

JEWISH --- AFFAIRS



Pesach 2012

Price R50,00
incl. VAT
Registered at the GPO
as a Newspaper

ISSN 0021 • 6313



9 770021 631019

Out of the Ordinary®



Rejoice in freedom

Chag sameach



Specialist Banking / Asset Management / Wealth & Investment

JEWISH AFFAIRS

MISSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

EDITORIAL BOARD

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

David Saks *SA Jewish Board of Deputies*

ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD

Professor Marcus Arkin *South African Zionist Federation*

Suzanne Belling *Journalist and editor*

Dr Louise Bethlehem *Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

Marlene Bethlehem *SA Jewish Board of Deputies*

Cedric Ginsberg *University of South Africa*

Dr Elaine Katz *University of the Witwatersrand*

Professor Marcia Leveson *University of the Witwatersrand*

Naomi Musiker *Archivist and Bibliographer*

Professor Reuben Musiker *University of the Witwatersrand*

Gwynne Schrire *SA Jewish Board of Deputies*

Dr Gabriel A Sivan *World Jewish Bible Centre*

Professor Gideon Shimoni *Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

Professor Milton Shain *University of Cape Town*

John Simon *University of Cape Town*

The Hon. Mr Justice Ralph Zulman *Appeal Court of South Africa*

SECRETARY – Golde Goldsmith

TYPESETTING/PRINTING – Bookpress, Johannesburg

© South African Jewish Board of Deputies 2011

Permission to reprint material from JEWISH AFFAIRS should be applied for from

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies

JEWISH AFFAIRS is published 3 times annually

Annual subscription R180 including VAT and postage

Overseas: Surface Mail US\$30 or BPS25

Air Mail US\$70 or BPS50

Postal Address: PO Box 87557, Houghton 2041

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

The Editor, JEWISH AFFAIRS, PO Box 87557, Houghton 2041,
david@beyachad.co.za

The Editorial Board reserves the right to cut the length of articles accepted for publication, and to make any stylistic changes which it may deem necessary.

JEWISH AFFAIRS

VOL. 67 ♦ NO. 1 ♦ PESACH 2012

Editor: David Saks

SOUTH AFRICAN JEWRY IN POST-APARTHEID SOCIETY

One Foot Out: Young Capetonian Jews in Post-World Cup South Africa <i>Dan Brotman</i>	3
Jewish Contributions to Johannesburg Inner City Development <i>Naomi Musiker</i>	12

SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH ARTISTS

Art as Protest: Jewish Inversions of the Crucifixion Motif <i>Gwynne Schrire</i>	17
Herman Wald – His Life and Work <i>Ute Ben Yosef</i>	24
Jewish law and aspects of the work of Herman Wald <i>Natalie Knight</i>	28
Sidney Goldblatt: the Artist and the Man <i>Frank Startz</i>	32

MEMOIRS

Grandma's Fur Coat <i>Annette Dubovsky</i>	36
Rhodesian Memories of a Jewish Prosecutor <i>Norman Sher</i>	37

BOOK REVIEWS

The Final Prize: My Life in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle <i>David Saks</i>	40
South Africa's Brave New World: The Beloved Country since the End of Apartheid <i>Ralph Zulman</i>	42
The Ochberg Orphans and the horrors from whence they came <i>Lionel Slier</i>	43

READER'S LETTER

<i>Mendel Katz</i>	47
--------------------------	----

FRONT COVER IMAGE:

The Aron Kodesh of the old Berea Hebrew Congregation in Johannesburg, designed by Herman Wald (see inside). Photo by Jac de Villiers

ONE FOOT OUT: YOUNG JEWISH CAPETONIANS FACE A POST-WORLD CUP SOUTH AFRICA

*

Dan Brotman

The South African Jewish community is currently experiencing attrition through emigration, which has diminished the number of residents by close to 50% since the end of *apartheid* in 1994. The Cape Town Jewish community in particular has a distinct character, and thus a different outlook and relationship with the country. This paper explores the narrative of that community through historical experience, analysis of the available statistics, and qualitative interviews, in order to evaluate the outlook of young Capetonian Jews (especially regarding emigration) following the successful 2010 FIFA World Cup. This research further focuses on those between the ages of 18 and 34, whose decision to stay or leave Cape Town will most drastically impact the community's viability.

