

JEWISH AFFAIRS

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

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ENQUIRIES beagle@sajbd.org

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david@sajbd.org

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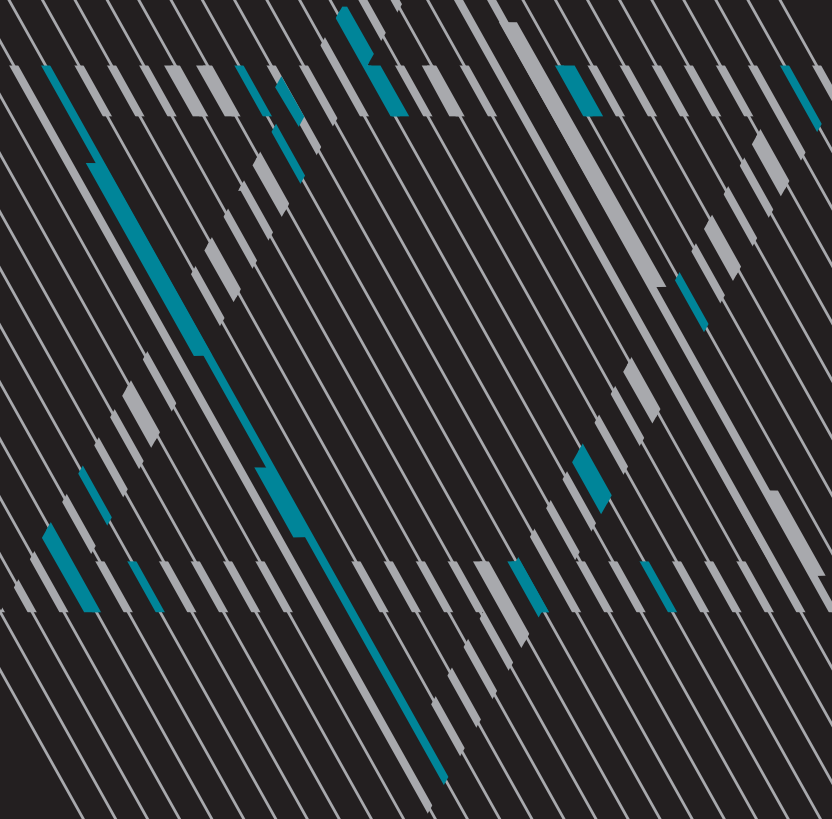
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FRONT COVER

Drawing room, Sammy Marks House Museum
(see article by Gwynne Schrire in this issue)



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JEWISH AFFAIRS

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THE BIBLE AND MUSIC

*

Cecil Bloom

The Bible is full of references to music in the life of the early Israelites. When Laban reproaches Jacob in the Mountain of Gilead after Jacob had fled from him, he tells him he would have sent him away “with celebration and with songs and with *tof* [drum] and with *kinnor* [harp]” (*Genesis* 31:27). This indicates the importance of music as a normal accompaniment to an escort of honour in those early days of the Hebrew nation. Moses’ song at the Red Sea (*Exodus* 15:1-18), perhaps the first song of freedom, is an integral part of Orthodox prayer and full of powerful imagery. Almost Moses’ last act is another song that he sang on the banks of the Jordan in sight of the Promised Land (*Deuteronomy* 32:1-43).

Joshua, of course, used sound and instrument to startling effect when he destroyed the walls of Jericho (*Joshua* 6:1-20) and David’s passion for music is well-known. He first used it to sooth Saul’s bad moods when he played his lyre for the king (1 *Samuel* 16:23). David was always conscious of music’s power, especially when he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem amid scenes of rejoicing: “And David and all the House of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of cypress wood, on lyres and on lutes and timbrels and on rattles and on cymbals” (2 *Samuel* 6:5).

The 12th Century sage R. Judah Halevi drew attention to the important role played by music in the national life of the ancient Israelites (*The Kuzari* 2:65). “Music” he wrote, “was the pride of the nation that distributed their songs in such a way that they fell to the lot of the aristocracy of the people [the Levites] who made practical use of them in the holy house and in the holy season”. He went on to comment that it was highly esteemed as an art form as long as people preserved its nobleness and purity. By Halevi’s time, the art had fallen from its glory and was practiced only by “half-crazy” people.

The Psalms and Solomon’s *Song of Songs* are supreme examples of poetry and song for the uplifting of man’s spirit. We may not have the music but the words with their pathos and sincerity stand out as one of man’s greatest achievements. And the *Song of Songs* must surely be the greatest of all Hebrew songs. The *Book of Psalms* concludes with a psalm extolling God that has been called the “greatest symphony of praise to God ever composed”. Eight different kinds of instruments are cited in this final psalm, the 150th.

One of the most famous of passages in the *Book of Psalms* describes the deep sense of sorrow of those in Babylonian exile when they remembered the Holy City, grief so intense that their harps (*kinnorot*) would be discarded and hung up on trees:

By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion,
Upon the willows in the midst thereof
We hanged up our harps (*Psalms* 137: 1-2)

Prophecy, one of the highest forms of religious achievement attained only by few in history, was also inspired by music. Elisha needed a minstrel to play to him before “the hand of the Lord came upon him” (2 *Kings* 3:15). But music in the Bible is also depicted less gloriously, such as, for example, when *Isaiah* refers to some musical instruments being used in disgraceful drunken merry-making (5:12) and when Amos deplors the use of the *nevel* to accompany ribald songs (6:5). But the greatest misuse of music occurs in the story of the Golden Calf, when the Israelites sing before it (*Exodus* 32:18).

The Bible’s first musical reference is that of Jubal, “the father of all such as the harp and the pipe [*uggav*]” (*Genesis* 4:21), so that music must be the most ancient of all the arts; but Hebrew music proper clearly begins with King David, who introduced music into divine worship, and the Levites were appointed as the singers and players of the Temple (1 *Chronicles* 15: 16-24). The sons of Aaron had, however, already been committed to musical duties when God told Moses they would be responsible for blowing the silver trumpets (*Numbers* 10:8). Later, professional singers appear in the Temple:

Cecil Bloom, a veteran contributor to *Jewish Affairs*, is a former technical director of a multinational pharmaceutical firm in the UK. His essays on Jewish themes relating to music, literature, history and Bible have also appeared in *Midstream* and *Jewish Quarterly*.

“And these were the singers, chiefs of the fathers’ houses of the Levites, dwelling in the Temple chambers free from other duties for they were employed in that work day and night” (1 *Chronicles* 9:33).

The Levites’ music accompanied some of the Temple sacrifices but, since sacrifices were not brought at night, this verse must imply that the Levites were busy at night (perhaps also during the day) rehearsing their music as well as carrying out their duties during sacrifices. The musical director of the Temple was Chenaniahu, as 1 *Chronicles* 15:22 records (“And Chenaniahu, chief of the Levites, was over the song; he was master of the song because he was skilful”). There has been much dispute over whether both vocal and instrumental music were obligatory but the *Gemara* rules that only vocal rendition was compulsory (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Sukah* 51a). That music must have been a regular feature of religious life is also illustrated by Amos’ denunciation of some of the ritual practices when he exclaimed “Take away from me the noise of the songs and not let me hear the melody of thy lutes” (*Amos* 5:23). It is recorded also that Heman and his children, seventeen sons and daughters, were instructed to provide the musical service for the Temple (1 *Chronicles* 25:5-6) and an elaborate musical structure for the Temple is described in 1 *Chronicles* 25:1-6, where many instruments were played.

A careful study of the Bible teaches us much about the musical instruments of the ancient Israelites that usually accompany singers. Although only a small number appear in the Pentateuch, most are detailed in the later Books. The *Book of Daniel* (3: 5, 7, 10 and 15) yields much information on instruments and lists those of an orchestra present at the Court of Nebuchadnezzar. Some, but probably not all, these instruments would have been used by Jews. Much research has been carried out on the ancient instruments of the Bible and scholars have brought forward many theories on their construction and make. Wall paintings and pottery and coin inscriptions have helped us to gather knowledge on the subject.

Biblical instruments, like those of a modern symphony orchestra, can be split into three categories – string, wind and percussion.

Strings

The *kinnor* is the most commonly cited stringed instrument and is closely followed by the *nevel*. Opinions vary on what these instruments were. Some scholars say the *kinnor* was a harp, some that it was a lyre, others that it was a lute and yet others a guitar. The *nevel* was either a lyre or a lute.

According to Flavius Josephus, the former had ten and the latter twelve strings but this is contradicted by *Psalms* 33, 92 and 144, which assigns ten strings to the *nevel*. While the *nevel* was played with the fingers, the *kinnor* was generally plucked with a plectrum but we do know that David plucked the *kinnor* with his hands or perhaps, more probably, with his fingers. (1 *Samuel* 16:16, 16:23, 18:10 and 19:9).

The Talmud contains a number of accounts of David and his *kinnor*. One is that he used to hang it over his bed and, when midnight arrived, a north wind would blow on it, causing it to play on its own (*Berachot* 3b). The *kinnor* was an instrument of joy and mirth and was used to accompany the voice, as in *Ezekiel* 26:13 (“And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be heard no more”) attests. It is of interest to note that the word *kinnor* is the Modern Hebrew word for violin. Other stringed instruments in existence in the Biblical period included



Nevel, probably the main instrument accompanying *Psalms* in the Temple (Potsdam Public Museum)

the *asor*, possibly a variant of the *nevel*. Its etymology suggests it had ten strings because *assara* is the Hebrew word for ten. The *psanterin* was one of Nebuchadnezzar's orchestra and was probably a form of *nevel* or *kinnor*. The Modern Hebrew word for piano is *psanter*, derived from *psanterin*. A *sabka* was a kind of harp that had four strings (*Daniel*, 3:5).

Wind Instruments

The *shofar* will be the most familiar to the modern reader through its use on *Rosh Hashona* but it was usually connected to some military activity and it had no musical use whatever. It warned of impending attack or doom but was also used for specific religious purposes. The *chatzotzera*, a form of trumpet fashioned from silver, similarly was used to give signals and was also used in the Temple. It is referred to in the singular only once (*Hosea* 5:8) but many times in the plural. Moses was commanded to make two of them (*Numbers* 10:2).

There were a number of musical wind instruments. The *uggav* was probably a shepherd flute. It has only a brief mention in the Bible but it was the second to be named - Jubal used it (*Genesis* 4:21). It is mentioned in the *Book of Job* and in *Psalms* 150, this latter suggesting it had wide usage. Its sound must have been joyful because *Job* (21:12) complains that the wicked "rejoice

at [its] sound". There are not too many references to the *halil*, a woodwind pipe, and it appears in the Bible only from the time of Saul. It first appeared with the prophets who met Saul (1 *Samuel* 10:5) and it was present when Solomon was anointed (1 *Kings* 1:40) but it seems usually to be considered as an instrument of joy with no special religious significance. Talmudic sources, however, in describing the ceremony of the drawing of water on the festival of *Sukkot*, refer to this as the *halil* because this instrument was the main one used in the ceremony. It was also involved in bringing the first fruits to Jerusalem. The *Mishnah* tells us (*Bikurim* 3:3) that, as a sign of joy, the procession to Jerusalem was headed by a musician playing the *halil* and this continued until the Temple Mount was reached. *Isaiah* (30:29) hints at this procession: "And gladness of heart, as when one goeth with the pipe to come unto the mountain of the Lord, to the Rock of Israel". The *halil* was very popular in secular life and was one of the instruments derided by *Isaiah* when he deplored drunken activities (5:12). *Jeremiah* mentions it in comparing its sound with the moaning in his heart for the people of Moab and Kir-heres (48:36), suggesting that it was not always perceived as having a joyful sound. The Modern Hebrew word for flute is *halil* but the Biblical version was probably a double reed of the oboe family. The other wind instruments are all



Chatzotserot (trumpets) from the Second Temple, shown on the Arch of Titus, Rome

mentioned in the *Book of Daniel* previously referred to. These are the *keren*, a horn or trumpet which Heman's sons were ordered to play (1 *Chronicles* 25:5), the *mashrokita*, a type of pipe (perhaps a Pan's pipe), and the *sumponiah*. This latter may, however, not be an instrument because the word can mean a 'combination of sounds' or an 'orchestra'. It could well be the origin of the word 'symphony'. There are, however, suggestions from the *Mishnah* (*Keilim*, 11:6) that it was a musical instrument somewhat akin to a bagpipe.

Percussions

Percussive instruments feature prominently in the Bible. They include the *tof*, a small drum that may have had jingles and the timbrel or a tambourine. Miriam used the *tof* in her dance of joy after the Red Sea crossing (*Exodus* 15:20); it was often played by women (*Judges* 11:34, 1 *Samuel* 18:6) but also by men. It is mentioned three times in the *Book of Psalms* in connection with the praising of God (81:3, 149:3 and 150:4). It was with King David when he brought the Ark to Jerusalem (2 *Samuel* 6:5). The Modern Hebrew word for 'drum' is *tof*.



**Tof, or frame drum
(Potsdam Public Museum)**

The *tzilzal*, a cymbal, was made of copper and had sound penetration "as far as Jericho" (*Mishnah Tamid* 3:8). An instrument of the Temple, it too was first referred to as one of those in David's procession when he brought the Ark to Jerusalem. The *paamon* was a bell or jingle that was attached to the high priests' skirts: "And the sound thereof shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord and when he cometh out" (*Exodus* 28:35).

Musical instruments were forbidden on holy days except in the Temple. The reason for this is believed to be to prevent musicians from being tempted to carry out any makeshift repairs to an instrument that required it - such work clearly being prohibited on these days. In the Temple, however, the Priests and the Levites could be relied upon to ensure that Biblical law was not transgressed (*Beitzah* 36b and *Tosfot Sukah*, 50a).

And what of women's role in the musical life of Israel? That their voices were accepted in secular society is evidenced from the comments of Barzillai the Gileadite when he declined David's invitation to accompany him to Jerusalem. At eighty years of age, he said, he was, too old for the journey because he could not "hear any more the voices of singing men and women" (2 *Samuel* 19:36). Female voices are often mentioned in the Bible. Miriam's response to the Song of Moses was to take a timbrel and lead the women in song (*Exodus* 15:20-21). Jephthah's daughter's use of music ended in tragedy. She comes out to welcome her father with timbrels (*Judges* 11:34) only to be condemned because of his foolish vow. The women of Israel greeted Saul with song after David's slaying of Goliath; they came from their homes with timbrels and lutes (1 *Samuel* 18:6). And finally, there is the report in the *Book of Ezra* (2:65) that of the 7337 servants of the rich who returned from Babylon, 200 were male and female singers, although *Nehemiah* (7:67) puts the number at 245. Nowhere in the Bible, however, is there any indication that the two sexes sang in unison and, in fact, the Talmud (*Berachot* 24a) derives from the passage "for sweet is thy voice" (*Song of Songs* 2:14) that a man may not listen to a woman singing except his wife because praise of a female voice could lead to unwanted desire. Thus the two sexes singing in unison would not be allowed.

THE TU BISHVAT FESTIVAL

*

Henia Bryer

Tu Bishvat is a somewhat forgotten and much neglected Jewish festival, especially outside of Israel. The etymology of the name derives from the letters ‘*tet*’ - number nine in the Hebrew alphabet - and ‘*vav*’ - number six - that together constitute the number 15, and which in Hebrew is pronounced as “*Tu*”. It is the date of the festival: the 15th of the month of Shvat, which is the fifth month in the Hebrew calendar. Tu Bishvat has another name - *Rosh Ha-Shanah la-Ilanot*, the New Year of the Trees. That name originated in the Mishnah, but the festival is deeply rooted in the Torah and in the Hebrew Bible (Tanach) as a whole.

Trees are accorded special significance in the Tanach. In Proverbs (3: 18), the Torah itself is described as a tree of life, a metaphor that is echoed in the well-known prayer in the synagogue: *Etz hayim hi le-mahazikim ba* - “She is a tree of life to them that cleave to her”. Man is often compared to a tree, as in Psalm 92: *Tsodik ka-tamar yifrah: ke-erez ba-Levanon yishgeh* - “The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon”; while Psalm 1:3 compares man to a tree “planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season”; In welcoming the Sabbath, we pray “*Az yeranenu kol atse ha-ya’ar*” - “Let all the trees of the forest exult before the Lord who cometh.”

According to Biblical law, there is a seven-year agricultural cycle concluding with the Sabbatical year, the *Shmitta*. The Hebrew Bible contains specific laws regarding the harvesting and consuming of the fruit of the trees according to this cycle. Leviticus 19: 23-4 contains a prohibition on eating the fruit of trees in the first three years after they are planted. This is known as ‘*Orlah*’, literally, ‘uncircumcised fruit’.¹ In the fourth year, there is an obligation to bring the fourth-year crops to Jerusalem as a tithe, known as *Neta Revi’i*. Deuteronomy 14: 22-29, refers

to a *Ma’asar Sheni*, the Second Tithe that had to be eaten in Jerusalem. It is called the second tithe because it is in addition to the two percent tithe that has to be given to the priests (*Kohanim*) and to the ten percent tithe that is given to the Levites. In the third and sixth year of the cycle, instead of the owners eating the second tithe in Jerusalem, they were obligated to give it to the poor. This tithing is known as *Ma’asar Ani* (“the tithe for the poor”).² In the Orthodox Jewish world, these practices are still observed. Fruit that ripens on a three year-old tree before Tu Bishvat is considered ‘*Orlah*’ and eating it is forbidden, while fruit that ripens on or after Tu Bishvat can be eaten. In the first, second, fourth and fifth year years of the *Shmitta* cycle, *Ma’asar Sheni* is observed today by a ceremony redeeming tithing obligations with a coin; in the third and sixth year, *Ma’asar Ani* is substituted, and no coin is required for redeeming it. It was these biblical injunctions that obliged the rabbis of the Mishnah to determine a date for the New Year of the Trees in order to calculate the age of fruit-bearing trees to determine the year to which the tithes belonged.

