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# **JEWISH AFFAIRS**

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## **JEWISH ANTI-APARTHEID ACTIVISM**

**Justice and Identity: The ‘Non-Jewish Jew’, Cosmopolitanism and Anti-Apartheid Activism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century South Africa**

*Alana Pugh-Jones*

**Daniel Mackintosh’s ‘Speaking out against injustice?’ - Two Readers Respond**

*Honey Gluckman, Sol Cowan*

**Thoughts on Denis Goldberg’s ‘Comrade Goldberg’**

*Benji Shulman*

## **SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH PIONEERS**

**The Nordens and Nortons of Grahamstown and their Families**

*Hazel Dakers*

**Jews with Van Riebeeck?**

*Janus J. Gluck*

**Northern Natal Memories of a Jewish Boy**

*Bernard Duchen*

**Jewish women in Early Johannesburg**

*Naomi Musiker*

## **REFLECTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES**

**Israel, the West Bank and the ‘One State - Two State’ Debate**

*David Saks*

**Chanukah – Why a “Festival of Lights”?**

*Gwynne Schrire*

**Tisha B'Av and Jewish Power**

*Adam Levick*

**A Fine Romance: Rosie Black and Mickey Moylan**

*Ann Rabinowitz*

**FICTION**

**The Blossoming**

*Shulamith Kagan*

**BOOK REVIEWS**

**Arab Propaganda for the Arab World**

*Gary Selikow*

**A Sprat to Catch a Mackerel**

*Ralph Zulman*

**READERS' LETTERS**

*David Benatar, E S Benjamin, Anthony Posner, Percy Tucker*

# JUSTICE AND IDENTITY: THE 'NON-JEWISH JEW', COSMOPOLITANISM AND ANTI-APARTHEID ACTIVISM IN TWENTIETH CENTURY SOUTH AFRICA

**Alan Pugh-Jones**

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## **Introduction**

Stretching back into history from the moment Moses raised his hand against the oppressive Egyptian overseer and led his people from slavery into freedom; to the instant that Abraham smashed the morally bankrupt idols of his day and opened his home to the stranger; through the modern revolutionary ideas of Marx and Freud and beyond, Jewish radicalism has emerged as a profoundly powerful force that has weaved itself through the epochs. By drawing on the great humanist and cosmopolitan notions of identity and justice within Judaism, a radical Jewish ideology and worldview has formed a tradition within a tradition. Profoundly motivated by the historical memory of the suffering of their own people throughout the ages, Jewish radicals have eternally sought to overturn the corrupt status quo of the day and transform humankind's structures of thought.

One such target for reform was the apartheid regime, which oppressed millions of black people based solely on their race and ensured a configuration of power that safeguarded the privileges of a small white minority. Although the community at large enjoyed the fruits of an apartheid economy, a disproportionate number of Jews played a role, either within the system as members of parliament and civil society or illegally through banned organisations, in fighting for a more just South Africa.<sup>1</sup> In particular, many Jewish radicals stood up against discrimination and injustice, and dedicated their lives to the fight for an equal nation.

## **Historiography**

Employing Isaac Deutscher's notion of the 'non-Jewish Jew' who transcends Jewry, the objective of this paper will be to attempt to trace and identify the changing intellectual patterns and paradigms operating among South African Jewish radicals in the anti-

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<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Suttner, (1997), *Cutting Through the Mountain – Interviews with South African Jewish Activists*. (South Africa: Viking), p2

apartheid struggle, focusing in particular on activists' notions of their own political identity and influences operating on their activism. By employing the use of primary sources as well as a variety of secondary material, especially memoir literature and interviews, an attempt will be made to explore the influence of 'Jewishness' and Jewish notions of justice upon the lives of these radicals.

The historiography of radical Jews in South Africa is not the historiography of white settlers, nor is it the history of the oppressed peoples of the country. Yet, in many ways it overlaps with both, and therefore it slips through the cracks. Recently, collections of interviews have been published as the number of those in the immigrant generation of radical politics begins to decline. Immanuel Suttner, in his "collection of portraits" *Cutting Through the Mountain*, and others have attempted to 'recanonicalise' those Jews whose contribution have gone unnoticed and whose life stories were censored by the state and their own community.<sup>2</sup> Personal testimony is indeed a channel through which history may be recovered, and occupies an integral part of South Africa's healing process, embodied in initiatives such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Today, our traditions of historiography have shifted from those of totalising histories to that of a personalized history, one that was often marginalised in the past.<sup>3</sup>

In order to assess the role of Jewish identity and notions of justice on radicalism, one must delve into the realm of social history in which individuals, studied in a particular context, are used as a means of exploring a broad range of historical issues.<sup>4</sup> South African historians have a role in creating a unified yet multicultural historical memory utilising 'history from below'. This paper is a humble attempt to contribute to the writing of radical Jewish South African history.

## **Justice in Judaism**

There can be little doubt that the teachings of Judaism place great emphasis on justice. Judaism incorporates a set of values which purports to defend the human spirit, its freedom and creativity, and create a system of order which fosters a harmonious society.<sup>5</sup> The writings of the prophets of Jewish history hold all members of society accountable for the injustices perpetrated against the stranger; widow; and orphan, all of whom symbolise the powerless in society. The mitzvot or commandments of the Torah exhort one, in the words of Isaiah, to "Learn to do good, seek justice, vindicate the victim, render justice to the orphan, take up the grievance of the widow".<sup>6</sup> The call to uphold and implement justice is the uppermost moral virtue echoed throughout Jewish religious texts.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., drawing on cover commentary

<sup>3</sup> Maya Ruth Scholtz, (1999), *Mervyn Susser and Zena Stein: Pioneers in Community Health and their Jewish identity as an orienting factor in their contribution* (Durban: University of Natal Press), p 5

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p2

<sup>5</sup> See Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein, (2006), *Defending the Human Spirit: Jewish Law's Vision for a Moral Society* (Israel: Feldheim Publishers), drawing on page 8

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p17



A hallmark of the Jewish tradition from its origins has been the ceaseless struggle for justice.<sup>7</sup> There are two distinct pillars to the essential notion of justice in Judaism: *tzedakah* (charity) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). The philosophy surrounding these concepts is unique in their universal relevance and forms the basis of a humanist tradition within Judaism that breeds sympathy for the underdog. These concepts are explored here for their power and lasting influence over Jewish thought and action throughout the ages into the modern realm.

The Hebrew word *tzedakah* has the word *tzedek* as its root, meaning justice or righteousness.<sup>8</sup> In Judaism, charity and righteousness are not merely above and beyond the call of duty; they are indeed fulfilling the demands of justice. The call for justice in Judaism is stated most explicitly in the Torah portion *Shoftim* (Judges). “Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may live, and inherit the land which the Lord your God gives you” *Shoftim*, 20: 16.<sup>9</sup>

The Jewish ideal of social action and social justice is also expressed in the Hebrew word *Tikkun Olam*, or ‘repairing the world’. The principle of *tikkun olam* has been seen throughout history as integral to Jewish programmes of social action. The kabbalistic idea of *tikkun* represents the idea that the world is profoundly broken and can be fixed only by human activity.<sup>10</sup> Judaism is an experiential religion, and places merit not in dogma or ideas, but in actions.

Jewish law and its related social ethics are often drawn from events in Jewish history. It is arguable that this historical memory has a long history of influencing the Jewish notion of justice, which is inextricably linked to the history of Jewish social activism. With the arrival of modernity, the vestigial impact of universal and humanist ideas of *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam*, so fundamental to a Jewish conception of justice, persisted, albeit transformed into a secular guise. Justice in the Jewish tradition therefore continued to inform the radical activism of secular Jewish thinkers.

## Modernity and Radicalism

From Biblical times, the Jewish tradition has encompassed within its ranks the history of a small but disproportionately influential number of revolutionaries and radicals who employed the cosmopolitan Jewish values of justice as a base upon which they built a worldview that challenged the status quo.<sup>11</sup> As we move towards modernity in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, religious teaching gradually eroded at the expense of secular currents of thought. The latter increasingly informed Jewish intellectual life as emancipated Jewry

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<sup>7</sup> M. Becher, (2005), *Gateway to Judaism: The What, How, and Why of Jewish Life* (Shaar Press), p 356

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p357

<sup>9</sup> Cited in A. Kahn, (2000), ‘Shoftim: Justice Justice’. Found at:

[http://www.aish.com/torahportion/moray/Justice3\\_Justice.asp](http://www.aish.com/torahportion/moray/Justice3_Justice.asp), accessed 27/ 11/ 2006

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Within Judaism, many scholars see two contradictory traditions working simultaneously – a particularist exclusivity and a universal cosmopolitanism. See, S. Lundgren, (2001): *Particularism and Universalism in Modern Jewish Thought* (New York: Academic Studies in the History of Judaism, Global Publications). Radical Jewry would fit into the cosmopolitan tradition that exists within Judaism.

began to bask in the sunlight of reason. During this period, Jewish radicals rebelled not just against the unsympathetic gentile world which resentfully gave them citizenship rights or no rights at all, but also from the stifling grip of ghetto life.<sup>12</sup> Many Jewish thinkers shed the outward symbols of Judaism and embraced a radical, universal worldview through which they could navigate modernity and secure a position within the wider gentile society.

Even though they were divorced from the foundations of the Jewish tradition, it will be argued that their 'historical memory' came to form part of a lasting Jewish impact on these figures. This was evident through their recollections of the Yiddish spoken by their parents; or the networks of Ashkenazi relatives that diffused the particular ancient Jewish fears and interpersonal relationships of that community and its culture.<sup>13</sup> Suttner argues that this was internalised in their "questioning and in their analytical ability, in their drivenness, in their desire to programmatically implement basic institutions about justice, in the food, music and humour they liked, in their professional aspirations and family dynamics".<sup>14</sup> These radicals therefore were very much a part of the Jewish tradition. As Jews emerged from the seclusion of the ghettos into the wider communities, many took up a transformative role as cultural and political revolutionaries and overturned existing monopolies of thought.<sup>15</sup> By spanning various worlds, the Jewish radical was able to break free from the shackles of the ghetto mentality and appropriate the language of the modern world to continue the Jewish tradition into the post-Enlightenment era.<sup>16</sup>

In this way, the utopian views of these Jewish radicals were a secularization of the Jewish values of *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam*. Marxism, it has been argued, is a secularized form of messianism.<sup>17</sup> Its concerns with social justice and the struggle of the oppressed is rooted firmly in the Jewish notions of justice and repairing the world. "In the Jewish demand for action as the benchmark by which the individual is measured can be found the direct predecessor of the Marxist formulation that: 'The purpose of philosophy is not to

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Johnson, (1987), *A History of the Jews* (Great Britain: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), p340

<sup>13</sup> Suttner, p601

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> The impact of the Emancipation on Jewry, and the subsequent failure of its promise to Jews for socio-political and economic equality as citizens in a secular nation-state, is seen by many historians as the reason for modern Jewish radicalism. The argument of the 'Ordeal of Civility', a phrase coined by John M. Cuddihy to describe the shock of Emancipation experienced by Jews, is a viewpoint expounded upon by Ferdinand Mount as the confrontation between the traditional Jewish world and the modern secular paradigm. From this perspective, it was the impact of the Emancipation and its clinical world of the Capitalist ethic that made some Jews create revolutionary 'structures of thought' that would overturn the status quo of the times.

<sup>16</sup> For Cuddihy, revolutionary structures of thought of post-emancipation Jewish origin have a double audience, addressing the Jews in order to bring about their reform as well as the gentile world as a way of apology for, and defence of, Jewry. Radical ideologies created by Jewish intellectuals can be seen as ideologies of redemption in the modern world. Cuddihy sees Jewish thought on 'dedifferentiation' as transforming the struggles faced by newly emancipated Jewry into 'scientific problems', thereby making Jewry less disreputable. This phenomenon created a disproportionate number of radical Jews who were the modern symbols of a legacy extending back to the time of the Hebrew prophets, who criticised the world around them and sought to bring about a perfected future for humankind.

<sup>17</sup> See Suttner, *Cutting Through the Mountain*, and 'The Passion of the Jews' (1975) in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Summer. Found at: [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org), accessed 21/09/2006

interpret the world but to change it”<sup>18</sup>. A disproportionate number of Jews are drawn to radical movements in their search for a modern manifestation of the ancient Jewish longing for the messianic utopia. Marxism is therefore the secularization of the Jewish humanist tradition, a universalized religious position where all enjoy the same inalienable rights – attached to the Jewish belief in the sanctity and value of human life but extending these ideas beyond Jewish particularism.<sup>19</sup>

Historical awareness of dehumanisation is another aspect of the Jewish tradition which may be the fertile soil in which the conviction that prejudices should be challenged was bred. “[And] their knowledge of themselves as the heirs to a messy, painful and ongoing history of being the devalued ‘other’”, Suttner argues, “made the new dichotomies of communism, like working class and owning class, seem full of hope and possibility”.<sup>20</sup> Racism, especially with the rise of ‘scientific racism’ in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century that located race in inherently biological factors, could then be escaped if it was placed in light of something that could be overturned, such as economic greed. Socialist ideologies held the promise of a better future, and offered an escape from ‘Jewishness’ into a universalistic paradigm without the disloyalty of conversion. By freeing themselves from communal dogmas, and seeking out a modern, rational basis of human continuity and identity, Jewish activists became bound to a radicalism that secularized Jewish notions of *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam*. This view has been explored by many authors and holds much sway in the historiography of Jewish radicals.<sup>21</sup>

A different form of secularization of Jewish values is also evident in the secularization of interpretations of Jewish history in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Modernity brought with it the effects of economic redistribution, acculturation, and religious and educational reforms.<sup>22</sup> Through this process a new historical consciousness began to emerge and exert an important influence in the creation of a modern Jewish identity. The stories and figures of justice in the Torah were appropriated and secularized as figures of morality and justice in the modern world. Jewish intellectuals in the last century wrote of the ‘prophetic tradition’ as influencing Jewish political work, which they identified with their own conception of their role as intellectuals. These radical Jews drew on the historical role of Jews as champions of universal justice, even though these concepts of justice were acknowledged to be the common assets of all mankind in modern times.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Suttner, p604

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p605

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p601

<sup>21</sup> The rise of Jewish socialist movements may also be highlighted as a continuous thread of the Jewish tradition – not only as the heir to the Jewish religious notions of social activism and justice, but to the Jewish tradition of poverty and ‘outsider’ status in the Diaspora. Both these forces can be seen to have united and created the growth of Jewish radical movements and attest to its influence of the Jewish tradition. See, Suttner, *Cutting Through the Mountain*, and Ezra Mendelsohn, (1997), ‘Introduction’ in *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left* (USA: New York University Press)

<sup>22</sup> M. Meyer, (1988), ‘The Emergence of Jewish Historiography: Motives and Motifs’ in *History and Theory*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Beiheft 27: Essays in Jewish Historiography, December. Found at: [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org), accessed 17/3/20 07, p160

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Rosenblum, ‘Hostile to Israel’, [www.aish.com/societyWork/society/Hostile\\_to\\_Israel.asp](http://www.aish.com/societyWork/society/Hostile_to_Israel.asp), 2007, accessed 18/3/07,



Radical Jews, however universal and opposed to nationalism in their Marxist views, were therefore still in some way Jewish in various aspects of their lives. The dislocation of Jews in society, the historical memory of prejudice against the Jewish people and their sympathy for the underdog as rooted in Jewish values of justice, propelled many such radical intellectuals to seek groundbreaking and ‘universalising’ theories. These Marxian ideas echoed many of the values within Judaism to create an ideology of equality which stressed a shared humanity, such as *tikkun olam*, *gemilut chasadim* and *tzedakah*.<sup>24</sup> Transforming the values and virtues of the Jewish tradition into a modern key, and fostered by the history of Jews as ‘outsiders’ to Western civilization, the ideologies created from the impact of Emancipation sought a humanized, universal and utopian world.<sup>25</sup>

The disproportionate involvement of Jews in leftist and communist ideologies was expressed as a deep universalism and cosmopolitanism. It has been argued that radical Jews felt an overwhelming sense of dislocation, which grew increasingly unbearable and resulted in a fierce contempt for racial loyalties. Born in an historical and political world that appeared corrupt and contained the seeds of its own destruction, these revolutionaries sought to smash and rebuild the established society, in the spirit of Abraham and the Jewish Prophets. Ferdinand Mount outlines how industrialization, with its imperatives of modernity, sought to maintain itself through the division of labour; the rational organisation of time; the separation of work and play; and the division between home and workplace.<sup>26</sup> The subsequent cultural dislocation of these processes united revolutionary minds and instilled within them a utopian longing not for a new world but for one which was lost – a utopianism which is arguably the cosmopolitanism of Jewish messianic values and a longing for the world of Jewish culture and value.

The history of the Jewish left raises one of the most basic questions of Jewish history, namely the question of the origins of Jewish radicalism.<sup>27</sup> This question debates whether the source of Jewish radicalism is uniquely Jewish or based on external influences. From one perspective, the Jews attraction to socialism derived from an authentic and deeply

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<sup>24</sup> According to Mount, being born on the fringe of a great culture, a ‘borderline case’ in one sense or another; showing contempt for particularistic patriotism; and an ancestry of ‘borderers’, are all factors that most revolutionaries have in common. These assertions aptly describe the location of Jews in society throughout the ages and may well explain why Jews are disproportionately represented on the left and how the Jewish tradition informed Jewish radicals.

<sup>25</sup> For assimilating Jewry at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, each day brought veiled transformations and problems of ‘civility’ in the world of strangers. As Jews moved ‘beyond the pale’ at the time of Emancipation, they were exposed to the individualistic and ceremonial modernity of the West, and found their *shtetl Yiddishkeit* philosophy to be lacking. This came to reconstitute the ‘Jewish Emancipation problematic’ in social modernity. The problems of assimilation into Western ‘bourgeois’ manners created the need for Jewish intellectuals to define a neutral social space in their ideologies, in which the common human experience would constitute equality between human beings. In the ‘culture shock’ resulting from Jewish emancipation; assimilation; and modernization, the Jewish intellectual became caught between ‘his own’ and the ‘host culture’. The great discoveries of Jewish intellectuals, such as Freud, Marx and Levi-Strauss, is thus seen by Cuddihy and others as attempts to deal with this continuing and unsuccessful ‘hidden transformation’.

<sup>26</sup> Ferdinand Mount, (1977), ‘Revolutionaries – Their Mind, Body and Soul’ in *Encounter*, Vol. XLIX, p69

<sup>27</sup> Mendelsohn, (1997), *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left*, p15

rooted Jewish tradition of social justice, as articulated by the Biblical prophets. The revolutionary Jewish thinkers of Marxism and Socialism are in this light the true heirs of the Prophets, in spite of their radical secularism and contempt for religion, including Judaism. Ezra Mendelsohn questions whether the conspicuous presence of Jews in communist parties and regimes may be attributed to the traditional Jewish concern of social justice, or the erroneous belief by some Jews that communism could shield them from the antisemitism of 'nationalism'.<sup>28</sup>

### **The 'Non-Jewish Jew'**

Jewish radicals therefore appear to be the bearers of historical memory of the tradition of justice, humanism, cosmopolitanism and empathy with the oppressed within Judaism. These secular and modern Jews appear to be influenced by something Jewish, however tenuous. Here it seems that Deutscher's notion of the 'non-Jewish Jew' is most useful. For Deutscher, the Jewish heretic who moves beyond Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition.<sup>29</sup> Throughout history, many Jews have found Jewry too narrow and constraining, and have therefore searched for ideas beyond Judaism. These Jews possessed the key ingredients of Jewish experience and intellect, and emerged on the cusp of great epochs. Dwelling on the borders of great civilisations, they came to represent much of the greatness of "profound upheavals in modern thought" and were influenced by diverse cultures and ideologies. "Each of them", wrote Deutscher "was in society and yet not in it, of it and yet not of it. It was this that enabled them to rise in thought above their societies, above their nations, above their times and generations, and to strike out mentally into wide new horizons and far into the future".<sup>30</sup> These are the 'non-Jewish Jews'. With the conditions within which they lived not allowing them to resolve themselves with nationally or religiously limited ideas, 'non-Jewish Jews' were thus stirred to work for the universal view of life; humanity; and the world.

Deutscher falls into the tradition of Luxemburg, Trotsky and Freud, each a 'non-Jewish Jew' who, he argues, "was formed amid historic cross-currents".<sup>31</sup> These revolutionaries studied societies from the sidelines and came to grasp the basic regularities of life whilst still conceiving the flux of reality. In this way, the common historical experience of Jewry of being the devalued 'other', as well as the fundamental essence of Jewish values with their emphasis on learning and justice, was embedded within the 'non-Jewish Jew'. The common link between the 'non-Jewish Jew' and their inherent 'Jewishness' as they expanded from the particular to the universal, was the notion of justice – from the justice of the Jewish tradition to the justice of radical philosophies.

At a deeper level the Jewish identity of radical Jews, rather than being negated by their mission, was in fact brought to a higher level of fulfilment. Deutscher asks what makes a Jew. "Religion? I am an atheist. Jewish nationalism? I am an internationalist. In neither sense am I, therefore, a Jew. I am, however, a Jew by force of my unconditional

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Isaac Deutscher, (1968), *The Non-Jewish Jews and Other Essays* (London: Oxford Univ. Press), p26

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p27

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p30

solidarity with the persecuted and exterminated. I am a Jew because I feel the Jewish tragedy as my own tragedy; because I feel the pulse of Jewish history”.<sup>32</sup> This is the framework within which Jewish radicals in have cast themselves. We will see many of these ideas played out in the lives of the South African Jewish radicals.

### **Jewish Radicals in South Africa<sup>33</sup>**

The secularization of Jewish values into universal ideologies in the modern world, as well as the failure of the promises of Emancipation, impacted greatly on the Jewish radicals in South Africa. Before moving into an analysis of the immigrant generation of Jewish radicals, it is necessary to briefly explore the broader political context, and the history of Jewish socialist movements, which influenced and shaped the world of the immigrant ‘non-Jewish Jew’.

The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries witnessed an explosion of radical protest movements. These were based on the essential principle that, “economic exploitation of one class by another is evil”. Mendelsohn describes the way in which Jewish socialism was born in the Russian Pale of Settlement prior to the First World War.<sup>34</sup> It was here that the two main factors necessary for the emergence of Jewish socialism existed, “a large, mostly Yiddish-speaking Jewish working class, labouring under extremely oppressive economic conditions, and an acculturated but not necessarily assimilated Jewish intelligentsia influenced by both Russian socialist and Jewish nationalist doctrines”.<sup>35</sup>

In the 1870s and 1880s the first attempts at formulating Jewish socialist ideologies was made, and the earliest organisations were formed. In this period, the founders of Jewish radicalism were faced with the dilemma of reconciling broad socialist principles with a connection and sensitivity to the unique requirements of the Jewish community. The defining aspect of Jewish socialism from its inception was its international character.<sup>36</sup>

The first Jewish socialist party, established in 1897 in the Jewish religious and cultural centre of Vilna, was the General Jewish Workers’ Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, popularly known as the Bund.<sup>37</sup> Mendelsohn describes it as “first and foremost a revolutionary organisation, Marxist in orientation and committed to the doctrine of class struggle. It saw itself as the ‘sole representative’ of the Russian-Jewish working class, whose historical task was to lead the revolutionary struggle within the Jewish community and, hand in hand with the working classes of other nations, topple tsarist despotism and

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<sup>32</sup> ‘The Passion of the Jews’, (1975). in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Summer. Found at: [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org), pp166-7

<sup>33</sup> For a fuller examination of the autobiographical writings of the Jewish radicals mentioned in this paper, and a detailed analysis of their thoughts on radicalism in the Jewish tradition, see my full thesis at the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies & Research, *Justice and Identity: The ‘Non-Jewish Jew’, Cosmopolitanism and Anti-Apartheid Activism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (2008)

<sup>34</sup> Mendelsohn, p1

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p2

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, ‘Introduction’, drawing on pages 3 to 4

replace it with a classless society”.<sup>38</sup> Internationalist in outlook, this organisation was also specifically ‘Jewish’ in orientation, and soon came to establish its own form of Jewish nationalism. With the principle at its core of *doikayt*, a Yiddish word referring to Jews staying in their place of residence and fighting for their rights in Eastern Europe, the Bund was fiercely anti-Zionist.

At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a variety of Jewish groups began to propose a synthesis of socialism and Zionism which would seek to build a national Jewish home in Palestine, and simultaneously establish in the new and old motherland a socialist society based on a Jewish agricultural working class.<sup>39</sup>

The radical immigrant generation in South Africa, however, was also moulded by processes and influences unique to their specific location and experiences, and these must be addressed for a greater insight into their world. In the early decades of the last Century, most Jewish immigrants to South Africa were working class and many had previously been exposed to socialist ideas in their country of origin, often by the Bund.

Milton Shain and Richard Mendelsohn grapple with the importance of migration on the ‘South African Jewish Experience’. They state that, “As a community built essentially upon the great wave of Jewish migration from Lithuania in the four decades prior to the First World War, that experience, including the cultural baggage brought by the newcomers, cannot be ignored in the shaping of their new identity and their behaviour in the new country”.<sup>40</sup> James Campbell introduces the role of “changing Jewish settlement patterns, class formation, experiences of work and leisure, and perhaps most importantly, about immigrant family life”.<sup>41</sup> He underlines the impact of migration, its consequent disruption and alienation, by stating that “South Africa’s celebrated Jewish radicalism”, may be, “a function of historically specific processes of dislocation and conflict”.<sup>42</sup> Gideon Shimoni understands Jewish radical activism in the immigrant generation as primarily a sociological factor of, “marginality or outsider status in relation to established elites and interests of white South African society compounded by alienation from Jewish religion and the normative life of the Jewish community”.<sup>43</sup>

Glenn Frankel writes that the radical activists of South Africa were schooled in dialectical materialism and sought Marxist principles – classic ‘non-Jewish Jews’; they did not deny their ethnic origins but treated them as irrelevant in contrast to the principles of universalism and socialist utopia.<sup>44</sup> Far from examples of self-hatred, these activists

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p3

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p8

<sup>41</sup> J. Campbell, (2000), “Beyond the Pale’: Jewish Immigration and the South African Left’ in (eds) Shain, M. and Mendelsohn, R, (2000), *Memories, Realities and Dreams: Aspects of the South African Jewish Experience* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers), p 99

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., ‘Introduction’ by M. Shain and R. Mendelsohn, p11

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, Gideon Shimoni, ‘Accounting for Jewish radicals in Apartheid South Africa’: Jewish Immigration and the South African Left’, p185

<sup>44</sup> Milton Shain and Sally Frankental, (1993), ‘Accommodation, Apathy and Activism: Jewish Political behaviour in South Africa’ in *Jewish Quarterly*, Spring, p7

were, according to Frankel, immersed in a tradition with a long Jewish history, in which the universal subsumed particularism and religion was seen as an atavistic nationalism.<sup>45</sup>

The radical ‘non-Jewish Jews’ of South Africa thus had a sense of ‘Jewishness’ and a conception of justice that was deeply rooted in the Eastern European Jewish immigrant milieu. As Iris Berger writes, this band of Jewish radicals, “tended to express their Jewish identity less in religious observance than through their secular commitment to ‘repairing the world’ through struggles for social justice”.<sup>46</sup> Their ‘Jewishness’, in this light, is therefore connected to the extensive Jewish tradition of humanism, empathy for the oppressed and cosmopolitanism. These radicals secularised and universalised the Jewish values of social justice, *tikkun olam* and *tzedakah*, and brought them into modernity within the context of a racially divided and prejudiced South Africa.

The radicals briefly explored in the pages that follow were chosen for their lasting influence on South African political history, their role in the anti-apartheid struggle and their international reputation as protectors of justice. Their lives have many discontinuities, but there are also fundamental continuities that link their identities and actions.

### **Sense of ‘Jewishness’**

Emerging from a conventional Jewish childhood, with many such as Ray Alexander and Rowley Arenstein graduating from *cheyder*, radical Jews of the immigrant generation were exposed to justice in the Jewish tradition from a very early age.<sup>47</sup> All imbued a strong sense of ‘Jewishness’, with many, such as Pauline Podbrey, Baruch Hirson and Ronnie Kasrils, even casting their identity and social activism in the mould of the Jewish Prophets. Simultaneously infused with the world and concerns of Eastern European secular Yiddish culture and the radical world of Jewish socialism and communism, these Jews were schooled in critical thinking and universal concerns from the start. Alexander, Arenstein, Slovo and Podbrey all cite the lasting impact of antisemitism in the ghetto on their sympathy for the underdog<sup>48</sup>, and even a later generation of radicals born in South Africa, such as Taffy Adler, Albie Sachs and Kasrils, describe the enormous imprint the historical memory of the suffering of their parents made upon their lives.<sup>49</sup>

One example of this is Slovo, who had a consciousness of being Jewish from an early age and grew up in the Yiddish ghetto community of Obel, Lithuania. Slovo describes his sense of ‘Jewishness’ as derived from the humanist notions of Judaism, once stating that his “pedigree is not unconnected with Jewishness and even Zionism”.<sup>50</sup> Experiences in the village ghetto; the Jewish Workers Club in Doornfontein; and even membership of

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<sup>45</sup> Glen Frankel, (1999), *Rivonia’s Children* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers), drawing on concluding chapter

<sup>46</sup> Iris Berger, (2004), ‘Introduction’ in Alexander, Ray, *All My Life and All My Strength* (Johannesburg: STE Publishers), p7

<sup>47</sup> Suttner, drawing on p24

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p230

<sup>49</sup> Baruch Hirson, (1995), *Revolutions in My Life* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press), p13

<sup>50</sup> Suttner, p223



the Zionist-Marxist Jewish youth movement *Hashomer Hatzair*, were all highlighted as formative moments in Slovo's life. Indeed, he believed that it was only as a result of emerging from a ghetto-community steeped in 'chauvinism' that Slovo truly came to understand and ultimately discard religious bigotry.<sup>51</sup>

For a radical like Arenstein, a Jewish identity also meant a life of struggling against prejudice. "We were taught, you can't say man is just man. From an early date I learned that man was not just an individual, but a social man. Without society he was nothing. So, that taught me that one must fight for the rights of people".<sup>52</sup> In turn, 'Jewishness' for Hirson was linked to the struggles of the past, and the triumph of surviving the perils of prejudice.<sup>53</sup>

Many of the essential vestiges of Eastern European *shtetl* culture were disseminated into Adler's generation for, despite the grim poverty and small-mindedness of *shtetl* life, it was the positive characteristics of interdependence and inclusive interactions between family and friends that were reproduced in the South African framework.<sup>54</sup> This pedigree of the 'Jewish immigrant' brand of revolutionary activity ensured that radicals like Adler were also inducted into the Communist family, and that the spirit of this generation was also immersed in the vestiges of the 'Old World'. This Jewish radicalism was a theme that Adler identifies as evident throughout the generations and "even into South Africa".<sup>55</sup>

Although childhood exposure to, and connection with, religiosity differed greatly amongst these radicals, from the deeply religious Podbrey to Kasrils, who was irreligious even as a very young child, it is apparent that the historical memory of the notions of *tikkun olam*, *tzedakah* and a concern for the oppressed was fused with a profound sense of 'Jewishness'. Whether learnt in *cheyder*, in the case of Arenstein and Alexander, or revealed through stories of Biblical heroes, as told to Turok and Adler, these Jews all operated in the Eastern European Jewish environment, which combined Jewish identity with radicalism and identified itself with some aspect of the Jewish tradition. In recollecting either their own personal suffering, or the tribulations of their parents generation, they also carried with them the vestigial impact of the distress of Jewish people as the prejudiced 'other' in society. It is arguably this burden, or blessing, as well as the sense of 'Jewishness' bound in Jewish notions of social activism and justice for all, that motivated radical Jews in South Africa to fight against the racism of apartheid.

