

- 1 Herrman, L., *A History of the Jews in South Africa, from the earliest times to 1895* (London, 1930), p121.
- 2 Today the land is occupied by Belvedere House, and forms part of the parliamentary complex, but a plaque marks the site, recording the presence there of the first synagogue in Southern Africa.
- 3 Herrman, *A History of the Jews in South Africa*, p153.
- 4 Ibid, p173.
- 5 Abrahams, I, *The Birth of a Community*, Cape Town, 1955, pp51.
- 6 Ibid, pp92-3



‘YOU ARE NOT IN LITHUANIA ANYMORE’ - YEHUDA LEIB SCHRIRE IN JOHANNESBURG, 1892-3

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Gwynne Schrire

In 1892 my great-grandfather Reb Yehuda Leib Schrire (1851-1912), a *shochet*, *bodek* (ritual slaughtering inspector) and cantor who had sung in many East European towns, left Neustadt, Lithuania, for Johannesburg to take up a position at the soon-to-be opened Park Synagogue. His stay in Johannesburg was disastrous. A deeply religious man, he was shocked to find himself serving so thoroughly assimilated a congregation.

“They found my long beard to be a deficiency”, he wrote in his diary, “They viewed my Hebrew language as a defect. They thought I was too orthodox - Eaters of abomination and the mouse.” The men were “violating covenants and had shaven beards from a hired razor” while the *sheitel*-less women walked around in clothes that exposed them “looking like *chassidot* with long *payot*”. In addition, he found much communal dissension: “Party against party, they came close together to judgement. The cry of distress and calamity accompanied many meetings.”

Reb Schrire stayed in Johannesburg from 8 August 1892 till 1 November 1893. Before leaving, he penned a diatribe castigating the Jewish community. His unexpurgated views, not meant for publication in his time, have recently become accessible with the translation of his Hebrew diary and autobiographical poem belonging to his great grand-daughter, Prof Carmel Schrire.

Similar criticisms of early Johannesburg Jewry are echoed in three roughly contemporary works - by Morris Abrahams, Meyer Dovid Hersch and Leibl Feldman - all of which have been recently recovered and published.¹ Schrire’s diary is the earliest of all. Unlike the others, it was not intended for public viewing, which is why he made no attempt to water down his strong opinions.²

Gwynne Schrire, a veteran contributor to Jewish Affairs and long-serving member of its editorial board, is Deputy Director of the Cape Council, SA Jewish Board of Deputies. She has written, co-written and edited numerous books on local Jewish and Cape Town history. The above article is based on her latest book The Reb and the Rebel: Jewish Narratives in South Africa, 1892-1913, co-edited by herself and Carmel Schrire, and reviewed in this issue.

Leaving Neustadt, Schrire travelled by wagon to the railway station and by train via Berlin and Hamburg, to Vlissingen, Holland. The following day, rather than breaking Shabbat by travelling in a wagon, he walked to the docks – on foot, a journey of several hours:

I found three honest people who came with me and we walked according to my ability. Drops of sweat poured from me and my hands were wet with water but in my heart I was happy because I was honouring Hashem and the Sabbath when I went walking... on my pathetic legs.³

He travelled on the *Dunbar Castle*,⁴ where he was allowed to slaughter meat for the Jewish passengers. Twenty days later, he arrived in Cape Town, where he stayed with a *landsleit*, a Mr Heneck, until after Shabbat. He met acquaintances from Neustadt and a *shochet*, *bodek* and cantor came to meet him:

... I found out that he is learned because he became a rabbi from the Government in the Grodno governorate in one of the towns - the only thing is that he



Yehuda Leib Schrire with his wife, Gela. The picture was probably taken in Vilna shortly before his departure for South Africa.

is frivolous. I also enquired about the [local] rabbi. He is an English Reverend Ornstein.⁵ I saw that he did not have the spirit of the Torah about him and he did not live Judaism. The English ways were his ways and his craft was also like theirs. They would eat non-kosher vermin and were not impressed by the holiness of the Shabbat.

After Shabbat he caught the train. At Vereeniging the railway line ended, and he caught the coach that would take him the rest of the way. He missed the chance to get a place inside the covered wagon and instead had to go up onto the roof where the passengers placed their bags and clothes:

After about 20 Russian *versts*, we came to a station where they changed mules for others standing ready only I could not see the light of day because I had about a finger's depth of dust on my face and on my clothes, my hair and my lips and I could feel pebbles crushing my teeth. I went down from the wagon and I asked my acquaintances who were sitting inside to give me a place to sit there. They agreed because they had given me great honour all the days of my travelling with them. Although of course the great heat that gathered inside the wagon choked me, I still felt grateful to be alive. I opened the window of the wagon, smoked a pipe and felt a bit better. We travelled on the mule cart for six hours without a stop. By 3 in the afternoon we already could see houses built in the correct way from iron sheets. There were also gardens and trees planted around them. It was unbelievable that in only eight years the great veld would have beautiful buildings, orderly and organised according to the rules of Europe and thousands of people would be on its streets.

'Hooray! Johannesburg!' the people called with a great cheer. 'Look! Over there is a great town to G-d.'

The wagon stood at the stop in Pritchard Street and the passengers started to get down. One fell into the arms of his father and one into that of his acquaintance, this one to his uncle and that one to his saviour who had sent him money for the expenses of the journey. I also heard a voice calling my name. I turned my head and here was my brother-in-law standing and waiting for me.

We travelled in a cart to his house. It was a sleep of pleasure in my brother-in-law's house. In the evening I got up from my bed and there was a loyal messenger sent after me because Fettel, the father of the

bridegroom, had heard that I had arrived in town and sent for me to come and take part in the *simchah*, even though I was tired and weary from the labour of a journey of 28 days on the water, two days and three nights on the railways from Cape Town and six hours on the mule cart and that does not include three days and nights until Vlissingen.

At the *simcha*, Schrire sang and also gave a *droscha*. The next day, he met with the heads of the community:⁶

They spoke to me in the Ashkenazi language to which they were not accustomed and they were all people of trouble. They were shaven! They had no *payot*! They asked me to cut my beard and my long hair! 'Your honour', they said, 'you are not in Lithuania anymore. Over there they will not look at the clothes of the cantor and the reverend. The weightier the clothes and the longer the *payot*, the more honour would be given the person, but in Africa the very honoured ladies will look at the reverend with seven eyes and if they do not like him, even though he continued to amaze the listeners with his singing and sweet words, all of this will come to nothing and to naught.'

I heard their words and I was amazed. These were not the kind of people with whom I should associate.⁷ The eyes of ignorant English types would not like me because their ways were far away from me. I, to their dismay, grew up on the lap of Judaism among the people of Lithuania who do not pay attention to clothes but to talents and advantages. I had already shortened the clothes that I wore up to my knees before they had seen them because I was afraid that they would be a mockery to their eyes. Nevertheless they told me that I could not come to pray in their prayer house in a garment like that. Very quickly they conspired and called a tailor to me. He stood and measured my height and my length, my width and my breadth. On Friday morning the tailor brought me the new clothes that he had made for me and they paid the price for it - £9 and 5 shillings....

On Thursday the princes of the community came to see me. One of them was very boastful about his wealth and wisdom and he brought me different books of music so that I would learn to pray from them on the following Saturday according to the English manner and style. In the newspaper that came out every day it was written that on Shabbat Harav Schrire would pray. With a broken heart and a

nervous soul I came to their house of prayer where they were praying until the wonderful building that came afterwards would be completed. People were sitting on chairs and the house seemed like a barn with small windows and the ceiling was made of a cloth spread out. The Holy Ark and the table on the *bimah* were also made from the packing cases that had brought goods from England through the sea to Africa.

Three weeks later the Park Synagogue ("large and expensive") was completed. Schrire attended the dedication ceremony, where President Paul Kruger officially opened the building, but decided against attending the subsequent banquet in Kruger's honour:

I knew in my heart that it was not for a man like me to mix with Presidents and ministers and among the English who speak English and Dutch. I would just look a mockery in their eyes. Furthermore I would not be able to put the food and drink into my mouth because they were going to have an abomination of a soup and a non-kosher wine because they liked these kinds of foods.⁸ That is why I came to the dedication of the synagogue but I did not go to the banquet and so passed another two weeks....

Schrire discovered that the synagogue only had prayers on the High Holy Days, so he went to the Johannesburg Orthodox Congregation to pray *slichot*. This antagonised the committee so, realising that the situation was irremediable, he wrote asking them to pay him whatever was owed to him:

I tore the envelope and in it was £25 and a letter of glory [saying] that they liked me. I was filled with rage⁹ and I cursed them and my advisers and I did not know what to do. I realised that I had fallen through my own handiwork and I could not get up from this. Who could go to the Beth Din to argue with the person who gave me advice? What is more to bring it to court would be very expensive and who knows if I would win. That is why I bit the flesh of my tongue and kept quiet

After struggling to support himself as a baker, a candy maker, and by conducting a bris in a distant village, and having turned down offers to officiate at the Orthodox Synagogue or run his own services, Schrire decided to return to Europe. Before he did so, he wrote a lengthy article, in which he tore Johannesburg's Jewish organisations to

shreds. Hereunder are some extracts:

'Israel and its Baggage' or 'My People and their Goods'

The Beth Haknesset: We have two synagogues here, one old¹⁰ and one new.¹¹ There is only one advantage to the new one, that is, it is already built on its foundations. The owners of the old synagogue saw that their synagogue was falling apart and with competition with its enemy, the new synagogue, they found a new scheme to draw the heart of the congregation to come to them. The rabbi,¹² who was also the cantor, picked for himself a choir of beautiful girls who sang on the High Holy Days and with their pleasant voices gladdened the heart of the people who came to the *Ma'ariv* prayers on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*.¹³ With this kind of promotion, they did very well and collected riches, much more than the new synagogue, which was stingy and did not spend anything on the necessary things.

The new synagogue saw that the creditors had not been paid for the house that they had built, so they looked for all kinds of stingy schemes, thrift and economy. The first days of *Chag HaSukkot* they said a blessing of the *etrog* on a Chinese apple. The very learned *shammas*, who was like ice to us, bought this fancy fruit in a street that sells cheaply and they could not afford to spend a lot of money to buy a fancy *etrog*. They also found a very ancient *lulav* on the ceiling of the house of the holy and pure rabbi¹⁴ and without spending on anything else, they shook it off. With all their hearts they did not want to say the *Avinu Malkeinu* prayers after *Neilah* because this was also too much and unnecessary. Also to their great disappointment, a *shatz*, a native of Russia, who really knew the laws of the prayers, prayed in their synagogue.¹⁵ He sinned in his soul and with a loud voice said *Avinu Malkeinu Chateinu Lefanecha*. Indeed they took their revenge on him for doing it in the correct way. They deducted from the reward of his pay and only gave him half the salary; the remains they held under his hands with the excuse that he did not come on Shabbat.

They had not yet paid for the building, so they thought to make a choir of beautiful girls and then they would be saved. The choir was ready and their eyes were looking forward to salvation through the girls, only to their disappointment [they found that] most of the worshippers in the new synagogue had foreign wives. To look for a great salvation to save Israel from its troubles cannot be done from foreign women and from foreign people.

The Beth Hamedrash is a fancy building

built not long ago¹⁶ when all the *grienes*¹⁷ acted as one and united to come together to pray three times a day and show the people and its leaders - the English people - that there was a special place to say *Kaddish* on the day of *Yortzeit* and they would keep it holy and worship every day.¹⁸ The members of the *Beth Hamedrash* made sure in advance that a person who did not pay membership fees would not dare to come to say *Kaddish* before he paid 10/- to the *gabbai*. This rule was an obstacle to many of the Lithuanians because they were left without *kaddishes* because of the penalty money. Most of them were poor and they could not afford to give penalty money in the days of their poverty. Still they did not complain. Also, the poor person who dared to open his mouth about the people in Johannesburg had to give in because he too had *yortzeit* and during the week the Synagogue did not have a *minyan*.

The Mikvah was in an honoured house but only a few women and one boy came to try to make it work and their husbands did not control it.

Beth Haolam: We have a cemetery in a large square but it is for the rich community leaders who make their own rules and regulations. They know the laws and they do not want to take the *grienes* into their company.¹⁹

The *Chevrah Kadisha* rules with much strength. It would be nice if they could boast of honest regulations. The members of the *chevra* have shown everybody that they know how to appreciate the deeds of the *gabbai*²⁰ because they gave him a golden watch engraved with the initials of all the members of the *chevra*. He carries this monster on his heart while he is carrying out his work and when they see the watch at least they will know what time it is and how much longer they will have to wait until it will fall into their own hands. Whenever someone gets sick and close to his end, then the *chevra* will pay someone else to help with the sick person and guard him so that, he will not take with him any of the Transvaal merchandise on which they have to pay tax. It is an easy thing to find a *griene* to serve as a helper and earn double pay.²¹ If someone will, G-d forbid, die, only then will the chosen people come. Everyone will know them and will know that they have been chosen for the holy work because each one will carry a white sash on his shoulders with a red or white rose on his heart to show that he is alive and enjoying the sweetness of a life of luxury. Nobody else is allowed to touch the dead person's goods

Gemilut Chesed was established according to the laws of England in every detail. For example, Reuven the son of Jacob is

temporarily poor and Hashem by chance has handed him a good deal on Sunday so that he will be able to earn a few pounds but the only obstacle to him is the lack of money. He would then go to the *gabbai* and the assigned person in charge to ask for a loan but, G-d forbid, he should ask for money on Sunday! Only on Fridays, from 1-2 p.m., has he justification to ask the *Gemilut Chasidim*. If he loses that time, then he must come back on that day and at that hour the following week to ask for his request.

But he cannot just ask the *Gemilut Chesed*. It must be done in the English language and on a paper printed for this purpose. Also the poor person must find three rich people to be guarantors otherwise he has to pay. Then, first of all the *chevra* will take ten shillings for themselves, because that is the regulation.²² Inside that regulation there is another - the person whose situation is bad and who asks for *Gemilut Chesed* has to be one of their members and the ten shillings is the voucher he has to pay ahead of time. After that the one in charge asks him to bring a voucher every week according to the amount that they decide and they will then give him the rest.

Chevrah Mishnayot: Grief and mourning in the Beth Hamedrash at the planned and regular hour for study with rules. Come evening five *grienes* will gather, the darkness of their faces will continue to project the terrible vision on their face in the big house. They are sitting around a table with small candles in their hands, their heads upon their chests, the way the Lithuanians used to sit a long time ago on *Tisha B'av* after *kinnot*. In their hands are small *Mishnayot*; they study the chapter together with all their might and with great difficulty until the *parnass* comes to say it is time to say the evening prayers. The people of the New Synagogue saw this and became jealous and got the idea of starting a *Chevrah Mishnayot* also under the leadership of a boy. Only to their disappointment all the *Mishnah* books were printed without vowels. How could they read the name of the *Chevrah* if not one of them can learn?

Except for these *chevrot* there are also *chevrot* and sub-*chevrot* like the *Chevrah* of the Sabbath Desecrators - the heads of the community, the *Chevra* of the English *Treif*-eaters, the *Chevrah* of those Married to Foreign Women, the *Chevrah* of the Poker Players (most of them) not counting transgressors, the lust masters, the Free Masons, the *Chevra* of the *Ba'al Teshuvah* and in each *chevrah* there are plenty of Bnei Israel - in short nothing is missing there.

Shochtim: The new synagogue took to themselves a newly qualified young *shochet*

who had just recently come out into the world who has bought and sold on the Holy Shabbat. He is not less than any of the chicken *shochets* to be found in Africa in almost every house because where can you not find a house that does not have there a black Kaffir who can fulfil the job to kill a chicken and can also fulfil the job of being the *mashgiach* in the kitchen? The rest of the new community has their situation forced upon them to be stingy and to employ *shochets* and *chazans* who are naughty boys because they will work for very little salary and will be satisfied with whatever is given to them.

In the old synagogue they had already taken an old *shochet*, but as our sages have told us, “watch out for the old person who has forgotten his study.”²³ What is more, he had not learnt his vocation. The *grienes* of the *Beth Hamedrash* employed a Lithuanian *shochet*, a simple man. Some women say about him that he never was a *shochet* ... but he has signed a written contract for three years to slaughter the animals of the non-Jew who sells the kosher meat. If he changes his mind now, he will be on the losing end and will have to pay a penalty.

Melamdin: The teacher had also taken the land of Africa as a milking cow, especially in Johannesburg. One of them came from Lithuania with grand-daughters in Europe who have come to a marriageable age. From the thousands of families that are living here, only eight boys have come to study with him. They can already say complete words with a stammering tongue because he is teaching them with an English accent in his Lithuanian language and that is why they are reciting the words half in Hebrew and half in English.²⁴

Chazans have also multiplied here and grow like grass. In the old synagogue there are two. A tailor is the first *chazan* and the second *chazan* too is not a very small ignoramus and not a great musician. With all these, many are saying that the time has come to overturn the pot, because the last one knows a bit of song while the first one knows nothing.

There are also two in the new synagogue – the first one does not know how to pray and the second one maybe knows nothing. The only difference between the two is that the second one looked for tricks and got to be liked by the girls and took one of them to marry and to fulfil the first mitzvah [to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ – Genesis 1:28]. The third Beth Hamedrash, which is called the Orthodox, wanted to hurt the feelings of the remaining congregation. To annoy them they built the Beth Hamedrash even though they are all keeping the laws of Africa and

its customs from A to Z. Most of them are *grienes*, sons of Lithuanians who have not yet washed off their greenness.

Rabbonim: The rabbis who are doing the holy work are two, not counting the rabbis who have previously used the crown of the rabbis in Africa. The burden was also upon them to pray aloud once a week. In the old synagogue there is appointed a famous rabbi²⁵ and even though the style of his learning is not sharpness and depth but the opposite, shame and crookedness, and there is no end to his simplicity.²⁶ He is a simple ignoramus and he himself likes non-kosher food and is used to desecrating the Shabbat in public like a simple Englishman does from birth. The new synagogue has a rabbi²⁷ who is praised by the English members because he is capable of talking his people’s language, the jargon. He came from Kimberley to be a rabbi and cantor in a place where the English had led me astray. This man is praised by the Englishman. His height is average, he is stout and on his fat neck he has a white collar, which the English priests wear in their houses of worship.

No goodniks: You can also find no goodniks in ever place you turn....There is a meshulach from Jerusalem who came here to collect the impure funds to fill the stomachs of the people in Jerusalem who had sent him here. This man has already changed his holy garment that was made according to the law because his fat stomach could not contain his clothes. He bought a garment of silk from a Malay cleric who used to wear it in his mosque. This garment the meshulach wore on Yom Kippur when he came to the old synagogue to listen to the sound of the girls who sang a new song.

On his return to Cape Town, Reb Yehuda Leib was asked by local East European Jews to become their *shochet* so that they would not have to join the English-oriented Gardens Shul to get kosher meat. He established a *shtiebel*, a Talmud Torah and a *mikvah*, and the dissidents he served went on to establish the Roeland Street shul. He would have been delighted to know that a hundred years later, although Johannesburg still had a few ‘nogoodniks’ and members of the ‘Chevrah of the Sabbath Desecrators’, the ‘Chevra of the English *Treif*-eaters’, the ‘Chevrah of those Married to Foreign Women’ and the ‘Chevrah of the Poker Players’, there had also been an explosion of *shtiebels*, religious learning, *sheitels* and *shochtim*, among whom he would have felt at home and alongside whom he would happily have worshipped. We all of us each live in our own time, know a little of the past and nothing of the future.



Yehuda Leib Schrire, 1897 (Shoshana Shapiro Collection)

NOTES

- 1 Morris Abrahams, *The Jews of Johannesburg 1886–1901* (Johannesburg: Scarecrow Books, in association with the Jewish Board of Deputies, 2001); Levy J I (ed.), *The writings of Meyer Dovid Hersch (1858–1933): Rand pioneer and historian of Jewish life in early Johannesburg* Author, Ammat Press, 2005; Leibl Feldman, *The Jews of Johannesburg (Until Union – 31 May 1910)*, trans. from the Yiddish by Veronica Belling (South Africa: Jewish Publications, Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, University of Cape Town), 2007.
- 2 The accounts by Morris Abrahams (writing before 1899) and by Meyer Dovid Hersch in 1895 were factual journalistic reports addressed to people in Europe interested in immigrating to Johannesburg. Leibl Feldman only arrived in Johannesburg in 1910 and published the first version of his book *Yidn in Johannesburg* much later, in 1950, as an anti-establishment history for Yiddish immigrants.
- 3 He always walked with a stick. His son Harry believed that he might have had polio as a child.
- 4 Built in 1883 by Barclay, Curle and Co. of Glasgow, Scotland, for the Union-Castle Line.
- 5 London-born Rev A F Ornstein was the rabbi from 1882–1895. Previously he had also been headmaster of the Birmingham Hebrew National Schools and had trained to be a rabbi at Aria College, Portsmouth (Dr Louis Herrman, *The Cape Town Hebrew Congregation 1941–1941: A Centenary History*, 55). It is not surprising that the writer would not have approved of so English a rabbi. He in turn did not like the ‘foreigners’.
- 6 Probably Emanuel Mendelssohn, a founder of both the congregations and Hyman Morris, its president, and ex-president of the old one, himself the son of a cantor.
- 7 Mendelssohn and the English Jews who had established both synagogues wanted them to be like themselves - modern, Anglicized and middle-class. The East European Jews were horrified initially, but after a while they too assimilated and these practices were retained in most South African congregations until recent times.
- 8 Mendelssohn and his congregation, although nominally Orthodox, had abandoned many of the Orthodox practices, including observance of the Sabbath and dietary laws, although keeping the High Holy Days and rites of passage.
- 9 His son, Harry, said of him, “What a memory. What a temper”.
- 10 President Street Synagogue of the Witwatersrand Hebrew Congregation
- 11 Park Synagogue of the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation
- 12 Rev Mark Harris
- 13 The use of a mixed choir was controversial - but Mrs Mendelssohn, wife of the founder, was a soprano trained at the Berlin Conservatoire of Music.
- 14 Rev Harris Isaacs, who arrived early in 1893.
- 15 He is referring to himself.
- 16 Officially called the Johannesburg Orthodox Congregation, this was the most orthodox of the synagogues and attracted the very religious *grienes*, like Schrire. They opened their own synagogue six months after he arrived. Abrahams described it as a large oblong room capable of holding about 250–300 worshippers with whitewashed walls, a small gallery for ladies and furnished with wooden benches; nothing was wasted on superfluous decorations. It was open from early morning till late at night (Abrahams, *The Jews of Johannesburg*, p11).
- 17 Newcomers from Eastern Europe.
- 18 Hersch said its services were conducted exactly as in the old country (Levy, p91).
- 19 Morris Abrahams, an English Jew, had nothing but praise for this organisation of which he was the honorary secretary. Hersch, writing in 1892, spoke of “the well thought-out regulations” of the Burial Society which had “brought order into the cemetery”, but added that the leaders of the society “know how to make out accounts” and had “no equal among similar societies in any part of the world for there is a good deal of feasting during the festival days” (Levy, p88).
- 20 Max Raphaely.
- 21 Abrahams, a secretary of the organisation, claimed that visiting the sick was carried out by the committee members, Abrahams, p20.
- 22 Hersch had only praise for the society which he said had been established in 1890 by English Jews as well but reminded members of the importance of paying their fees without delay (Levy, p88).
- 23 From September 1892 to October 1894 the *shochet* and second minister was Rev B Ginzburg.
- 24 In 1893 the classroom was a small room with a mud floor, broken windows and dirty walls. Both M Abrahams and M D Hersch bemoan the poor Jewish education given to the children – Hersch said parents are quite satisfied if their sons can make a blessing when called up to the Law and nothing else (Levy, p91).
- 25 Rev Mark Harris.
- 26 Hersch said Harris knew how to find favour in the sight of his congregation but his tendency was to following the English Jews and he only preached in English (Levy, p90).
- 27 Rev Harris Isaacs.

COLONIAL PORT JEWS - THE JEWS OF PORT ELIZABETH, EASTERN CAPE

*

Saul Issroff

In his 1999 paper 'The Port Jew: Notes Toward a Social Type'¹ David Sorkin, drawing on his work on Sephardi and Italian Jews living in Mediterranean, Atlantic and West Indian seaports between the 17th and 20th Centuries, noted five characteristics of port Jews:

- A trading network dependent on trusted Sephardi commercial and family connections, between the Atlantic and Mediterranean economies.
- The commercial value of Jews to the new country guaranteed security of residence.
- The legal status of Jews in the new country ensured privileges and legal equality.
- The re-conversion and re-education of individuals who had unwillingly converted to Christianity during the Inquisition (*haskalah avant la lettre*).
- Jewish identity and belief strengthened in both secular and religious areas.

In broad terms, it is possible to apply some of Sorkin's criteria to the Southern African port Jews from Germany and England.² This study will outline the establishment and development of the South African port city of Port Elizabeth and the role played in this of families of Jewish origin in that city and further inland.

Port Elizabeth is possibly unique amongst port cities in that it has had a Jewish presence since its founding, in 1820.³ The early Jewish settlers in the area (1820-40) in the main had family and trading connections, primarily with Germany and England. There was no pressure on them to convert. Some of the families seem to have been at ease in both

Christian and Jewish circles, and several of the more prominent figures contributed financially to both groups. There appears to have been little discrimination against Jews in the Cape until the influx of Eastern European Jews towards the end of the 19th Century, when attempts were made to limit this immigration.

Sephardic Jews were prominent in the Portuguese voyages of discovery, especially with respect to mapmaking, navigation, and astrological charts. Theoretically, South Africa was a Portuguese possession for almost a century after Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Cape in 1487;⁴ the goal of the Portuguese, however, was India and the spice routes. While they explored and mapped the southern African coast carefully, it was mostly with a view to securing fresh water and food for its mariners, and they established no permanent settlements at the Cape.

In 1497 Vasco da Gama's voyage aboard the *São Gabriel* brought him to Algoa Bay, where he planted a wooden cross on a small island, now called St Croix or Santa Cruz island. He gave the bay a name meaning 'Bay of the Rock'. This was later changed to '*Bahia de Lagoa*' (Bay of the Lagoon), which eventually became Algoa Bay.⁵

At the end of February 1752, a large, well equipped, expedition under the command of Ensign August Frederick Beutler left the Cape to explore the land east of the settlement and report on any changes since 1688. They reached Algoa Bay in early May, explored the salt pans and took bearings of the surrounding shore. Beutler regarded this as too exposed to the south east winds to be of any use for shipping. He set up a beacon inscribed with the letters VOC⁶ at the mouth of the Zwartkops River to denote that possession had been taken by the company.⁷

In 1799 Fort Frederick, with a garrison of 150 troops, was established at Algoa Bay by the British, primarily to gain better control over the rebellious Boers of the hinterland. In 1820, the settlement that grew up around it was formally proclaimed as a town and named after the deceased wife of Cape Governor Sir Rufane Donkin. Port Elizabeth grew rapidly after 1873, when a railroad to Kimberley was built. Today, with over a 1.3 million inhabitants, it is South Africa's fourth-largest

Dr Saul Issroff is past President of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Great Britain, Deputy Chairman of the International Institute of Jewish Genealogy and project director of The Centre for Jewish Migration and Genealogy at the Kaplan Centre, University of Cape Town. He has published various works on the Holocaust in Lithuania, migration to South Africa and Jews in the Diaspora. Born in Port Elizabeth, he now lives in London.

city and third-largest seaport. The major industry is related to car manufacturing.⁸ Wool washing and export, fruit processing and export, tanning and shoe manufacturing, metal and timber processing, and electrical engineering are also of significance.

The Jewish Settlers of 1820

The story of the Jews in Port Elizabeth⁹ dates back to the arrival of the 1820 British settlers in Algoa Bay. There was considerable unemployment in Britain following the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars and many were easily induced to settle at the Cape by the Governor of the Cape Colony, Lord Charles Somerset.

The immigrants made a major contribution to the commercial and industrial development of the Cape, despite all starting in agriculture.¹⁰ Among the members of Willson's party of settlers, who sailed in the *Belle Alliance* and reached the Bay in May, 1820, were four Jewish families comprising eighteen persons, including John Norton, Philip Simons (38), Morris Sloman (33) and the Norden brothers – Benjamin, Joshua Davis, Marcus, Samuel and Harry. Maurice Garcia was another settler of Jewish descent.¹¹

The Nordens settled in Grahamstown, about 100km inland. Benjamin, a typical London man, was known as “the Cockney gardener”, was not suited to farming and after three years went to Uitenhage, trading in ivory. He joined the Grahamstown committee that planned the first jetty in Port Elizabeth (completed 1837). Norden was impressed by the commercial possibilities of Natal, urging outright annexation by the British, and also investigated the economic possibilities of Delagoa Bay (now Maputo). Asked by Sir Benjamin D'Urban, then governor of the Cape Colony, to meet with the Zulu chief Dingaan, he stayed several days at the latter's kraal and concluded a good ivory deal. Later, he wrote about his travels in the *Graham's Town Journal*.¹² Norden further assisted in funding the building of churches and synagogues, and in 1841, the first Jewish prayer service was held in his Cape Town home. He was a precursor of the future Cape industrialists.¹³

Joshua Davis Norden became an auctioneer and one of the most prominent citizens of Grahamstown. He was appointed commandant of the Grahamstown Yeomanry, a crack military body which, together with the Stubbs' Rangers, rendered valuable services to Grahamstown during the early troubled days on the Eastern Cape frontier. Early in the Seventh Frontier War of 1846-7, he was killed at the head of his troops in a skirmish near the town. A marble tablet to his memory was placed upon the south wall

of the Grahamstown Cathedral.¹⁴ The Jewish community in Grahamstown was established in 1843, twelve years before that of Port Elizabeth.

The Brothers Mosenthal

During the 1820s, German Jewish traders (the Merchant Pioneers)¹⁵ started to arrive in the Colony, developing a particularly Jewish branch of commerce and setting up trading stations in towns best suited for commercial exploitation of rural areas with itinerant agents (often family from Germany). The Mosenthals from Hesse-Cassel were the most significant Jewish family connected with the early settlement and development of the Eastern Province, with family connections in the other provinces as well. The Mosenthals' ancestors, Sustman and Moses were *Shutzjuden*, who in 1700 were living in Petershagen on the River Weser. The *Schutzbrief* was a letter of protection that enabled them to live in the city and carry on business. Moses Hertz had a son Abraham Moses (Marburg), who was granted a *Schutzbrief* in 1717. He had nine children, of whom one, Moses Abraham, was the paternal and another, Joseph Sussman, the maternal grandfather of Joseph Mosenthal, the first of the family to settle in the Cape in 1819.¹⁶

Joseph was later joined by his brother, Adolf, and the two founded the firm of Mosenthal Brothers in Cape Town. In 1842, a branch was opened in Port Elizabeth. The brothers had bought a huge consignment of goods in England and shipped this to Port Elizabeth. They advertised very carefully, setting themselves apart from other traders by stressing the fact that they were from Europe, and had contacts and financial backing. They were opening a mercantile and shipping house, clearly stating they would be doing exports and imports. Their primary interest originally was trading in the export of wool, hides and skins and importing everyday products from Europe. This was expanded to include gold and diamond mining, industrial enterprises and banking. In the early years, the firm issued its own banknotes, later withdrawn when the colony developed its own commercial banking system.

The Mosenthals made a special study of ostrich farming and export of ostrich feathers.¹⁷ They imported the first merino sheep from France, the first Angora goats from Turkey and established the mohair industry. Immediately after the Crimean War, Adolf went to Constantinople where, aided by the British consul, he purchased a number of rams and ewes, which were sold to farmers in the Graaff-Reinet area. In the

period 1845-1870, they were responsible for more than half the Jewish families coming to settle in South Africa. These Hessian Jews became managers and sub-managers for the brothers' rapidly spreading enterprises, or they traded on their own account with financial support from the Mosenthals.¹⁸

Of Adolph Mosenthal's six sons, two died in their twenties, one went to London and the remaining three, Harry, George and William, went into the business. The family had a commitment to civic duty. Adolph became a Justice of the Peace at Graaff-Reinet (1851) and a Member of the Legislative Council (1857); Joseph was a Member of the Legislative Council in 1861; another brother, Julius, was the first professing Jew to be elected to the Eastern Cape Legislative assembly, and also became a JP (1855)¹⁹ and Harry was Chairman of the Port Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce in 1893 and 1911. In 1867, with the discovery of diamonds, Harry encouraged his father's firm to engage in mining, and at the age of twenty founded the London and South Africa Exploration Company, with Lord Farquar and Sigmund Ochs. The company bought the first two farms with surface soils indicating diamond fields, and within a few years owned a large part of the burgeoning diamond town of Kimberley. Later, Harry joined with Cecil Rhodes, Alfred Beit and Barney Barnato in establishing De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited, thus joining a lot of small mines into a huge conglomerate. George, said to be of a delicate constitution, was involved in developing the policy and activities of the firm. William took over after Harry died in 1912. He was also president of the PE Chamber of Commerce and the PE turf club, owning fine horses. His nephew, Edgar, took over after his death in 1933.