Tu Bishvat appears only once in the Mishnah, in Tractate Rosh Hashanah. It is one of a total of four new years that are marked in the Hebrew calendar. The dates of each of the new years were debated by the rabbis. The first date was that of the first of Nissan, and was considered to be the new year for calculating the reign of kings and of the festivals. The first of Nissan was also a contender for the beginning of the calendar year. However, Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Shimon declared the first of Tishrei to be the new year for the calculation of the calendar, sabbatical years and jubilees. The first of Elul was declared the new year for animal tithes. The date of the new year for planting and sowing was also hotly debated. According to the school of Shammai, it was the first day of Shevat, while the school of Hillel declared it to be the fifteenth of Shevat (Rosh Hashanah: 2a). The rabbis of the Talmud ruled in favour of Hillel and thus the 15th of Shevat became the date for calculating the beginning of the agricultural cycle for the purpose of calculating biblical tithes.³ This date was chosen because most

Henia Bryer, a Polish Holocaust survivor, lived in Israel during the early years of the State before coming to South Africa in 1952. After training as a Hebrew teacher, she taught at the Talmud Torah in Bloemfontein for forty years. This article, transcribed and expanded upon by Veronica Belling, is based on a talk she gave in Bloemfontein during this time.

of the annual rains in the Land of Israel fall before this date (RH 14a).⁴

There are many references to trees in the Bible. They demonstrate the love of our ancestors for trees and the appreciation they had of their value as a source of food and shelter. In Leviticus (19: 23), it is written that the planting of trees should be the first matter attended to when the Children of Israel entered the Land of Israel. The custom of planting trees on Tu B'shvat derives from this commandment. Because of their vital importance even in war time it was declared that fruit trees should not be destroyed, as it is written in the book of Deuteronomy (20: 19):

When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them; for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege.

The Tanach accentuates the trees that were used in matters of religious importance. For example, acacia wood (*atsey shittim*) is often mentioned in reference to objects used in the construction of the Tabernacle (Exodus 37: 25). From a practical point of view, acacia trees would have been the only type of trees available in the wilderness regions travelled by the Children of Israel. It has also been suggested that this was because acacia wood is most resistant to decay.⁵ When Solomon built the First Temple, he built the entire inner structure out of wood. He made the walls of cedar, the floor of fir or pine, and the doors of olive and of fir wood (I Kings 6: 1-38).

Mentioned many times in the Bible, the willow tree is possibly most famous for its appearance by the rivers of Babylon, as is described in Psalm (137: 1-2): "We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof."

The palm tree is best known for the part it plays in the creation of booths on the festival of Sukkoth, as it is written in Leviticus (23: 40): "And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, the branches of palm trees." Curiously the citron or *etrog*, one of the four species, is never specifically mentioned in the Bible. The rabbis ruled that the term *pri ets hadar* – 'the fruit of goodly trees' – referred to it.⁶

The Hebrew *atse broshim* can be translated either as a cypress or as a fir tree. Thus we read in II Samuel (6: 5): "And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of cypress/fir wood..."

Gopher wood appears only once in the Bible as the wood from which Noah was instructed to build the ark. (Genesis 6: 14). However, it is not a word that is known in Hebrew and there is no consensus as to its exact translation.⁷

The fig tree is primarily known for providing the leaves that Adam and Eve sewed together to make themselves aprons to hide their nakedness (Genesis 3: 7). The fruit of the olive tree is known for providing the "pure olive oil" to burn the eternal light in the Tabernacle (Exodus 27: 20-21). The dove and the olive branch after the Flood has become an international symbol of peace (Genesis 8: 8-12).

The carob tree (*haruv*) was made famous in post-Biblical times. When the great teacher, Simeon Bar Yochai continued to teach Torah to his pupils in defiance of the Romans, he was forced to hide in a cave in the mountains of Galilee. According to legend, a carob tree grew at the mouth of the cave and supplied him with food (Shabbat 33b).⁸

In ancient Israel, it was customary to plant a cedar tree when a boy was born and a cypress tree for a girl. When the children grew up and were married, branches from each of their trees were used for making the *chupah*. This was considered to bring them good luck, while all the while they cared for their own trees.⁹

Customs

For liturgical purposes, the New Year of the Trees is regarded as a minor holiday; no penitential prayers are said and no fasting is permitted. With no fixed liturgy, over the years many and varied customs for celebrating this festival sprang up all over the Jewish world.

In the Ashkenazi communities in Europe, it was customary to eat fifteen different types of fruit, with special emphasis on the fruits that were grown in the Land of Israel. The eating of fruits was accompanied by the reciting of Psalm 104 and the 15 ascending psalms 120-134. In some communities, children did not go to school on the festival. The Sephardic communities gave the festival even greater significance. Under the influence of the Kabbalists of Sefad, in the 16th Century the Sephardi liturgy and customs for the festival were expanded. From Safed the liturgy spread to the Jewish communities of Turkey, Italy, Greece, Asia and North Africa. Among Sephardic communities, it became known as the Feast of Fruits, and special poems – called '*complas*' – were sung. A special order of service known as *Hemdut ha-Yamim* was compiled by Nathan of Gaza (c1644-1690). It was modelled on the

Passover *seder* and included drinking four glasses of wine. This liturgy, expanded by additional poems (*piyyutim*) for the *Amidah* on the 15th of Shevat and readings from the Scriptures and Midrashic literature, was collected and published under the title, *Pri Ets Hadar* (1753).¹⁰

Some communities instituted a *Ma'ot Perot* fund to provide fruit for the poor. In Kurdistan, raisins and other sweet fruits was placed in a ring around the trees on Tu Bishvat, while the people prayed for an abundant fruit season and for the birth of many children.¹¹

Since the establishment of the agricultural settlements in Palestine in the last decades of the 19th Century, the New Year of the Trees has acquired great significance symbolising the revival and redemption of the land. On Tu Bishvat in 1890 Rabbi Ze'ev Yavetz, one of the founders of the Mizrahi movement, took his students to plant trees in the agricultural colony of Zichron Yaakov. This custom was adopted in 1908 by the Jewish Teachers' Union and later by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), established in 1901 to oversee land reclamation and afforestation in the Land of Israel. In the early 20th Century, the JNF devoted the day to planting eucalyptus trees to stop the plague of malaria in the Huleh valley. Today, the Fund organises major tree planting events in large forests every Tu Bishvat. In keeping with the idea of Tu Bishvat marking the revival of nature, many of Israel's major institutions have chosen this day for their inauguration. The laying of the cornerstone of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem took place on Tu Bishvat 1918, the Technion in Haifa on Tu Bishvat 1925 and the Knesset on Tu Bishvat 1949.¹²

In modern Israel it is mainly a children's festival. It is celebrated with children's songs in honour of the New Year of the Trees and tree-planting ceremonies by kindergarten children are organised under the auspices of the Afforestation Department of the Jewish National Fund.¹³ Children are taught how to plant and care for trees. It is the first sign of spring in Israel and the first tree to blossom is the almond tree.

In South Africa, Tu Bishvat is observed by contributing to the JNF and eating fruits from Israel.

Flowers and trees and all growing things mean a great deal to every human being. Our ancestors knew this. They realised that trees are among our best friends. Trees help feed and clothe us. They give us wood for our houses, paper for books, fruit to eat and shade from the hot sun. Trees keep the soil rich and fertile and they give beauty to the world. Tu Bishvat reminds us that the world is G-d's creation.



Tree planting in Israel, Tu Bishvat, 1954

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THE BARMITZVAH

*

Lionel Slier

“A five year-old boy is ripe for the Bible, a ten year-old boy for the Mishnah, a thirteen year-old for the fulfilment of the Commandments”. So it is written in the *Ethics of the Fathers* (*Pirkei Avot*), 5:24.

From here, we see that at the age of thirteen a Jewish boy assumes full responsibility for the observance of all the precepts and commandments of his religion. He is now “bar mitzvah”, literally, “son of the commandment” (from the Aramaic word *bar* = son) and has all the responsibilities that go with this. This status is usually formalised in a shul ceremony wherein the boy’s father gives up the burden of his son’s religious duties. This takes place most often on the Shabbat after the boy’s thirteenth birthday. The bar mitzvah boy is called to the *bima* to read the final *aliyah* (*maftir*) and also a passage from the Prophets (*Haftarah*).

The word ‘Barmitzvah can be used as a noun’. The boy himself is referred to as “the barmitzvah”, and so too is the actual ceremony. As an adjective he becomes “the barmitzvah boy” and the word can, somewhat ponderously, even be used as a verb (e.g. “he was barmitzvahed”).

In ancient Hebrew sources (*Soferim* 18:5) there is reference to the custom in Jerusalem of parents taking their thirteen year-old boy to the elders of the city to be blessed. Scholars have pointed to evidence that the age of thirteen is a turning point in a boy’s life. At that age, Abraham rejected his father’s idols. In Genesis 25:37, Jacob parted from his brother Esau and undertook the study of the Torah. In Genesis 34:25, Levi, the son of Jacob, is called ‘*ish*’ (a man). In Isaiah 43:21 we read, “This people have I formed for myself; they shall pronounce my praise”, which has been interpreted as Isaiah having reached the age of thirteen.

Yet there was no particular ceremony for a boy who had turned thirteen (actually, thirteen plus one day). It merely meant that the boy now had full responsibility for his own religious behaviour. He could now pray as an adult, don *tefillin* and be counted in a *minyan*. This acceptance crystallised in the post-biblical period and was clearly established by the Second Century C.E. Strangely, then,

the practice remained unchanged for over a thousand years. There is very little comment about it in Jewish writings of the period.

There is some uncertainty about when barmitzvahs began to be celebrated with a formal ceremony – or even where or why this happened. It seems that either in Italy and/or in France Jews in the 14th Century began to emulate the Christian confirmation ceremony, which then became an established practice, widespread throughout the Diaspora (although, strangely enough, not in Yemen). Birthday boys were given the honorific *aliyah*, the *maftir*.

Aliyot were not given to girls because they were not considered to be knowledgeable enough or sufficiently versed in Hebrew learning to be able to recite from the Torah on the *bima*. According to Jewish tradition and belief, a girl’s duties lay in the home with the family. Furthermore, establishing and keeping a Jewish home and a Jewish way of life was as important as learning the Torah. This perpetuated Judaism.

A Johannesburg rabbi once told me that regardless of whether a Jewish boy has a formal ceremony or not, he is still regarded as barmitzvah; he has reached religious maturity as a Jew. There are circumstances when a boy cannot have a ceremony in shul. He may have been ill. A family situation may have made it impossible. There could be other pressing reasons.

Asked what the attitude of the rabbinate would be to a boy who declined to have a ‘proper’ barmitzvah, the rabbi was very tolerant: “That is his choice. He is still considered barmitzvah. He is still an adult Jew, and is not outside the community. But it is his loss.” Another rabbi has written, “It is a common mistake to imagine that in the absence of a barmitzvah ceremony the boy is not fully Jewish. The plain fact is that every male Jew becomes automatically responsible”.

One must recall the havoc that World War II wreaked amongst Jewish boys turning thirteen. All over Europe, formal barmitzvah ceremonies simply could not take place. Young boys who survived the war were certainly not lesser Jews!

Prior to the establishment of the Jewish day schools, many South African boys aged eleven years and up had to undergo (to them the torment) of having to learn their barmitzvah portions by heart. Only a very few could read

Lionel Slier is a veteran contributor to South African Jewish publications, including Jewish Affairs and the South African Jewish Report.

Hebrew. After learning by rote, coupled with intensive coaching in *cheder* for anything up to two years, they generally managed to get by. Since the coming of the day schools, most Jewish boys of barmitzvah age from those schools can read Hebrew without too much difficulty.

In more Orthodox ceremonies, it is usual for the boy to deliver a discourse (*drasha*) on his *parsha*, showing that he has understood it. For the less religious or secular, the barmitzvah boy is expected to make a speech at the luncheon or dinner. For many a youngster, this has been the most frightening part of the whole affair.

In 1922, the Reconstructionist movement in the USA introduced batmitzvah ceremonies for girls. The rabbis had always reckoned girls to be more spiritually mature at an earlier age than boys, and therefore they could celebrate their batmitzvahs at the age of twelve. In Progressive and Conservative/Masorti congregations, girls perform exactly the same as the boys do. Gender differences are not recognised. The Orthodox introduced batmitzvah ceremonies for girls at a later date. They have multi-batmitzvahs wherein a whole class of girls celebrate in shul simultaneously. As long as the form of celebration is not in violation of *halachah*, there are no objections to this.

In his book *To be a Jew: A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life* (1991), Rabbi Hayim Donin has written, pertinently, "The nature and extent of the festivities which accompany the barmitzvah are a matter of local custom, and a reflection of the personal taste and/or the means of the family..... Where the festivities are held in such a way as to violate not only the spirit of Judaism but also its specific precepts and values, the celebration only tends to secularize the event, cheapening the religious significanceAs the years go by, a serious and intelligent young man will rightly look back upon such a celebration as a religious mockery. It also behooves parents to resist the temptations to turn a Bar-Mitzvah into a gala, ostentatious *birthday party* for a thirteen year-old."

Rabbi Donin was writing about American barmitzvahs. Could he just as well also have been referring to South African ones? Here, the boy's speech at the party will begin with the usual thanks to the rabbi and Hebrew teacher, going on to reading messages of congratulations from the various aunts, uncles and cousins in Israel, Toronto, Sydney, San Diego, Atlanta, London and points north, east and west. Our divided families and diminishing community give a particular South African twist to the proceedings.

Finally, some tips for the post-barmitzvah speech:

What to include:

- Thanks to the rabbi for his patience and indulgence.
- Thanks to the Hebrew teacher.
- Thanks to parents (a little joke may be included).
- Thanks to *bubbes* and *zeides* (Consider yourself lucky if any of them are there).
- Thanks to all relatives and friends who have come.
- A special mention of anyone who has come from outside South Africa.

Never say:

- You will not see me inside a shul again.
- Now I can go and play football and cricket with my friends.
- I won't have my mother nagging me about Hebrew lessons anymore.
- My mother won't have to *schlep* me to Hebrew classes anymore.
- I can't wait to get home to open the presents.
- Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking....
- I suppose that now I will get three copies of *Jewish Pathways*.
- Thank goodness all this is over.
- Despite what my mother thinks – to-day I am a man!

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QUEEN VICTORIA, BROAD-MINDED WOMEN AND THE MARKS FAMILY SCRAPBOOK

*

Gwynne Schrire

My hands were genuinely shaking as I opened the packet I had just received and inside it found a very old scrapbook, nearly 120 years old as it turned out. A frail, tattered red cloth-bound book with *Newspaper Cuttings* inscribed in gold along the leather spine, it was filled with press clippings dealing with such subjects as the Anglo-Boer War, Queen Victoria, the death of Cecil John Rhodes and other ephemera from that time. There were also articles on *Bringing up Our Children* from the weekly *The Gentlewoman* and humorous takes on relationships between the sexes, one of which read as follows:

There was once a woman who held very broad views. Of these views she often spoke, as is the habit of those who hold them. But though she was very advanced, she had her little plans, just like the rest of us. One day, she was talking with a man who was interested in her and therefore, as she thought, in her views. For even advanced women make this error occasionally.

"If I were married", she said, "I should never for one moment expect my husband to confide his past to me. I should consider it to be none of my business. Nor should I feel that he was necessarily immoral if he looked at any other woman but me. For that is idiotic, considering that men are only human".

The man smiled approvingly. "You are quite right", he said, "If more women were like you the world would be a happier place. But few are so broad minded".

"And then", said the woman, "I should expect the same tolerance from him; for women are only human too".

The man drew away his chair. "I fear", said he somewhat coldly, "that you are carrying matters a little too far. The constitution of society requires some

foundation. There are certainly things a man has a right to expect from his wife". And he engaged himself to a girl who had just come from a convent school".¹

It is thanks to Stanley Dorman and his nephew Eddie Winterstein, who came across the scrapbook along with other papers at an auction that I was able to view this window into the past, now handed over for safekeeping to the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town.

Scrapbooking is a popular hobby and helps preserve documents important to those engaged in it - invitations, mementoes of holidays, theatre programmes and relevant newspaper cuttings. Nowadays, craft teachers and hobby shops are available to provide the necessary raw materials, information, ideas and ornamental stickers. However, the hobby is older than one might think. The word 'scrapbook' was first used in 1821 and its use as a verb was first recorded in 1879. A hundred years ago, scrapbooking was as popular as it is today and, like us, our Victorian ancestors used to glue into specially bound books newspaper clippings on subjects they were interested in, jokes, cartoons, visiting cards, invitations, stickers and other such items. As an article in an 1894 copy of *The Lafayette Gazette* said, material pasted into a scrapbook helps us "to keep for another time what one day made us smile or weep; a biography, a history, a journal written by a thousand other hands, and yet our own".² And this is what the book I saw achieves.

What was in the scrapbook and to whom did it belong? Whoever kept it was most unsystematic, pasting in articles from a wide assortment of papers with little chronological or thematic order. It starts in April 1899 with articles from two Johannesburg-based papers, the *Standard and Diggers News* and the *Star*, on the sudden death, in Lisbon from smallpox, of Mr W Campbell. This was glued on top of a copy of the Rand Jubilee Address to Queen Victoria that had been issued by Mr Campbell, who had taken a principal part in organising her diamond jubilee celebrations on the Witwatersrand. He

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.

must have been a close acquaintance judging by the number of articles about him and the fact that whoever began the scrapbook chose to begin it with two of them.

The next two clippings, entitled “Jews and the war” (possibly from the *Argus*) and “Jews in the war” (*Cape Times*) are dated eighteen months later. Both refer to an article in the *Jewish World* of 11 October 1900,³ in which that paper’s editor John Raphael had complained to Potchefstroom Lt-General Edwards about his order regarding receipts for supply of horses, mules and wagons, which was intended to prevent the burghers from being swindled by the Jews. Raphael complained that the order was unfair and cruel, particularly as so many Jews were serving in the British army, with some having lost their lives or been wounded. He mentioned several names in this regard. One was ‘Mr Sam Marks of Pretoria’, who in the despatches issued by the War Office the previous week was specially mentioned for the assistance he had given in ameliorating the condition of the British prisoners in Waterval. Mr Marks, although a resident in the then existing republic, did for those that which others who were not burghers failed to do. The *Cape Times* article referred to his “unique distinction” of being mentioned in the despatch.

Did the scrapbook belong to someone Jewish?

A few pages later is an unidentified article, “Purchases of Estates”, which mentions inter alia that Isaac Lewis of the well-known firm of Messrs. Lewis and Marks had just purchased, for about £100 000, the beautiful estates in Kent and Sussex known as Hedgebury Park. Covering about 4436 acres, this included a magnificent mansion often visited by Disraeli. Lewis, the article states, would “ere long quit his beautiful house in Fitzjohn’s Avenue, St Johns Wood”.