## Seeking Justice

Whether in the case of Alexander, making the parallels between antisemitism and apartheid, or like Podbrey watching her mother feed a poor black man only to be greeted by the neighbours' shock, Jewish radicals all felt that their Jewish moral and social

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p224

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p374

<sup>53</sup> Hirson, p13

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p12

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p9

heritage inculcated within them a need to fight oppression.<sup>56</sup> As Podbrey states, “The role of the Jew in history is ... the need to fight for freedom, to demand justice, to oppose oppression”.<sup>57</sup> The political debates in Raymond Suttner and Ben Turok’s homes, as well as the lessons of the Holocaust which stayed with Kasrils, added to the working class experience of most of these activists who took the Biblical injunction to love your fellow as yourself to heart. These described in their own autobiographies a sensitivity to discrimination, linked to the radical traditions of justice within Judaism and its secularised counterpart in the form of Marxist theory, that obliged them to act against apartheid.

Emerging from the heart of this Eastern European immigrant world, this band of Jewish radicals, “tended to express their Jewish identity less in religious observance than through their secular commitment to ‘repairing the world’ through struggles for social justice”.<sup>58</sup> The ‘non-Jewish Jews’ of South Africa put the Jewish concern for the universal struggles of the underdog around the world into action by embracing a sense of ‘Jewishness’ in terms of the tradition of rebelling against a corrupt status quo.

### **Cosmopolitanism and Anti-Zionism**

This obligation was based on a secular understanding of justice in Judaism, expressed largely as Marxist and radical theory in modern times, which was informed by a cosmopolitanism or universal concern for struggles non-Jewish. Alexander was concerned with the social and political concerns of people around the world, “Because I felt that I belong to the world. I’m an internationalist, which is true”.<sup>59</sup> Belonging to the world shows her secularization and universalization of the Jewish concepts which identify with society’s vulnerable: *tikkun olam* or making the world right, and *tzedakah* or charity and righteousness. Like Deutscher’s ‘non-Jewish Jew’, Alexander takes these ideas and extends them from the particular to the universal.

As evinced by Alexander’s refusal to debate the Balfour Declaration at a school function,<sup>60</sup> or at Slovo’s empathy to Palestinians, this feeling of obligation was rooted in, and in turn deepened, an ambiguous attitude towards the State of Israel and Zionism, or Jewish nationalism.<sup>61</sup> As radicals, these Jews stood against ethnic particularism and therefore the notion of a Jewish state; but many, such as Podbrey, retained sufficient ‘Jewishness’ to feel some links to Israel. Kasrils and others note the tension between the particular and the universal within Jewish identity and all looked to Marxism as a means of social action.<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, despite the clear ‘Jewishness’ of the Jewish radicals of South Africa, the latter were universalists and concerned with the underdog everywhere. In rejecting ethnicity

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<sup>56</sup> Pauline Podbrey, (1993), *White Girl in Search of the Party*

<sup>57</sup> Suttner, p64

<sup>58</sup> Berger, ‘Introduction’, p7

<sup>59</sup> Suttner, p44

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p27

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p243

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p281

and nationalism, they became wholly concerned with injustice to the downtrodden, and in the case of Israel, the Palestinian people.

## Conclusion

Throughout history, Jewry has encompassed a number of radical individuals who sought to overturn the corrupt status quo of their day. Within these rebels, however, is something innately 'Jewish' – in their conceptions of justice, their humanist values and ultimately, their universal concern for the underdog. The vestigial impact of the historical memory of the discrimination of their own people profoundly influenced these radicals and motivated them to revolutionary action.

With the coming of modernity and the failure of the promise of Emancipation to integrate Jews as equals into society, many Jews rebelled against outward symbols of 'Jewishness' and secularized and universalized Jewish values into revolutionary ideologies. These new philosophies, such as Marxism, focused on Jewish notions of cosmopolitanism, sympathy for the underdog and the creation of a messianic utopia. The 'Non-Jewish Jews' that emerged were therefore in society but not in it and found the narrow confines of Judaism too restricting and sought to move beyond it.

This paper has endeavoured to illustrate the ways in which the legacy of radical 'Jewishness' played itself out in the lives of the Jewish radicals of South Africa who were immersed in the anti-apartheid struggle. The immigrant generation of radicals, such as Alexander, Podbrey and Slovo, born into the poverty of the Eastern European *shtetl* and the prejudice of the Eastern European areas, are in many ways poles apart from the generation of South African-born activists, like Adler, Kasrils and Coleman among others, who came from middle-class professional families and enjoyed the privileges of white apartheid South Africa. The radicalism of the former was stirred dramatically by their socialist surroundings and raw personal experiences of antisemitism, alienation and dislocation. The latter were touched by events around the world, such as the Holocaust and the Eichmann Trial, and came to a personal realisation, through a sympathetic identification with the oppressed, that they could not be truly free in a society where others were denied justice.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, however, a continuous thread weaved itself through the lives of these radicals and drew them together was their deep commitment to the cosmopolitan and humanist values of justice, as embodied in the Jewish tradition. This was in turn the embodiment of their sense of 'Jewishness', a conception of their identity rooted in the notions of *tzedakah*, *tikkun olam* and the vestigial impact of historical memory. Together these notions acted as a 'subtle catalyst' (in Suttner's words) throughout their lives and propelled them into a world of resistance against apartheid. Suttner keenly observes that above all, the single most obvious commonality amongst these radicals was their role as 'shaker-uppers' in South African society.<sup>64</sup>

It has been argued that these 'non-Jewish Jews' embodied the Jewish tradition in which words become actions. Rather than disowning their 'Jewishness', they brought Jewish

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p597

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p598

values to a higher fulfilment by extending notions of justice beyond the parochial. If being Jewish, as Suttner asserts, “means being compassionate and having the willingness to nurture and create”, many of the ‘non-Jewish Jews’ in this thesis were in fact Jews in the deepest Talmudic sense.

## **DANIEL MACKINTOSH’S ‘SPEAKING OUT AGAINST INJUSTICE’: TWO READERS RESPOND**

**Honey Gluckman, Sol Cowan**

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The following is a response by two readers from the ‘Jewish Community’ to Daniel Macintosh’s article ‘Speaking out Against Injustice? Re-examining the SAJBD’s Response to Apartheid, 1948- 1976’ in the Rosh Hashanah 2010 issue of *Jewish Affairs*.

We were forced to read this article several times, since it was often difficult to follow. Though Mackintosh specified that he was referring to the period 1948 to 1976, his use of phrases like, ‘propping up and supporting Apartheid,’ ‘during Apartheid’ and ‘the context of Apartheid’ seemed to indicate that he was referring to the whole period, 1948 to roughly 1990, when the policy of Apartheid broke down. This was already confusing, but what was particularly surprising was that the writer, notwithstanding his university education, should have been guilty of so many factual and logical errors in his effort to prove, among other points, that the Jewish Board of Deputies was not always politically neutral. Our response however, will be concentrating only on the accusations that he has made against the Jewish community. We will leave the Board of Deputies to defend themselves.

Mackintosh’s first and most serious logical error is in his constantly contradicting himself. He writes, “this essay will seek to analyse the actions of the Board *only* (our emphasis), rather than characterise the community as a whole.” Throughout his essay, however, he constantly refers to the Jewish community. Examples include such statements as, “neither should this absolve us from probing the role that the Jewish community played during Apartheid”, “the community justified their beneficial status in

the context of Apartheid..." and "It is time for an honest assessment of our community's role...during Apartheid." Are these statements not "characterising the community as a whole?" Mackintosh also concedes that he would never know "what it was like to...walk directly into an oppressive Apartheid system. In no way am I suggesting we would have been different." Yet this did not stop him from criticising those who had lived during those years. If you make a disclaimer, then ignore it, you are also contradicting yourself.

Secondly, in the generalised way he constantly uses it, Mackintosh is guilty of applying the concept of *community* dishonestly. According to various dictionaries, this concept of community has several meanings. It could, for example, refer to a body of people in the same locality. Jews, however live all over South Africa. It could further denote a group of people who have common interests, characteristics or culture. Again, this could not apply to all Jews who, as is the case today, were highly diversified. Socially, some were middle class and others were working class; some were professionals and others tradesmen; some were rich and some were scraping along. This still applies today, with charitable organisations having to provide many Jews with food on a weekly basis. Religiously, some Jews were ultra Orthodox, some Orthodox but not fully practising, some Reform and some agnostic or atheistic.

Politically, Jews have always voted for different parties. I recall the horror which many Jews felt when *one* Jewish man hit the headlines when he joined the Nationalist Party (later National Party). Most Jews voted either for the United or the Progressive parties. Mackintosh himself reveals this lack of uniformity by quoting from several sources. One stated that, "Jewish opinion on politics and racial issues is far from uniform." Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd wrote that it had "not passed unnoticed" how many Jews had voted for the Progressive Party instead of the Nationalists. Immanuel Suttner, in his book *Cutting through the Mountain* (Viking, 1997), sought to explain why so many Jews were part of the anti-Apartheid struggle. The old joke, *two Jews, three political parties*, sums up the heterogeneity of those who call themselves Jewish.

Thirdly, Mackintosh nevertheless feels at liberty to unashamedly generalise about the Jewish community. May we point out to him that only *one* instance to the contrary negates an entire generalisation? Yes, there were many who did not speak out. They either accepted the status quo because that was what they had grown up in, or they were too intimidated to do or say anything (something which Mackintosh, living in a free society cannot comprehend) or were happy with the situation because they really were racists. But many South African Jews, as will be shown, did oppose the National Party government. What right, therefore, does Mackintosh have to arrogantly portray Jews as a monolithic, racist community having one mind or one set of values, and in doing so to condemn all Jews in this country? Have his studies and Hitler not taught him the dangers of generalisations?

Fourthly, Mackintosh shows a glaring bias by ignoring his own sources, as well as articles and books written which proved that there was a high proportion of Jews who opposed apartheid. Just one example is Maurice Ostroff's *Facts About South African Jews in the Apartheid Era* (<http://maurice-ostroff.tripod.com/id27.html>). Ostroff notes



that of the 23 whites in the 1956 Treason trial, 14 were Jews. All the whites arrested in 1963 at Lilliesleaf farm, home of Arthur Goldreich, were Jewish. He named Jewish anti-apartheid activists, such as Harold Wolpe, Joe Slovo, Albi Sachs, Ruth First, Janet Love; opposition politicians such as Helen Suzman and Harry Schwarz; advocates I.A. Maisels and Sydney Kentridge, who defended the Treason Trialists and, in Kentridges case, Solly Sachs, secretary of the Garment Workers Union as well; Arthur Chaskalson, who established the Legal Resource Centre, which provided legal services for Blacks, and Wolfie Kodesh, who provided a safe refuge for Mandela in an apartment in Berea. There were also many Jewish members in the Springbok Legion, the Torch Commando and the Black Sash, all of which opposed the Nationalist government. Jewish students, as Mackintosh acknowledges in his footnotes (#40) but ignored in his own essay, also spoke out. For example, in the mid-1970s Michael Mendelowitz, in his capacity as Wits S.R.C. president as well as that of a member of NUSAS, fought tirelessly against the Apartheid laws of the time.

In 1985, moreover, after the *Rand Daily Mail* was closed down, Irwin Manoim and Anton Harber, helped by civil rights lawyer David Dison and Clive Cope as managing director, started the *Weekly Mail* (now the *Mail and Guardian*). To quote Manoim, “The *Weekly Mail* ...defined its role as reporting on the hidden face of South Africa.” And despite the many dangers they all faced, they reported constantly on the grim truth about Apartheid.

From our own experience, when racial interaction was forbidden, we can recall the work of Bertha Egnos, who staged the black musical *Ipi Tombi*, and Leon Gluckman, who staged *King Kong*. In 1978, Sylvia Glasser started South Africa’s first non-racial dance studio. Ina Perlman started and ran Operation Hunger for many years (which unfortunately collapsed after she retired, when it was taken over by a non-Jew). Educationally, Marc Suttner was the founding editor of *Learn and Teach*, which published readers and books relevant to the needs and experiences of African children and adults. Paulette Bethlehem started and for many years ran upgrading courses for black teachers (at which your co-author, Honey Gluckman, was a volunteer trainer), and the Oxford Synagogue ran adult education programmes as well as providing other services. Charities such as the Union of Jewish Women and ORT did and still do outreach work.

In 1978, a Jewish lecturer was an early pioneer in the concept of reaching out to those in need, initiating and for over fifteen years organising a Community Education Course for Johannesburg College of Education teachers in training. Every student had to give thirty hours of service to black underprivileged pupils, students and adults. A Jewish pharmacist, distressed by the many Africans who came into his shop looking for work, started a campaign to provide jobs for those seeking them. As the campaign got underway, it was killed by the emerging black trade unions.

The point about this incomplete list of names of people and organizations is that all of them chose to *act*, rather than merely speaking out. The latter course, given the

intransigence of the Nationalist government, was a waste of time.<sup>65</sup>

Because some Jews became wealthy during the Apartheid years, Mackintosh concludes that it was Apartheid that brought about their wealth. For him, intensive study, hard work, intelligence and perseverance evidently had nothing to do with their success. Rich Jews (and non-Jews) everywhere else are allowed to become wealthy through these attributes, but Jews in South Africa, according to Mackintosh, could only have obtained wealth because they lived in an Apartheid state. Would he have preferred them to sabotage their intelligence and energy so as to remain poor?

We believe that Mr. Mackintosh owes an apology to those many Jews who - *in their own way* - fought against Apartheid. Could it be that his failure to address the question of Jewish behavior under apartheid in a fair manner is due to the bias he holds against Israel, something demonstrated by his sudden demand at the end of his article for “an explicit condemnation of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian people”? Is this the reason why, having stated that he is writing solely about the Board of Deputies, he concludes by speaking about the Jewish community as a whole? One could plausibly surmise that his failure to mention the many Jews who took part in well-documented anti-Apartheid activities can be attributed to his anger towards those Jews who do not condemn Israel’s legitimate efforts to defend herself against those who would destroy her.

## THOUGHTS ON DENIS GOLDBERG'S 'COMRADE GOLDBERG'

**Benji Shulman**

*Benji Shulman is currently doing his masters in Geography at Wits University. He is a former National Chairperson of the South African Union of Jewish Students.*

*Comrade Goldberg* is a documentary currently doing the alternative film circuit telling the story of one of South Africa's less well-known struggle heroes. It looks at the life and times of Dennis Goldberg who, like Nelson Mandela and a number of other activists, was charged with sabotage following the police raid on Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia. He was tried, found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment, because he was white to be served at Pretoria State Prison. His comrades were sent Robben Island.

Unfortunately, from the outset the film suffers from poor directing. It is clearly made for a German viewership, has a German director and features Goldberg speaking the language fluently for much of the film. As a result, it follows a simplistic linear anti-apartheid narrative designed for an audience that has little knowledge of the topic. It starts out with the evils of apartheid, looks briefly at Goldberg's early life, goes on to chronicle his involvement with subversive activities and then his arrest, trial and eventual imprisonment. It concludes with the triumphant victory of the ANC and a bit of lamenting over the state of the post-apartheid regime, along with some of Goldberg's retirement activities. The capitalist West German government and its multinational organisations also come under close scrutiny for their support of the old South Africa. In many ways, the film represents the genre of the standard anti-apartheid story.

The problem is that Goldberg's story is far from standard. For example, unlike many other apartheid prisoners much of Goldberg's resistance came in the jails where he was held. Goldberg led a very active existence for a prisoner, organising and participating in numerous escape bids. These were audacious actions, almost James Bond-like in their execution, and yet the audience sees nothing of them at all. There is also nothing about his exile roles for the ANC or governmental positions post-release.

Thus, *Comrade Goldberg* is an interesting film not so much in what it says but rather in what it ignores, as well as in the cuddly yet quietly sad figure of Goldberg himself. Take, for example, a poignant scene when he walks through Robben Island with his comrade, Ahmed Kathrada. It does not take long before Kathrada is instantly recognised by some passing school children and their tour guide. Goldberg, however, has to wait in the shadows until almost apologetically being introduced at a later point. The reason for this apparent slight we only see later.

In the early 1980s, political prisoners were offered the opportunity to be released if they renounced the armed struggle. Most refused, but Goldberg took the offer. It is clear that many in the ANC that felt that this was a betrayal. However, instead of integrating the reasons for the decision or issues it raises, the film takes on a confessional tone.

Interviews with his friends try to defend his actions or show that he is now a forgiven member of the ANC. There is an embarrassing sequence where Kathrada tries to argue that prison was harder for white political prisoners than those of other races. This is something that has been flatly contradicted even by those who were serving with Goldberg at the time. It is also clear that resentment still lingers in the ANC. Pallo Jordan and Jeremy Cronin were the only other personalities of a high profile interviewed for the making of the film.

It would seem that the other reason that Goldberg's decision was controversial was that he was released to the care of Israel. Goldberg explains that this was done because it was where members of his family lived. However, Goldberg is as virulent an anti-Zionist as any you are ever likely to meet. During the interview, he spends a little time on a cute story involving an El AL air hostess before launching into an anti- Israel tirade (lest anyone get the wrong idea about his ideological thinking). He also makes sure to point out that he left the country as soon possible.

I asked Goldberg, who was at the film's screening, about the incident. It occurred to me that if the ANC had been angry at Goldberg for being released to Israel, what did they think of fellow Rivonia arrestee Arthur Goldreich, who had actually gone to live there? His answer was startling. He said when he eventually arrived in England after his release, he found that the ANC had completely excluded Goldreich from the organisation. They would not even send

him anti-apartheid literature. Goldberg had had to intervene personally to remedy this. He then confided to me that he found this behavior rather strange. Both England and America had supported apartheid, yet going into exile in those countries never meant you were shunned. To explain this, he proffered the predictable mantra that it must be on account of Israel's similarity to apartheid.

This is an interesting response in that it is an explicit acknowledgment that the ANC holds a double standard when it comes to Israel, one coming straight from a Jewish, anti-Zionist member of the party. It is also interesting because Nelson Mandela, of the same era, has made a rather sound assessment of Goldreich and the Zionist enterprise in general. It has been thought that ANC hostility towards Israel only started in the 1970s, in line with rest of the African continent. This might point to a much longer resentment against the Jewish state than was previously thought.

In the end, *Comrade Goldberg* comes across as a wasted opportunity. What we should have seen was a remarkable man telling a remarkable story. Instead, we get a half-baked cinema experience that seeks to rehabilitate Goldberg's public image by conforming to party discipline and international ignorance. It is a pity; one gets the feeling that Goldberg deserved more.

## THE NORDENS AND NORTONS OF GRAHAMSTOWN AND THEIR FAMILIES

### Hazel Dakers

**Hazel Dakers**, a Fellow of CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals), has worked in a variety of libraries, from school libraries to the British Library. During the 1990s, she taught a series of courses in London for Black South African teacher librarians, funded by the British Council in partnership with READ. She further carried out research in libraries in Gauteng while studying for an MSc in Training. Her maternal grandfather Herman Paul Heimann was South African and his mother was born Sarah Norden. Her genealogy website is at [www.hazeldakers.co.uk](http://www.hazeldakers.co.uk).

Some years after the death of my South African grandfather, my aunts and my mother agreed to pass on to me the small folder containing the only information he kept connected with his own life and that of his family. Amongst other items, it included a fading scrap of newsprint recording the marriage of his parents. There was also a small (undated) article by SA Rochlin, archivist and researcher at the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, in a column entitled 'Curios of SA Life: First Jewish Marriage in OFS'.

That first Jewish marriage to be celebrated in the Orange Free State was that of my great-grandparents, "Mr Julius Heimann and Miss Sarah Norden, both of Bethulie". Samuel Rapaport, who had been recently appointed marriage officer for the Eastern Cape, Griqualand West and the Orange Free State, officiated. The *Cape Argus* reported on the wedding, which took place on 19 February 1874, as follows:

The inhabitants of the little village, as though sensible of the importance of the occasion turned out *en masse* (including the Landrost, and other dignitaries) to drink the health of the newly-wedded pair, and that of the worthy host and hostess (Mr and Mrs Arnholz), the uncle and aunt of the bride, and that of Mrs Solomon, the bride's grandmother.

We will only add that Mr Heimann was a former resident of Bloemfontein; that, like a true burgher, he did good service in the late Basuto war; and that we hope he and his young wife will live to enjoy very many years of wedded bliss.

It was a letter from my great-grandmother, Sarah Heimann (nee Norden, 1855-1937) to my grandfather Herman Paul Heimann (1888-1981) that provided the other initial clues to my Norden ancestry. Manny, as my Grandfather was known by his friends, had by this time been living in England for more than twenty years. He had initially come to the UK after studying at SACS to continue his education at Cambridge. From afar, he had clearly written to his mother enquiring about his forebears. (He was her youngest and, at this point, one of three surviving children).



In this letter, dated 30/5/1930, Jacobsdaal, Sarah wrote: “The Ben Norden mentioned was an uncle of my late Father’s. The Joshua Norden, Captain Norden, was a brother to my late father. My late father’s name was Louis Norden, son of old Mark Norden of Grahamstown.”

Some 12-13 years ago, I began to get to grips seriously with my family history. I had by then discovered entries for Nordens in the *Dictionary of South African Biography*. This early discovery gave me the false impression that unearthing the Nordens and sorting out their relationships to me would be simple and quick! I took an early decision to investigate any South African Nordens, and to this later added the associated family of Nortons. Essentially, I also researched any Jewish Nordens I found elsewhere in an attempt to fit the missing pieces of the jigsaw. So what I describe now is the story as I know it in 2010, largely supported by documents found in archives in South Africa, the UK and elsewhere by myself and by other researchers, some professional, some amateur, by some cousins and, of course, with the assistance of colleagues in libraries and archives. To all of these I am exceedingly grateful. It is a developing story to which I continue to add each year and sometimes correct earlier assumptions.

### **London in the 1790s**

In London in 1791, as shown in archival documents, there was a certain Abraham Norden, son of Yehuda. The civil name of Yehuda remains a mystery to me, as does the place of birth and marriage of both Yehuda and of Abraham and his siblings. Where, also, were Abraham’s children born? Yehuda also had at least two other sons, Pinchas and Jacob (who had a large, well- documented and interesting family) and possibly a daughter, Beile or Betsey.

Abraham was married to Abigail (or Adel). They lived at this time near the Tower of London, with various addresses around Upper East Smithfield. He was in business as a slop seller. Only the very wealthy at that time would have had new clothes. Others bought second hand. However, the fact that he had insurance cover with Sun implies that his was a not inconsiderable concern. Abraham and Abigail may have had as many as ten children, although I am more inclined to believe that eight is the correct number.

### **Nordens to the Cape**

My direct ancestor, Marcus or Mark, was the eldest child of Abraham and Abigail, and was probably born around 1791. His sister, Sarah, who was married to John Norton, and brothers Benjamin and Joshua Davis (another uncle to my great-grandmother’s father rather than a brother as she claims above) were amongst the earliest British Jews who settled in the Cape. I believe that Mark and his family actually followed in 1830.

The youngest sister, Julia, came after the death of their parents. She married James Hamilton Parker in Grahamstown (‘Graham’s Town, as it was then called) in 1843 and died in Cape Town in 1864. Born in 1811, she would not have known most of her

siblings when she joined them. Francis, Jane and Hannah (the last I surmise was a daughter) remained in England as far as can be established to date.

Immigrating to the Cape was, in fact, Abraham's idea, not his children's. In 1819, he applied to the British government to lead a party within the planned settlement. His list is entirely made up of London Jews living close to him near the Tower of London. The list includes his sons and others, who do in fact appear in the lists of those who eventually went to the Cape. Unfortunately, Abraham's application was rejected and the younger generation took their chance without him. Shortly after their departure, Abraham and Abigail made what seems to have been a mysterious move to Hammersmith, where he is recorded in rates documents and business directories of 1838 and 1839 as being a 'general dealer' in 1823. It was an unusual move as it was far from the Jewish community in which they were used to living. It was a three-and-a-half mile walk from Hammersmith to the Westminster Synagogue. However, the move coincided with the opening, for a period of eight years, of a school at Wallborough House on Hammersmith Mall in 1825. This was owned by Henry Naphtali Solomon, earlier in his career first headmaster of the Jews Free School and later at Edmonton.(1)

John and Sarah Norton (she was the sister of Benjamin *et al*) are listed in the various versions of the List for Thomas Willson's Party on the *Belle Alliance*. It has been difficult to prove that Benjamin and Joshua were also on the ship, but the balance of evidence is towards presence rather than his absence – probably under other names. (This was not unusual, as the weather was stormy at the time of departure and many booked on the vessel had cold feet at the last moment!).

### **Arrival in the Cape June 1820**

The documents still remain making it possible to track the Willson Party's progress on arrival: By 8 June 1820, arrangements were being made by the military at Uitenhage for the transportation of the settlers arrived in Algoa Bay by wagon to their eventual destination. It was foreseen that the convoy's route would be: "4<sup>th</sup> July, Tuesday, to Swarthoss River; 5<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday, Sundays River; 6<sup>th</sup>, Thursday, Bautenbacks Drift; 7<sup>th</sup>, Friday, Assaigaay Bush" and then, "somewhere between the Karriga and Kowie - the latter is preferable - finally on the 6<sup>th</sup> night reaching their locations".(2)

Willson's Party was to be located at no. 30 on the plan enclosed with the memorandum, which had previously been intended for a Mr Erith, "running up along the same river to Mr. Southey's location". They were to go by Assaigay Bush, to cross the barrage and Kowie Drift and as far as the cross road coming from Graham's Town. From there, they were partly to turn off towards Bathurst, along the road to the first River (the place where Mr Erith was first intended to be located), and partly to continue to where it comes out of the rocky Hills westerly of the place where Mr Southey was now located.

The progress of the settlers can be followed again in 1823. In May of that year, the Return of the Settlers was published.<sup>i</sup> By then, Willson's Party occupied locations 30 and 33, including the intermediate lands. At the time of landing, there had been 94 adults in

this party. Now, on the 1000 acre location, there were only 34 men and 22 women, as well as 73 children. Their livestock comprised mainly cows and sheep, and they were growing a fair range of crops, with the exception of rye and oats. Whilst most of the general remarks upon the industry of the various parties are brief – “an industrious/idle and undeserving party” – there are several comments with regard to Willson’s Party. This was a very large group, abandoned by their head on arrival. The location allotted to them was: “badly divided, and no good arrangements made for their general advantage. With the exception of a few individuals, little or no industry has been employed on the location”.

In a formal request to the authorities,<sup>ii</sup> John Norton asked for a pass to trade in cattle in any of the districts. The response: “I have no objection to this, nor of egress and ingress for the purposes expressed. The Landrost must examine and may grant a pass for a specific time and purpose and write to the Landrost of the district John Norton goes, to inform them”.

A February 1824 statement of settlers then actually residing on their locations within the Field Cornetcy of Bathurst includes, from Willson’s Party, 28 men, 20 women and 46 children. On Norton’s Location are listed by name 11 men, 5 women and 14 children. There are no Nordens or Nortons amongst them.

John Ayliff, in his fictionalised account of the Willson Party’s experience *The Journal of Harry Hastings Albany Settler*, almost certainly refers to John Norton (‘JN’) in his account of some trading during August 1820. In this, he takes a younger man to learn how to barter such goods as watches, silver spoons and forks and clothing in exchange for much needed cattle.

### **Grahams Town 1824 – 1846**

As mentioned above, I believe that it was not until 1830 that my direct ancestor Mark Norden and his wife Ann Levy settled in Grahams Town. My evidence for this comes from Masonic records. What I do not know is whether they had previously visited the Cape Colony. Whereas his brothers were known as local auctioneers, whose advertisements feature in most issues of the early *Grahams Town Journal*, Mark opened a shop which sold everything under the sun. The front page of the 15 September 1836 issue of *The Graham's Town Journal* includes an announcement that Mark Norden had “opened a General Job Store corner of New Street and High Street”. The brothers and brother-in-law John Norton were active within the local Masonic Lodge. Their business partnerships with each other and other citizens seemed to fluctuate. There were major rows both within the family and within the masons.