Early editions of the *Port Elizabeth Herald* have advertisements for two other Jewish traders, S. Rodolph and George Britton, dealers in paints, glass, lead bars, cigars,

pepper, soap etc. Britton, a discharged trooper from the Cape garrison, remained as a colonist in 1817, became an elephant hunter and trader, and was interested in coastal trade with Natal.

In the early years, Jews in Port Elizabeth were active in Queen Street, close to the port, anticipating the likely direction of the development of the town. A congregation was first formed in 1855, with the hire of a small room opposite the St George's church. The Port Elizabeth Hebrew Congregation was formally constituted two years later and a temporary synagogue, seating sixty, was set up in North End. The first Rosh Hashanah services were held there, with many Jews coming from country areas. In 1862, a church school building was bought to serve as a permanent synagogue.

The first Jewish marriage in Port Elizabeth was that of Deborah Moss, shipwrecked stepdaughter of Saul Solomon, a trader from St Helena and later Member of the Cape Parliament, to Joseph Phillips (witnessed by Joseph Hess). A M Jackson, who arrived in 1859,²⁰ was appointed marriage officer. He also secured land for a Jewish cemetery, still used today.

By 1864 the growing community, mainly from England and Germany, supported the petition for self-government and put forward Julius Mosenthal to stand for a vacancy in the Cape Legislative Assembly. Nathaniel Adler was the French Consul and the dentist Ernest Moss became the first to use anaesthetics in the town. In 1869, after lengthy correspondence with the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Dr N M Adler, Rev. Samuel Rappaport of Portsmouth was appointed minister. He held the post for 25 years, serving communities in other parts of the Cape, Natal and the Orange Free State.²¹ Rev. David Wasserzug succeeded him.

By 1874, larger synagogue premises were needed. Land in Western Avenue was purchased, and a new synagogue consecrated in 1877. A social club, a Sabbath school and a philanthropic society were established. In 1918, a Hebrew school opened in Albany Road.



The first synagogue in Port Elizabeth, Whites Road, as it looked circa. 1980. Note Gothic window on side wall.

Date	Jewish Population	% of white population
1877	71	
1904	760	
1926	1502	4.5
1960	2840	
1967/8	2611	2.6
2003	450	
2016	300 (est.)	

The Jewish population of Port Elizabeth, 1877-2016

The Orange Free State

Sophie Leviser (b. 1857, Bloemfontein) wrote that her father, Isaac Baumann (b. 1813, Hesse-Cassel) came to South Africa in 1838, arriving in Graaff Reinet to join his boyhood friends, the Mosenthal brothers. He was one of the first people to own land in Bloemfontein and was present when the land was being marked off. He became director of the first bank and one of the first mayors. His was the first Jewish family in Bloemfontein, probably the first in the Orange Free State. The pattern of settlement was typical in that he brought out relatives and encouraged others to do the same. Thus the Jordan, Allenburg, Leviser, Ehrlich and Haarbarger families came to the Orange Free State.

Anthony Trollope, in his *Travels in Southern Africa*²², was surprised to find a woman of such culture in Bloemfontein, namely, Sophie's mother Caroline Baumann (born Allenburg). In 1863, the family was sent to Port Elizabeth with the intention of visiting Isaac Baumann's mother in Germany. However, the Orange Free State-Basuto War broke out and Baumann could not leave his business, so the family remained in Port Elizabeth for several years. There the children, previously speaking Dutch and German, learnt English, and the family came into contact with organised Jewish life.

In 1875, Port Elizabeth's *Eastern Star* noted that "the educated Jews and Germans... have been of inestimable advantage not only to the social life, but to the commerce and business, of Port Elizabeth... they are open-hearted and open-handed."²³ Seven of the 38 members of the Port Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce in 1871 were Jewish firms.

The arrival of 'Russian' Jews, mainly from Lithuania and Latvia in the 1890s, increased the size of the community (although it probably never rose above 3000 souls). As a percentage of the SA Jewish population, Port Elizabeth Jewry averaged 2.4% in the period 1936-1980). They did not integrate easily with the Anglo and German-origin Jews, and built their own synagogue in 1913.

In 1877 the small congregation sent £150 to the Anglo-Jewish Association for 'distressed co-religionists' in Turkey. During the Anglo-Boer War, a Refugee Relief Committee was formed to assist Jewish refugees who had come from the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. A number of the refugees felt they were badly treated and exploited by the community, and letters of complaint were sent to the *Jewish Chronicle* (London). At this time funds were also collected for relief of distress in Russia and Romania.

Civic Role

Jews were always prominent in civic affairs. Port Elizabeth has had seven Jewish mayors, the first being H H Solomon (1873-5). He was a diamond, wool, hides and skin merchant, and later became active in the Lydenburg Goldfields. Max Gumpert was the next (1899-1900).²⁴ The adjacent, now contiguous, town of Uitenhage also had a number of Jewish mayors.²⁵

Adolph Schauder (b. 1880 in Kolomya, then in Austria-Hungary, now Ukraine) was the most significant of PE's Jewish mayors. He had 65 years of public service, not connected to any political party, and devoted himself to conciliation and building goodwill amongst all sectors of the population. His main interest was in mass housing and elimination of slums, in which respect Port Elizabeth was way ahead of the rest of South Africa.

Schauder, who came from a very poor family, was initially apprenticed as a furniture maker and later as a hat maker in Vienna. He found it difficult to get work because of antisemitism, tried many places in Germany, Austria and Norway, and eventually secured a job as a cap maker in Manchester, England. Being restless, he got a berth on a ship bound for Australia and arrived in Cape Town. The Anglo-Boer War was still raging, and few jobs were available, so he went to Port Elizabeth and secured a job as a medical orderly in Grahamstown. On the strength of this experience he joined the Red Cross Detachment of the Prince of Wales Light Horse Regiment in 1901. He was issued with a rifle, bandolier and horse, and not given any nursing work. This unit was trailing General de Wet in the Free State and thereafter was active in the Standerton area in the Transvaal. Schauder had deep sympathy for the plight of the Boers. On encountering refugees families, he tried to help. He noted, "What a tragic picture it was. The men were barefoot and almost naked ... The Boers will be ruined. Even if they were to stop fighting now there would be famine."

When the war ended in 1902, Schauder returned to Port Elizabeth, where he started a small shop selling everything on a penny basis - fish, bread, beer for a penny. Here he met the Patlansky brothers, refugees from the Transvaal, and assisted them with letters of reference to the authorities in the Transvaal. He became a partner in their wholesale trading company, and was the first of the 'foreign' Jews to enter the wholesale business in Port Elizabeth, up to that time dominated by the Mosenthals, Frasers and Dunns. He had a reputation for trying new things, such as liquid soap and electric light bulbs.

When WWI broke out, Schauder volunteered for service, but was rejected on medical grounds. Anti-German riots broke out in the city, putting him at risk (since he was of 'German' origin). A prominent Baptist minister, Rev. Clapp, allowed him to use his name in an announcement in the local newspaper calling attention to his war service and patriotism. Schauder was involved in relief work during the war, at one stage sending a donation of a ton of cheese to England.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Schauder was involved in promoting sub-economic housing for low earning Afrikaners and employment opportunities for families in very low-income groups. He secured the first ever government low interest loan (3/4%) for housing schemes in Port Elizabeth and cajoled his fellow councilors to clear the slums. He was innovative, at one time getting crates from the Ford and General Motors factories to be turned into wooden houses. Under his leadership over 30 000 houses were built for all races (Schauder Township was named after him) and he was able to get the terrible slum town of Korsten cleaned up. In 1951 he visited the UK and lectured extensively to local councils and housing authorities on the housing schemes of Port Elizabeth. Schauder would attribute the driving force of his work as coming from his '*Yiddishe Neshama*' (Jewish soul).

The Western Road synagogue was dominated by Jews of English and German origin and was known as the *English Shul*. The East European immigrants were not comfortable with the forms of service and low levels of observance, considering the English to be '*goyish*' and '*ignorant*'. The English Jews in turn found the Litvaks to be crude and lacking in manners. In 1912, the Litvaks put together sufficient funds to build their own synagogue, in Raleigh Street.²⁶ Schauder was one of the founders. This had some art nouveau elements but preserved traditional synagogue elements, and commissioned a well-known Pretoria architect, Orlando Middleton, to design it.²⁷ This is now a national monument and houses a Jewish museum.²⁸



Raleigh Street synagogue, Port Elizabeth Orthodox Hebrew Congregation

Schauder belonged to both the congregations. He also organised the Chevra Kadisha (burial society) so that no single section of the community could control burials to the disadvantage of another. Although he was only 33 years old at the time, he remained as President of the society for 25 years. In 1918 he established a Hebrew school along modern lines; this was the first school in South Africa to get Hebrew recognized as a modern language. On a national level he served on the boards of the SA Zionist Federation, Ort Oze and SA Jewish Board of Deputies.²⁹

Rev. Abraham Levy, a graduate of Jews College, London, went to Durban in 1903 and in 1913 succeeded Rev. Phillips in Port Elizabeth.³⁰ He remained in this post until his retirement in 1954.³¹ He formed a strong bond between the Jewish and non-Jewish sections of the population, and actively helped to bridge the gap between the 'Westernised' Anglo-German Jews and the 'Russian' Jewish immigrants. He was involved in a wide range of Jewish and non-Jewish communal activities, including the School Board, the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Hospital Board. In 1934, he was the successful defendant in what came to be known as the 'Greysheet' case [See reprint of chapter from *Hadassah Ben-Itto's book elsewhere in this issue – ed*].³²

Another PE notable was Sir Lewis Richardson, C.B.E., who came from Birmingham in 1882, and was knighted for his services to the Crown in provisions of wool and leather during WWI.³³



Annual picnic of the Port Elizabeth Hebrew School, 1920. Hyman Schauder, (chairman) is left, front, and David Mierowsky, the first principal, right-front.

Summary and Conclusion

Port Elizabeth represents a colonial port community that was intimately involved in the development of the Eastern Cape Frontier and later the Orange Free State and the Kimberly diamond fields. The original

English settlers were augmented by German Jewish families with established trading and banking links worldwide. In this respect the Mosenthal family, with a background resulting from German emancipation and close links to England and America, were the most prominent.

The communities of Argentina, Australia and South Africa are manifestations of the great frontier of Europe that began with the Spanish and Portuguese voyages of discovery in the late 15th Century. The discovery of new sea routes from Europe to the Orient rapidly moved with the opening of a land frontier in the New World. The land frontier, based on rural activities, agricultural or extractive (mining), is the classic frontier of the modern era. This evinced a chain reaction that opened up new frontiers; it was never a temporary phenomenon. Large remote territories had to be settled, with new technology that led to a new urban industrial frontier. The new frontier was characterized by a modern urbanisation, people coming together not just to serve agricultural or mining hinterlands but also to concentrate and apply technology to make new wealth - thus making the hinterland dependent upon them.³⁴ A linkage developed between the extractive dimension of the land frontier and the urban-industrial frontier in other countries. This provided South Africa with the resources to develop an urban-industrial frontier of its own, precisely at the time that Jews were arriving in the country in force, so that they were participants in the last stage of the land frontier and the change to other frontiers.

The Jews largely missed the Dutch frontier experience, but Anglo and German Jews participated in the development of the English 'frontiers' and also in the Afrikaner settlement of the interior. The Litvak newcomers were not simply immigrants but were pioneers with the Boers of at least the urban frontier. Individual Jews became closely connected to Afrikaners at all levels, but the communal development was more closely tied to the British, despite a degree of discrimination. Jews in the multinational society were accepted as individuals but kept separate as a group.


There appear to be similarities between the group behaviours of Port Elizabeth Jewry as compared to communities in port and frontier cities in South America, Australia and New Zealand and the southern states of the US. The substantial participation of Jews, often, but not always, commercially successful individuals in the community at large, as well as amongst their own group, raises the question of whether this characteristic is common to port and frontier Jews in other parts of the world.

NOTES

- 1 *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 50.1 (Spring 1999), pp88-97.
- 2 Very few Sephardi Jews settled in South Africa until the last quarter of the 20th Century, despite many having been active in the Portuguese voyages of discovery. The small number of recorded cases of conversion to Christianity occurred mainly in the period following Jan van Riebeeck's first permanent settlement at the Cape on behalf of the Dutch East India Company in 1652. Louis Herrman (*A History of the Jews in South Africa*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1930, pp55-60) notes that David Heijlbron and Samuel Jacobson were recorded in the baptismal registers of the Dutch Reformed church on Christmas Day, 1669. An Abraham of Prague was baptised in 1673. One Hessel Jacobs, probably Jewish, was imprisoned for stealing vegetables. He is thought to have died in captivity and is not known to have been baptised. Several other possible Jews are noted during this early period of settlement.
- 3 Clive M. Burton, 'Settlers to the Cape of Good Hope. Organisation of the Nottinghamshire Party 1819-1820', Historical Society of Port Elizabeth, 1971. This outlines the economic conditions in England at the time, the Colonial Office plans for assisted passage and resettlement in the Cape Colony, and conditions in the Cape.
- 4 For example, see extract from a letter by Joseph Zapateiro de Lambego to King João II of Portugal "that the ships which sailed down the Coast of Guinea might be sure of reaching the termination of the Continent by persisting in a course to the South; and that when they should arrive in the Eastern Ocean their best direction must be to enquire for Sofala and the Island of the Moon, and they will find pilots to take them to Malabar" (in Herrmann, 1930, p11).
- 5 For a discussion about inscriptions on markers and beacons around Africa see Schoonees, P, 'Inscriptions on Padrões, Postal Stones, Tombstones and Beacons', Cape Town: SA Cultural History Museum, 1991.
- 6 *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or Dutch East India Company.
- 7 George McCall Theal, *History of South Africa* [1691-1795], London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1888. pp143-6.
- 8 Ford and Volkswagen (Uitenhage) have their production plants here.
- 9 Redgrave, J J, *Port Elizabeth in Bygone Days*, Rustica Press: Wynberg, Cape, 1964. This has a list of early Jewish settlers in PE. Most standard texts on SA history barely mention Jews. Very little has been written about PE Jewry in the past fifty years; Sam Abrahams, 'The Jewish 1820 Settlers', *The Settler*, Vol 68, No.2, 1995.
- 10 Rosenthal, E, 'Jews in South African Industry and commerce' in *South African Jewry*, 1965, ed. Leon Feldberg. Johannesburg: Fieldhill publications, 1965, pp143 et seq.
- 11 Friedman-Spits, C, 'Maurice Garcia, Jewish 1820 Settler', *Jewish Affairs*, 36 (4), 1981, pp59-66
- 12 Israel Abrahams, *The Birth of a Community*, Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, 1955, pp.9-11
- 13 Hazel Dakers, personal communication. 'Benjamin Norden is known to have contributed to the building of one of the first churches in Durban and to St John's

- Anglican Church in Grahamstown. St George's Church which was to become the Grahamstown Cathedral contains a memorial plaque to his warrior brother Joshua Davis Norden. It is within its registers that the rites of passage of various members of the Norden family are recorded - births, baptisms and marriages. At first an active opponent of the move to settle convicts at the Cape, Benjamin Norden later voluntarily supplied the convict ship *Neptune* at his own expense in 1849. Neither his health (he was injured when stoned) nor his public standing ever fully recovered from this humanitarian action.'
- 14 Herrmann, *History of the Jews in South Africa*, p205.
 - 15 Fleisher, D, Caccia, A, *Merchant Pioneers. The House of Mosenthal*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1983.
 - 16 It was Moses Abraham who took the name of Mosenthal, while Joel Sussman adopted the name of Rosengarten, both later registered under the Napoleonic edicts requiring all Jews to assume surnames. They had lived in the Judengasse in Marburg, but moved to Kassel around 1770, where they prospered as traders. Both were devout Jews and, like Mayer Amschel Rothschild of this period, wore caftans. As privileged suppliers to the Kassel Military College they had a contract to supply the army at the time of the invasion of France, and lost a lot of money in this disastrous campaign. The *Landgraf* compensated them for this by granting protection letters for all their children.
 - 17 Julius made a special study of the ostrich industry but also had expert knowledge of the wool trade, and wrote articles on this for the *Cape Monthly Magazine*. Adolph was mainly interested in wool and hides. Joseph was mainly interested in banking and finance.
 - 18 Mendelssohn, S, *Jewish Pioneers of South Africa*, Jewish Historical Society of England, 1912, pp195-6.
 - 19 Abrahams, op cit., p136.
 - 20 Hyman Schauder, 'The History of the Jews of Port Elizabeth', in *South African Jewish Yearbook*, 1929. Johannesburg: South African Jewish Historical Society, 1929, pp113-122.
 - 21 *Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 8, 1942
 - 22 Chapman and Hall: London, 1878
 - 23 Abrahams, op. cit. pp.29
 - 24 Alfred Markman had an industrial township named after him
 - 25 Hyman Schauder notes H H Solomon (1873-5), Max Gumpert (1899-1900), Adolph Schauder (1940-1), Louis Dubb (1954-5), Alfred Markman (1960-1), N Cohen (1978-9) Solly Rubin (1988-9), Abraham Karstaedt was deputy mayor for many years. In Uitenhage Joe Seween Levy was mayor (1969-70, 1971-1973), and Julius Schauder also served as mayor. Most of these men were also active on Zionist Councils and the Board of Deputies; *South African Jewish Yearbook*, 1929; *South African Jewry*. Johannesburg: Fieldhill, 1965.
 - 26 *Eastern Province (Weekend) Herald*, 20/12/1986
 - 27 *Eastern Province Herald*, 29/3/1958
 - 28 Jewish Pioneers Memorial Museum, Raleigh Street, Port Elizabeth
 - 29 Edgar Bernstein, "Give me the Strength to Help People", Adolph Schauder and his work for South Africa, *Jewish Affairs*, Dec.1965, pp11-15
 - 30 Hyman Schauder, op.cit. 1973, pp.107
 - 31 Gus Saron and Louis Hotz, op.cit.1955. pp. 310-11
 - 32 *Grey Shirt Judgement, Libel Action at Grahamstown*, reprinted from Grocott's Daily Mail, August.21, 1934. Grahamstown: Grocott and Sherry, 1934
 - 33 He was possibly the only PE citizen to get knighted whilst living in the city. However, Colonel Sir David Harris MP, a cousin of Barney Barnato, retired to PE and died there (see 'Pioneer, Soldier and Politician. Summarised memoirs of Colonel Sir David Harris', London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co., 1931). PE-born Sir Raymond (Bill) Hoffenberg was President of the Royal College of Physicians. He served in Italy in WWII. Post-war he joined the African National Congress, was imprisoned and eventually expelled for his political beliefs. For a detailed discussion of Jewish actions relating to apartheid times see Gideon Shimoni, *Community and Conscience. The Jews in Apartheid South Africa*, University Press of New England, 2003.
 - 34 Daniel J. Elazar, with Peter Medding, *Jewish Communities in Frontier Societies: Argentina, Australia and South Africa*. New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1983.

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PROTECTING JEWISH LIFE AND THE JEWISH WAY OF LIFE

THE SA FRIENDS OF BETH HATEFUTSOTH 'JEWISH LIFE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNTRY COMMUNITIES' PROJECT

*

Adrienne Kollenberg

This year marks the 175th anniversary of Tikvath Israel - the first congregation and synagogue in South Africa. We salute the Jews of Cape Town who, from that time onwards, have had a vibrant and flourishing Jewish community. From this momentous beginning, congregations and synagogues have been established in small towns and big cities throughout the country.

It was not easy for the early Jewish settlers in South Africa's country towns and villages to even get a *minyan*, let alone form a congregation, and even more so to build a synagogue. They were, however, determined to carry on their religious beliefs, even in this foreign and unknown land. The story of these country communities has been uncovered through meticulous and comprehensive research carried out by the South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth (SAFBH) over the past 24 years.

In the early 1980s, a very successful exhibition documenting the Jews of South Africa was jointly undertaken by the Beth Hatefutsoth Museum in Tel Aviv, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), and the SA Zionist Federation (SAZF). Curated by Rose Norwich, it was first shown in Israel, and thereafter in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg.

The success of the exhibition resulted firstly in the formation, in 1984, of the SAFBH, with a small committee under the chairmanship of David Ellum (subsequent chairmen were Derrick Barnett, the late Dennis Fox, Ian Mann and, currently, Rose Norwich and Adrienne Kollenberg). Its brief was to make known the information provided by the Museum, and to provide it with financial support. In 1992, the Museum sent out the highly regarded Kafka Exhibition, which the Friends opened at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg, and which subsequently travelled around the country.

Adrienne Kollenberg is, with Rose Norwich, co-chairman of the SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth and has been one of the project convenors of its country communities research project since its inception. She has a BA (Social Science) and Honours – Sociology degrees from Wits University.

Secondly, a request was received from the Beth Hatefutsoth Museum for further information on the Jews of South Africa. The Museum has a database of Jews throughout the world; however, it only had information on the major towns in South Africa up till 1960. The SAJBD and SAZF were asked for assistance in sending out a researcher for six months to document the country's smaller communities. As this was not a practical proposition, the Friends decided to carry out this research themselves.



Chaitow family store, Pilgrim's Rest, 1909

Further motivation was given by the late Phyllis Jowell and the late David Susman who, in the early 1990s, had visited Latvia and Lithuania, and found no sign of anything Jewish in towns which had once had thriving Jewish communities. So began our venture into the inspiring, if also somewhat sad story of the former Jewish country centres. This story, which began some years before the first congregation was formed in Cape Town, is one that remains significant to all South Africans, whether Jewish or not. It tells the history of South Africa and the contribution Jews made to its growth and development. Rose Norwich, Phyllis Jowell and I convened this project. With the help of two retired gentlemen, the late David Seligman and the late Les Meyerowitz, we met a couple of mornings a week and started delving into the archives of the SAJBD.

The project begins with the arrival of the 1820 Settlers, who came from England to escape poor economic conditions at home. The British government gave each settler a plot of land to farm in the Albany district of the Eastern Cape. Among these settlers

were 18 Jews, who had travelled as part of the Wilson party on the ship *Belle Alliance*. Most of these Jews, however, were not of farming background, and soon drifted into Grahamstown to find other means of making a living. They formed a close relationship with the Jews of Cape Town and became country members of the Tikvath Israel congregation. In fact Benjamin Norden, an 1820 Settler, and Nathan Birkenruth, a Grahamstown merchant, were both founder members of Tikvath Israel.

The English Jews were followed by Jews from Germany. The Anglo-German Jewish community in the Eastern Cape paved the way for those from Eastern Europe, who came via London, where they were assisted by the Poor Jews Temporary Shelter. They left their homes mainly to escape antisemitism, poverty and the threat of 25 years conscription into the Tzar's army, leaving behind them families they most likely never saw again. Some came penniless, with just the clothes on their backs. The lucky ones were able to get assistance from relatives or *landsleit* who had arrived before them. They knew nothing about the country they were coming to, and in fact, when they were offered free passage to South Africa on the Union Castle Mail ships in exchange for a year's work on the diamond mines, many thought they were going to America to join family who had gone before them. They could not speak the language and many surnames were changed by immigration officers when the passenger gave their occupation, instead of their name - for example, a teacher was given the name Melamed and a tailor became known as Schneider. Most of these immigrants started out as *smouse*, with a donkey or horse and cart, going on to become general dealers in a remote village where they felt they could make a living. Or, as the anecdote alleges, where their horse died and they could go no further!



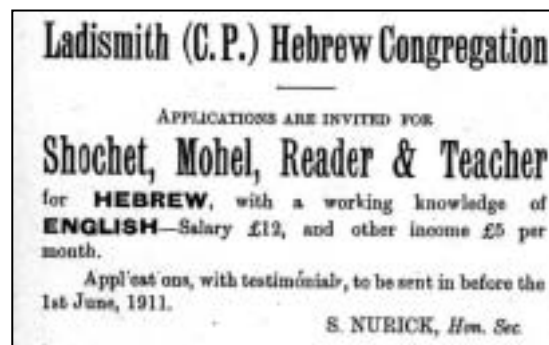
Lancrisha Hotel, Lichtenburg

The amount of information the volunteer researchers uncovered was overwhelming and this was only from the SAJBD Archives.

We realised that we had to approach this important task in a more professional manner. A database was set up especially for the project by Mark Jowell, Phyllis' son. The sample questionnaire sent from the Museum in Israel was not relevant to this country, and Joan Gentin, who was employed as the research coordinator at that time, designed a more applicable one. A librarian, Larna Bronstein was employed to source and index material for each town. A full list of the researchers and staff who have worked on the project over the years can be found on the SAFBH website.

The questionnaire covers all aspects of the place being researched, stating whether it was a farm, a settlement, a village or a small town. It begins with the geographical position, its description and background; when it was established and how it was run - by a health committee or municipality; neighbouring places where Jews lived and association with these Jews, religious and social; information on the first Jews to settle in the place, within a chosen time frame; where the residents came from, alone or with family; occupation prior to arrival and after; and informal religious services.

The questionnaire then goes on to the establishment of a congregation, synagogue, cemetery, *chevra kadisha*, *mikveh*, *cheder* and provisions for *kashrut*. Economic activities of the residents and prominent members of the community in all fields of endeavour are mentioned, as are relationships with the general community and any antisemitic incidents. All the Jewish societies in a town are listed as are all residents, ranging from a single individual to over 2000 people. Official census and community figures are also recorded.



When the questionnaire is completed, it is captured onto the database by the research coordinator, currently Elona Steinfeld, and her assistant, Shirley Hatzkilson, who check all information, and make sure all data is correctly referenced.

Finally, Rose and I write the overview of each town, from the database, and these form the contents of the book. The wonderful old

photographs which are introduced alongside the text are carefully captioned with names and dates.

Two of the committee members, Joy Kropman and Yvonne Jawitz, organised publicity and fundraising functions for the project. The first was the Jewish Hoteliers Exhibition, held in Johannesburg in 1998, and again in Cape Town, under the convenorship of Phyllis Jowell, at the Albrow Centre in 2000. This was followed, in 2002, with "What was Was", an exhibition of old photographs shown at a dinner held at the Sandton synagogue hall, with speakers hilariously recalling bygone days and which concluded with an auction.

Geoff Sifrin was the main speaker at an evening held by the Friends for farmers of the 'Tel Aviv Strip'. Members of the audience entertained the full hall with their reminiscences. Another get-together took place in 2007 for Free State Jews (with Bernard Lurie bringing along his branding iron with which he branded his cattle with a Magen David!). The event was so successful that it was repeated a month later.

Throughout this project, the Friends have fundraised from individuals and trusts which recognised the importance of preserving this history for posterity. Initially, when staff had to be hired and rent paid, David Susman came to our rescue. To keep the project running, other sponsors had to be found. After two years, the sponsors wanted to see something concrete for their support. The aim of the project had been to provide the South African community and the Beth Hatefutsoth Museum with a database of research, and now the sponsors asked for a book to be published!

The team could not afford a publisher, so had to become self-publishers! That, of course, meant finding an editor, typesetter, designer, indexer and printer. Happily Vol 1, complete with interesting photographs, was a great success. This first volume has been sold out and reprinted three times!

Now that one book had been published, there would have to be a series of books. This meant raising a significant amount of funds. To date we have published five volumes, two of which have been sponsored - Vol IV on Natal by the Victor Daitz Foundation and Volume V on the Free State, by the Goldstuck family in memory of the late Oscar Goldstuck. This was greatly appreciated and of tremendous assistance to the project.

Contributors who have helped keep the project afloat include: the Norwich Charitable Trust, Kirsh Foundation, Berdun Charitable Trust, George Elkin Charity Trust, Graham and Rhona Beck Foundation, Cecil Jowell Family Trust, Kollenberg Family Trust, Harold and Beatrice Kramer Foundation,

Rabb Charitable Trust, Samson Foundation, Susman Charitable Trust and Tolman Trust. There are also numerous individual donors whose regular support is very important to us.

The project to date covers 1550 small towns and villages, with the occasional new place still being added. It was not always easy to tell the exact number of Jews living in the country towns at any one time. For example, a survey done in 1943 by the so-called Matzo Board counted how much matzah was needed per town for Pesach, but unfortunately, did not take into account how many were residents and who were family and friends coming to the Seder from other towns! We also use the official census figures, but with names and borders being changed constantly, it is difficult to get a precise number of Jews in these towns.

Certain themes run through most of the towns. However isolated they were, the early Jewish settlers supported the Zionist cause as individuals, long before there were Zionist societies in their localities. This trend has been passed down through generations, as South African Jews are known for their strong Zionism. As soon as there were sufficient men in a country town to form a *minyan*, services were held in private homes. In the smaller communities, in the evenings, the men played klabberjas while the women played penny rummy. In a larger town, if they were lucky, there might have been a bioscope, or films shown in the hotel dining room. The SAJBD Country Communities Department organised Family Days when families met for the day in a nearby town. Eventually, communities grew and formed congregations and some even built synagogues. In smaller communities, Jews went to the nearest town which had these facilities, and possibly a cemetery.



Young Israel Society, Robertson, 1923-5

The SAJBD has concerned itself with the country communities since 1939, when two country community organisers, Messrs Overdoff and Dwolatsky, were appointed to attend to the needs of the country Jews. Then rabbis, such as Rabbi AH Lapin, later of Yeoville Synagogue, and Rabbi Abt, Cultural

Officer of the SAJBD, toured the country. In 1951, the SAJBD employed a Country Community Rabbi, Rabbi Dr J Newman, who travelled round the country, visiting the isolated communities and bringing to them kosher products, companionship and news of the outside Jewish world. This service is still in operation today, with Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft travelling to all parts of the country and even further into Africa. Rabbi Silberhaft has been of immense assistance to the Friends, updating us on the state of the communities where there are still Jews and on the condition of the cemeteries where there are no longer communities. The SAJBD Country Communities Department also instituted the Mother-Teachers scheme, sending educational material to families where there was no one in the town to provide Jewish education.

The most important outcome of this research



Calitzdorp, Southern Cape: Mayor Ian Maltz and Sylvia Maltz at a mayoral reception, 1958.



Joseph Levy, Mayor of Aliwal North 1889, and Acting Mayor, 1899-1902

was the extensive contribution made by Jews to the development of South Africa in all spheres of life. Starting out as *smouse*, most eventually became general dealers. They had the reputation of being helpful to their customers when times were hard, allowing them to buy on credit until they were able to pay. There is a touching story of one of these customers arriving ten years later to pay all his debts to the shopkeeper.

As the towns grew, many Jews became town councillors, mayors or active on the Chamber of Commerce. There were also professionals such as doctors, lawyers and accountants, to name but a few. It appears that wherever there was a country hotel, it was almost invariably owned by a Jew at some time or other.

Many country Jews excelled in their fields, and greatly influenced the growth and development of the country. Often the early traders and/or their offspring became captains of industry and commerce. Among them were Samuel Marks and Isaac Lewis, who started farming in Pienaarsrivier, and who with Alois Hugo Nellmapius, a Hungarian Jewish immigrant living in Irene Gauteng, established the first real industries in the Transvaal. Mining magnates included Samuel Marks, Alfred Beit, Isaac Lewis and Barney Barnato, all of whom made their mark on the history of the Barberton community.

In the early 1840s, Adolph Mosenthal was in partnership with his brother, Joseph, in Graaff-Reinet and Port Elizabeth. The Mosenthal brothers owned a network of stores in the Eastern Cape and promoted the merino wool and angora mohair industries in the Graaff-Reinet area, strengthening the Cape stock. They went on to become parliamentarians, bankers and traders.

Another pioneer was Jonas Bergtheil, the first Jew in Pietermaritzburg (1843). Amongst other things, he brought out 190 settlers from Germany to start a cotton plantation in what are now New Germany and Westville. Although the cotton plantation failed, New Germany today has one of the country's largest concentrations of textile industries and has been called the 'Manchester of South Africa'.

The following, in alphabetical order, are some other Jews from the country areas who achieved noteworthy success:

Gustave Ackerman, born in Riversdale in 1894, founded Ackerman's Stores. His son, Raymond, was the pioneer of hypermarkets and is today a household name in this country.

Dr Henry Bernstein, from Bronkhorstspuit, was appointed Medical Officer of Health in Vereeniging in 1952. In 1955, he established a Tuberculosis Hospital

in Sharpeville, renamed the Henry Bernstein Chest Hospital the following year.

Robert Brozin, who grew up in Middelburg, Transvaal, founded Nandos Chickenland (Pty) Ltd. By the 21st Century, Nandos was operating in 23 countries around the world.

Dr Hymie Ebedes was born in Ermelo in 1936. In 1978 he lived in Stellenbosch, where he was instrumental in developing tranquilisers to assist translocation of wild animals in order to reduce stress and mortality. He was the Chief Vet at the Pretoria Zoo in the 1980s, when he became involved in obtaining giraffe and rhino for the Biblical Zoo in Jerusalem.

In 1950, **Philip Frame** established a cotton mill in Pinetown. By 1999, Frame Spinning Mills was the largest yarn spinning operation in South Africa.