Next follow articles from the *Cape Times* written in May 1900 by Rudyard Kipling about his visit to South Africa. Turn over the page, and it is now January 1901. The first clipping is about Dr W J Leyds,⁴ followed by a *Daily Mail* of October 1901 on the Tobacco Trust and a 10 September 1900 item in the *Natal Mercury* entitled ‘A corner in foodstuffs’.

Was the scrapbook compiled by a tradesman who dealt in tobacco and food and who was now sticking in at random news cuttings about people he knew that he had been collecting for a long time?

Still back in 1900, ‘Kruger’s Flight’ (*Argus*) is followed by a piece in the *Natal Mercury* reading, “A new Johannesburg-Vereeniging railway is the only work going on. Everyday scores of people go out to see the work going

on”, together with a clipping of Field-Marshal Lord Robert’s⁵ route to Pretoria showing all the railway sidings through which he would pass (*Argus*, 23.5.1900). After *Cape Times* articles on ‘Tobacco War Leaders’ and on Baden Powell Day⁶ comes a special *Cape Times* supplement on ‘Roberts Over The Vaal’

(20 May 1900). Thereafter follow pages and pages dealing with the death of Queen Victoria (22 January 1901). These include a fifteen-page illustrated supplement on the Queen’s life and a clipping headed ‘News of the Day’ providing the invaluable information that she had reigned for sixty three years, seven months, two days and six and a half hours. The *Daily Mail*’s Edgar Wallace (later a popular detective writer who wrote 957 short stories and over 170 novels) favoured the readers with copies of messages he had received from native chiefs expressing their grief. Khama, Chief of the Bamgwato, telegraphed from Palapye, “She carried me in her arms. She was our ruler and father and mother, there is pain in all our hearts”. A Pondo chief telegraphed, “Tonight I shall look in the sky for another Star”.⁷

Loyalty to the Queen and the British Empire, in which Jews lived as equal citizens, formed an important part of Jewish identification in the Cape Colony, where the Jewish community shared in the fervent royalism of other British citizens. The community also had significant links to Anglo Jewry. A number of the original members of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation (CTHC) had come from England as part of the 1820 Settler movement, synagogue services followed English norms and customs (the liturgy had been taken over almost entirely from the English *Minhag*) and the community’s ministers had trained in or been appointed from London by the British Chief Rabbi.⁸ At the consecration of the first synagogue in Cape Town on 15 September 1849, prayers were said for the Queen and the Royal Family.⁹ When the Green & Sea Point Hebrew Congregation drew up its constitution in 1926, it still contained clauses stating that “the form of the service shall be in accordance with the ritual adopted by the United Hebrew Congregation of the British Empire which is under the spiritual direction of the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire for the time being.”¹⁰

Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897 was marked throughout the Empire by demonstrations of patriotism, in which Jews everywhere participated. The Jewish community of South Africa commissioned a magnificent stinkwood casket made by DE Isaacs & Co, a prominent furniture maker and committee member of the CTHC, and designed by Walter Isaacs. Measuring 24 by

twelve by ten inches, it had a delicate carving of the Tables of the Covenant and the Ten Commandments surmounted by a crown on the top. Its corners were adorned with four richly-chased gold dolphins and rested on eagle's claws and wings and the front of the case was ornamented with an elegant gold shield with the arms of the Cape Colony in relief with the Magen David in gold on the lid. It was small wonder that this gift was exhibited in the Imperial Institute together with gifts from other countries.¹¹

And what did this magnificent and over the top stinkwood case enclose? An illuminated album containing what was later described by Rabbi Israel Abrahams as "the patriotic felicitation and devout good wishes of the Community". The Paarl Hebrew Congregation, which had a close relationship with the CTHC's minister Rev AP Bender, contributed three guineas towards the production of this "souvenir album" to be presented as a jubilee gift and towards "framing photographs of same as a remembrance", and one of its members, Charles Joel, decorated his Central Hotel with bunting along its length.¹² The Cape Town Jewish Boys and Girls Guild set up by Rev Bender sent a donation to the fund for the enlargement of the new Somerset Hospital.¹³ Far more practical than an ornamented casket.¹⁴ The CTHC had a full choral service for the occasion, "which left a deep impression on all the worshippers."¹⁵ So it is not surprising that when the Queen died four years later, there was an equally over the top outpouring of loyalist grief.

A memorial service was held in the synagogue on Saturday, 2 February 1901, and attended, as noted by Rabbi Abrahams in his history of the congregation, by all the leading Jews in the city including members of parliament, military officers and representatives of the law. The scrapbook includes the programme of this memorial service for her Most Gracious Majesty.¹⁶ Not only has this been preserved, but glued into the scrapbook is the ticket admitting

Mr Ellia Marks to the Memorial Service, a severe black edged postcard of Queen Victoria sent to "Dear Edie with love from Aunt Bertha" on 15 February 1901 and a black edged envelope addressed to F Marks, Muscliff House, Main Road, Cape Town sent from Hampstead on 25 November.

As an afterthought, on the same page as the postcard is a special edition of *Grocott's Daily Mail*, dated 12 October 1899: 'War Declared!! Martial Law Proclaimed'.¹⁷ On the following page is an article dated 17.12.1899 containing a *Cape Times* Supplement on the Battle of Colenso¹⁸ and on the next is an article by Rudyard Kipling and a cartoon:

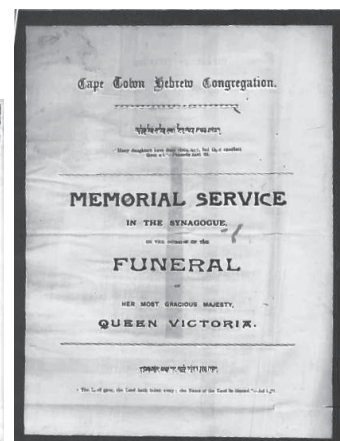
She: "A man is the most sensible of all animals is he not?"

He (proudly): "Certainly".

She: "Then I wonder why he doesn't wear a loose comfortable collar like a dog".

Thus, although the programme and postcard was not pasted in any order or with any acknowledgement of their importance, for the first time we have been given valuable clues to the identity of the scrapbook owner (and his/their attitude to tight collars). We know who Queen Victoria was but who was Ellia Marks? Who was Edie? Who was Aunt Bertha? Who was F Marks?

Ellia was the brother of Sammy Marks, who in turn was married to Bertha, daughter of Tobias Gutman with whom he had boarded in London as a young man. Guttman had paid for his passage to the Cape and given him a case of knives to sell when he arrived there. From these beginnings, Sammy famously went on to amass a very large fortune, dealing in coal, diamonds, steel, canning, glass, flour mills, brick and tile factories and second class gin. Sammy went into business with his cousins Isaac and Barnett Lewis. Rabbi Abrahams remarked that "they built their vast fortunes from the humblest beginnings by dint of hard work and innate ability".¹⁹ They all joined the CTHC in 1874. Sammy



was generous to the Jewish community²⁰ and loyal to his family, bringing out his younger brothers Ellia and Joseph. He put Ellia in charge of his Vereeniging Estates, which he managed before and during the Anglo-Boer War.²¹ It explains why Ellia was interested in the progress of the Johannesburg-Vereeniging railway line and the various sidings on the way.



Sammy Marks (seated, left) with cousins Barnett and Isaac Lewis

Ellia married Isaac Lewis' sister Frederica²² and they had three children, Edith, Madge and Alex. No wonder, then, they had clipped the articles recording that Sam Marks had been mentioned in despatches and that his partner Isaac, Frederica's brother, had bought a large estate.

This identity is corroborated by a confirmation copy of a telegram, on very fine paper not glued in but slipped loose at the back of the scrapbook, dated 6 January 1906. Sent from Johannesburg from "father", it is addressed to Samuel Alexander Marks of 20 Hyde Park Place, and wishing him loving congratulations on his tenth birthday, with love to mother, Edie and Madge. But by 1906 the enthusiasm for scrapbooking had passed and most of the remaining pages were left blank.

So there we have the scrapbook of this branch of the Marks family - Ellia, his wife Frederica and their children Edie, Madge and Samuel Alexander (Alex), together with information on Ellia's brother Sam, sister-

in-law Bertha and brother-in law Isaac. But who actually kept the scrapbook and was responsible for selecting, clipping and pasting in the articles - Mr or Mrs Marks? And how did it land up a hundred years later with the other papers on auction?

From the 1899 battle of Colenso, the scrapbook skips eighteen months to an advert in the *Standard and Diggers News* for the products of Sammy Mark's Hatherly Distillery (4 May 1901) and an *Argus* announcement that King Edward VII's ascension to the throne would be proclaimed the next day at Cape Town's Town House²³ (25 January 1901). It is followed by articles on the Rhodes Scholarship, the attempted assassination of America's President McKinley and on the death of Charlotte Yonge, a well-known authoress - my grandmother had given me one of her books (*Cape Times*, 2 July 1901).

Soon after, Ellie's family were ensconced in England, judging by the papers they clipped. Instead of *Grocott's Daily Mail*, *Standard and Diggers*, *Cape Times* and *Argus*, they were now reading the *Westminster Gazette*, *Daily Mail*, *Globe*, *Pall Mall Gazette* or *Sun*. The family were prolific newspaper readers.

One or more family members must have attended the millenary celebrations of King Arthur in Winchester, as there was a full page from *The Daily Mail* covering where to go and what to see, and a news cutting refers to a Jewish military service during Chanukah attended by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayor (*Times*, 9 December 1901). Perhaps they were there too.

Apart from articles criticising the British lack of success in the Anglo-Boer War, Rhodes' funeral, a yacht race and a full page on the life of Pasteur, the news cuttings now become more light hearted, with cartoons, jokes and interesting trivia, the diamonds to be worn at the coronation, suitable headgear, unusual shop signs and the gifts given to the new King by the Company Corporation of the City of London as part of his rents inherited from William the Conqueror - half a dozen old horse shoes, 61 nails, two bundles of faggots and a sharp and blunt hatchet. At the risk of gender generalisation, these were more likely to appeal to Frederica than to Ellie. There are also articles of cultural interest - an interview with actor Henry Irving and the sale of relics belonging to Charles Dickens, Charlotte Yonge and Rudyard Kipling. There are a number of articles dealing with the wholesale and retail trade of tobacco.

Seemingly out of place on a page dealing with "The Tobacco struggle: the Imperial Company Economises: Will there be a boycott"? (*St James Gazette*, no date) is a short clipping from the *Lady's Pictorial*

of 30 January 1892, which seems to hint at Frederica's longstanding unhappiness in the way she is disregarded, hints that have also been shown in some of the jokes and cartoons she (presumably) has inserted about the attitude towards women. She was probably a supporter of the suffragette movement:

Yes, there's where the offence comes in. Isn't it odd that the moment a man or a woman lets other people see that he or she is thoroughly delighted with his or her individuality, talents, beauty, worldly position, everybody else begins to distrust that person".

It must have been very meaningful to her, otherwise why would she have kept that tiny paragraph for ten years?

Surprisingly, an article on the death of C J Rhodes is followed by numerous clippings from *The Gentlewoman: An Illustrated Weekly Journal for Gentlewomen* published in London. These clippings date from 1891. Had Mrs Marks kept them for ten years and taken them to London with her and then decided to include them in the scrapbook when she had more time on her hands? As the journal was founded in 1890, presumably she had been a subscriber from its inception. Most were from the sections called "The Lady in Waiting", and "Our Children and How to Educate them". These included articles on corporal punishment, on when education should commence, on delicate and backward children, on preparatory schools, on pocket money and on books for growing maidens. Her concern for education is also shown with a 1902 clipping on "Teachers for Boer Infants" in the refugee camps.

Frederica's feelings regarding education and respect for women were shown early in the scrapbook with an article from the *Cape Times* of 25 May 1902 harshly criticising remarks by a Mr Treves at the Reform Club. Treves had been quoted as saying, "there were two plagues in South Africa - the plague of flies and the plague of women. The flies could be got rid of but that of woman was absolutely a terror". Treves had to apologise for his sweeping statement, which amounted to a condemnation of all efforts of amateur nurses as a blot in the campaign. *The Cape Times* correspondent fully acknowledged the generous efforts made by many wealthy persons in organising private hospitals and the many who had unsparingly devoted both money and time to the welfare of the sick and wounded soldiers. What Frederica's role had been during the war is unknown, but Sam had given a wagon and mule team for use as an ambulance, fitted out Dr Boris Liknaitzky and sent grapes to the hospitals

and £1000 to the International Red Cross.²⁴ As Ellie was in charge of the Vereeniging Collieries during the war, he and Frederica would most likely have been involved and she would have been understandably annoyed by Treves' remarks.

After many pages from *The Gentlewoman*, the scrapbook returns to clippings from the 1902 *St James Gazette*, on rank and fashion, ending with an article from that paper dated 27 March 1902 on Rhodes's funeral entitled "A Prince in Israel". This includes the unpleasantly antisemitic canard "He could fight for wealth like any Hebrew yet his life was simple and he would throw his gold away with both hands to serve any cause on which his heart was set". It concludes, 'Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fell this day in Israel.'

The last completed page is an item devoted to the Oxford and Cambridge boat race written by Etherington-Smith. There the scrapbook ends, with many blank pages still to be covered.

Tucked loose in the front of the book is a page of the *Westminster Gazette* 20.1.1901 on coronation medals and a page of *The Times*, 23.9.1902 and at the back of the book is a complete and unclipped copy of the *Globe* of 3 June 1902 and a page of *St James Gazette* of 14 July 1902. I could see nothing in them that would merit their being kept. Also at the back is the 1906 telegram already mentioned by Ellie for his son's 10th birthday and their tickets to the gala performance at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, on 7 July 1903 given in honour of the visit of the President of the French Republic, Emile Loubet.²⁵ Their excitement at scoring a place on the guest list was such that both their tickets have been preserved in the scrapbook – seats number K27 and 28 in the orchestra stalls – printed on a firm buff card with the French and British emblems along with scroll work with flowers and a French Republic badge together with the folder in which they were enclosed. Levee dress was required - full dress uniform or court dress. But the enthusiasm for the scrapbook had passed and the telegram and the tickets were just slipped loose into the back.

The probable answers to the initial questions posed are that the scrapbook belonged to Sammy Mark's brother and his wife, who was probably the keeper of the scrapbook, as being a fashionable pursuit for a Victorian gentlewoman of means, but how it ended up on auction 120 years later is anyone's guess.

The Marks scrapbook provides a window into the interests of this family as shown by the articles of political, financial, cultural and personal interest they chose to preserve. The Rare Book & Manuscript

Library at the University of Illinois contains a collection of 43 scrapbook volumes of letters, newspaper clippings, and memorabilia kept by a poet Martin F. Tupper (1810-1889), which researchers have found to be a direct source of material culture, providing detailed insights about the culture at large as well as about individual collecting habits.²⁶ It is to be hoped that future researchers who page through this scrapbook will similarly find much information of interest to them.



Grave of Ellia Marks, Bulawayo Jewish Cemetery.

NOTES

- 1 "Fables for the fair," undated, unnamed newspaper clipping.
- 2 Publication: The Lafayette Gazette (Lafayette, La.) Source publication date: October 06, 1894
Scrapbooks as a history of life, of feeling, of the emotions of one's heart: Perspectives on our place in time from 1894.
- 3 The handwritten 10 Octobers date on the *Cape Times* is incorrect.
- 4 Willem Johannes Leyds, former State Attorney of the SA Republic, was its diplomat during the Anglo-Boer War and tried unsuccessfully to win support for the Boer cause in Europe.
- 5 After a string of defeats, Frederick Sleigh Roberts, later Earl Roberts, took over command of the British forces and was accompanied by the despatch of huge reinforcements. His strategies devised included burning farms and setting up concentration camps.
- 6 Lieut-Gen Robert Baden-Powell successfully defended the town in the Siege of Mafeking and later founded the Boy Scouts Association.
- 7 No newspaper name or date to this clipping.
- 8 Simon, John, 'A Study of the Nature and Development of Orthodox Judaism in South Africa', MA thesis, Department of Jewish Studies, University of Cape Town, 1996, 85. https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/item/17381/thesis_hum_1996_simon_john_ian.pdf?...
- 9 Herrman, Dr Louis, 'The Cape Town Hebrew Congregation 1841-1941: A Centenary history', CT Hebrew Congregation, 22
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- 12 Press, Charles, *The Light of Israel: The Story of the Paarl Jewish Community*, Jubilee Productions, Paarl, 1993, 15. The book contains a photograph of rhea Paarl Central Hotel decorated with bunting for the Queens' I Diamond Jubilee, 113.
- 13 Abrahams, 95.
- 14 A similar casket also with a congratulatory address was presented by the Jews of Southern African when King Edward VII became King in 1901. By then the family was in London and were not involved in the affairs of the CTHC although messages of congratulations were sent to the colonial office on the occasion of his coronation from "the Zionist and Jewish residents at the Cape of Good Hope" according to the *Jewish Chronicle*.
- 15 Abrahams, 121
- 16 The order of Service lists Rev Lyons reading Psalms 90 and 91, and the Kaddish, the choir sang the anthem 'And I will remember unto thee the loving kindness of thy youth and Oh shelter us beneath the shadows of thy wings, and; As for man, they days are grass'. Rev A Hoffenberg recited Proverbs 31 and Psalm 23 and Rev AP Bender gave an address and the memorial prayer.
- 17 Founded in 1870, *Grocott's Mail* is South Africa's oldest surviving independent newspaper and is still published in Grahamstown.
- 18 A humiliating British defeat on 15.12.1899.
- 19 Abrahams, 35.
- 20 In 1892 Marks and Lewis donated money towards the endowment of a Chair of Hebrew at the South African College, which was to become the University of Cape Town, and Sammy also donated money to buy school furniture for the Jewish public schools established at Hope Mill, up the road from the CTHC (Abrahams, 90).
- 21 Mendelsohn, Richard, *Sammy Marks: The uncrowned king of the Transvaal*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1991, 117.
- 22 Ibid, 34.
- 23 The Old Town House), built in 1755 in the Cape Rococo style, now houses the Michaelis Collection of Dutch art from the 17th Century Golden Age donated by Jewish mining magnate Sir Max Michaelis.
- 24 Mendelsohn, 116.
- 26 15 April 2014, <https://nonsolusblog.wordpress.com/2014/04/15/victorian-scrapbooks-rediscovered/>

ARTICLES, THESES & BOOKS PERTAINING TO SA JEWRY AND JEWISH STUDIES, 2018, WITH ADDITIONS FOR 2014-2017

*

Juan-Paul Burke

This bibliography follows on from the one that appeared, under the title 'Articles, Theses & Books pertaining to SA Jewry and Jewish Studies, 2014-2017' in the Pesach 2018 issue of *Jewish Affairs*. As the title suggests, the reader can expect to find the year 2018 well covered in this bibliography as well as additions for the years 2014-2017 that were missed the first time around.