During this period the Jewish community of Grahams Town increased with, amongst others, the families of Myer Schrijver, Simon Marcus and Michael Benjamin settling there. So what had been at first a very brave step away from both London and the Jewish community they knew gradually became more familiar. However, apparently no early Jewish community records exist for the town. Cory Library manuscript: MS 1112A, extract from Journal of Rev. F Owen, 29.1.39 - 30.4.1839 provides a flavour: “Calling at

a shop (Mr M Norden's) I perceived that the shopkeeper's wife was an Israelite, & whilst she sent for change had some conversation with her. She said the Jews at Grahams Town, of whom there were but few, could not keep up the customs or observations of their religion. They kept open shop on the Sabbath, & the only solemnity they observe is the white fast, one day in the year, in commemoration of the destruction of Jerusalem".

1846 was one of disaster for my family. On 17 April Louis Norton, aged 30, died after being thrown from his horse. The *Grahams Town Journal* mourned him as being 'among the young men of the highest promise.' He left behind his wife Kate, John Robert (2) and Joshua (only a few weeks old). Just a week later, on 24 April, Joshua Davis Norden (brother to Mark and Sarah) died in battle, a hero of the 7<sup>th</sup> Frontier War, aged 42. A graphic description of the incident (his body was mutilated after his death) is provided in the *Grahams Town Journal*. There is a memorial plaque for him in the Grahamstown Cathedral. On 31 July, Mark Norden died, aged 55. Sarah Norton (nee Norden) died, aged 52, on 7 December.

In the following two years, Sarah was followed by another son, Philip (1847) and by her husband, John (1848). Together with my friends Sally and Gray Poole and my cousin Chante Norton (descended from Sarah), I believe we identified Sarah's grave a few years ago in the Jewish Cemetery at Grahamstown. We just managed to make out the vestiges of the engraving on the weathered stone.

### **Benjamin Norden (1798-1875)**

Of all the Nordens, the one best known is undoubtedly Benjamin. He was clearly a successful business man judging from those of his houses I have visited: in Grahamstown; in Cape Town (the part of the Mount Nelson Hotel claimed to have been his home has a plaque commemorating the first Jewish Prayer meeting in 1841); what is now a post-war reconstruction of the Post Office in Baker Street, London; and the home of his retirement in Ramsgate, from which on a clear day France can be seen.

Benjamin clearly stands out within the family as the one with both exceptional business acumen and drive but also as one who wished to be involved in the community around him. He bought and sold a great deal of property. The plain Georgian style house he built for himself overlooking the Market Place in Grahams Town has since been added to and is now a guest house, called The Cock House after its next owner. Benjamin was a public notary and elected a city commissioner in Cape Town (municipal councillor) in 1848. In 1854 he stood for the Lower House of the Cape Legislative Assembly.

Not only was Benjamin a daring enough young man to go to the Colony as an 1820 Settler in the first place, but he later he also represented the British Governor to the Zulu Chief Dingaan in Natal and further conducted business with the Chief. He is said to have traded up the Wild Coast between Port Elizabeth and Durban (then Port Natal), which was daring, and maybe foolhardy, to say the least. So self-confident was Benjamin that

he wrote up some of his own exploits in the *Grahams Town Journal*, under a pseudonym of course! He was in business with Aaron de Pass and a friend of Piet Retief's. That Benjamin led the group who founded the first synagogue in South Africa is well known. I do not know whether he provided funds for the Jewish cemetery in Grahams Town, but most certainly he did both in Cape Town and in Ramsgate, where the *tahara* house commemorates both him and his wife, Abigail, on each of its walls.

In addition to contributing to the building of the first synagogue in Cape Town, Benjamin likewise contributed to the building of various churches. He, of course, registered the births of his own children in church registers, this being the only way to do so at that time in Grahams Town.

However, Benjamin was not universally liked. This could well be the case with some other successful businessmen, as to achieve in business may take a certain toughness and lack of sentimentality. Heart-rending letters were written by John Norton to his son Lewis in 1844 at the time of his insolvency (Cape Archives). He recommends Lewis to his Uncle Joshua and warns him away from his Uncle Ben and brothers, Joshua and Philip. These letters are found amongst documentation concerning the case of JH Bartman and Benjamin Norden, 1852, versus the executor of the estate of John Norton.

Benjamin had a Cape Town office from 1839 onwards. In 1849, he decided to voluntarily supply the convict ship *Neptune*, then berthed in Cape Town on its way from England to Australia. This angered the whole of Cape Town's white society, including the Jewish community, and resulted in Benjamin's house and person being stoned by an angry mob. His health never recovered, though the British Government did reimburse him. Eventually, he retired to England, returning only once to the Cape. The story of the silver cup (now in the Jewish Museum in Cape Town) with its engraved thanks presented to him and the verbatim account of the speeches given at the presentation dinner and published in the *Cape Argus* of 31 October 1857 is well known. The latter was reprinted 100 years later by SA Rochlin in *Jewish Affairs*, November 1957.

Benjamin and his wife retired first to central London and finally to Ramsgate, where both eventually died.

### **Families of the Settler Nordens**

For me, the fascination is for this family as a whole and in particular for the less usual aspects of their lives. To protect the privacy of descendant cousins, many of whom have become my friends, I am mentioning by full name mainly public figures. In all sorts of ways, the lives of the settler descendants make a quite intriguing patchwork of stories. For the sake of space, I shall select but a few.

My Great-Great-Great Grandfather Marcus Norden had five children who survived infancy.

Of these, Ester first married Samuel Moss, in 1833. They had four children, whose descendants continue to thrive to this day and some of whom have remained Jewish.



Then – Samuel Moss still living – she married Saul Solomons in 1853. Divorce was then extremely unusual and I have found no record thereof.

Joshua Joseph Emanuel Norden married four times, having four children by his first wife and five by his second. Both these wives have Dutch names and the children seem to have been brought up in their traditions, one of his descendants being a leading contemporary academic in the field of Afrikaans literature. At least two of Joshua's descendants became Church of England ministers.

Benjamin Norden (son of Marcus) had three children by his wife, Mary Anne Susan Maguire, before his early death at the age of 36. One of their descendants was Lucie Norden van Huyssteen, who during her lifetime researched and wrote about the family but whose conclusions were not always the same as mine!

Louis Norden, my Great-Great-Grandfather, had four children who survived infancy, including Sarah mentioned at the start of this piece. Some of Louis' descendants remain Jewish – I mention this because the vast majority of Norden descendants have not been Jewish for several generations. As this is my own branch of the family, I have probably traced a higher proportion of the descendants than elsewhere in the tree. Eleven years after the premature death of his wife, Marion, or Miriam Heilbronn, in 1863, Louis remarried New York-born Leah Pass, in 1870. I can find no further traces of Leah thereafter, whether in the Cape, in the UK or in her childhood home of Barbados.

Louis' behaviour became increasingly erratic, to the point where Rev Joel Rabinowitz, having failed to persuade him to return to England with the gift of a ticket, nearly succeeded in having him incarcerated in the Lunatic Asylum on Robben Island. His brother-in-law, Bernhard Arnholz, became guardian to the children. In the years 1874-9, Louis was intermittently a patient in the Old Somerset Hospital.<sup>iii</sup> Beyond this point, he is mentioned no more – living or dead. Does any reader of *Jewish Affairs* know the fate of Leah or Louis?

Louis' eldest son Mark had a great many children before being divorced by his wife on – in my opinion – very reasonable grounds. I have made some very good friends amongst his descendants. The one I shall mention in particular is Althea Norden Duncan, who passed away just a few years ago. Before the days of the Internet, she built up a magnificent amount of family information, largely through writing to every Norden she could find in the South African telephone directory. Althea delighted in corresponding with these cousins and most generously allowed me copies of her archive not long after I started my research.

Louis' son John, or Jack, Norden was the father of leading Durban Chartered Accountant Bert Norden, who in turn was step-father to my celebrated step-cousin Professor Phillip Tobias (who has also written about the Norden family).

Hannah, or Anna, Norden married Thomas McCabe. Whilst I have traced some McCabes during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, I am far from certain that they are indeed Hannah's family. If

indeed they are, they were in business in Queenstown, Dordrecht and Birmingham. The fortunes of these businesses, like those of so many other small enterprises at this time, fluctuated considerably.

### **Descendants of Sarah Norden and John Norton**

I have referred to the untimely deaths of some Nortons in 1846. The family is so large that I shall simply highlight a few of the most unusual lives. Amongst the descendants of Sarah and John were many who married the descendants of other well known settler families, such as White and Bowker.

One granddaughter of Philip Norton, whose death in 1847 is mentioned above, was Ellen Mary Anne Norton (1864-1942). She married Maximillian Sackville-West, an illegitimate scion of the famous literary family whose seat is at Knole in Kent and whose niece was Vita Sackville-West. The latter lived at Sissinghurst and was famous for the garden she created with her husband, Harold Nicholson.<sup>iv</sup>

Sarah's son Joshua Abraham's story is without a doubt the best known and most extraordinary of all. As a child of two years, he was an 1820 Settler. After losing much of his close family in the 1840s, he set off to become a Forty-Niner in the 1849 California gold rush. His business partnership in grain came to a sticky end and he found himself penniless. Using his wits, he arrived in San Francisco and announced himself to be Emperor Norton I of the United States of America (later taking Mexico into his 'protectorate'). The broader populace good-naturedly indulged the fantasy. The City provided him with a new Emperor's uniform with plumed hat each year, railways provided free travel and restaurants entertained him as befitted one of his 'status'. He printed and used his own currency and his doings were followed by the local press. When one of the dogs who followed him died, its obituary was written by local journalist, Mark Twain.

Another San Francisco reporter, Robert Louis Stevenson, is said to have based a minor character on Joshua in a novel *The Wrecker*. Whilst Joshua lived this feted life, he in fact apparently slept in a very dilapidated lodging house. Yet such was the affection he engendered amongst his public that tens of thousands turned out for his funeral after he dropped dead in the street in 1880. I can claim no original research on his life in the United States, for which in this case I am merely summarising secondary sources. When my son visited his grave, he was told that a transvestite calling herself Empress Norton, who has a grave plot reserved beside his for herself, has held regular ceremonies at the gravesite to raise funds for Aids charities. How Joshua would have relished knowing that 130 years after his death, he is still in the limelight!

A Great-Great-Grandson to John and Sarah - through their son Benjamin John Norton - was the last Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Hill Norton. Shortly after the early death of his father Martin, known as Jack Norton, Peter's mother decided to send him to the Naval School at Dartmouth as a 13 year-old cadet. It goes without saying that his naval career was outstanding, taking him to be Chief of the [UK] Defence Staff and then Chairman of

the NATO Military Committee. His eventual retirement led to active participation in the House of Lords where, in addition to defence topics, he asked questions regarding sightings of UFOs. His reputation, according to the obituaries, was formidable, yet knowing him only in the last few years of his life by correspondence and then meeting a couple of times to exchange research on family history, I only found him charming, interesting and glad to share a mutual hobby.

Esther Norton married Henry Benjamin Kisch – another vast family. Their children later changed the name to Kyshe. One of their great-grandsons, said to be the inspiration for James Bond, was Fitzroy Maclean, writer, diplomat, adventurer and war hero who fought alongside Tito.

### **Descendants of Benjamin Norden**

It must have been tough to be in the shadow of a father as successful as Benjamin Norden. Perhaps, then, it is no surprise that it was one of his sons-in-law, Joseph Levy (husband of Abigail Ann Norden), who most shared his talent for business. I have followed Joseph's business career from managing a store for Benjamin through to leaving £37 000 gross as his estate in 1901. At this point, most people earned less than £100pa. Their son, Samuel Benjamin Levy, seems to have been an unforgiving sort of father. Amongst his grandchildren was the dedicated paediatrician Professor Lucy Wagstaff who, even in her eventual retirement, would slip back to the famous Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto - where she had been based through much of her career - to assist the then dreadfully understaffed medical team. She also filled her retirement with work for UNICEF and was Adviser on Child Health to the Gauteng Government. Lucy, whose interest in the here and now was far greater than in family history, kindly gave me some wonderful photographs from her branch of the family.

### **Descendants of Joshua Davis Norden**

Battle hero Joshua Davis died leaving a widow and young family in 1846. Three sons survived to adulthood. Of these one, sharing his father's name, eventually settled in the Kimberley area and had children of his own whose descendents still live in South Africa today. It took Joshua Davis Norden's American wife Catherine some years to obtain her due from his business interests that often involved his brothers – and from the British Government – as he died fighting on its behalf. I am not sure when it was that they left the Cape, but by 1860 Catherine and her youngest son, Ben, were living in Portland Oregon with Myer and Rebecca Mansfield. Myer is referred to as Ben's uncle in the obituary following Ben's death. Ben had four daughters and a son. It is his son – another Ben – who during World War I was a surgeon in the navy aboard the U. S. S. South Dakota. He later returned to private practice.

### **And more.....**

I cannot hope to cover the details of the lives of all the Nordens and Nortons in the space of a single article. Instead, I have tried to give you a flavour of the wider family and to

highlight some who may be said to have led unusually interesting or high-achieving lives. I have purposely not dwelt at great length on the well known stories which have been recounted in many other articles and books.

My own great pleasure has been in the friends I have made amongst the cousins – many of them not mentioned here – and with those who, like me, research their family history, exchanging recent finds and stories. Whilst I have met many of these in person, others are email correspondents who have come to me through my website [www.hazeldakers.co.uk](http://www.hazeldakers.co.uk), on which you will find a reasonably current family tree for the Nordens and Nortons as well as for my other families.

I think there are several reasons for which this family has caught my imagination and so engaged my research skills more than the seven families of my other Great-Grandparents. My favourite period of social history is Georgian England. I live in a house largely built around 1700. The Nordens left an extraordinary paper trail, much of which is well indexed by the National Archives of South Africa. This made it possible to uncover much of their story. As the Cape was a British Colony, its goings on are well logged in the Colonial Office Records and most fully reported upon in contemporary newspapers of the Cape and the UK. I look back with awe at the spirit of adventure which took them from the shadow of the Tower of London, from a close knit Jewish community within that part of London and across the seas and into the unknown.

## NOTES

1 CO 48/76 p309-11 UK National Archives

2 CO 48/76 p.392-3 The National Archives (UK) Kew

## JEWS WITH VAN RIEBEECK?

Janus J. Gluck

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How do we know? How can we know? History has preserved few name-lists on crewmen or of enlisted men beyond what they called themselves. Typically Jewish names are hardly met with in South Africa prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. However, the Church's conversion records, when available, are reliable indices of a Jewish presence. Thus, in 1669 mention is made of the conversion of two youngsters, a certain Jacobsohn and a Heijlbron and a year later two others without mentioning their names. These conversions took place quite a few years after the departure of Van Riebeeck in 1662. Therefore, the above Jews were not likely to have been the protagonists of the following account of what took place shortly after the landing of the first boats of Van Riebeeck's party on the shores of today's Cape Town. Consequently, there were most likely others of Jewish origin who actually arrived with Van Riebeeck without caring to advertise their Jewishness.

The Jewish presence in the maritime adventures during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries seems something of an enigma. Neither the poor living conditions, nor the low pay, high mortality rate or the semi-criminal company could possibly attract a Jew to seafaring or army career. Yet a Jewish presence in the service of the Dutch East, and even more so with the Dutch West, India Company, their British counterparts and in the various colonial armies is a fact.

The reason for this seemingly strange phenomenon is the second-class, indeed the powerless, civic status of the Jewish at that time in Western Europe. The ghetto system ensured their physical safety but their numbers in the ghettos were prescribed and limited by law, with those beyond the quota having no legal status, or indeed legal existence. The only openings to legitimacy were joining the army or navy, or some big organization like the Dutch East (or West) India Company, and many young Jews did just that.

As soon as Van Riebeeck landed in the Cape, he sought contact with the indigenous population, the Khoikhoi (called 'Hottentots' by the Dutch), as per instructions from the Company in Amsterdam. For the first few decades, the policy of the Dutch East India Company was preoccupied with creating a working friendship with the local native population. The reason for this policy was the Company's immediate and ever-growing need for cattle supplies, the only food item the Khoikhoi produced, since the main purpose of the Cape venture was to establish a victualling station for seafarers. The newcomers soon learned of the locals' ignorance of agriculture, and even of fishing (despite sitting on the world's richest seas in terms of fish). They were engaged instead in animal husbandry of cattle and sheep. The cattle the Khoikhoi readily supplied helped the

Dutch to survive in the first few years of the settlement, and even to sell beef and mutton to passing ships.

Although the Khoikhoi showed friendship towards the Europeans, communications between the two groups were hindered by language problems. The Dutch found the Khoikhoi dialects difficult to master, even failing to distinguish properly between many of their sound elements. This may account for local personal names appearing in so many different spellings in the governors' journals. Whether it was the difficulty in distinguishing foreign-sounding names or the innate sense of humour of the Dutch, it was an accepted practice to call local Khoikhoi leaders and tribes by Dutch nicknames instead of their real names. Thus Gogosoa, chief of the Goringhaiquas (the first important Khoikhoi group to meet the Dutch), was referred to by Van Riebeeck in his journal as the Fat Captain, for his corpulent physique. His eldest son and soon-to-be heir to the leadership, was known as 'Schacher', though his actual name was something that sounded like Osingkhima. After succeeding his father as the chief of the south-western clans of the Khoikhoi, Schacher assumed the name Mankgou; but for the Dutch he remained forever Schacher.

This brings us to the topic of this article, which endeavors to clarify this appellation, Schacher, and its possible historical significance.

The Dutch etymological dictionary of Jan de Vries records this word, even noting its first appearance in Dutch literature in 1613. It suggests that the word was actually a borrowing from the Yiddish *schacher*, derived originally from the Hebrew *socher*, meaning 'merchant' or 'peddler'.<sup>66</sup>

Yiddish lexicography<sup>67</sup> knows this word and adds the phrase '*schacher-macher*', meaning a "dealer in anything" or "wholesaler-dealer". Actually, *shakhor* = black and *shoher* (*soher* = merchant) are well-known Hebrew words. They are therefore freely employable in Yiddish, a medieval German dialect which the Jews carried with them to the non-Germanic east and mixed some Hebrew into. Yiddish words also reached the Low Countries, at least in the low class jargon. Van Riebeeck, the educated Dutchman, did not understand the word *schacher*, as he wrote in his Journal.

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<sup>66</sup> Jan de Vries: *Nederlands Etymologisch Woordeboek* (Revised by F de Tollenaere.) Leiden, 1971; cf. Franck, Van Wijk and Van Haeringen: *Etymologisch Woordeboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, Martinus Myhoff, 1971; J L Terwen: *Etymologisch Handwoordeboek*, etc. Gouda 1844; All larger German dictionaries record it as an old German word with the earliest known appearance in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. The etymology claimed by them is either Old Germanic (sic!) with the meaning 'robber' or the Hebrew '*socher*' = peddler (traveling) merchant). Most lexicographers seem to connect it with Yiddish. Cf. F Kluge (revised by W Mitzka) *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*. Berlin, 1957.

<sup>67</sup> cf. Beem, H: *Resten van een Taal*. Assen-Amsterdam, 1975, knows this lexeme, especially in its verbal forms and spells it as '*sjacheren*' or '*sjachelen*' and claims it to be a non-Yiddish word, originally though part of the Yiddish vernacular later!? The following two dictionaries do not record *schacher* as an individual word: U Weinreich: *Modern English-Yiddish, Yiddish-English Dictionary*, N.Y. 1968, and A Harkavy, *English-Yiddish Dictionary*, New York, 1910.

III. The opinion of R Dozy (in the *Verklarende Lijst der Nederlandsche Woorden die uit het says that this word is of Hebreuwsch ... afkomstig zijn*. Leiden, 1867) has always been the most important opinion. He records '*sachern*' "*Schacheren*" = koopman, handelaar.

It should be noted that the words *schachor* - black and *socher* - peddler may have identical pronunciation in some Yiddish dialects. Strictly speaking, all the above meanings could have fitted the context. Schacher-Osingkhima came to offer some of his cattle, bargaining for as much tobacco and copper as he could possibly get out of the equally hard-bargaining Dutch. Since the arguments were conveyed through a clumsy and ignorant interpreter, the onlookers must have been treated to floods of strange sounds and gesticulations. The situation was not without its humor for the idle spectator, and the Yiddish nickname *Schacher* for the Hottentot was almost called for. The appellation, with its various semantic facets for the black chief selling cattle, could be rather funny in the circumstances, as well as somewhat derogatory.

Whoever the original joker might have been, the name Schacher was eventually accepted as a bona fide name and probably even have lost its original undertones. On a land purchase document of Commissioner Aernout van Overbeke, dated 19 April 1672, Schacher, having gained by then further stature, was called Prince Schacher.

The Yiddish name given to the son of a chief has an historical significance as far as South African Jewish history is concerned. It strongly suggests that there was a Jewish presence among the first groups of Europeans in the Cape, even though there are no typically Jewish names mentioned in the relevant sources. Moreover, for a witticism to be appreciated it needs an appreciative audience, that is, at least one or two others who participate in the fun. These would have had to be fellow Yiddish speakers, and therefore Jews.

Indeed, history is gleaned from the quaintest sources.





# NORTHERN NATAL MEMORIES OF A JEWISH BOY

**Bernard Duchen**

*Bernard Duchen spent most of his youth in KwaZulu-Natal, moving to Johannesburg after qualifying as a Mechanical Engineer at Natal University.*

I was born in Johannesburg, in December 1941, but grew up in Wesselsnek, a little coal mining village in the district of Kliprivier, in the Dundee/Newcastle/Ladysmith triangle of Northern Natal. From around 1840, this had become a rich coal mining area. My grandfather Naftoli Dukhen (subsequently Anglicised to Duchen) arrived in Natal from Lithuania in about 1868, a young lad less than twenty years old. He returned to his native village of Yolokai some five years later, where he married and in time ensured that his sons came to South Africa. My father's older brothers, Willie and Abie, arrived sometime between the two Boer wars. Harry, my father, arrived in 1904, aged fifteen.

This branch of the Duchen family began a process of 'colonization' of Northern Natal. Others followed, from both Lithuania and Latvia, so that by the mid-1930s the family collective owned many mine concession stores, some hotels, a milling company and a number of farms throughout the area, from Elandslaagte to Vryheid. The Duchens and their close relatives were to be found at Glencoe, Wesselsnek, Elandslaagte, Dannhauser, Ballengeich, Hlobane, Wasbank and Vryheid. In later years, some moved to Gravelotte in the old Transvaal, to Witbank and, of course to Johannesburg.

Initially living and working at Ballengeich near Newcastle in the mid 1930s, my father took over the concession rights and farms at Wesselsnek, as well as the store at Elandslaagte. His brother Abie had married and moved elsewhere while Willie had suffered a stroke and was bedridden. Willie remained at, and died, while living at Wesselsnek. Under my father's guidance, Harry Duchen Wesselsnek grew to become an impressive business complex.

Wesselsnek was the site of a profitable coal mine belonging to the Natal Steam Coal Company. About thirty white families lived in the village. Generally, they were engineers and technicians on the mine, but some also worked for Harry Duchen Wesselsnek while others ran their own little small holdings, either around the area or at Waschbank, which was only about three miles over the hill, as the crow flies. There were also about forty Indian families.

Wesselsnek station lay on the main Johannesburg-Durban railway line, about four miles on, on the Helpmekaar road. Our two farms were located about two miles beyond the station, on either side of the line as it wended way through to Elandslaagte and Ladysmith and then on through the Natal Midlands to Durban. This area had been the scene of many battles between the Zulu people and occasional British and Boer armies and we would often find assegai heads and .303 rifle shells lying in the veld.

I have only good memories of my childhood, despite some freak accidents which left me partially blind in my left eye at the age of four and the near loss of my fingers in a mangle a year later. By age five I could drive the steam engine. At seven, I had learnt to drive a tractor and strip down its engine and transmission - of course needing some considerable help in

loosening or tightening the bolts and lifting off the really heavy bits. But I knew where the parts went and generally what they did. No wonder, then, that I grew up to be an Engineer.

## Early Schooldays

As a child, I was known amongst the locals as “*Umfaan umHlope*” – the White Umfaan. I spoke Fanagalo and most times ran around in a Zulu ‘*muchi*’, except, of course, when my mother deemed it necessary for me to be more civilized and presentable!

In January 1947, it was time for me to start school and my mother had to find somewhere where I could be civilized, taught European manners and learn to speak adequate English. My sister Natalie – 17 months my senior – was then attending Elandslaagte school as a day scholar, but my mother chose instead to send us both to Ladysmith Convent. We became weekly boarders, together with the two Karpul girls (whose father, Joe, had by then taken over the Elandslaagte business from Harry Duchon), making up the four Jewish children at the Convent. Every Friday afternoon, our parents would take us home for the weekend, returning us to school on Sunday afternoon.

Ladysmith Convent accommodated 37 boys, from Grade One through to Matric. About eighteen of us were boarders. We shared a single dormitory, with beds on each side. At the bottom, there was a curtained cubicle where Sister Mary slept. My bed was next to her cubicle and every night she would take me in for an hour or so to teach me English and basic European deportment (like *not* eating *putu* with my fingers). Of course, my disappearing into her cubicle every night always led to a lot of guffaws and ribald comments from the older boys, but in my innocence, these just passed me by. So effective was her tuition, however, that at the end of my first year I won the Grade 1 prize for English.

I loved the Convent and was incredibly happy there. However, two incidents occurred that had a fundamental effect on me and eventually led to my mother having to remove and send me elsewhere.

The first incident occurred about halfway through that first year, when Sister Rose-Anne began handing out pencils to the class, preparatory to our learning to write. Being a natural ‘lefty’, I picked up mine with my left hand, and idly began chewing on it to while away time while she completed her task. Returning to her desk, Sister Rose-Anne turned around - and all hell broke loose!

Some may know that the Latin for right is *dexter* and for left *sinister*, so imagine the horror facing poor Sister Rose-Anne when she saw this little Jewish boy holding his pencil in his *sinister* hand. She hurtled back down the aisle, screaming “the Devil, the Devil, the Devil” over and over again and smashed my left hand away. The pencil was drawn across my palate (the dull end, fortunately) and left a painful bruise in my mouth that hurt for days. To add insult to this injury, she absolutely forbade me to use my left hand, to the extent even of tying it to my side with a ribbon until I was writing right-handed. To this day, despite having reverted back to my left hand, my handwriting is an illegible disaster.

It goes without saying that the older boys were quick to capitalize on the situation. “Because you’re left handed, you have to go to church next Sunday so that Jesus can exorcise the devil” they said, adding “because you are Jewish, you will have to take an extra helping of holy water”.

And so it was. That coming Sunday evening, I entered the church for the first time. The holy water was held in a bowl nestling in the cupped hands of a full size statue of Jesus that hung on the wall in the vestibule. While everyone else dipped a finger in the bowl and crossed themselves, I dropped my whole hand in and literally washed myself across my chest, to nods of approval and much sniggering from the other boys.

This notwithstanding, I was so enthralled by the music and the awesome environment of the church that it became an important feature of my life. Now, every Sunday, my parents had to return me to the convent early enough for me to bath and be in church in time for the service to begin. The ritual of the holy water became ingrained in me and continued well into Grade two, but disaster struck again and led, calamitously, to incident number two.

One Sunday evening, about March 1948, we had a puncture while returning to Ladysmith. By the time my father had changed the wheel, we were late and as we drove up the hill towards the Convent, I could hear the church bells ringing. The car had barely stopped at the Convent when I rushed to the church and into the vestibule. I plunged my fist into the bowl of holy water, but my fist stuck in the bowl, much like the monkey who reaches into a bottle and will not release its grip. I panicked and wrenched my hand upwards. The whole statue came crashing down and broke into pieces.

The choir stopped singing and a congregation of devout Catholics turned around to see the little heathen smashing their relics.

To say that this incident was dramatic is an understatement. I never entered the church again and was promised such terrible heavenly retribution by the other boys that I began to suffer nightmares. A month later, my parents had to remove me from the Convent.

My mother moved quickly. A week after my leaving, we went for an interview with the headmaster at Michaelhouse, an Anglican school and one of the Natal Midland's great country institutions. In my mind's eye, I recall the Michaelhouse scene as if it was happening now:

Headmaster is seated behind a huge oak desk, with an application form in front of him. In his right hand he holds a genuine quill pen and as he proceeds down the application form, every now and again he dips the quill into an elegant glass inkwell.

At last he comes to the critical question. "Religion?" he asks as he raises the quill once more from the inkwell. My mother suspects nothing. After all, where could the problem be? Did not young John Schlesinger go to Michaelhouse?

"Jewish" she replies, whereupon headmaster, with a mighty force, launches the quill like a javelin into the application form. It sticks into the oak desk and he rips the paper out from under it, crumples it up and throws it into his waste basket. "Please leave, Madam" he barks, "we do not take Hebrews here".

Perhaps, this is the point where my mother is supposed to hint at the possible building of a new wing for the school, as the Schlesingers apparently did, or something equally persuasive. But she understands that Harry Duchon, although comfortable, is not quite

a Schlesinger. So she simply stands tall (she is nearly six feet in height), vomits across his oak desk and as it spills onto his carpet, she strides out head high, with me in tow.

By May of that year I found myself a boarder at Herber House in South Street, Berea, and attending school at King David, Linksfield. In time, my sister was transferred to Maris Stella Convent in Durban, where she finished her schooling.

### **Commercial Travelers**

In those days, there were many Jewish traveling salesmen who used to visit country stores, usually on a two or three week circuit. They would travel by road as representatives of the big wholesalers and generally would stay overnight at the country hotels in the small towns. For many Wesselsnek, although lacking a hotel, was a prime weekend destination. Not only did we have the butcher shop, which was restocked daily with beef and lamb slaughtered on our own farm, but we also had a dairy herd that yielded copious volumes of milk, from which my mother made cream cheese and blintzes. At Wesselsnek, they stayed free of charge. Here, my mother was renowned for her hospitality and her *kneidlach*. H Duchen Wesselsnek was famous for the huge meaty dinners and breakfasts. My father also owned the largest pig farm in Natal and as a member of the Eskort Bacon Cooperative, his 3000-pig holding ensured that there was always a plentiful supply of Eskort products for breakfast (H Duchen Wesselsnek was *not* a kosher establishment).