Beginning with the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, Jews have historically emigrated en masse in relatively short periods of time following an existential threat.¹ Jews in South Africa have not emigrated due to one particular event or even circumstances targeting specifically Jews, but rather in response to a multitude of political, social, and economic transformations in the country. South African-born Australian Professor Colin Tatz of the University of New South Wales explains that "fleeing was never in question for white South Africans," with an average gap of "two years...between decision and actual movement [for white South Africans]."² Even in a post-*apartheid* South Africa, young Capetonian Jews continue to weigh a variety of recent political, economic, and social developments when evaluating their options for the future. While the community as a whole is currently more optimistic than in the past several years about the country's future, it holds onto a fear based on historical precedence that circumstances at home can

deteriorate quickly, and thus one must always have an escape plan for the future.

Tatz defines an *aggregate of events* as "political, economic, social and psychological forces which accumulate and help build up a perception, or recognition, that it is time to think of moving, and then to act on them."³ Unlike previous 20th Century Jewish migrations, there was no *single* event that spurred South African Jews to emigrate en masse. Although the community reached its peak in the early 1970s (comprising 118 200 members)⁴, there are today an estimated 72 000-85 000 Jews remaining in the country⁵, with 15 500 in Cape Town.⁶ Between 1981 and 2005, 40% of the community (47 000 people) left South Africa, with 38 000 departing between 1970 and 1990⁷. The emigration of younger community members during this period resulted in the median age rising from 31.9 in 1970 to 38.9 in 1991.⁸

While 800,000 to 1 million whites left the country from 1996 to 2006, a whopping 40% of Jews did so during a similar period⁹. After having reviewed the latest communal survey and interviewed young Capetonian Jews on whether or not they intend building their lives in South Africa, I hope to better understand why the question of "staying or leaving" is so prominent in the Capetonian Jewish psyche, and particularly among young people.

Historical Context: The Migration of Jews to South Africa

In March 1881, Tsar Alexander II of Russia was assassinated by a radical group called The People's Will Party. As Russian Jewess Gessia Gelfman was one of those implicated in the assassination, her participation was used to justify attacking thousands of Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe. Six weeks after the assassination, anti-Jewish pogroms targeted hundreds of Jewish communities with permission from the authorities. The May Laws were introduced the following year, which barred Jews from leaving the Pale of Settlement¹⁰ and placing other restrictions on the already impoverished population. This *aggregate of events* resulted in

Dan Brotman is Media and Diplomatic Liaison officer at the Cape Council at the SA Jewish Board of Deputies. He holds a BA (Honours) in International Relations from the University of Oregon, and is a regular contributor to local and international publications on issues relating to South African Jewry.

three million Eastern European Jews emigrating between 1880 and 1914; most immigrated to the United States. During this period, Jewish men who had previously immigrated to South Africa began writing home of the good conditions. Most South African Jews today are the descendants of the 40 000 mainly Lithuanian Jews who followed these veteran immigrants between 1880 and 1914.

Part I – “Past”: The History of the Emigration of Jews from South Africa

Specific post-1948 events and the subsequent political climate that followed created a gradual *aggregate of events* for Capetonian Jews, which resulted in many of them deciding to emigrate. In the specific case of South Africa, Tatz believes that it was a build-up of many events and factors that ultimately resulted in South African Jewish emigration throughout four specific periods, which he lists as: 1) Before the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, 2) From Sharpeville to the 1976 Soweto Uprising, 3) periods of states of emergency and wars, and 4) the period leading up to, and since the release of Nelson Mandela.¹¹

From Ostracized to Integrated: Before the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre

The South African Jewish community was very uncertain of its future when Daniel François Malan of the National Party defeated Jan Smuts' United Party in the 1948 general elections. As Minister of the Interior, Malan had introduced the 1930 Quota Act, a law that put an end to Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. Only a few months after *Kristallnacht*,¹² he spoke in front of over 1000 people, referring to 'parasites' who exploited the financial markets and common people, which was code language for Jews.¹³ Given Malan's previous record as Minister of the Interior, his victory caused massive panic within the Jewish community. On the eve of the 1948 general elections, historian Arthur Keppel-Jones wrote a satirical piece called *When Smuts Goes*, in which he predicted a major anti-Jewish pogrom (which never happened) following the National Party's rise to power. Describing the Jewish community's demise from a time in the future, Keppel-Jones wrote that this hypothetical pogrom deprived young Jews of career aspirations and caused mass emigration of Jewish families,¹⁴ similar to the experience of their Lithuanian ancestors.