As noted in the previous bibliography, I have excluded anything from local community publications as it goes without saying that they will be filled with South African Jewish content. Also excluded are articles in non-Jewish newspapers and magazines. I have included academic, popular and religious texts found in academic journals, books or as theses. A couple of new websites are also included.

This listing cannot be claimed to be comprehensive and it is more than likely that certain items have been missed. I appeal to readers to inform me of any edits or suggestions of additions to the bibliography (email: paysach12@gmail.com).

My reference style is based on UCT author-date. The slight variance is for links at the end of a reference where I have dropped "Available:" before the link and the date accessed at the end. Several subjects are represented including education, history, antisemitism, holocaust, politics, literature, music, religion, business, genealogy and Yiddish.

2018

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Juan-Paul Burke is the Librarian and Archivist for the Pretoria Hebrew Congregation. He has previously worked for University of Cape Town Libraries in their Jewish Studies Branch Library housed in the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research.

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THE TRIPLE D AND THE JERUSALEM TOWER

*

Lyonell Fliss

When World War II ended, the horrified world and the traumatized survivors believed that the lessons from the Holocaust would be learned and that such a monstrous human tragedy would never, ever be repeated.

Over seven decades later, we are witnessing a new form of war against the Jewish nation. If the Holocaust was aimed at the physical annihilation of the European Jews, the present war, which I call “The Heritage War”, is targeting the historic heritage of the Jewish nation, to ‘prove’ that this nation did not ever have any deep roots in history and particularly in their own Land of Israel. Physical massacre is being replaced by an intellectual one.

This Heritage War is being fought through the distortion of history and the discreditation of biblical historians, archaeologists and academic institutions, particularly The Hebrew University of Jerusalem Israel (HUJI) aiming to disinherit the Jewish nation from their most valuable asset: their historic heritage. It aims to delegitimize the State of Israel and the Jewish nation’s rights to their ancient land and ultimately to destroy the State of Israel and its Jewish population.

This movement, which I call “The Triple D” – similar to Natan Sharansky’s 3-D test of antisemitic criticism of Israel (Delegitimization, Demonization and Double standards) – is supported by the enemies of Israel, international institutions such as the United Nations, academic institutions and antisemitic individuals, who all benefit in various ways from their ties with rich Muslim countries such as Iran, and dream of the disappearance of the State of Israel and the Jewish people.

Lyonell Fliss is a Rumanian-born civil engineer and Holocaust survivor now living in Johannesburg. In 1969, he and his wife Liliana escaped from Communist-ruled Rumania and moved to Israel, where Mr Fliss’ was involved in the building of the water tower on Mount Scopus, today widely regarded as a symbol of the Hebrew University. This article, along with an interview with Mr Fliss conducted by Jerusalem Report editor Steve Linde, first appeared in the Jerusalem Report of 12 November 2018, and is reprinted here, together with extracts from that interview, with Mr Linde’s kind permission.

Their actions range from public condemnations, boycotts and sanctions, to publications endorsed or produced by influential individuals and institutions, seeking to proliferate their antisemitic and anti-Israel theories. They employ the Triple D philosophy.

The first D is the *Distortion* of Jewish history, which involves:

- Denial of Jewish national history from Hebron to the Holocaust
- Defamation of biblical historians and archaeologists who find evidence of Jewish history in the Land of Israel
- Discreditation of Israeli academic institutions, including HUJI

The second D is the *Disinheritance* of the Jewish nation from its own history.

The third D is the *Delegitimization* of Israel and the Jewish nation with regard to their right to their historic land.

Triple D is the main instrument currently being used by the enemies of Israel to delegitimize the State of Israel, with the intention of wiping it off the world map and eradicating its Jewish population. It is a movement initiated by radical Muslim countries and organizations, but also by anti-Israel, antisemitic non-Muslim countries, organizations, academic institutions and influential individuals. Their activities are gaining momentum through international conferences, mass demonstrations, in the world, BDS and intense propaganda in mainstream media as well as social media.

Their methods of infiltrating the minds of millions of Muslims and non-Muslims with their ideology are reminiscent of those used by the Nazis: gross distortions of the truth and discreditation of those trying to oppose them. The greater the lies and the more often are they repeated, the greater the chances that they will eventually become credible and accepted as facts by the public at large.

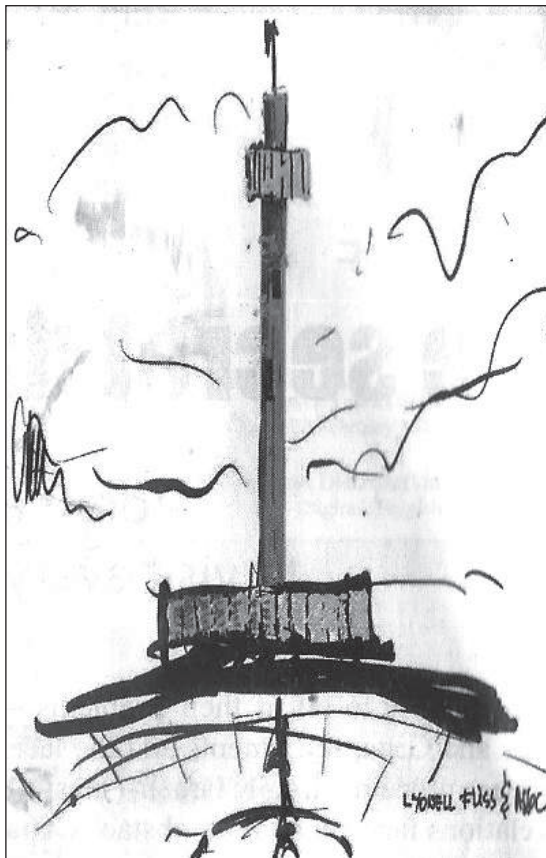
The conclusion is that the Triple D should not be ignored but, on the contrary, actively combated. The lessons of the Holocaust shall not be forgotten and we shall never, ever allow a Heritage War to succeed. In this fight for truth, which is vital for the future of the State of Israel and the Jewish nation, two institutions have significant roles to play:

- The Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Heritage, the arm of the Israeli government in charge of protecting and promoting Jewish heritage
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the custodian of Jewish culture and history

To carry out these roles properly at the international level, I believe we need to create a world-class centre called The Jerusalem Heritage Forum comprising a visitors and conference centre with an integrated Mount Scopus Panoramic Observatory. It is a forum from which the visitors could learn, discuss and see at a glance 3000 years of Jewish history and the Jewish people's connection with the heart of their land, their capital, Jerusalem, and its surrounding areas. From the observatory decks, visitors will receive the best orientation by Hebrew University guides before starting their tours on the ground.

These days when there is again talk about West Jerusalem and East Jerusalem, the observatory will demonstrate that Jerusalem cannot be divided into west and east, because Jerusalem has always been one Jerusalem, a unique place with a rich history over various epochs, the eternal capital of Israel and of the Jewish people around the world.

So long as the Triple D persists, we



Artist's impression of proposed Mount Scopus tower

should not remain complacent. Therefore, construction of The Jerusalem Heritage Forum and the new Mount Scopus Observatory should become a national priority. It will be the symbol of Israel's right to exist and its sovereignty over Jerusalem as its historic capital. The tower will be a beacon of hope to Jews around the world and a permanent reminder to those who dream of Israel's destruction.

APPENDIX: Extracts from interview with Lyonell Fliss, conducted by Steve Linde, Jerusalem Report, 4 November 2018.

What exactly is your project?

This is a joint non-profit initiative between me and South African entrepreneur Stewart Cohen, known as Mr. Price (the honorary chairman of the Mr. Price Group retail chain).

How did it come about?

After I immigrated to Israel in 1970, I started to work in my profession as a structural civil engineer at a company in Haifa called Balasha-Yalon and they got a project from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to provide the water supply to the campus, which included a major structure that was the water tower. The architects Binyamin Idelson and Gershon Tzipor got me to design the tower, and supervise its construction. When I first saw the design, I couldn't believe my eyes. It was a work of art, which enhanced the campus and Mount Scopus view, but in my opinion, its size was not big enough for a symbolic landmark of Jerusalem skyline.

During construction, I inspected this structure a number of times, and when we reached the top, which is about 53 meters, I knew that this was my legacy, my contribution and connection to the State of Israel. Every time I come to Israel, I go there to climb the tower and touch it. On the top there is an observatory, which looks out at the Dead Sea and Jordan, but it is not panoramic and it doesn't look westward toward Jerusalem and the Old City.

When we finished the construction in 1971, I remember [being] left on the very top of the tower by myself. There was complete silence, and I could see the view of the whole of Jerusalem. Years later, I read a singular impression from a very famous person, who didn't have the luxury of a tower, but visited Mount Scopus in 1831 and saw the view from up high of Jerusalem. His name was Benjamin Disraeli, later prime minister of England, and he gave the best description of the view that remains

imprinted in my mind. He said, "The view of Jerusalem is the history of the world; it is more, it is the history of earth and of heaven." You can't beat this description! During the various epochs of human history, Jerusalem was regarded as the centre of the world, where the three continents of the world come together – Europe, Asia and Africa – and where the three monotheistic religions converge, especially Judaism and Christianity, both of which regard Jerusalem as the holiest place. When I came there for the first time, I said, "This view of Jerusalem is a treasure, with which no other view in the world can compete. The Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Empire State Building in New York are magnificent, but their observatories can't compare with this view of 3000 years of history. We have a treasure which, in my mind, must be shared with the rest of the world".

What is the importance of this project for Israel?

What is the symbol of Paris? The Eiffel Tower. What is the symbol of New York? The Empire State Building. What is the symbol of Egypt? The pyramids. What is the symbol of Israel and Jerusalem? The Western Wall and the Old City. The world sees this view as the symbol of Israel, but I am offering a new vision, a striking new symbol.

A symbol that means what?

Israel has constructed the Knesset building, the Dead Sea Scrolls museum, the Bridge of Strings, but none of them offers a panoramic view of the Jerusalem skyline like this project does If the Temple Mount is the soul of Jerusalem and Judaism, then Mount Scopus is the eye of Jerusalem.

The Mount Scopus Observatory will provide a direct view over 3000 years of Jerusalem's history and topography and the ancient and modern buildings of Israel's capital.

I came to the conclusion that Israel, the Jewish people and the world ... deserve a grand vision on the right scale in the right place at the right time, with the dual purpose of educating the world and showing what Jerusalem really is, the united capital of Israel. In my opinion, it should be the first stop for VIPs and tourists coming to Israel.

Do you have the funding to do it?

I can tell you a few figures. The Eiffel Tower receives seven million visitors a year, and draws from these visitors 140 million euros. The Empire State Building has received

86 million dollars from visitors every year for the last six years. The funding should come from an investor who sees the potential of this.

What would it mean for you personally?

Just the satisfaction of an unaccomplished duty for this country. I am not looking for a cent as a profit. Someone asked me what my sign of success would be. And I said, "I would like to come to Israel to put the first shovel of concrete on the foundation." That means the project is on the go. This is the dream of my life. I have built over 200 big industrial projects, mostly in southern Africa, some of them the largest in the world, such as the Alusaf aluminium smelter at Richards Bay in South Africa and another one that's even bigger in Mozambique. But this one will be the cherry on the top of my career. It must be the highest quality possible of architecture. On the top will be an open-air observatory, and under that a revolving restaurant and an art gallery. There will be a visitors' centre on the ground floor, and various other things, such as the Einstein Memorial in memory of Albert Einstein, who had such a close connection with the university and left his archive to it. Next to this is a museum of Jewish contributions to the world, including all the Nobel prizes and medical discoveries, musicians, writers, actors and chess players, called "The Jewish Mind Museum". Next to this will be a convention centre, a commercial mall, and on the road to what is currently the Botanical Gardens should be a monument for the Defenders of Mount Scopus during the years between the War of Independence and the Six Day War. I have called the whole complex "The Jerusalem Heritage Forum."

I visualize the tower as the missing landmark and symbol of Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the State of Israel. It is my vision and it will hopefully be my legacy, but more importantly, it will be my gift to Jerusalem and Israel, to the Jewish people and to the world.



The author points to the location of the proposed tower on Mount Scopus

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SOWETO'S MORRIS ISAACSON SCHOOL AND THE MAN WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE

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Paul Trewhela



Morris Isaacson, c. 1879-1954

Morris Isaacson, the founder of Soweto's Morris Isaacson High School, was born in or near Kovno (now Kaunas) in Lithuania, then part of the Russian Empire, in about 1879.¹

The village in which they lived was probably Pakalne, north-east of Kovno. Isaacson's adopted son, Jeffrey, later remembered that his father named every house in which they lived 'Pakalne'.

In about 1895, a family crisis meant that Morris, still in his teens, was sent on his own to South Africa. The previous year, the Russian government introduced a state monopoly on the sale of alcohol, extending it to Lithuania in 1897. So complete was the ban on private sale of alcohol that by 1914 the Russian state earned one third of its revenue from the sale of vodka. Isaacson's father was an inn-keeper. Faced with the destruction of the family's income as a result of the monopoly, it was decided to

send young Morris to earn a living to South Africa, where there were already two relatives. Morris travelled by train from Memel (now Kleipeda) on the Baltic Sea to the port city of Bremen in Germany on the North Sea. Following conflicts with unscrupulous travel 'agents', in which Morris helped to organise one of his first protests, he and other young immigrants were sent to London, and from there to Cape Town, registered as 'miners'.

Lithuanian Jews, known as 'Litvaks', formed the great majority of Jewish immigrants to South Africa. When they arrived at Cape Town they generally did not understand any of the languages spoken in Southern Africa. As was usual among the Jews of Eastern Europe, Morris Isaacson's first language - the language of his family and his local community - was Yiddish, a spoken and written language used only by Jews, derived grammatically and linguistically mainly from German, but including Hebrew words, and written in Hebrew script.

All Jewish boys in Lithuania over that period studied the Jewish holy books, the Talmud and the Torah, in preparation for religious graduation into manhood at age 13. Morris Isaacson shared this religious graduation into manhood through the learning of Hebrew, then still universal among Jews of the Pale.² His first name, as with very many other Lithuanian Jewish immigrants to South Africa, was almost certainly adopted on his arrival in the country.

After living for a short while in Cape Town, Morris arrived in Johannesburg, within ten years of the beginning of the city. The discovery of gold on the Rand in 1886 led to an extraordinarily rapid development of the gold-mining industry, with Johannesburg soon the fastest-growing economic centre in Africa. It was soon a sprawling, urban giant, within the mainly rural South African Republic (ZAR), then ruled exclusively by the minority of white, mainly Afrikaans-speaking citizens.

Following a period as an itinerant trader, or hawker ('smous'), Isaacson became a shop assistant in Brakpan, afterwards working in many different occupations ranging from in a mineral factory to selling insurance. He later established himself in business.

In 1899, war broke between the British Empire and the Boer republics of the Transvaal

Paul Trewhela is a journalist, author and former anti-apartheid activists now living in Aylesbury, UK. From 1964-1967, he was imprisoned for his political activities, which included editing the underground journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe, Freedom Fighter, during the Rivonia Trial. He has since written extensively on the lives of fellow Jewish political activists and other aspects of the liberation movement.

and the Orange Free State. Isaacson moved back to Cape Town, staying there until after the conclusion of the war in May 1902. One of the few remaining documents from his possessions is his passport from the SAR, issued to him in 1899, giving him permission to travel to Cape Town.

The defeat of the Boer republics and their incorporation in 1910 into the new Union of South Africa together with the former British colonies of the Cape and Natal, led to expanded opportunities for economic development, though under very harsh conditions for workers, white as well as black. In 1910 Isaacson, now back in Johannesburg, joined the new South African Labour Party, a party of white workers and their supporters. For more than ten stormy years, he took a leading part in labour politics in Johannesburg. He knew little of the theory of socialism, but his friends said he was “a born Socialist” and he acted and spoke as one. He took a prominent part in a very fierce strike of white mine-workers in 1913, called by the Transvaal Federation of Trades, to which nearly all the unions then in existence – so far only of white workers – were affiliated. At least twenty people were killed in clashes with troops in the strike.

In 1914, Isaacson was elected a member of the National Executive of the Labour Party, and was a candidate in elections for the Johannesburg Town Council. However, an armed rebellion after the outbreak of World War I by Afrikaans-speakers hostile to the British Empire led to the elections being cancelled.

The national executive of the Labour Party opposed the war, in accordance with a decision of the Second International – an organisation of working class political organisations in many countries, mainly in Europe. Known as “M.I.I.”, Isaacson was one of a small group of Labour Party members who formed the War on War League, later to emerge in 1915 as the International Socialist League. He presided at one of its stormy mass meetings, held at the Gaiety Theatre in Johannesburg. Among his colleagues in the formation of the ISL – which had a Yiddish-speaking branch in Johannesburg – were the founders of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in 1921, including SP Bunting, David Ivon Jones, WH Andrews and Frank Glass. However, Isaacson did not join them in this further political step, which allied the CPSA to the revolutionary Bolshevik state in what became the Soviet Union a year later.

As a member of the Labour Party’s Administrative Council, Isaacson took a prominent part in the Rand Rebellion of 1922, in which there was armed conflict by strikers and their supporters with the state,

led by the Prime Minister, General Jan Smuts. The primary issue in this general strike, which developed into armed revolt, related to the wages, conditions and status of white mineworkers in the gold mines. It was crushed by military force, with between 230 and 250 deaths and led to the execution by hanging of four of the ringleaders (three of whom went to the gallows singing “The Red Flag”). After the crushing of the revolt, Isaacson hid for a time with his friend Gabriel Weinstock, a Yiddish-speaking Labour Party MP and member of the national committee of the ISL, in Sweetwaters, a small village in Natal.

In 1924, together with Weinstock, Morris Kentridge (also a Labour Party MP) and B Jenkins, Isaacson established the Labour weekly *Forward*. This became the official journal of the Labour Party, which in 1924 entered into an electoral Pact with the National Party under General JBM Hertzog against the Smuts government. This led to the participation of the Labour Party in a short-lived coalition government based of a programme of job reservation for white workers. It was a turning point in South Africa’s political history. Sharp divisions arose between members of the ISL, focused on the issue of the “white labour” policy of the Labour Party. The CPSA later became the first South African political party to open itself to non-racial membership and a non-racial political programme.