Travelers would start arriving on Friday afternoon. It was not unusual for there to be eight or more of them for the weekend. It never rained at night and even in winter it was warm, so they slept under a long covered verandah which ran the full North and West perimeters of the house. Because Friday was a busy day, it was 8.00 pm by the time the day's cashing up had been completed. Friday evening was therefore a late but extremely sociable affair. Dinner would start at 8.15pm and would include listening to the *Frank Brathwaite Racing Report* for the coming weekend. Discussion centered on the expected winners (Cocky Feldman and Tiger Wright being the favorite jockeys), which horses were 'puddlers' or which had "no legs" and had to be avoided.

At 9.00pm, the poker games began. My parents possessed a magnificent poker table, which held pride of place in the lounge, a room that I recall seemed to have had no other purpose. A second poker school was set up in the dining room. Once started, the games never stopped. Players left or joined on a continuing basis, taking breaks for tea in the huge kitchen with its grand AGA stove, or ablutions, or just plain leg stretching. On Saturday morning, my cousin Edward, Uncle Abie and my father had to get back to work but the poker continued. At 1.00 pm they were back again after close of business.

The games continued well into Sunday finally coming to an end on Sunday afternoon, when the travelers had to leave to be ready for their next call on Monday morning. Occasionally, some diehards would stay on until the early hours of Monday morning, when they would finally stagger on to their next stop.

So invasive was the poker game that I think that I took my first steps at the table and my first spoken words were "chip – double".

### **The Influence of Herber House**

Although we were an Orthodox Jewish family, we were not religious. My father and Edward had eschewed religion after the war, having lost much of their family in Lithuania during the Holocaust (we learnt in 1952 that some had in fact escaped and were living in Tel Aviv and Rechovot – their name was anglicized to ‘Duchan’).

One of the results of my time at Herber House and King David was that I forced some religion back into the life at Wesselsnek. At Herber House, I attended daily *Shachrit*, *Mincha* and *Maariv services* and, of course, Shabbat was always an occasion. By the end of 1948, I was versed in the Shabbat ritual so, on returning to Wesselsnek for the year-end holidays, I put appropriate pressure on my parents to become more observant.

My mother tried her best to achieve and maintain a reasonable standard of Jewish life and in all fairness to my father, Edward and Abie, they responded well. Friday nights were changed so that we would now have an early, simple family *Shabbat* dinner in the kitchen, with candles, wine and *Kiddush*. Sometimes a traveler or two would also join us. Although I never had my way with daily prayers, at least we now had Shabbat and we also began to celebrate *Pesach* and *Rosh Hashanah*.

To ensure that there was sufficient meat for sale in the butchery, we would generally slaughter two cattle each Monday to Thursday and three on Friday. Sheep were slaughtered twice weekly. The slaughtering was managed by a huge-muscled mountain of a man named Magamphela, who was quite capable of wrestling the occasional recalcitrant ox to the floor. When I began to insist that our animals be killed by a *shochet*, Edward rose quickly to the challenge. One afternoon, he took us all to the farm, where he dressed Magamphela in a *yarmulke* and a shawl (to serve as a *tallit*) and, reading from his siddur, he performed a little ritual, taught Magamphela a simple Hebrew prayer and, instructing him to always say the prayer before dispatching the animal, proclaimed him Rabbi Magamphela

Of course, I cannot say whether the full ritual was performed when I was not at Wesselsnek, but it clearly satisfied me at the time.

## JEWISH WOMEN IN EARLY JOHANNESBURG

Naomi Musiker

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Most of the early immigrants to the Witwatersrand were unaccompanied males due to the difficult, unsanitary and unpleasant conditions prevalent on the early goldfields. In July 1896, according to the Sanitary Board's first conducted census, there were 6253 Jews in Johannesburg, of whom only 1549 were women. The wives of families generally followed their men-folk to South Africa.

In 1904, the Jewish population of South Africa consisted of 25 864 males and 12 237 females. By 1911, these figures had risen to 27 820 and 19 099 respectively. In 1904 there were 36 more men than there were women in every Jewish group of 100 souls. In 1911, the excess had dropped to just over 18 and by 1918 it had fallen to 11. The sexes thus rapidly approached equality in numbers.<sup>v</sup>

Women frequently had a difficult period of readjustment in their daily routine, particularly those who came from Eastern Europe. Not only did they have to learn a new language but they also had to adapt to new social and cultural patterns. Their greatest need was to attend to family and domestic requirements and, in many cases to assisting their husbands in building up their businesses. Such spare time as they had was taken up with participation in women's benevolent associations. In most cases, these were combined with membership of ladies' synagogue guilds.

In the Victorian era, Jewish women in Johannesburg were obliged to adopt a conventional respectable middle class identity. The true 'lady' was defined as completely subservient to her husband and confined her activities to domestic and family matters. Higher education for girls was not given the same priority as that of boys. Where possible, girls of the upper middle classes were not expected to earn a living, and were preferably only skilled in the social graces of music, deportment and domestic matters.

Women's voluntary work in the charitable and Zionist organisations was of fundamental importance to the operation and welfare of the community as a whole. Their fundraising activities facilitated the operation of the community, sponsored its projects and were the central factor that gave Johannesburg Jewry such a remarkably strong presence and force.

"There are three distinct societies among Johannesburg women", wrote correspondent Miss M C Bruce in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, "the British, the Dutch and the Jewish":

Like the Dutch, Jewish women believe in the bending of the twig, and they keep their young people together by means of many social institutions. The women are bright... and they have an extraordinary influence over their men and their children, on whom they lavish the best possible educational advantages... In a city like that of

Johannesburg where there are many poor Jews, and a large pushing middle class, and a few refined and cultivated people, it is difficult to generalise, but they form an intelligent, thrifty, loyal and law abiding asset.<sup>vi</sup>

Women's philanthropic groups were expected to be 'non-political' and spanned a range of programmes of education and welfare, following patterns established by the Guild of Loyal Women of South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War. The Guild aimed at transcending parochial identities with 'patriotic South African Nationalism'. The Guild established three institutions to support needy working class women and children, the Queen Victoria hospital, the Alexandra Convalescent Home and the Guild Cottage for Destitute Women and Children. The most popular form of women's philanthropy was the informal system of 'home visiting'.

Jewish women generally attempted to follow this trend, as is evident from contemporary writings. In May 1905, the *South African Jewish Chronicle* began a special woman's page, entitled 'Social and Fashionable', and produced in the form of a 'Diary of Jessica', "designed to reflect the lives of women, especially Jewish women in Johannesburg. Her philanthropies are general, her hospitality proverbial: she is a good dresser, smart businesswoman, and her tastes are cosmopolitan. She is interested in all the social and artistic matters of her day".

**Flora Berman**, a founder of the Union of Jewish Women, arrived in Johannesburg in 1906. She later produced a fascinating account of the daily existence of a married upper class Jewish woman in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, extracts from which follow:<sup>vii</sup>

In my trousseau appeared the first ankle-length dresses. Until then, most dresses for grown-ups swept the ground and most of them had a slight train as well, gathering up dust and dirt, impeding walking and rendering the catching of a tram a hazardous venture.

In the days before telephones, supplies for the home were simply arranged. There were daily deliveries of various foodstuffs by the various shopkeepers "At times, a newly arrived Russian Jewish immigrant from Poland or Lithuania would call with eggs, live chickens and non-perishable fruits of the earth, potatoes and onions. He would always willingly replace a cracked or bad egg, not to mention potatoes or onions that had gone moldy".

It was not long before the immigrant arrived in a horse-drawn vehicle, and usually not more than a couple of years before he was replaced by a young son, who explained that Pa had to look after the shop, at the back of which the newly arrived family was housed. When a lady left the environs of her house, she wore a hat and gloves. Until 1907, hats were large and mostly trimmed with ostrich feathers. With the advent of the motor car in 1907, the head hugging style became imperative. It was worn with a large veil that anchored the hat down, preventing not only the hat but the wearer's very head from being blown away.

Roads had not yet been macadamized, except in the heart of the town. Red dust lay inches deep, whirling into dense clouds at the slightest breeze that blew. Whenever it rained, the dust was churned into red mud that clung to delicate fabrics that no amount of washing could remove. Storm water drains had not yet caught up with the needs of the city. It was a common occurrence for a daintily shod lady to have to wade through raging gutters to step into a car or cab. There were no buses in those days and trams drawn by horses moved along at a leisurely pace.

Life between 1906 and 1913 ran along normal lines, and the social scene was gay and light-hearted. Servants, such as ‘nannies’, were recruited from the poorer white members of the community. However, no white servant would perform tasks considered to be ‘kaffir’ work and so “there were natives, men and women in all homes even the poorest. Even in the most modest homes there would be a cook, a washerwoman, a gardener and in some cases a driver, all black” (ibid.). Lighting in the home was done by electricity. Cooking was carried out with coal and firewood.

Life for the married woman was gracious and flowed along on easy lines, but that for the spinster was desperate. Clerical work for women was unknown. Her only means of subsistence lay in the badly paid professions of teaching, music and dress-making. Marriage was therefore a matter of urgency while divorce was considered a disgrace, not only for the couple but for the whole family. The lowly position for spinsters vanished with the onset of World War I, when women came crowding into the business world.

### **Communal Work**

The Chevra Kadisha, formed in 1888, was the earliest Jewish communal organisation. From the outset, it had a Ladies *Messakos* who attended to the final rites of females. This was the first organised service group of Jewish women in Johannesburg.

The **Johannesburg Jewish Ladies’ Benevolent Society** originated in June 1893 as the Johannesburg Jewish Ladies’ Society, attached to the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation. It was formed in response to economic distress in the Jewish population following the depression of 1890-1. Its aim was to assist the Chevra Kadisha in some of its relief work, making donations and arranging benefits that raised impressive amounts of money. The first President was Dinah Joel, who had had considerable experience as President of the Kimberley Philanthropic Society before relocating to Johannesburg. Bella Isaacs, wife of the Reverend Harris Isaacs, succeeded her and held the post until 1899.

Members helped with maternity cases among poor immigrants and made regular weekly visits to the Jewish patients in the Johannesburg Hospital. They conducted free education classes for adult Yiddish speaking immigrants to teach them English and embarked on ‘home visiting’ to widowed women and sick women. They also made loans to poor women to enable them to start businesses. Funding came from voluntary subscribers, who totaled 212 in 1894. In 1898, the society was greatly assisted by a donation from the Dynamite Relief Fund, established by the government after the Braamfontein Dynamite Explosion.

The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) had a bad effect on the philanthropic societies as most of the subscribers and members left Johannesburg for Cape Town and other coastal centres. Some of the members, such as Mary Solomon, joined refugee committees at the coast working to support and care for these immigrant refugees. The President, Rebecca Klagsbrun, was left to struggle on almost single-handedly. She was assisted by Reverend David Wasserzug, who succeeded in making a collection from some of the leading financial houses for the benefit of the Society. Mrs Klagsbrun operated a Soup Kitchen throughout the war, providing for the city poor, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. In order to augment the Society’s funds, a Purim Ball was held in 1901. Simchas Torah balls became a regular fund raising feature of the Society.



By 1903, the Society had established a Dorcas Society, under the guidance of Mrs E. Sasserath, to make and distribute clothes to the poor. In 1906, the Dorcas Society made over 1000 garments, sent chiefly to the SA Jewish Orphanage. The workroom of the Dorcas Society was at first attached to the Fordsburg Shul, moving to new premises in 1930 at the Hebrew High School, opposite the Wolmarans Street Shul.<sup>viii</sup>

The Johannesburg Jewish Ladies' Society was from the outset in the 1890s involved in maternity work, first in the patient's own home and later in the Queen Victoria Hospital. The latter was started in 1904 by the Guild of Loyal Women in a house in End Street, Doornfontein. If a patient was unable to go to hospital, the Society arranged for a nurse to be engaged at a daily fee. By 1913, the Society was dealing with over 200 cases a year, raising its funds from subscriptions of £1 per annum per member, from private collections and from its annual Simchas Torah Ball.

Patients in the hospital were regularly visited and a kosher kitchen started at the hospital and furnished by donations of cutlery and cooking utensils. The work of the Kosher Kitchen was handed over to the Jewish Ladies' Association, to which an annual donation of £10 was promised. At the September 1907 meeting, the name of the society was changed to the **Johannesburg Jewish Women's Benevolent Society**.

In February 1912, the Chevra Kadisha decided to establish the first Jewish old age home or *Moshev Zekinim*, in a house on four stands at the corner of Banket and Smit Streets, Joubert Park. The official name was the Witwatersrand Jewish Aged Home - Beth Moshev Zekinim. Mrs. L Gluckman was appointed the first matron. There were initially twelve residents. The Home was administered by a Ladies' Committee, supervised by Raphael Alexander, president of the Chevra Kadisha and three members of his committee. Mrs. Dora Hillman was chairperson. At a meeting of subscribers held in March 1913, the first elected committee of the home consisted of men. A Ladies' House Committee, chaired by Mrs. Hillman, was elected.

**A Jewish Ladies' Society** was formed at Fordsburg with the following office-bearers: Mrs. Max Langermann as President, Mrs. A Solomon as treasurer and Secretary Mrs. A Jacobs and these ladies, together with their committee, raised £320 towards the furnishing of the Fordsburg Synagogue, erected in 1906 and opened by Max Langermann, President of the Jewish Board of Deputies. In 1913, a fund-raising ball was held, and was a great financial and social success. The Chairlady of the Fordsburg and District Ladies Benevolent Society was Mrs. L. Melman, who laid one of the stones of the Fordsburg Synagogue in 1906. Rachel Zidel, wife of the Reverend Jacob Zidel, was a member of this society for over thirty years and greatly assisted the poor and middle class people who had fallen on bad days.<sup>ix</sup> In 1922, the Fordsburg Synagogue instituted a Memorial Fund in the name of Mrs. R Melman as tribute to her devotion to the cause of Jewish welfare in general and Fordsburg in particular.

**The Johannesburg Jewish Ladies' Association of the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation** was mainly concerned with supplying the needs of Jewish patients at the Johannesburg Hospital. The hospital supplied and fitted out the room for the Kosher Kitchen, some of the food and some of the labour. An annual donation was provided by the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation, while the ladies and the rest of the Jewish community had to raise the remainder. The Chevra Kadisha donated £5 towards the upkeep of the Kitchen, with a further amount for special Passover food as part of the Passover Relief Fund.

The Kosher Kitchen managed well until 1907, despite little support from the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation.

The Jewish Ladies Association also ran a Soup Kitchen. This ceased to function at the end of August 1907 and was replaced by a 'grocery branch' that distributed groceries and provisions to 675 families in twelve months.

By 1908, subscriptions to the Kosher Kitchen had declined to such an extent that the Hospital Board promised an annual maintenance grant of £200, leaving the committee with £160 to find each year. By 1909, the number of patients served with kosher meals had increased to 735. After 1915, the Kosher Kitchen became a well supported enterprise incorporated into the Federation of Synagogues Women's Guilds of South Africa.<sup>x</sup>

### **Jewish Ladies' Communal League of the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation<sup>xi</sup>**

In 1898, the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the synagogue. The celebration took the form of a ball and concert at the Freemason's Hall on 16 November. It was decided that the profits should be used for the formation of a Ladies Communal League to supervise the care of the Vestments of the Synagogue, oversee the Congregation's Hebrew and Religious classes and plan for the future formation of a Kindergarten to serve the community.

On 30 November 1898, Reverend J H Hertz called a meeting of the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation. A total of 39 people assembled, of whom 31 were women. Hertz was perturbed by the social problems of the poorer areas of Johannesburg and by the existence of 'immorality' among the immigrant Jewish population, particularly the white slave trade and prostitution. He pleaded for the formation of a committee to work among poor women and children in the immigrant committee with a programme of education as well as alms. At the same time, the committee should continue to oversee the decoration of the synagogue.

Rabbi Hertz proposed Samuel Goldreich as president of the committee and E M Davis-Marks as Honorary Secretary. All the other members of the committee were women. Financial matters and the right of veto and policy were controlled by the two men on the committee, with Rabbi Hertz as ex-officio adviser.

The women created sub-committees that reported back at monthly meetings. Each month, different pairs of women visited the sick in their homes and in the hospital and tried to find employment for people leaving hospital. Members were expected to find new recruits as subscriptions were a major source of income. Social activities were as important as philanthropic ones, and were used to network and increase membership, share experiences and develop a collective identity.

This was not to Rabbi Hertz's liking, and in 1899 he proposed disbanding the League. This idea was rejected by the ladies, who embarked on a more active programme of community work. They set about raising funds for the synagogue decoration by means of society balls and fetes involving a great deal of organization and hard work. The League women relied heavily on the volunteer work of organisers assisted by domestic labour from their own homes. African women servants did the cooking and other preparations for the dinner dances and fund-raising functions and the cleaning up afterwards. League members were active in selling tickets for society balls, making up rosettes and ordering large amounts of food for

preparation. The Jewish Ladies' Communal League was the major fund-raiser for their synagogue.

In November 1902, the League held a general meeting at the Old Synagogue, President Street, at which Samuel Goldreich, the president, announced that the balance sheet showed an income in 1899 of £200. This had been used for the installation of electric lights in the Synagogue, and for the relief of the poor caught up in the war. It was mentioned at this meeting that a fund for the maintenance and education of Jewish orphans should be established and that hospital visits should be re-started. A new committee was elected, in which Goldreich retained the presidency with Mrs. J Jacobs as vice-president. Subscriptions were fixed at 1 shilling a month. On 3 December, it was decided to hold a fund-raising New Years' Eve ball, which proved a great success.

The League now turned its attention to the South African Jewish Orphanage founded by Rabbi Dr Hertz in 1903. Max Langermann donated £200 and four valuable stands in Kensington for the erection of an orphanage. The League formed a special sub-committee to deal with the orphanage question, assisted by an advisory board.

On 13 July 1903, a house was rented as a temporary orphanage at 51 Pretoria Street Hillbrow and Mrs. Celina Lowenstock was appointed as matron. The SA Jewish Orphanage opened with eight children, including those previously housed at Nazareth House, the Catholic Orphanage in Norwood. Donations included furniture, household utensils and food. The house soon proved too small, and in July 1904 a building was leased at 23 Esselen Street, Hospital Hill. On 23 March 1905, Alice Langermann laid the foundation stone of the building in Kensington and in October, twenty children moved in. The League continued to run the Orphanage until December 1920. In 1915, Mrs. Langermann retired as President, leaving the committee's affairs largely to the vice-president, Mrs. Clare Jacobs.

## **Zionist Activities**

From the outset, women were involved in Zionist work, mainly through men's societies. They performed valuable secretarial tasks and were entrusted with fund raising, particularly distribution and collection of Jewish National Fund (JNF) boxes.

The earliest official women's Zionist organisation in Johannesburg was the Ladies' Zionist Society, formed with the encouragement of Rabbi Hertz and Bernard Jacob Chaimowitz in 1904. Credit for the formation was due to the efforts of two young Lithuanian immigrants, Edith Treisman (later Adelson) and Tilly Michalisky (later Moross) who succeeded in enrolling some 150 members. Tilly Michalisky was the first Chairman while the Joint Secretaries were Miss Katz (later Becker) and Edith Treisman. Mrs. Glaser, a Zionist Socialist who had experience of Zionist work in Europe, also played an important role in the Society. In 1905 Regina Lourie became Chairman with Katie Cohen (later Mrs. Gluckman) as Secretary. Mrs. Gluckman was eventually elected to the executive committee of the S A Zionist Federation in 1928, in recognition of her personal contribution to the Zionism, and from 1936 to 1949 served as chairman of the JNF Department.

The Johannesburg Ladies' Zionist Society made notable progress, attracting many young women from Eastern Europe. By 1905, its membership had grown to 400.<sup>xii</sup> At the first SA Zionist Conference in 1905 in Johannesburg, there were ten women delegates, representing various South African Women's Zionist societies.

After 1905, interest flagged in the Women's Zionist Movement until 1914, when Rabbi J L Landau and his wife, Annie, established the Johannesburg Women's Zionist League with Annie as President. Isabel Salomon was the first Vice Chairman with Cissie Shapiro and Lily Machanik (later Sive) as Joint Honorary Secretaries. Lily Mechanik ran a Young Israel Society in Johannesburg until 1916 and, as juvenile commissioner, became the first woman on the executive committee of the SA Zionist Federation.

Thus it is evident that in all the Jewish communal activities of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, women played a vital role in building up institutions, many of which still exist today. Their role has only recently been acknowledged, particularly by the social historian, Riva Krut and more research remains to be done.<sup>xiii</sup>

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## ISRAEL, THE WEST BANK AND THE 'ONE STATE vs 'TWO STATE' DEBATE

**David Saks**

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*At the beginning of 2010, the author was interviewed by a graduate student at Wits University for a thesis on possible long-term solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Questions posed probed the notion that Jewish settlement in the West Bank has in effect created a 'One State' reality that it is too late to undo, thereby making the 'Two States for Two Peoples' formula for peace unworkable and necessitating a change of focus aimed at the creation of a single, bi-national, unitary state. The interview was followed by a written exchange, in question and answer format, an edited version of which follows.*

***Which solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict do you believe has the best chance of succeeding and bringing about a sustained peace and why is this?***

Ideally, the two Palestinian territories – the West Bank and Gaza – should (by common consent, obviously) be reincorporated into the previous occupying powers, namely Jordan and Egypt. It makes far more sense since those countries are likewise Arab-speaking and Muslim by religion, hence the prospects of a successful merger are much greater. Realistically, this is not on the table. Jordan has expressed no desire to take over the West Bank again and Egypt, not least because of its own concerns of Muslim fundamentalism within its own borders, is positively hostile to the idea.

It goes without saying that if the territories cannot even be incorporated within other Arab-Muslim societies, then amalgamating them with Hebrew speaking, Jewish Israel, especially in light of the bitterly hostile relationship of the past seventy years, is a non-starter.

This leaves achieving Palestinian sovereignty in the above territories as the only realistic option open. The “Two State Solution” envisions the West Bank and Gaza in terms of this becoming one independent state co-existing peacefully alongside Israel. Now that Gaza and the West Bank have effectively split into two mutually antagonistic entities, a de facto ‘Three State Solution’ scenario is emerging.

***Do you believe that a democratic one-state solution is beginning to be viewed as preferable to a two-state solution or a winner-take-all single polity?***

It’s a school of thought within left-leaning academia, where there is an entrenched hostility towards the very idea of a sovereign, Jewish majority State. However, as practical politics it has gained little if any traction. Even the South African government, where there is a profound traditional of hostility towards Israel, accepts the “Two State Solution” as being the only viable one.

It has been more plausibly suggested that some kind of confederal arrangement linking Israel and the territories should be looked at.

***Could one go as far as to say that a bi-national and power-sharing state is the only viable alternative to the continuing conflict?***

No, on the contrary. If it has not even proved possible up until now to achieve the peaceful co-existence of Israelis and Palestinians living alongside one another in their own separate states, how much more so would pitching them together within a single state prove. Actually, given its self evident illogicality, it’s very odd to see the theory even being discussed. No-one proposed the reunifying of Yugoslavia as a solution to all the ethnic violence of a decade ago, nor is ‘One Statism’ being proposed as a solution to the (from a global peace perspective, far more dangerous) India-Pakistan conflict. The reason why the Two State solution hasn’t been implemented essentially comes down to the intensity of Arab-Muslim opposition to a sovereign Jewish presence on ‘their’ land. Peaceful co-existence cannot be achieved, whether in two states and self-evidently not within one, so long as Jews are considered to be an illegitimate, usurping presence that must be fought against without respite until their State is eradicated.

***Why has there been a lack of genuine progress towards the two-state solution as***

***proposed under Oslo? What has prevented its plans from becoming a reality?***

Both parties were to blame for Oslo's failure. On the Israeli side, it took the form of escalating Jewish settlement across the Green Line, which understandably undermined whatever trust they were trying to build with the Palestinians. On the Palestinian's part, anti-Jewish incitement throughout their society and regular acts of terrorism that were either secretly planned or at least tolerated by the Palestinian Authority, only caused the rift to widen. Finally, the Palestinians themselves torpedoed the whole process, first by rejecting Israel's far-reaching peace proposals at Camp David in mid-2000 and then launching, without provocation, the disastrous '2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada'.

***Is a South Africa-type solution possible in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?***

Anything is possible, but it is highly unlikely. Firstly, the two situations are not analogous. In South Africa, there was an intermingled, multi-racial population de facto existing within a single geographic territory, with the ruling white caste constituting a small minority. Physical separation of the races was impossible. It was realized that South Africans had to learn to swim together otherwise they would sink together, and common sense fortunately prevailed. Israel, on the other hand, has a substantial Jewish majority within its official borders. Why would it wish to sacrifice this by amalgamating with a territory mainly comprising non-Jews? If the majority of South Africans had been white, they certainly would not have agreed to their country joining up with, say, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, no matter how much they were assured of equal and fair treatment.

Another crucial difference is in the differing nature of the political visions of black South Africans and Palestinians. The black majority here was committed to a non-racial society that would "belong to all who live in it" and produced leaders who fought for equality and democracy, not racial vengeance and the replacing of one group's dominance with that of another. The Palestinian vision, whether in its Arabist ethnic form as encapsulated by the Palestinian National Covenant or its religious Islamist manifestation, as shown by the Hamas Charter, is rejectionist and victory directed, the ultimate aim being to establish a dominant Arab-Islamic entity in place of Jewish Israel. Had the liberation movements in this country adopted a similarly zero-sum approach to the 'Struggle', no peaceful transition to democracy would, or could, have taken place.

***Are there certain segments of the population that support a forced transfer of Palestinians out of Israel and the occupied territories? Could this be a viable alternative?***

Yes, one hears rumbles of this from time to time from the fringes of the Israeli far right, but I doubt whether even they seriously envisage such a policy being carried out in practical terms. Apart from the moral implications of what would essentially be a cold-blooded policy of mass ethnic cleansing, the logistical difficulties of physically uprooting millions of people are insurmountable.

Referring to Arabs within Israel as 'Palestinians' is incorrect, however. They are Israelis no less than Jews (and Christians etc.) are.

***If we remain in the current deadlock, what is likely to happen? Is a third intifada a threat?***

I don't think so. Muammar Abbas is a pragmatist, as are the other members of his government. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada brought much suffering and destruction to the Palestinian population, with very little if anything to show for it, and he has said so. In the last couple of years, the trend with regard to the West Bank has been encouraging. Israeli and Palestinian security personnel, with important input from the US, cooperate on security matters, which is reflected in the dramatic dropping off to almost nothing in terrorist violence and counter-violence. Because of this, a process of normalization is taking place, most visible in the dismantling of checkpoints and opening of roads to all. The Palestinian economy is also growing dramatically, with much input from the Israeli side. That much remains to be done – many restrictive laws remain in place, mainly for the benefit and protection of the Jewish settlers, and this has to remain a focus when pushing for changes on the ground – is undeniable. It is further of concern that while direct violence is no longer being incited and planned, the demonisation of Jews and Israel and refusal to accept Israel's legitimacy throughout Palestinian society continues apace.

The Gaza situation is another story. However, since the population there is no longer under Israeli rule, there can be no popular uprising against it. It remains to be seen if the harsh lessons learned during last year's Operation Cast Lead prove enduring in dissuading the Hamas leadership from relaunching its missile attacks.

***How would a one-state solution operate? What would its implications be? How would such a state function?***

It would not be dissimilar to the SA situation post-1994. At the very least, there would have to be an entrenched Bill of Rights, complete judicial independence and the upholding of all basic democratic freedoms, including academic, media and NGO independence and complete non-discrimination when it comes to religious practice. Palestinian society is frankly not ready for this. It is religiously very conservative (e.g. it criminalizes homosexuality, converting to a faith other than Islam, any discourse considered to be 'blasphemous' etc) and is authoritarian, persecuting political dissidents and executing suspected traitors. Israel is the mirror image of all this, having much more in common with the secular Western democracies.

***What are the positive aspects of a one-state solution?***

Assuming a South African 'miracle' somehow emerged, it would mean an end to conflict and all the tragedy that entails, the lifting of all current restrictions on the Palestinian population, the corresponding freedom of Jews to travel and live in any part of 'Eretz Yisrael' that they choose to, without being reviled and threatened as 'illegal settlers', the extension of Israel's impressive economic success to the Palestinian territories and from there throughout the Middle East region – theoretically, all this is possible.

***What are the negative aspects of a one-state solution?***

It is a reality that ethnic, and especially deeply-held religious antagonisms lead either to

balkanization, that is the breaking up of countries into distinct new sovereign entities where one or another religio-national grouping is dominant, or persistent civil war (e.g. the Kurdish separatist movement in Turkey, the war in Chechnya etc). Sometimes, unfortunately, the only realistic alternative is to keep warring factions apart from one another. This was in part the thinking that led to the UN partition of Palestine in 1947 as well as the break-up of India that same year. Given the recent history of intense antagonism between Israel Jews and Arab Muslims, not to mention the profound political and cultural differences noted above, any attempt to coexist within a single binational state would violently unravel almost immediately. (If two dogs are fighting, who in his right mind shoves them both into the same cage to force them to get along? One will simply kill the other, or both will be ripped to shreds).