Malan's 1948 election victory became one of the first *aggregate of events*, resulting in thirteen Jewish families immigrating to Australia for ideological reasons that same year.¹⁵ These families made a conscious decision to leave South Africa due to Malan's previous record of antisemitism and racism, which later manifested itself in his decision to strengthen and expand the Immorality Act of 1927 and seek to abolish the

Cape Coloured franchise.¹⁶ Gerry Shnier and Jennifer Luntz are two separate examples of 'liberal' Jews who left South Africa in the early to mid-1960s due to the strengthening of *apartheid*. Shnier recalls feeling that, "As human beings, and particularly as Jews, we could not be residents of a country which enslaved its Coloured community." Luntz justifies her decision to leave South Africa due to her inability "to live with my conscience in a society which granted me the opportunity to get a good school education ... because I had a White skin."¹⁷ Jews who emigrated from the late 1940s up until the early 1960s are often assumed to have been ideologically liberal, Communist or active opponents of the apartheid regime.¹⁸

Ideological-based emigration would increasingly be replaced over the next two decades by emigration spurred by concern for personal safety and the country's future.

The build-up to the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre was characterized by the strengthening of apartheid laws and a general sense of repression. Two years after Malan's victory, the Suppression of Communist Act was passed in an attempt to curtail any opposition to the regime. Following his resignation in 1954, Malan was replaced by Johannes Gerhardus Strijdom, who Patrick Furlong describes as a "committed antisemite" and a member of the white supremacist *Broederbond*.¹⁹ It was under Strijdom that "God Save the Queen" was abolished as the co-anthem, and that District Six was destroyed under the bolstered Group Areas Act of 1950.²⁰ Following Strijdom's death in office in 1958, Dutch-born Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd developed a system in which black South Africans (who comprised over 80% of the country's population) were relegated to living on some 13% of the land in reserves, where according to Verwoerd, "[they can] live and develop along their own lines"²¹, and ultimately would comprise of separate states.

Struggling to Take a Stand: Between Sharpeville and Soweto (1960-1975)

The Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 marked the end of the nonviolent struggle against apartheid, with black leaders looking for more effective actions against the institutionalized system of discrimination. The "black problem" was becoming a greater part of everyday conversation for ordinary white South Africans. While many African colonies were being granted independence in the 1960s, South Africa was emerging as a pariah state both regionally and globally. British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan gave his famous "Winds of Change" speech to the South African parliament in 1960, in which he stated that the "winds of change" were sweeping throughout Africa, and implied that white South Africa too would eventually have to recognize and reconcile with its black majority.²² That same year, South

Africa elected not to remain part of the British Commonwealth and become a Republic, which led to white South Africans losing their status to freely immigrate to British Commonwealth countries.²³ White South Africans were beginning to feel the negative implications of living under the apartheid system, but little knew that the situation at home would become a lot more uncomfortable for all races over the next decade.

Crisis and Growing Dissent: 1976-1985

The Soweto Uprising in June 1976 resulted in 176 deaths and, unlike the Sharpeville Massacre, was aired live on television, which had recently been introduced to South Africa. Steve Biko's death in 1977 (at the hands of the Bureau of State Security) fuelled international outrage towards South Africa, but Biko's legacy in the Black Consciousness Movement continued to instil pride among black South Africans in their language and culture.²⁴ 1983 proved just as bad as 1976, with 469 industrial strikes, inflation rising to record levels, and 450 names on the 'banned' list. Afrikaner extremism was on the rise, with Eugène Terre'Blanche and his *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* supporters parading openly in uniform.²⁵ Tatz describes the typical white emigrant of this decade as "appalled or frightened by the Soweto uprising and police massacres."²⁶

The Beginning of the End: 1986-1990

Despite international sanctions, *apartheid* South Africa was able to stay afloat into the 1980s partially due to the insistence of US President Ronald Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement" with the regime of Pieter Willem Botha. Capetonian emigrant Gillian Heller says, "The mid-80s was a time of great political instability in South Africa. Because of embargoes on news reporting from the townships, we knew little of the truth of what was going on, but one certainty was that life as we knew it in apartheid South Africa was going to change. The big fear was that the transition to a new status quo would be a bloodbath ... this is the reason why I emigrated."²⁷