By this time, Isaacson was increasingly turning away from South African politics. His attention went mainly to the needs of orphaned Jewish children in the former Russian empire whose parents had been killed in pogroms, wars and civil wars, and to his own personal life. This was the beginning of his exertions on behalf of children and young people which, in association with the Jewish tradition of faith in education, finally found secular expression in the founding of Morris Isaacson High School.

At the beginning of World War I, Isaacson had been one of the chief advocates for the formation of a Jewish War Relief Fund. By the end of the war, he was one the most prominent and active leaders of Johannesburg Jews: President of the Jewish Guild, Treasurer of the Jewish War Memorial fund, and Treasurer and Vice-president of the Jewish Relief and Reconstruction Fund. In 1921 he became a member of an advisory board that drafted a new constitution for the South African Jewish Orphanage in Johannesburg, and became a member of its committee. In 1924 he became its chairman.

On 24 March 1924, Isaacson married Mavis Myers, whom he had met through his work for the orphanage, where she was

the matron. He was about 46, she was 24. He had played a crucial part in bringing 88 Jewish orphans from Eastern Europe to the orphanage. In an illuminated citation for their wedding, the central executive committee of the Fund paid tribute to his "great and noble work." After the "pogrom period in the Ukraine" had created "hundreds of thousands of pogrom orphans," it stated, "you placed yourself at the head of the Save the Orphans Campaign and since then you have worked wholeheartedly on behalf of these destitute orphans of ours.... Indeed you have been like a father to them".

Mavis Myers, whose mother Rosie was then head of the Jewish orphanage, took charge of the 88 orphans when they arrived in South Africa. The orphans were by then housed at the Arcadia Jewish Orphanage in Parktown. She soon became "Mummy Myers" to them, while "M.I.I." became "Pappa Isaacson". As their wedding citation stated, "Miss Mavis Meyers has as Matron been a true friend to them, giving them a mother's care and love."

In the years before their marriage, Isaacson had played a leading role in raising money for the purchase of a large house in Kensington belonging to the mining magnate, Sir Lionel Phillips. This became the premises for the Jewish orphanage, formally opened in 1923 by Prime Minister Smuts. At Morris's suggestion it was named 'Arcadia', from an ancient Greek myth about an ideal land of happiness and peace.

After the orphanage was securely established, Morris and Mavis left Johannesburg in 1926 to establish the Warmbaths Hotel at Warmbaths (now Bela-Bela, or "boiling-boiling" in Tswana) in Limpopo province. For twenty years this was a principal home of their married life, and the main source of their earnings, which after their deaths helped to fund the education and care of generations of children. The couple had no children of their own. In 1933, however, they adopted Mavis's nephew Jeffrey, then almost one year old. Until decades after their deaths, Jeffrey Isaacson never knew he was not in fact the birth child of Mavis and Morris, and that his beloved uncle Kevin Myers (who owned a hotel in Durban) was in fact his birth father.

Mavis and Morris provided their son with the best education in South Africa that money could buy. Jeffrey attended boarding schools in Johannesburg and Natal, spending holidays with his parents at Warmbaths, in Johannesburg and at the coast.

In this period of safety and educational development for Jeffrey, the Holocaust resulted in the wholesale murder of almost all Jews in Nazi-occupied Lithuania. Of approximately 208 000 to 210 000 Jews living in Lithuania

at the time of the German invasion in June 1941, which took place simultaneously with the invasion of the Soviet Union, an estimated 195 000 and perhaps even more were murdered before the end of the war, most of them in the six months between June and December 1941.

The Holocaust in Lithuania was one of the first, large-scale implementations of the Nazi "Final Solution". Lithuanian fascist organisations and individuals began murdering Jews from the very first days of the occupation, without even waiting for the German *Einsatzgruppen* (Action Groups). As early as 25 June 1941, just days after the German invasion, a photographer with the German army, Wilhelm Gunsilius, took photographs of the systematic murder of Jews in Kovno by Lithuanian civilians. A Lithuanian observer recalled later how at the Lietukis Garage in the city centre, "a group of well dressed, spruce intelligent looking people held iron bars which they used to viciously beat another group of similarly well dressed, spruce, intelligent people".³

That was the end of Morris Isaacson's birth family in Lithuania. Letters stopped coming. Only after the war did he learn of their fate.

South Africa provided the Isaacsons with safety. Morris and Mavis had close family friends in South Africa, and were loved and respected. In addition to running the Warmbaths Hotel and a nearby farm, from 1936 Morris worked as manager of the Commodore Hotel in Berea, Johannesburg, while from 1939 Mavis worked full time in the Almoner's department in Johannesburg General Hospital, to assess whether patients had to pay or got free treatment.

Jeffrey Isaacson has written that his parents continued with their charity work after leaving the Arcadia Orphanage. He continues, "When I finished school in 1947, my father sold his hotel, and for eight months we travelled. We returned to Johannesburg and I went to study at Wits from 1949 to 1953.

"My mother was diagnosed with cancer immediately after our return to South Africa and died the day I enrolled at Wits. In a strange coincidence, my father attended my graduation in 1954, and died a week later.

"In my mother's memory he built the first nursery school in Soweto, called the Mavis Isaacson Hall. At the time there was nothing similar in an area of dreadful black poverty, with a population of 150 000.

"My father also left most of his estate in a charity educational trust fund. We had a committee which assessed the students' ability to study, and my wife Myrna worked with the various bequests, within the premises of the South African Institute of Race Relations. This committee was still active when we

immigrated to Israel in 1963.

"In his memory we also built the Morris Isaacson High School.

"I last visited the school in 1996, where I got an extremely emotional reception from the students".

The initiative for establishment of the school rested with Morris Isaacson.

Derrick Kobe, principal of the very impoverished Mohloding Secondary School in Jabavu, had approached several businessmen in the early 1950s to ask them for help. Morris Isaacson donated six classrooms and a laboratory, with the school being renamed Morris Isaacson High School in 1961. The first group of students matriculated in 1963.

Probably the most important existing collection of documents relating to Morris Isaacson and the Isaacson educational bequests can be found in the archive of the late Richard Feldman (1897-1968), deposited at the University of the Witwatersrand. Born, like Isaacson, in Lithuania, though substantially younger than him, Feldman was also a leading member of the Labour Party, serving as secretary of its Organizing Committee and as an elected councillor on the Transvaal Provincial Council between 1943 and 1954. A biographical note states that for several years he was an "executor of the Morris Isaacson Education Fund, which grants bursaries to deserving African students. This fund had its origin in the Peretz School for Africans, which Feldman established earlier and which was incorporated into the Isaacson Fund."

The Feldman papers indicate that the former Ngakane Primary School was renamed the Isaacson Primary School in 1953, prior to the death of MII. The papers include MI Isaacson's last will and testament, of which Feldman was an executor, dated 31 December 1952.

A note concerning Richard Feldman's extensive papers reads: "Re the estate of M.I. Isaacson, appeals for financial help, setting up of a non-European Trades School in Johannesburg, shares, setting up of a bursary fund for Africans, Entokozweno School, Mavis Isaacson Play Centre, Jan Hofmeyr School, South African Council for English Education. Other correspondents include T. Huddleston, J. Isaacson, W. Nicol, F. J. van Wyk."

"J. Isaacson" is Jeffrey Isaacson. "T. Huddleston" is Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, rector of the Community of the Resurrection mission station in Sophiatown, rector of St Peter's School, Rosettenville, and a founder and later president of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in London. "W. Nicol" is William Nicol, the Administrator of the Transvaal from 1948 to 1958. "F.J. van Wyk" is Fred van Wyk, director of the SA Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR).

A further note in the Feldman archive states: "On student bursaries, feeding of African school children. Report of the Isaacson Foundation Bursary Fund, 1962 Apr., signed Annemarie Wolpe, administrative secretary, 16 pages/Report of the Isaacson Foundation Education Fund: a brief survey of its formation and work by Richard Feldman, 1967, July 9, 8 pages".

Annemarie Wolpe, the administrative secretary of the Isaacson Bursary Fund, was the wife of Harold Wolpe, a leading member of the SACP and Umkhonto we Sizwe. Wolpe was arrested at Lilliesleaf Farm in Rivonia in the police raid of 11 July 1963, together with Arthur Goldreich, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba and other leaders of Umkhonto we Sizwe. With Goldreich, Abdhullah Jassat and Moosa Moolla, he escaped, from police detention and from South Africa the following month. Nicholas Wolpe, son of Annemarie and Harold, is now director of the Lilliesleaf Heritage Trust in Rivonia, Johannesburg.

Jeffrey Isaacson helped to supervise the funding and building of Morris Isaacson High School, and took part in the opening of the school in 1961. Before leaving for Israel in 1963 with his wife Myrna and their first two children, he was also chairman of the Union of Southern African Artists, which promoted the musical *King Kong* (1959), with music by Todd Matshikiza and starring Miriam Makeba.

The Isaacson Foundation Bursary Fund, the second largest of the funds administered by the SAIRR, is still very much in operation. According to the Institute's audited financial statements, the fund had assets worth R4 876 653 at the end of 2010. As far as the CEO of the Institute, John Kane-Berman, can make out, the original bequest was the equivalent of R100 000!

A great many students have graduated on Morris Isaacson bursaries awarded by the Institute – 70 in the last decade alone in the following fields: Commerce (17), Science (11), Engineering (10), Health Science (10), Medicine (5), Education (5), Law (3), Arts (3), Business Administration (3), Built Environment (2), and Architecture (1).⁴ During the 2011 academic year, there were 21 students studying on Morris Isaacson bursaries!

NOTES

- 1 He was not sure of his date of birth.
- 2 As an adult, Isaacson was not religious, and would not be buried in an Orthodox Jewish ceremony.
- 4 These figures are for the first decade of the present century.

SARAH LEFTWICH - A LIFE IN ZIONISM

*

Marge Clouts

My mother Sarah Leftwich (1898-1997) was a tireless and dedicated member of WIZO in Johannesburg from the early thirties onwards. She also lectured to many Zionist groups, wrote articles for the *WIZO News and Views* and was an active member of the Women's Council. Her father, like so many other Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, was likewise a passionate Zionist and he and Sarah had many fervent discussions on the subject. Their hero was Theodor Herzl.

Sarah's parents, Israel Pincus and Rebecca (Rivke) Hellmann first lived in Riga, Latvia, a dangerous proceeding without permission to settle permanently. They later moved to Talsen, Courland, where life was freer. In 1902, Israel immigrated to South Africa, settling in Brandfort in the then Orange River Colony, and in 1904 was finally able to send for his wife and six children (two more would be born in South Africa). He had been a tailor by trade, but was a most enterprising man, trying various ways of making a living.

What follows is a brief but poignant memoir by Sarah of her early years in Talsen and eventual departure for South Africa.

Sarah's Memoir

"Where's Sarah? Sarah is not here", my mother cried in anguished tones. She looked round the cellar and made a swift count of her five other children standing among the agitated group of adult neighbours taking refuge with her. "I must look for her", she said, and was up the steps before outstretched detaining hands could stop her.

Doors had been locked, windows shuttered,

sticks and pepper in paper bags on tables were ready for defence against attackers - I had heard the dreaded word 'Cossacks'. Tired of several days of confinement within the darkened house, I had slipped out of the kitchen door into the large empty yard open on one side to a distant hill, from where shots were being fired. I didn't remember the sequence of events, but what I then witnessed, at the age of seven, remained sharply etched in my memory forever.

An old man fell to the ground with a cry of pain; his wife dragged him up the stairs. She put him on a bed, and I saw the deep wound in his thigh from which blood was gushing. Two Russian soldiers with rifles entered the bedroom from the front door. The old woman pointed to her wounded husband and held out her hands in entreaty. The soldiers stepped back into the dining-room, where they began jabbing at the furniture with their bayonets. They splintered the glass door of a bookcase and books tumbled out onto the floor. I ran - through the bedroom, down the stairs, across the yard, and there, coming out of our own door, was my mother. I was bundled into the cellar. How long the frightened group huddled there I don't know, but I understood that a warning had come that our house was on fire. We hurried out of the cellar and stood bewildered in the snow and frost-covered yard.

Then began a long and slow trudging through the empty wintry streets, my

Marge Clouts was born and educated in South Africa, going on to spend two and a half years in the newly established State of Israel. Following her return, she married the poet, Sydney Clouts, with whom she had three sons. After Sharpeville in March 1960, the couple moved to London, where they started a literary agency. Marge also taught English as a Foreign Language, English literature in various London colleges and Creative Writing in the Cotswolds. She has written many literary reviews for Jewish Renaissance and other publications.



Rivka Hellmann with her children, Talsen, circa 1904. From left, Erna, Lena, Rachel, Rivka, Max, Joseph, a cousin and Sarah.

mother carrying the youngest child, Max, in her arms, the other five children clustering round her. We came to a big house where others had also taken refuge. An old bearded man met us with a Torah scroll in his arms, uttering comforting words of faith and courage.

Looking out of a window, I saw a group of soldiers dash up to a big house nearby and hurl something - it looked like a little bottle - at it. At once the house burst into a mass of flames. Our place of shelter became unsafe, and our trudging began again, this time along a snow-covered country road, silent and lonely, till at last a farmhouse came into view. The few days there were like a picnic, eating country food at long tables with many men, women and children, and sleeping on straw on the floors.

The revolutionaries were suppressed and the fighting ceased. The pogrom feared by the Jews during the uprising had not taken place, and the refugees returned to Talsen in carts, through the streets of burnt-down and still burning houses. A further memory of my birthplace is of my standing on the charred remains of where our house had stood, and my mother instructing a workman where to dig. Out of the hole he dug, my mother lifted boxes filled with blackened gold jewellery and silver cutlery.

The next event in my young life was a train journey to my grandparents' house in Kovno. Everything was so different from Talsen. The little town of Novoaleksandroviski was rather dreary, without Talsen's beauties of nature and its higher standard of living: No boating on a lovely lake, no music in a park, no strawberry-picking in the woods, no rolling down grass-covered hills, few trees and flowers and the houses were simple and poor. The language was Russian, not German, and the Yiddish spoken by my grandparents was full of unfamiliar words. Despite this, the few months that we stayed there were full of interest and excitement.

It was a peaceful interlude before the new excitement of a train journey to Riga and then to Libau, on a ship to London, a longer voyage to Cape Town, a train journey to Brandfort in the Orange Free State, and reunion with my father who had preceded his family 'to Africa' two years earlier.

Brandfort

'To the older generation of Orthodox Jews from Russia, Eretz Yisroel was part of the

warp and woof of life, unknown, remote, but woven into the very fabric of their thoughts and hopes". Thus begins Sarah Leftwich's 'How Zionism Came to Our Free State Dorp', published in *The Zionist Record Annual* of September 1956. Zionism, she continues, was "a perpetual dream", and Russian Jews brought this outlook to South Africa, "reinforced during the eight brief years when Jewish periodicals reported and commented on Dr Herzl's comings and goings, his meetings and negotiations with kings and statesmen, his Zionist capturing and alerting of communities both near and far from the scene of his physical presence...." Back then, she notes, organised Zionism as it then existed in the 1950s was entirely absent. There were "no Zionist societies, no Zionist meetings, no Zionist cultural gatherings, and no Zionist fund-raising functions". And yet, she could not remember a time, even in very early childhood, when she did not know of Dr Herzl.

Zionism was something one lived through one's reading, as Sarah goes on to elaborate:

Friday nights stand out as belonging pre-eminently to the printed word.... The Sabbath meal over, the dining-room became the whole family's reading room. Round the large table covered with a white cloth, under the ornamental hanging paraffin lamp with its shining glass pendants and the Sabbath candles, parents and children, relaxed and pleasurably expectant, began to read. My father had stopped poring over the *gemorah* in his leisure time, and now read smaller volumes, mostly in Yiddish, that were ordered in batches from America - Jewish histories, and I remember isolated books: Spinoza, Heine's prose writings.... Before setting down to a book he would read the articles in American Yiddish weeklies.... The elder children, self-consciously intellectual, read the English classical poets, essayists and novelists. My favourite reading was first the Young Israel page of the *London Jewish Chronicle*, and then with a sense of duty and pleasure mixed, Graetz's *History of the Jews*...

Later, at about the time of the Balfour Declaration, most of the sixteen Jewish families in our village, children and grownups, assembled in the small synagogue to hear the first Zionist emissary I remember - Benzion Hersch. His impassioned oratory moved his audience deeply: '*Feier un Flamm*' was the verdict on him.

The next Zionist speech in a Free State dorps that I heard soon afterwards was in English, by Mr A. M. Abrahams.¹ It was



Sarah with her two South Africa-born siblings, Bella and Lionel, Brandfort circa 1918.

the first in a long chain of 'Impressions of Israel' to which South African audiences, avid for news and pictures of Palestine, have listened to throughout the years.

Reading, Teaching, Writing

My Yiddish-speaking mother did not learn to read English before she was nine, but reading very soon became her 'chiefest joy'. She started taking out books from the Brandfort School library - books set in England, which presented little-understood ideas and conditions. George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, she recorded later in her journal, "aroused the impression of great fear, even terror. The horror of the 'fall' of Hetty, for reasons not understood, created an indelible and frightening impression". Her later voracious reading, she wrote, "led to my special desire for universal knowledge and my inclination for real literature".

In 1917, Sarah spent a year in Bloemfontein at a Teachers Training College (there were very few careers open to women, and university for her was a longed-for but impossible dream) and then a long slog at teaching in cultural deserts like Jagersfontein, Ladybrand, Ficksburg, Zastron and Kroonstad. It was in Kroonstad that she met Irene Geffen, later to become the first female law graduate in South Africa, and they became lifelong friends.



Sarah Hellman shortly before her marriage, Johannesburg 1928

In 1921, Israel Helmann bought a house in Joel Road, Berea, Johannesburg, so that his wife and at least four members of their family could be together. My mother was then able to live a fuller life as a Zionist, a reader, and an aspiring writer. She frequented the Johannesburg Library, and there met a very friendly woman, Mrs Raie Jacobson, who just happened to have a very eligible bachelor brother, Sam Leftwich. Sarah and Sam duly met over bridge games at the Jacobson's house. They married in January 1929. It was the year when the Great Depression began, and "frugal living became the norm".