Legendary cricketer **Norman Gordon** (1911-2014) was born in Boksburg. He was educated at Jeppe High School in Johannesburg, where he developed a passion for cricket. He started playing cricket for Transvaal in 1934 and represented South Africa in five test matches against England in 1938-9. In the famous 'Timeless Test' match in March 1939, he bowled 92.9 eight ball overs, still considered a record. Until the age of 97, he was a keen golfer, scoring a hole in one at the age of 87 (when he was made an honorary member of the Houghton Golf Club). Gordon was possibly the first Jewish cricketer to speak openly about his Jewish faith, despite the possibility of being subjected to antisemitic jibes.

Sidney and Emily Kark were doctors in Pietermaritzburg. In 1982, Sidney was awarded an honorary D Sc (Med) by the University of Witwatersrand, the citation for which stated that he had "established the Pholela Health Centre, which was a trailblazing institution of its kind" and that, supported by his wife, Dr Emily Kark, he had "laid the foundations of social medicine in this continent". The health centre was west of Pietermaritzburg.

Meyer Kahn, 'the boykie from Brits', was named as one of the top five businessmen in the country in 1983. He was managing director of OK Bazaars before joining South African Breweries in 1988. The following year, the University of Pretoria honoured him as Professor Extraordinaire and in 1990 awarded him an Honorary Doctorate of Commerce. Also in 1990, he was named Businessman of the Year, and in 1992, he received an award for Business Excellence from the University of the Witwatersrand. In 1997, he was appointed chief executive of the South African Police Force for a period of two years, and in 1999 he was runner-up in the Lexus Lifetime Achiever Award.

Betty Pack, one of four musically talented

daughters of Marcus and Jesse Pack of Middlefontein in the Bushveld, was a well-known cellist. She devoted herself to chamber music. In 1952, her Youth South African Chamber Orchestra made its debut, touring schools and inspiring pupils.

Professor Philip Tobias, who grew up in Westville, Natal, was Professor of Anatomy and Human Biology at the University of the Witwatersrand. He was best known, however, in the field of human evolution and the fossilised ancestry of humanity. He was awarded the Walter Sisulu Special Contribution Award from the City of Johannesburg and nominated three times for the Nobel Prize.



Professor Phillip Tobias

In 1933, **Fred Smollan** from Uitenhage was selected to play for the Springbok rugby side against the touring Australians. He was one of a number of Jewish Springbok rugby players from the small towns. Another Jewish rugby Springbok was **Morris Zimmerman**, considered the greatest rugby wing of his day. Born and educated in Jansenville, he played for Western Province in 1929 and for the Springboks during the 1931-1932 rugby tour to the UK. After 1934, he played for the Transvaal provincial side. Following a serious illness, he could only play club rugby and eventually went into coaching. He was a member of the SA Rugby Selection Committee. A lawyer by profession, Morris specialised in labour law, working closely with Solly Sachs and the Garment Workers Union and constantly coming up against the Nationalist government during the 1950s. After his retirement in 1979, he joined the Legal Resources Centre (LRC), a fledgling organisation that provided free legal aid to those who could not afford it. At the LRC he concentrated on consumer law. After his death in 1992, the LRC established a law scholarship at Wits in his honour.

There were many innovative and successful Jewish farmers. In 1927, it was recorded that the Jewish Highveld farming in the Transvaal stretched east from Springs to Bethal for

about 82 miles. It was known as the Tel Aviv Strip. There were approximately 116 Jewish farmers in the area by 1948. Most of the Jewish-owned farms were started from scratch, usually without any capital or knowledge of farming. Jewish farmers nevertheless revolutionised agricultural practice on the Highveld and in the Free State.

Ezrael Lazarus, of Bombardie farm between Ogies and Leslie, became the 'Maize and Potato King' of the Transvaal, and was growing the largest amount of mealies in the world by the time of his death in 1946. Jacob Lurie of Tweespruit, the 'Potato King', became the one of the largest potato growers in the world. Captain Bernard Podlashuk, owner of the Bellingham Wine Estate in Franschoek, Cape, was the only South African to be awarded the title of Chevalier de Confrerie de Tastevin (1966). Commercial and industrial magnate IW Schlesinger owned three farms at Letaba, near Tzaneen. At one point he had the second largest citrus estate in the world.

Although relations between Jews and non-Jews in the country communities were generally cordial, there were outbreaks of antisemitism, especially in the 1930s and 1940s. The Grey Shirts held meetings in the towns and spread anti-Jewish propaganda through the distribution of pamphlets and the like. The SAJBD sent representatives, as well as Morris Alexander KC, MP, to conduct 'goodwill visits' in many areas to counter this propaganda and other incidents of antisemitism.

On the other hand, among many such examples, in 1960, the Vereeniging Branch of the SA Women's Agricultural Union

(SAWAU - *SA Vroue Federasie*) held a special function devoted to the land of Israel, its people and customs. Information for the event was provided by the Israeli Consulate, the Women's Zionist Council and the SAZF. Farmers and their wives as well as Jewish residents attended the event. According to the *Zionist Record* of 6 May 1960 "Relationships at these events were said to be 'not only cordial', but even described as 'brotherly'".

At their peak, there were around 220 congregations, and 130 synagogues, in 1550 small towns around South Africa. These communities have mostly disappeared. Jews moved to the large centres for a variety of reasons -- to give their children Jewish schooling and a larger circle of Jewish friends, to have a more complete Jewish life, or for economic reasons. Small towns have become big towns and the simple life enjoyed by many has largely disappeared.

The responses to the books produced thus far by the SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth have been gratifying. In conclusion, here are some comments from our readers:

- 'The evolution of the immense Jewish contribution to South Africa constitutes a huge part of the history of our relatively young nation. These books are valuable pieces of Africana that document the progress of a country from rural backwater to modern day industrial powerhouse. The photographs in particular are of important historical interest, especially those of buildings still recognisable throughout the land'.
- 'In our opinion, *Jewish Life in the South African Country Communities* is a must-have for every South African Jewish family and even more so for those who have emigrated in more recent years. It is also of considerable interest to all South Africans with an interest in history and how it relates to their own personal stories. This is a missing piece of their story, and a truly marvellous one, at that. *Jewish Life in the South African Country Communities* is beautifully laid out with a particularly rich assemblage of photographs, both historical and of a more recent vintage'.
- 'The book evoked great pride of where and what I came from, but simultaneously and sadly, nagging nostalgia and resignation for what once was. It is beautifully compiled and thoroughly researched'

For further information on this project, please view our website www.jewishcountrylife.co.za



Kroonstad synagogue, Free State

THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES OF LIMPOPO/NORTHERN TRANSVAAL

*

Charlotte Wiener

The northern part of South Africa was the last area of the country to be explored and occupied by Europeans. It was an untamed area, with wide open spaces teeming with animals. The first Trekkers¹ who moved northwards wanted to escape the influence of the British in the Cape. These pioneers, led by Louis Trichardt, were independent, strong-willed and ready for adventure. They settled in the Zoutpansberg, near present-day Louis Trichardt/Makhado, in 1836, before moving on eastwards. In 1848 Andries Hendrik Potgieter, who did not want to be shackled by the authority of A W J Pretorius in Potchefstroom, arrived in the area. This spirit of independence and dismissal of centralised authority continued for many generations. Because of the long distances to the main towns and the neglect of these far-flung areas by the central authorities, these pioneers made their own rules. A similar spirit of independence was exhibited by the Jewish communities that established themselves in many remote country towns, far from the influence of the mainstream community leadership in Johannesburg.

The area changed its name several times in the course of history. The British recognized the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* [ZAR] in 1852. After the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, this area, including the Northern Transvaal, was incorporated into the British Empire as the Transvaal Colony. In 1910, the Transvaal was incorporated into the Union of South Africa. After the first multiracial elections in 1994, the Transvaal was restructured and the Northern Transvaal became known as the Northern Province. Its name was again changed, on 12 February 2002, to Limpopo Province.

Pietersburg is situated 275 kilometers north of Pretoria on the Great North Road to Zimbabwe. It was established on the farm Opzadel [Sterkloop] in 1884 by the Vice-President of the Transvaal Republic,

Kommandant-Generaal Pieter Jacobus Joubert and was named after him. The town was officially proclaimed on 31 July 1886. Pietersburg was renamed Polokwane in 2002 and it is the capital of Limpopo Province. The old names of the towns will be used in this study.

According to Elazar and Medding's 'Centre and Periphery Model',² the South African Jewish community is an example of structured power, whereby the central institutions formulate policy. This model of authoritative power works well in the country's relatively homogenous Jewish community. Other models include the American 'pluralistic' diffusion of power, where there is no one source for decisions affecting the whole community, and the 'separatist' fragmentation of Argentinian Jewry.³

Pietersburg/Polokwane looked to Johannesburg for guidance in its Jewish needs. In the same way Pietersburg became the centre in the Northern Transvaal/Limpopo for the surrounding satellite towns of Louis Trichardt/Makhado, Messina/Musina, Potgietersrus/Mokopane and Tzaneen, as well as the smaller communities of Soekmekaar, Haenertsberg, Duiwelskloof, Gravelotte, Phalaborwa, Nylstroom/Modimolle and Naboomspruit/Mookgophong, Settlers, Roedtan and Marble Hall. However, because Pietersburg was so far in distance from the authoritative Jewish institutions in Johannesburg, the community often felt neglected, as they believed that they received no assistance when they had problems obtaining ministers and teachers and also that speakers from the different societies only visited when they collected money. The Pietersburg community therefore tended to act on its own initiative and did not always conform to what the central authority told them to do.

The first gold rush in the Transvaal began in 1871, when gold was discovered at Eersteling near Marabastad, a few kilometers from present-day Pietersburg. The first Jews to come to the northern Transvaal were mostly prospectors, originally from England, Germany and Holland. Marabastad ceased to exist in 1887 as it was too far from the claim sites. Instead, the diggers moved south-east to Smitsdorp, but as this place did not have enough water, they again moved two

Charlotte Wiener has a BSc (Pharm) from Rhodes and a MA degree in Judaica from UNISA. She is the author of *The History of the Pietersburg/Polokwane Jewish community* (2006). Her latest book *Jewish Country Communities of Limpopo/northern Transvaal* will be out shortly. She now lives in Netanya, Israel.

kilometers away to New Smitsdorp.⁴ In 1888 Senator Munnik, the mining Commissioner in New Smitsdorp, moved the whole town to Pietersburg. Gold was also discovered around 1887 near Haenertsberg, Agatha and Leydsdorp. When these goldfields failed to produce good yields, many Jews turned to trading and farming in remote areas. Eventually, small Jewish communities were built up around these trading stores.

Jews started arriving from Eastern Europe, mainly Lithuania and Latvia, after 1882. They left Europe because of persecution, overpopulation and poor economic conditions and were attracted by the economic opportunities and freedom from oppression in South Africa. Many could not find work in Johannesburg and decided to move north to establish trading stores and hotels in remote areas, despite the hardships they were to experience there. They had to travel by horse or wagon or later by Zeederberg stagecoach on poor roads, which became muddy and treacherous in the rainy season. They also had to brave the dangers of wild animals, restless black tribes, heat and diseases such as malaria and black water fever. Most traders learned to speak Afrikaans from the farmers, as well as an African language from the blacks who frequented their stores.

Jews integrated so well that many fought on the side of the Boers during the Anglo-Boer War, fought between the British Empire and the Boer Republics of the Transvaal and Free State. The mining houses also had grievances against President Kruger's government, such as the dynamite monopoly, the railways, food supply and the pass laws. President Kruger feared losing his independence if he succumbed to their demands. At the outbreak of war, those who were British citizens fled to the Cape or further afield. However, most of the Jews in the northern Transvaal remained neutral as they had not been living in the country for long and did not want to take sides. Nevertheless, they continued trading and some of their stores were looted by the Boers. The British instituted their 'scorched earth' policy to remove the Boer's source of supplies. Several Jewish families living in remote areas were put into concentration camps, such as the Hirschmanns in an internment camp in Houtbosdorp and the Kallmeyers in a camp in Pietersburg and their houses were confiscated. The Kallmeyers managed to be transferred to a house in Pietersburg due to the overcrowding in the camp. Several Jewish men fought heroically for the Boers,⁵ such as Commandant N D Kaplan, Sascha Schmahmann of Slypsteendrift and Joel Charles Duveen. Sascha was nicknamed 'Jan Snyman die Jood', as the Boers could not pronounce his name and also to distinguish

him from another man called Jan Snyman. Duveen was a dare-devil, who saved many of his fellow soldiers on several occasions.

After the war, many of the Jewish storekeepers claimed compensation from the British government for goods looted from their stores. However, they were generally not compensated as they had no proof of Russian citizenship, most of them having left Russia illegally. The British also claimed that they had carried on trading with the Boers during the war and had served in the Town Guard. The Germans were also not compensated as they had been in the country for too long and no longer had claim to German nationality.

There were Jews living in many of the small towns even before these towns were declared municipalities. Naboomspruit was first called Kaufmann's Place after a Mr Kaufmann, who owned a shop and an inn with a stable that was used by the Zeederburg Mail Coach. Philip Cohen opened a general dealer store, together with the first hotel, in Naboomspruit in 1910. One year later, Barney Reichman opened a store across the road from Cohen. One of the oldest pioneers of Potgietersrus was Leib Levin Schmahman, who came to South Africa in 1895. He and his wife Minna opened a shop at Slypsteendrif, west of Ellisras [Lephalele] on the Botswana border. They had 11 children. Mr F D Cohen was one of the account holders in the first three months of the existence of Barclays Bank in Potgietersrus in 1904. He farmed near Potgietersrus and was a produce dealer. He married a non-Jewess from St Helena, and was nicknamed 'Schwarze Cohen' by the community, as his wife was a coloured woman.⁶ Salli Kahn was a prospector who came from Germany to Haenertsburg in 1890. Julius Heimann was already in Haenertsberg by 1888, where he owned several properties. He was also a diamond miner. He died in the veld of a fever, alone except for a servant who returned to Sarah Norden, his widow, saying 'Massa dead, I bury'.⁷ Many prospectors were buried where they died and no record of their burial exists.

Jews worked hard to establish themselves in trading stores and hotels until they earned enough money to bring out members of their families. Several large families lived in the northern Transvaal as a result of this immigration. The three largest families came from Latvia. Herman Hirschmann came out from Talsen in Courland, Latvia, receiving his naturalization papers on 12 August 1895.⁸ He established himself in Woodbush, near Haenertsburg, where he owned a farm and a store. He brought out his brothers and sisters and their families to the area. These included the Kallmeyer, Palte, Rakusin, Levy and Perlmann families. Max and Wolf Israelsohn

came from Talsen in 1888 to Woodbush and then bought a farm at Turfloop, site of the present-day University of the North. They brought out a very large extended family, which spread to several hamlets, such as Groot-Spelonken and Soekmekaar. The family included members of the Eichholz, Brenner, Miller, Levy and Ellison families. Although several of the Hirschmann and Israelsohn families married people from the Northern Transvaal, including their own cousins or uncles, there was no intermarriage between the two families, except when the two daughters of Rev Levine each married a Rakusin and an Eichholz, thus joining the families.

Another large family in the northern Transvaal was that of the Himmelhochs, who immigrated from Goldinger, Courland, to Louis Trichardt before the 1890s. The Himmelhochs also intermarried with many families in the area. They were related to the Schmahmann and Serman families. The result of these three large families marrying partners that were also living in the northern Transvaal meant that just about everyone in the area was related to each other.

A large number of Jews were farmers who opened stores on their farms. Some divided their farms into plots to establish new towns. The Pulerewitz family divided their farm and sold off the plots to establish the town of Roedtan. Charles Whyte founded the hamlet of Settlers on his farm. Meyer Kahan came from Belarus in 1901. He had his farm surveyed by his friend Herman Manaschewitz (who also surveyed parts of Pietersburg and Tzaneen), and established the town of Soekmekaar. He named the streets after his family – Pearl for his wife, and Feigele, Adelaide and Maxim for his children. There was even a Restoration Street, named for the hope of the restoration of the Jews to the land of Israel. The Kahan family later made *aliyah*, where Max Kahan became Police Commander of the northern district of Israel.⁹

The earliest Jewish settlers of Pietersburg included William ‘Patsy’ Cohen, who first settled in nearby Smitsdorp. He came via Ireland, hence the name Patsy. He then moved to Mara, near Louis Trichardt, where he bartered his farm from a black chief.¹⁰ In 1921, he laid the foundation stone of Pietersburg’s first synagogue. In 1888 Barney Herman, from Weksne, Russia, came to New Smitsdorp as a prospector. He moved to Pietersburg, where he became mayor, president for 34 years of the Pietersburg Hebrew Congregation and chairman of almost every society in the town.

Max [Marcus] Rosenberg was an Austrian-born Jew, who had a general dealer’s store in Pietersburg from 1893. The first *minyan* in the northern Transvaal – the *Rosh Hashanah* [New Year] service – took place in 1893 at his home, with Rosenberg officiating.¹¹ At first, they could only assemble nine men and were about to abandon their attempt at a service, when the local blacksmith, who was not known to be Jewish, arrived with a *machzor* to make up the tenth member of the *minyan*.

A Jewish deputation, led by Patsy Cohen and Barnard Herman, came to President Kruger, when he visited Pietersburg in 1896 to ask him for a plot of land for a Jewish cemetery.¹² The *Landdrost* [magistrate], Senator Munnik,¹³ reported that Kruger asked, “Why can’t you lie among the rest of my people when you are dead?” Patsy replied that certain ceremonies had to be performed at a building at the gate. The President then asked Munnik how big the Christian cemetery was and he answered four morgen. The President said, “Instruct Surveyor Devenish to measure off two morgen for them, and send up the diagram and I will issue title.” When Patsy asked why they were getting a cemetery half the size of the Christian one, Kruger replied: “Because you believe in half the Bible.” After much protestation by Cohen, Kruger gave in and allocated



Pietersburg Market Square 1890s [courtesy: Zoutpansberg Review]

four morgen because ‘I acknowledge that you Jews are good and law-abiding citizens wherever you fix your abode, so I will give you four morgen also’.

The Zoutpansberg Hebrew Congregation was established in 1897. It consisted of both the Pietersburg and Louis Trichardt congregations until Pietersburg broke away in 1912, calling itself the Pietersburg Hebrew Congregation (PHC). The Potgietersrus Hebrew Congregation was established in 1927 and the Messina Hebrew Congregation only in 1937. The PHC constitution was adopted on 22 November 1925. Pietersburg and Louis Trichardt were the only two communities to build synagogues. The foundation stone of the first Pietersburg synagogue was laid on 19 June 1921 at 23 Jorissen Street; the building was completed in October 1921. However, the congregation grew so rapidly that another larger synagogue was built. It was opened on 12 July 1953. The original synagogue was turned into a communal hall, named after Rev J I Levine.



Pietersburg synagogue, opened 12 July 1953
[courtesy: Pietersburg collection]

In 1933 Aron Berman, who lived in Louis Trichardt, ceded land in his will to the Zoutpansberg Hebrew Congregation and in 1938 a synagogue was built there on the corner of Krogh and Devenish Streets. While ground was allocated to the Potgietersrus and Messina communities by their municipalities, the number of congregants were never enough to warrant the building of synagogues. Potgietersrus eventually returned their allocated ground to the town council in 1977, as they could no longer afford the high assessment rates and the Klaff family sold the ground in Messina, giving the money to various charities. The Brenner family sold the Louis Trichardt shul and donated the money to charity.

Following his first pastoral tour of the Jewish communities of the British Overseas Dominions from Pretoria to Rhodesia in 1922, Chief Rabbi Dr J H Hertz reported that he had “found Jewish hearts throbbing with



Louis Trichardt synagogue [courtesy Rabbi M Silberhaft]

enthusiasm for all forms of Jewish endeavor, and nowhere more so than in many a wayside station with its two or three inhabitants”.¹⁴ Nevertheless, many of the traders found that they had to keep their shops open on Saturdays to make a living. They also found it hard to keep kosher as they were far away from sources of these foods. According to Jocelyn Hellig,¹⁵ the level of religious affiliation of the Jews of South Africa is ‘non-observant Orthodox’, meaning that they were affiliated to Orthodox synagogues but did not necessarily follow the requirements of Orthodoxy. This was true of the Jews of Pietersburg and its surrounds, as almost every Jew was a member of the synagogue, but only a small number attended synagogue regularly or kept kosher. The synagogue became the center of their communal identification.

Services in the country towns were held in a hall or private houses. Sometimes, services on Friday nights alternated between Potgietersrus and various small towns. High Holy Days were celebrated by importing family members or *yeshiva* [Talmudic college] boys to make up a *minyan*. All the children attended some form of Hebrew class in the afternoon, be it from a Hebrew teacher, a visiting Rabbi or by mothers using the SA Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Mother-Teacher scheme.¹⁶ Eventually, children from the small towns were sent to school in Pietersburg or Johannesburg to get a Jewish education.

No *mikveh* (ritual bath) was ever built in the Northern Transvaal; the idea was investigated by the PHC committee, but proved to be too expensive. The ministers’ wives had to travel to Pretoria or Johannesburg once a month. In the event of a *bris*, a *mohel* (person who performs circumcisions) was brought from Johannesburg. Kosher meat was obtained from a *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) in Pietersburg or came by rail from Johannesburg. Every community had a Zionist society and a large percentage of northern Transvaal Jews made *aliyah*. The SAJBD encouraged the formation of regional

committees, with Pietersburg as the centre, in order to strengthen ties between the Jewish communities as well as the SAJBD. Regional conferences were held, as well as family days, with communities coming from all over the northern Transvaal.

The Pietersburg congregation employed ministers from 1914 until 1992. The smaller towns only had one or two ministers for a short while. The minister had to be a jack-of-all-trades – he had to conduct services and give sermons, perform at funerals and weddings, teach Hebrew classes to the children and be a *shochet*. He also had to travel to the surrounding towns to teach the children. Most ministers did not stay very long, as they were either found to be unsuitable or they used Pietersburg as a stepping stone to better-paid jobs elsewhere. One such example was when a PHC member brought a complaint to the committee against Rev M M Levy in 1928.¹⁷ It was alleged that Rev Levy had overheard a conversation at a *Shabbat* night service between two members of the congregation regarding certain mining ventures. One of the latter alleged that Rev Levy went behind their backs and obtained the mineral option for himself on the *Shabbat* afternoon, leaving them out of the deal. In his defense, Rev Levy said that he had done the deal on a Sunday and that he intended including the others in it. He was asked to resign.

Chief Rabbi C K Harris described an ideal Rabbi as a “dynamic preacher... conscientious teacher... congregational manager... energetic youth leader... regular visitor of the aged and infirm at home and at hospital... tactful communal diplomat... skilled marriage and bereavement counselor. He must show approachability, educate his congregation, care and inspire”.¹⁸ Pietersburg was very fortunate to employ such a minister in Rev J I Levine from 1931 to 1963. Dearly loved by his congregants, he was the epitome of a community minister. Rev Levine encouraged his congregation and pupils to follow Jewish law, despite their resistance, and was involved in Zionist youth activities. He was so well regarded by the general community that out of concern for his health as he grew older, the town council installed better lighting and a bench between the synagogue and his home for him to rest on when he walked on *Shabbat*. He not only ministered to his own congregation but also instituted a regional ministry in the surrounding Northern Transvaal towns, with Pietersburg at its centre. This so impressed Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz that he instituted the same idea in Potchefstroom and Windhoek, South West Africa.¹⁹

After Rev Levine retired, Pietersburg had great difficulty in employing any minister for

more than three years, as the congregation had monetary problems and ministers did not want to work in a remote area with few Jewish facilities or observant Jews. The community eventually imported several ministers from Israel in the 1960s and 1970s but there were numerous problems, mostly monetary. The country community Rabbis tried their best to find a solution for the problem of finding ministers and teachers but were sorely tried in this endeavor.

Jews began moving away from isolated areas into Pietersburg because of the growth of the co-operatives, who gave clients a longer time to pay so that the small shopkeeper could not compete. Due to improved roads and transport, customers could reach the towns much quicker and there was no longer a need for isolated shops and hotels. They also wanted a better education for their children, which they could get in the smaller towns. Most Jews who moved from the smaller centres to Pietersburg participated fully in the Jewish community, becoming members of all the Jewish organisations. They were amongst the founders of the PHC, and included Patsy Cohen, S Frenkel, M Rosenberg, B Herman, Joseph Kallmeyer, Herman Hirschmann, Max and Wolf Israelsohn, Jacob Hirschmann, Adolph Israelsohn and Herman Eichholz.

Jewish cemeteries existed in Pietersburg, Potgietersrus, Louis Trichardt and Messina. The Pietersburg *Chevrah Kadisha* (burial society) travelled to the outlying areas to prepare the bodies for burial. Wally Levy was its chairman for forty years. He and the treasurer, Morris Wiener, would visit the cemetery every Sunday morning to see that everything was kept to their satisfaction and would pay for its upkeep out of their own pockets. Wally was always at odds with the PHC committee as they would not allow him any independence. They interfered with his charges for funerals and when the *Chevrah Kadisha* eventually had a surplus of money, they appropriated it for the congregation. In 2002, the gravestones in the Pietersburg, Messina and Warmbaths cemeteries were laid flat to prevent vandalism.

The Pietersburg *Chevrah Kadisha* was a voluntary organization that did not charge when it was called to work in towns outside Pietersburg. On 18 January 1968, Wally Levy and Harold Levin travelled to Messina to conduct the burial of Raphael Berman.²⁰ However, they found that they were unable to bury him in the old Jewish cemetery as they had hit bedrock and were unable to dig a grave. As there was no consecrated ground in the new cemetery, they decided to consecrate the ground themselves. Being far away from any *halachic* (Jewish legal) authority and uncertain of the accepted ritual,

they made up their own ceremony. Harold recited a short prayer he composed himself: "In the name of G-d I hereby consecrate this piece of ground as a final resting place for departed souls, Amen." Wally then walked around the grave seven times. After that the deceased was buried. The minister from Pietersburg came at a later date to consecrate the ground in the correct manner.

In 1956 Hubert Esakow, a renowned boxer from Potgietersrus who wore a *Magen David* on his trunks, was killed in the ring, aged 21, by Willy Toweel. Hubert's father, a Jew, had married a non-Jewess, meaning that Hubert was not *halachically* Jewish and could not be buried in Potgietersrus' Jewish cemetery. However, the Christian community took it for granted that the burial would take place there. Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz was approached for his advice and gave permission for Hubert to be buried in the Jewish cemetery. Wally Levy recalls that Rev Levine performed a token *bris* on the body before the burial, which is not *halachically* accepted.²¹

For many years, women were not allowed to vote on the PHC committee. Attempts were made every Annual General Meeting, starting in 1921, to change this, but success was only finally achieved in 1948. In the same year, Mrs Palte formed the Pietersburg Jewish Women's Guild. As well as catering to the Judaic needs of the congregation, they raised money for the new synagogue. The society was always struggling financially and had to rely on the congregation to assist them, but in later years they made a large profit by catering functions in the communal hall. In the early days, *kashrut* standards were not high, but with each new minister, improved catering facilities and better transport from Johannesburg, standards rose to a high level.

Northern Transvaal Jews were strong supporters of Zionist causes, especially as most inhabitants had come from a Lithuanian/Latvian background, where Zionism was strongly supported. The Pietersburg-Zoutpansberg Zionist Society was established as early as 1905.²² In contrast to the Women's Guild, women were already elected onto the committee from 1914. The Pietersburg and District Women's Zionist League was formed in 1932, after many arguments with the original committee. They organized numerous functions and fundraising drives, which enabled them to reach their annual quota almost every year. The Northern Transvaal was known as one of the largest donors per capita to Zionist causes in South Africa. Several young men volunteered to fight in Israel's wars.

Pietersburg was mostly a center for right-wing politics. It had a strong *Afrikaanse Weerstand Beweging* (AWB) following and it was not unusual to see men walking down

the main street in their AWB uniforms. Despite this, there were not many antisemitic incidents, aside from some discrimination in business dealings or a shout of "*Vang die Jood*" (Catch the Jew) at rugby matches. There was a sharp rise in antisemitism during the Second World War years, especially in Tzaneen, where a large number of Germans had settled. Pietersburg Jewry mostly supported the United and Progressive Parties, although there were a few who supported the Nationalist Party. In Nylstroom, Dr Bernard Morris was deputy mayor as well as leader of the United Party. Nylstroom was a National Party hub, breeding such leaders as J G Strydom, F H Odendaal and J de Klerk, father of South African President and Nobel Peace Prize winner F W de Klerk.

Arthur Goldreich, who grew up in Pietersburg, became a front man for the communist underground movement during the Apartheid years. His parents supported Zionism and Arthur served as a volunteer in Israel's War of Independence. It was in Israel that he learned how people were prepared to fight for their freedom and independence.²³ This influenced him to support armed resistance in South Africa. In 1963, he was arrested, together with other leaders of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (armed wing of the by then banned African National Congress) at Liliesleaf Farm, the group's secret headquarters in Rivonia, Johannesburg. Together with Harold Wolpe and two other prisoners, he escaped from Marshall Square Police Station in Johannesburg and fled to Swaziland. Wolpe had relatives, the Fainbergs, in Pietersburg and their house was watched for some time by the police in case he sought refuge with them. Goldreich settled in Israel and Wolpe in England.

The PHC always had financial problems and had to approach individual members to contribute to its upkeep. From a high of 120 families in the 1950s, the congregation had decreased to 24 families by 1990 due to the general movement towards the cities for better educational and social opportunities. The last minister left in 1992 and the community had to forge on without any steadying hand. With the congregation continuing to decrease, it was decided in 1994 to sell the communal hall to the Moolman Group, which then built a smaller communal hall attached to the back of the synagogue. This hall was named after Wally Levy, who had led the *Chevrah Kadisha* for many years. As there were five *Sifrei Torah* (Scrolls of the Law) in Pietersburg, it was decided to donate two of them to the *Shiftei Yisrael* Synagogue in Ra'anana, Israel. A *Hachnasat Torah* ceremony (ceremony to welcome a new *Sefer Torah* to a synagogue) was held in Ra'anana and

attended by about thirty ex-Pietersburgers living in Israel.

As the country communities continued to disappear, the SAJBD became concerned that any synagogue property would accrue to the State if there were no Jewish members left in the town. They therefore suggested that the remaining members of the community sign consent for a Trusteeship Constitution, whereby the SAJBD would administer a trust for the community when it was no longer able to administer its own affairs. At a special general meeting held on 6 November 1997, the 28 PHC members present unanimously voted in favour of the new constitution. It made provision for the demise of the congregation and the conditions for forming and administering the Pietersburg Trust.

Although the congregation was now financially secure, the dwindling numbers did not warrant the hiring of a minister, which meant that there was no steadying force or arbitrator in the community. The country communities Rabbi assisted whenever needed for a ceremony or festival. Due to the small number of members, high officials tended to stay in office for many years on all the committees, leading to stagnation and dissention. Several points of contention that could not easily be resolved led to a split in the congregation. Dissention arose when the community wanted to use congregational money to fund trips to Israel by members. Other problems arose when non-Jews started attending services, leading to a member complaining and refusing to come to services. This led to there being no *minyan* on a *Shabbat*. Some of the members supported the non-Jews as they were their friends. As there was no religious leader, it was difficult to come to a compromise, so member turned to the *Beth Din* for a ruling. After some time, the non-Jews were asked to stop coming every week but the matter only added to the split in the community.

The congregation continued to decrease until only nine men were left for services. The treasurer brought a proposal to the PHC committee to sell the synagogue building to the Moolman Group, who had first option, and then to ship the contents of the synagogue and the memorial stones to Tel Mond in Israel, where they would be incorporated into a new synagogue that was to be built there. A memorial wall to the PHC would be incorporated into the entrance of the synagogue in order to perpetuate the memory of the community. A special general meeting of the congregation was called in February 2002, when some members raised an objection to selling the synagogue. Another special general meeting was held in March 2002, but no other viable proposal had been found.

The matter became heated as a few members did not want to face the fact that the time had come for change. Tempers were raised, which led to the treasurer being assaulted by one of the dissenters and pandemonium resulted. In the end, the treasurer's proposal was accepted unanimously.

The consequences of this evening was that the treasurer sued the member for assault. The matter was settled out of court with a large settlement that the treasurer donated to charity. Another consequence was that the chairman of the congregation and his wife, the secretary, resigned from the committee and the small congregation split in two. Friday nights, saw two services being held – one in the synagogue and one in a private house – neither having a *minyan*.

A de-consecration service for the Pietersburg synagogue was held on Friday night, 31 January 2003, with Country Communities Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft officiating. Many ex-members of the congregation travelled from Johannesburg to attend. The minute books and marriage register were taken by Rabbi Silberhaft for the SAJBD archives and the contents of the communal hall kitchen donated to the Selwyn Segal hostel.

The Pietersburg Trust, as laid out by the constitution, was brought into being to secure the assets of the community. A Board of Trustees was formed consisting of two members from Pietersburg and two from the SAJBD. Stipulations were made as to the distribution of the interest on the money. Ex-members of the congregation were to be looked after, as well as the cemetery and specific Jewish charities.