A state of emergency was declared in 35 districts in July 1985, and at any one time South Africa had 20 000 troops in active military duty throughout South Africa, Southwest Africa (Namibia), Angola, Lesotho, and Botswana. That same year, private businessmen began meeting with the ANC leadership outside of South Africa, as a general consensus began to emerge among whites that negotiations with the ANC were necessary. Tatz reports that during this period, "leaving South Africa was now becoming much more thinkable, and viable. A cross-over point had been reached – the one at which the individual who could once say 'none of this affects me' was now able to admit that a great deal of all this was affecting him or her."²⁸ The main catalysts to

emigrate during this period were the states of emergency, growing urban guerrilla warfare, and increasing crime.²⁹

In 1990, de Klerk announced that he would release Nelson Mandela, suspend the death penalty, and un-ban the ANC and other opposition parties. South Africa was on the brink of change,³⁰ and black majority rule was now imminent. Tatz describes the period leading up to black majority rule and the black-on-black violence prior to the 1994 elections as leading to rapid emigration by white South Africans, as "most people could not believe that the non-violent transfer of power could stay non-violent."³¹ As one 1989 Jewish emigrant explained: "The political, rule of law and financial future situation there appeared to be heading in the wrong direction."³² Regardless of which side of the fence Jews were in respect to apartheid, the period from 1986-1990 was filled with uncertainty over imminent change.

With the demise of *apartheid*, Jews continued to leave South Africa in droves. Although now democratic, a new black government and soaring crime rates (particularly in Johannesburg) created a new set of concerns for those who did not leave during the turbulent *apartheid* years, and led to further emigration from the Mandela years to the present.

Cohesion and Insularity: 1990-Present

Lack of personal safety became a major catalyst for emigration beginning in the late 1980s, with crime rates eventually peaking in 1999 and 2000. Only three years following the first democratic elections in 1994, Interpol reported that South Africa had the highest per capita rates of murder and rape in the world,³³ and in 2001 the BBC reported that "South Africa is the most dangerous country in the world which is not at war."³⁴ 1999 emigrant Merle Finkel left because of "crime, violence, and I saw no long-term future. There was great disappointment with the attitude of the new government in fulfilling their promises."³⁵ Tatz describes crime as the prime motivator for Jewish emigration in the post-2000 era, which created an unbearable situation for some whites who had previously been accustomed to living in *apartheid*-era safety.³⁶

Between 2000 and 2008, 44% of Jewish emigrants chose Australia, 18% the US, 12% Israel, and 9% Canada. One recent emigrant commented on her choice to move to Australia: "If these problems are realistically addressed [under the current leadership of President Jacob Zuma], I would not rule out the possibility of coming back. However ... as a young family, we see ourselves as going to a first world country with a low crime rate, a similar climate and the important factor of a big Jewish community in Australia."³⁷

As the 2005 Kaplan Survey (see Part II) was conducted before some of the country's more

recent changes (i.e., the election of Jacob Zuma, the Democratic Alliance taking control of the Western Cape, the global recession/stronger Rand, the World Cup, and the rising prominence of ANC Youth League President Julius Malema), my interviews with young Capetonian Jews highlight some of the latest developments in the country that were not addressed in that Survey. I believe that these more recent events are vitally important and frequently discussed among 18-34 year old Jews, who ponder whether or not to stay in South Africa. If the majority of this age group decides to stay in the country, they will emerge as some of the future leaders of the Jewish community and of their nation. If most of them choose to leave, the community's future viability will be seriously compromised.

Part II – “Present”: Findings from the 2005 Kaplan Survey

In 2005, a nationwide survey was conducted of the South African Jewish community by the University of Cape Town's Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research. It was based on 1000 face-to-face interviews throughout the nation, and was divided proportionately according to where the Jewish community currently resides. With the second largest Jewish community in South Africa and about one-quarter of the Jewish community, Cape Town provided 250 respondents.³⁸ The purpose of the survey was to check on the community's *attitude-needs-and-behaviour-barometer*, in order to better understand the current trends in a community that is undergoing demographic change due to low birth rates and emigration. Of the 250 respondents in Cape Town, 46% were male, and 54% female. I focused on the responses of 18-34 year olds, who comprise of 27% of the total respondents.³⁹

An Educated and Professional Community

1993 emigrant Doreen Wainer explained her decision to emigrate due to her sense that the “academic education standards would decline in the public school system.”⁴⁰ Regardless of whether or not Wainer's concerns about the public school system came true, the survey shows that the average level of education among South African Jews has in fact *increased* since the 1998 survey, with 91% of Jews now holding a high school matriculation certificate. 64% of Jews have obtained post-high school education, up from 56% in 1998. While only 32% had university qualifications in 1998, this had risen to 36% in 2005, with 56% of those holding a university degree having graduated with honours or above.⁴¹ The high level of education among South African Jews most likely gives the younger members the relative flexibility to succeed in their own country or to emigrate, making the question of migration extremely relevant among this group.