***Is there a way in which the Israeli Jewish population opposition to a one state solution could be diminished? What would their likely demands be?***

For Israel Jews (and a great many Israeli Arabs, particularly Christians, are also unlikely to necessarily wish to amalgamate with a still economically backward, anti-democratic Palestine) there would have at the very least to be a virtual revolution in Palestinian attitudes towards Jews, Zionism and Israel. The demonisation of Jews, denigration of Judaism, brazen denial of Jewish history and glorification of ‘martyrs’ who sacrificed themselves in killing Israeli civilians that right now dominates the way Palestinians are taught to see the world has to completely overturned. Next, the relatively peaceful conditions between Israel and the West Bank need to be maintained and firmed up over a period of several years. Facts on the ground are also important, such as increased economic cooperation. Finally, instead of demanding that all the settlements be dismantled and their Jewish inhabitants sent back across the border, the Palestinians should accept them as fellow citizens. All this would help assuage understandable Jewish fears and foster an environment where Jews and Arabs can indeed co-exist, notwithstanding their differences.

***Is there a chance that a one state solution could lead to the Palestinians becoming a permanent underclass given the far stronger institutional, educational and economic development of the Israeli-Jewish sector?***

No. Obviously, the Israeli-Jewish sector would have a head start, but under conditions of equality that would prevail in a theoretical democratic single state, the gaps would decrease naturally over time.

***Could the Palestinian diaspora play a vital role in the nation-building process?***

Right now, aside from those in Jordan, the 1948 refugees and their descendants are being kept in a state of limbo by their host countries, denied citizenship rights and all that entails.

Were a binational Israeli-Palestinian state to come into being, there would be no reason for the host Arab countries to continue maintaining this underclass as human title deeds to ‘stolen’ Arab land. The Palestinians abroad would in most cases then simply be absorbed into their host countries, in which the great majority was in any case born.



***Would such a one state solution win support of the international community?***

It has not up until now and most likely will not since it is so impractical and is at present rejected not just by most Israelis but by a substantial majority of Palestinians themselves. Anyway, it's not for the international community to make the decision. Its up to Israelis and Palestinians themselves to determine whether or not to cast in their lots with one another.

***What would Palestinian demands most likely be if a one-state solution was put forward and what would their reservations be?***

I'd imagine non-negotiable equality and the extension of the 'Right of Return' to the 1948 refugees and their descendants would be part of the mix.

Palestinians, too, have reservations about losing their identity and compromising their particular values by amalgamating with a foreign population. For them, near-nudity on a Tel Aviv beach, parliamentarians who opine that David and Jonathan were homosexuals, academics who teach that all the prophets, including Mohammed, were unbalanced fabricators, gay liberation marches in Jerusalem and all other manifestations of the 'freedom of expression' principle that operates in Israel are anathema.

***Do you believe that the one-state solution is now the only viable situation under democratic international law?***

By no means. I see no necessity for the whole of Israel and the whole of the territories to meld into one because the two-state solution hasn't worked, for the reasons outlined above. I do see the necessity of the Jewish presence in the West Bank being regularized, either through the incorporation of the Jewish population into the general population or through their return to Israel. What is unsustainable is the continuation of a situation where extraordinary security measures are needed to protect the Jewish WB minority, to the detriment of the majority population.

**Settlements**

***Are the settlement policies that are being followed by the Israeli government making a two-state solution unviable by eroding the basis of a future Palestinian state?***

Not necessarily in the long term. Currently, the problem with settlements is that Israel is compelled to implement extraordinary security measures to protect them (separation fences, checkpoints, separate roads etc) since their presence is so very unwelcome to the Palestinian majority. These measures do indeed put severe limits on Palestinian sovereignty. The solution is for the Palestinians to accept the presence of a small Jewish minority within its borders, whose status would be no less (and no more, as is currently the case) than that of the rest of the population. The settlers, for their part, would have to accept that they are now Palestinian, not Israeli citizens, and that they would not enjoy any special privileges.

I like to use the South West Africa/Namibia example when making this point. In demanding its independence from South Africa, Namibians did not insist that whites who had settled their under South African rule be kicked out. On the contrary, it was never a question that

these would be regarded as full, equal citizens of the newly independent Namibia.

The problem with the West Bank is that the antagonism between the two groups is so intense – lethally so – that such a scenario looks utopian at present.

***Do you think that anyone is capable of dismantling the settlements? Is there a chance that this may trigger a civil war within Israel?***

Some 300 000 Israeli Jews now live across the Green Line. There is no way they will ever be uprooted, nor, in my view, should they be. Those settlements close to Israel's borders should be absorbed into Israel (appropriate land swaps could come into the equation here) while where this is not feasible, they must be incorporated into the Palestinian state.

***If settlement expansion continues and the construction of the security barrier continues, would this lead to a single, undemocratic entity where Israel rules over a Palestinian majority?***

The security barrier really strengthens the reality of two states since it creates a de facto border. Jewish cross-border settlement does on the face of it cause a blurring of the distinction through intermingling the two populations. However, this admixture only takes place in a fairly limited geographical area. It therefore does not necessitate the whole of Israel and the whole of the West Bank to amalgamate since their populations are not, in fact, already inextricably intermingled as was the case in South Africa. Only that area along the border where the population is mixed should be incorporated into the West Bank (theoretically, it could also be incorporated into Israel, with the Palestinian element becoming Israeli citizens).

To show that it is serious about wanting the West Bank to achieve independence, Israel needs to stop any more of its citizens moving across the border. It must further continue working constantly with the Palestinian side to further conditions whereby the relationship can be normalized. This is working quite well at present, with most checkpoints having been dismantled, roads being opened and the route of the security barrier moved on a number of occasions. Much more needs to be done, of course, but so long as current peaceful conditions prevail, incremental normalization can and will happen.

***Can it be said that the settlements have in fact created an irreversible situation and have caused people to already be living in a bi-national situation?***

Again, this is true only for the West Bank itself. It does not follow that the whole of Israel must be regarded as inextricably joined with the West Bank simply because a number of Israeli citizens have settled across the border. Instead, it means that the population of the Palestinian state will not be homogeneously Arab and Muslim but will have a small Jewish minority as well (just as Israel, while being predominantly Jewish, consists of a fairly sizable non-Jewish minority).

What is irreversible is the settler presence, which cannot be uprooted at this stage.

***How has the separation barrier further led to the demise of a possible two state solution and can it be viewed as confirmation of the borders Israel has in mind for a future Palestinian state?***

As noted above, the presence of a physical barrier roughly following the 1967 borders concretizes and strengthens the reality of two distinct states rather than the reverse. Where the fence cuts into lands beyond the 1967 border, disrupting normal day to day Palestinian life is the heart of the problem. There is no way this section of the fence can be accepted as a permanent border. With the re-establishment of a lasting peace situation, those sections of the fence must be moved or dismantled altogether. It is always important to remember that the fence did not exist prior to the launch of the sustained terrorism campaign from September 2000, in which Jewish settlers were ruthlessly targeted.

***What do you think of the comments made by John Dugard that since the declaration of the state of Israel over 60 years ago it has been in violation of international law?***

When international law is applied in a selective and discriminatory manner, with the most rights-delinquent countries hijacking it to target its designated enemies, then what you have is not international law but international lynch law. Dugard himself is a noted anti-Israel activist who has taken part in UN initiatives aimed at targeting Israel for exclusive condemnation. His views must be seen in this context.

***Given Israel's identification as the state of the Jewish people, would Jewish ethnocentrism be a major deterrent to a one-state solution? Could this be overcome?***

Most Middle Eastern and North African countries defines themselves in ethnic (Arab) or religious (Muslim) terms, or both. The two main Palestinian factions themselves define themselves as either Arab (Fatah) or Islamist (Hamas). Israel similarly defines itself in ethno-religious terms. This is not a problem, so long as a) the majority of the population buy into that definition and b) minority groups are not discriminated against. In Israel's case, there is majority support for the concept, and while a degree of discrimination against the non-Jewish minority (within Israel proper) does unfortunately exist and must be addressed, it is much milder than discrimination against religious, and sometimes ethnic (e.g. Kurds in Syria) minorities that is prevalent elsewhere in the region. In short, I would say that Palestinian ethnic and religious exclusivity is far more of an obstacle to any putative 'one state' scenario than its Jewish counterpart.

***Can the de facto Israel state even be classified as a Jewish state as it stands now? It can be said that it is neither Jewish nor democratic because of the nature of the occupation and the status of the millions of Palestinians who live under it.***

Were the West Bank to be formally annexed, without its citizens being accorded full democratic rights, that would certainly be true. To repeat, so long as the majority of Israel's citizens wish to define their country as a 'Jewish State' (what that actually means would be subject to a range of opinions), then there is no problem.

***If Israel were to choose a state that was either non-Jewish or undemocratic, what do you***

**believe it would choose?**

It would be a disaster if it came down to there being only those two choices. Theoretically, a South Africa-style compromise in which a mixed population coexists equally within a single territory would not be the end of the world. The problem is that the Arab-Islamic attitude towards the re-established Jewish presence in what is regarded as exclusively their domain is characterized by so implacable a degree of antagonism that Israeli Jews could never risk surrendering their sovereignty and trusting that everything will work out for the best. On the other hand, ending up as a country in which half the population are disenfranchised would also be a disaster. There would be a situation of permanent conflict, as happened in South Africa. That is why even the Israeli right has largely accepted the reality that the West Bank will have to be surrendered in the end.

## CHANUKAH - WHY A FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS?

Gwynne Schrire

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Chanukah has another name - the Festival of Lights - and if you are lucky enough to walk around the streets of Jerusalem on Chanukah evenings, you can certainly see why. Everywhere, the lights of *chanukiot* are winking and twinkling at you - some shining from behind locked glass panels built into the walls of the houses. Here in the Diaspora, this is not common because of a *halachic* decision in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century that the lamp could be placed inside if there was any danger (from *goyim* - or *ganovim*?).

Why is the holiday called the 'Festival of Lights'? Certainly, we light lights - usually candles - 44 in all over the eight days in candlesticks called *chanukiot*. The latter date back to the Talmudic period and probably developed from the early clay oil lamps. Instead of having one spout, these special lamps had eight spouts for eight wicks and looked rather like an eight-toed foot. Another kind of *chanukiah* from the same period found in a Jerusalem cave is a rectangular grooved stone. There has been a remarkable continuity in this design as not only has this style been found in 12<sup>th</sup> Century France, but also in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Yemen and 19<sup>th</sup> Century North African lamps.

As well as these clay and stone *chanukiot*, metal ones were also used in Talmudic times. A bronze one from Babylon, dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE, exists. Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg (13<sup>th</sup> Century) would not use a *chanukiah* of clay and his teacher used a metal one which would hang on his door. When it became dangerous to place these outside the home and the custom of keeping them inside was adopted, their shape changed. A back wall was added and as well as a hook for hanging. This type developed in Spain, the earliest preserved one dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Some Mediaeval French and German *chanukiot* dating between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries have survived. These are usually bronze, with a back plate. This design spread around the Mediterranean, reaching Eastern Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. The Poles added legs to the back wall so that the lamp could stand on a table.

German Jews were resistant to Spanish fashions. They preferred to use hanging lamps in the form of a star or separate metal vessels like a cup or a chair, adding a new one each day, or an eight-branched standing menorah. Not many early German *chanukiot* survive as they were

confiscated during various wars to reappear, melted down, as guns or bullets. *Chanukiot* have been made in pottery, stone, glass, ceramic, brass, silver, pewter - but surely none have been as precious as the one made in a concentration camp from carefully hoarded potatoes.

Originally, oil was used for light. Candles came into use in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, although the Mediterranean and North African countries continued to burn vegetable oil. Necessity is the mother of invention. During the 1948 War of Independence, soldiers near Latrun burnt rifle grease in their *chanukiah*.

Until 1948, Chanukah was the only festival based on a datable historical story - 25 Kislev, 164 BCE. A very exciting story it is too, one of bravery and rebellion, of a small band determined to restore freedom of religion and of a mighty army overthrown. However, the story as it appears in the two Books of Maccabee does not help to answer the initial question about why the festival is called the 'Festival of Lights', and indeed does not even mention lighting *chanukiot*. It mentions the cleansing of the Temple and the lighting of the menorah, but that was just part of the daily Temple ritual. It talks of celebrating the event with gladness like Succoth - but we do not light lights on Succoth! The story of the miracle of the cruse of oil only developed years later. As there was only one cruse of oil, why observe a festival of 'lights'? Would not a festival of 'a light' be more appropriate, using one large candle like a giant *yortzeit* candle designed to burn for eight days?

When Josephus described the festival two hundred years later, he called it the 'Festival of Lights', not Chanukah. He explained the name not in terms of lighting *chanukkiot* but that the right to serve G-d had come like a sudden light.

His explanation does not shed much light on the problem.

The first reference to lighting a *chanukiah* comes in a *baraita* regarding a discussion between Hillel and Shammai over the right way to light it. This indicates that by the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BCE, the practice formed part of the festival. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE, sages had said that the candelabra of the Hasmoneans were not made of gold, and in another *baraita* the miracle of the cruse of oil had come to light.

The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* says that "all these stories seem to be nothing but legends and the authenticity of the 'oil cruse' story has already been questioned in the Middle Ages". Why, then, the story and why the name "Festival of Lights"?

It is very possible that the legend of the cruse of oil lasting eight days developed during Roman times to give a religious cover to what was in essence a nationalistic festival celebrating the overthrow of a conqueror and the re-establishment of Jewish independence and religious freedom. Such themes would certainly not have been acceptable to the Romans, who would most likely have banned its celebration.

However, the name 'Festival of Lights' used for this holiday by Josephus would have been most acceptable to the Romans because, being based in Europe, they were well aware of the festivals of lights common at this time in midwinter, in the frozen wastes in the Northern Hemisphere. There, people worshipped the sun and wanted to ensure in the long dark winter that the sun would be reborn to provide another warm and fruitful summer. Fires were lit in December and priests would scan the sky to announce the rebirth of the sun god with joyous celebrations. At this time Rome also celebrated, with a ten day Saturnalia. The lighting of a

progressively stronger light as the holiday of Chanukah progressed, using a candle called a *shamash* (which could have also stood for *shemesh* - the sun) might certainly have been interpreted by the Romans as a quaint Festival of Lights similar to the other midwinter festivals being observed by their other conquered peoples.

Only the Jews would have been aware that by lighting the candles, they were reaffirming their belief in the power of their G-d who had helped them to overthrow one conqueror and, by doing so, they were fanning the flames of their desire to try again.

Thus the name 'Festival of Lights' adds another dimension to the festival of Chanukah, tapping as it does into other traditions, now long forgotten, belonging to long forgotten peoples.

*Am Yisrael Chai*, and *chagim* like Chanukah have helped to preserve the Jews as a nation.

## **A FINE ROMANCE: ROSIE BLACK & MICKEY MOYLAN**

**Ann Rabinowitz**

*Many times, we only hear the dry stories that records can tell us of our ancestors' lives. Their everyday troubles and turmoil are lost to us as they all too often have been passed on. It is just such a real life story that follows, one set in a time between the World Wars when Jewish immigrants lived in decaying inner city slums in Britain's industrial cities and were in the process of moving out into more livable neighborhoods.*

Tears of sorrow greeted her at the beginning of her life, as Rosie Black was just a babe when her parents died, and followed her to the inevitable end of it. It was not unusual in those days for young parents, as well as their children, to perish of diseases that today would be easily controlled by medication, good living conditions and proper diet. Those immigrant families who lived in the slums of Manchester, as Rosie's parents had, worked hard and had little left for essentials, never mind luxuries of any sort. It was not a kind or gentle life by any means.

A very fortunate orphan was Rosie Black, as she did not have to linger in an orphanage as other children left bereft of relatives did. She was adopted soon afterwards by the family of Rabbi Cohen, who lived on Harris Street in Manchester's Strangeways district. There, she was brought up in a strict Orthodox environment as the daughter of a rabbi, growing up into a beautiful and lively girl. Her family was poor by today's standards, but they had the basics and got by, with their religion as their spiritual support in times of need.

Young Rosie had many friends, amongst them, my mother's two older sisters, Ada and Sadie. They were neighbors as my family lived in the next street over at 19 Cheetwood Street. They all went to school together and were pals throughout their growing up years.

The girls reached maturity in an era when social and religious barriers were breaking down due to World War I. The fact that women were now in the workforce in the factories and other commercial places changed how they were treated and accepted in society. They dressed in a modern fashion, spoke the latest lingo and went out to places and did things that their grandmothers, or even mothers, would probably not have approved of in their time.

Manchester's streets were diversely populated, with Jews and gentiles intermixing to an extent not done in the past. There were occasions where mixed marriages occurred, and other untoward things as well. It was a period during which people of different social classes often interacted and enjoyed each other's company, especially in public venues such as the dance halls, theaters and the movies. These venues provided an easy means of finding glamour, excitement and romance.

Jewish girls and boys were no different from others in Manchester. They participated in these public activities with much pleasure and interest, even though these things were far removed from the religiosity and backstreet houses, without indoor plumbing or electricity, that most shared in the slums they came from.

This novel and fascinating new world opened up new avenues of adventure, especially to the girls of the slums, and Rosie was no different. Despite her strict religious upbringing, she would sneak out and go dancing at the popular Ritz Ballroom with her friends. There, she became well-known for her excellent dancing skills, grace and beauty. She won prizes for her dancing and attracted the best partners. As a consequence, she eventually met a very charming Irishman, a popular exhibition dancer named Mickey Moylan, originally from Dublin, Ireland.

It was love at first sight and a fine romance, at least for Rosie. The two became successful exhibition dancing partners and won numerous competitions across the county of Lancashire, in places outside Manchester such as Blackpool and Southport. Their popularity soared wherever they went on the dancing circuit.

As a result, Rosie soon forgot her strict upbringing entirely and had intimate relations with her partner. Little more than a teenager, at the time, she became pregnant and was therefore forced to marry Moylan. He was not happy at this unexpected turn of events as he wanted to be carefree and unattached. Little did he think when he started his relationship with Rosie that he would be stuck with marrying a Jewish girl, and pregnant at that.

Her family was horrified at this turn of events; especially when Moylan demanded that she convert and raise their child as a Catholic. Totally besotted with Mickey, Rosie readily accommodated him and his family's wishes and took instructions to become a Catholic. Her religious family disowned her as a result.

Little knowing what she was getting into, Rosie moved in with Mickey's large family. She ended up being the navvy and scullery maid for them all. She was forced to take a fulltime job in the daytime, took care of her baby son in the evening and then had to slave over her husband's family as well. It was not the life she was accustomed to or thought she would have one day. However, she loved Moylan with all her heart and stuck it out as she could not go back to her family; in any case, as they had already sat *Shiva* for her.

In those infrequent moments of free time that she had, she would escape the drudgery of her life and come over to visit her girlhood friends, my aunts, and sit for a while to chat and to knit. She was always knitting sweaters, caps and mittens, all for her beloved baby; it was her relaxation and saving grace.

Eventually, Moylan decided to seek greener pastures and left Manchester for his native Dublin with Rosie and their son in tow. She was pregnant again and shortly afterwards had a



baby daughter. In Dublin, Moylan set her up in a jewelry store-cum-pawn shop. The choice of the store was by no means an accident. As it so happened, this charming and debonair Irishman was something of a confirmed jewel thief and all-round *gonif* and used the store to fence his loot.

Moylan had a set routine. He would come in every day, bring in the loot and then later in the day return to take all the money from the till. This left Rosie and their two young children, Michael and Patricia, with hardly a farthing to survive on. If she did not cooperate, withheld any of the takings to use for food or not make the requisite amount of money he thought she should, he would beat her soundly. There was many an occasion when she and the children were left with nothing to eat.

In times of dire need, Rosie would implore my mother's sister Sadie, who now lived in Dublin too, to give her some money or food to help her carry on. This Sadie did with a heavy heart as she saw how her friend was suffering and was continually degraded by her abusive criminal of a husband. She wondered, how had a young and beautiful Jewish girl allowed herself to be brought so low?

Rosie's life had devolved into a day-to-day struggle for survival. Her children came to hate her too, although they did not hate their father, who certainly merited such hatred. In part, their hatred of her sprung from her Jewish origins, which they denied and could not come to terms with. She had made the ultimate sacrifice and given up her religion to raise two children who only hated her for it.

Moylan by this time had long before run off to London with one of his own kind, a kept woman he had taken from off the streets. There, in the British capital, he pursued smuggling, gunrunning and other sundry criminal activities. He was an opportunist and took whatever was going that he could make some money off of. It was said, in private, that he was connected somehow with Aristotle Onassis and his gun-runners and perhaps the IRA. He was an urban legend of sorts, talked about in whispers, with stories of his escapades making the rounds in polite company.

Surprisingly, one night he turned up in Dublin at my Aunt's house on Harold's Cross Road. He was armed to the teeth and told my uncle that he was on the run from the Garda Síochána and needed a place to hide. He threatened that if he did not cooperate, he would kill the entire family. My uncle, fearing the worst, put him in the attic at the top of the house, the attic where, as a child, I would later read and enjoy quiet moments.

The fugitive stayed for three days before he was willing to leave. During this time, the family were nervous wrecks, fearing that he would do something or the Gardai would come and someone would get injured. Eventually, he left as silently as he had come, during the night, and was never caught. Fortunately for my family, they never saw him again either.

Finally, after years of deprivation and hardship, her beauty and grace long gone, Rosie became fatally ill from consumption. This disease, which was so rampant amongst the poor, had come to haunt her as a result of the damp and dirty places she had been forced to live in due to lack of proper support from her husband. Her children had, by this time, all but abandoned her to her fate.

As she lay on her death bed, the fury of the consumption upon her body and the battle against it all but lost, she begged for my Aunt Sadie to be called. Sadie came immediately to bid her friend a bittersweet farewell. She hoped to give her what comfort she could as she lingered in the damp and moldy coldwater flat in the poorest section of Dublin.

As she lay there, Rosie used the last of her strength to tell my Aunt Sadie that she wanted a priest to give her the last rites and have a mass said for the repose of her soul. My Aunt was thoroughly appalled at this unexpected request. It was the last straw. She had expected to hear that Rosie wanted to repudiate her old life, which had given her so much pain. Then, she thought, Rosie would ask for a rabbi to be at her side at the end. After that, perhaps, she would then request to be laid to rest in a Jewish burial ground.

Since that was not to be the case, Sadie thought the situation over calmly. She realized that perhaps Rosie's adopted religion was not something she took lightly. Neither did she adhere to it only to please her husband and his family. She truly believed in it. It appeared to be the only tangible thing she had left after a life of destitution and abuse. Why deny her this last consolation? The priest was called, the rites were given, and Rosie went peacefully out into that good night that all must face in the end.

Occasionally, during the years that followed, my Aunt would see the Moylan children, now adults, strutting about the Dublin quays as bold as brass and stamped in the image of their benighted father. It was then that she would again ponder the sad fate of her friend, Rosie Black, the poor and beautiful Jewish orphan, who had met such a bad end. The poignant memories of their childhood and later adulthood would assail her. She would then weep a bit to think of how far from a fine romance her life had turned out to be.

## **TISHA B'AV AND JEWISH POWER**

**Adam Levick**

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*"People resent the Jews for having emerged from their immemorial weakness and fearlessly resorted to force. They thereby betrayed the mission that history had assigned to them – being a people...that did not get tangled up in the obtuse narrowness of the nation-state."*

**Pascal Bruckner, *The Tyranny of Guilt***

Tisha B'Av is a day of mourning commemorating the many tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people, a number of which coincidentally have occurred on the same date in the Hebrew calendar. Primarily, Tisha B'Av commemorates the destruction of the first and second Temples, both of which were destroyed on the ninth of Av. On this day, however, we reflect also on the many other tragedies that befell the Jewish people, from the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 to the mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto (both of the latter also occurred on 9 Av).

Like many in Jerusalem, I spent some time on Tisha B'Av evening at the Kotel reflecting on these tragedies. But, I also could not help but view this painful annual recollection of suffering and catastrophe in the context of the Jewish community's often ambivalent relationship with power, and my new citizenship in the modern Jewish state, a nation often forced to exercise power in order to prevent additional tragedies from befalling the Jewish people.

Indeed, Israel's creation can be seen as a direct response to these tragedies, an attempt to turn history around, to act instead of being acted upon. Whether defending itself in war, or aiding/rescuing endangered Jewish communities around the world, the Jewish collective has at its disposal, for the first time in over 2000 years, a state apparatus with the means - logistically, politically, diplomatically, and militarily - to protect its interests, just as other people organized in nation-states have had through the ages.

However, with this organized exercise of power comes a price. Any exertion of power, any control over your own fate, inevitably carries with it a burden, the loss of a kind of innocence that is often projected upon people perceived to be powerless. It is a burden that many Jews seem unwilling or unable to bear.

Israeli military power (exercised against terrorism and small scale regional threats, and in actual wars against state actors, and its territorial repercussions), and the relative success and political power of Jewish communities in the West – as well as the influence of a broader political culture which selectively eschews particularistic moral sympathies which fall on the wrong side of the arbitrary post-colonial divide – seems to instil in many a loss of identification with their fellow Jews. This chasm often finds expression in the need to identify in a way uniquely separate from such ethnocentric, seemingly crude, expressions of political and military power. Many Jews today find it more ethically comforting to identify with non-Jewish 'progressive' causes than with having to continually defend a state (one representing a very particular identity) in all the complexities and compromises that are invariably associated with even the most progressive national enterprises.

Before the birth of the modern Jewish state, the German-Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, in his pre-Holocaust book *The Star of Redemption*, expressed his belief that a return to Israel would embroil the Jews into a worldly history they should eschew. He viewed Judaism as a supra-historical entity, whose importance lies in the fact that it is not political but presents a spiritual ideal only. He saw the creation of a nation-state as a blow to the Jewish ideal of an apolitical spiritual life.

From the recent revival of *Mussar* (and other similar movements which aspire to furthering individual Jewish ethical and spiritual development) to the progressive mantra of "*Tikkun Olam*" (which views seeking "social justice" and performing acts of charity as the greatest expression of Jewish devotion), one sees this recurring Jewish tendency to pay greater attention to their own moral performance and good deeds than to the nitty-gritty, everyday, morally unglamorous, necessities of collective survival. It is an inclination that writer Ruth Wisse characterizes as "moral solipsism."

While personal spiritual improvement is indeed admirable, as is the desire to tend to the needs of "the other" (such as by feeding the hungry or protecting the environment), it can also represent a political pathology – a moral escapism rooted in a wilful blindness to the undeniable political lessons of our peoples' history. Wisse, in her book *Jews and Power*,

argues that, historically, Jews, in displaying the resilience necessary to survive in exile, and not burdened by the weight of a military, believed they could pursue their mission as a “light unto the nations” on a purely moral plane. She demonstrates how, in fact, perpetual political weakness increased Jews’ vulnerability to scapegoating and violence, as it unwittingly goaded power-seeking nations to cast them as perpetual targets.

Throughout their pre-state history, Jews inhabited a potentially precarious position, ever exposed to the whims of rulers and the resentment of the populace. Their trust in God as the absolute arbiter of history allowed them to endure the unimaginable indignities of their situation, and to turn inward to concentrate on their own moral excellence. Wisse concludes that “Jews who endured the powerlessness of exile were in danger of mistaking it for a requirement of Jewish life or, worse, for a Jewish ideal.”

Indeed, some Jews I have known express their disapproval of Israel, or the Jewish community at large, by lamenting this newly acquired capacity to exercise political and military power by exclaiming that (with a tone that almost approaches longing), “Jews have always been the underdog, never the powerful.” Such Jews almost seem to have a fetish-like view of this weakness – their people’s historic lack of agency – and, in so doing, fail to see the role that such powerlessness has played in the suffering that has befallen Jews through the ages.

Yes, with national sovereignty there is a price that has to be paid in terms of responsibility for the occasional infliction of human suffering (even if unintentional) that invariably occurs as the result of even the most responsible and judicious use of national power. But in the lives of individual adults, as in the lives of nations, rarely is there the luxury of making choices that allow one to live a life of pristine innocence, nor one which offers decisions that will result in perfect justice for all concerned. Rather, with every serious decision in front of her, Israel must carefully weigh the costs and benefits of various possible acts and try to make the decision that will likely result in the most positive outcome, not only in the present, but also taking into account how such actions will affect the safety and well-being of future generations of Israelis, and the broader Jewish community, as well.

Israel has a profound responsibility in carrying out the arduous, thankless – but, ethically necessary – task of collective self-defence (a Zionist vision which Theodore Herzl referred to as “The Guardian of the Jews”). For Israel, in an era replete with concrete physical threats by state and non-state actors – as well as, less quantifiable, but no less dangerous, delegitimization campaigns by loosely connected political networks – an unapologetic and fiercely determined self-defence is an urgent moral duty.

Protecting yourself, your family, your community, and your nation from potential harm is consistent with the highest Jewish ethical standards. It is an idea the Jewish community must take seriously while lamenting the suffering of so many throughout our history on Tisha B’Av.

## THE BLOSSOMING

Shulamit Kagan

*Shulamit Kagan, a clinical psychologist, is an Israeli-born Hebrew scholar with a special interest in Hebrew poetry. She has been a regular contributor to Jewish Affairs over many years.*

A loud wailing filled the air and after that the loud weeping of his mother and the soft weeping of his sister. The doctor came out to the balcony and laid a hand on Yakov's shoulder. He stood still as if perplexed and then returned to the room, where his father's body was being laid out on the floor. Somebody covered the body with a sheet and lit candles around it.

Yakov tried to imagine his father's voice, serene at last, but in front of his eyes was the image of the living father – the sad eyes, tight mouth, the brow wrinkle as if trying to solve a difficult problem. Yakov felt as if there was a heavy stone in his heart. If he could only weep, he thought, he would feel better. He screwed up his face to force a cry but nothing happened. His lips moved voicelessly, "what will become of me? Father in heaven, what will become of me?"

Rivkah and Sander Chaikin were nearly middle aged when they brought two children into the world. Yakov was two years younger than his sister and completely different. He was small,

smaller than the average 16 year-old. He had a chilled face, his skin was clear and soft like the skin of a girl and his brown-black eyes were framed by long black lashes.

“How beautiful he is!” people used to say behind his back but often within his ear shot, “what a pity he is not a girl”. This remark used to cause Yakov much sorrow, especially when his manhood started torturing him at night.