In 2013, the *Mevaseret Zion* Synagogue was opened in Tel Mond. It contained the seats, *bimah* and pulpit from the Pietersburg synagogue. A wall in the entrance features the foundation stones and plaques from the Pietersburg building, as well as a timeline of the history of the Pietersburg congregation. In 2015, the *Mevaseret Zion* congregation had enough money to replace the uncomfortable seats with exact replicas, although sumptuously padded. The old seats were donated to the Kaplan Yeshiva in Safed, where they were enthusiastically received.

The Jewish community in the Northern Transvaal survived for over a hundred years before disappearing. Today, its memory is perpetuated in Israel, in history books, the cemeteries and in the hearts of all those who lived there.

NOTES

- 1 Dutch-speaking sheep and cattle farmers who moved into the interior of the Cape from the end of the 17th Century.

- 2 Elazar, D J, and Medding, P, *Jewish communities in frontier societies: Argentina, Australia, and South Africa*. Holmes and Meier: New York, 1983, p191.
- 3 Wiener, Charlotte, *The History of the Pietersburg [Polokwane] Jewish Community*, University of South Africa, 2006, p7.
- 4 Changuion, Louis. *Pietersburg: Die eerste eeu 1886-1986*, V & R Printers Pty Ltd: Pretoria, 1986, p35.
- 5 Wiener, C, *op cit*, p50.
- 6 Interview with Estelle Joffe in Israel, 2001.
- 7 Interview with Hazel Dakers, Julius Heimann's great-granddaughter, 2002 in Pietersburg.
- 8 South African National Archives Reference R6457/95
- 9 Interview with Maxie Kahan in Haifa, Israel, 2002.
- 10 Interview with Patsy Cohen's niece Hannah Levy, 2003.
- 11 Herrman, Louis, *A History of the Jews in South Africa from the earliest times to 1895*, South African Edition, SA Jewish Board of Deputies, 1935, p272.
- 12 Wiener, C, *op cit*, p119.
- 13 Munnik, the Hon G G, *Munnik: Memoirs of Senator The Hon G G Munnik*, Cape Town, 1916.
- 14 SA Jewish Board of Deputies paper read before the Jewish Historical Society of England 13 June 1922 and appeared in Volume X of the Society's transactions.
- 15 Hellig, J, 'Religious Expression', in *South African Jewry: A contemporary survey*, edited by M Arkin: Oxford University Press: Cape Town, 1984, pp 95-116.
- 16 A home study course in 'Judaism for country children', material compiled for Jewish mothers to teach their children in rural communities. It consisted of gramophone records, books and work books. SAJBD Archives: country communities Rabbi's reports: Letter from Rabbi E J Dushinsky, country communities Rabbi to rural communities, 17/1/1966.
- 17 PHC committee minutes, 11/7/1928.
- 18 Harris, C K, 'Leaves from a Rabbi's Diary: The Ideal Rabbi' in *Jewish Tradition* Vol. 40 No 1 April 1995, p27.
- 19 Rabinowitz, L I, 'The Problem of the Country Communities' in *SA Jewish Times* Rosh Hashanah, September 1947, p6.
- 20 Interviews with Wally Levy and Harold Levin.
- 21 Wiener, C, *op cit*, p122.
- 22 *South African Jewish Year Book 1929*, 5689-90, M De Saxe (ed), SA Jewish Historical Society: Johannesburg, 1929, p281; SAJBD Archives file S, p352.
- 23 Interview with Arthur Goldreich in Israel, 26/6/2001.



ORT's history is a 136-year journey, focused on improving peoples' lives through education around the world. ORT began in Russia in 1880 to help impoverished Jews to acquire skills that would enable them to become self-sufficient. During the course of this remarkable voyage spanning revolutions and wars, ORT has endured and grown through its ability to adapt to change.

ORT South Africa was inaugurated in 1936. Many illustrious members of the Jewish community were involved in the continued growth of ORT in South Africa over the following 80 years.

ORT SA's mission changed in 1994, when attention was focused inwards on the needs of the larger community in the country.

The ORT-Step Institute was formed with the help of World ORT in partnership with the new South African government to teach technology to teachers. Since then ORT SA has grown into the formidable organization it is today, with 40 staff members and a brand new Academy at its premises in Houghton. ORT SA has trained thousands of teachers and 80 000 pupils in mathematics and science. Computer training and entrepreneurial skills has reached thousands of South Africans across the country through ORT SA's programmes in disadvantaged communities in order to help make them self-sufficient.

Since the establishment of ORT JET 1000 Jewish businesses have benefited from the programmes and it continues its-ground-breaking mentor model in Cape Town (through ORT SA Cape) and now in Durban. Over the last five years, the ORT SA Trust has supported hundreds of students in tertiary institutions.

The new ORT SA Academy is testimony to the continuing growth and development of ORT in South Africa. The Academy will include the teaching of 21st Century Skills such as Coding, Robotics and other subjects for future careers.

Jewish Life

in the South African Country Communities

**Do you know where the first members of your family in
South Africa came from?**

**Do you know why and how they came to this country and
how they made a living?**

If they settled in a country town or village

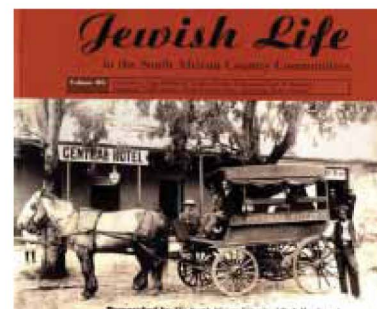
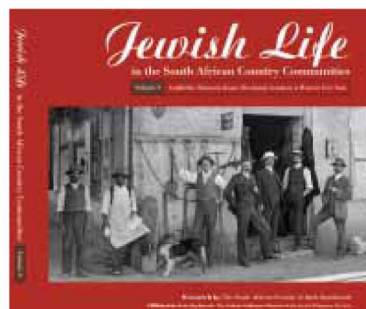
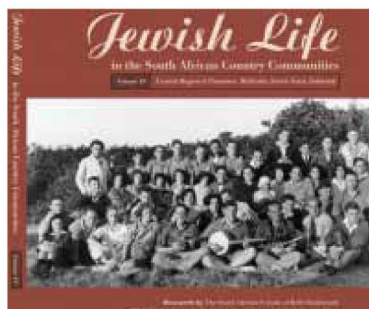
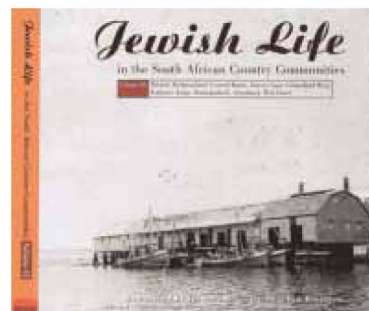
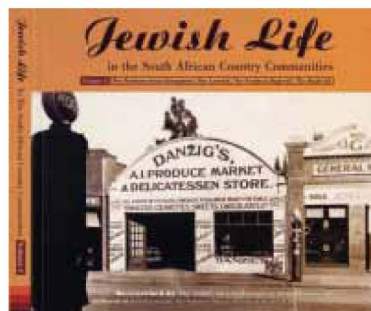
South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth will have all the answers.

For the past 24 years this organisation has researched and recorded over 1550 places where Jews settled in South Africa, dating back to the 1800s.

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Books have been published on five regions of the country, with two still in progress.

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SAJBD



Country Communities Department

African Jewish Congress

NO JEW FORGOTTEN

For over seven decades, the Country Communities Department of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies has helped Jews in the smaller rural towns of South Africa to remain connected to their Jewish heritage, regardless of numbers or distance.

The Department is headed by a Country Communities Rabbi, whose duties include:

- Travelling to all parts of South Africa to meet with community members still living in the rural areas, providing them with spiritual guidance and support.
- Recording and preserving the history of Jewish country communities that have since closed their doors and arranging for their assets to be appropriately safeguarded.
- Overseeing the maintenance of over 20 000 Jewish graves in over 220 country Jewish cemeteries.
- Conducting life-cycle events such as Bar/Batmitzvahs, weddings, funerals and unveilings.
- Arranges for volunteers to officiate at High Holydays services in various centres around the country.

The SAJBD Country Communities Department joins in celebrating 175 years of Jewish communal life, of which it is proud to have been an integral part.

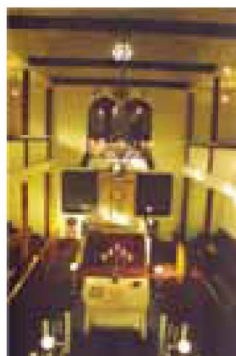
WORLD JEWRY'S BRIDGE TO AFRICA

Established in 1994, the African Jewish Congress provides a forum for Jewish communities throughout Sub-Saharan Africa to build bridges with and assist each other in the maintenance of Jewish life in the region.

Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, Spiritual Leader and CEO of the AJC, travels to affiliated countries, officiating at religious services and life-cycle events and overseeing the maintenance of Jewish cemeteries. Together with local Jewish representatives, he meets regularly with the senior leadership of the various affiliate countries.

The AJC is affiliated to the World Jewish Congress. Affiliates include Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The AJC is grateful to the Jewish community of South Africa for its invaluable assistance in promoting Jewish life in Southern Africa and extends its warmest congratulations on the occasion of its 175th birthday.



Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft
"THE TRAVELLING RABBI"

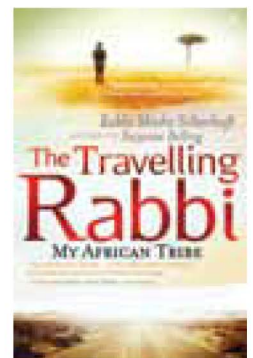
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Tel: +27 11 645 2523

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Afrika Tikkun empowers communities to develop new generations of productive citizens using our unique 360° cradle to career model.



Afrika Tikkun
Developing Young People
from Cradle to Career

We achieve this through purpose built 'Centres of Excellence' within the townships, providing holistic development services targeted at young people from cradle to career.

The accomplishments of Afrika Tikkun from early on, were of great inspiration. Mandela described it as a "miracle" in Mandela's words: "Tikkun demonstrates in a practical and sustainable manner what can be done with limited resources, great commitment and passion. It is my belief that Tikkun represents the best of what civil society can offer in partnership with Government's considerable efforts." The company continues to be inspired and influenced by the founders of the organization - the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, the late Bertie Lubner (of blessed memory), Herby Rosenberg, Ann Harris and Arnold Forman, and at the helm is one of Bertie's sons Marc Lubner | CEO of Afrika Tikkun. With the passing of Bertie, Afrika Tikkun has recently appointed Arnold Basserabie as its new Chairman.



Lubners philosophy on life was:

"What can I do to make a real difference?" but the second part of that thinking was: "Nobody can make a success of life without the help of others. You measure true success in two ways - in your own life, yourself and your family and when you add value to the lives of others."

At the core of Afrika Tikkun's philosophy and value system is the principal of Tikkun Olam & Ubuntu. Tikkun Olam embodies the spirit of philanthropy. Increasing the well-being of humankind is one of the key elements of repairing the world. Helping those who are in need, no matter in what capacity, is crucial and "holy" work and applies to working in all communities, not just Jewish communities.

Humanity's responsibility to change, improve, and fix its earthly surroundings is powerful. It implies that each person has a hand in working towards the betterment of his or her own existence as well as the lives of future generations.

Afrika Tikkun believes that South Africa is a work in progress. We strive to work with previously disadvantaged people of all ages to overcome poverty and move beyond the inequality created by decades of injustice.

Over the last 22 years, Afrika Tikkun has been taking action by building development programs to enable disadvantaged young people to realise their potential. We are dedicated to supporting our youth at each stage of their development, from cradle to career. Through our proven and unique cradle to career model, we support children from infancy into adulthood and employment to ensure that they become the next generation of productive South African citizens. In 2015 we reached over 17 000 beneficiaries and their families.

THE RABBINATE AND SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS, 1898 TO THE PRESENT

*

Naomi Musiker

At the close of the 19th Century, the leading Jewish congregations in Johannesburg were the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation (WOHC), the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation and the Johannesburg Orthodox Hebrew Congregation. The first two were established by English and German Jewish pioneers, and the latter by East European immigrants, mainly from Lithuania.

The WOHC felt the need to appoint a minister who 'should belong to a higher class, socially and intellectually, than those previously holding the position' and advertised in two journals, the *American Hebrew* (edited by Philip Cowen) and the *Jewish Chronicle* (London). It was believed that a minister with American experience would be better able to cope with pioneer conditions in Johannesburg. Cowen encouraged the young Rev Dr Joseph Herman Hertz to apply for the position. Hertz was a graduate of New York City College, Columbia University and the Jewish Theological College, founded by Sabato Morais. His first ministry was to the congregation at Syracuse, N.Y. The American Committee which sponsored Hertz's nomination included Dr H Pereira Mendes of Shearith Israel, Dr Kaufman Kohler and Philip Cohen.¹

Hertz was inducted as Minister of the WOHC in September 1898, a very critical time, following the Jameson Raid of 1896 into the Transvaal Republic. There was a great deal of anti-British sentiment and the *Volksraad* was fearful of granting civic liberties to the 'Uitlanders' (foreigners). Civic disabilities included exclusion of Catholics and Jews from state positions and the *Volksraad* and the withholding of educational subsidies from non-Afrikaner Protestant schools.

On 16 November, at the celebration of the WOHC's tenth anniversary, Hertz delivered a

passionate address in the Freemason's Hall entitled 'The Jew as Patriot - A Plea for the Removal of the Civil Disabilities of the Jews in the Transvaal'. He followed this up with an unsuccessful interview with President Kruger. His final recourse was to liaise with the Catholic community at a mass meeting organised by the Uitlander Committee, held at the Wanderers on 26 July 1899. Here he proposed the resolution: 'That the removal of each and every disability on account of religious belief is a necessary reform, essential to the liberties of a free people'.

A decade later, he wrote an explanation of his participation in that historic meeting: 'I did so because I should have failed in my duty as Jew and American, proved myself a traitor to the ideals of my revered teachers Sabato Morais - leader of orthodoxy, saint and fearless anti-slavery war preacher - and Marcus Jastrow - Talmudist, scholar and champion of Polish independence - if I had refused this opportunity effectively to plead for religious equality. And I did speak at that meeting as I have never spoken before and never expect to speak again.'²

As a result of his actions, Hertz was expelled from the Transvaal; he only returned to Johannesburg in 1901, shortly before the end of the Anglo-Boer War. He was highly regarded by the British High Commissioner Lord Alfred Milner, who appointed him a member of his Consultative Committee.

Following the war, there were many difficulties regarding immigration and naturalisation of Jews from Eastern Europe, and the resettlement of refugees who had fled the Transvaal in 1899. Together with Max Langermann, Hertz was the prime initiator of the Jewish Board of Deputies for the Transvaal and Natal, established in April 1903. The first public meeting of the Board was held at the Wanderers on 28 July 1903, and was addressed by Milner. Hertz served as the first honorary secretary of the Board. He stated that its objectives were 'to furnish the Governments in these Colonies with an official medium for authoritative information on all specifically Jewish matters. And as ignorance is always the mother of prejudice where the Jew is concerned, this Board proposes to itself the task of enlightening public opinion whenever any Jewish question

Naomi Musiker, a veteran contributor to Jewish Affairs and long-serving member of its Editorial Board, has contributed numerous biographical articles for the Dictionary of SA Biography and the Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa and, as an indexer, has worked for some of South Africa's leading publishers and indexed many important reference works. She has held the position of archivist at the SA Jewish Board of Deputies since 1992.

is beset with misunderstandings.’³

Hertz was equally devoted to the Zionist cause and served as vice-president of the SA Zionist Federation (SAZF) from 1899 to 1904. At the first conference of the SAZF in July 1904, he read a paper on ‘The Jew in South Africa’, much of which was incorporated into a later article on ‘South Africa’, in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*. From 1906-8, he served as professor of Philosophy at the Transvaal University College. In 1911, Hertz returned to New York to head up the Orach Chayim Congregation. Two years later, he succeeded Dr Hermann Adler as Chief Rabbi of the British Empire.

On 16 September 1903, Rabbi Dr Judah Leo Landau took up his appointment as minister of the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation (JHC). Born in Galicia in 1866, Landau received his rabbinic diploma at the Rabbinical Seminary in Vienna and a Doctorate in Philosophy at the University of Vienna. Before coming to South Africa, he spent two years as rabbi of an eastern Jewish Orthodox congregation in Manchester. In 1915, the WOHC and JHC merged to form the United Hebrew Congregation, with Landau as ‘Ecclesiastical Head and Chief Rabbi of the Amalgamated Congregation for life’.

In 1919, Landau was appointed, ex-officio, as a member of the SAJBD Executive Council, and later a vice-president. His relations with the Board were generally co-operative and even cordial. However, there were occasional disagreements with regard to the Board’s authority to act in certain matters which Landau felt belonged to the domain of the religious authorities. These included his wish to have a council of representatives of important congregations to discuss Jewish religious matters outside the proper sphere of the Board, such as *shechita* and proselytism. With the emergence of new Johannesburg synagogues in Yeoville, Bertrams, Jeppe, Mayfair and Berea between 1925 and 1927, he became further convinced of the need to set up such a co-ordinating body. In consultation with SAJBD President Bernard Alexander, a Conference of Presidents of Synagogues was held on 17 August 1924. A Provisional Federation of Synagogues Council was formed and problems concerning the Beth Din discussed. Siegfried Raphaely was elected President and delegates from the Chevra Kadisha, Berea Synagogue, Orthodox Congregation and Jeppetown Congregation were appointed to the executive committee. In 1932, the Federation was reconstituted and expanded to include the whole of the Transvaal. Rabbi Landau was appointed as its Chief Rabbi while Rabbi Isaac Kossowsky, head of the Orthodox Congregation, took up the position of Rosh Beth Din.

Landau admired Britain as ‘a firm rock of liberalism’, but considered that the English-speaking Jewries lack the fervent loyalty of the Eastern European communities and the cultural accomplishments of German-speaking Jewries. He greatly feared the forces of assimilation, and desired to acquaint his congregation with the treasures of the Jewish past and beauties of traditional Jewish life. Landau engaged in many literary and cultural activities, in promoting Jewish education, the Hebrew language and the cause of Zionism. One of his chief ambitions was the establishment of educational institutions, particularly Jewish boarding schools.

The SAJBD was primarily concerned with issues concerning immigration legislation, the naturalisation of immigrants and antisemitic and discriminatory incidents, mainly directed against East European immigrants. It widened the scope of its political activities to include the promotion of Hebrew education. In 1904, a deputation from the Board met with the head of the Government Education Board in connection with the provision of Hebrew education to children attending government schools. Together with the SAZF, the Board sponsored the South African Hebrew Education Conference in Bloemfontein in 1928, which resulted in the formation of the South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE). SAJBD President Siegfried Raphaely had been actively involved in the formation of the United Hebrew Schools of Johannesburg in February the previous year. The Board also attended to matters of secular education in Government schools, including the attendance of Jewish children during instruction lessons and prayers. At the 1938 SABJE conference, attended by delegates from the SAJBD, SAZF, SABJE and Rabbi Kossowsky and his Orthodox colleagues, Rabbi JL Zlotnick was appointed as Director of the Board of Jewish Education of South Africa.

Landau entertained great hopes in Britain as the promoter of the Zionist cause, but was later to change his mind regarding the British administration of Palestine, expressing disappointment in Chaim Weizmann and in the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel. The rise to power of Hitler in Germany in February 1933 and the insidious antisemitic campaigns of the various ‘Shirt’ movements in South Africa had a profound effect on SA Jewry. The Board organised a protest meeting in the Johannesburg City Hall on 8 May 1933, which was attended by church dignitaries, principals of universities and members of parliament. Rabbi Landau delivered a powerful oration at the gathering, which resulted in a resolution joining the citizens of Johannesburg in the world wide expression of sympathy for German Jewry.

The main line of Board policy was to urge the Government for legislation outlawing hate speech against any specific group or section of the population. In 1936, when the Government initiated new legislation to limit the entry of German-Jewish refugees, Landau took part in protest deputations and in efforts to rally public opinion. He was in favour of a nation-wide petition but the Board opposed this, preferring 'an approach by influential gentiles' to the Government 'in an informal way'.

Landau supported the Board in founding, in conjunction with the Witwatersrand Church Council and various ministers of religion, the Goodwill Movement and the Society of Jews and Christians to combat antisemitism, as well as the Board's role in the appointment of Jewish Chaplains to the South African armed forces.

On 29 December 1942 the Board, in conjunction with the SAZF and the rabbinate, proclaimed a Day of Mourning for the victims of the Holocaust. Public meetings attended by prominent citizens and clergy of every denomination were held in all the large urban centres of South Africa and also in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. This commemoration became an annual event under the auspices of the Board, held at West Park Cemetery.

Landau's successor in March 1945, Rabbi Dr Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, was educated at the University of London and the Yeshiva Etz Chaim. From 1932 to 1939 he served as Minister at the Cricklewood Synagogue, London and during the Second World War

was principal chaplain to the British Eighth Army. His appointment was largely due to the recommendation of Chief Rabbi Hertz. Rabbi Rabinowitz was a passionate supporter of the Zionist Revisionist Movement and a stern critic of Britain's actions in Palestine against the Jewish resistance movements, the closing of the Jewish Agency offices and arrest of Jewish leaders. At a mass protest meeting in Johannesburg on 4 July 1946, in the presence of leaders of the SAJBD, SAZF and other dignitaries, Rabbi Rabinowitz denounced the British leadership and tore off his medals. The SAJBD dissociated itself from this extreme reaction. In 1942, it established the SA Jewish War Appeal to provide relief for the survivors of the Nazi Holocaust. This was followed in 1948 by the Israel United Appeal (IUA) established jointly by the Board of Deputies and the Zionist Federation in order to merge overseas fund raising activities. Rabbi Rabinowitz served as vice-president of the IUA and participated in numerous fund-raising campaigns. In October 1949 the SAJBD initiated the United Communal Fund (UCF) for local communal purposes. This too was supported by the Rabbi up to the time of his retirement in 1961. In 1986, the IUA and UCF merged as an independent fund raising organisation.

By the 1960s, the SAJBD had extended its activities beyond the combatting of anti-Jewish prejudice and discrimination and concerned itself with all internal domestic Jewish affairs. These included assistance to the small Jewish platteland communities in religious and educational requirements, publication of *Jewish Affairs*, a monthly journal, cultural and adult education programmes, establishment of a Jewish historical archive and museum, a library of Jewish information and planning of programmes for Jewish youth and university students. Towards the end of his ministry, Rabbi Rabinowitz reviewed the Board of Deputies activities. He acknowledged that, under the Nationalist government there had been a mitigation of antisemitism prevalent in the 1930s. He commended the Board's efforts with regard to its archives, museum and library, which he had occasion to use in his researches for the SA Jewish Sociological and Historical Society. Rabbi Rabinowitz was extremely critical of the Board's caution in not openly declaring a Jewish ethical attitude on the question of race relations and the government's apartheid policy, preferring to leave it to the individual conscience within the constraints of the law. He himself was fearless in denouncing apartheid in various sermons and public pronouncements, being particularly censorious of certain Jewish farmers who profited from the apartheid policy to obtain cheap convict labour.



Rabbi Dr Judah Leo Landau, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg, 1915-1942, and of the Federation of Synagogues of South Africa, 1932-1942.

As regards communal planning, another function of the Board, the Rabbi criticised the failure to establish a Union of Orthodox Synagogues, the short-lived existence of the Regional Community Councils and the abandonment of the plan for an all-embracing Johannesburg Area Committee. The Country Communities project had shown great progress under Rabbi Newman but, in Rabinowitz's opinion, had deteriorated subsequently. He also thought that the cultural and educational programmes, initiated by the General Secretary, Gus Saron, including the People's College, showed great initial promise but were allowed to lapse due to the apathy of the Board's leadership. This was particularly distressing for the Rabbi, who had succeeded Landau as Professor of Hebrew at Wits University. Rabinowitz expressed pessimism about the continued existence of the Hillel Houses at the Universities and the Children's Hostels such as Herber House.

Despite this pessimism, Jewish education had, by 1948, made progress with the opening of the SABJE's Linksfield Hebrew Educational Centre, the forerunner of the King David Schools. The SABJE was hampered by a chronic shortage of funds and became a major beneficiary of the United Communal Fund in the 1970s.

The appointment of Rabbi Dr Bernard Casper as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation in 1963 coincided with the expansion of Hebrew education in South



Rabbi Dr Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, Chief Rabbi of the Federation of Synagogues of South Africa, 1945-1962.

Africa. Rabbi Casper was born in London in 1917 and was a graduate of Jews College and Trinity College, Cambridge. After serving as minister at Higher Broughton, Manchester, he was appointed senior chaplain to the Jewish Brigade from 1941 to 1945. In 1946 he returned to his congregation at Manchester and in 1950 took up work as director of Jewish education. He was ordained as rabbi in Jerusalem in 1948. After serving two years as minister of the Western Synagogue, London, he became Dean of Students at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem from 1956 to 1962. He served the SA Jewish community from 1963 to 1987, initially as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg and subsequently as Chief Rabbi of the Federation of Orthodox Synagogues. In 1986, he became the first Chief Rabbi of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues. Rabbi Casper saw as his duty the promotion of the Jewish life of his community as opposed to political interference and reformation of the societal order as a whole. In 1970, he participated in a peaceful demonstration with Christian clerics against detention without trial. During the state of emergency in South Africa in August 1985, he expressed concern and hoped that it would be a temporary measure. At other times he was careful to avoid government censure. Casper maintained his apolitical attitude despite harsh criticisms from Jewish activists, particularly from a group of Jewish students at the University of Cape Town in October 1972. The Rabbi reminded his accusers of the benefits the Jewish population enjoyed in South Africa 'Would you suggest that the small Jewish minority group of this country, itself largely composed of comparatively recent immigrants, should embark upon a Jewish crusade for the solution of the issues arising from South Africa's demographic composition and political system? As citizens it is your right, and perhaps your duty to be involved in these matters. But you have not the right to speak as though this is the special burden and responsibility of the Jewish community and its leaders.'⁴

In contrast to Rabbi Casper's attitude, a handful of rabbis, both orthodox and reform, condemned apartheid from the pulpit and also took part in public protests. These included Rabbis Abner Weiss and Selwyn Franklin (Durban), David Rosen (Cape Town) and Ben Isaacson (Har El congregation). Rabbi Norman Bernhard of the Oxford Synagogue initiated a more cautious approach to social issues through the Oxford Synagogue Social Action Committee (OSSAC) established in 1980. He also supported the antiapartheid social action group, Jews for Social Justice.

After 1976 the Board, under the leadership

of Advocate D K Mann and A Suzman, gradually moved away from its previous cautious attitude towards the apartheid issue. At its 1985 National Congress, a resolution explicitly rejecting apartheid was adopted. In 1987, during the state of emergency, the Board's Congress took various resolutions condemning apartheid legislation.

Rabbi Casper's relationship with the Reform movement was not cordial. With the mediation of the SAJBD, a 'Concordat' was negotiated in July 1965 between Rabbi Casper and Senior Reform Rabbi AS Super. This clarified the procedures to be followed by respective Orthodox and Progressive Rabbis at West Park Memorial Ceremonies and other public occasions. The agreement was endorsed by the Board of Deputies but much criticised by the SA Union for Progressive Judaism.

Rabbi Casper was intent on promoting Jewish education and religious values in South Africa. Jewish religious leaders expressed great concern regarding the government's policy of promoting Christian National education in public schools attended by many Jewish pupils. In 1973 the Board of Deputies arranged an interview with the Minister of National Education, Senator van der Spuy which resulted in official permission for Jewish pupils to be excluded from Christocentric education classes and receive separate Religious Instruction according to a syllabus specially drawn up by the SABJE. Rabbi Casper insisted on a

more religious form of education in Jewish day schools than that followed by the King David school complex.

The Jewish day schools underwent tremendous expansion throughout the 1970's and 1980's. The SA Board of Jewish Education experienced financial hardships despite subsidies from the United Communal Fund and the IUA. The Board of Deputies' attempts to obtain increased government subsidies faced competition from Catholic and Anglican private schools. The situation was finally resolved by the establishment of a debenture scheme and a Trust Fund initiated by business leaders, Gerald Leissner and Monty Hilkowitz in 1985. Leissner had close connections with the Board of Deputies, serving successively as Chairman and President from 1987 to 1995. Russell Gaddin, SAJBE Chairman from 1987 to 1992, became Chairman of the SAJBD in 1999.

In 1989, the Bernard H Casper Memorial Fund for the advancement of Jewish Education was established in honour of the contribution made Rabbi Casper, who died in Israel in 1988. An educational complex was established on the King David Linksfield Campus.

In 1988, Rabbi Cyril K. Harris of St John's Wood Synagogue was appointed Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation. He was born in Glasgow and educated at the University of London, obtaining his rabbinical diploma from Jews' College. He was a well-known broadcaster with the BBC and served as Jewish Chaplain to the British Forces from 1966 to 1975. At his induction service in 1988 in Johannesburg's Great Synagogue, he outlined his mission as 'the continuity of traditional Judaism as a living force: the preservation of the bonds of the Jewish people with the State of Israel and the practical application of Jewish ethical teachings to the South African scene.' In his New Year message of 1990, he maintained that Judaism utterly rejected the doctrine of racial discrimination and censured the Jewish community for not doing more to help establish a non-racial society. At the SA Jewish Board of Deputies Conference in August 1990, Harris questioned the moral ambivalence of the Jewish community. He quoted Mandela as wanting a non-racial South Africa and urged the Jewish community to contribute to the disadvantaged. As a result of his endeavours the Tikkun Jewish Communal organisation was formed to which he contributed the mission statement of 1996, embodying the upliftment of the disadvantaged towards nation building. He was a founder and co-chairman of Tikkun until his death in 2005. Tikkun was initially housed at the SAJBD offices but subsequently became an independent organisation.



Rabbi Bernard Moses Casper, Chief Rabbi of the Federation of Synagogues of South Africa, 1963-1986, and of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues of SA, 1986-7.

Harris was a key participant in the National Religious Leaders' Forum to promote interfaith relations with Christian, Hindu and Moslem groups. The South African Chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace promoted the Desmond Tutu Peace Lectures from 1885 onwards to which the Rabbi, Franz Auerbach and Jocelyn Hellig contributed. However Archbishop Tutu alienated the Jewish community in 1990 by expressing support for the Palestinian cause in their right to resist Israeli aggression and organise themselves politically. This was the beginning of a deep divide between the Jewish community and Tutu which reached its peak in 2011 when the Archbishop testified at the Russell Tribunal set up to establish the links between apartheid South Africa and events in Palestine.

Rabbi Harris played a leading role in the Jewish contribution to the Constitutional Assembly in October 1996. He was on the panel of religious leaders which helped monitor the 1994 democratic elections and participated in Codesa 1 and 11. He was a member of the Constitutional Committee established by the SAJBD to draw up submissions and proposals on the working draft of the new SA constitution, including measures against racism, freedom of religion, belief and opinion, freedom of expression, state aid to private schools and universal right to welfare and social services. On behalf of the Jewish community he presented a submission to the Faith Hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in November 1997. He apologised to the TRC on behalf of the community, which he said had benefited from apartheid. He endeared himself to President Nelson Mandela and was the speaker at his inauguration on 10 May 1994. In January 1995 Harris gave a moving oration at the state funeral of Joe Slovo a Jewish activist and former National Chairman of the Communist Party who became Minister of Housing in 1994.

The SAJBD set up a Community Outreach Committee in 1991, with the assistance of Dr Franz Auerbach, a member of the National Executive Council, the Gauteng Council and subsequently a staff member. Through this committee, Dr Auerbach hoped to establish joint programmes with the South African Council of Churches and other ministries, Cosatu, National Youth Conference and African National Congress. Membership of the Community Outreach Committee included Jonny Frankel (Tiger Oats), Dr Selma Browde, Colin Coleman, Mrs Anne Harris, Seymour Kopelowitz and Leslie Harris (representing the SAJBD), Adv. David Mann, Jeremy Hayman (SAZF) Miriam Stein (Union of Jewish Women), Brenda Stern (SA Union of

Jewish Students). Ex-officio members were Michael Katz and Gerald Leissner. The Board also established links with Gesher, the Jewish Movement for Social Action which commenced activities in 1996.

Through the Outreach Programmes, the Board hoped also to establish better communication and understanding of the Jewish community and combat racial intolerance and antisemitism.

Mandela and the African National Congress had strong ties with the Palestinian Liberation Congress, formed during the years of exile. This caused considerable anxiety among the Jewish Community. In August 1993, Mandela addressed the opening session of the Board's Congress. He stated that the ANC equally recognised the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism and Zionism. However the Board was concerned about the rise of hostility and defamation among certain sections of the Muslim community which took the form of anti-Israel agitation with overtones of antisemitism. This was particularly prevalent in the Western Cape and on university campuses. Another disturbing factor was the rise in criminal activities which threatened Jewish schools, synagogues and other institutions. From July 1993, the Jewish community operated, in close cooperation with the police, a multifaceted Community Security Organization of young Jewish volunteers trained by a team of professionals.