It is also noteworthy that Jews are becoming increasingly well-educated during an era in which South Africa is struggling to educate all of its citizens. Despite common complaints that government-supported Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)⁴² limits academic and professional opportunities for whites, Jews are obtaining degrees of higher education at astounding rates. One question I explored during my interviews was whether Jews pursued education more strongly, especially higher education, due the restrictions of BEE in terms of entrance requirements to university. Alternatively, the fact that the vast majority of Jews attend exclusive private Jewish high schools means that they are probably better prepared than most South Africans to enter and excel in the higher education system, which has very little to do with BEE.

Employment rates among Jews have remained consistently high from 1998-2005 compared to South Africa at large, with seven in ten Jews engaged in paid employment, and five in seven of those are engaged in full-time employment.⁴³ Once again, it is curious as to how the Jewish community has weathered the economic changes in the country over the past 16 years. They may have maintained high levels of employment due to their high level of education, the motivation to work harder despite the restrictions of BEE, and/or the practice of Jews hiring other Jews. Lastly, young Jews may be motivated to obtain a higher education due to cultural reasons, with some pursuing higher education in order to one day be able to leave the country permanently or compete for a job in an era where non-white South Africans officially get job preference. These questions I will consider in Part III.

Staying versus Leaving

Of the 92% of respondents who characterize themselves as likely to remain in South Africa over the next five years (the highest recorded preponderance of Jews *ever* wanting to stay in the country), they were asked to give their top three reasons for wanting to stay. Of all reasons given, 90% mentioned financial/business/career factors, 86% mentioned an emotional attachment to the country, and 69% mentioned staying close to family. Although I was surprised that family unification was not given as the top reason for staying, it is possible that the dispersal of South African Jewish families around the globe now means that staying no longer automatically *guarantees* family unification. Alternatively, the relative ease with which South African Jews can now travel (as opposed to during the *apartheid* years) to visit loved ones may mean that family unification is less of determining factor as to in which country one chooses to reside.⁴⁴ Researchers observed that there was a heavier emphasis in 2005 on “positive” reasons for staying (i.e. “emotional attachment to South Africa”) over the

many negative factors mentioned in 1998 (i.e. “too hard to start over elsewhere”).⁴⁵

When this same group of 92% respondents who plan to stay in South Africa over the next five years were asked what would make them feel that they no longer want to live in the country, a remarkable 97% cited crime/personal safety concerns/militancy/anarchy/ corruption, 68% cited a change in quality of life, 64% cited issues relating to Jews (i.e. antisemitism and anti-Zionism), 55% cited career/financial/ business/economy, and 38% cited family/friends/relationship issues.⁴⁶ It is difficult to explain why 90% of respondents mentioned career/financial/business/economy as a reason for *staying*, while a mere 55% mentioned that a deterioration in this category would cause them to consider *leaving*.⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that only 15% would consider leaving if the economic situation deteriorated, 8% if affirmative action became too restrictive, 6% if Zimbabwe-like hostilities were unleashed against whites, and 1% if corruption increased.⁴⁸ The survey indicates overwhelmingly that Jews choose to remain in the country due to perceived career opportunities, an emotional attachment to the country, and family reasons, while a major deterioration in the level of personal safety or quality of life would cause them to leave. My interviews in Part III confirm the survey’s findings on questions of staying versus leaving.

While only 7% of respondents indicated they were fairly (4%) or very likely (3%) to leave in the next five years, the top reasons mentioned by over 20% of those likely to emigrate in the next five years are (in order of prevalence) due to personal safety concerns, reunification with family overseas, worries about the future, and the advancement of their careers. These numbers have changed since 1998, when 79% of those likely to emigrate mentioned crime, whereas it dropped to 54% in 2005.⁴⁹ 90% of respondents in 1998 rated the level of personal safety in the country as ‘poor’, while in 2005 that dropped to 60%,⁵⁰ meaning that although personal safety is still a primary motivator for emigration, South African Jews also see the level of personal safety as improving. This may explain why only 71% planned on staying in the country in 1998, versus 92% in 2005.⁵¹ However, the survey did not ask if Jews have been investing more money over the past few years hiring private security companies or fortifying their homes, as this could have a major impact on their sense of security, even if in reality the safety situation has deteriorated.