Sander loved his children very much, but like many fathers he expressed his love by nagging, criticizing and fault finding. He so wanted his children to have the success that had eluded him; he so wanted them to have what he did not have. However, in doing so he prevented them from enjoying the only thing that life gives to every child – childhood.

Yakov’s sister fitted herself in with her father’s demands. She excelled at school, behaved politely and quietly and generally pleased everyone. Yakov, on the other hand, rebelled. It seemed that all the *joie de vivre* that was lacking in the family was given to him. He did not listen in the class, did not do his homework and passed from class to class by the skin of his teeth. Worse than that, there was not a prank or a practical joke in the school that he was not in some way involved in. Day in and day out his father would repeat his monotonous reprimand, “*Sheigetz*, do you want to become a swine herd? When will you become a *mentsch*? What will become of you?” His mother used to say nothing but just look at her son with sad eyes. This look, more than the father’s rebuke, caused Yakov to regret his behavior and take a decision to mend his ways. This did not last long. He soon reverted to his old practices. He knew, of course, that his father’s nagging was caused by deep love and worry, but his young and resilient spirit did not facilitate surrender.

Yakov’s zest for life evaporated with his father’s death. His heart was now filled with vague anxiety and fear, the reason for which he did not understand. Overnight, he seemed to have passed from a world populated by children to a world populated by grown, authoritative adults.

Immediately after *Shivah*, he got a job as a messenger boy in a large outfitting store. It was a strange, unfamiliar world. He felt like an outsider looking in with incompressible curiosity mingled with fear. He often said to himself that perhaps his father was right and that he would amount to nothing. If somebody would have asked him how he spent his time and what his dream for the future was, he would not have known what to answer.

His mother bought him, from his first wages, a suit. It was somewhat faded but it fitted him well and lent him an air of some masculinity. Every evening, he would put on the suit and wander the streets of the city. He never ceased to be amazed at metamorphosis in the streets, from the mundane during the day to the air of festivity in the evenings. He felt part of it and walk around in a vague dream.

One evening, Yakov was awakened from his dream by a very tall, wild-haired young man. He later learnt that the name by which the tall young man lived was Haim Arukim (a play on the double meaning: The Long Haim – Long Life). Haim Arukim was a painter who was looking for a model. Yakov’s beauty and the air of suffering about him charmed the artist and he invited Yakov to his basement- studio. All sorts of people used to visit Haim’s basement and lively discussions used to take place there. Yakov used to watch in wonder and envied the ease with which these people expressed themselves. On these occasions, he would resent the heavy burden that his life put on him. Sometimes, a deep hatred used to rise within him - hatred of his late father who left the family helpless, at his sickly mother and his self-righteous sister. Most of all, he hated himself.

Sometimes, though, his old zest for life asserted itself and he used to feel free. This used to happen in the evenings, when he was alone with Haim. Haim would paint and listen to Yakov, responding only with 'ah', 'hum' and 'I understand'. Yakov would open up and talk about the poverty at home and the futility of his life, but also of childhood pranks, laughter and dreams.

One evening, Haim asked him if he could perhaps bring a girl to be his model. "She needn't be pretty" said Haim, "but she must be unusual, different, not the run of the 'mill'".

Yakov thought of Yona immediately. Yona was one of the '*shponza*' girls in the shop. She was skinny and seemed to be all angles. In contrast to this were her huge dark eyes and her laughter. Her laughter was strangely musical. She laughed as though her heart was bursting with joy. In Yakov, her laughter evoked repressed desires. In his dreams, he would see her rising out of her threadbare cloths and laughing to him – only to him.

That morning, Yakov rushed early to the shop. The door was still closed. He waited, his heart beating wildly with anticipation and also fear of a rebuff. It was to be the first time he spoke to her. What if she laughed at him? Soon the *shponzah* girls appeared in the end of the street. Yona's laughter announced that she was among them. One by one, the girls disappeared through the doorway. Soon, Yona would disappear too. Yakov froze but at the last moment gathered his courage and cried – almost shouted: "Yonah, I need to speak to you". She looked at him, puzzled, and then lowered her eyes shyly. She listened to his explanation about Haim Arukim and the painting, then lifted her eyes, nodded her head, her lips forming the word 'alright'.

From that day, a new relationship was formed between Yakov and Yona. They walked together to Haim's studio and spoke about all sorts of unimportant things. Often, he wanted to tell her about his real feelings but was too shy. Often, too, he felt that she too would like a more intimate conversation and was waiting for him to initiate it. At such times, he felt that she saw him as a coward and not worthy of her attention.

Haim Arukim worked steadily on their portraits. He painted the two of them facing each other in a picture he call 'The Blossoming'. It had two levels; on the surface, they looked as they were at present but above, superimposed on this, they looked as if they were rising out of darkness into light; they looked brave and full of hope. Yakov often looked at the picture. He was astonished at how much Haim understood the depth of his innermost wishes.

Yakov slept very badly at night. One night, he got up, took a sheet of paper and started pouring out his yearnings on it. Perspiration covered his body and ran from his forehead onto the paper, but he paid no attention. He felt as though it was not he that was writing but that the verses had a life of their own, that his fingers wrote automatically. He did not feel the time pass, but when he put his pen down he felt, for the first time since his father's death, a deep calmness. Smiling, he addressed his dead father: "You'll see, father, I'll be fine".

On the following morning, he put the folded sheet in Yona's hand. Since he had started writing, his need to unburden himself to Haim had become less and less. Also, his self-abnegation in the company of Haim's friends decreased. He realized that their seemingly highly held opinion to be a cover up for shallow thought and an attempt to put on airs.

He got used to speaking to Yona freely now. They would go for long walks, telling each other about their families, their problems and their dreams.

One morning, he found Yona waiting for him. “I have a surprise for you” she said. Yakov looked into her eyes. The old sadness was still there, but underneath was a new light – a light of hope. With both her hands, she handed him a thin book. He opened it. On the front page he found, printed in bold letters, “The Blossoming” and under this, in smaller letters: “A selection of Poems, by Yakov Chaikin”.

He was puzzled for a moment, then understood.

“You...?” he asked.

“Yes”, she said “I found a publisher.”

Tears that were dammed in Yakov for so long burst forth. He wept long and hard. Yona put both her hands on the sides of his face and with her fingers wiped his tears. He bent his head and kissed the inside of her hands.

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **A SPRAT TO CATCH A MACKEREL**

**Ralph Zulman**

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

Raymond Ackerman is a well known philanthropic Jewish businessman. He was rated by the Financial Times as among the World’s top 100 Most Respected Businessmen and is the first South African to receive the International Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship. He is further the author of the best-selling memoir - *Hearing Grasshoppers Jump* and *The Four Legs of the Table*, in which recounts how he built Pick’n Pay.

Pick’n Pay was founded in 1966, with four small stores. Over the years, the number of stores continually increased, and today Pick ‘n Pay is a household name with no less than 792 stores in eight countries employing more than 60 000 people and generating an annual



turnover of around R60 billion. By his retirement 44 years later, Ackerman had changed the face of southern African retailing. *A Sprat to Catch a Mackerel*, Ackerman's latest book, is a brief, concise account loaded with sound common sense and based on his vast experience and knowledge. It is dedicated to "all those extraordinary human beings who create jobs, grow the economy and serve their customers, while leading the independent life they've always dreamed of."

The work consists of a prologue followed by twenty chapters, each listing a set of principles - numbering 53 in total - and an appendix, entitled 'Nuts & Bolts'. The title of each chapter is insightful. Examples include 'The Most Vital Ingredient of All' (Chapter 1), 'The Real Reason You're in Business Negotiating' (3), 'The Art of Persuasion' (7), 'Pricing - A Tricky Business' (9), 'Serving Your Customer - Three Cast-iron Rules' (11), 'Humility - Never Know Enough' (14), 'Marketing from the Heart' (16), 'Hope - The Importance of Optimism' (17), and 'Make Mistakes, Not Regrets' (19). In Chapter 8, entitled 'Empathy & Empowerment - The Guardians of your Greatest Asset' (in describing Principle 17), Ackerman quotes these words of Winston Churchill: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Principle 47 is 'Business practices may change but principles must remain' while Principle 49 is 'When you come to a roadblock, take a detour'. Quoting John Steinbeck, Principle 50 is 'What good is warmth without cold to give it sweetness?' Principle 53 advises "take your work seriously but yourself lightly".

Ackerman concludes the book with these wise sentiments: "Given that a business requires meticulous and ongoing research, it is finally time for me to hand over to you.

It is my fervent wish that you put this book down feeling more than ever ready to tackle the admirable task of running your own business and master your destiny. Good luck!"

I recommend a reading of this most interesting and enjoyable work.

*A Sprat to Catch a Mackerel: Key Principles to Build your Business* by Raymond Ackerman, with Pippa De Bruyn and Suzanne Ackerman, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2010, 215pp

# **NAZI PROPAGANDA FOR THE ARAB WORLD**

**Gary Selikow**

This comprehensive and pivotal work by Jeffrey Herf details the dissemination of propaganda from Nazi Germany into the Middle East and North Africa during the Second World War, and the influence this has had to this day on Arab and Islamic antisemitism/anti-Zionism. During the war, Germany circulated millions of printed leaflets and broadcast thousands of hours of shortwave radio (all in Arabic) in order to disseminate its anti-Jewish ideology throughout the Arab world. It was at pains to demonstrate that it was anti-Jewish but in no way hostile to other Semitic peoples such as Arabs, for whom it professed great admiration and affinity with.

What Herf does is document the ideas, individuals and institutions behind this initiative. The first Axis broadcasts in Arabic were pioneered by Fascist Italy in its radio broadcasts on Radio Bari in 1934. At the same time Hitler, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Himmler and officials in the Reich Security Main Office demonstrated a strong desire to appeal to Arabs and Muslims. Nazi Germany stressed that it was an uncompromising foe of Zionism, which was to bring it much Arab support.

In June 1939, Saudi King Ibn Saud Khalid al-Hud-al Qarqani met with Hitler, who assured him of his long-standing sympathy for the Arabs and his willingness to offer them 'active assistance', especially in supporting the Arab cause in Palestine and preventing the realization of a Jewish national home there.

Nazi shortwave broadcasts in Arabic commenced in October 1939, and continued until March 1945 on the Nazi German Arab language radio station, the Voice of Free Arabism (VFA). The Nazi regime saw extreme antisemitism and anti-Zionism as pivotal points of entry into the Arab world. As the author explains:

Throughout the war Nazi Arabic radio repeated the charge that World War II was a Jewish war whose purpose in the region was to establish a Jewish State in Palestine that would expand into and dominate the entire Muslim and Arab world. Moreover, the broadcasts asserted that the Jews in the mid-Twentieth Century were attempting to destroy Islam just as their ancestors had been attempting to do for thirteen centuries...An Axis victory would prevent the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The same way Nazi propaganda exploited hundreds of years of Christian antisemitism to create its venomous propaganda, so did it make the same use in the Arab world of the antisemitism inherent in Islamic thought. This dissemination was to be a molding force in the ideas of both anti-Zionist Arab nationalism and Islamist radicalism, and is today echoed in the propaganda of such Islamist groups as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, the Khamenei-Ahmadinejad Islamist regime in Iran and a plethora of Islamic media. The same way the Nazis decried and despised the elective affinity between English Puritanism and the Jews, so did they take pride in the affinity between National Socialist ideology and what it selected from the traditions of Islam.

Hitler assured Palestinian Arab leader Haj Aminel Hussein that once he had defeated Soviet Russia and moved south from the Caucasus, the "policy of destruction of the Jewish element" would be extended to Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and Transjordan. In the event of an Axis victory

in North Africa, *Einsatzgruppen* SS units were being prepared to be sent to the region to annihilate the Jews of Palestine and elsewhere in North Africa and the Middle East, in collaboration with the Palestine Arabs. This would certainly have happened had the German forces been victorious in North Africa, as they would then have overrun Egypt and from there invaded the Holy Land. Plans were made between the Mufti and the Nazi leadership for this extension of the Final Solution, which is illustrated in detail in Klaus Michael-Mallmann's 'The Plans for the Extermination of the Jews in Palestine'. The Mufti's collaboration with SS officials extended to a close collaboration with Himmler himself, and with Adolf Eichmann. VFA, in its broadcasts to Egypt, urged greater militancy to prevent Palestine "becoming a Jewish colony".

Axis-backed incitement intensified in 1942, with El Husseini and Yunus Bahri urging Arabs in Egypt and Palestine to "rise, murder the Jews and seize their property". In October of that year, The Arab Nation broadcast from Berlin the message that the Arabs would refuse any sort of coexistence with the Jews. As Herf points out, "Refusal of any compromise on the Palestine issue was another logical outcome of the intertwining of political and religious themes in Axis propaganda".

On 19 October 1943, the above station attacked Chaim Weizmann: "Perhaps this despicable usurer is hoping that the Arabs of Palestine will leave their country to the Jews. But wait, dirty Jew, Palestine will remain a pure Arab country as it has always been. It is you and your dirty relatives who will be kicked out and this will come about by the grace of Allah".

Nazi propaganda presented Zionism as a component of a supposedly ancient Jewish vendetta against Islam. VFA declared that Jews hoped to use Palestine to expand and rule over a vast empire, from the Tigris in Iraq to as far as Morocco. On 21 November, it proclaimed, "Since the days of Mohammed the Jews have been hostile to Islam ... Hatred of Islam and of the Arabs is the main reason for the desire of the Jews to have Palestine for their own and if they take Palestine they will be in a good position over the other Arab countries". 1000s of pamphlets and broadcasts disseminated the idea that the Jews kindled World War II, that the Arabs had been enslaved by the Jews of Palestine and that this fate awaited the Arabs of North Africa unless the Axis was victorious.

As evidence of the annihilation of the Jews in Europe filtered to the world in 1943, the Arab Nation and VFA referred to this evidence as lies - an early example of Holocaust Denial - and asserted that the Jews "would not be able to take Palestine unless the world believes they are worthy of sympathy". Thus was the stage set for the centrality of Holocaust denial in anti-Zionism.

Propaganda was also disseminated to the effect that the Jews were the glue that held together those earmarked as enemies of both Nazi Germany and the Arabs - Britain, the USA and the Communists. Arab religious leaders referred to Hitler as the reincarnation of Jesus (Isa) who, as predicted in the Koran, would return as a warrior to defeat Islam's enemies. Shiites in Iraq were told that Hitler was the incarnation of the Eleventh Iman who would bring victory to Islam. On 1 March 1944, el-Husseini broadcast from Berlin to Palestine: "Arabs, rise as one and fight for your sacred rights. Kill the Jews wherever you find them. This pleases God, history and religion".

After the defeat of Nazi Germany, the British declined to let the Mufti and other pro-Nazi Arab leaders be prosecuted as this would lose them much-needed Arab support. Hence, the

Mufti was not brought to trial for incitement and actions that at times had been more inflammatory than those of German officials, such as Otto Dietrich, who were tried at Nuremberg. After the war the Palestine Arab Party, which supported the Mufti and was led by his cousin, Jamal al-Husseini, put pressure on the British to release all the incarcerated Axis leaders. It saw the Mufti's wartime activity as a source of pride. Propaganda began by the Axis broadcasts was continued by the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as the governments of Syria and Egypt. The fact that Colonel Nasser hired Nazi propagandist Johan von Leers to oversee Egyptian information agencies illustrated his determination to continue to support ideas and propaganda about Jews and Israel that were rooted in Nazi propaganda and ideology.

The author has produced a very important work tracing the history of Islamic propaganda against Israel and Jews, one that demonstrates to both Islamic and Leftist anti-Zionist propagandists the company and legacy that they share.

Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World by Jeffrey Herf, Yale University Press, 2009, 352pp

## READERS' LETTERS

The subtitle of Dr Azila Reisenberger's 'The Fundamental Significance of Foreign Language in Worship: A Response to David Benatar' (*Jewish Affairs*, Rosh Hashanah 2010), suggests that she takes issue with something I said. However, instead of responding to my argument that Jewish atheists could logically engage in orthopraxis, she offers a tangential observation. More specifically, she claims that atheists are less likely to utter prayers if they know the meanings of the words they are reciting. Perhaps she is right that they are *less likely* to do so, but that is not a point of disagreement with me because atheists, even when they understand the prayers, *could* still utter them for reasons other than communing with a deity. After all, atheists *do* already understand that prayers are usually directed to a God, but those atheists who recite prayers are obviously not directing them to God and thus do not take prayer literally.

To illustrate her point, Dr Reisenberger refers to patriarchal prayers as well as the plea that God pour out his wrath on the gentiles. But even religious people could have concerns about such prayers when they understand them. Indeed, religious people might be more concerned to ask for things they do not want since they think that there is actually somebody listening to the prayers.

Perhaps this is why Dr Reisenberger slips from speaking about atheists to speaking about "religious people" in the final paragraphs of her paper. She says that "if religious people who recite prayers in foreign languages fully understood the nuances of what they were saying, they would be more hesitant in proclaiming a willingness to kill or die for their religions." This, she says, is because such "extremist proclamations, often incite extremist actions or reactions, which may not be fully intended by the individual – who simply repeat utterances in unfamiliar languages".

It is hard to see how this claim is supported by the examples Dr Reisenberger provides. Patriarchal language – referring to Our God and the God of our fathers (rather than fathers and mothers), for example – is not plausibly thought of as an incitement to violence. The point could be made somewhat less implausibly with reference to the plea that God pour out his wrath on the gentiles, but even that is not a call to *human* action. Matters are left squarely in God's hands.

Even if suitable examples of inciting prayers were provided, it would be very difficult to make sense of Dr Reisenberger's claim. While ensuring that religious people understand their prayers might result in some of these people desisting from uttering prayers that could be construed as incitement, it would also make those with no such sensitivities more prone to being incited. Whereas previously the latter would not have understood the inciting prayers, that impediment would be removed once they understood them.

Dr Reisenberger's argument cannot be saved by dropping reference to incitement. Those who are willing to kill themselves or others for their religions are the very people who would be least likely to be disturbed by knowing the meaning of the kind of prayers to which Dr Reisenberger refers. And those who would be disturbed to learn the meaning of those prayers are the people who, even in their ignorance of the meaning, would be very unlikely to kill in the name of religion. Thus, understanding the meaning of prayers is hardly likely to be a bulwark against extremism.

**Professor David Benatar**  
**Cape Town**

Congratulations to Gwynne Schrire on her wonderful article 'The German Jewish Immigrant Contribution to South African Art' (Rosh Hashanah, 2010). A number of those individuals she mentions were known to me personally. When I was running first 'Show Service' and then 'Computicket' in Johannesburg, I met a lot of Jewish families who lived in the suburbs of Hillbrow/Berea/Yeoville and who were regular theatre and concert-goers. When I visited them socially, I used to marvel at the SA art on their walls, all bought in the 1930s, '40s, '50s and '60s. When they were very elderly, a painting would sometimes be missing. When I asked what had happened to it, the answer would be "my children who have left SA need the money" or "I need more money to pay for all the tickets I buy and of course for living expenses". Very few of them had pensions, but most of them had paintings.

When I was in Australia recently, I asked long-standing friends how they could afford the homes they were living in and the answer invariably was, "I sold three of my six Irma Sterns", or "I sold a Kentridge/Pierneef etc etc". There was still so much SA art on their walls, and the way prices are going they are all going to live very comfortably, possibly doing what their parents and grandparents had done over the years in SA.

**Percy Tucker**  
**Cape Town**

In your Rosh Hashanah 2010 issue Daniel Mackintosh ('Speaking out against injustice? Re-examining the SA Jewish Board of Deputies' response to Apartheid, 1948-1976') writes: "By making the comparison between German youth after the Holocaust and the South African Jewish youth of today, I am not drawing a direct moral equivalence between the complicity of Germans in perpetrating the Holocaust and South African Jews. Rather, the comparison is made to recognize that a time has come for the hard questions about our past to be asked by the Jewish youth of today."

Although I am not part of the South African Jewish youth "of today" (being neither South African nor young), I think it is legitimate to pose a few personal questions to the writer:

- (1) Has his own family benefited from apartheid in any way whatsoever?
- (2) Does his family own any property in South Africa which might have been acquired from capital that was amassed during the apartheid era?
- (3) Who paid for his education? Was it at least partially financed from money that was obtained during the apartheid era?

I know nothing about Mr. Mackintosh's family. However, I think that since he is calling for a Jewish Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be set up, he should make public its financial and political activities during the apartheid era. This information should not be limited to his parents. What about his grandparents?

My concern is that the writer is himself a product of apartheid. If, having examined his family's tax returns (1948-1994), I find that there is evidence of capital accumulation, I believe that he has no option but to ensure that all 'racist money', and any houses or flats that were bought, be immediately forwarded to the ANC Youth League. I have no doubt that such a contribution would be appreciated by the Youth League's leadership and would be spent on various youth projects.

Please do not imagine that I am advocating some sort of Jewish witch hunt. This is not *The Crucible* and I am not alleging that Mackintosh's mother and grandmothers were witches. I do not believe for one moment that they were actually casting spells during the apartheid era. However, I am concerned that, in this new production, they might have also been exploiting a black maid, and if that is the case, then I think that the writer will have no option but to put them forward for investigation at the Jewish Truth and Reconciliation Commission (JTRC).

Furthermore, with regard to the substance of Mackintosh's article, I question his premise that apartheid was in the interests of white middle class South African Jewry.

On his blog "Writing Rights", Zackie Achmat states:

Mackintosh locates the South African Jewish leadership's collaboration with apartheid in their economic class interests.

He uses a range of data to prove his argument. One such study demonstrates that the average Jewish income in 1951 was "placed at R1432 compared with R882 for Anglicans (which could be used as an indicator to measure English-speaking whites) and R688 for Dutch Reformed adherents (a measure for Afrikaners).

Income inequality among white people in 1951 must surely indicate both colonial and apartheid privilege. Class was certainly a factor in Jewish accommodation with apartheid or to call it by its real name — the oppression of Black people.

With regard to the above, I think that the following is relevant. H M (Hymie) Basner was a Jew and a Native Representative in the South African parliament. In the post-apartheid radical historiography, Basner has unfortunately been somewhat neglected. It is therefore possible that Achmat and MacKintosh are ignorant of yet another major Jewish contribution to human rights and anti-racism.

Basner said the following during a debate in 1942, which contradicts the Achmat/MacKintosh thesis that apartheid was in the interests of the Jewish (or any other South African) middle class:

Is it necessary for me to state, except in broad terms, that the whole native population is starving, is ruined, is in misery, its health declining, being ravaged by disease and malnutrition?

So what have we done with the ten million human beings who live in our country? The whole of the non-European population we have degraded, as well as a quarter of the European population....

It was done by those mine owners who needed cheap native labour, and who could use the racial psychology of this country in order to further their own interest. It was done by a few land-owning companies, and by what I call the upper strata of the population - whom I do not call the farmers, but who are, and have been, and cannot forget that they are, feudal landlords...

The average white middle class of this country does not benefit by the conditions which we have imposed on the native people. On the contrary, we are holding it back as a whole, and we are holding it back, not for the sake of our racial pride or for our racial domination or even for our racial security. We are holding it back for the benefit of one big industry which needs cheap native labour, and for a small section which wants to make big profits.

My appeal today is this-and I must be understood at the present moment not to be suggesting that you close down the gold mines - we have got to say to these people: "Either you let go the reins which you have imposed on this country, or those reins will be taken out of your hands, either by the European section in a democratic form, or - and I say again that I am representing three and a half million people, and I live among them, and I know the lines along which they are thinking - the reins are going to go in an unconstitutional form.

For the record, Basner later employed Nelson Mandela as an attorney, and if one reads Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, there can be no doubt that he held Basner in high esteem.

MacKintosh also fails to explicitly state that South African Jewry overwhelmingly did not vote for the National Party in 1948, and I am, quite frankly, amazed that his thesis supervisor

did not advise him to include that extremely relevant fact. MacKintosh's failure to do so calls into question his motivation for writing the article.

This is how MacKintosh attempts to describe the situation that Jews found themselves in:

The National Party was also under suspicion of antisemitism, which came into focus when they opposed the South African entry into World War Two (seen by Jews as a high priority in light of Nazi atrocities). Braude documents a few of the actual incidents of antisemitism prior to the 1948 elections, which created a very tense situation for SA Jewry. This included a meeting at Stellenbosch University, attended by over fifteen hundred people, at which a resolution was put forward to stop Jewish immigration by "legislation and other measures.

I would refer here to Benjamin Pogrund's article 'Why South African Jews feared the Nats' (<http://www.mg.co.za/article/1997-04-04-why-sas-jews-feared-the-nats>). This clearly states the harsh realities of the position that the Jews found themselves in, and one has to wonder, why MacKintosh was unable or unwilling to clearly state the facts.

**Anthony Posner**  
**Johannesburg**



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## ISRAEL, THE WEST BANK AND THE 'ONE STATE vs 'TWO STATE' DEBATE

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

*At the beginning of 2010, the author was interviewed by a graduate student at Wits University for a thesis on possible long-term solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Questions posed probed the notion that Jewish settlement in the West Bank has in effect created a 'One State' reality that it is too late to undo, thereby making the 'Two States for Two Peoples' formula for peace unworkable and necessitating a change of focus aimed at the creation of a single, bi-national, unitary state. The interview was followed by a written*

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*exchange, in question and answer format, an edited version of which follows.*

***Which solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict do you believe has the best chance of succeeding and bringing about a sustained peace and why is this?***

Ideally, the two Palestinian territories – the West Bank and Gaza – should (by common consent, obviously) be reincorporated into the previous occupying powers, namely Jordan and Egypt. It makes far more sense since those countries are likewise Arab-speaking and Muslim by religion, hence the prospects of a successful merger are much greater. Realistically, this is not on the table. Jordan has expressed no desire to take over the West Bank again and Egypt, not least because of its own concerns of Muslim fundamentalism within its own borders, is positively hostile to the idea.

It goes without saying that if the territories cannot even be incorporated within other Arab-Muslim societies, then amalgamating them with Hebrew speaking, Jewish Israel, especially in light of the bitterly hostile relationship of the past seventy years, is a non-starter.

This leaves achieving Palestinian sovereignty in the above territories as the only realistic option open. The “Two State Solution” envisions the West Bank and Gaza in terms of this becoming one independent state co-existing peacefully alongside Israel. Now that Gaza and the West Bank have effectively split into two mutually antagonistic entities, a de facto ‘Three State Solution’ scenario is emerging.

***Do you believe that a democratic one-state solution is beginning to be viewed as preferable to a two-state solution or a winner-take-all single polity?***

It’s a school of thought within left-leaning academia, where there is an entrenched hostility towards the very idea of a sovereign, Jewish majority State. However, as practical politics it has gained little if any traction. Even the South African government, where there is a profound traditional of hostility towards Israel, accepts the “Two State Solution” as being the only viable one.

It has been more plausibly suggested that some kind of confederal arrangement linking Israel and the territories should be looked at.

***Could one go as far as to say that a bi-national and power-sharing state is the only viable alternative to the continuing conflict?***

No, on the contrary. If it has not even proved possible up until now to achieve the peaceful co-existence of Israelis and Palestinians living alongside one another in their own separate states, how much more so would pitching them together within a single state prove. Actually, given its self evident illogicality, it’s very odd to see the theory even being discussed. No-one proposed the reunifying of Yugoslavia as a solution to all the ethnic violence of a decade ago, nor is ‘One Statism’ being proposed as a solution to the (from a global peace perspective, far more dangerous) India-Pakistan conflict. The reason why the Two State solution hasn’t been implemented essentially comes down to the intensity of

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Arab-Muslim opposition to a sovereign Jewish presence on ‘their’ land. Peaceful co-existence cannot be achieved, whether in two states and self-evidently not within one, so long as Jews are considered to be an illegitimate, usurping presence that must be fought against without respite until their State is eradicated.

***Why has there been a lack of genuine progress towards the two-state solution as proposed under Oslo? What has prevented its plans from becoming a reality?***

Both parties were to blame for Oslo’s failure. On the Israeli side, it took the form of escalating Jewish settlement across the Green Line, which understandably undermined whatever trust they were trying to build with the Palestinians. On the Palestinian’s part, anti-Jewish incitement throughout their society and regular acts of terrorism that were either secretly planned or at least tolerated by the Palestinian Authority, only caused the rift to widen. Finally, the Palestinians themselves torpedoed the whole process, first by rejecting Israel’s far-reaching peace proposals at Camp David in mid-2000 and then launching, without provocation, the disastrous ‘2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada’.

***Is a South Africa-type solution possible in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?***

Anything is possible, but it is highly unlikely. Firstly, the two situations are not analogous. In South Africa, there was an intermingled, multi-racial population de facto existing within a single geographic territory, with the ruling white caste constituting a small minority. Physical separation of the races was impossible. It was realized that South Africans had to learn to swim together otherwise they would sink together, and common sense fortunately prevailed. Israel, on the other hand, has a substantial Jewish majority within its official borders. Why would it wish to sacrifice this by amalgamating with a territory mainly comprising non-Jews? If the majority of South Africans had been white, they certainly would not have agreed to their country joining up with, say, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, no matter how much they were assured of equal and fair treatment.

Another crucial difference is in the differing nature of the political visions of black South Africans and Palestinians. The black majority here was committed to a non-racial society that would “belong to all who live in it” and produced leaders who fought for equality and democracy, not racial vengeance and the replacing of one group’s dominance with that of another. The Palestinian vision, whether in its Arabist ethnic form as encapsulated by the Palestinian National Covenant or its religious Islamist manifestation, as shown by the Hamas Charter, is rejectionist and victory directed, the ultimate aim being to establish a dominant Arab-Islamic entity in place of Jewish Israel. Had the liberation movements in this country adopted a similarly zero-sum approach to the ‘Struggle’, no peaceful transition to democracy would, or could, have taken place.

***Are there certain segments of the population that support a forced transfer of Palestinians out of Israel and the occupied territories? Could this be a viable alternative?***

Yes, one hears rumbles of this from time to time from the fringes of the Israeli far right, but I doubt whether even they seriously envisage such a policy being carried out in practical

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terms. Apart from the moral implications of what would essentially be a cold-blooded policy of mass ethnic cleansing, the logistical difficulties of physically uprooting millions of people are insurmountable.