Domestic duties and bringing up her only child did not stop the flow of Sarah's journalism. She published book reviews and many articles on Jewish, Zionist and literary subjects, mainly in the *Zionist Record*, while working for WIZO - endless meetings, fund-raising events, talks to WIZO groups in smaller towns, eventually taking her place in the Council. I grew up hearing names such as Anna Franks, Nettie Davidoff, Sylvia Nel, Sadie Fredman and Fanny Raphael among many others. My mother greatly valued the many friendships which this comradeship in work engendered.

Israel and Later Years

At last, in 1949, it became possible for Sarah to visit this place of passionate focus, and the subject of many of her talks and articles - Israel. Her purpose was threefold: she wanted to find her father's grave - he



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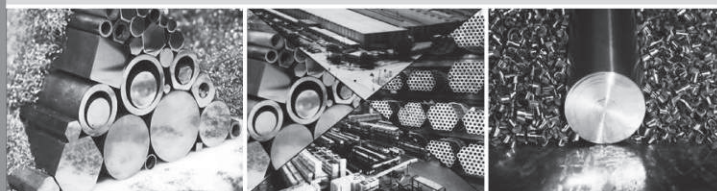
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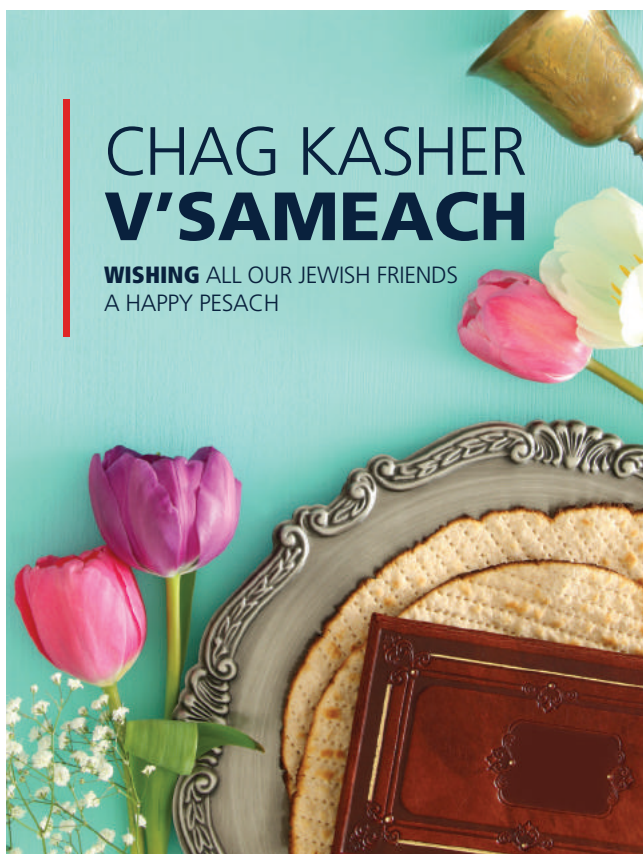


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Mother and daughter, Tel Aviv, 1949

had spent the last two years of his life there, in Ramat Gan, dying in 1941 (this proved frustratingly impossible). She wanted to visit me on my kibbutz, Bet Keshet, and after her initial shock at our primitive conditions, engaged the few English speakers there in interesting discussions arising out of her searching questions. And of course, she longed to see for herself various WIZO projects and to experience Israel as fully as possible in the short time of two months

that she was there.

I remember going with her to Ra'anana Immigrant Reception, her eager questioning of the WIZO workers there, and her speaking in German and Yiddish to some of the refugees. Many WIZO colleagues who had already made *aliyah* were most helpful and hospitable to her, making her stay so much more manageable and memorable. She returned with a new confidence to WIZO educational work, fundraising and many more informed and knowledgeable talks. She continued writing for WIZO's *News and Views* and also for the newly founded *Jewish Affairs*, edited by her great friend Millie Levy.

In later years my parents were able to visit me, my husband and their three grandsons in London, and to enjoy several world cruises. They also visited Israel, where they were invited to meet the President, and were taken to see the many projects which all the WIZO fundraising had made possible. There is a hospital ward in Israel named in my mother's honour.

After my father's death in 1989, Sarah went to live in Our Parents' Home, amongst people who valued her for her intellect and her achievements in the world of South African Judaism. She died there in 1997, aged 99.

NOTES

- 1 Abraham Mark Abrahams, later President of the SA Zionist Federation and Principal of the Jewish Government School in Johannesburg.



Executive of the Women's Zionist Council, 1956. Sarah Leftwich, Vice-President and Campaign Convener, is seated third from right, next to WJC President Inez Gordon.

THE HERSCHEL GRYNSPAN SAGA

*

Solly Kessler

History tells of men who, for one brief moment of notoriety, rise from complete obscurity and by a single act spark off consequences for the world or for their people, the enormity of which they could never have contemplated. One such instance was the killing of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Gavrilo Princip at Sarajevo on 28 June, 1914. Another, enacted on 7 November 1938, and yet almost forgotten today, was the Herschel Grynszpan affair.

Cast your mind back to the Europe of 1938. In a move intended to prevent Hitler from dumping Germany's 60 000 Polish Jewish nationals back into Poland, the Polish government issued a decree invalidating the Polish passports of persons who had been living abroad unless they returned to the country by midnight on 28 October, 1938, to obtain a special endorsement on their passports. Failure to do this would render the persons concerned stateless.

At that stage, there were still high-ranking Nazis who thought in terms of forced Jewish emigration as a solution to "the Jewish Problem". Using the Polish decree as a pretext, they conceived a plan to rid Germany of its Polish Jews – Jews who had hitherto enjoyed a measure of protection from the molestations of the Nazis merely because of Germany's desire to maintain friendly relations with Poland as long as the Czechoslovakian issue remained unsolved.

Thus, in the small hours of 28 October, German police swooped on some 15 000 Polish Jews throughout the country, served deportation orders on them, and, within a

matter of hours, put them on special trains bound for the Polish frontier.

Near the border the trains disembarked their hapless passengers and they then herded like cattle through swamps and marshes to the frontier.

On reaching "no-man's land", however, they found that they could neither proceed nor retreat, for their way into Poland was barred by Polish guards, while behind them S.S. troopers fired into the air to discourage any Jews who might be thinking of re-entering Germany.

And there, near the village of Zbonszyn, those several thousand souls were stranded.

Amongst the Zbonszyn refugees were the parents of the 17 year-old Herschel Grynszpan, who was on a visit to his uncle in Paris at the time. The news of his parents' plight embittered Herschel's heart. A deep and burning feeling of frustration overcame his whole being, but was soon replaced by an unquenchable thirst for something that the Jewish soul had been able to repress for so long - revenge!

On 7 November, 1938, he left the home of his uncle and set out for the German Embassy.



Herschel Grynszpan, 1921 - ?

Solly Kessler (1929-2005) was a Cape Town attorney and a prominent figure in Jewish communal affairs throughout his life. Amongst other positions held, he served on the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape Council) and the Western Cape Zionist Council (including as Chairman). A leading liberal voice in Jewish circles, he was responsible for drafting the Hate Speech clause in the Bill of Rights, and also presented both written and oral testimony into the pivotal Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (#4, 2000). Mr Kessler was a frequent contributor to Jewish publications, including Jewish Affairs. This article is based on an unpublished paper he wrote in 1988, at the time of the 40th anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogrom.

Had it but known the nature of Herschel's mission, German Jewry would have moved heaven and earth to prevent him from entering that building; but, alas, it did not. Herschel stepped inside and asked to see the Ambassador, Count Johannes von Welczek. He was met by the doorman, who told him to wait on the steps while he conveyed the message to His Excellency. A door in the corridor opened and out stepped a young man who walked towards Herschel and asked the object of his call. The answer came in no uncertain terms, in the form of bullets from the revolver that Herschel had drawn from his inner jacket pocket.

The man whom Herschel had shot and who now lay critically wounded on the floor was Ernst vom Rath, third secretary of the Embassy, a man who had never been unfriendly to the Jews, and who for some time had been suspected by the Nazis – and not without foundation – of being an enemy of the regime.

The attack on vom Rath struck fear into the heart of German Jewry. While he lingered between life and death from 7 to 9 November, their anxiety mounted, for the ominous words of the violently antisemitic *Das Schwarze Korps*, official weekly of the S.A.,¹ published on 3 November, were still fresh in their minds: "The Jews in Germany are a part of world Jewry. They must share the responsibility for any attacks world Jewry launches upon Germany, and they must answer for any injury world Jewry inflicts or is likely to inflict on us".

The evening papers on 9 November carried the news of vom Rath's death. There was no immediate public reaction however, for to the man in the street the death of this minor diplomat meant nothing. But German Jewry knew that the storm must surely follow. And precisely at 2 a.m. the following morning that storm broke simultaneously throughout Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland, as the disciplined German heart suddenly – and at this odd hour – cried out for vengeance.

First Jewish shops were attacked, pillaged and burnt – all in all about 7500 Jewish businesses.

From there, the mob moved onto the synagogues and within moments flames were billowing forth and licking the very sky. Some 200 shuls were either razed to the ground or reduced to charred shells. The *Sifrei Torah* (Scrolls of the Law) were carried to the public squares and burnt, in many instances in the enforced presence of the Rabbi. Later, when the mob could find no more Jewish shops and synagogues, attacks were made on Jewish houses and apartments, and furniture was dragged into the streets and hacked to pieces. Jewish orphanages

were invaded as well as community centres; even homes for consumptives. The violence continued throughout the 10th until, at 10 p.m. Goebbels called a halt and the indignant German heart was immediately calmed. On 11 November the *Völkischer Beobachter* wrote, the outraged people's soul has found a safety valve."

Throughout that day and the previous night, Jews had been brutally assaulted in the streets and many had lost their lives. But now the Secret Police went into action and within a few hours about 30 000 Jews were arrested, mostly communal leaders, rabbis and the last of the Jewish lawyers and 'healers' (the special title of inferiority the Nazis had given to Jewish doctors, who could by now only treat Jewish patients). They were thrown into concentration camps, "to protect them", as the Nazis told the world, "from the indignation of the people".

The assassination of Ernst vom Rath had been used as the pretext for the worst pogrom that Germany had ever seen. But it was only the prelude to much worse.

On 12 November, Hermann Goering called an inter-ministerial conference at which new anti-Jewish measures were decided upon. Goering told the meeting that he had just had instructions from the Fuehrer that "the Jewish question is to be co-ordinated and solved now, once and for all, in one way or another." The measures that were agreed upon were designed to eliminate German Jewry from the social, cultural and economic life of the country. From these laws to total annihilation was but a short step, as the world soon learnt.

Indeed, the annihilation of all German Jewry was foreshadowed in *Das Schwarze Korps* on 24 November. There, it was stated that the Jews would be driven from their homes, segregated and reduced to poverty. Such a policy would cause them to sink into delinquency, thus giving the German people an excuse to treat them as criminals and exterminate them by fire and sword, bringing the factual and final end of Jewry in Germany – its absolute annihilation.

On 12 November, the following decrees were published in the *Reich Law Gazette*:

- (a) A decree requiring German Jewry to pay "an atonement fine" of one billion reichsmarks as a punishment for "the hostile attitude of Jewry against the German people, not even recoiling from cowardly murder".
- (b) A decree intended to exclude Jews from the economic life of Germany. It provided that as from 1 January, 1939, Jews could not own retail stores, mail order or brokerage firms,

nor could they engage in any trade, either independently or as employees in executive positions.

- (c) A decree that Jews were immediately and at their own expense to repair the damage suffered by them as a result of the pogrom. Insurance money payable to Jews in respect of the damage was to be forfeited to the Reich.

Further anti-Jewish laws followed. Thus, on 16 November the “numerous clauses” was abolished and the few remaining Jews in German schools were expelled. As the *Volksischer Beobachter* wrote when introducing this decree, “After the ruthless murder in Paris we can no longer require German teachers to instruct Jewish pupils.” On 28 November, a police decree was published authorising administrative officials to exclude Jews from certain localities and to ban them from appearing in public at certain hours. Pursuant to this decree, on 3 December the Berlin Police Chief banned Jews from all theatres and cinemas, as well as other places of entertainment museums, sports fields and several prominent Berlin streets.

Detailed provisions for the compulsory realisation and liquidation of Jewish property and businesses were promulgated on 3 December. This decree also prohibited Jews from acquiring landed property, and required Jewish securities, stocks and bonds to be deposited with a recognised bank. Sales of land belonging to Jews could only take place under permit from the government, and if the ‘Aryan’ purchaser acquired such land cheaply he had to make a payment to the Reich.

Other decrees published following the Paris shooting forbade Jews from possessing arms and even deprived them of their licences to drive motor vehicles. Certain local areas passed their own anti-Jewish measures. In Nuremberg, for instance, it was decreed that Jews could not remain in the city for more than 48 hours without a police permit. Such was the shattering aftermath of the November pogrom, the aftermath of young Herschel’s folly. His act had been the spark that set all Germany aflame with the lust for Jewish blood.

Early in 1939 G. Warburg, in his book *Six Years of Hitler*, wrote the following tragically prophetic words:

The Pogrom has not quenched the thirst of the radical Nazis around Herr Himmler for the blood of the Jews. The wrecking of Jewish homes, the destruction of Jewish livelihoods, the tearing apart of Jewish families, the hundreds of executions,

murders, maimings and suicides, the thousands of arrests, were not enough. They regard the Pogrom as merely the preliminary to something worse. They have worked up their hatred by their own agitation to such a pitch that only a mass slaughter can give them satisfaction.

And what of Herschel?

He was arrested by the French police and detained in prison, but the French never brought him to trial. In May 1940, when the train conveying him and other French prisoners from Paris to Toulouse was bombed and there was the chance of escape, he remained and insisted on being taken to prison. In June 1940, with the French collapse, he fell into German hands.

By this time, Herschel was not just the Nazis’ excuse for the “November Pogrom”, but had become the symbol of “the International Jew who had caused the war itself”. On 20 September, 1939, Goebbels had published a yellow book – “Grynszpan and his Accomplices” – in which this thesis had been propounded.

From the moment that he received news of Herschel’s capture, Goebbels dreamed of a great State Trial “to open the eyes of all mankind”. Nothing, however, was done until November, 1941, when Goebbels sent Dierwege, the author of the yellow book, to Paris to collect witnesses. Dierwege interviewed M. Georges Bonnet who, according to him, was prepared to testify that “the Jewish influences that had delayed Grynszpan’s trial had compelled him to declare war on Germany”.

But the Nazi party leaders were not in agreement as to the desirability of holding the trial and, although arrangements were made for the trial in the Berlin People’s Court and Judge and defending counsel were appointed, it was postponed sine die on 11 May, 1942. From this moment the darkness that engulfed the millions of European Jews who disappeared in the Nazi extermination camps closed around Herschel, and the world knows nothing more of this tragic young Jew whose rash deed brought such misfortune to his people.²

The world heard more of the November 1938 pogrom, however, for certain aspects thereof were the subject of evidence given at the Nuremberg Trials of 1945-46. Some of this evidence cast serious doubt on the assertions made by Goebbels in 1938 that the pogrom was “the spontaneous expression of the people’s indignation”. According to documents produced in evidence at the trial the following instructions were issued by the Gestapo to all police offices on the night of 9 November, 1938:

These instructions must be forwarded to all S.S. quarters immediately:

- (1) Within the shortest time possible action against the Jews will start all over Germany, especially against their synagogues. Interference of any kind will not be tolerated.
- (2) Important material in the archives of the synagogues must be confiscated and removed to a safe place.
- (3) Between 20 000 and 30 000 Jews within the Reich must be arrested. They are to be chosen from among wealthy Jews. Special instructions pertaining to this phase of the actions will be issued during the night.

Reinhardt Heydrich, head of the Gestapo and the man generally regarded as the real engineer of the extermination of European Jewry, issued the following order on the same night:

Because of the assassination of a member of the German Legation in Paris, demonstrations against the Jews in the Reich, Austria and the Sudeten area are to be expected in the night from November 9 to 10. To deal with these events the following orders are to be obeyed:

Leaders of all the State Police must at once call for a meeting to secure co-ordinated action of demonstrations.

For such actions only orders are to be issued which do not endanger the life or property of German citizens. Synagogues are to be set on fire only if buildings of German citizens are not endangered by the flames

So much for the spontaneity of the pogrom.

As to the anti-Jewish measures that followed, those that were intended to eliminate German Jewry from the economic life of the country were already considered early in 1938, long before the shooting of vom Rath, if the testimony given at the Nuremberg Trial by Funk, the Reich Minister of Economics, is to be believed. But this may well have been an attempt by Funk to exculpate himself and to place the blame for his oppressive economic measures on others.


These, then, are the facts of the Grynszpan affair.

But they pose problems of cause and effect which are not easy to solve, namely whether the shooting of vom Rath brought about the subsequent events in Germany, or whether history merely used the assassin as a human trigger-device to set in motion a predestined chain of events; whether the tragic history of European Jewry would have been quite the same if the boy had never been born.

NOTES

- 1 The *Sturmabteilung*, literally Storm Detachment, the Nazi Party's original paramilitary.
- 2 *Editor's note:* In 2016, many years after this article was written, a photograph purportedly of Grynszpan and taken at a displaced persons camp in Bamberg, Germany, on 3 July 1946 was discovered in the archives of Vienna's Jewish Museum. The photograph appears to show Grynszpan participating in a demonstration of Holocaust survivors against the UK government's refusal to let them immigrate to the British mandate of Palestine. A facial recognition test showed a 95% chance that the photo was of Grynszpan, "the highest possible outcome" according to the *Guardian* report of 18 December 2016.

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AN UNSUNG HOLOCAUST HERO: RABBI SOLOMON SCHONFELD

*

Isaac Reznik

2 December 2018 commemorated the 80th anniversary of the ‘*Kindertransport*’, as the rescue efforts that brought some 10 000 refugee Jewish children to the UK from Nazi Germany and other European countries in the years 1938-1940 are called. One of the most remarkable, yet still largely unheralded heroes of those times was Solomon Schonfeld, a young British rabbi who personally rescued thousands of Jews during the tragic decade of 1938-1948.