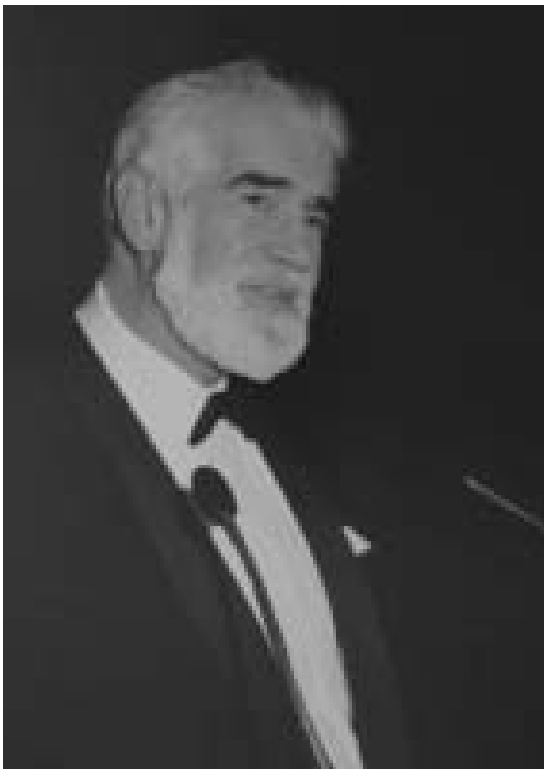
The final years of Rabbi Harris's period of office were permeated by the growth of the anti-Israel movement, mentioned earlier. Ronnie Kasrils, a former anti-apartheid activist and later Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, played a large role in organising the petition 'Not in My Name', a declaration of conscience on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict signed by 'South Africans of Jewish Descent', in November 2001. In addition, at the World Conference on Racism held in Durban in August to September 2001, there were pre-organised anti-Israel manifestations which forced the SAJBD to withdraw from the conference.

The Jewish communal organisational structure of Johannesburg and the country communities had undergone considerable change by the close of the 20th Century. Due to decreased membership through emigration, many of the larger synagogues which formed the original United Hebrew Congregation closed down and were replaced by smaller congregations. Organisations such as the SAZF and SAJBD downsized and came together under the Beyachad umbrella. The Office of the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation and the office of the Johannesburg Beth Din were transferred to the HOD Centre in Orchards and the Wolmarans

Street Synagogue was replaced by the Great Park Synagogue in Glenhove Road, Houghton with its own spiritual leader. Conversely, the number of religious communities, including the Chabad and Ohr Somayach movements, increased despite lower membership numbers. Most country communities became defunct as their membership dwindled.

Chief Rabbi Harris maintained a warm relationship with all religious groups, conducted numerous pastoral visits throughout South Africa and introduced an annual rabbinical conference of all the rabbis of South Africa. A reorganisation of the country communities took place with the establishment in 1994 of the African Jewish Congress. The Country Communities Rabbi appointed by the Board of Deputies became, in addition, head of the African Jewish Congress which included Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zambia.

Chief Rabbi Harris retired in 2004. As a tribute to his great contributions, the Rabbi Cyril Harris Communal Centre was established in the Great Park Synagogue precinct. Largely on his recommendation, he was succeeded by Rabbi Warren Goldstein in 2005. Rabbi Goldstein was the first South African incumbent to hold the position, having received his rabbinic ordination from Rabbi Azriel Chaim Goldstein at the Yeshivah Gedolah of Johannesburg and the Eretz Hemda Institute in Jerusalem.



Rabbi Cyril K Harris, Chief Rabbi of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa, 1988-2004

In addition, he was unique in having legal qualifications, including a PhD in Human Rights and Constitutional Law from Wits University. His doctoral thesis compared Western and Jewish law and was published as a book, 'Defending the Human Spirit: Jewish Law's Vision for a Moral Society'. Rabbi Harris, at his inauguration, proclaimed Goldstein to be a "Master of Torah, a Doctor of Laws and a fierce campaigner on behalf of the vulnerable".

In previous decades the SAJBD, which had a strong legal representation among its leadership, had been the chief communicator with the government of the day. Rabbi Goldstein undertook to engage more personally with the government on public views of the highest interest affecting South Africa and its Jewish community. He was the co-founder and co-chairman of the Community Active Protection organisation, a community based anti-crime initiative, strongly supported by the Board's Community Security Organisation which had been set up in 1995. He contributed regularly to print, radio, television and the electronic media on issues of moral regeneration, crime, education, poverty alleviation and religious values. As a member of the National Religious Leaders Forum, Rabbi Goldstein engaged with other faith communities on such issues.

In order to encourage Talmud learning, the Chief Rabbi established a Beth Midrash learning programme at the King David and Herzlia schools, and promoted the annual Sinai Indaba colloquies, Generation Sinai events and Shabbos Projects, the latter of which gained world-wide acceptance. This was complemented by the Limmud SA programmes.

A serious problem affecting contemporary Jewish communities worldwide was the



Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, Chief Rabbi of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa since 2005.

growth of the anti-Israel movement. This was supported and propagated by pro-Palestinian organisations such as the Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement which gained a vociferous following in South Africa, particularly in the universities. The Board and Chief Rabbi combined efforts in defending Israel in the local and international press, the electronic media, presenting arguments which supported the Israeli side of the argument.

As a contributor to the development of the new South African Constitution from 1997 onwards, the Board continues to make submissions on racist hate speech, including the monitoring of the social media and submits proposals on how the SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) could be made more effective in dealing with this phenomenon.

The Jewish community has undergone a fascinating development from the early pioneer structures of the late nineteenth century to

the early 21st Century, gaining in influence and religious observance despite all obstacles.

NOTES

- 1 Quoted by Gus Saron, Unpublished manuscript, 'Dr Joseph Hertz: His Appointment', SAJBD Archives. Biographical Section 199 HER.
- 2 Dr Joseph Hertz and the Transvaal: A reply to the Hon. J.C Smuts. Letter to the Editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 June 1911.
- 3 Board of Deputies for the Transvaal and Natal: Inaugural Public Meeting at the Wanderers' Rink, Johannesburg, 28 July, 1903. In 1912, a congress was held at Bloemfontein to arrange for the creation of an amalgamated SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD). After the creation of the first Executive Council of the South African Board all Jewish institutions in South Africa were invited to apply for membership. By 1914, there were 51 constituent bodies, represented by sixty deputies.
- 4 *SA Jewish Times*, 3 November 1972.

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JEWISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO LAW IN SOUTH AFRICA

*

Dennis Davis

There is a photograph of Jewish judges of what is now the Gauteng High Court taken in 2000. Nine judges feature, which meant that at that time more than 20% of the judicial complement of the province were Jews.¹ It represents the high point of Jewish involvement in the South African Bench. Since those 'glory days' there has been a distinct decline of Jewish representatives on the Bench so that today there are only four Jewish judges in Gauteng and one on the Supreme Court of Appeal, while I am the only Jewish judge on the Western Cape High Court.

The history of the Jewish contribution to law in South Africa is, however, far more reflective of the 2000 photograph. In a lecture of this nature, it is impossible to detail the contribution of every Jewish judge and lawyer who has practised or taught in this country over the past century. Cognisant of the problem of offending some, I have nonetheless made a selection of particular emphasis on the role of lawyers in the Western Cape.

The injunction *Tzedek, tzedek tirdof* – 'Justice, Justice you should pursue' – in the book of *Devarim* has stimulated a range of different interpretations. Two, I believe partly explain the astounding contribution of Jews to South African law. The first is sourced in the interpretation of Rashi, who amongst other comments, suggests that there are two obligations which flow from the repetition of the word '*Tzedek*', namely that for judges there is an obligation to seek justice and for the population at large there is an obligation to seek out or demand just courts; that is the public should not simply passively accept any judge who is appointed but need to play an active role in ensuring that justice is promoted through the appointment of judges who seek justice. The second interpretation, which is equally important, is that the double use of the word justice was designed to emphasise that not only must we achieve

just ends but we must employ just means to achieve these ends.

In the Western Cape, the first Jewish judge might well have been R P Davis (no relation) who, however, never acknowledged his Judaism. Accordingly, we can claim that the first Jewish judge appointed was Joseph Herstein. Born in Graaff-Reinet in 1897, he obtained his LLB degree at the University of Cape Town, thereafter practising at the Cape Bar where he became a silk in 1939. In late 1947, he was appointed to the Cape Bench and served until early 1963 where, at the age of 65, he retired and settled in Israel. There is more than a justifiable inference that his retirement was due to the fact that when Jackie de Villiers retired as Judge President of the Cape Supreme Court (as it was then known) in 1959 and Andrew Beyers was appointed, albeit that Herstein was the senior judge, he had decided that "enough was enough" and accordingly resigned once he attained 15 years of service. Judge Herstein was a passionate Zionist and after making *aliyah*, he continued to further the cause of Zionism. He became a governor of the Hebrew University, and on being presented with his scroll by that institution, the following was said:

His humanitarianism and sense of fairness have always impelled him to efforts to ensure that educational opportunities are open to every able young person

Joseph Herstein has devoted his life to the cause of justice, the dignity of man, and the needs of the Jewish people with a genuineness and an integrity that lend lustre and dimension to his every endeavour. He is a man of independent mind - innovative and outspoken – a man to respect, to admire, and to follow.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem salutes Joseph Herstein – eminent jurist, lifelong Zionist, and devoted friend - and welcomes him with pride and affection into the Fellowship.

Herstein's other major contribution to the law was the publication of Herstein and Van Winsen, *The Civil Practice of the Supreme Courts* which, in its modern edition, is still widely used.

Dennis Davis is a Judge of the High Court of South Africa and a former Chairman of the SAJBD – Cape Council. This article is adapted from his lecture given in July 2016 as part of the commemorative programme marking the 175th anniversary of the Gardens Synagogue.

The second Jewish judge was H M (Bobby) Bloch who was only a judge between 1958 and his premature death in 1963. A brilliant forensic advocate, there were high expectations for Bloch, but health prevented him from fulfilling his judicial potential. He was also an active member of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the Western Province Zionist Council. Thereafter Phillip Shock, an eccentric but outstanding commercial lawyer, was appointed to the Bench, followed shortly thereafter by Gerald Friedman, of whom more further on. Harold Berman, who was a notoriously nervous advocate and a somewhat more assertive judge, spent ten years on the Bench between 1985 and 1995. Although a great friend of the reactionary Judge President George Munnik, he delivered a number of important and courageous judgments with care and style during the troubled late 1980s. Shortly after Berman, Selwyn Selikowitz was appointed. Possessed of an extraordinarily sharp intellect, he should have ended up on the highest court as the leading commercial judge of his generation. Sadly, he never quite fulfilled his great intellectual talent, and retired upon the age of 65 after twenty years of service.

Selwyn and Gerald were judges when I arrived on the bench, and shortly thereafter we were joined by Gerald Josman, a kind and thoughtful jurist who tragically died in a motor accident. One could say that, given that he was born Jewish, there were four Jewish judges at that time as Edwin King (later to become Judge President) was born a Jew but was by then a bastion of the Anglican Church, his family having long before converted.

Of all of these judges, the most outstanding was unquestionably Gerald Friedman. He was appointed as the Judge President of the Cape in 1992, having already served on the Appellate Division in Bloemfontein. He gave up this elevated position to take over the running of the Cape Supreme Court from the notorious George Munnik. Friedman had already shown great courage and integrity under fire. In 1985, he delivered a minority judgment in *Omar and others v Minister of Law and Order*. The case was decided on the basis of an application which had been brought by a number of detainees including Dullah Omar (later to become the Minister of Justice in the democratic South Africa) for the release of detainees on the basis of an argument that they had a right to make written representations as to why they should not be detained. This meant that they were required to be provided with reasons for their continued detention. The majority judgment was delivered by Judge Vivier in which, naturally, the reactionary Munnik

concurred. Friedman's judgment is one of the great minority judgments delivered in South African legal history. It began from the premise that, unless a person's rights are taken away by express legislation, the liberty of the individual should continue to be the governing legal principle. Accordingly, he held that the principle of *audi alteram partem* (the right of the other side to be heard) implied an obligation on the Minister who had detained Mr Omar to advise him of this reasons for the action so to enable the detainee to defend himself effectively.

Significantly, the judge who became far more famous than Friedman in the eyes of lay people, Richard Goldstone, was confronted with a similar case a few days later in the matter of *Momoniati v Minister of Law and Order and others*. Judge Goldstone found in favour of the continued detention of Mr Momoniati, a judgment standing in sharp contrast to the minority opinion of Gerald.²

As Judge President, Friedman was an extraordinary administrator, careful to balance the needs of litigants with those of his judges and fastidious in the administration of the court. He was also deeply committed to the demographic transformation of the bench. The present Judge President John Hlophe and the future Chief Justice, Sandile Ngcobo, were both appointed to the Cape bench under his Judge Presidency. I was one of the fortunate few to be mentored by him.

On the very first Friday as an acting judge in 1996, Gerald ensured that I sit with him in a matter dealing with a breach of contract. When, after the oral argument, we agreed upon the result, he informed me that I should write the judgment. Two weeks after I delivered him a draft, he gave me the finest lesson that any young judge could receive about how to write a judgment, including for whom the judgment should be written and the manner in which it should be crafted. It is a lesson for which I am enormously indebted to Gerald Friedman, as I was for much guidance that he gave me and other young judges during his term of office.

There are two other judges that require attention, as both came from the Cape. Albie Sachs, who was a member of the Cape Bar before being forced into exile, was appointed to the first Constitutional Court in 1994. It was a controversial appointment because of Sachs' involvement in the ANC's internal enquiry into the death of Thami Zulu, which certainly was not his greatest moment. But in a number of transformative judgments, Sachs vindicated the decision to appoint him to the highest court in the land. To this day many judges, including myself, rely particularly on his decision in *Port Elizabeth Municipality v Various Occupiers* which gave guidance

to all courts as to how to deal with the rights of vulnerable occupiers of land. It is a luminous and eloquent exposition of the law which redounds to the credit of the Constitutional Court.

Leonard Hoffmann, born in Cape Town in 1934, was the son of Barney Hoffmann, a leading attorney and part of the firm of Sonnenberg Hoffmann and Golombik. He was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship, as a result of which he read law at Oxford University. In 1958, he returned to Cape Town and practised at the Cape Bar between 1958 and 1960 before returning to the London Bar. In 1985, he was appointed as a Judge of the High Court of England and Wales in the Chancery Division and later to the House of Lords. He was a dominant intellectual force in the Lords during his tenure. To South African lawyers he is probably best known for the work *South African Law of Evidence*. He wrote the first two editions, and under his formidable pen this book was one of the clearest and most useful legal text books produced in this country.

The Jewish community has also made a major contribution to Cape Bar, from the time of Morris Alexander, who was a founder of the Board of Deputies, a Member of Parliament between 1908 and 1929 and a member of the Cape Bar between 1900 and 1946. Many followed in his footsteps, more recently Sam Aaron SC, an outstanding advocate, Milton Seligson SC, who still practices and who taught me in 1974 at the University of Cape Town. He remains, in my view, the advocate who personifies the very best traditions of the bar. When Seligson appears in front of a judge he informs the Court that there are, for example, 14 cases which are relevant to the dispute required to be decided. He will then inform the Court that of these five cases do not support his argument and then he will take the judge through each of them to show you why they are either not relevant or distinguishable. A judge will search in vain for any other cases which may be relevant to the dispute. He provides, in short, the full conspectus of all the law in a manner which is truly an example to any advocate. Sadly that practice is not followed universally today.

The other figure of a similar generation is Peter Hodes SC. Some might be fooled by his 'Rumpole of the Bailey' manner, but this hides an extraordinary memory and formidable forensic skill. Today, Hodes is the leader of the Cape Bar in terms of seniority. He is also an extraordinary generous and kind human being. Regrettably neither Seligson nor Hodes, although both have acted as judges at the Cape High Court, accepted the invitation to a permanent appointment, where

they would have made a great contribution to our jurisprudence.

Most recently, the Bar has benefitted from Geoff Budlender SC, whose entire career encapsulates the imperative of pursuing justice from the time that he was a junior lawyer at the Legal Resources Centre. Budlender is an outstanding advocate; indeed the finest advocate of the contemporary era never to have been appointed to the Bench. That he applied three times and was refused on each occasion by the Judicial Service Commission reflects appallingly on the process of appointment.

The three advocates on which I wish to concentrate on, however, are Gerald Gordon QC, Harry Snitcher QC, and Dave Meyerowitz SC, all of whom (particularly Gordon and Meyerowitz) I knew. Gerald Gordon was born in 1909. At school his academic excellence secured him the London College of Preceptors prize for the top place in the British Empire in Latin and Greek in 1924. After reading for a law degree at UCT, he read in chambers with Joseph Herbstein in 1931 and then joined the Cape Bar. His career was interrupted by the war, when he served in the Union Defence Force. After being demobilised, he returned to the Cape Bar, taking silk in 1949. Gerald was a committed liberal. He appeared in numerous political cases, including *R v Abdurahman* in 1950 when the latter was charged with inciting persons who were not white to commit the offence of entering the first class railway carriage reserved on routes for whites only. He also defended Neville Alexander and Fikele Bam in an important political case in the early 1960s.

Gerald was chairman of the Cape Bar in 1965 to 1967, 1967 to 1969 and again in 1972. Apart from an active practice he published the first work on insurance the *South African Law of Insurance* in 1936 and, with Arthur Suzman, the *Law of Compulsory Motor Vehicle Insurance in South Africa* in 1954. He retired from legal practice in 1975 but that did not prevent him from continuing to promote democratic values including writing a series of oped pieces which I was fortunate to co-author during the 1980s about the state of repressive law. He was an excellent writer and wrote a series of novels, the last of which, *Four People* (1964), was concerned within the migratory labour system and the Sharpeville and Langa massacres of 1960. When he was asked as how he managed to write novels he said: "I wrote them while my learned friends in trials or opposed motions were trying to reply to my arguments"!

A wonderful feature of Gerald was his great integrity and commitment to principle. In 1958, having already been a silk for some

nine years, the National Party under the Minister of Justice C R Swart was persuaded to appoint him to the Cape Bench. Gerald would have been an excellent judge and was prepared to take the appointment. Shortly after being informed that Swart was inclined to appoint him, he was contacted by Alan Paton to stand in the 1958 election in the Sea Point constituency on behalf of the Liberal Party. He knew that if he stood he would never be appointed as a judge nor was it possible that, in what was still a reactionary constituency, he would win a parliamentary seat for the Liberal Party. Indeed he garnered only 1761 votes, as he often reminded me. But he stood and gave up his opportunity to become a judge. There was no room for expediency in Gerald's world.

Harry Snitcher was born in 1911. After his father died in 1924 his mother, to eke out a living, rented out rooms in the house to boarders. Somehow Harry found his way to SACS, matriculating, at 15 years of age, in 1926. He then graduated with a BA LLB degree in 1931. It was six months before his 21st birthday and he had to wait these six months before being admitted to the Cape Bar. Harry became a leading member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party until 1948. In 1946, along with other members of the Central Committee, he was arrested and charged with sedition. Although the charges were dropped by the National Party government when it came into power in 1948, Harry's career as a member of the Communist Party cost him dear in later life. In 1949 he became a silk.

Harry's career was remarkable. He was the last of the great jury advocates, which was not surprising in that his mentor was the great jury advocate Beauclark Uppington (who referred to him as the 'Snitch'). In Harry's early career, that is, until 1947, he appeared in 22 important Appellate Division appeals, including *R v Blom*, which remains the leading case with regard to the drawing of inferences. After 1947 he was counsel in 227 reported leading cases. He thus had an outstanding career but sadly never became a judge. There is little doubt that it was his political activities which prevented his appointment. Members of the bar approached the government on numerous occasions in order to secure an appointment for this leading advocate of the Cape Bar, but without success.

The third of the advocates to whom I wish to make reference is David Meyerowitz. After completing his law degree at UCT in 1937, he was offered employment at the Patent Office in Pretoria; however, at this stage he was courting his wife Eva, and Pretoria was therefore not an option. He obtained instead a position at the Masters Office in

Cape Town and thus by accident acquired a knowledge of administration of estates which gave rise to the first comprehensive text law on the subject, written by him in 1949. By then, Dave was a member of the Cape Bar. Joining forces with Erwin Spiro and Aubrey Silke, he published the first journal which was devoted to Income Tax, *The Taxpayer*. By 1961 Silke was no longer a member of the editorial board and shortly thereafter Meyerowitz and Spiro brought out an income tax text book, *Meyerowitz and Spiro on Income Tax*.

Dave Meyerowitz was a remarkable man. Not only was he the leading tax advocate at the Bar and not only did he publish a monthly journal *The Taxpayer* (for almost twenty years on his own until I joined him in the mid 1980's) and maintain his two text books but, for a number of years, he was the chair of the Western Provinces Zionist Council. With Gerald Friedman, I regard Dave as my mentor, although he consistently would remind me that I was incorrect about my views on income tax! Perhaps a story which reflects Dave best is the following: One of my colleagues Dennis van Reenen, who holds the same high regard for Dave as I did, related to me how he once had a case to fight in the Appellate Division in Bloemfontein. His opponent was Meyerowitz. At that stage van Reenen, then a junior, had a pupil by the name of Jeremy Gauntlett, now one of the finest silks in the country (and another whom the JSC should have appointed to the Bench). Van Reenen generously paid for Gauntlett to accompany him to the hearing in Bloemfontein. At the airport in Cape Town, he introduced Meyerowitz to his pupil. Meyerowitz took one look at Gauntlett and said to van Reenen, "I am in no need of staff". In many ways this anecdote reflects the character of David Meyerowitz. He was always his own man.

Of the academic community in Cape Town one person stands out, Professor Ben Zion Beinart. Ben Beinart came to the University of Cape Town after the Second World War and remained there until 1973. He was the dominant academic force at the law faculty. He taught Roman Law and Jurisprudence and attained international acclaim, particularly, for his scholarship in the area of Roman Law. During the 1950s, together with Dennis Cowen, he made a major contribution to the legal thinking behind the so called 'coloured vote' cases which sought to keep coloured voters on the common voters role during the turbulent period of the 1950s.

Beinart was a legendary character at UCT. One anecdote from my own personal engagement with him must suffice. It was well known that if one obtained an oral

for Roman Law II, Ben's major course, it was highly unlikely that one would pass. Returning one night from watching cricket at Newlands, after examinations had been completed, my mother informed me that Professor Beinart had phoned. I worked with the clear assumption that this was to inform me that I had an oral. Crestfallen, I realised that my academic career in law had come to an end because I was simply not prepared to repeat the subject. I ignored the call in an exhibition of ridiculous denial. Some hours later Professor Beinart called again. I apologised for not returning his call. He then asked me which school I had attended, to which I replied that I had been educated at Herzlia. He then asked, with a chuckle: had they mixed up my English and Hebrew writing! I was unaware as to what he meant until he informed me that he could not read my paper and I was required to come to his office the next day in order to read it to him and the external examiner.

When I arrived, Ben and Professor Paul van Warmelo, the external, were seated. I had not read through more than two thirds of my first answer when Beinart interrupted me to suggest that my answer was completely incorrect. Professor van Warmelo, by contrast, suggested that I was correct and that there was clear authority for my proposition. The two learned academics then engaged in an argument which must have continued for at least twenty minutes before Beinart turned to van Warmelo and said "its 13h00. I have booked at a very good restaurant". He then said, "I think we have heard enough". Mercifully, it was enough to pass but more so, it reflected Ben's eccentric approach to legal education.

There are too many in Johannesburg lawyers who deserve a mention. As befits the larger Jewish community, there were far many important lawyers in Johannesburg than in Cape Town. I must mention a number of the practitioners, including Oscar Rathouse, Arthur Suzman and Sydney (now Sir Sydney) Kentridge. Probably the finest advocate produced by this country, Kentridge was a man who personified the pursuit of justice in many cases, including his memorable representation of the Biko family in the Biko inquest. Jules Browde, who died recently at the age of 97, was another giant who consistently pursued justice not only at the Bar and through his contribution to Lawyers for Human Rights but by being so exemplary a representative of the best of the Bar traditions. Jules was also prominent in the Habonim movement. Of significance was the career of Karen Blum, who was only the second woman silk at the South African Bar and went on to the Bench.³

There are judges who sat on the Appellate Division who deserve mention. They include Leopold Greenberg, a major force on the liberal Appellate bench during the 1950s, Richard Goldstone, Oscar Galgut and Solly Miller (whose appointment was, again, shamefully held up by the government because his wife was a member of the Black Sash). More recently, Ralph Zulman and Carol Lewis graced this Court.

There were many judges on the then Transvaal Supreme Court, too many to discuss.⁴ Of the attorneys Basil Wunsh, himself among the very best and who was deservedly elevated to the Bench, told me that Natie Werksman and later Michael Katz were beyond peer. In Cape Town we have recently lost three of the best, Cyril Prisman, Mervyn Smith and John Simon, the latter two who were also leaders of the Jewish community.

I conclude with reference to two great lawyers. The first is Isie Maisels, who began practice in 1930. He initially obtained fame when he was briefed as junior to Harry Morris KC in the trial of the notorious Daisy de Melker, whom he once described as "probably the most unattractive woman I have ever seen". Maisels became a Kings counsel in 1948. During the 1950s and 1960s he had an extraordinary career as arguably the foremost advocate in Johannesburg. He was the lead counsel in the Treason Trial, which ran for more than three years. Amongst the accused were Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Ahmed Kathrada. Maisels and his team secured their legal victory. Maisels also appeared for the defence of David Pratt on a charge of attempted assassination of Prime Minister Dr H F Verwoerd.

As a young student, I went every day to hear Maisels defend Ronald Cohen, realising how formidable a cross examiner he was.

In 1961, Maisels accepted an appointment to the Bench in South Rhodesia, where he stayed until 1963. He resigned as a judge because he would have had to enforce draconian legislation, the final piece of which was a provision which provided that if a person was found guilty of throwing a petrol bomb into a household the death penalty was mandatory. For Maisels this was unacceptable, and being a person of unbending integrity, he refused to continue as a judge and returned to the Johannesburg Bar.

Maisels was also a dominant figure on the SA Zionist Federation and Chairman of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, at the same time as he pursued his extensive practice.

The other giant was Arthur Chaskalson, the first President of the Constitutional Court and later Chief Justice. Arthur's political career as an advocate began when he joined the Rivonia Trial defence team. He was

clearly in awe of Bram Fisher, the team's leader. When he became Chief Justice his office was populated by Fisher's desk. In 1979, at the height of his career as a silk, Chaskalson left practice and began the Legal Resources Centre in Johannesburg. Here, he led legal teams in a numbers of important cases, in particular in *Komani N.O. v Bantu Affairs Administration Board* and *Oosrandse Administrasie Raad v Rikhoto*. These two judgments led to the destruction of the influx control laws which had created such havoc amongst black South Africans for decades.

Arthur was an important figure in the drafting of the South African Constitution. It was therefore no surprise when, in 1994, President Mandela appointed him as President of the Constitutional Court. One of his colleagues, Kate O'Regan, encapsulates Arthur when she wrote in tribute:

Most memorable of all was his integrity. Arthur Chaskalson was that rare person whose values were reflected in everything he did. His commitment to using law as a means to achieve justice and a better life for all shone brightly in every sphere of his life. He treated everyone at the court, whether the newest researcher or the most junior administrator, with respect and courtesy. His talent for institution building, honed at the Legal Resources Centre, was employed to its full extent at the Constitutional Court. How fortunate

South Africa was to have him at the helm of the Constitutional Court for its first decade with his unmatched gift for institution building and his profound commitment to constitutional values. Justice Chaskalson's absence is keenly felt, but in mourning his passing, we should remember that ever present are the institutions to which he gave his life: the Legal Resources Centre and the Constitutional Court. Long may they be torchbearers for his values and vision.

Hopefully, this short excursus of the Jewish contribution to law in South Africa has revealed how the concept of 'Justice, Justice you shall Pursue' was understood by many Jewish lawyers, and that future young lawyers will follow in their footsteps.

NOTES

- 1 Ezra Goldstein, Meyer Joffe, Lewis Goldblatt, Max Labe, Basil Wunsh, Phillip Borochowitz, Ivor Schwartzman, Percy Blieden and Carol Lewis
- 2 To be fair, Goldstone did deliver a critical judgment which circumscribed the scope of the pernicious Group Areas Act and did sterling work in visiting detainees in the 1980s.
- 3 I have omitted the outstanding academics at Wits, including Elison Kahn, David Zeffert, Carol Lewis and the brilliant Etienne Murenik, an extraordinary public lawyer
- 4 In Durban Ray Leon, David Friedman, Alan Magid and Philip Levinsohn graced the Bench.

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A GLIMPSE INTO THE ROLE OF JEWISH FARMERS IN THE SA ECONOMY

*

Eli Goldstein

Rather than following the style of a historical treatise, this article aims to briefly show how Jews have contributed to and continue to play a role in agriculture and agribusiness in South Africa. Agribusiness is a term used to refer to the peripheral business around agriculture and farming in terms of the supply of inputs to the agricultural process and the processing, marketing and distribution of products emanating from this enterprise. Besides a host of challenges South Africa faces today, the issue of water and food security is one that requires much focus. Can we as a Jewish community mobilise our resources and contribute toward solving these questions?

To do justice to the Jewish contribution would require the publication of a book. Paucity of time and space precludes me from including in this overview the names of many Jewish contributors to farming in South Africa, but this by no means diminishes their impact. Jewish farmers in South Africa today may be far fewer but they still contribute to a large extent to food supply. As we celebrate this 175th anniversary of SA Jewry, we should focus not only on the past, but on learning through it how can we demonstrate our ability to continue helping to fix our country and, more importantly, using modern media, create an awareness of our role.

The perception sometimes exists that Jews have had little, if any association, with Agriculture in South Africa. Nothing could be further from the truth. From the very outset, Jews have played a pivotal role, often in pioneering ventures but also in making their mark in innovative farming practices that brought about a huge impact on local food production and other agricultural products. Our community may be characterised politically through those of its members who featured

in the anti-Apartheid struggle, but how much does the general populous know about our role in Agriculture?

While Agriculture's percentage of SA's Gross Domestic Product may have fallen in the 21st Century, it still plays a vital role in feeding a continuously growing population. Our links with Israel and its amazing innovations in the field make it incumbent on local Jewry to promote awareness of these practices among South Africa's existing and emerging farmers. Israel's miracle in water management is described by Seth M Siegel in his book *Let There Be Water - Israel's Solution for a Water-Starved World*. While a number of agricultural and water projects exist, facilitated through the Israel Embassy, a lot more can be done.

Early Days

Many of the published works on South African Jewish history tend to focus on a number of Jewish famers who have been pioneers in this area or have earned the title of 'King', such as Mealie King, Potato King, Onion King, etc. Examples include:

The **Mosenthal Family**, whose members were amongst the earliest Jewish pioneers in the agricultural export trade and who, inter alia, imported the first Angora goats from Turkey, resulting in the development of the successful mohair industry in South Africa. Originating from Hesse-Kassel, Germany, the brothers were Joseph (1813–1871), Adolph (1812–1882) and Julius (1819–1880). Mosenthal Brothers, started in Cape Town, flourished under the control of the family into the 20th Century. Operating mainly in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Graaff-Reinet, its activities spread throughout the Cape Colony, and later to the then Transvaal.

Jonas Bergtheil (1819–1902) immigrated to the Cape Colony from Bavaria, Germany, in 1834, moving to Durban in 1843. He formed a company to bring settlers from Europe and started the first cotton growing enterprise in South Africa. The Bergtheil Museum in Westville has exhibits focusing on the first non-Jewish German settlers that Bergtheil

Eli Goldstein has a B.Sc in Agriculture majoring in Animal Science from the University of Pretoria. After farming on his family's farms in Bethal, he joined IBM as a Systems Engineer supporting Agricultural Cooperative customers. In 1991, he left IBM to start his own consulting business in Information and Communications Technology strategy and Customer Relationship and Customer Experience Management.

brought to Natal when he was director of the Natal Cotton Company, showing their contribution to the settlements of Westville, Clermont and New Germany.

There have been a number of attempts to document Jewish life in the local farming scene. South African Yiddish writers have provided a rich tapestry of the lives of Yiddish farmers in the early days and up to about the 1930s. One M Brown, in a paper presented to the Jewish Sociological and Historical Society in November 1948, mentions that out of a then total population of 104 000 farmers, Jews numbered about 800 in 1936 and possibly 1000 in 1948. While less than 1% of the total, their influence was wholly disproportionate, reflecting the common thread of how the extent of Jewish influence in so many walks of life has far exceeded their numbers.

Eric Rosenthal makes mention of the story of Jewish Agriculture in South Africa going back to 1672, when a certain Samuel Jacobson acted as a shepherd, and lists Adam Tas, who carried out small farming operations in the Stellenbosch area. Arthur Markowitz, in the *South African Jewish Year Book* of 1950, produced an overview of Jewish famers in South Africa. In the wine industry, they included Charles Louis Back, who started viticulture in 1902 and whose grandson, Charles Back, still operates the well-known wine and cheese brands of Backsberg and Fairview. Joseph Sarembok pioneered deciduous fruit growing in the district of Ceres. Theo Kirsch is described as the 'Plum King'; in the 1950s, he produced an annual average of 350 tons. Max Rose pioneered the ostrich feather industry in Oudtshoorn, the town dubbed "The Jerusalem of Africa" by Yiddish writers such as Leibl Feldman. Before the collapse of the feather industry in the post-World War I era, many Jews were successful in ostrich farming and in the feather trade. There are still Jews



Ezrael Lazarus Training Farm, Bethal

farming with ostriches in Oudtshoorn today.