When respondents were asked to list the top three countries which they would consider emigrating to (if they *had* to leave), Australia received the most mentions (61%), followed by the US (55%), Israel (51%), UK (38%), Canada (18%) and New Zealand (8%). While the rankings for 25-34 year olds are comparable to those of their older counterparts, only 18-24 year-olds indicated a top preference for the US and UK,

followed by Australia and then Israel.⁵²

Part III – “Future”: Four Interviews with Young Capetonian Jews

Although the 2005 Kaplan Survey presents many noteworthy statistics, the mere fact that is it a broad national survey means it does not offer a platform for Capetonian Jews to tell their personal narratives, which most certainly play a role in the way in which they answered the questions. In Part III, I have selected four young Capetonian Jews under the age of 34, each of whom brings a unique perspective and outlook to questions regarding the emigration of Capetonian Jewish young adults. While some of the interviews I conducted substantiated my assumptions regarding the behaviour and thought processes of young Capetonian Jews, some of their statements raise compelling questions, with implications that suggest directions for further enquiry.

Although South African by birth, **Ryan** and **Dean Solomon**⁵³ (aged 25 and 22) only arrived in Cape Town in 2004, having been raised by their Zimbabwean-born parents in Bulawayo. Their parents left for Johannesburg in the late 1970s, and it was here that Ryan, Dean, and their older brother Craig were born. After starting a business from scratch proved to be too difficult, their parents brought the boys back to Zimbabwe, where their father joined the family business. Transnational migration is therefore not new to the brothers, all three of whom currently live in Cape Town, though their parents remain in Bulawayo. While their father’s brother and sister live in Cape Town, their mother’s brother and parents live in Australia. The dispersal of Ryan and Dean’s extended family is universal in the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean Jewish community, which at its peak had about 7000 members in the 1970s⁵⁴, and which today numbers little more than 250.⁵⁵

Aside from having relocated to South Africa as young adults, Ryan and Dean offer a unique perspective as Zimbabweans. They more consciously look for warning signs of trouble, as they have previously witnessed the deterioration of the economy, government, and services in their homeland. When asked if they see signs that South Africa might face a similar fate, Ryan expresses concern over the invasions of white farms, although it was “on no scale near to what happened in Zimbabwe, and I do not think it will be. There is too much foreign investment here.” Dean reminds Ryan in the interview that Zimbabwe was once “the highest ranked country in Africa ... [but] it takes one *shmuck* to stand on top and say ‘this is how it’s going to work’, and completely screw everything over.” Ryan believes that the multi-party system in South Africa⁵⁶ will prevent it from ever becoming a Zimbabwe-like dictatorship. Although Ryan appears to be more confident than Dean that South Africa is not

heading down a path towards chaos, Dean cites recent local power cuts and food shortages as similar to the early signs of national crisis experienced in Zimbabwe.

When the situation in Zimbabwe drastically deteriorated in 2000, Ryan and Dean's parents applied to immigrate to Australia, but eventually decided against it due to the difficulty of starting over. Their decision was based on the perception of Australia as a 'utopia' (in Ryan's words), due to a similar climate and lifestyle, and a relatively low crime rate. Dean cites the fact of their mother's family already being in Australia as a reason for why it was their parents' first-choice destination. Although their older brother was admitted to a university in Perth, he relocated to Cape Town instead when he realized that his parents were not going to leave Zimbabwe. Ryan came to Cape Town to commence his marketing degree, while Dean chose to complete high school at a Durban boarding school. Neither brother saw his decision to come to South Africa as being permanent, but rather as a necessary step to furthering his education. While Ryan did not choose to study marketing for any particular reason relating to emigration, Dean says that he chose chartered accountancy because in high school, "they tell you what the most sought-after jobs are. And accountants are in the top ten." He adds that if accounting had not been desirable abroad, he would have chosen to study another subject.