Solomon Schonfeld, the second son of Rabbi Dr Victor Schonfeld of London, was rabbi of the Adath Yisroel Synagogue, a small Orthodox congregation in London. A dynamic and charismatic personality, he was inspired to embark on rescue work on behalf of European Jewry by his former teacher, Rabbi Michoel Dov Weissmandl. This work was accomplished under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi’s Religious Emergency Council, a body created in 1938 with the approval of his future father-in-law, Chief Rabbi J H Hertz and of which he became executive director.

Following *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, Rabbi Dr Schonfeld assisted the Austrian communal leader Julius Steinfeld in organising a *Kindertransport* of some 300 Orthodox Jewish youth, whose entry he secured through providing the UK government with his personal guarantee. He was subsequently responsible for all but single-handedly bringing to pre-war England several thousand youngsters, rabbis, teachers, ritual slaughterers and other religious functionaries ignored by the secular British Jewish establishment, providing his ‘charges’ with kosher homes, Jewish education and jobs. He also saved large numbers of Jews with South American protection papers. After the war, he devoted himself to the spiritual and physical needs of survivors in the liberated areas, including creating unique mobile synagogues. During the war, he approached His Majesty’s Government to heed R. Weissmandl’s pleas to bomb Auschwitz, but his appeal went unheeded.

Isaac Reznik, a veteran Jewish communal worker, journalist and editor, has written extensively on aspects of South African and general Jewish history. He is a member of the editorial board of Jewish Affairs.

Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, the late Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, was a noted example of the long-range impact of Rabbi Schonfeld’s actions, since he and his immediate family were among the thousands rescued by him from Nazi Germany. Lord Jakobovits arrived in London as a teenager in 1936. After staying for a year in the Northfield boarding school, he was enrolled in the Jewish Secondary School, Aberglaslyn. In his memoirs, he recalls the excitement of the evacuation to Shefford and surrounding villages, when the sleepy little Bedfordshire town was turned into a spiritual fortress throbbing with Jewish life. Never before, he reflected, had there been such a concentration of Jews and Jewish life in Great Britain.

Lord Jakobovits further recognized the extraordinary contributions made by Rabbi Dr Schonfeld through his founding of the Hasmonean schools in London as well as other schools that formed the Jewish Secondary Schools Movement in England.

There are individuals whose achievements leave permanent marks on an entire community. There are even fewer whose single-handed efforts save thousands of Jews – who multiplied into tens of thousands. Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld was an Anglo-Jew who accomplished both.



Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld (1912-1984) as he looked during his 1946 visit to Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps to assist survivors.

CHILD OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMP (Part V)

*

Don Krausz

Once again we were halted at a forest for the night. We were now very close to the front line, with the sounds of gunfire everywhere and planes being shot down overhead. That night I began to pray as I have never prayed before or since. I was not afraid and praying for my life. I prayed that after all these years of horror this terrible war would come to an end. I prayed for my parents and Irene, none of whom I expected to see again. After the experiences of the past two weeks I did not think that my father, whom I knew to be a sick man, or my mother and a small child like Irene could possibly have survived the hunger, the exhaustion and continuous shooting that we had witnessed.

The following day we still rested in that forest. When there was a lull in the shooting, our guards once again attempted to get us onto our feet and to continue the march. One man had climbed a tree and was watching the fighting in the distance. He now called to one of the guards to come and look. This guard also climbed a tree and saw Russian tanks advancing from where we had come. He climbed down, took his rifle by the barrel, smashed it against a tree and, throwing the broken pieces away, simply walked off.

For us the war was over. The date was 2 May 1945; I had been imprisoned for exactly two years, seven months and sixteen days.

For years we prisoners had dreamed of the end of the war, and the event had often featured in our discussions. We had tried to picture our liberation: tanks breaking through the gate, and our falling on the guards and tearing them to pieces. We even said that after the war we would not return straight home, but would first gladly each serve ten years of our lives as guards of those who had tortured us.

Don Krausz served as the chairman of the Association of Holocaust Survivors in Johannesburg (She'erith Hapleitah) from 1985. Over the past three decades, he has spoken to thousands of South Africans, Jewish and non-Jewish, including addressing many school groups, on his experiences during the Holocaust. This article, the fifth and final section of his Holocaust memoir, picks up the narrative near the end of the so-called 'Death March' which he and his fellow prisoners were forced to undertake during the final German retreat.

Now here was the reality. Our guards were no longer the hated and feared SS, but ex-prisoners who had exchanged their concentration camp uniforms for that of the Wehrmacht. We lay there and watched them leave; nobody stopped them, no one touched them. Perhaps we were physically and emotionally too exhausted to think of revenge. All day we watched as the spectacle of war took place before our eyes. American jeeps roaring East, Russian tanks plodding West, for we were at a place where the two armies met. A German Panzer arrived and left the road to stand in a field. Its driver emerged carrying a bazooka and proceeded to fire a shell into the tank, which caught fire. A column of Wehrmacht soldiers came marching in perfect formation, stopped on the road in front of us much to our trepidation, disarmed completely and continued marching towards the American lines. I got up and examined the weapons that they had discarded and that had taken such a toll of our lives, but did not know how to use them and threw them away.

There were some Russian boys amongst us. They suffered from no such ignorance, picked up guns and headed for the nearest German farm. Soon we heard shooting. The boys came back empty-handed, with one of their party wounded. They left him at the side of the road. Eventually a few Russian tanks lumbered along with infantry sitting on top of them. The Russian boys called to them, the tanks stopped and after a brief conversation one tank swiveled its gun and proceeded to pump shell after shell into the farm house.

All day long there was movement; people got up, people left. Most of our party stayed where we were, just resting although we had no food. The following day a number of the Dutchmen got up to leave and asked me to accompany them, but I still did not feel strong enough. The next day, however, Nobel, Otto and I together with four other Dutchmen left and returned towards Hagenau, behind which the American lines were situated.

It was still quite a distance and we eventually came to a Russian check post. One of the Russians spoke German and asked us why we wanted to leave what had now become the Russian zone. We explained that we came from Holland and that the shortest distance home was via the American zone,

not Moscow. He then warned us that we would come to a fork in the road and that we should take the one fork and not the other. "Yesterday", he said, "A party of you Dutchmen came through here and took the wrong road. They walked into an SS ambush and were all shot."

On the way to Hagenau we went through the village where Otto and I had been identified as bandits. The place seemed deserted, the shutters closed, and I had the impression that the population was afraid of the seven of us, mostly dressed in striped concentration camp uniforms. Any healthy man could have handled all of us put together, but these were the brave Germans. We stopped to rest in the village square, when suddenly a door opened and a pretty little blond girl came out. She ran straight towards me and started talking and playing and I was only too glad to play with her. It was such a normal thing to do and perhaps she reminded me of Irene. The Dutchmen watched this in amazement and asked me how I, a Jewish boy, could bring myself to play with a German child. I had no answer for them; I just knew that I had done no wrong.

Upon entering Hagenau we found the place crowded with refugees, German soldiers and ex-prisoners. I think that we split up in order

to try and find food. Not easy, as others had got to the dustbins before us.

I was walking down one of the streets when I saw some cheese rinds lying in the gutter. By then I had not eaten for six days. Such was my hunger that I began to eat those parings, when suddenly a voice said in German, "Come and sit down, boy". It was a German soldier busy cooking food on the pavement and he shared his meal with me. It has always been a moment of supreme irony for me that the first decent food that I ate after the war came from a German soldier.

By now I was again too weak to walk and I remember Otto and I taking turns to be wheeled on a bicycle that somebody had 'liberated'. We were directed to a Luftwaffe camp outside the town which had been transformed into a Displaced Persons (DP) camp, joining up with ten other boys of my age. We were housed several to a room and to my surprise received no medical attention. The food was also disappointing - potato soup, but at least you could get as much as you wanted and were no longer hungry. From time to time we received Red Cross parcels. In those parcels were American cigarettes and one day we boys decided that it was time for a celebration. The war was over, Germany had been defeated, the guards

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were gone, the shooting had stopped and we were alive! True, we were not home yet or re-united with our families, but from now on nothing more could go wrong.

We managed to exchange some cigarettes with a German farmer for butter and a bag of potatoes, 'liberated' a small wash tub and proceeded to make chips. We gorged ourselves.

This was a mistake; we had not eaten any fat and hardly any meat for years and our bodies could not take this rich food. We all got diarrhea and within a week eight out of the twelve of us were dead. Years later a cardiologist would tell me that this food must have put such a strain on our systems, that the ones who died probably suffered heart attacks.

This was the pattern with every group of concentration camp survivors throughout liberated Europe.

In the meantime, I had contacted the American soldiers in our area and made friends with the Jews among them, including a soldier named Ben Botwick from New Jersey. My mother was English and I was familiar with the language. The soldiers were most interested in the stories that I had to tell. Outside their barracks, German POW's were employed peeling potatoes. I remember a sergeant listening to my tales of woe, pulling his pistol from his holster, unloading it and telling me: "Here, take this, go outside and shoot the lot of them."

I stood in the doorway and aimed the pistol at the nearest German. When he looked up and saw me he fell backwards off his bench trying to get out of my line of fire. The next German I aimed at also disappeared. Eventually I had many of those men running all over that yard. Not one had the courage to call my bluff. Childish, of course, but it gave me a great deal of satisfaction.

One day we ex-prisoners were told by Red Cross personnel to report to a clothing shop in Hagenau in order to be issued with new clothing. Although Otto and I did not wear the striped camp uniform, we had worn our present outer garments since about the time that we had been sent to the Men's camps seven months earlier. For the past two weeks we had literally lived in them day and night, sleeping in mud and rain.

I arrived rather late at this store and the German owner peremptorily ordered me out and refused to serve me. So back I went to my good friend Ben Botwick. He picked up his Tommygun and said: "Come!" We walked to that store, rang the bell and when the owner appeared, Ben tickled the man's stomach with the gun and told me to repeat my request for clothing.

Never have I had better and more courteous service, not even at Levisons, a high-class

clothing retailer in Johannesburg. The only existing picture of me taken shortly after the war shows me wearing that new suit, courtesy of the Red Cross and Ben Botwick.

At another time I was in my room when I heard a commotion outside and looking out, saw Ben walking down the road with a uniformed SS officer in front of him. Walking behind him were about twenty Poles, not Jewish, all shouting and gesticulating. I went outside and Ben explained to me that he had been put in charge of a group of German POWs, and that the Poles hailed from Auschwitz and claimed to have recognized this officer as one of that camp's guards. They demanded that Ben hand over the prisoner so that they could administer instant justice.

Ben told me that he was responsible for every prisoner in his charge. He asked me whether I knew the Nazi, which I denied. He then asked me to speak to the Poles in German and to tell them two things: one was that if they tried to lay hands on that prisoner he would shoot them. Secondly, that he knew a Jewish girl from Auschwitz in the DP camp and if she confirmed that this officer was an Auschwitz guard, then the Poles could have him with pleasure. So what does he do with this prisoner in the meantime? He puts me in charge of him.

So there I was, all of 14 years old with a potentially murderous Nazi on my hands who stood to be lynched before the day was out. I took him to my room, gave him a broom and told him to sweep the floor. This must have been a particularly stupid Nazi for he actually did so, instead of immediately making good his escape. I was not armed – perhaps he was shell shocked. The Poles had left with Ben. After about an hour they all returned and Ben told me that he had mentioned the prisoner's name to the Jewish girl and it did not mean anything to her. He relieved me of my Nazi officer and that was the last that I saw of him. Upon being questioned, the Poles told me that the Jewish girl had probably been this German's mistress, and so she had shielded him.

But she was not the only one who had shielded that German. What had stopped me from telling Ben that I also recognized the man as a concentration camp guard, or otherwise prevailing on Ben that here was a chance to take revenge on the hated SS? All I know is that I did not do so, and could never have done it.

Otto and I had decided that we needed to strengthen ourselves and would go for long walks in a nearby forest. I used to take with a German army kitbag with a couple of bricks inside for added effort. One day we were roaming through the forest when we came upon a group of armed German

soldiers. They took one look at us and one immediately said: "You are Jews, aren't you?" I confirmed this and remember thinking what a silly way this would be to die, but all that they wanted was information on how to avoid American patrols. I sent them in a direction where they would be sure to find some, then asking poor Otto to keep an eye on them. I ran back as fast as I could to the DP camp and alerted the Americans. They promptly manned a couple of jeeps, and taking me with as guide, proceeded at speed along a road leading into the forest. They were all armed, of course, and as I did not want to find myself in a fight empty handed I grabbed an axe and put it into my belt.

We finally arrived at the place where we had encountered the Germans, only to find Otto there and not a German in sight. He had been too wise to follow those soldiers but was able to indicate in which direction they had gone. Then off we went into the forest, spread out in battle formation, guns and axe at the ready. Suddenly one of the Americans held up his hand, aimed his rifle and fired. My heart nearly stood still. "What did you see?" I asked. "A deer," he said. We never saw those Germans again. Racing back in the jeeps the way we had come we hit a pothole. I shot up into the air and landed on the point of the axe, which had been in my belt, making me the only casualty of the whole exercise. I have my battle scar to this day.

But it was not only German soldiers that we found. One day we came across Herbert Klein, the French boy with a dislike for water. It appeared that he had managed to attach himself to a group of French prisoners after we had left the Destruction camp and they had looked after him.

Even more interesting to me was one day finding one of the Jewish Czech boys in the DP camp. He assured me that the other Jewish boys had also survived. The Gypsies I did not bother to enquire about.



*Contents of a Red Cross parcel,
World War II*

Repatriation

We were now interviewed by members of the Red Cross with a view to repatriation. Both Otto and I stated that we were Dutch. No one could argue with us - we had no papers and there were no witnesses. I don't know what made us lie, other than perhaps maintaining the fiction that had enabled us to gain access to the Dutch barrack in Sachsenhausen. We realized that if any of our families had survived, they would try and return to Holland in the hope of finding someone or even something. It was as well that we did say that we were Dutch; one of the boys of our Hungarian group had become separated from his mother. When questioned after his liberation he told the truth, namely that he had Hungarian nationality. The authorities promptly sent him to Hungary and it took his mother two years before she could get him released by the Communists.

Knowing that we were soon to be repatriated we inquired as to conditions in Holland. It was then that we found out about the widespread starvation there. I, in the meantime, had acquired some souvenirs - German ceremonial swords, daggers etc. Had I been so inclined I could have brought a submachine gun or Luger pistol back with me; I was never searched. Under the circumstances I decided to get rid of all my loot and instead managed to exchange it with the American soldiers for six Red Cross parcels, returning to Holland carrying three in each hand. I will never know what excited my Auntie Lenke more when I arrived there, my survival or those parcels.

And so one day we left Lunenburg airport in a military Dakota, and in due course landed in Brussels on our way back home. We had some time to ourselves and wandered around the city admiring both the architecture and our freedom to do so. Suddenly we heard our names called in an excited voice and found ourselves confronted by Jacques. He was overjoyed to see us and lost no time in telling Otto and me that he was now the proud possessor of two houses, probably once owned by his parents. Otto and I looked at each other: "What has become of your mother, Jacques" I asked him. His eyes became evasive and he did not answer. "Your father and older brother were sent to Buchenwald" I persisted. Again he did not answer, but after a few seconds recovered his earlier enthusiasm and again insisted that we accompany him to see his houses. Saddened we walked away, leaving him standing there.

Holland

That evening I arrived with Nobel at his home in Rotterdam, while Otto went on to The Hague to find his uncle. Mrs Nobel was a dear woman and made me most welcome and after dinner I was shown my room. It had big featherbeds in it and I looked at them, felt them, felt the mattress and then burst out laughing. It took me some time to compose myself.

The following day, leaving my Red Cross parcels at the Nobels, I set out for Schiedam and the van Hultens. I arrived there in the afternoon and with trepidation knocked on the door. How had they fared since my father last saw them in 1943? Mrs van Hulten opened the door, looking the same as I had remembered her. For a moment she stared at me. Then she said: "It is Don," and then, "We heard from your mother and sister this morning."

Although the van Hultens and the Krausz's had been neighbours for many years as well as friends and their children had gone to the same school, I was not surprised that Mrs van Hulten had not recognized me initially; I may have lost some weight and had a very different expression. By contrast, when I eventually saw the photos of my mother and Irene that had been taken upon their arrival in Sweden after having been liberated, I was amazed to see how healthy and well-fed they both looked. The food at the Siemens camp must have been adequate.

Some time after I had been transferred to the Men's camp, my mother went to work at the nearby Siemens factory and with Riva's help she managed to have Irene sent there as well. They stayed at the Siemens labour camp, not in Ravensbruck. The conditions in Siemens were better than in Ravensbruck; if I had still been with my mother and sister, then the transfer to that labour camp could not have taken place. My mother and sister were returned to Ravensbruck when the Siemens camp was evacuated.

Not long thereafter the Hungarian group was informed that they could choose to be sent to the Bergen Belsen concentration camp if they so wished. This episode was rather irregular. The Nazis were not in the habit of allowing one any choice – people were disposed of like so much cattle. The women knew nothing about the conditions in Bergen Belsen, except that it was in the west and therefore more likely to be liberated by the English or Americans than by the Russians. Nearly all the Hungarian women from Holland took this option.

My mother was not so sure. These could be life or death decisions and she had to consider the welfare of her child as well. So acting on intuition, she did something that

was also highly irregular: She asked one of the SS guards for advice.

Now there was not supposed to be any civil contact between the SS guards and those whom they might be called upon to beat or kill at a moment's notice. The man whom my mother selected was one of the very few whom she had not seen ill-treat a prisoner. My sister was a very beautiful child, allowing for concentration camp conditions. She was fair-skinned, blond and blue-eyed, the very epitome of a young Aryan girl. The guard listened to my mother and then looked at Irene.

"Is this your child?" he asked. Upon hearing the affirmation, he said, "*Bleib hier*" (Stay), and walked away.

This decision would be their salvation. The Hungarian group that went to Bergen Belsen found themselves in a camp rife with typhus and tuberculosis. Many became critically ill and some died, including Otto's mother. When a barrack was infested with typhus it was not uncommon for 99% of its occupants to perish.

In March 1945 my mother heard of a list that was being prepared of all the English prisoners in Ravensbruck and she had her name and Irene's entered on that list. Later, in April, the Red Cross evacuated them to Sweden and in due course my mother contacted the van Hultens.