Jack Geffen, who farmed in Bot River, was known as the 'Onion King'. Jankel Lurie was heavily involved in potato farming and Ezrael Lazarus made a huge impact on maize farming in the then Eastern Transvaal; he was called a 'National Asset' by Jan Smuts and J H Hofmeyr.

Beef cattle production has featured farmers such as 'Bokkie' Niselow and Morris Hyman and the Kahn brothers, Jack and Julius who, together Jacob Hyman, started Kanhym Estates. Today we have Jacob's son and grandson Solly and Desmond Hyman in S.I.S Estates and other farming enterprises. Ivor Karan is well known for Karan Beef. Today's beef farmers are either in feedlots or in breeding beef cattle. Besides a large component of maize and potato production, Rowan Hirschowitz runs a large beef cattle herd.

Jewish farmers have been and still are involved in potato farming. Examples include Fred Kadish and his nephew, Darryl, in Davel, which is near the once thriving potato production area of Bethal in Mpumalanga. Interesting, it is referred to in Zulu as *Mazambanini* (Place of the Potato).

There were large wheat farms owned by Jews in the Free State. Examples of Jewish dairy farmers include Abe and George Braun, the Brinkmans and the Rubins of Lancewood Cheese in George, Fairview.

In Agribusiness, a number of Jews deserve mention. Probably the first is Sammy Marks, well known for being one of the pioneers of Litvak immigration to South Africa. Besides being a successful industrialist, he had a lasting influence on the milling industry in South Africa. The following is gleaned from the Epol website:

The birth of Epol is considered to be 26 June 1916, when Sammy Marks registered the Vereeniging milling company (VMC) as a subsidiary of Vereeniging estates limited. A year after VMC's registration, Marks, together with Adolf Sacks (a miller from Eastern Europe) built a maize mill in Vereeniging.

It was the first maize mill in South Africa to be equipped with mechanised handling facilities for bulk intake and storage of maize. It was the forerunner of an enterprise which was to develop into one of the foremost animal feed and pet food groups in the country. From maize milling, the company expanded into oil expressing and in the early 1920s, the Vereeniging mill began producing and marketing oil under the now-familiar trade name, Epic Oil.¹

Other Jews in Agribusiness include the Frankel family of Tiger Oats, Leon Medalie of H Lewis and Company and various firms in the marketing of potatoes in Johannesburg, such as the firm Spitz and Mereine.

The *Oostelike Transvaalse Kooperasie* (OTK) was at one stage the country's largest Agribusiness Cooperative. Headquartered in Bethal, it became a listed company called Afgri. Two Jewish farmers, Colman Goldstein and Charlie Schnaid, served on its 1932 board.



The 1932 Afgri Board. Colman Goldstein is front, second from left, and Charlie Schnaid back, third from left (photo from 100 anniversary yearbook of Bethal, 1980)

The question is often asked why many Jews decided to farm. If we accept that the majority of South African Jews came from areas in Lithuania and surrounds, much of the drive to migrate from Eastern Europe was because of poverty and poor living conditions. Pioneers such as Sammy Marks, who had flourished in South Africa, were invoked as examples of the success one could achieve in the "Land of Gold and Sunshine" (as some Yiddish writers termed it).

Many Litvak immigrants arrived with no profession or trade and were often forced to work as 'tryers', a South African Yiddish colloquialism referring to those who tried all sorts of possible activities to try and make a living – 'trying' this or 'trying' that. Many became itinerant peddlers ('smouse'). The practice started in the cities, with *smouse* moving from house to house carrying their wares, sometimes on their backs or on small carts. These *smouse* went on 'toch' (*Tocher*

was a Yiddish transliteration of the Afrikaner word *tog*, meaning to ride or travel) into the country, eventually procuring a horse and cart and supplying Afrikaans farmers with goods. Often, they would be paid in produce, such as milk and eggs. Debts were sometimes paid with cattle, leading to some *smouse* venturing into farming. Some of the travails of the *smouse* can be read in a translation of an interesting Yiddish article by J M Sherman, 'The Thorny Path of Jewish Immigration to South Africa', in the *Rakishek Yizkor* book.²

The story of my own grandfather, Kalmen Meir Goldstein (name changed from Olshvang) is typical of those of many Litvak migrants who turned to farming. Kalmen (Colman) arrived in the Cape from Lithuania via the UK in June 1899. He moved on to Oudtshoorn, where he worked for his uncle, Abraham Goldstein (brother of his father, Leib Itze Olshvang) who farmed with ostriches and had a supply store on the farm Welbedacht, in the district. He also met up with a second cousin, Jusman Feldt, who had been working for Abraham and later left to become a *smous*. On the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War later that year, Colman volunteered to serve with the British forces (the Cape being a British colony). After being de-mobbed in 1902, he operated a horse-drawn cab business in East London for a while before moving, at the end of 1903, to Johannesburg. There, he was involved in a transport business, carrying building materials. Jusman Feldt, for his part, started farming as a manager for Ezrael Lazarus in the Ogies-Kriel district, subsequently becoming a partner of Lazarus and then farming on his own. It appears to me that my grandfather's subsequent move into farming in the Bethal district was sparked by his cousin's example.

NOTES

- 1 http://www.epol.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7&Itemid=2
- 2 <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rokiskis/rok528.html#p530>.



Cattle of Jacob Lurie in Tweespruit, Orange Free State

THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION COMES TO SOUTH AFRICA (Part III)

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Hadassa Ben-Itto

Editor's Note: This is the final instalment of a three-part feature reprinting (with slight editing) Chapter 10, as well as the relevant section of Chapter 12, of Hadassa Ben-Itto's *The Lie That Wouldn't Die: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Vallentine Mitchell – London, 2005). A best-seller on its publication, the book was quickly recognized as being amongst the definitive studies on *The Protocols*. It includes a chapter on the famous Grahamstown libel trial of 1934, where the SA Jewish Board of Deputies lodged a case against prominent members of the SA National Party (Greyshirts) movement after they had forged a document with contents closely based on *The Protocols* and falsely intimated that it was authored by Rev. Abraham Levy of Port Elizabeth. The action was successful, making this one of the first cases where *The Protocols* was debunked in a court of law.

The second section, published in the Pesach 2016 issue of *Jewish Affairs*, dealt with the presentation of the plaintiff's witnesses, including Rev Levy himself and the then World Zionist President Nahum Sokolow, an expert on *The Protocols* who providentially happened to be in the country at the time. This final section features the defendants' arguments and the court's judgment. It concludes with a section from a later chapter in the book relating to the subsequent history of *The Protocols* in South Africa and how, in 1991, it was placed on the list of 'undesirable publications' following an application to the Directorate of Publications by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists (SA Chapter).

The Editor thanks Judge Ben-Itto for allowing *Jewish Affairs* to reprint the relevant sections of her book. *The Lie That Would Not Die: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is available through the publisher (frank.cass@vmbooks.com) from the distributor in the USA (wendy@isbs.com) and at Amazon.

It was time for the defendants to present their witnesses.

From now on he would speak in the name of all three defendants, Von Moltke declared. 'We all realize outside and inside this court', he announced, 'that this case is of a very serious character.' It was not just a defamation case, he said. As the defendants were pleading justification, in order to expose the international Jewish Plot, it was a case unique in the history of the British Empire.

Turning to the judges he declared, "I must say, Your Lordships have been so lenient with us, seeing we are not represented here, and you have given us all the latitude which has been very favorably commented upon by our sympathizers."

This is outrageous, Reynolds thought. This case was not tried in front of the Nazi sympathizers, he whispered to his colleague. Don't be too sure, Stuart whispered back.

Addressing the court Von Moltke announced that they would prove and argue the following points:

1. That the Christian people in South

Africa were a divided people.

2. That the International Jew divided them and will keep them divided as long as he could exploit them.
3. That within a few generations all the Christian people in South Africa will have been forced into an unconditional bondage by the International Jew, if they did not awake.
4. The Christian Church and the Christian Faith was being disgracefully undermined by the immoral code of the Jew.
5. Within the Christian State of South Africa there was a hostile Jewish state. Similar Jewish hostile states existed in all the countries of the world.

Some of the defense witnesses appeared in Grey Shirt uniforms, decorated with swastikas. They had all attended the meetings but the name of the Rabbi was not mentioned; nobody referred to Rabbi Levy.

The defendants' tactic was clear, Reynolds whispered to his colleague. Fearing that they might have to compensate the Rabbi for defamation, they were trying to minimize

the effect of the forged document, at the same time using the court as a public forum for advertising the Jewish International Plot. There was no question now, Reynolds said with satisfaction, that the court would have to rule on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

Reynolds had decided to spare the court and keep his cross-examination to a minimum. It would be futile, he explained to his client, to argue with witnesses whose bias was apparent. What do you ask a witness like Joseph Jacobus Van Heerden, a missionary who preaches to natives, who had assured the court he knew the Bible well and that according to the Bible the Jews were out to dominate all other nations. They crucified Christ, he had declared, "because Christ was against dirty morality, and they could not stand his attitude and preachings against them". Even the judges had looked disgusted, Reynolds reminded the Rabbi; it was much more effective to ignore such testimony completely.

At long last they were done with the witnesses concerning Rabbi Levy. It was now time for the witnesses against the Jewish people.

With a triumphant gesture, Von Moltke invited to the stand and introduced the expert for the defense: Henry Hamilton Beamish. The son of an English Admiral, Beamish had come to Canada at the age of 18 and taken part in the Boer War and World War I. He had also grown tea in Ceylon and worked in the mines in Rhodesia. But his claim to fame lay in his 'expertise' on the 'Jewish question', as Beamish himself boasted to the court.

He was one of the mentors of the Nazis, Beamish declared, had traveled around the world and visited every continent and scores of countries, to promote Nazi propaganda. For thirty years he had been concerned with the 'Jewish Question', and one of his main goals was to combat the Jewish World Dominion. He was one of the leaders of what he called 'The Nazintern', and served as president of numerous national as well as international Nazi organizations. He also headed publishing establishments, such as 'The Britons' in London, and had published important anti-Jewish books, which had been translated into many languages.

Beamish said that he was personally involved in various publications of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*; he knew Victor Marsden, who had translated the *Protocols* into English, as well as Theodor Fritsch in Leipzig. Fritsch was the publisher of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in Germany, the editor of *Hammer Verlag*, the publishing house that published the Henry Ford book [*The International Jew*] and refused to

stop publication even after Ford's retraction.

To top it all, Beamish said, he was personally acquainted with all the important Nazi leaders, who had drawn many of their ideas from his writings and from personal instruction by him. He also knew L. Fry, the author of *Waters Flowing Eastward*, he volunteered, but gave himself away when he used the masculine gender, speaking of Lesley Fry as if she was a man. He called himself a student of 'raceology'.

A real honest-to-God admitted Nazi, Reynolds noted on his pad.

The witness was not through with his boasts. To Von Moltke's question about his formal position in racial movements, he stated unblinking, "I belong to most of the Racist movements in Great Britain. When the League of Gentiles was started some years ago I believe they made me president....and I have been asked to attend the Pan-Aryan Congress to be held in Bavaria. I am also told that I have just been made President of the *Bund Volkischer Europaer*, which in English is for keeping the European races pure....mainly to keep them free from Jew blood".

Western civilization was in a sorry plight, continued Beamish, and these various movements had been established for the avowed purpose of re-establishing European-Aryan control in Government.

What have we here, Reynolds pushed a note in front of his colleague, *Protocols of the Aryan Elders of Europe*?

On the stand Beamish was warming to his subject: "I defy anyone to name any government in the whole of Europe today that is not absolutely controlled by Jews, with the exception of Germany, because she set an example". With a voice of authority, he then delivered his well-rehearsed 'Expert Opinion' on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Adopting the well-rehearsed 'Ford tactic', he stated that the *Protocols* were true because he can prove how the whole Jewish plan was being implemented.

The plot had not started with the publication of the *Protocols*. It was, he assured the court, a very old plot, and the Jews had been involved in manipulating world history for thousands of years. Both the court and Reynolds questioned him in detail, politely trying to expose the absurdity of his allegations, but he was undeterred: The Jews had engineered the Russian revolution, the Hungarian revolution, the Spanish revolution. The list was endless. Also the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, World War I. The Jews had also financed William the Conqueror in 1066, they had used Cromwell - the revolt against Charles the First was arranged and financed by Jews. They corrupted the Church

and caused Luther to break away from it. There was not the slightest doubt that Gandhi was manipulated by the Jews, although the population of India was 240 million, and there were only about 10 000 Jews.

He had seen documents that the Jews offered to buy St. Paul's Cathedral and turn it into a synagogue, and he had seen a photograph of a monument to Judas Iscariot, which the Jews had erected in Russia. The judges looked at each other in astonishment, but the witness, unabashed, continued. He had seen match boxes issued by Jews, having as a trade mark the crucified Christ.

When Reynolds remarked with sarcasm that he assumed the witness did not bring these documents and photographs with him, there were some snickers from the audience, and Beamish turned on the lawyer, whispering audibly "I shall deal with you later".

Then came the institutions: the Jews were in charge of all governments, all institutions, both political and financial, the press and what not. Name after name were brought up of all the famous world leaders - they were all either Jewish or manipulated by the Jews. When Reynolds asked with a smile: "Is there any institution in England that you are prepared to acquit from Jewish influence?" the witness answered, unabashed, "I candidly do not know of anything except possibly the Church, to a minor extent".

Q: Take the Archbishop of Canterbury; he said he does not believe in the *Protocols*.

A: I have written to him and complained.

Jews definitely ruled South Africa, asserted Beamish, in spite of the fact that there were only two Jewish members in Parliament. Only one mosquito gives you malaria, he said.

Beamish occupied the witness stand for three consecutive days, six sessions, morning and afternoon, on 17, 18 and 19 July. His typed verbatim testimony takes up 119 pages of the court record.

I force myself to read every page. I remind myself that it was the year 1934. The world was beginning to realize that Hitler was indeed in power in Germany. Jews in other countries were beginning to be apprehensive. They read their morning papers with a worried expression, and then went on with their lives as usual. They calmed their collective conscience by donating money to help Jews who were smart enough to leave Germany.

Most Jews never took the trouble to read Hitler's Mein Kampf, I muse, just as they never read The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. What garbage, they said. Had they

taken the trouble, I think, they might have seen the writing on the wall. Or maybe they wouldn't have believed even then.

Coming back to the courthouse in Grahamstown, I try to imagine how it must have seemed then. This was a unique situation, I tell myself. What other forum provided an opportunity for such a frank confrontation in July 1934? Here were prominent Nazis, under oath, describing in detail and with straight faces the essence of their theory. They were also stating in public what should be done to the Jews. Yet, the procedural decorum was perfectly observed. No matter how insulting and threatening a witness sounded, he was treated by the lawyers with the utmost respect. The people in the audience were quiet and well behaved. The judges wore poker faces, allowing a witness like Beamish to make the most outrageous and revolting statements, carefully observing the rules of procedure.

Beamish was treated as if he were a real expert, his revolting statements taken at face value.

When he boasted that he had taught Herr Hitler early in his career and instructed him on the Jewish question, the judges politely asked for details of their conversation.

Beamish was most forthcoming: "We met in 1921", he recalled, "I said to him 'How do you propose to deal with the Jews', because naturally that was the subject, and he said 'I have made up my mind', and I said 'What is that' - I always get others opinions first - and he said 'We are going to send all our Jews to the allies', and I said 'I think they thoroughly deserve it.... But', I said. 'That won't cure the disease, if you have a mad dog and you tie him up in your backyard that does not get rid of the mad dog'. And then Hitler became more reasonable".

With a smirk on his face Beamish winked at his friends in the audience, who winked back. Nobody said anything. The court decorum was not disrupted.

At the end of the session they all went home to have dinner. The Jews nodded their heads in disgust. What a lunatic, they said to each other, dismissing Henry Hamilton Beamish from their thoughts.

What utter rubbish, the lawyers said to each other, they had succeeded in making him look ridiculous, they boasted with satisfaction. The court would never believe such a witness, they assured each other.

The Jews did not believe him, either.

In front of the courthouse, Nazis in uniform were congratulating Beamish, shaking the hands of the defendants.

The judges will wipe that smug look off

their faces, the Jews said to each other. Wait for the judgment, they said, not realizing that Beamish was not trying to convince the judges with his lies. He was not talking to them, for the real battle was not being fought in the courtroom and it was not the judges who would deliver the final judgment on the Jews.

The same was happening today with the denial of the Holocaust, I suddenly thought. Not realizing the extent of the denial, the growing movements, the hundreds of publications, the massive use of the internet, all flying in the face of the most recorded event in history, learned judges were presiding over trials, hearing testimony of Holocaust survivors, arguing about rules of evidence, not raising their heads from their judicial benches to see what was really happening out there.

Certain facts are usually presumed by courts in all countries, not requiring proof. In the English system courts take 'judicial notice' of facts which are uncontested by all. Under this rule a litigant is not required to prove that the earth is round, that the sun shines during the day and the moon at night, that the week has seven days and that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. A litigant who would deny these facts would probably be a candidate for a lunatic asylum. But survivors of the Holocaust are asked to relive their traumatic experiences in courts of law where the Holocaust is denied by growing numbers of Neo-Nazis.

With a start I returned to the Grahamstown courtroom.

Inch and Olivier testified first, interrogated by Von Moltke.

Inch repeated his story of breaking into the synagogue. He presented an almost-too-easy target for the cross examination by Reynolds.

His testimony, which takes up 84 pages of the record, was basically worthless in the eyes of the lawyer. He was an uneducated man and a bad liar, Reynolds explained to his client, he could not have composed the document himself, but he refused to divulge the names of his colleagues, even when ordered by the court to do so.

'They would be victimized by the Jews', Inch stated.

'Yet you will victimize the Jews?' Reynolds asked.

'This is a different matter', Inch responded, 'this is for the Cause.'

Olivier was more intelligent. He had full confidence in the Inch document handed to him by Von Moltke. He knew from his experience with Jews that these documents were true. There did exist a Jewish conspiracy.

He admitted that the testimony of Inch about breaking into the synagogue "sounded peculiar" but he could not doubt his word for he was a believer in Christ and if he were to lie under oath her would have to be "worse than the worst Jew".

Von Moltke was the last witness for the defense.

It was immediately apparent that this witness was trying to address the intelligent public.

He started his testimony with a monologue, as there was nobody to interrogate him. When Hitler came to the front, he opened in a conversational tone, he himself started pondering how it was possible that an entire nation like the Germans, one of the most highly cultured people in the world, a nation that had led the Western World, could become barbarians. He ultimately came to the conclusion that if the Jews, who constituted such a small percent of the German population, could wield that stupendous power in Germany it was worth while studying the subject in his own country for the sake of his own race. He began wondering, he said, whether the 7% Jews in South Africa could not possibly be behind all the havoc that was wrought in this country specially during the last thirty or forty years, and whether it could not be their fault that 56% of the European population in South Africa had become 'poor whites', living below the breadline.

"It became clear to me", he said, "that there must be an alien community, a race that would not assimilate with my race, who must be the key to the whole situation. My country, for which my ancestors fought on father's and mother's side, some fought under the Republic Flag, others under the Union Jack, my country for which they spilled their blood, the birthright that they thought they were going to give me, was being rapidly taken away from me and snatched from the Gentile posterity of South Africa by a community of people, who are not interested in the tilling of the soil and are only interested in exploiting the labor of the Gentiles".

The book that convinced him of this truth and opened his eyes was the excellent book of Mr. Beamish, Olivier said. He became convinced that his dear homeland was being ruled and controlled by what he called 'octopuses'. Quoting from Beamish, he listed ten of these octopuses: the Diamond Octopus, the Gold Octopus, the Land Octopus, the Food Octopus, the Wholesaler Octopus, the Retail Octopus, the Schlesinger Octopus, the International Finance Octopus, the News Octopus, and the Press Octopus. They were all ruled by the interests of these International Jews, and were definitely

organized to perfection. He then presented a historical lecture, explaining how the Jews ruled everything.

The Jews had four rules, which he had found in documents, Von Moltke declared:

1. Whatever we do must be done through others. Use officials such as Prime Ministers, and ministers not quite prime, First Lords, War Ministers, and Christian partners.
2. Spend money in improving Parliaments, that is, spend the people's money in bribing and blackmailing the so-called people's representatives.
3. We don't want to shell out ourselves, i.e. make Christians pay, make gentiles pay.
4. "Now he has gone, his widow has nothing, while we have made a large fortune out of him".

He understood that last rule to mean that Jews should make fortunes out of Gentile ruin.

Von Moltke went on to mention by name all the Jews in South Africa who were wealthy and prominent, and as such, influenced government although they had only two members in parliament. Perfecting the 'Ford tactic' he explained: "If you stand in front of a building with the plan in your hand, and you find the building coincides in detail with the plan, you have every right to believe that the building was put up by the persons responsible for drawing up the plan".

In his cross examination, Reynolds brought out easily that Von Moltke had only joined 'the cause' after he had become unemployed, and that he had left many bills unpaid, including his rent and telephone bills, although he owned a few farms and other assets, as the lawyer proved in detail. He answered that the money was more necessary for the movement than to pay the landlord.

Pretending that he had no income, he said that the movement had no bank account, they got small donations. He and his wife and children lived on a small "few shillings a week" received from Inch. He could not explain how he went around in a luxurious motorcar and kept a bodyguard.

Von Moltke's blatant racism soon became embarrassingly apparent when he stated that if he were leader of the country, he would know how to deal with the colored people. "They are the sins of our fathers", he announced; he was in favor of racial purity.

Judge Gutsche finally intervened, saying how come he himself had been living in this part of the world for thirty years and had never heard of the 'Jewish Conspiracy'. Von Moltke replied, "My Lord, you should read the *Protocols*".

When the judge persisted, putting to him further questions, Von Moltke suddenly announced that their cause was being put to ridicule by the court, so he was withdrawing from the case. Having said this, he walked out of the court.

The judges seemed unimpressed.

On 21 August 1934, in a somber atmosphere, the court delivered its judgment to a packed courtroom.

Members of the community knew that they had won, but were in no mood to gloat. They were eager to read the judgment, but soon realized that it was too long and contained too many legal terms. The Rabbi suggested that they convene a meeting at the synagogue that same evening, and invite Reynolds to explain the judgment in simple terms.

They had a large audience, including many youngsters.

In the judgment, delivered for the court by his lordship Judge Graham, Reynolds explained, he stated that Inch had not stolen the document, but had concocted it himself or with the assistance of *Grey Shirt* members, and Von Moltke had deliberately refrained from investigating the truth of the story told by him. Olivier, too, should not have published it without proper investigation.

The court also found that the existence of a so-called "World Plot" organized by the Jews, with the object of destroying "the Christian Church and religion generally and Judaizing the civilized world", had not been established, the defendants having failed to produce a vestige of proof in that direction.

The court stated that the Inch document could reasonably be construed as referring to Rabbi Levy, and that it was most defamatory. It was not necessary, the court ruled, that the whole world should recognize the libel. It is sufficient if those who know the plaintiff can make out that he is the person meant. A group cannot sue for libel under English law, the court explained, so where whole nations or classes or professions are defamed, and no particular person is directly or indirectly indicated, the defamatory statement is aimed too widely and hits no one and has therefore no legal effect. But where the words refer to all the members of a particular number, group or class, such as "all the officers of this regiment" or "all the members of that jury", each one of that particular group or class can sue.

The Rabbi, who had studied the judgment, remarked with a sad smile that looking for a legal precedent the court had quoted a Canadian case of 1914, which also concerned the libeling of a Jew. "Indeed, we Jews can claim to be heavy contributors to the laws

of libel in every country” he said.

Even Reynolds smiled at the interruption, but he soon continued. He did not intend to quote all the harsh things the court had to say about the defendants, but as members of the community had been particularly revolted at the testimony of Beamish, he read to them what the court had to say about this witness: “Beamish impressed us as a man obsessed with the views he enunciated. Intolerant in his beliefs, with an exaggerated idea of his own importance....he has greedily swallowed every anti-Jewish publication that he has discovered and accepted as facts every anti-Jewish statement they contained and upon this question he is a fanatic. He has been unable to produce a vestige of relevant evidence in support of his charge”.

They were all disappointed. Beamish deserved to be condemned in stronger language, they said. This is as far as judges, who were raised in the English tradition, will go, Reynolds assured them.

The damages that the court awarded him against all three defendants were of no importance, the Rabbi said; however, the judgment would convince the public that one could not libel Jews with impunity.

“Let us hope you are right”, some skeptics in the audience murmured. The defendants would not dream of paying the damages, they guessed, and knowing the Rabbi they assumed that he would do nothing to enforce the judgment.

A few months later they learned with satisfaction that Inch, at least, was made to pay. In criminal proceedings that followed the judgment in the civil case, after a trial that lasted nine days, Inch was convicted by a jury of uttering a forged document and committing perjury at the first trial. The foreman of the jury asked the judge’s permission to make a statement, in which he said that the jury considered the crimes committed by Inch to be racial and political.

To general surprise, the court sentenced Harry Victor Inch to six years and three months imprisonment with hard labor. Looking straight at the defendant Judge Pittman, who presided over the criminal trial, announced the reasons for this surprisingly harsh sentence:

I am bound to say that I regard your offenses in a very serious light. Your conduct in hatching this plot was one that was calculated, I think, to work disaster of the most serious character on the community. You launched your plot with extreme recklessness as to the consequences, and in your furtherance of it you have been guilty of what I can only regard as a most flagrant attempt in this court to pervert the course of justice....I

cannot shut my eyes to the harm you might have brought to a community, and which in some measure you actually did bring about. Other persons who may be disposed to follow in your footsteps....must be warned by the sentence I impose upon you that any such indulgence on their part will meet with the severest retribution.

On 29 October all three Natal newspapers devoted a large amount of space to report on a statement issued by the Minister of the Interior, J H Hofmeyr:

Unhappily, there is no lie so foolish but some witless folk will be found believing it, and no libel so cruel but eager zealots will give it wider currency once they hear it. People talk about the sacred rights of freedom being in peril, but the sacred right of freedom should not carry with it the license to propagate mass attacks upon communities or sections of a community, or any title to put into circulation statements that can only result in setting race against race, creed against creed or faith against faith. Unhappily it proves too often that those who talk loudest about civil freedom.... are those least fitted to enjoy the rights they speak about....it is the business of the government to see at all times that negligible minorities are not permitted to go outside the bounds of legitimate propaganda and let loose such doctrines as are bound to breed counter-activities among people as earnest as they, with the inevitable result that the peace of the land is temporarily endangered.

Epilogue: Retrial in Johannesburg

The year was 1991 and South Africa was in the middle of the painful process of reform that would finally rid the country of the scourge of Apartheid. For many years books in large numbers, considered to be ‘undesirable’, had been banned by the white regime, which was now un-banning and releasing for publication carefully selected lists of books. To the surprise and consternation of the Jewish community, it was learned that The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, banned in South Africa since 1945, and declared ‘undesirable’ in 1979, were prominent on the list of books to be un-banned. On 12 July 1991, an ad hoc Committee of Publications, acting in its legal capacity, had declared that the Protocols of the Elders of Zion was a book ‘not to be considered undesirable’.

On 2 August 1991, an appeal was

submitted to the 'Publication Appeal Board' in Johannesburg by the 'Directorate of Publications' against the 'Committee of Publications', in the matter of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists (South African Chapter) were named as 'Intervening Parties'. They claimed that this publication fell within three categories of the definition of 'undesirable publications' in section 47(2) of the Publication Act, which stated:

For the purposes of this Act any publication...shall be deemed to be undesirable if it or any part of it-

Is blasphemous or is offensive to the religious convictions or feelings of any section of the inhabitants of the Republic;
or
Brings any section of the inhabitants of the Republic into ridicule or contempt;
or
Is harmful to the relations between any section of the inhabitants of the Republic.

Clearly, they argued, the Jewish community of the Republic of South Africa, which constituted a "section of the inhabitants of the Republic", had a right to protect its interests and to be represented by those who were well equipped to present its views to the board.

Unlike the trial in Grahamstown, they did not need a private plaintiff to prove personal harm. The law applicable in this case protected groups and sections, therefore a group of people whose interests were threatened had a right to be represented.

There was also no need to speculate about the possible danger from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This was the post-Holocaust era and there was ample proof of the use the Nazis had made of the *Protocols*. It was also evident that Neo-Nazi groups were reviving the *Protocols* and new publications were appearing all over the world.

Their impressive legal brief held 137 pages. It included the history of the *Protocols*, the revelations of their origin, the description of the harm they had done, and the attitude of prestigious academic bodies as well as governments, parliaments and courts, in other countries, to this particular publication.

On 12 November 1991, the seven members of the 'Publications Appeal Board', chaired by Mr. D W Morkel, delivered its unanimous judgment, setting aside the decision of the ad hoc 'Committee of Publications'. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was declared an undesirable document, not only its publication

but also its possession prohibited.

The lawyers, who had almost closed their offices to the public to prepare in record time the legal brief, convened with their clients to study the decision of the Board.

They had won an important legal battle and they had set a precedent. On the question of representation, the board decided that the Jewish community of South Africa constituted an important section of the inhabitants of the Republic and as the publication in question purported to be an important Jewish policy-document, the Jewish community had a vital interest to make representation. "It would have been contrary to the principle of natural justice and the flexibility and fairness normally associated with the proceedings of administrative tribunals not to afford them the right", the Appeal Board stated. Had the representations not been filed, he would probably have approached the Jewish Board of Deputies for expert advice, the Chairman added.

They were particularly impressed by the board's perception of the danger the *Protocols* created. They had succeeded in convincing the tribunal that South Africa should join other countries which had found it necessary to deal with the publication of the *Protocols* in the post Holocaust era.

Now, the Jewish community noted with satisfaction, South Africa was making a clear statement that libelous lies against a group of citizens did not deserve the protection accorded to other forms of speech.

The board had specifically addressed itself to the problem of antisemitism: Unlike other legal proceedings concerning the *Protocols*, the respondents in this appeal did not argue against the facts presented in the legal brief of the Jewish lawyers, which was highly praised by the board. They openly agreed that the *Protocols* were a fraudulent document and that they fell within the definition of 'undesirable publications'. But, the committee said, they had decided to 'unban' the *Protocols*, as they had come to the conclusion that the document had been overtaken by history and that the relations between Jews and non-Jews in South Africa had been so good as to render the publication harmless. Rejecting this argument, the board said it was convinced that in many countries of the world antisemitism was on the rise and that this publication served as the "Bible of antisemitism":

South Africa finds itself in a fragile and transitory period where attempts to promote racial and ethnic harmony are of the utmost importance", they said, "...the board is convinced that the publication is inundated with material, which is likely to offend both Jews and non-Jews. It has

great potential for fanning racial tension and in the hands of malicious individuals could be used as a tool to that end....both Jews and non-Jews would be mortified by passages in the publication....the fact that the publication has been proven to be fraudulent but can be applied to reality makes it exceedingly dangerous.

The *Protocols* were not only anti-Jewish, the board declared, accepting the argument of the Directorate of Publications that the book brought the non-Jewish section of the population of the Republic into contempt and ridicule. The 'Goyim' were stated to be brainless dupes, beset by drunkenness and immorality. They were the real villains of the *Protocols*, the Directorate argued. The court agreed stating that South Africa could do without a publication that apart from being extremely antisemitic, also expressly advocated the killing of non-Jews.

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THE JEWISH CONNECTION IN THE RIVONIA TRIAL, 1963-4

*

Gene Eisen, Les Glassman

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Jews were involved in “The Struggle” against South Africa’s apartheid mainly because it is part of our DNA. In Deuteronomy (16:20), we are commanded “Justice, Justice you shall pursue.”

Even before the National Party gained power in 1948 and apartheid became official state policy, non-whites, the majority of the population, were subjected to tremendous inequality.

The draconian apartheid laws enforced the separation of the races. Blacks, coloureds and Indians were disenfranchised and were forced to live in separate areas. All amenities were separate, including schools, hospitals, transportation and the work place. The only exceptions were the English-speaking universities, including the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the University of Cape Town. Here “privileged blacks” were allowed to study on equal terms with their white counterparts.

In 1950, Nelson Mandela was the only black student in the final year law class at Wits. The class included many Jews, several of whom Mandela befriended. At Wits, Mandela also met and befriended Joe Slovo, who later became head of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC).

Because of their traditions and history, many Jews in South Africa felt compassion and kindness towards oppressed blacks. It is not surprising that Lazer Sidelsky admitted the young Mandela to his law firm to enable him to serve his articles, an action that no other white law firm was prepared to take.¹ Mandela met and developed close relationships with many liberal-minded Jews while working at the firm.