Referring to Arabs within Israel as ‘Palestinians’ is incorrect, however. They are Israelis no less than Jews (and Christians etc.) are.

***If we remain in the current deadlock, what is likely to happen? Is a third intifada a threat?***

I don’t think so. Muammar Abbas is a pragmatist, as are the other members of his government. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada brought much suffering and destruction to the Palestinian population, with very little if anything to show for it, and he has said so. In the last couple of years, the trend with regard to the West Bank has been encouraging. Israeli and Palestinian security personnel, with important input from the US, cooperate on security matters, which is reflected in the dramatic dropping off to almost nothing in terrorist violence and counter-violence. Because of this, a process of normalization is taking place, most visible in the dismantling of checkpoints and opening of roads to all. The Palestinian economy is also growing dramatically, with much input from the Israeli side. That much remains to be done – many restrictive laws remain in place, mainly for the benefit and protection of the Jewish settlers, and this has to remain a focus when pushing for changes on the ground – is undeniable. It is further of concern that while direct violence is no longer being incited and planned, the demonisation of Jews and Israel and refusal to accept Israel’s legitimacy throughout Palestinian society continues apace.

The Gaza situation is another story. However, since the population there is no longer under Israeli rule, there can be no popular uprising against it. It remains to be seen if the harsh lessons learned during last year’s Operation Cast Lead prove enduring in dissuading the Hamas leadership from relaunching its missile attacks.

***How would a one-state solution operate? What would its implications be? How would such a state function?***

It would not be dissimilar to the SA situation post-1994. At the very least, there would have to be an entrenched Bill of Rights, complete judicial independence and the upholding of all basic democratic freedoms, including academic, media and NGO independence and complete non-discrimination when it comes to religious practice. Palestinian society is frankly not ready for this. It is religiously very conservative (e.g. it criminalizes homosexuality, converting to a faith other than Islam, any discourse considered to be ‘blasphemous’ etc) and is authoritarian, persecuting political dissidents and executing suspected traitors. Israel is the mirror image of all this, having much more in common with the secular Western democracies.

***What are the positive aspects of a one-state solution?***

Assuming a South African ‘miracle’ somehow emerged, it would mean an end to conflict and all the tragedy that entails, the lifting of all current restrictions on the Palestinian

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population, the corresponding freedom of Jews to travel and live in any part of 'Eretz Yisrael' that they choose to, without being reviled and threatened as 'illegal settlers', the extension of Israel's impressive economic success to the Palestinian territories and from there throughout the Middle East region – theoretically, all this is possible.

***What are the negative aspects of a one-state solution?***

It is a reality that ethnic, and especially deeply-held religious antagonisms lead either to balkanization, that is the breaking up of countries into distinct new sovereign entities where one or another religio-national grouping is dominant, or persistent civil war (e.g. the Kurdish separatist movement in Turkey, the war in Chechnya etc). Sometimes, unfortunately, the only realistic alternative is to keep warring factions apart from one another. This was in part the thinking that led to the UN partition of Palestine in 1947 as well as the break-up of India that same year. Given the recent history of intense antagonism between Israel Jews and Arab Muslims, not to mention the profound political and cultural differences noted above, any attempt to coexist within a single binational state would violently unravel almost immediately. (If two dogs are fighting, who in his right mind shoves them both into the same cage to force them to get along? One will simply kill the other, or both will be ripped to shreds).

***Is there a way in which the Israeli Jewish population opposition to a one state solution could be diminished? What would their likely demands be?***

For Israel Jews (and a great many Israeli Arabs, particularly Christians, are also unlikely to necessarily wish to amalgamate with a still economically backward, anti-democratic Palestine) there would have at the very least to be a virtual revolution in Palestinian attitudes towards Jews, Zionism and Israel. The demonisation of Jews, denigration of Judaism, brazen denial of Jewish history and glorification of 'martyrs' who sacrificed themselves in killing Israeli civilians that right now dominates the way Palestinians are taught to see the world has to be completely overturned. Next, the relatively peaceful conditions between Israel and the West Bank need to be maintained and firmed up over a period of several years. Facts on the ground are also important, such as increased economic cooperation. Finally, instead of demanding that all the settlements be dismantled and their Jewish inhabitants sent back across the border, the Palestinians should accept them as fellow citizens. All this would help assuage understandable Jewish fears and foster an environment where Jews and Arabs can indeed co-exist, notwithstanding their differences.

***Is there a chance that a one state solution could lead to the Palestinians becoming a permanent underclass given the far stronger institutional, educational and economic development of the Israeli-Jewish sector?***

No. Obviously, the Israeli-Jewish sector would have a head start, but under conditions of equality that would prevail in a theoretical democratic single state, the gaps would decrease naturally over time.

***Could the Palestinian diaspora play a vital role in the nation-building process?***

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Right now, aside from those in Jordan, the 1948 refugees and their descendants are being kept in a state of limbo by their host countries, denied citizenship rights and all that entails.

Were a binational Israeli-Palestinian state to come into being, there would be no reason for the host Arab countries to continue maintaining this underclass as human title deeds to 'stolen' Arab land. The Palestinians abroad would in most cases then simply be absorbed into their host countries, in which the great majority was in any case born.

***Would such a one state solution win support of the international community?***

It has not up until now and most likely will not since it is so impractical and is at present rejected not just by most Israelis but by a substantial majority of Palestinians themselves. Anyway, it's not for the international community to make the decision. It's up to Israelis and Palestinians themselves to determine whether or not to cast in their lots with one another.

***What would Palestinian demands most likely be if a one-state solution was put forward and what would their reservations be?***

I'd imagine non-negotiable equality and the extension of the 'Right of Return' to the 1948 refugees and their descendants would be part of the mix.

Palestinians, too, have reservations about losing their identity and compromising their particular values by amalgamating with a foreign population. For them, near-nudity on a Tel Aviv beach, parliamentarians who opine that David and Jonathan were homosexuals, academics who teach that all the prophets, including Mohammed, were unbalanced fabricators, gay liberation marches in Jerusalem and all other manifestations of the 'freedom of expression' principle that operates in Israel are anathema.

***Do you believe that the one-state solution is now the only viable situation under democratic international law?***

By no means. I see no necessity for the whole of Israel and the whole of the territories to meld into one because the two-state solution hasn't worked, for the reasons outlined above. I do see the necessity of the Jewish presence in the West Bank being regularized, either through the incorporation of the Jewish population into the general population or through their return to Israel. What is unsustainable is the continuation of a situation where extraordinary security measures are needed to protect the Jewish WB minority, to the detriment of the majority population.

**Settlements**

***Are the settlement policies that are being followed by the Israeli government making a two-state solution unviable by eroding the basis of a future Palestinian state?***

Not necessarily in the long term. Currently, the problem with settlements is that Israel is compelled to implement extraordinary security measures to protect them (separation

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fences, checkpoints, separate roads etc) since their presence is so very unwelcome to the Palestinian majority. These measures do indeed put severe limits on Palestinian sovereignty. The solution is for the Palestinians to accept the presence of a small Jewish minority within its borders, whose status would be no less (and no more, as is currently the case) than that of the rest of the population. The settlers, for their part, would have to accept that they are now Palestinian, not Israeli citizens, and that they would not enjoy any special privileges.

I like to use the South West Africa/Namibia example when making this point. In demanding its independence from South Africa, Namibians did not insist that whites who had settled their under South African rule be kicked out. On the contrary, it was never a question that these would be regarded as full, equal citizens of the newly independent Namibia.

The problem with the West Bank is that the antagonism between the two groups is so intense – lethally so – that such a scenario looks utopian at present.

***Do you think that anyone is capable of dismantling the settlements? Is there a chance that this may trigger a civil war within Israel?***

Some 300 000 Israeli Jews now live across the Green Line. There is no way they will ever be uprooted, nor, in my view, should they be. Those settlements close to Israel's borders should be absorbed into Israel (appropriate land swaps could come into the equation here) while where this is not feasible, they must be incorporated into the Palestinian state.

***If settlement expansion continues and the construction of the security barrier continues, would this lead to a single, undemocratic entity where Israel rules over a Palestinian majority?***

The security barrier really strengthens the reality of two states since it creates a de facto border. Jewish cross-border settlement does on the face of it cause a blurring of the distinction through intermingling the two populations. However, this admixture only takes place in a fairly limited geographical area. It therefore does not necessitate the whole of Israel and the whole of the West Bank to amalgamate since their populations are not, in fact, already inextricably intermingled as was the case in South Africa. Only that area along the border where the population is mixed should be incorporated into the West Bank (theoretically, it could also be incorporated into Israel, with the Palestinian element becoming Israeli citizens).

To show that it is serious about wanting the West Bank to achieve independence, Israel needs to stop any more of its citizens moving across the border. It must further continue working constantly with the Palestinian side to further conditions whereby the relationship can be normalized. This is working quite well at present, with most checkpoints having been dismantled, roads being opened and the route of the security barrier moved on a number of occasions. Much more needs to be done, of course, but so long as current peaceful conditions prevail, incremental normalization can and will happen.

***Can it be said that the settlements have in fact created an irreversible situation and have***

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***caused people to already be living in a bi-national situation?***

Again, this is true only for the West Bank itself. It does not follow that the whole of Israel must be regarded as inextricably joined with the West Bank simply because a number of Israeli citizens have settled across the border. Instead, it means that the population of the Palestinian state will not be homogeneously Arab and Muslim but will have a small Jewish minority as well (just as Israel, while being predominantly Jewish, consists of a fairly sizable non-Jewish minority).

What is irreversible is the settler presence, which cannot be uprooted at this stage.

***How has the separation barrier further led to the demise of a possible two state solution and can it be viewed as confirmation of the borders Israel has in mind for a future Palestinian state?***

As noted above, the presence of a physical barrier roughly following the 1967 borders concretizes and strengthens the reality of two distinct states rather than the reverse. Where the fence cuts into lands beyond the 1967 border, disrupting normal day to day Palestinian life is the heart of the problem. There is no way this section of the fence can be accepted as a permanent border. With the re-establishment of a lasting peace situation, those sections of the fence must be moved or dismantled altogether. It is always important to remember that the fence did not exist prior to the launch of the sustained terrorism campaign from September 2000, in which Jewish settlers were ruthlessly targeted.

***What do you think of the comments made by John Dugard that since the declaration of the state of Israel over 60 years ago it has been in violation of international law?***

When international law is applied in a selective and discriminatory manner, with the most rights-delinquent countries hijacking it to target its designated enemies, then what you have is not international law but international lynch law. Dugard himself is a noted anti-Israel activist who has taken part in UN initiatives aimed at targeting Israel for exclusive condemnation. His views must be seen in this context.

***Given Israel's identification as the state of the Jewish people, would Jewish ethnocentrism be a major deterrent to a one-state solution? Could this be overcome?***

Most Middle Eastern and North African countries define themselves in ethnic (Arab) or religious (Muslim) terms, or both. The two main Palestinian factions themselves define themselves as either Arab (Fatah) or Islamist (Hamas). Israel similarly defines itself in ethno-religious terms. This is not a problem, so long as a) the majority of the population buy into that definition and b) minority groups are not discriminated against. In Israel's case, there is majority support for the concept, and while a degree of discrimination against the non-Jewish minority (within Israel proper) does unfortunately exist and must be addressed, it is much milder than discrimination against religious, and sometimes ethnic (e.g. Kurds in Syria) minorities that is prevalent elsewhere in the region. In short, I would say that Palestinian ethnic and religious exclusivity is far more of an obstacle to any putative 'one state' scenario



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than its Jewish counterpart.

***Can the de facto Israel state even be classified as a Jewish state as it stands now? It can be said that it is neither Jewish nor democratic because of the nature of the occupation and the status of the millions of Palestinians who live under it.***

Were the West Bank to be formally annexed, without its citizens being accorded full democratic rights, that would certainly be true. To repeat, so long as the majority of Israel's citizens wish to define their country as a 'Jewish State' (what that actually means would be subject to a range of opinions), then there is no problem.

**If Israel were to choose a state that was either non-Jewish or undemocratic, what do you believe it would choose?**

It would be a disaster if it came down to there being only those two choices. Theoretically, a South Africa-style compromise in which a mixed population coexists equally within a single territory would not be the end of the world. The problem is that the Arab-Islamic attitude towards the re-established Jewish presence in what is regarded as exclusively their domain is characterized by so implacable a degree of antagonism that Israeli Jews could never risk surrendering their sovereignty and trusting that everything will work out for the best. On the other hand, ending up as a country in which half the population are disenfranchised would also be a disaster. There would be a situation of permanent conflict, as happened in South Africa. That is why even the Israeli right has largely accepted the reality that the West Bank will have to be surrendered in the end.

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## CHANUKAH - WHY A FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS?

Gwynne Schrire

*Gwynne Schrire is Deputy Director of the SAJBD Cape Council and a member of the editorial board of Jewish Affairs, to which she is a veteran contributor.*

Chanukah has another name - the Festival of Lights - and if you are lucky enough to walk around the streets of Jerusalem on Chanukah evenings, you can certainly see why. Everywhere, the lights of *chanukiot* are winking and twinkling at you - some shining from behind locked glass panels built into the walls of the houses. Here in the Diaspora, this is not common because of a *halachic* decision in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century that the lamp could be placed inside if there was any danger (from *goyim* - or *ganovim*?).

Why is the holiday called the 'Festival of Lights'? Certainly, we light lights - usually candles - 44 in all over the eight days in candlesticks called *chanukiot*. The latter date back to the Talmudic period and probably developed from the early clay oil lamps. Instead of having one spout, these special lamps had eight spouts for eight wicks and looked rather like an eight-toed foot. Another kind of *chanukiah* from the same period found in a Jerusalem cave is a rectangular grooved stone. There has been a remarkable continuity in this design as not only has this style been found in 12<sup>th</sup> Century France, but also in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Yemen and 19<sup>th</sup> Century North African lamps.

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As well as these clay and stone *chanukiot*, metal ones were also used in Talmudic times. A bronze one from Babylon, dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE, exists. Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg (13<sup>th</sup> Century) would not use a *chanukiah* of clay and his teacher used a metal one which would hang on his door. When it became dangerous to place these outside the home and the custom of keeping them inside was adopted, their shape changed. A back wall was added and as well as a hook for hanging. This type developed in Spain, the earliest preserved one dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Some Mediaeval French and German *chanukiot* dating between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries have survived. These are usually bronze, with a back plate. This design spread around the Mediterranean, reaching Eastern Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. The Poles added legs to the back wall so that the lamp could stand on a table.

German Jews were resistant to Spanish fashions. They preferred to use hanging lamps in the form of a star or separate metal vessels like a cup or a chair, adding a new one each day, or an eight-branched standing menorah. Not many early German *chanukiot* survive as they were confiscated during various wars to reappear, melted down, as guns or bullets. *Chanukiot* have been made in pottery, stone, glass, ceramic, brass, silver, pewter - but surely none have been as precious as the one made in a concentration camp from carefully hoarded potatoes.

Originally, oil was used for light. Candles came into use in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, although the Mediterranean and North African countries continued to burn vegetable oil. Necessity is the mother of invention. During the 1948 War of Independence, soldiers near Latrun burnt rifle grease in their *chanukiah*.

Until 1948, Chanukah was the only festival based on a datable historical story - 25 Kislev, 164 BCE. A very exciting story it is too, one of bravery and rebellion, of a small band determined to restore freedom of religion and of a mighty army overthrown. However, the story as it appears in the two Books of Maccabee does not help to answer the initial question about why the festival is called the 'Festival of Lights', and indeed does not even mention lighting *chanukiot*. It mentions the cleansing of the Temple and the lighting of the menorah, but that was just part of the daily Temple ritual. It talks of celebrating the event with gladness like Succoth - but we do not light lights on Succoth! The story of the miracle of the cruse of oil only developed years later. As there was only one cruse of oil, why observe a festival of 'lights'? Would not a festival of 'a light' be more appropriate, using one large candle like a giant *yortzeit* candle designed to burn for eight days?

When Josephus described the festival two hundred years later, he called it the 'Festival of Lights', not Chanukah. He explained the name not in terms of lighting *chanukkiot* but that the right to serve G-d had come like a sudden light.

His explanation does not shed much light on the problem.

The first reference to lighting a *chanukiah* comes in a *baraita* regarding a discussion between Hillel and Shammai over the right way to light it. This indicates that by the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BCE, the practice formed part of the festival. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE, sages had said that the candelabra of the Hasmoneans were not made of gold, and in another *baraita* the miracle of the cruse of oil had come to light.

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The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* says that “all these stories seem to be nothing but legends and the authenticity of the ‘oil cruse’ story has already been questioned in the Middle Ages”. Why, then, the story and why the name “Festival of Lights”?

It is very possible that the legend of the cruse of oil lasting eight days developed during Roman times to give a religious cover to what was in essence a nationalistic festival celebrating the overthrow of a conqueror and the re-establishment of Jewish independence and religious freedom. Such themes would certainly not have been acceptable to the Romans, who would most likely have banned its celebration.

However, the name ‘Festival of Lights’ used for this holiday by Josephus would have been most acceptable to the Romans because, being based in Europe, they were well aware of the festivals of lights common at this time in midwinter, in the frozen wastes in the Northern Hemisphere. There, people worshipped the sun and wanted to ensure in the long dark winter that the sun would be reborn to provide another warm and fruitful summer. Fires were lit in December and priests would scan the sky to announce the rebirth of the sun god with joyous celebrations. At this time Rome also celebrated, with a ten day Saturnalia. The lighting of a progressively stronger light as the holiday of Chanukah progressed, using a candle called a *shamash* (which could have also stood for *shemesh* - the sun) might certainly have been interpreted by the Romans as a quaint Festival of Lights similar to the other midwinter festivals being observed by their other conquered peoples.

Only the Jews would have been aware that by lighting the candles, they were reaffirming their belief in the power of their G-d who had helped them to overthrow one conqueror and, by doing so, they were fanning the flames of their desire to try again.

Thus the name ‘Festival of Lights’ adds another dimension to the festival of Chanukah, tapping as it does into other traditions, now long forgotten, belonging to long forgotten peoples.

*Am Yisrael Chai*, and *chagim* like Chanukah have helped to preserve the Jews as a nation.

## **A FINE ROMANCE: ROSIE BLACK & MICKEY MOYLAN**

**Ann Rabinowitz**

*Many times, we only hear the dry stories that records can tell us of our ancestors' lives. Their everyday troubles and turmoil are lost to us as they all too often have been passed on. It is just such a real life story that follows, one set in a time between the World Wars when Jewish immigrants lived in decaying inner city slums in Britain's industrial cities and were in the process of moving out into more livable neighborhoods.*

Tears of sorrow greeted her at the beginning of her life, as Rosie Black was just a babe when her parents died, and followed her to the inevitable end of it. It was not unusual in those days for young parents, as well as their children, to perish of diseases that today would be easily controlled by medication, good living conditions and proper diet. Those immigrant families who lived in the slums of Manchester, as Rosie's parents had, worked hard and had little left for essentials, never mind luxuries of any sort. It was not a kind or gentle life by any means.

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A very fortunate orphan was Rosie Black, as she did not have to linger in an orphanage as other children left bereft of relatives did. She was adopted soon afterwards by the family of Rabbi Cohen, who lived on Harris Street in Manchester's Strangeways district. There, she was brought up in a strict Orthodox environment as the daughter of a rabbi, growing up into a beautiful and lively girl. Her family was poor by today's standards, but they had the basics and got by, with their religion as their spiritual support in times of need.

Young Rosie had many friends, amongst them, my mother's two older sisters, Ada and Sadie. They were neighbors as my family lived in the next street over at 19 Cheetwood Street. They all went to school together and were pals throughout their growing up years.

The girls reached maturity in an era when social and religious barriers were breaking down due to World War I. The fact that women were now in the workforce in the factories and other commercial places changed how they were treated and accepted in society. They dressed in a modern fashion, spoke the latest lingo and went out to places and did things that their grandmothers, or even mothers, would probably not have approved of in their time.

Manchester's streets were diversely populated, with Jews and gentiles intermixing to an extent not done in the past. There were occasions where mixed marriages occurred, and other untoward things as well. It was a period during which people of different social classes often interacted and enjoyed each other's company, especially in public venues such as the dance halls, theaters and the movies. These venues provided an easy means of finding glamour, excitement and romance.

Jewish girls and boys were no different from others in Manchester. They participated in these public activities with much pleasure and interest, even though these things were far removed from the religiosity and backstreet houses, without indoor plumbing or electricity, that most shared in the slums they came from.

This novel and fascinating new world opened up new avenues of adventure, especially to the girls of the slums, and Rosie was no different. Despite her strict religious upbringing, she would sneak out and go dancing at the popular Ritz Ballroom with her friends. There, she became well-known for her excellent dancing skills, grace and beauty. She won prizes for her dancing and attracted the best partners. As a consequence, she eventually met a very charming Irishman, a popular exhibition dancer named Mickey Moylan, originally from Dublin, Ireland.

It was love at first sight and a fine romance, at least for Rosie. The two became successful exhibition dancing partners and won numerous competitions across the county of Lancashire, in places outside Manchester such as Blackpool and Southport. Their popularity soared wherever they went on the dancing circuit.

As a result, Rosie soon forgot her strict upbringing entirely and had intimate relations with her partner. Little more than a teenager, at the time, she became pregnant and was therefore forced to marry Moylan. He was not happy at this unexpected turn of events as he wanted to be carefree and unattached. Little did he think when he started his relationship with Rosie that he would be stuck with marrying a Jewish girl, and pregnant at that.

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Her family was horrified at this turn of events; especially when Moylan demanded that she convert and raise their child as a Catholic. Totally besotted with Mickey, Rosie readily accommodated him and his family's wishes and took instructions to become a Catholic. Her religious family disowned her as a result.

Little knowing what she was getting into, Rosie moved in with Mickey's large family. She ended up being the navvy and scullery maid for them all. She was forced to take a fulltime job in the daytime, took care of her baby son in the evening and then had to slave over her husband's family as well. It was not the life she was accustomed to or thought she would have one day. However, she loved Moylan with all her heart and stuck it out as she could not go back to her family; in any case, as they had already sat *Shiva* for her.

In those infrequent moments of free time that she had, she would escape the drudgery of her life and come over to visit her girlhood friends, my aunts, and sit for a while to chat and to knit. She was always knitting sweaters, caps and mittens, all for her beloved baby; it was her relaxation and saving grace.

Eventually, Moylan decided to seek greener pastures and left Manchester for his native Dublin with Rosie and their son in tow. She was pregnant again and shortly afterwards had a baby daughter. In Dublin, Moylan set her up in a jewelry store-cum-pawn shop. The choice of the store was by no means an accident. As it so happened, this charming and debonair Irishman was something of a confirmed jewel thief and all-round *gonif* and used the store to fence his loot.

Moylan had a set routine. He would come in every day, bring in the loot and then later in the day return to take all the money from the till. This left Rosie and their two young children, Michael and Patricia, with hardly a farthing to survive on. If she did not cooperate, withheld any of the takings to use for food or not make the requisite amount of money he thought she should, he would beat her soundly. There was many an occasion when she and the children were left with nothing to eat.

In times of dire need, Rosie would implore my mother's sister Sadie, who now lived in Dublin too, to give her some money or food to help her carry on. This Sadie did with a heavy heart as she saw how her friend was suffering and was continually degraded by her abusive criminal of a husband. She wondered, how had a young and beautiful Jewish girl allowed herself to be brought so low?

Rosie's life had devolved into a day-to-day struggle for survival. Her children came to hate her too, although they did not hate their father, who certainly merited such hatred. In part, their hatred of her sprung from her Jewish origins, which they denied and could not come to terms with. She had made the ultimate sacrifice and given up her religion to raise two children who only hated her for it.

Moylan by this time had long before run off to London with one of his own kind, a kept woman he had taken from off the streets. There, in the British capital, he pursued smuggling, gunrunning and other sundry criminal activities. He was an opportunist and took whatever was going that he could make some money off of. It was said, in private, that he was connected somehow with Aristotle Onassis and his gun-runners and perhaps the IRA. He

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was an urban legend of sorts, talked about in whispers, with stories of his escapades making the rounds in polite company.

Surprisingly, one night he turned up in Dublin at my Aunty's house on Harold's Cross Road. He was armed to the teeth and told my uncle that he was on the run from the Garda Síochána and needed a place to hide. He threatened that if he did not cooperate, he would kill the entire family. My uncle, fearing the worst, put him in the attic at the top of the house, the attic where, as a child, I would later read and enjoy quiet moments.

The fugitive stayed for three days before he was willing to leave. During this time, the family were nervous wrecks, fearing that he would do something or the Gardai would come and someone would get injured. Eventually, he left as silently as he had come, during the night, and was never caught. Fortunately for my family, they never saw him again either.

Finally, after years of deprivation and hardship, her beauty and grace long gone, Rosie became fatally ill from consumption. This disease, which was so rampant amongst the poor, had come to haunt her as a result of the damp and dirty places she had been forced to live in due to lack of proper support from her husband. Her children had, by this time, all but abandoned her to her fate.

As she lay on her death bed, the fury of the consumption upon her body and the battle against it all but lost, she begged for my Aunty Sadie to be called. Sadie came immediately to bid her friend a bittersweet farewell. She hoped to give her what comfort she could as she lingered in the damp and moldy coldwater flat in the poorest section of Dublin.

As she lay there, Rosie used the last of her strength to tell my Aunty Sadie that she wanted a priest to give her the last rites and have a mass said for the repose of her soul. My Aunty was thoroughly appalled at this unexpected request. It was the last straw. She had expected to hear that Rosie wanted to repudiate her old life, which had given her so much pain. Then, she thought, Rosie would ask for a rabbi to be at her side at the end. After that, perhaps, she would then request to be laid to rest in a Jewish burial ground.

Since that was not to be the case, Sadie thought the situation over calmly. She realized that perhaps Rosie's adopted religion was not something she took lightly. Neither did she adhere to it only to please her husband and his family. She truly believed in it. It appeared to be the only tangible thing she had left after a life of destitution and abuse. Why deny her this last consolation? The priest was called, the rites were given, and Rosie went peacefully out into that good night that all must face in the end.

Occasionally, during the years that followed, my Aunty would see the Moylan children, now adults, strutting about the Dublin quays as bold as brass and stamped in the image of their benighted father. It was then that she would again ponder the sad fate of her friend, Rosie Black, the poor and beautiful Jewish orphan, who had met such a bad end. The poignant memories of their childhood and later adulthood would assail her. She would then weep a bit to think of how far from a fine romance her life had turned out to be.

## **TISHA B'AV AND JEWISH POWER**

**Adam Levick**

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*Adam Levick is an Israel-based writer and research analyst whose work has been primarily in the field of Israel advocacy and counter-propaganda. Amongst the organisations he has worked for are the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, NGO Monitor, the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee. He is currently Managing Editor of CiF Watch, a media watchdog group that monitors anti-Israel commentary at the The Guardian's 'Comment is Free' blog.*

*"People resent the Jews for having emerged from their immemorial weakness and fearlessly resorted to force. They thereby betrayed the mission that history had assigned to them – being a people...that did not get tangled up in the obtuse narrowness of the nation-state."*

**Pascal Bruckner, *The Tyranny of Guilt***

Tisha B'Av is a day of mourning commemorating the many tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people, a number of which coincidentally have occurred on the same date in the Hebrew calendar. Primarily, Tisha B'Av commemorates the destruction of the first and second Temples, both of which were destroyed on the ninth of Av. On this day, however, we reflect also on the many other tragedies that befell the Jewish people, from the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 to the mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto (both of the latter also occurred on 9 Av).

Like many in Jerusalem, I spent some time on Tisha B'Av evening at the Kotel reflecting on these tragedies. But, I also could not help but view this painful annual recollection of suffering and catastrophe in the context of the Jewish community's often ambivalent relationship with power, and my new citizenship in the modern Jewish state, a nation often forced to exercise power in order to prevent additional tragedies from befalling the Jewish people.

Indeed, Israel's creation can be seen as a direct response to these tragedies, an attempt to turn history around, to act instead of being acted upon. Whether defending itself in war, or aiding/rescuing endangered Jewish communities around the world, the Jewish collective has at its disposal, for the first time in over 2000 years, a state apparatus with the means - logistically, politically, diplomatically, and militarily - to protect its interests, just as other people organized in nation-states have had through the ages.

However, with this organized exercise of power comes a price. Any exertion of power, any control over your own fate, inevitably carries with it a burden, the loss of a kind of innocence that is often projected upon people perceived to be powerless. It is a burden that many Jews seem unwilling or unable to bear.

Israeli military power (exercised against terrorism and small scale regional threats, and in actual wars against state actors, and its territorial repercussions), and the relative success and political power of Jewish communities in the West – as well as the influence of a broader political culture which selectively eschews particularistic moral sympathies which fall on the wrong side of the arbitrary post-colonial divide – seems to instil in many a loss of identification with their fellow Jews. This chasm often finds expression in the need to identify in a way uniquely separate from such ethnocentric, seemingly crude, expressions of political and military power. Many Jews today find it more ethically comforting to identify with non-Jewish 'progressive' causes than with having to continually defend a state (one



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representing a very particular identity) in all the complexities and compromises that are invariably associated with even the most progressive national enterprises.

Before the birth of the modern Jewish state, the German-Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, in his pre-Holocaust book *The Star of Redemption*, expressed his belief that a return to Israel would embroil the Jews into a worldly history they should eschew. He viewed Judaism as a supra-historical entity, whose importance lies in the fact that it is not political but presents a spiritual ideal only. He saw the creation of a nation-state as a blow to the Jewish ideal of an apolitical spiritual life.