A fellow prisoner drew my mother's attention to this list. She was a Chinese lady called Nadine Wang who claimed to have been a colonel in Chiang Kai-shek's army. Before the Swedish Red Cross evacuated the English prisoners, my mother and Irene went to take their leave of Nadine Wang and to thank her for what may well have been the gift of their lives. None of them knew what future lay ahead. Nadine Wang was not a young woman and had no children. She asked my mother that if all went well and Irene married and became a mother herself, that she should be reminded of what had happened on this occasion. If the infant were a girl, then Nadine Wang would appreciate it if Irene would name the child after her. Irene's daughter is called Ronit Nadine.

I now began to alternate my sojourn between the Nobels, the van Hultens and my Auntie Lenke. I learned that Lenke and her husband Baczi had survived by being in hiding during the war. Holland was still in the grip of hunger, food was rationed and my Red Cross parcels were duly divided between those three families. I got on very well with all of them, although my childhood friend, Jan van Hulten, who was one year younger than I, would tell me years later that he felt that I was at least 25 years older than he when I returned. I still kept in touch with Otto

and we would go for long walks together. His younger brother and sister had survived Bergen Belsen and were to join him in The Hague eventually.

Otto and his brother and sister did not remain in Holland. Their uncle and aunt decided that they could not cope with them. A Jewish Dutch family, who had all survived the war despite the husband having been in Auschwitz, then took in Otto, Rudi and Emmy. So grateful was this family for the miracle of their survival that they gathered orphans from all over Holland, giving them eleven children in all including their own. They immigrated to Israel when the state was established and were sent to the Kibbutz Givat Brenner. Otto changed his name to Menachem Kallus and joined the airforce. He was a member of the Israeli contingent in Uganda, became friendly with a major by the name of Idi Amin, and is now settled near Haifa as a businessman with his own family.

Mr. Nobel had meanwhile returned to his work as a police photographer in Rotterdam. I was staying with him when I saw him return from work one day with a large envelope. I asked him what was in there and he said that the envelope contained photos that he had taken in his line of work and that it was best that I did not see them. I replied that he knew very well that I was used to scenes of violence. Later that evening as we were sitting around the table having dinner, he got up and, approaching me from behind, he reached over my shoulder and put a photo in front of my face. It was the picture of an old lady sitting in her chair with her throat cut. I knocked it right out of his hand. I then began to realize that my reactions were slowly returning to normal.

None of the people that I stayed with thought it necessary to send me for a medical or psychiatric examination. I behaved normally, was not sick, and I suppose that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder had not yet been heard of. My uncle Pityu had meanwhile returned from the camps. He had no definite news of my father, nor of his other two brothers who had been in Buchenwald, but informed me that he did not believe that they were still alive. They had become too weak to work, had been put on a transport.... Some time after Pityu's return my mother would receive confirmation of my father's death through the Red Cross. Of the fifty relatives that my father had in Europe before the war only ten survived. This meant that I had lost my grandmother and nearly all my uncles, aunts and cousins plus my friends that I had known since early childhood.

The Germans kept records of the names and dates when people died or were murdered in the concentration camps but not in the death

camps. In due course this information was computerized by the Yad Vashem institute in Jerusalem and became available to the public. These details not only served the purpose of ascertaining the fate of many of the missing people but also to gainsay the calumny that the Holocaust was a myth and that there had never been gas chambers. Neo Nazis would admit that Jews had died in concentration camps, but only as a result of diseases such as typhus which effected the German population as well.

I wrote this before the records of millions of concentration camp victims were discovered at Bad Arolsen. The record of my father's death was among them and I received a Death Notice from the Red Cross stating that he had died of pleurisy.

As I am typing this I have in front of me a photostatic extract from the Yad Vashem records. It concerns the details of people by the name of Krausz, when and where they were born and died. It is by no means comprehensive: my father's name does not even appear on it. That list shows the names of my uncle Jenö, his wife and two children, all perished on the same day, 13-3-1943 in Sobibor, and my aunt Etah and her twin children, all dead on 27-8-1943 in Auschwitz. When there are no battles or bombings and whole families die on the same day, then that is not disease, it is murder.

One day I was walking in Rotterdam when I saw the Italian boy Pietro whom I had rescued at school, the boy whose parents were Nazis. He gave a joyful shout when he saw me: "Don, you are still alive!" There was something in those words that touched a very raw nerve. "Yes," I said, "I am still alive," and walked on.

My memory of the Dutch people has been a very happy one. I lived there for twelve years and not once did I have an antisemitic experience or hear a derogatory remark for being a Jew. There are not many Jews of European origin that can say this. In 1980, my wife and I visited Holland and went to Amsterdam. I had learned that during the war the Nazis would concentrate the Jews of Amsterdam in a theatre called the Schouwburg and from there send them to Westerbork. This building had been converted into a memorial and I wanted to visit it. Despite having been given the address I could not find the place and eventually asked a man in the street whether he could direct me. That he did, and then suddenly took my arm and said, "I hope that you find what you are looking for." He was not a Jew, and the empathy and compassion of his gesture nearly made me weep.

Here in South Africa we had a few Dutch people who rescued Jews. One was a most

remarkable man named Jaap van Proosdij, who had been employed at the Gestapo headquarters and had used his official position there to rescue some 240 Jews. Had he been caught then I have no doubt that he would have been tortured and shot. As vice chairman of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Association I played a role in having him recognized officially as a Righteous Gentile and he received all the honour and rewards that come with such recognition.

Sometime thereafter our Holocaust survivors in Johannesburg had a reception for Jaap at which he addressed us. He was asked why he had risked his life, and became quite agitated. "If you see someone drowning," he said, "Then what are you going to do? Just stand there?"

In my speech of appreciation I pointed out what actions such as his had meant to us. We were engulfed in the darkest of nights, hated, despised and abandoned by the whole world, condemned to terrible suffering and death. Suddenly there came a person such as he, like a shining light, risking his life to save ours. I also told him how much I envied him. In the Jewish religion the act of saving one person's life is compared to saving the whole world; Jaap van Proosdij had succeeded in saving 240.

Epilogue

I had been lecturing at schools on the Shoah, and now determined to include German

schools. The object was to acquaint them with their history without pointing accusing fingers or making them feel personally guilty. Children cannot be held responsible for the misdeeds of their elders.

Whether this effort bore fruit I only realized after a talk at the German school in Pretoria. I was already walking back to my car when a little German girl came running after me and simply said, "Thank you." I don't remember what I had said to that child but it must have had meaning for her.

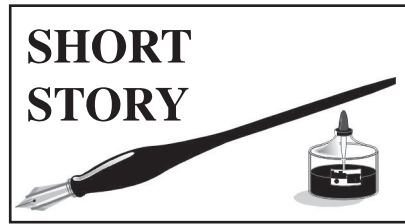
So I know that in my face-to-face dealings with Germans I experience no hatred. And where they are less than forthright in condemning antisemitism I see them as victims of fear and indoctrination, even nationalism - people that need help and sympathy, not hatred.

And yet, and yet, I have had the experience of sitting in a restaurant and hearing a certain kind of German spoken at a table behind me. I began to feel ice cold. No, I did not turn around to look, just sat there amazed that after half a century my past experiences could still have such a hold on me.

I cannot vouch for always being right, but am convinced of this: The Holocaust was the result of fear and hatred. Hatred cannot be the antidote. So when I meet a stranger I look at that person's face. If I like what I see then his or her accent, nationality, skin colour, religion or dress are no deterrent and I will engage that person as one human being to another. I can see no alternative.



Don Krausz at the 2017 Yom Hashoah ceremony in Johannesburg, where he was keynote speaker. With him are SAJBD Gauteng Council chairman Shaun Zagnoev (left) and National Chairman Jeff Katz.



A HOUSE WITH STORIES TO TELL

*

Zita Nurok

The house was the start of a new life in a new country for our parents. They'd made their way across the seas from Europe to South Africa in search of new beginnings. They brought with them the difficulties and challenges, but also riches from the towns where they had lived. My father's education helped him establish roots, and earned him the respect he yearned for in our small Jewish community of approximately sixty families. My mother came in search of her own hopes, and dreamed that one day her mother and youngest sister who had remained in Lithuania would join her – dreams that would not come true. And so, their stories began.

My mother came from Riteve, a small town – *shtetl* - in the western part of Lithuania, where most inhabitants were Jewish, and spoke Yiddish. There was poverty and opportunities were few, with people often requiring support from welfare. Because of the lack of opportunity, people who were able immigrated to the outside world. Most of those who left Riteve immigrated to South Africa, before the First World War, and later before the Holocaust. Our mother left in 1929.

The majority of Lithuanian Jews were killed in Lithuania during the Holocaust, including the Jews of Riteve. The local populations - Lithuanian collaborators - did most of the killing - often under German supervision.

My father came from Kurshan in the North-West part of Lithuania. It was surrounded by hills and forests on the shores of a river. During World War II, most of the 900 Jews living there were murdered. Our father and some of his brothers and a sister had already left for South Africa before the war. He left in 1925.

For him the Jewish calendar- the Sabbath, holidays, and prayers governed life. He focused on the observance of these throughout the growing years of my brother and me.

Central to our Jewish life were the customs and traditions our parents brought into our home, replicating what had been familiar to them in Lithuania before the Second World War. Culinary traditions permeated our home on every holiday and many a Shabbat. The memories of those traditions that were observed as our mother grew up in Riteve became a form of art that she cultivated through her cooking. Year after year, in an endless cycle, they provided a certainty, a continuity and a security as time went by. From Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, from Sukkot to Simchat Torah, from Chanukah to Purim to Shavuot, she provided our family with carefully created edible works of art. We eagerly looked forward to each holiday and many a Shabbat, excited in our anticipation of the holiday activities and the delectable foods that awaited us. Our home was filled with aromas of baking, with visual delights, and tastes that forever lingered to remind us until today of those times. This cooking helped our mother, passionately and proudly, to hold onto her origins. It meant more to her than merely providing tasty meals for a family; it represented a link that held generations of her family together. She produced *challahs*, often nostalgically recalling how she helped her mother bake before Shabbat. She made *kneidlach*, *hamantaschen*, *perogen*, blintzes, potato *latkes*, *imberlach*, *kichlach*, *kreplach*, *taiglach* (white and brown), cheesecakes, *geschmirte* matzos and much more. Her art also

Zita Nurok, a regular contributor to Jewish Affairs, is an elementary school teacher who grew up in South Africa. She is a member of the National League of American Pen Women, and has served as Vice-President and President of the Indianapolis branch. The above story is based on real events.

created for her an added sense of belonging to a community when she contributed to the shul events. She basked in the recognition of and wonder over her talents.

Stories she told us about her town in Lithuania came alive as she lovingly recreated her memories, weaving them into our lives. She told about the Yureh River, where she and her friends splashed and played, how they skipped and danced in the forests, and picked berries to cook, how they traveled with a horse and cart along the sandy roads and how she helped her mother at holiday times. These pleasant and joyful memories of her home stayed with her as she tried to reconstruct that life, despite the changes that time wrought upon her family.

Our small shul, where women sat upstairs and men down, provided a meaningful and comfortable routine for us, a place where everyone gathered and established bonds. Friendships grew among likeminded families, but differences and conflicts too were whispered throughout the community, sometimes becoming bigger stories to talk about.

But throughout those days in our home, ever present was a dark shadow that waxed and waned over the years. The Second World War became a reality in our family as it did in many other families, when our parents learned of the brutal finality of our mother's mother and her youngest sister at the hands of the Nazis. Her story forever lurked in our home:



This message appeared in the pages of documents sent from the Soviet Union in 1944, to the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists, and Scientists, a body that was compiling a "Jewish Black Book" of Nazi crimes against the Jewish people.

We were that family in South Africa. Two brothers and another sister lived in New York. This faded newspaper article lay in an envelope in the bottom drawer of the dressing table in our parents' bedroom for many years. I have it now. I light a candle to remember the anniversary of the deaths of a grandmother and an aunt. It was the year when I was born. The Talmud states that "when a child is born during a mourning period it is a blessed omen, a salve for the family."

Thus were my mother's hopes of someday reuniting with her family cruelly and brutally dashed.

What could she do with the shattering pain she must have felt when confronted with this truth? How many questions remained unanswered, haunting her through the years as she grappled with the reality that the war brought into our home?

And so, I believe that she must have lost herself in her own world of creation. She had additionally discovered a different art form as she sat hour after hour embroidering beautiful tablecloths and pictures with colorful silken threads, many of which she had brought with her from her beloved Lithuanian home. How proud she felt when I wore dresses she sewed for me as a child on her special Singer Sewing Machine. How she beamed when it was said that I was the best dressed little girl in the shul.

In the simplicity of her varied creations she expressed something more profound - something deeper - of beauty in place of the demons of horror that invaded her life. Perhaps she found the solace she sought in these places.

The house no longer stands in our town, nor is there a Jewish community. But perhaps stories like ours will remain with those families in our small Jewish community who scattered to the bigger cities in South Africa, and also to other countries around the world - these are stories that future generations must know.

In his moving essay *Hope, Despair, and Memory*, Eli Wiesel states: "The memory of evil will serve as a shield against evil."



THE LAST HURRAH: SOUTH AFRICA AND THE ROYAL TOUR OF 1947

*

David Saks

One of the many poignant and symbolically resonant incidents recorded in this excellent account of the 1947 Royal Visit to South Africa occurs on page 151, where it is related how at the end of the ceremony arranged for representatives of the Zulu nation to welcome the Royal Family a chieftain was heard to call out, “Do not forget us when you go away”. The date was 19 March 1947, approximately half-way through the visit to the Union of South Africa of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth and their two daughters, Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. Tens of thousands of Zulus had gathered in Eshowe for the occasion to demonstrate their loyalty to the sovereign head of the British Empire, nominal as their status as subjects of that Empire had become by then. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that it was irrelevant whether or not the Royal visitors remembered their hosts, since South Africa was destined shortly thereafter to strike out in a direction very far removed from the world of King and Empire that in 1947 was still so dominant an influence. Moreover, little as anyone suspected it at the time, the British Empire itself was on the verge of dissolution, a process that would begin just a few months hence when India gained its independence and which would be all but completed a mere fifteen or so years later.

At the time of Queen Elizabeth II’s visit to South Africa in March 1995, this reviewer was working at MuseumAfrica, and was tasked with curating a small exhibition on the previous Royal Visit of February-April 1947. The project was straight-forward enough, entailing little more than gathering together a representative selection of the

commemorative material produced during that time – brooches, badges and other such bric-a-brac. It was the first (and quite possibly the last) time that these items had been temporarily liberated from storage for display purposes. While on a modest scale, the exhibition nevertheless provided a tangible reminder of the importance of the Royal connection to a sizable proportion of the South African population. In addition to those who were themselves of British origin, they included a surprising number of black and Indian South Africans and a substantial majority of the Jewish community.

As its aptly-chosen title indicates, *The Last Hurrah* is about the end of an era, specifically of an era in South Africa but in a broader context, on the international stage as well. The 1947 Royal Visit was indeed “the last hurrah” for avid supporters of the Imperial connection, even if by the late 1940s, those ties were more symbolic and sentimental than of any legal or practical significance. Little more than a year later, South Africa would be in the hands of hard-line Afrikaner nationalists who desired both to sever ties altogether with Great Britain and, more significantly, implement a system of political and social control that would, they believed, permanently entrench white minority domination in the country. The first object at least was achieved on 31 May 1961 with the establishment of a republic, South Africa’s enforced withdrawal from the Commonwealth having already taken place shortly before that.

Afrikaner nationalists were not the only ones taking a dim view of the Royal Visit. By the late 1940s, Black resistance to the myriad racially discriminatory laws that even before the 1948 National Party electoral victory were already firmly in place was starting to gain genuine momentum after

David Saks is Associate Director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and Editor of Jewish Affairs.

decades of being largely ineffectual. At its December 1946 conference, an increasingly assertive African National Congress adopted a resolution “to devise ways and means likely to bring about the abstention of the Africans from participation in the welcoming of the Royal Family” during the upcoming tour. In the end, however, people on the ground tended to ignore these calls, turning out in their many thousands to demonstrate their support at events held throughout the country. Boycott calls by the South African Indian Congress proved to be just as ineffectual.

What was the attitude of the Jewish community to the visit? Normally, this would not really be a question since overwhelmingly, Jews living within the Empire tended to be extremely loyal to it, not least because by and large they could count on receiving fair and equal treatment of a kind still distinctly lacking in many parts of the world. Of South African Jews back then, Viney writes, “Ready and indeed keen to assimilate (though not in matters religious), they rapidly adopted an increasingly English identity, and more and more lived like their fellow neighbours of English descent. ...Accents were ironed out; mannerisms and styles of dress were subtly altered” (p204). By 1947, however, Britain’s progressively more hostile and obstructive approach to the Jewish national struggle in Mandatory Palestine had generated much anti-British feeling in the community. The previous year, this had taken the form of mass protest marches, at one of which Chief Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz had famously thrown to the ground the British army medals he had received for his recent wartime services. What actually transpired was a decision, adopted by the leadership and rank and file alike, to make a distinction between opposition to certain policies of the British government and loyalty to the Crown as a whole. Here, Viney quotes the *South African Jewish Times* of 2 May 1947, which stated that it was “testimony to the fact that

whatever may be Jewish grievances against the British administration in Palestine, these do not derogate from the bonds of friendship between Jewry and the British people as such, and the loyalty and the loyalty of the Jews throughout the Empire to the British Crown”.

In his thoughtful, meticulously researched study of what until now has been a largely forgotten episode in modern South African history, Viney looks not only at the actual events of the Royal Visit – the innumerable flag-waving receptions, solemn speeches, messages of welcome, presentations, official banquets and other such formal occasions that took place throughout South Africa – but more importantly at how the attitudes to the visit of different parts of the population were reflective of the broader political concerns and tensions of the day. The reader has always to bear in mind that the government of that time was still the United Party, essentially a partnership between English and politically more moderate Afrikaans speakers of the kind that had dominated South African politics since unification. Few anticipated that the opposition National Party, with its focus on the furthering of specifically Afrikaner ethnic interests and vision for entrenching white minority rule through a comprehensive programme of racial segregation known as ‘Apartheid’, would come into office barely a year later, let alone that it would go on to exercise a stranglehold on South African politics for the next four decades and more. The irony at the heart of this book is that even as those committed to maintaining the primacy of the Anglo-Imperial connection were celebrating the Royal Visit, seeing it no doubt as an impressive show of strength that boded well for the future, in reality they were on the cusp of losing power altogether and being forever relegated to the side-lines.

The Last Hurrah: South Africa and the Royal Tour of 1947 by Graham Viney, Jonathan Ball, 2018, 386pp, index, photographs.

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