In 1958, Mandela met Arthur Goldreich, who had served in the Palmach in the 1948 Israeli War of Independence. Three years later, he took up Goldreich’s offer to live at Liliesleaf Farm, located in the then largely rural northern Johannesburg suburb

of Rivonia. It was a “safe house” in which Arthur, his wife Hazel and their children lived while Mandela, in the guise of a caretaker-houseboy, stayed in the adjoining domestic workers cottage. Leaders of the ANC (which had been banned in April 1960) and Umkhonto we Sizwe met in secret and planned operations there.

During a raid on Liliesleaf on 11 July 1963, security police confiscated a six-page plan of an action called “Operation Mayibuye”. This, in Mandela’s words, “sketched out in general form the plan for a possible commencement of guerrilla operations and how it might spark a mass armed uprising” against the South African government. The police seized other documents, which implicated several ANC members with serious crimes against the state.²

The 50th anniversary of the Rivonia Trial, named after the suburb in which the raid took place, was commemorated with the issue of a Prestige Booklet on 26 November, 2013.³ The handsome booklet, designed by Marie Vermeulen-Breedt, includes a souvenir sheet picturing the accused and a biographical sheet for each of the twelve ANC members arrested: Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni, Arthur Goldreich, Denis Goldberg, Elias Motsoaledi, Govan Mbeki, Harold Wolpe, James Kantor, Lionel ‘Rusty’ Bernstein, Raymond Mhlaba, Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela.

The remainder of this article will focus on the Jewish participants in the trial - accused, defence and prosecution. All six of the whites arrested were Jews: Arthur Goldreich, Denis Goldberg, Harold Wolpe, James Kantor, Lionel Bernstein and Bob Hepple (whose mother, Josephine Zwarenstein, was Jewish). The defence lawyers included Bram Fischer, Vernon Berrange, George Bizos, Arthur Chaskalson, Nat Levy, Harold Hanson and Joel Joffe. Kantor’s defence team was separate and consisted of Hanson, John Coaker, George Lowen, Herbert C. Nicholas and Harry Schwarz. Of the above,

Chaskalson, Joffe, Lowen, Hansen, Levy and Schwarz were Jewish.

The charges against the accused were made under the Sabotage Act. Sabotage was defined as:

- The recruiting of persons for training in the preparation and use of explosives and in guerrilla warfare for the purpose of violent revolution and committing acts of sabotage;
- Conspiring to commit the aforementioned acts and to aid foreign military units;
- Soliciting and receiving money for these purposes from foreign governments.

The charges of sabotage probably saved the lives of the men on trial, for if they had been convicted of high treason, it would almost certainly have carried the death penalty.

Hepple was originally charged, but was later released after declaring he would testify for the prosecution. Presumably, this was why he was not included in the booklet. Hepple later fled the country and when in exile stated that he never intended to testify against the people he so admired.⁴

Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich were never put on trial. Shortly after their arrest, they made a spectacular escape from the high security Marshall Square Prison by bribing a guard. With the help of their friend Barney Simon, a Jewish activist, playwright and theatre director, they escaped from South Africa disguised as priests, hiding in the trunk of a car as they crossed the Swaziland border. From Swaziland, they flew to Bechuanaland, now Botswana. Following the escape James Kantor, who was originally one of the defence attorneys, was arrested on suspicion of aiding the fugitives because he was Wolpe's law partner and brother-in-law.

The Rivonia Trial began on 9 October, 1963. The prosecutor was Percy Yutar, who was also Jewish. Despite the prevalence of antisemitism in South African political circles, his ambition and strong determination had enabled him to rise through the ranks to his position at the time of the trial. As the trial proceeded, Yutar brutally cross-examined the defendants.

Justice Quartus de Wet at the end of the prosecution's case dismissed all charges against Kantor. Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeki, Motsoaledi, Mlangeni, Goldberg and Mhlaba were found guilty on all charges and Kathrada on one charge of conspiracy. De Wet decided that the death penalty was not appropriate and sentenced all to life imprisonment. Bernstein was found not guilty but was later rearrested, released on bail and placed under house arrest.

By the mid-1980s, the winds of change

were sweeping South Africa. In 1985, Denis Goldberg became the first of the Rivonia defendants to be released. Nelson Mandela was the last, released in 1990. In April 1994, South Africans of all races went to the polls and the ANC won with 62% of the vote. On 10 May, Mandela took the oath of office as the first black President of South Africa.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...?

In 1964, **Arthur Goldreich** moved to Israel, where he had earlier served in the 1948 war. There, he pursued his career in art and design, and was in due course appointed as head of the Industrial and Environmental Design Department at Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem. He returned to South Africa in 2001 to attend a reunion of the Rivonia Trialists and their defence team at Liliesleaf. He also visited in 2004, participating in the SA Jewish Board of Deputies Freedom Seder at the same venue. He died at the age of 82 in Tel Aviv in May 2011. A few days before his death, it was announced that he had been chosen by the SAJBD for its Human Rights Award.⁵



Following his discharge, **Lionel Bernstein** suspected that the South African government was likely to indict him and his wife, Hilda, for undisclosed crimes. Therefore, the couple decided to escape by crossing the border to Botswana on foot. They eventually made their way to England, where their children joined them. In London, Bernstein worked as an architect and continued fighting for the abolition of apartheid. He briefly returned to South Africa during the first post-apartheid elections in 1994. He died in 2002 at the age of 82.⁶



James Kantor lost his law practice and

decided to begin a new life with his family in London. There, he developed a successful publishing business. However, his health never recovered from the harsh treatment experienced while in prison awaiting trial. He suffered a series of heart attacks and died at the age of 48 in 1975.⁷



Denis Goldberg was the only one of the six Jews originally accused in the Rivonia Trial who was convicted. He was considered to be the “most dangerous white man in South Africa.” After spending 22 years in prison in Pretoria, the Israeli government interceded on his behalf, and he was released [in 1997 Julius Weinstein related to the editor how he, in his capacity of Chairman of the SA Zionist Federation, together with the then Israeli Ambassador to South Africa Eliyahu Lankin, met with President P W Botha and persuaded him to release Goldberg]. After first visiting his daughter, who was living on a kibbutz in Israel, he went into exile in London, where he joined his family and resumed his work for the ANC (1985-1994). He returned to South Africa in 2002 to take up a government position.⁸



Following his escape, **Harold Wolpe** settled in England, where he became a Nuffield Foundation Scholar at the London School of Economics (1964-65). Afterwards, he joined the Sociology Department of the University of Essex. In 1990, together with his wife, Annemarie (herself an activist), he returned to South Africa, where he became the Director of the Education Policy Unit at the University of the Western Cape. He passed away in 1996, aged 70.



Bob Hepple, assisted by Bram Fischer, the lead counsel for the defence, escaped with his wife Shirley via Bechuanaland Protectorate and Tanzania to England. Although legally trained, Hepple acquired further English qualifications at Clary College, Cambridge, where he read for his LLB (1964-65). He rose to become a Queens Counsel and distinguished internationally renowned legal academic. Hepple was knighted in 2004.

Arthur Chaskalson left a successful legal practice to become a human rights lawyer, helping to establish the Legal Resources Centre to pursue justice and human rights for non-whites in South Africa. He served as the Centre's director from 1974-1983. Chaskalson became the first President of South Africa's new Constitutional Court (1994-2001) and served as Chief Justice of South Africa from 2001-2005. The court's first decision under his leadership was the abolition of the death penalty on 6 June 1995. Arthur Chaskalson died in 2012, aged 81.

Joel Joffe and his family resumed their plans to immigrate to Australia, which had been postponed by the Rivonia Trial. However, before they could leave the country, Joffe's South African passport was withdrawn. They eventually moved to England. Joffe left the law profession and went into a successful financial services venture, which enabled him to retire in 1991. He served as Chair of the British charity Oxfam from 1995-2001. He actively pursues a number of charitable activities. In 1999, he was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire and made a life peer in 2000, becoming Baron Joffe of Liddington.

Harry Schwarz had a distinguished political career as an anti-apartheid parliamentarian. After being expelled for ‘disloyalty’ from the United Party, he founded the Reform Party, which in 1975 merged with the Progressive Party to form the Progressive Reform Party, renamed the Progressive Federal Party in 1977. In 1990, Schwarz became the 13th South African Ambassador to the United States. He died in 2010, aged 86.

After the Rivonia Trial, **Percy Yutar's** successful career continued. He became the first Jewish attorney general of South Africa in the Orange Free State (1968) and subsequently in the Transvaal (1975). Yutar

remained a controversial figure. For example, he stated that he had in fact saved the lives of the Rivonia defendants by charging them with sabotage instead of treason, an argument that was challenged by both the accused and the defence attorneys.⁹ After Nelson Mandela was elected President of South Africa, in a spirit of reconciliation, he invited Yutar to lunch. Mandela clearly was a remarkable individual to have essentially made peace with the prosecutor through whom he had been sentenced to life imprisonment.

Mandela maintained a close relationship with his friends in the Jewish community who had helped him in "The Struggle." He also had a very special bond with the Chief Rabbi of South Africa, Cyril Harris. In September 1997, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Ben Gurion University. In November 1999, he made a historic visit to Israel, where he was hosted by President Weizmann.

Mandela possessed an incredible *hakarat hatov* - gratitude. In his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* he wrote, "In my experience I have found Jews to be more broad-minded than most whites on issues of race and politics, perhaps because they themselves have

historically been victims of prejudice." This remarkable individual - a regal personality and a world icon in our generation - passed away in December 2013, aged 95.

NOTES

- 1 Co-author of this article Les Glassman is a very close friend of Lazer's son, Dov Sidelsky.
- 2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rivonia_Trial
- 3 <http://www.postoffice.co.za/group/philately/2013/>; Embrey, J, South Africa-50th Anniversary of the Rivonia Trial. *Judaica Thematic Society Newsletter*, 105:5, Dec. 2014
- 4 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rivonia_Trial; Broun, K, *Saving Nelson Mandela: The Rivonia Trial and the Fate of South Africa*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2012.
- 5 It was presented posthumously at the SAJBD's national conference later that year and accepted by his sons, Paul and Amos.
- 6 http://www.rusty-bernstein.com/profile_rusty_bernstein
- 7 <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/james-kantor>
- 8 <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/professor-denis-theodore-goldberg>
- 9 Rathbone, Emma, 'Mandela's Prosecutor', *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 89 (4): 158-168, (Fall 2013).



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GRIT IN INTEGRITY

*

Charlotte Cohen

The passage was a nightmare. Hundreds of Jewish emigrants, each with their most treasured possessions crammed into two suitcases, packed like sardines onto a vessel that would transport them to the "new world"; each managing to get through the ordeal of the journey by their determination to discard their desperation and consummate the dream that would take them to a new home; each anticipating the opportunities and sunshine, even gold, that possibly awaited them there.

Background - Sophia Newstead (born Cynkin)

I was born in April 1881 in the town of Mir, in the province of Minsk.¹ My formal schooling ended when I was ten, although I continued my education by attending evening classes. Coming from a family of tailors, I went to work as a seamstress. I gave most of my earnings to my mother. Whatever little I managed to save was carefully put away, so that one day it would help to pay for my passage on a ship sailing to an exciting new world, leaving behind the nightmare of hatred, poverty and pogroms.

One of the people in our village had a cousin who had gone to New York. He sent a newspaper home once a month. Circulated to every family in the village, it was perused and pored over from cover to cover. They saw a new world! A better world! ... Even if it meant never seeing their children again, parents urged them to leave. "Go!" they urged ... "Go to freedom! Go to a better life."

I met a boy when I was seventeen. His name was Moishe and he became my boyfriend. We shared dreams and were excited about our plans to go to a new land.

People leaving our town went either to America or South Africa. At eighteen, with the money I had painstakingly saved and with what my parents managed to scrape together, there was enough for a single fare out. I chose South Africa because a Mr Chaimowitz, a tailor who had left Mir a year before and settled in Cape Town, promised my parents – and me – that he would have a job for me.

Charlotte Cohen, a regular contributor to Jewish Affairs, is an award-winning short story writer and poet, whose work has appeared in a wide variety of South African publications since the early 1970s.

Moishe did not have enough money for a ticket. Actually, he did not like saving or even working very much – preferring to spend his time playing or pretending to study. (I say this because with all the studying he said he was doing, he should have been much more learned than he was.)

When I told him that I had managed to get the money together for my fare to South Africa, and that I would be going, he was outraged. He said it was not right for girls to travel on their own. In fact, he said, it was against the law. He told me to give *him* the money – that *he* would go, he would work and then send for me. I said I preferred to use my money for my own fare; and that I would go and work and send for *him*.

He started shouting, insisting that it was unheard of for a woman to go to a strange country, on her own – and 'send for' a man. Nonetheless, I told him that my mind was made up, and that I would use my money for my own fare. He flew into a rage. He broke off our engagement and cursed me by saying that all my children would be born hunch-back – which was the popular curse of the day.

As having children was the furthest thing from my mind, it did not bother me very much. I had much more to think about: The long-awaited dream had become a traumatic reality with the filling-in and waiting for forms and more forms, the packing of my belongings, preparations for the journey and the unbearable finality of saying goodbye to my parents, family and friends, knowing that there was little chance of ever seeing them again.

The uncertainty of the future presented a strange mixture of trepidation and anticipation; great sadness, anxiety and fear intermingled with expectation, excitement and hope. I was leaving a life I had known for eighteen years with a one-way ticket into the unknown.

Grit in Gravity

After an arduous journey, I landed in Cape Town to be greeted with the shock of hearing that Mr Chaimowitz, the tailor for whom I was supposed to be working, was bankrupt. He had no job for me. He had no job for himself.

I could only converse in Yiddish. My scant knowledge of English was less than useless.

I was desolate and desperate, completely on my own with no one to turn to. I had found lodgings with a Mrs Melamed, who ran a boarding house in Cape Town especially for immigrant Jews. For a monthly rental of 17/6d, I shared a bedroom with five other people. In the 'arrangement' for the accommodation, I was also to wash the pots every night and scrub the floors on a Sunday morning.

Being poor was no stranger to me. I did not mind the extra work I was expected to do. In fact, hard work was my best friend. I could rely on it. Work was my comfort, my security and my salvation. But not having a job was devastating. I tramped from one place to another looking for work. The little money I had was running out

I prayed. ... I vowed I would never ask God for another thing if He would only provide me with a job.

Grit in Gratitude

Soon after, I was recommended to contact a Mrs Lerner, who ran a dressmaking salon which she called 'Madame Lerner's'. She employed me as a seamstress. My hours were 7 in the morning until 7 at night. My wages were twenty shillings a month.

With the money I had over after paying my board, I bought bread, soap and tooth-powder.

Mrs. Lerner brought sandwiches to share with me at lunchtime and gave me some left-over pieces of material so that I could make myself another skirt and blouse, as the few clothes I had were becoming worn-out and shabby.

Two months after I started working at 'Madame Lerner's', a Mr. Bernstein (from 'der heim') came into the shop. He said my parents were anxiously waiting to receive a letter from me. They had not heard from me since I had landed in Cape Town. He asked me why I had not written home. I told him I did not have the money for the

stamp. He placed a coin on the counter.

"You can always come to me" he said, "I will lend you the money."

I left the coin where it was. "I cannot afford to pay you back," I said.

At night, after cleaning the pots, I was so exhausted that I did not hear the snores and grunts from the five others with whom I shared the room when I went to sleep.

But my prayers had been answered: I had a job.

Grit in Gravitation

One Sunday morning, a handsome young man came to visit a friend who was also staying at the boarding house. He saw me kneeling next to the bucket, cleaning the floor. I was embarrassed and lowered my face, hoping that he would just walk past me. But he didn't. He stopped and introduced himself as Reuben Newstead and asked me my name. He told me he was a baker. He was born in Riga and had also come to South Africa an immigrant.

Reuben approached Mrs Melamed and complained about my having to work on a Sunday morning. He told her that it was not right to have me do this extra work after paying for my lodging.

It was the first time anyone had protected me since I had arrived in South Africa.

Reuben was a strong, determined and ambitious man. He was also a caring man with nice eyes. He asked me to go with him to a picnic at the Strand the following Sunday. I wanted to go, but was worried about my having to clean the floors.

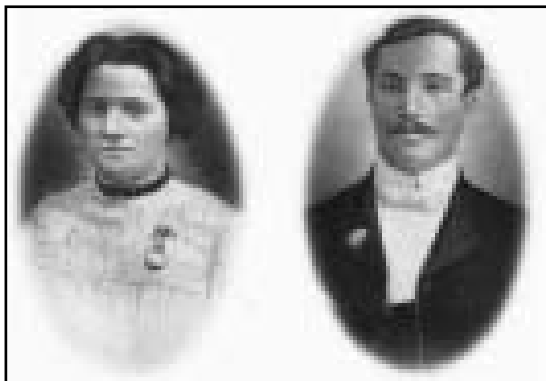
Reuben sought out Mrs. Melamed again. He informed her that he had invited me to go out with him the following Sunday; that I *would* be going and also that I would *not* be cleaning floors on any Sunday again.

Mrs Melamed did not like it (nothing was more obvious than her tightly pursed lips) – but she did not mention my having to clean the floors again. Nor did she make me leave.

Reuben courted me. We went out only on Sundays. Seven months later, we were married. Over the next nine years, I bore him five children. None were born with a hunchback.

Grit in Gratification

We stayed on the third floor of a block of flats. Water had to be fetched and brought up three flights in a pail. Reuben would get up well before dawn to make and knead the dough. Deliveries were made by horse-and-cart and had to be done before lunchtime. I went with him and remained in the cart while he loaded and off-loaded the bread.



*Reuben and Sophia Newstead c. 1905
(Portraits courtesy Bernice Kling)*

One day, the horse became detached from the cart and ran away. All the bread lay strewn over the ground. It blocked the road and it took hours for us to clean it up.

Other than that, I stayed home to look after my growing family. It gave me a great deal of satisfaction that I had learned how to make do with what we had, and also, how to make what we had, stretch. No one in my family ever went hungry. Everyone was always clean and neatly dressed.

Reuben bought me a new Singer sewing machine. Worked with a foot treadle, it sewed seams in a fraction of the time it took me to do by hand. I loved sitting before that black shiny machine, suspended for a while in a quiet, meditative world, where I could think, reflect, understand and marvel as I sewed.

Reuben was observant. The rituals and legacy of the Jewish religion, together with our upbringing, were an integral part of our lives. Whereas Moishe regarded religion as didactic, demanding and prescriptive, Reuben's religious expression was directed more by his dedication and determination.

Grit in Generosity

There were only a few Jewish families living in the Claremont area at the turn of the century.

Reuben could not bear the thought that the Sabbath and the festivals would not be observed in the traditional way. He contacted every Jewish man living in Claremont and the neighboring rural village of Lansdowne. Everyone was placed under a moral obligation to make up a *minyan* and in 1904 the first regular *minyanim* were organized at Askew's Building on the Main Road, Claremont. High Festival services were held in the Town Hall opposite the Claremont Railway station. But the dream was to have our own house of worship.

One Sunday morning, with our son, Bonnie, in the horse and buggy, Reuben went to solicit money for the building of the synagogue. After he explained the purpose of the visit Mr Gorfinkel, the gentleman on whom he had called, said, "That's a very good idea, Mr Newstead. The next time you come around, I'll give, you something."

Reuben rode around the block, and ten minutes later, knocked on Mr. Gorfinkel's door again and simply said, "It's the 'next time'!"

Grit in Granite

In 1914, Reuben was joined in business by a Mr Gershon Fine. He was much more than merely a business partner, but became a lifelong companion and a family friend.

He supported Reuben in all his efforts and also become involved in Jewish affairs.

Kneading machines, mixers and big ovens were installed at the bakery. It was given the name N. & F. (Newstead & Fine) Baking Company.

After the beginning of World War I, there were about twenty Jewish families who had settled in and around Claremont. Services for High Holy Days were still being held in the old Town Hall, with other services held in private homes. More than ever, Reuben felt the need for the community to pray in a proper house of worship. He called on the more affluent Jewish residents in the area to raise funds. He was determined.

In 1915, a Building Committee was formed. The dream, nurtured since 1904, became a reality in 1919. Claremont's first synagogue was erected at the lower end of Grove Avenue. Reuben was elected as the first president of the Claremont Hebrew Congregation.

Grit in Integrity

At a ceremony four years later, in 1923, the community honored Reuben by presenting him with a beautiful plaque. I was also mentioned in it. It read: *'The Congregation desires to offer you a heartfelt and unanimous tribute of respect and gratitude for your integrity and your years of service on their behalf. They feel that it is largely owing to your great ability and devotion in your work that the Congregation have realized their aims. They fervently pray that the Almighty may bless you, together with your helpmeet, Mrs. Newstead, and your children for many happy years to come, and may continue to crown your undertakings with His Blessing.'*

By this time I could converse quite well in English, but still could not easily write it and there were sometimes words I did not understand. I looked up the word 'integrity' in the dictionary. The meaning was given as "uprightness, principle or honour". I noticed there was another word in it: It was the word 'grit'. I looked up that word as well. It gave the meaning as 'gravel' or 'sand.'

It seemed fitting that the word 'grit' would be in the word 'integrity'.

Experience had been a good teacher. For life and love are inexplicably bound with discipline; and discipline is found in hard work and restraint. I knew that if Destiny were a piece of ground given to us at birth, only by moving the gravel and working with the grit, can the ground ever become a garden. Hard work always brings its own reward. That is its blessing.

In August 1935, Reuben was made first Life President of the Claremont Hebrew Congregation. On Gershon Fine's death in

1938, he dedicated a stone to his memory. Originally placed in the front of the synagogue, it is now in the synagogue hall. It is inscribed: "I mourn a friend and brother, whose soul was bound with mine, Undimmed will his memory ever live in my heart and shine."

Sewing it together

Just like the off-cuts given to her by Mrs Lerner, the fabric of this story was given to me in bits and pieces by my grandmother - and then sewn together with information kindly provided to me by the late Mr Herbie Merris (to whom I was referred by the late Willie Katz). Mr Merris lent me old papers and minute books which he still had in his possession. These gave me some dates and places² on which to hang the story. Then, using the yarn of my own imagination to give it expression, I embroidered it with the emotions I think my grandmother would have felt.

My grandfather, Reuben Newstead, died in 1955 at the age of 72.³ Sophia lived another 24 years after that. She passed away in 1979 at the age of 96.

Connection and Recollection

I was fortunate to have stayed next door to my grandmother for almost twenty years prior to her death. She had a good sense of humour, could be quite feisty at times - yet knew how to keep her own counsel.

She liked to play rummy and to attend the Saturday afternoon matinees at the cinema on the corner - for which she had made an arrangement with the manager whereby she could purchase her ticket on a Friday afternoon. She made the most marvelous *gerigten*, which I have never tasted again since she died. One of them (called '*lupchikes*') made from fermented beetroot leaves and stalks, chopped and cooked with onion and served with sour cream, was like tasting a

"one-way ticket to heaven". I have only met one person who has ever heard of it.

She did all her own sewing, mending, shopping and cooking. 'Work' was always her best friend. She showed me how to make potato kugel (my most prized recipe with a special secret ingredient).

When I think of how she handled transpositions in her life, I find I am more able to cope with the vicissitudes in mine. She has been, and still is, one of the greatest influences in my life.

My grandmother fell when she was 93. Although she walked again with the aid of a walker, she became very frail after that.

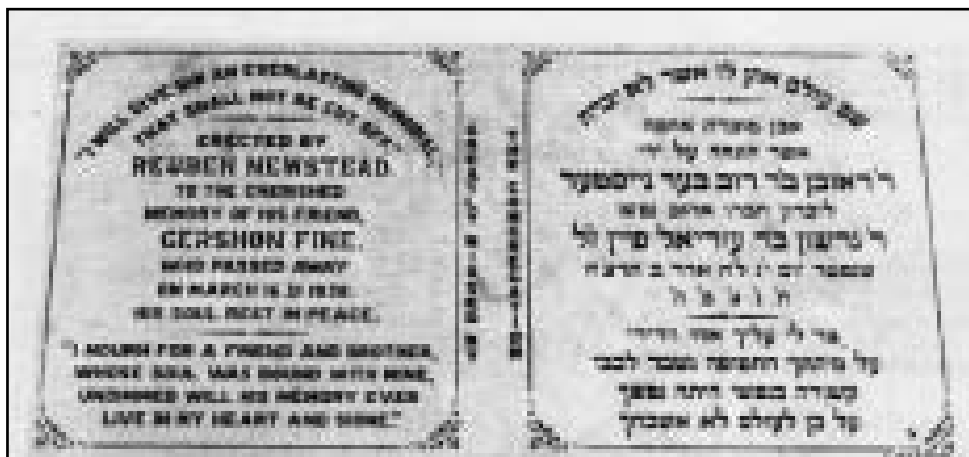
The beautifully framed scroll given to my grandfather in 1923 and which took pride of place in her hallway was passed on to her daughter, Dolly, and eventually on *her* death, to her son, my cousin Jeffrey. Before he immigrated to Australia, he gave it to me. Having had pride of place in *my* hallway for many years, it was recently passed on to the Jewish Museum in Cape Town for exhibition.

Remembrance and Reminiscence

My grandmother hardly ever proffered stories and anecdotes of her background that I have used. They were related on the few occasions when I became curious and plied her with questions about her past.

Now I proverbially wring my hands when I realise how much I could and should have extracted from the history I *did* hold in my hands. Why did I not take more from her while I could? Why was she, herself, not more forthcoming about her early years? A line in the beautiful song *The Way We Were* may offer some answers as to our parents and grandparents reticence about their past: "What's too painful to remember, we simply choose to forget."

The Jewish religion, however, does not forget. It keeps reminding us of our roots. It is infused with an intensity to recount



Memorial stone now in the succah of the present Claremont Hebrew Congregation.

what has been.

I looked up. My eyes were drawn to the framed plaque that had been given to my grandfather. The word 'grit' in the word 'integrity' stared back at me.

I looked up the word in the dictionary to check whether 'grit' was Western American slang. It wasn't. 'Grit' was described as 'gravel' or 'sand' (as my grandmother had seen it); but was also described as "courage, decision, nerve, firmness."

As both meanings of the word 'grit' increases the coincidence of its appearing in the word 'integrity', this story has been woven in such a way that, just as my grandmother and I could each have applied a different interpretation, both are appropriate and apt.

This excerpt is taken from Dale Carnegie's scrapbook:

*So don't be a pifter, old pard
Just draw on your grit
It's so easy to quit
It's the keeping-your-chin-up that's hard.*

*It's easy to cry that you're broken and die
It's easy to crawfish and crawl.
But to fight and to fight, when hope's
out of sight;
Why, that's the best game of all!
And though you come out of each grueling
bout
All beaten and battered and scarred
Just draw on your grit. It's so easy to quit
It's the keeping-on-living that's hard.*

Retrospection

In the same way as children do not always see eye to eye with parents, or members of the same household disagree, there is nonetheless a common thread that runs through our veins. It is a cord which irrevocably ties us. We belong to the same family.

Whether Jewish religious affiliation is Orthodox, Conservative, Progressive, or none - whatever our preference - we are knit with strands of the same skein.

As it is with 'grit' in 'integrity', so are there wheels within wheels ... circles within circles.

We are all irrevocably bound. We may differ in our thinking: But we are the same in recognising that 'grit' is one of the integral ingredients of integrity:

*It takes grit to meet life head on.
It takes grit to keep trying.
It takes grit to be honest and to accomplish
one's purpose.
It takes grit not to lose hope.*

What carried my grandparents was courage.

What sustained them was faith. Vision and determination drove them and hard work made it all possible.

'Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards' (Soren Kierkegaard)

The Jewish New Year has within its heart a combination of chronicle and continuance.

This is the time when history and destiny are tacked together. It is the time when we are able to cut pieces from the various fabrics we have worn, fit them together with fragments of material donned by our forefathers, and make ourselves a new "coat of many colors".

It is at this time that we 'understand' by looking backwards and, at the same time 'live forwards' by looking to the future.



*Sophia Newstead
1883 - 1979*

Notes

- 1 Then considered to be part of greater Lithuania, today, part of Belarus
- 2 Subsequent to that, one or two of these - i.e. my grandmother's place of birth, was corrected by Professor Marsha Cohen from the United States, who is a genealogist and whose grandfather was a brother to my grandmother. She has been meticulous in giving me as many details or our forebears as possible - and for this, I am extremely grateful.
- 3 On another note of interest, Google incorrectly gives his date of death as 1979 - which is actually my grandmother's date of death.

THE POETRY OF DAVID FRAM REVISITED

*

Maurice Skikne

I have a particular fascination for the Yiddish language, one cultivated since toddlerhood. In later life, there has been born in my 'Neshoma' a desire not only to speak it, but also, a will and ability to write blank verse poetry in Yiddish (not in Hebrew script, but in Roman alphabet). Fifteen years ago, I acquired a treasured copy of David Fram's *A Schvalb ofen Dakh*, but battled to 'farteitsh' (translate) his beautiful work into sensible English. Very fortunately, I came across an essay on Fram by the late Joseph Sherman in the American Jewish journal *Midstream*.¹ On reading it, I was transported back into the earlier 20th Century by this masterful and erudite analysis.

Fram was born in Ponevezh, Lithuania, on 14 October 1903. By the time he immigrated to South Africa, he had already established himself as a young poet of renown in Europe, having published not only in Lithuania (Kovno) but also in Warsaw, Poland. His education at a state school culminated at the gymnasium in Vilkomir, under the tutelage of Yudel Mark, a great Yiddish linguist who had an important influence on him. With the publication of his epic *Reb Yoshe in zayn Gorton* (Reb Yoshe in his Garden) in the prestigious *Oyfkom* (Rebirth, New York), he graduated to international fame. Fram had become a restless soul, due possibly to the Russian Revolution and World War I. He moved initially to France and then, at the behest of an uncle, to South Africa.

Jolted by the differences in lifestyle between white and black people, Fram was inspired to pen his first South African stanzas, which emphasized the disparity between the races. For this, he was roundly censured by other Yiddish writers, including Richard Feldman. He then took a different tack, leading to the publication of his anthology *Lider un Poemes*, sponsored by some locals and appearing in Vilnius in 1931. His approach was a lyrical one:

From the Spaciousness of Russia
to Africa's lone plains,
From far-off places and snows

Maurice Skikne, a frequent contributor to Jewish Affairs, has for many years been a student mentor and consultant at Johannesburg universities. He is chairman of the Jewish Genealogical Society of South Africa.

of gleaming white,
To the sun-swept distances where endless
Summer reigns!
How deep the self-division in my
solitary plight²

Fram's colleagues in Europe persuaded him to help found a society, named 'The Unicorn', which met on a regular basis at a restaurant in Johannesburg. Members ranged from poets and writers to artists, sculptors and the like. The society was distantly modelled on a famous Russian society in Moscow - the Stoila Pegasa.³ Inspired by the likes of such Afrikaans poets as Vincent Swart and Uys Krige, Fram composed further poems. His talent for lyricism led to his scripting two well-received operettas in Yiddish - *A Tsigayner Fantasia* (A Gypsy Fantasy, 1932) and the satirical *Fun Fordsburg biz Parktown* (from Fordsburg to Parktown, 1933), with music composed by Hirsch Ichilchik and Francis Bohr. These activities brought him to wider notice, and led to his being appointed editor of *Afrikaner Yiddishe Tsaytung*. From there, he and Abel Shaban founded their own paper *Der Yidisher Ekspres*. This unfortunately lasted barely two years, closing in 1937.

Fram never felt comfortable living in South Africa. A trip to London in 1934 to assist Gaumont-British Picture Corporation's Michael Balcon in filming *Jew Suss* convinced him he felt most at ease there. He returned to SA with his second wife, Pamela, just before the eruption of World War II. Fram's response to the horror of the Holocaust included two of his most powerful poems: *Efsher* (Perhaps) and *Dos Letste Kapitl* (the Last Chapter). The former questions accepted values, whilst the latter laments the destruction of Jewish life in Lithuania. To quote Sherman, *Dos Letste Kapitl* "recalls a harmonious, and largely mythical, time when Jew and Christian lived peacefully in brotherhood, before the shocking reality of the present". These lines and those immediately following quote from the poem (Sherman's translation):

Oh Lithuania, I had looked to you
To help the hunted Lithuanian Jew.
But joining the hunters, with upraised
own hand,
You struck down the brother born in
your own land.
You allied yourself with the bloody invader,

Transforming yourself into robber and raider.....

On this, Hazel Frankel comments, "The speaker is torn between love for the land in which he was born and the fearful realization that its natives-those Lithuanian Christians he had longed to call 'brothers'-were also implacable enemies of the Jews." What a rude realization for David Fram to grasp that his former playmates harbored the same for kin as did those Nazi barbarians! Oh woe must have been his crass hurt, for those implacable killers of the Jews!⁴

Of the friends of my childhood, the men
I once knew,
Is not left alive one Lithuanian Jew.
What have I there now without Jewish
Young
Without Jewish song, without Jewish tongue
Without Jewish scholars, without Jewish
lore,
With no Jewish Heart and no Jewish door?
Of my Lithuania there is left to me
Only a desolate vast cemetery.

Frankel (2013) cites Fram's various writings on the Shoah, in particular those written well after the war (in 1969, 1971 and as late as 1984). *Unsere kedoyshim* (Our Martyrs, 1969) records the continuous persecution of the Jews. Frankel quotes the rending of a garment as a sign of mourning. By literally tearing his garment, the writer connects himself to the victims.