From the recent revival of *Mussar* (and other similar movements which aspire to furthering individual Jewish ethical and spiritual development) to the progressive mantra of “*Tikkun Olam*” (which views seeking “social justice” and performing acts of charity as the greatest expression of Jewish devotion), one sees this recurring Jewish tendency to pay greater attention to their own moral performance and good deeds than to the nitty-gritty, everyday, morally unglamorous, necessities of collective survival. It is an inclination that writer Ruth Wisse characterizes as “moral solipsism.”

While personal spiritual improvement is indeed admirable, as is the desire to tend to the needs of “the other” (such as by feeding the hungry or protecting the environment), it can also represent a political pathology – a moral escapism rooted in a wilful blindness to the undeniable political lessons of our peoples’ history. Wisse, in her book *Jews and Power*, argues that, historically, Jews, in displaying the resilience necessary to survive in exile, and not burdened by the weight of a military, believed they could pursue their mission as a “light unto the nations” on a purely moral plane. She demonstrates how, in fact, perpetual political weakness increased Jews’ vulnerability to scapegoating and violence, as it unwittingly goaded power-seeking nations to cast them as perpetual targets.

Throughout their pre-state history, Jews inhabited a potentially precarious position, ever exposed to the whims of rulers and the resentment of the populace. Their trust in God as the absolute arbiter of history allowed them to endure the unimaginable indignities of their situation, and to turn inward to concentrate on their own moral excellence. Wisse concludes that “Jews who endured the powerlessness of exile were in danger of mistaking it for a requirement of Jewish life or, worse, for a Jewish ideal.”

Indeed, some Jews I have known express their disapproval of Israel, or the Jewish community at large, by lamenting this newly acquired capacity to exercise political and military power by exclaiming that (with a tone that almost approaches longing), “Jews have always been the underdog, never the powerful.” Such Jews almost seem to have a fetish-like view of this weakness – their people’s historic lack of agency – and, in so doing, fail to see the role that such powerlessness has played in the suffering that has befallen Jews through the ages.

Yes, with national sovereignty there is a price that has to be paid in terms of responsibility for the occasional infliction of human suffering (even if unintentional) that invariably occurs as the result of even the most responsible and judicious use of national power. But in the lives of individual adults, as in the lives of nations, rarely is there the luxury of making choices that allow one to live a life of pristine innocence, nor one which offers decisions that will result in perfect justice for all concerned. Rather, with every serious decision in front of her, Israel must carefully weigh the costs and benefits of various possible acts and try to make the

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decision that will likely result in the most positive outcome, not only in the present, but also taking into account how such actions will affect the safety and well-being of future generations of Israelis, and the broader Jewish community, as well.

Israel has a profound responsibility in carrying out the arduous, thankless – but, ethically necessary – task of collective self-defence (a Zionist vision which Theodore Herzl referred to as “The Guardian of the Jews”). For Israel, in an era replete with concrete physical threats by state and non-state actors – as well as, less quantifiable, but no less dangerous, delegitimization campaigns by loosely connected political networks – an unapologetic and fiercely determined self-defence is an urgent moral duty.

Protecting yourself, your family, your community, and your nation from potential harm is consistent with the highest Jewish ethical standards. It is an idea the Jewish community must take seriously while lamenting the suffering of so many throughout our history on Tisha B’Av.

**THE BLOSSOMING**

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## Shulamit Kagan

*Shulamit Kagan, a clinical psychologist, is an Israeli-born Hebrew scholar with a special interest in Hebrew poetry. She has been a regular contributor to Jewish Affairs over many years.*

A loud wailing filled the air and after that the loud weeping of his mother and the soft weeping of his sister. The doctor came out to the balcony and laid a hand on Yakov's shoulder. He stood still as if perplexed and then returned to the room, where his father's body was being laid out on the floor. Somebody covered the body with a sheet and lit candles around it.

Yakov tried to imagine his father's voice, serene at last, but in front of his eyes was the image of the living father – the sad eyes, tight mouth, the brow wrinkle as if trying to solve a difficult problem. Yakov felt as if there was a heavy stone in his heart. If he could only weep, he thought, he would feel better. He screwed up his face to force a cry but nothing happened. His lips moved voicelessly, "what will become of me? Father in heaven, what will become of me?"

Rivkah and Sander Chaikin were nearly middle aged when they brought two children into the world. Yakov was two years younger than his sister and completely different. He was small, smaller than the average 16 year-old. He had a chilled face, his skin was clear and soft like the skin of a girl and his brown-black eyes were framed by long black lashes. "How beautiful he is!" people used to say behind his back but often within his ear shot, "what a pity he is not a girl". This remark used to cause Yakov much sorrow, especially when his manhood started torturing him at night.

Sander loved his children very much, but like many fathers he expressed his love by nagging, criticizing and fault finding. He so wanted his children to have the success that had eluded him; he so wanted them to have what he did not have. However, in doing so he prevented them from enjoying the only thing that life gives to every child – childhood.

Yakov's sister fitted herself in with her father's demands. She excelled at school, behaved politely and quietly and generally pleased everyone. Yakov, on the other hand, rebelled. It seemed that all the *joie de vivre* that was lacking in the family was given to him. He did not listen in the class, did not do his homework and passed from class to class by the skin of his teeth. Worse than that, there was not a prank or a practical joke in the school that he was not in some way involved in. Day in and day out his father would repeat his monotonous reprimand, "*Sheigetz*, do you want to become a swine herd? When will you become a *mentsch*? What will become of you?" His mother used to say nothing but just look at her son with sad eyes. This look, more than the father's rebuke, caused Yakov to regret his behavior and take a decision to mend his ways. This did not last long. He soon reverted to his old practices. He knew, of course, that his father's nagging was caused by deep love and worry, but his young and resilient spirit did not facilitate surrender.

Yakov's zest for life evaporated with his father's death. His heart was now filled with vague anxiety and fear, the reason for which he did not understand. Overnight, he seemed to have

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passed from a world populated by children to a world populated by grown, authoritative adults.

Immediately after *Shivah*, he got a job as a messenger boy in a large outfitting store. It was a strange, unfamiliar world. He felt like an outsider looking in with incompressible curiosity mingled with fear. He often said to himself that perhaps his father was right and that he would amount to nothing. If somebody would have asked him how he spent his time and what his dream for the future was, he would not have known what to answer.

His mother bought him, from his first wages, a suit. It was somewhat faded but it fitted him well and lent him an air of some masculinity. Every evening, he would put on the suit and wander the streets of the city. He never ceased to be amazed at metamorphosis in the streets, from the mundane during the day to the air of festivity in the evenings. He felt part of it and walk around in a vague dream.

One evening, Yakov was awakened from his dream by a very tall, wild-haired young man. He later learnt that the name by which the tall young man lived was Haim Arukim (a play on the double meaning: The Long Haim – Long Life). Haim Arukim was a painter who was looking for a model. Yakov's beauty and the air of suffering about him charmed the artist and he invited Yakov to his basement- studio. All sorts of people used to visit Haim's basement and lively discussions used to take place there. Yakov used to watch in wonder and envied the ease with which these people expressed themselves. On these occasions, he would resent the heavy burden that his life put on him. Sometimes, a deep hatred used to rise within him - hatred of his late father who left the family helpless, at his sickly mother and his self-righteous sister. Most of all, he hated himself.

Sometimes, though, his old zest for life asserted itself and he used to feel free. This used to happen in the evenings, when he was alone with Haim. Haim would paint and listen to Yakov, responding only with 'ah', 'hum' and 'I understand'. Yakov would open up and talk about the poverty at home and the futility of his life, but also of childhood pranks, laughter and dreams.

One evening, Haim asked him if he could perhaps bring a girl to be his model. "She needn't be pretty" said Haim, "but she must be unusual, different, not the run of the 'mill'".

Yakov thought of Yona immediately. Yona was one of the '*shponza*' girls in the shop. She was skinny and seemed to be all angles. In contrast to this were her huge dark eyes and her laughter. Her laughter was strangely musical. She laughed as though her heart was bursting with joy. In Yakov, her laughter evoked repressed desires. In his dreams, he would see her rising out of her threadbare cloths and laughing to him – only to him.

That morning, Yakov rushed early to the shop. The door was still closed. He waited, his heart beating wildly with anticipation and also fear of a rebuff. It was to be the first time he spoke to her. What if she laughed at him? Soon the *shponzah* girls appeared in the end of the street. Yona's laughter announced that she was among them. One by one, the girls disappeared through the doorway. Soon, Yona would disappear too. Yakov froze but at the last moment gathered his courage and cried – almost shouted: "Yonah, I need to speak to you". She looked at him, puzzled, and then lowered her eyes shyly. She listened to his explanation about Haim Arukim and the painting, then lifted her eyes, nodded her head, her lips forming the word 'alright'.

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From that day, a new relationship was formed between Yakov and Yona. They walked together to Haim's studio and spoke about all sorts of unimportant things. Often, he wanted to tell her about his real feelings but was too shy. Often, too, he felt that she too would like a more intimate conversation and was waiting for him to initiate it. At such times, he felt that she saw him as a coward and not worthy of her attention.

Haim Arukim worked steadily on their portraits. He painted the two of them facing each other in a picture he call 'The Blossoming'. It had two levels; on the surface, they looked as they were at present but above, superimposed on this, they looked as if they were rising out of darkness into light; they looked brave and full of hope. Yakov often looked at the picture. He was astonished at how much Haim understood the depth of his innermost wishes.

Yakov slept very badly at night. One night, he got up, took a sheet of paper and started pouring out his yearnings on it. Perspiration covered his body and ran from his forehead onto the paper, but he paid no attention. He felt as though it was not he that was writing but that the verses had a life of their own, that his fingers wrote automatically. He did not feel the time pass, but when he put his pen down he felt, for the first time since his father's death, a deep calmness. Smiling, he addressed his dead father: "You'll see, father, I'll be fine".

On the following morning, he put the folded sheet in Yona's hand. Since he had started writing, his need to unburden himself to Haim had become less and less. Also, his self-abnegation in the company of Haim's friends decreased. He realized that their seemingly highly held opinion to be a cover up for shallow thought and an attempt to put on airs.

He got used to speaking to Yona freely now. They would go for long walks, telling each other about their families, their problems and their dreams.

One morning, he found Yona waiting for him. "I have a surprise for you" she said. Yakov looked into her eyes. The old sadness was still there, but underneath was a new light – a light of hope. With both her hands, she handed him a thin book. He opened it. On the front page he found, printed in bold letters, "The Blossoming" and under this, in smaller letters: "A selection of Poems, by Yakov Chaikin".

He was puzzled for a moment, then understood.

"You...?" he asked.

"Yes", she said "I found a publisher."

Tears that were dammed in Yakov for so long burst forth. He wept long and hard. Yona put both her hands on the sides of his face and with her fingers wiped his tears. He bent his head and kissed the inside of her hands.

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **A SPRAT TO CATCH A MACKEREL**

**Ralph Zulman**

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

Raymond Ackerman is a well known philanthropic Jewish businessman. He was rated by the Financial Times as among the World's top 100 Most Respected Businessmen and is the first South African to receive the International Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship. He is further the author of the best-selling memoir - *Hearing Grasshoppers Jump* and *The Four Legs of the Table*, in which recounts how he built Pick'n Pay.

Pick'n Pay was founded in 1966, with four small stores. Over the years, the number of stores continually increased, and today Pick 'n Pay is a household name with no less than 792 stores in eight countries employing more than 60 000 people and generating an annual

turnover of around R60 billion. By his retirement 44 years later, Ackerman had changed the face of southern African retailing. *A Sprat to Catch a Mackerel*, Ackerman's latest book, is a brief, concise account loaded with sound common sense and based on his vast experience and knowledge. It is dedicated to "all those extraordinary human beings who create jobs, grow the economy and serve their customers, while leading the independent life they've always dreamed of."

The work consists of a prologue followed by twenty chapters, each listing a set of principles - numbering 53 in total - and an appendix, entitled 'Nuts & Bolts'. The title of each chapter is insightful. Examples include 'The Most Vital Ingredient of All' (Chapter 1), 'The Real Reason You're in Business Negotiating' (3), 'The Art of Persuasion' (7), 'Pricing – A Tricky Business' (9), 'Serving Your Customer –Three Cast-iron Rules' (11), 'Humility – Never Know Enough' (14), 'Marketing from the Heart' (16), 'Hope – The Importance of Optimism'(17), and 'Make Mistakes, Not Regrets' (19). In Chapter 8, entitled 'Empathy & Empowerment - The Guardians of your Greatest Asset' (in describing Principle 17), Ackerman quotes these words of Winston Churchill: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Principle 47 is 'Business practices may change but principles must remain' while Principle 49 is 'When you come to a roadblock, take a detour'. Quoting John Steinbeck, Principle 50 is

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‘What good is warmth without cold to give it sweetness?’ Principle 53 advises “take your work seriously but yourself lightly”.

Ackerman concludes the book with these wise sentiments: “Given that a business requires meticulous and ongoing research, it is finally time for me to hand over to you.

It is my fervent wish that you put this book down feeling more than ever ready to tackle the admirable task of running your own business and master your destiny. Good luck!”

I recommend a reading of this most interesting and enjoyable work.

*A Sprat to Catch a Mackerel: Key Principles to Build your Business* by Raymond Ackerman, with Pippa De Bruyn and Suzanne Ackerman, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2010, 215pp

## **NAZI PROPAGANDA FOR THE ARAB WORLD** **Gary Selikow**

This comprehensive and pivotal work by Jeffrey Herf details the dissemination of propaganda from Nazi Germany into the Middle East and North Africa during the Second World War, and the influence this has had to this day on Arab and Islamic antisemitism/anti-Zionism. During the war, Germany circulated millions of printed leaflets and broadcast thousands of hours of shortwave radio (all in Arabic) in order to disseminate its anti-Jewish ideology throughout the Arab world. It was at pains to demonstrate that it was anti-Jewish but in no way hostile to other Semitic peoples such as Arabs, for whom it professed great admiration and affinity with.

What Herf does is document the ideas, individuals and institutions behind this initiative. The first Axis broadcasts in Arabic were pioneered by Fascist Italy in its radio broadcasts on Radio Bari in 1934. At the same time Hitler, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Himmler and officials in the Reich Security Main Office demonstrated a strong desire to appeal to Arabs and Muslims. Nazi Germany stressed that it was an uncompromising foe of Zionism, which was to bring it much Arab support.

In June 1939, Saudi King Ibn Saud Khalid al-Hud-al Qarqani met with Hitler, who assured him of his long-standing sympathy for the Arabs and his willingness to offer them ‘active assistance’, especially in supporting the Arab cause in Palestine and preventing the realization of a Jewish national home there.

Nazi shortwave broadcasts in Arabic commenced in October 1939, and continued until March 1945 on the Nazi German Arab language radio station, the Voice of Free Arabism (VFA). The Nazi regime saw extreme antisemitism and anti-Zionism as pivotal points of entry into the Arab world. As the author explains:

Throughout the war Nazi Arabic radio repeated the charge that World War II was a Jewish war whose purpose in the region was to establish a Jewish State in Palestine that would expand into and dominate the entire Muslim and Arab world. Moreover, the broadcasts asserted that the Jews in the mid-Twentieth Century were attempting to destroy Islam just as their ancestors had been attempting to do for thirteen

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centuries...An Axis victory would prevent the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The same way Nazi propaganda exploited hundreds of years of Christian antisemitism to create its venomous propaganda, so did it make the same use in the Arab world of the antisemitism inherent in Islamic thought. This dissemination was to be a molding force in the ideas of both anti-Zionist Arab nationalism and Islamist radicalism, and is today echoed in the propaganda of such Islamist groups as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, the Khamenei-Ahmadinejad Islamist regime in Iran and a plethora of Islamic media. The same way the Nazis decried and despised the elective affinity between English Puritanism and the Jews, so did they take pride in the affinity between National Socialist ideology and what it selected from the traditions of Islam.

Hitler assured Palestinian Arab leader Haj Aminel Husseini that once he had defeated Soviet Russia and moved south from the Caucasus, the “policy of destruction of the Jewish element” would be extended to Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and Transjordan. In the event of an Axis victory in North Africa, *Einsatzgruppen* SS units were being prepared to be sent to the region to annihilate the Jews of Palestine and elsewhere in North Africa and the Middle East, in collaboration with the Palestine Arabs. This would certainly have happened had the German forces been victorious in North Africa, as they would then have overrun Egypt and from there invaded the Holy Land. Plans were made between the Mufti and the Nazi leadership for this extension of the Final Solution, which is illustrated in detail in Klaus Michael-Mallmann’s ‘The Plans for the Extermination of the Jews in Palestine’. The Mufti’s collaboration with SS officials extended to a close collaboration with Himmler himself, and with Adolf Eichmann. VFA, in its broadcasts to Egypt, urged greater militancy to prevent Palestine “becoming a Jewish colony”.

Axis-backed incitement intensified in 1942, with El Husseini and Yunus Bahri urging Arabs in Egypt and Palestine to “rise, murder the Jews and seize their property”. In October of that year, The Arab Nation broadcast from Berlin the message that the Arabs would refuse any sort of coexistence with the Jews. As Herf points out, “Refusal of any compromise on the Palestine issue was another logical outcome of the intertwining of political and religious themes in Axis propaganda”.

On 19 October 1943, the above station attacked Chaim Weizmann: “Perhaps this despicable usurer is hoping that the Arabs of Palestine will leave their country to the Jews. But wait, dirty Jew, Palestine will remain a pure Arab country as it has always been. It is you and your dirty relatives who will be kicked out and this will come about by the grace of Allah”.

Nazi propaganda presented Zionism as a component of a supposedly ancient Jewish vendetta against Islam. VFA declared that Jews hoped to use Palestine to expand and rule over a vast empire, from the Tigris in Iraq to as far as Morocco. On 21 November, it proclaimed, “Since the days of Mohammed the Jews have been hostile to Islam ... Hatred of Islam and of the Arabs is the main reason for the desire of the Jews to have Palestine for their own and if they take Palestine they will be in a good position over the other Arab countries”. 1000s of pamphlets and broadcasts disseminated the idea that the Jews kindled World War II, that the Arabs had been enslaved by the Jews of Palestine and that this fate awaited the Arabs of North Africa unless the Axis was victorious.



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As evidence of the annihilation of the Jews in Europe filtered to the world in 1943, the Arab Nation and VFA referred to this evidence as lies - an early example of Holocaust Denial – and asserted that the Jews “would not be able to take Palestine unless the world believes they are worthy of sympathy”. Thus was the stage set for the centrality of Holocaust denial in anti-Zionism.

Propaganda was also disseminated to the effect that the Jews were the glue that held together those earmarked as enemies of both Nazi Germany and the Arabs - Britain, the USA and the Communists. Arab religious leaders referred to Hitler as the reincarnation of Jesus (Isa) who, as predicted in the Koran, would return as a warrior to defeat Islam’s enemies. Shiites in Iraq were told that Hitler was the incarnation of the Eleventh Iman who would bring victory to Islam. On 1 March 1944, el-Husseini broadcast from Berlin to Palestine: “Arabs, rise as one and fight for your sacred rights. Kill the Jews wherever you find them. This pleases God, history and religion”.

After the defeat of Nazi Germany, the British declined to let the Mufti and other pro-Nazi Arab leaders be prosecuted as this would lose them much-needed Arab support. Hence, the Mufti was not brought to trial for incitement and actions that at times had been more inflammatory than those of German officials, such as Otto Dietrich, who were tried at Nuremberg. After the war the Palestine Arab Party, which supported the Mufti and was led by his cousin, Jamal al-Husseini, put pressure on the British to release all the incarcerated Axis leaders. It saw the Mufti’s wartime activity as a source of pride. Propaganda began by the Axis broadcasts was continued by the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as the governments of Syria and Egypt. The fact that Colonel Nasser hired Nazi propagandist Johan von Leers to oversee Egyptian information agencies illustrated his determination to continue to support ideas and propaganda about Jews and Israel that were rooted in Nazi propaganda and ideology.

The author has produced a very important work tracing the history of Islamic propaganda against Israel and Jews, one that demonstrates to both Islamic and Leftist anti-Zionist propagandists the company and legacy that they share.

Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World by Jeffrey Herf, Yale University Press, 2009, 352pp

## READERS’ LETTERS

The subtitle of Dr Azila Reisenberger’s ‘The Fundamental Significance of Foreign Language in Worship: A Response to David Benatar’ (*Jewish Affairs*, Rosh Hashanah 2010), suggests that she takes issue with something I said. However, instead of responding to my argument that Jewish atheists could logically engage in orthopraxis, she offers a tangential observation. More specifically, she claims that atheists are less likely to utter prayers if they know the meanings of the words they are reciting. Perhaps she is right that they are *less likely* to do so, but that is not a point of disagreement with me because atheists, even when they understand the prayers, *could* still utter them for reasons other than communing with a deity. After all, atheists *do* already understand that prayers are usually directed to a God, but those atheists

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who recite prayers are obviously not directing them to God and thus do not take prayer literally.

To illustrate her point, Dr Reisenberger refers to patriarchal prayers as well as the plea that God pour out his wrath on the gentiles. But even religious people could have concerns about such prayers when they understand them. Indeed, religious people might be more concerned to ask for things they do not want since they think that there is actually somebody listening to the prayers.

Perhaps this is why Dr Reisenberger slips from speaking about atheists to speaking about “religious people” in the final paragraphs of her paper. She says that “if religious people who recite prayers in foreign languages fully understood the nuances of what they were saying, they would be more hesitant in proclaiming a willingness to kill or die for their religions.” This, she says, is because such “extremist proclamations, often incite extremist actions or reactions, which may not be fully intended by the individual – who simply repeat utterances in unfamiliar languages”.

It is hard to see how this claim is supported by the examples Dr Reisenberger provides. Patriarchal language – referring to Our God and the God of our fathers (rather than fathers and mothers), for example – is not plausibly thought of as an incitement to violence. The point could be made somewhat less implausibly with reference to the plea that God pour out his wrath on the gentiles, but even that is not a call to *human* action. Matters are left squarely in God’s hands.

Even if suitable examples of inciting prayers were provided, it would be very difficult to make sense of Dr Reisenberger’s claim. While ensuring that religious people understand their prayers might result in some of these people desisting from uttering prayers that could be construed as incitement, it would also make those with no such sensitivities more prone to being incited. Whereas previously the latter would not have understood the inciting prayers, that impediment would be removed once they understood them.

Dr Reisenberger’s argument cannot be saved by dropping reference to incitement. Those who are willing to kill themselves or others for their religions are the very people who would be least likely to be disturbed by knowing the meaning of the kind of prayers to which Dr Reisenberger refers. And those who would be disturbed to learn the meaning of those prayers are the people who, even in their ignorance of the meaning, would be very unlikely to kill in the name of religion. Thus, understanding the meaning of prayers is hardly likely to be a bulwark against extremism.

**Professor David Benatar**  
**Cape Town**

Congratulations to Gwynne Schrire on her wonderful article ‘The German Jewish Immigrant Contribution to South African Art’ (Rosh Hashanah, 2010). A number of those individuals she mentions were known to me personally. When I was running first ‘Show Service’ and then ‘Computicket’ in Johannesburg, I met a lot of Jewish families who lived in the suburbs of Hillbrow/Berea/Yeoville and who were regular theatre and concert-goers. When I visited them socially, I used to marvel at the SA art on their walls, all bought in the 1930s, ‘40s, ‘50s

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and '60s. When they were very elderly, a painting would sometimes be missing. When I asked what had happened to it, the answer would be "my children who have left SA need the money" or "I need more money to pay for all the tickets I buy and of course for living expenses". Very few of them had pensions, but most of them had paintings.

When I was in Australia recently, I asked long-standing friends how they could afford the homes they were living in and the answer invariably was, "I sold three of my six Irma Sterns", or "I sold a Kentridge/Pierneef etc etc". There was still so much SA art on their walls, and the way prices are going they are all going to live very comfortably, possibly doing what their parents and grandparents had done over the years in SA.

**Percy Tucker**  
**Cape Town**

In your Rosh Hashanah 2010 issue Daniel Mackintosh ('Speaking out against injustice? Re-examining the SA Jewish Board of Deputies' response to Apartheid, 1948-1976') writes: "By making the comparison between German youth after the Holocaust and the South African Jewish youth of today, I am not drawing a direct moral equivalence between the complicity of Germans in perpetrating the Holocaust and South African Jews. Rather, the comparison is made to recognize that a time has come for the hard questions about our past to be asked by the Jewish youth of today."

Although I am not part of the South African Jewish youth "of today" (being neither South African nor young), I think it is legitimate to pose a few personal questions to the writer:

- (1) Has his own family benefited from apartheid in any way whatsoever?
- (2) Does his family own any property in South Africa which might have been acquired from capital that was amassed during the apartheid era?
- (3) Who paid for his education? Was it at least partially financed from money that was obtained during the apartheid era?

I know nothing about Mr. Mackintosh's family. However, I think that since he is calling for a Jewish Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be set up, he should make public its financial and political activities during the apartheid era. This information should not be limited to his parents. What about his grandparents?

My concern is that the writer is himself a product of apartheid. If, having examined his family's tax returns (1948-1994), I find that there is evidence of capital accumulation, I believe that he has no option but to ensure that all 'racist money', and any houses or flats that were bought, be immediately forwarded to the ANC Youth League. I have no doubt that such a contribution would be appreciated by the Youth League's leadership and would be spent on various youth projects.

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Please do not imagine that I am advocating some sort of Jewish witch hunt. This is not *The Crucible* and I am not alleging that Mackintosh's mother and grandmothers were witches. I do not believe for one moment that they were actually casting spells during the apartheid era. However, I am concerned that, in this new production, they might have also been exploiting a black maid, and if that is the case, then I think that the writer will have no option but to put them forward for investigation at the Jewish Truth and Reconciliation Commission (JTRC).

Furthermore, with regard to the substance of Mackintosh's article, I question his premise that apartheid was in the interests of white middle class South African Jewry.

On his blog "Writing Rights", Zackie Achmat states:

Mackintosh locates the South African Jewish leadership's collaboration with apartheid in their economic class interests.

He uses a range of data to prove his argument. One such study demonstrates that the average Jewish income in 1951 was "placed at R1432 compared with R882 for Anglicans (which could be used as an indicator to measure English-speaking whites) and R688 for Dutch Reformed adherents (a measure for Afrikaners).

Income inequality among white people in 1951 must surely indicate both colonial and apartheid privilege. Class was certainly a factor in Jewish accommodation with apartheid or to call it by its real name — the oppression of Black people.

With regard to the above, I think that the following is relevant. H M (Hymie) Basner was a Jew and a Native Representative in the South African parliament. In the post-apartheid radical historiography, Basner has unfortunately been somewhat neglected. It is therefore possible that Achmat and MacKintosh are ignorant of yet another major Jewish contribution to human rights and anti-racism.

Basner said the following during a debate in 1942, which contradicts the Achmat/MacKintosh thesis that apartheid was in the interests of the Jewish (or any other South African) middle class:

Is it necessary for me to state, except in broad terms, that the whole native population is starving, is ruined, is in misery, its health declining, being ravaged by disease and malnutrition?

So what have we done with the ten million human beings who live in our country? The whole of the non-European population we have degraded, as well as a quarter of the European population....

It was done by those mine owners who needed cheap native labour, and who could use the racial psychology of this country in order to further their own interest. It was done by a few land-owning companies, and by what I call the upper strata of the population - whom I do not call the farmers, but who are, and have been, and cannot forget that they are, feudal landlords...

The average white middle class of this country does not benefit by the conditions

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which we have imposed on the native people. On the contrary, we are holding it back as a whole, and we are holding it back, not for the sake of our racial pride or for our racial domination or even for our racial security. We are holding it back for the benefit of one big industry which needs cheap native labour, and for a small section which wants to make big profits.

My appeal today is this-and I must be understood at the present moment not to be suggesting that you close down the gold mines - we have got to say to these people: "Either you let go the reins which you have imposed on this country, or those reins will be taken out of your hands, either by the European section in a democratic form, or - and I say again that I am representing three and a half million people, and I live among them, and I know the lines along which they are thinking - the reins are going to go in an unconstitutional form.

For the record, Basner later employed Nelson Mandela as an attorney, and if one reads Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, there can be no doubt that he held Basner in high esteem.

MacKintosh also fails to explicitly state that South African Jewry overwhelmingly did not vote for the National Party in 1948, and I am, quite frankly, amazed that his thesis supervisor did not advise him to include that extremely relevant fact. MacKintosh's failure to do so calls into question his motivation for writing the article.

This is how MacKintosh attempts to describe the situation that Jews found themselves in:

The National Party was also under suspicion of antisemitism, which came into focus when they opposed the South African entry into World War Two (seen by Jews as a high priority in light of Nazi atrocities). Braude documents a few of the actual incidents of antisemitism prior to the 1948 elections, which created a very tense situation for SA Jewry. This included a meeting at Stellenbosch University, attended by over fifteen hundred people, at which a resolution was put forward to stop Jewish immigration by "legislation and other measures.

I would refer here to Benjamin Pogrund's article 'Why South African Jews feared the Nats' (<http://www.mg.co.za/article/1997-04-04-why-sas-jews-feared-the-nats>). This clearly states the harsh realities of the position that the Jews found themselves in, and one has to wonder, why MacKintosh was unable or unwilling to clearly state the facts.

**Anthony Posner**  
**Johannesburg**

I have been a subscriber to Jewish Affairs for many years and have found your journal to be of a consistently high standard. There is always stimulation, instruction and humor. In the Rosh Hashanah 2010 issue, I found the article by Cecil Bloom, *Some Gentile Zionists (Part II)*, of particular interest.

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However, there is an inaccurate statement with regard to General Jan Smuts. The article states: "... his Government was the first in the British Commonwealth ... to recognize the state of Israel". Unfortunately, Smuts lost the election in April 1948 and was out of power when the State of Israel was declared on 14 May 1948. To their credit, the Nationalist Party government was quick to recognize the State of Israel and if I remember correctly Dr. D.F. Malan was the first or one of the first Prime Ministers in the British Commonwealth to visit it.

**E S Benjamin.**  
**Cape Town**