In *An entfder der velt* (An Answer to the World, 1971), Fram refers to Jews being forced to wear the Yellow Star and how they were exterminated:

I wear the yellow star once again
In the distance there still billows
the smoke from the lime-kiln----

In *Dos Letste Kapital* (1984) Fram expresses his personal anger towards the perpetrators:

Your hands today are drenched with blood,
That blood you will never be able to
wash away,
Your shame became extinguished within you
And you're your streets are rotten now
with murder.⁵

One can imagine how Fram must have felt when writing these lines. At the same time, he felt similar outrage over events in his new country, where the Nationalist Party, led by hardened right-wingers who had sided with those very barbarous beings who had eliminated almost all the Jews of his homeland, were in control. This was not only

his own feeling; almost all Jews in South Africa felt similar concern over the pro-Nazi Afrikaner leaders. It took writers like S I Mocke⁶ and Herman Charles Bosman⁷ to attempt to placate the local Jewish community. Correspondence between Fram and Mocke led to Fram's contributing to the latter's bilingual journal *Horison*.

While continuing to write, Fram involved himself in the diamond and Persian carpet trades, a relic of his first wife's father's business. This made him wealthy and enabled him to attempt farming in the Hekpoort district for a while. However, this did not satiate his restless spirit. After a couple of years, he sold the farm and joined his brother in Zimbabwe, becoming a food producer in Harare. Concomitantly, this forged another direction in his writing. Living in Zimbabwe influenced him to be more conscious of what was happening to the black peoples, and led to a number of poems about them. Thus, African titles like *Matatulu*, *Matabela* and *Matumba* appeared, published in *Dorem Afrike* in the 1950s. These typified for the first time in Yiddish the bush, primitive farming, kraal life, traditional weaponry and the like. Fram also wrote pieces such as *Boeren*⁸ which created the portrait of the rural Afrikaner, both in South Africa and Zimbabwe. *William Scott* was an insightful tribute to whites who toiled to advance the emancipation of Black people, particularly in Kenya, Namibia, Malawi and Botswana as changes swept throughout Africa. Much of the farming activity reminded Fram of visits to his own grandfather in Lithuania, which had spurred him to write *Baym zeydn* (at Grandfather's, in *Lider und Poemes*).

Fram recorded the racial schisms between the Afrikaner, the Jew and the black people in such works as *Volkns iber Hekpoort* (Clouds over Hekpoort) and *In Afrike* (In Africa - one assumes, this was never completed). In 1983, for his 80th birthday, Fram produced an anthology of his work, entitled *A Shvalb oyfn Dakh* (A swallow on the roof), which seemed to have attributed to his earlier life in Europe.⁹

As Sherman points out, this publication made available much of Fram's *Lider tsu a froy aza vi du* ("Lyrics to a Woman such as you", possibly alluding to his first wife), which illustrated how deeply lyrical and passionate his compositions were.

To illustrate more of his prowess and nostalgic longing for his home, Lithuania, here is another piece of Fram's insight (entitled *My Departure*):

The Shirt-I still remember-my sister
sewed it.
I know her tiny stitches, the careful seams.

She breathed her quiet sincerity and
 longing into it
 While sitting alone for long, long evenings
 until late.
 And after that my mother quietly made
 a parcel
 Packed with oranges and sweets.
 I remember, such a tiny woman in the
 autumn evening,
 As she worriedly escorted me to the
 stretched out, broad road.
 My father stood tiredly with thin, long
 arms,
 His white head bowed, without word and
 silent.
 A bloody sunset burned in our hearts,
 As a dark night separated us all,
 And in that autumn night I left them alone,
 A dry, sharp pain cut through my silent
 heart,
 And many desperate tears we moan
 Muffled by dismal loneliness we cry out
 desolately.
 And here in Far-off Africa, it is painful
 and hard
 Wandering in a strange land filled with
 pure longing...
 My sister dressed me up in a nice-
 smelling shirt,
 And mother's tear accompanied me along
 the way.

One can imagine Fram's anguish at leaving his family, home and land, little visualizing what was to befall those he was leaving behind. One can also understand why writers and poets of his generation never allowed themselves to bend to prescribed religion, such sensitive people being unable to address themselves to the enormous hurt of oppression and suffering engendered by the horrors of pogroms, the 1917 Revolution and the Holocaust. It was only later, when time had helped to heal the torn spirit, that love transcended the bitterness. As Fram wrote:

To Whom shall I address my yearning -
 I know not whom - to God or thee?
 I only know my soul in burning -
 I ask you both to set me free.

And this will be my last ambition,
 A plea you both can well afford.
 But who will grant me my petition -
 Will it be you? - will it be God?

One initially thinks that that Fram was addressing his plea to his wife and to G-d. But on reflection he could have meant - Thee/You - to mean Mankind, the cruelest being on this planet! Sherman comments that Fram's verse is the pain, the loneliness and suffering the Neshoma endures. Did King

David in his Psalms (such as 5, 7 and 12) put forward the very same ideas found in Fram's poetic philosophies, beseeching G-d to save his soul?

With Fram's passing on 10 July 1988, aged 85, South Africa lost one of its most prolific Yiddish language poets. The great pity of it all is that until someone undertakes the complete translation of his poetry his work remains in limbo. We, the modern Jewish generation, and non-Jewish appreciators of the poetic word cannot otherwise revel in some of the most beautiful wordsmithing of this truly brilliant mind. There is another problem and that after his death all Fram's archival material was sent to the University of Texas, Austin. This is a huge pity, for to either journey there to study, translate or even to make copies, would at today's monetary exchange rates, plus airfares cost a veritable fortune. This writer is at a loss to understand why it was necessary to have moved such valuable material to another continent!

NOTES

- 1 Sherman J., "'What balm for the Heart...?': The Yiddish Poetry of David Fram (1903-1988)", *Midstream*, July/August, 2006, pp.7-11.
- 2 Translated from *Lider and pemes* by Amelia Levy, *Jewish Affairs*, January 1949, p28.
- 3 A bust of Fram was sculpted by Lippy Lipschitz and Irma Stern painted his portrait.
- 4 Frankel H, 'David Fram: Lithuanian Yiddish Poet of the South African Diaspora', Doctoral Thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, 2013.
- 5 This and the foregoing extract translated by Hazel Frankel (see 'David Fram: Lithuanian Yiddish Poet of the South African Diaspora', *Jewish Affairs*, Pesach 2013, pp.26-34).
- 6 *SA Jewish Times*, 30 July, 1948.
- 7 Bosman, H.C., 'The Nationalists and the Jews', *SA Jewish Times*, 6 August, 1948.
- 8 Fram D, 'Boeren' in *Lider un Poemes*, pp 210-249.
- 9 Fram, D, *A Shvalb oyfn dakh*, Johannesburg, Kayor, 1983.



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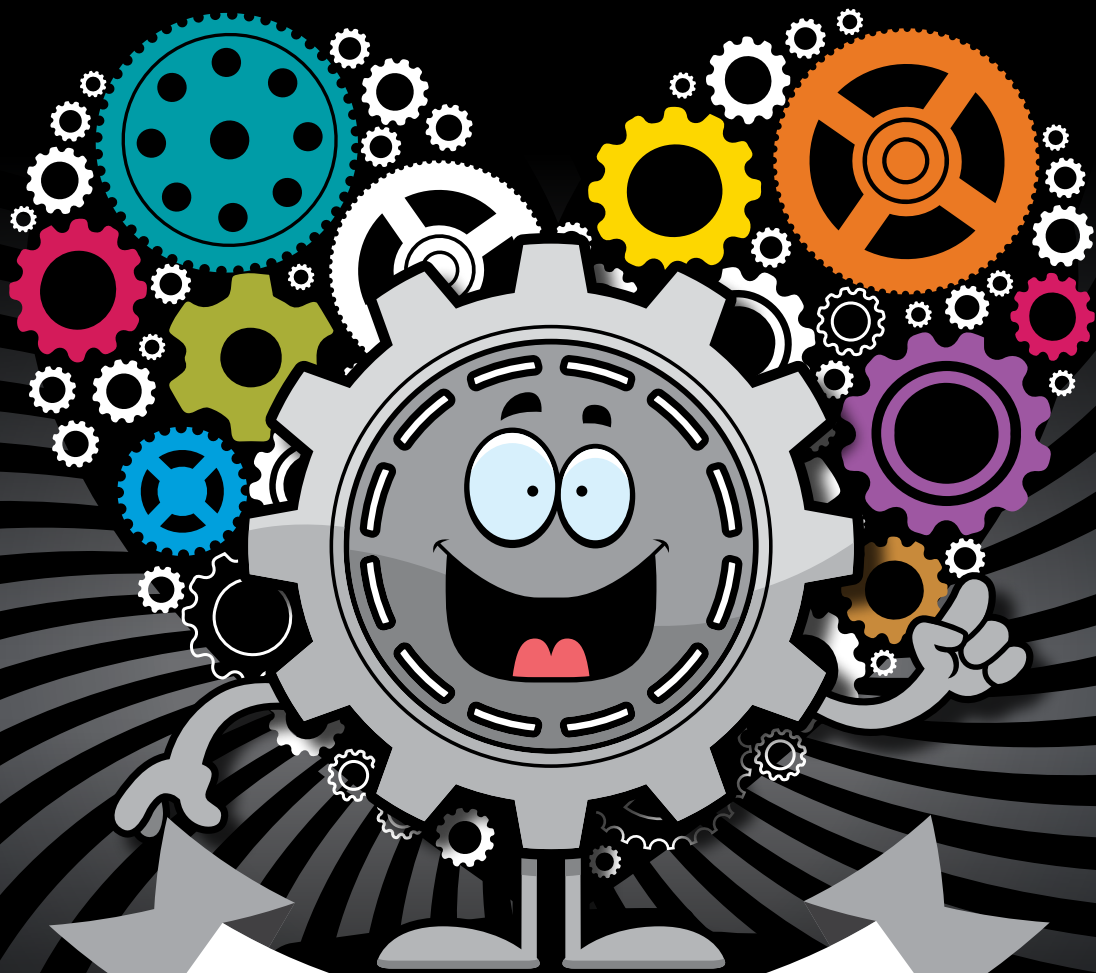


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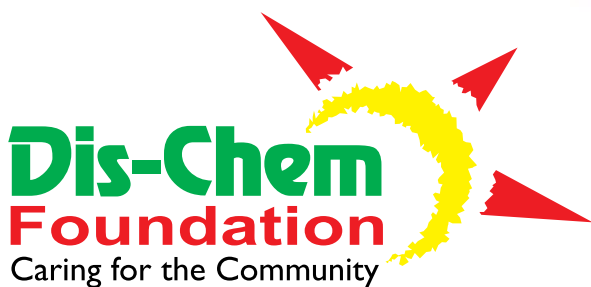


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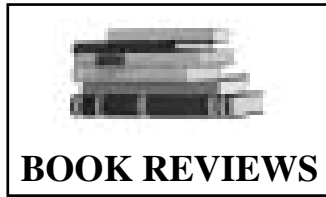
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CHIEF RABBI CYRIL HARRIS: HOW HUMANITY, MORALITY AND HUMOUR HELPED LEAD A COMMUNITY

*

Marcia Leveson

“When the history of our transformation is written, his name will be among those who lent a hand in the efforts to establish democracy, to heal divisions, and to start the process of building a better life.” These are the words of Nelson Mandela. He was referring neither to a native-born South African nor to a fellow ANC member, but to Rabbi Cyril Harris, a man born in Glasgow and educated in London, who took up his position as Chief Rabbi in South Africa in 1987. It says much about the impact that this exceptional person and unique spiritual leader made during his tenure, which ended with his retirement in 2004.

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the death of Rabbi Harris, Geoff Sifrin has compiled a vivid portrait of the man and his service. He skillfully and sensitively weaves together interviews and memories from those who knew him or who were involved with him in his multiple activities. He includes key passages from Harris’s own memoir of his life, published in 2000, and contributions from his wife and sons. This book is therefore not merely the record of the work of a Chief Rabbi; it is a document for all those interested in the history of South Africa.

During the mid-1980s, many in the Jewish community felt threatened by the upheavals in the country and the atmosphere of impending change. Numbers dwindled due to emigration, and the position of Chief Rabbi was vacant. A selection committee spearheaded by Mendel Kaplan and under the guidance of Lord Jakobovits, Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, settled on Rabbi Harris, who by this time,

through his special qualities of wisdom and leadership, as well as his charisma and gift for oratory, had already built up three large congregations in London. Harris accepted the challenge to take office in territory unfamiliar both politically and communally, and in a tense country on the brink of dramatic transformation. He saw it as an opportunity to put into practice his strongly-held belief in “being a religious Jew in the real world”.

Sifrin describes how Harris and his wife, Ann, travelled throughout South Africa, visiting every Jewish community, and how his towering presence provided invaluable guidance and support. As his son, Jonathan writes, “with his physical and moral energy... he transformed the attitude of the bulk of the Jewish community away from their sometimes passive acceptance of apartheid”.

Because South African Jews were not accustomed to a Chief Rabbi of this nature, his engagement with controversial issues took courage, which he had in abundance. This was evident when he attended the eulogy at the funeral of a prominent Jewish educationalist and humanist, Franz Auerbach, even though it was a Reform ceremony. He gave an address at the funeral rally of the leading member of the SA Communist Party, Joe Slovo, even though Slovo was outspokenly opposed to Jewish religious orthodoxy.

Although Harris was fundamentally rooted in Orthodox Judaism, he had the all-too-rare quality of a generous “compassionate universalism” which extended to an acknowledgement of other branches of Judaism and to members of other faith groups and races. He was an active participant in many interfaith initiatives. But while he was neither narrow-minded nor bigoted, he was unflinchingly committed to the principles of Halacha.

The book is no mere hagiography; despite his immense gift for friendship – encapsulated in the iconic photograph of his embrace with

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.

Nelson Mandela - it is clear that indeed, he also ruffled some feathers. When he felt that his deeply held beliefs were being challenged, his fiery temper flamed out and, to the consternation of some, he sometimes went out on a limb. In contrast to his predecessors, he actively encouraged Jewish engagement in the political process, and even earned the nickname of "Comrade Rabbi". At the SA Board of Deputies conference in 1990, although mindful of the historic and political background of South African Jewry, he nevertheless called on the Board "to up its whole image". He went before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1997 and apologised for "the evil of indifference which so many in the Jewish community professed" during apartheid. His address to the TRC is quoted in full.

Harris was not content to concentrate solely on the Jewish community's internal affairs; he threw himself into the social and economic problems of the country as a whole. The book relates how in 1994, together with Bertie Lubner, he founded the important organisational outreach programme Tikkun (later Afrika Tikkun), which incorporated existing Jewish programmes and developed new projects to alleviate poverty, illness and unemployment. As Lubner puts it, "Mutual values, embodied in the African concept of ubuntu and the Jewish concept of tikkun olam were to be the guiding light that set Afrika Tikkun on its road to success".

Even from childhood, Ann Harris had been involved in community outreach. She became a partner in an English law firm, and in South Africa worked in legal social welfare. Quite soon she became a driving force in Tikkun, which has vastly grown and now boasts six centres of excellence. She continues as a director to the present day. Her account of

these times gives the reader a sense of the development of Tikkun, of her energetic, resolute spirit, and the vital and creative partnership between her and her husband.

Harris emerges from the pages as open-spirited, hugely principled and wise, with a great sense of humour, warmth and innate empathy for those less fortunate. As well, he had a rather unrabbinical partiality for cricket and 17th Century English metaphysical poetry. He won much admiration and great respect, and not only from South Africans. His legacy is an enduring one. It is fitting that in 2003 he was awarded the Jerusalem Prize for services to the Jewish people.

The concluding chapter deals with how, in honoring his memory and in the spirit of his particular vision, The Chief Rabbi CK Harris Memorial Foundation was set up in 2007. This aims to create partnerships with and offer assistance in training personnel in a variety of services. Areas of involvement are the mentoring of rabbanim; medical care for children with cancer; support for Jewish communal organisations and the nurturing of a large range of developmental groups working with disadvantaged communities.

This readable and enlightening book, filled with photographs that evoke the man and his work, is both record and tribute. Gideon Shimoni wrote of Rabbi Harris as having been "the right person in the right place" and "a ... gift to the Jewish community". But as Sifrin amply shows, the gift was equally to South African society as a whole.

Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris: how *humanity, morality and humour helped lead a community*, ed. Geoff Sifrin, Chief Rabbi CK Harris Memorial Foundation and Batya Bricker, 2015.

HOW LONG WILL SOUTH AFRICA SURVIVE? THE LOOMING CRISIS

*

Ralph Zulman

R W Johnson, an Emeritus Fellow of Magdalen College Oxford, has published twelve books, scores of academic papers and innumerable articles for the international press. In his best-selling book *How Long Will*

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.

South Africa Survive? (1977), he provided a controversial and highly original analysis of the prospects of the apartheid regime. Now, after more than twenty years of ANC rule, he believes the situation has become so critical that the question must be posed again, hence the title of his latest book.

How Long Will South Africa Survive? The Looming Crisis consists of a list of abbreviations and acronyms, a preface, ten chapters, notes and an index. It is dedicated to

Professor Lawrie Schlemmer, described as “a friend, a colleague and great South African”. Schlemmer, who was of part Jewish extraction, was a former Director of the Helen Suzman Foundation and an eminent sociologist and political analyst.

In the preface, the author describes how Jacob Zuma once sat in his classes. Zuma never expected to be president. Migrating to Durban from “a bone- poor rural background (his mother was a domestic, his father a policeman who died young)”, he told Johnson that he “used to polish the verandah, you know, jobs like that”. In the Durban of those days, the Zulu “house-boys” wore white calico uniforms trimmed with red on their sleeves and shorts and were barefoot. “The very existence of such a group of men as these Zulu house-boys bespoke the humiliation of the Zulu nation” Johnson observes. He remembers Zuma as being “full of bounce and life, always a very jovial man, and also politically aware”.

The Jewish lawyer Rowley Arenstein was Johnson’s great mentor. He remembers him and his wife, Jackie, with great warmth. They were both banned communists and placed under house arrest. The only person to whom he owes as much as he does, and as previously stated, to whom he has dedicated his book, is Schlemmer, in his estimation “a truly irreplaceable man” who was never given the appreciation or recognition that he deserved.

The ‘iron law’ of South African history is that the inflow of foreign investment has to continue for the country to go forward. Chapter One (entitled ‘Then and Now’) concludes with these sobering words:

After 1994 South Africa entered into a euphoric era - which slowly turned sour. For the promises that it had learnt while in exile in independent Africa, the ANC in fact repeated all the classic mistakes of such regimes. There was a lot of misgovernance but perhaps even more than that, there was simply no governance. For years the government was protected by a friendly international environment, by a long commodities boom and by growth which resulted simply from the opening of the rest of Africa to South African trade and investment. After twenty years of almost complete fecklessness, an extremely serious situation had been reached by 2014. It is the contention of this book that South Africa is now heading for another investment crisis, which will in turn end in another regime change, as crises always have in the past.

Chapter Two (‘KwaZulu-Natal, the World of Jacob Zuma’) begins with a description of the taxi wars of the 1990s. It goes on to deal

with armed robberies of cash in transit and the ANC’s struggle in KwaZulu-Natal, which was far more violent than in any other province because it came up against “the entrenched strength of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi’s Inkatha movement”.

This was the world that Zuma confronted when he returned from exile in February 1990. Most of his income probably came from the Indian businessman Schabir Shaik and tycoon Viviam Reddy. Zuma “blithely incurred large debts His family and lifestyle required more money than he could ever pay from his salary”. The pattern of sympathetic Indians subsidizing Zulu politicians was, Johnson points out, “almost tradition in KwaZulu-Natal...ever since Gandhi funded the Natal Indian Congress”. Zuma’s “rock-solid base was his own Zulu heartland but this was not enough”. He was greatly helped by the special relationship between the Zulus and the Indians. Johnson describes Zuma as “an extremely pleasant and genial man, almost universally popular among those who know him. His fine singing voice and joviality meant that he was in great demand to sing at weddings and funerals”.

President Thabo Mbeki had a low opinion of Zuma and at first tolerated him. Once he was re-elected in 2004, however, he wanted him out. This was not to be – in the end, Zuma ousted Mbeki. His sweeping victory was “an epochal victory for grass-roots democracy”. Much of the story that followed took the form of paying off debts incurred in the desperate years of 2005-7.

The Ishebe group of companies was founded by the Zuma family as a major vehicle for its interests and uses the Zuma name to push for contracts. No fewer than five family members either sit on the board or serve in executive positions. Zuma’s nephew, Khulubuse, is involved in over thirty companies. He works alongside Zuma’s lawyer, Michael Hulley, who was “apparently rewarded for helping Zuma to escape various charges against him”. The pattern which emerges is characterized by Johnson as a “dense forest of family corporate behavior” in which Zuma’s family “has seen his ascent to political leadership as a once-in-a-life-time opportunity to get rich quick...” The Zuma era, he writes, has “brought about the sweeping criminalization of the South African state”.

Chapters Three through to Nine describe in detail the ANC under Zuma, the 2014 Mangaung conference, the new class structure, culture wars, the state’s repression of economic activity and the Brics alternative respectively. In Chapter Eight, the point is made that in response to Julius Malema’s “set of magic formulae”, his ANC competitors produced their “own magic”. This situation inevitably caused “frissons of anxiety among the minorities

(especially Asians and Jews), but South Africa's ruling elite appears to be blithely oblivious to it, as also the damage done to the investment climate".

In the final, tenth, Chapter, entitled 'The Impossibility of Autarchy', Johnson concludes with these somewhat bleak views:

... the whole ANC experiment is top-heavy ... in power the ANC has actually become more chiefly, more tribal, a giant federation of political bosses held together by patronage, clientelism and concomitant looting and corruption. This has created a political regime which is quite incapable of managing and developing a modern state. It may take great social convulsions to change that because the groups now in power will not easily let go of it. Indeed had they played their cards more cleverly they might have consolidated their rule. But they have done the opposite. The result is an imminent crisis on many fronts...

My own hope - supported by certain optimism - is that, as in Portugal, this will ultimately see the consolidation of liberal democracy here in South Africa too.

Elsewhere in the book, Johnson states that "... everything suggests that South Africa under ANC rule is fast slipping backward and that even the survival of South Africa as a unitary state cannot be taken for granted".

I agree with the view that Johnson's analysis is "strikingly original and cogently argued". His analysis is lucid and shows a complete lack of deference towards the conventional wisdom. He writes without fear or favor. His book is commended not only to every South African but to all who are interested in the future of South Africa.

How Long Will South Africa Survive: The Looming Crisis by R W Johnson, Oxford University Press, 2015, 266pp

SOAP TO SENATE: A GERMAN JEW AT THE DAWN OF APARTHEID

*

David Ginsberg

This biography of Senator Franz Ginsberg provides wonderful insight into the tensions and sequence of events of a bygone age that shaped modern South Africa, and specifically into the significant role played in that regard by this public spirited and liberal minded Jewish entrepreneur. The work further enhances our understanding of the global events and prevailing antisemitism in Europe that influenced the difficult decisions faced by many Jews at the time, one of which was that taken, in 1880, by Dr Nathan Ginsberg in Germany, to send his eighteen year-old son Franz to King William's Town, South Africa. It gives substance to the life, and context to the role played by Senator Ginsberg as a humble, principled, pragmatic and humanistic leader, one who gained the respect of the people as a German and a Jew, and as loyal British subject. He was a Victorian South African

with a deep love for his adopted homeland and all its peoples.

The author, Adam Yamey, and I are both great grandchildren of Senator Franz. I am grateful to him for his research, and for having dedicated the book to his cousins, Jane Rindl and myself.

Yamey's well-researched biography reveals how the young Franz quickly established himself as an industrialist and politician. Successfully dabbling in many enterprises, from match-making, photography and diamond mining to candle making, farming and the manufacture of soap, he went on, in 1910, to become the first elected Jewish Senator of the newly formed Union of South Africa. Yamey weaves a compelling narrative of Ginsberg's remarkable political journey to the Senate. His lifetime of public service commenced in the Council of the Borough of King William's Town, where he rose from councilor to mayor, and later to Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Cape Province prior to his election as a Senator.

Through meticulous research into old press articles and public records, Yamey shows how Ginsberg came to grips with the structures

David Ginsberg has a background in retail management, accounting and school business management. He has held the position of Director Finance and Administration, and joint CEO at United Herzlia Schools, Cape Town, for the past 27 years.

and mechanisms of government, developing a deep understanding of the needs of Colonial industry and the aspirations its citizens of various cultures and persuasions. Always wanting to do good and looking to improving the lives of all peoples, including those less fortunate, he tirelessly promoted Colonial industries and campaigned for the introduction of protective tariffs to allow them to become more competitive.

Yamey describes how Ginsberg, a self-professed liberal, gained the respect and confidence of the Eastern Cape German settlers and the Xhosa people, how his humanitarian approach influenced decisions at various levels of government, and how he strongly opposed the voices of prejudice. The beginnings of separate development and seeds of Apartheid had been sown many years before in the hearts and minds of Europeans and even in those early days it was evident in all his dealing with the different levels of government. Despite his prescience, there was a certain inevitability that seemed to conspire against him.

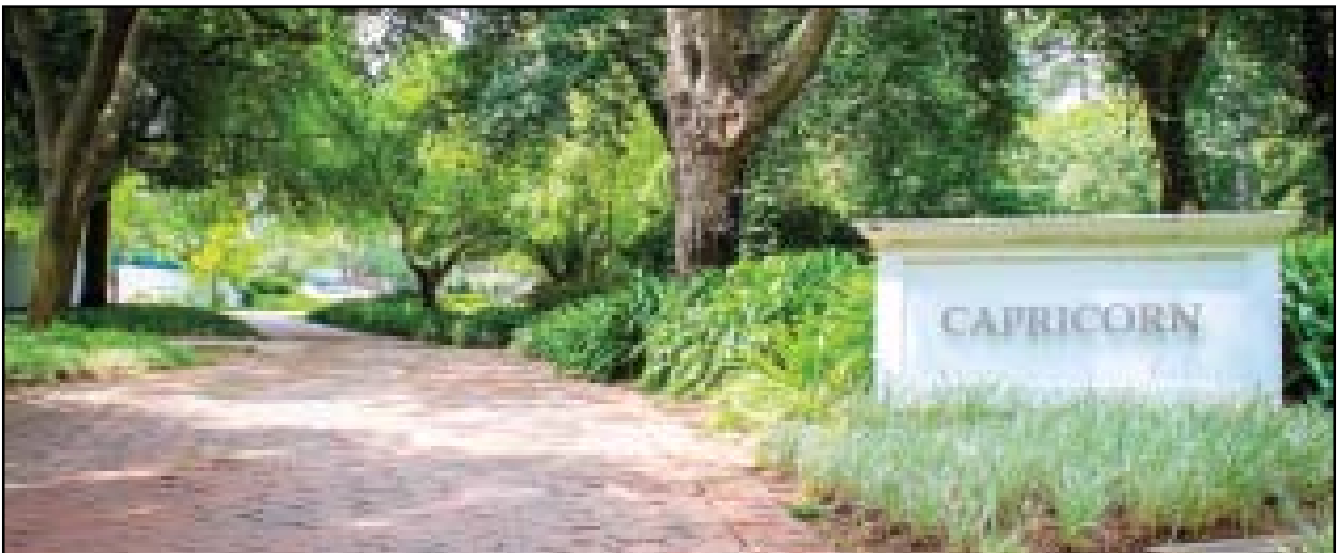
The author is able to connect events like the advent of bubonic plague in the late 1800s, which gave rise to the need to address sanitary conditions in 'King', and consequently led to the establishment of a 'location' for 'natives' outside the town. Named "Ginsberg location", it was here that Steve Biko later lived. 'Locations' were subsequently used for political purposes by proponents of separate development during the dark days of apartheid.

The politically intensive process of coalescing common sentiment and benefit to be derived from the formation of a union or federation of South Africa was mainly focused on economic benefits rather than the franchise for all. Hardline positions taken by most Afrikaner politicians resulted in the vote for 'Natives' being forfeited in order for unification to be achieved. The intriguing and perhaps little-known fact is that prior to unification, there was limited franchise for "civilized Natives" of the Cape Province. The history of South Africa would have been very different had it not been decided to shelve this important issue for resolution at a future time.

In telling the story of the life of Senator Franz Ginsberg, Yamey also reveals the rich tapestry and complexity of life for early settlers in the Eastern Cape, their difficulties, challenges and the importance of family in achieving their aspirations for a better life.

Soap to Senate is a well written and researched book, replete with references to well-known personalities of the time. It will be of interest to all wishing to learn more about the contribution of Jewish settlers and about the early beginnings of what forces influenced the political landscape as we know it today.

Soap to Senate: A German Jew at the Dawn of Apartheid by Adam Yamey, published by the author, 458pp, 2016. Available on Kindle and in hard copy.



Shana Tova U'Metuka
Best wishes for a Sweet & Prosperous New Year



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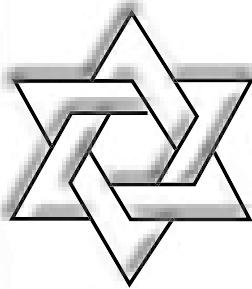


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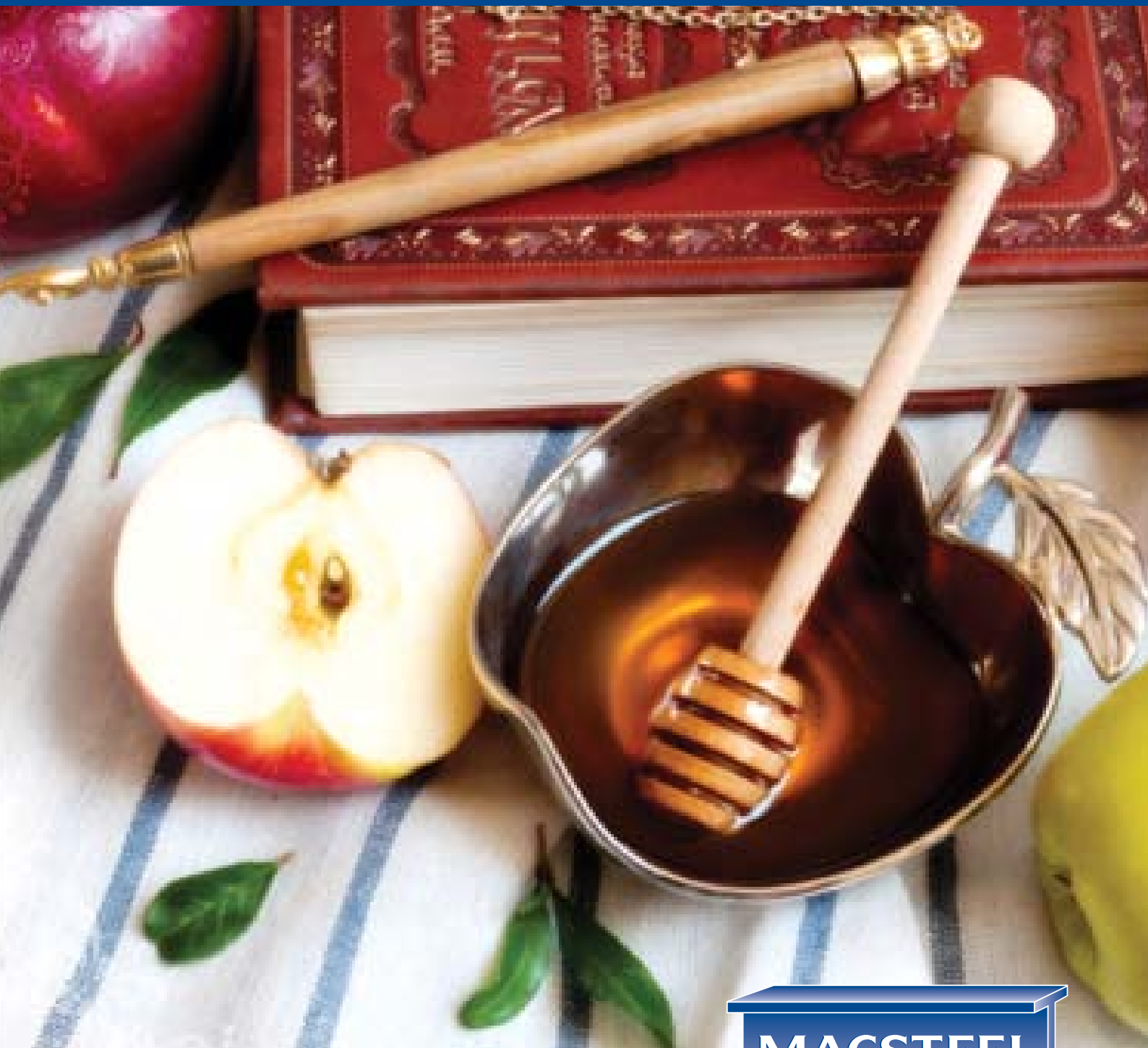


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