After his experience of living under Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, Dean was extremely concerned when Jacob Zuma became President in 2009. However, when reflecting on Zuma's presidency after its first year, he expresses relief: "He [Zuma] has not done that much now as a president, but he has not done anything wrong. The guy had rape allegations against him, he is a polygamist... all these things are negative signs against him...someone you do not want to be running your country...and then you look at [then ANC Youth League President] Julius Malema." Ryan is proud of the current economic stability in South Africa, but believes that there will be no future for foreign investment if someone like Malema became president.

Together with their mother and older brother, Ryan and Dean began the process five years ago of applying for Polish citizenship, as their maternal grandfather was born in Poland. Both agree that this decision to obtain a European Union passport was to provide an option to leave (i.e. an "escape plan") should this ever be required. Although they could legally migrate tomorrow to Britain (as European Union citizens) or Israel (as Jews), or even to rejoin their parents in Zimbabwe, the brothers are committed to building a future in Cape Town. Says Ryan, "I like Africa. I have seen life in America, London ... it is not the same as here." However, both would leave the country if living in Cape Town was no longer possible. Dean explains: "I would not move anywhere

[else] in South Africa. I do not enjoy the lifestyle in Johannesburg behind closed doors, [and it is] polluted. I hate the feeling of being in Johannesburg. Paranoia. Durban I have lived in, and did not enjoy it. And after living in Cape Town, I cannot go back to living in a small town".

Although the brothers related instances of violent crime against family members, such as Ryan being robbed at gunpoint, and their aunt being beaten over the head during an armed robbery, both express a commitment to staying as long as the current situation does not change drastically. They express a love for living in their corner of Africa, and although now possessing European passports, intend to build their long-term futures in the Mother City.

Kelly Berzack⁵⁷, a 34 year-old self-employed masseuse and silversmith, is a first-generation Capetonian and second-generation South African, her parents having been born in Johannesburg and her grandparents in England and Lithuania. Of the three children in her family, she and her older brother live in Cape Town while her older sister has lived out of South Africa for more than 20 years and currently resides in New York. Explaining why her sister left, Kelly says "because she wanted an overseas education, and did not want to live in this country, ever." Kelly has a large extended family of South African origin in the United States (her father's brothers live in Atlanta and Los Angeles). Her perspective on migration and the South African situation is unique in that she belongs to the last generation to have grown up under *apartheid* (she matriculated in 1995) and thus witnessed first-hand the transition to democracy and subsequent rise in crime. She only recently moved back to Cape Town after a two-year stint in Israel, to where she immigrated in 2008 to marry her Israeli-born husband. She belongs to the roughly 8% of South African Jews who have previously emigrated and returned, and thus her choice to remain here is a conscious and careful decision.⁵⁸

Like Ryan and Dean, Kelly lives in Sea Point, which is locally known as 'the' Jewish neighbourhood in Cape Town.⁵⁹ She describes her childhood as peaceful and safe, and only remembers crime becoming an issue after the 1994 elections. Of her Sea Point childhood, she recalls: "It was blissful. I remember as a youngster walking Sea Point Main Road, or rollerblading at eleven o'clock at night. You could walk on the sea promenade at night without a care in the world. From about 1997-98, you began hearing stories about what was going on - people getting mugged, and so on".

One of the biggest changes to affect Kelly's life was the influx of street people to her neighbourhood. "It affects my life every day, as they live on my street. It is uncomfortable, it is noisy, and it stinks. They use the street as a toilet....Sea Point became like that in 1999 or 2000. They just came in from nowhere, and settled

themselves.” Kelly believes that the government should create *kibbutz*-like farm and factory jobs to get the poor off the streets, where many of them live. Prior to immigrating to Israel, she hired a private security company to patrol her street and escort her to her front door when she returned home at night. She has little faith in the local police, whom she believes are more intent on clamping down on law-abiding civilians than on potential criminals.

Violent crime has affected both Kelly’s family and friends. Five of the latter have been held up at gunpoint and/or have been mugged while driving, and a gun was held to her stepmother’s head during a break-in. Despite this, neither she nor her friends or immediate family want to leave the country. On the current safety situation in Sea Point, she says, “Personally, I worry that I may be naïve, but I feel that it is safer. I do not know how much it has to do with the FIFA World Cup, but it definitely feels like it has improved.”

Although Kelly believes that South Africa is at a junction from where it can either succeed or fail, she chooses to believe that it will succeed. As she does not currently have children, she feels under less pressure to worry about the future. She believes that most white South Africans are uncertain about the future, but for herself does not see South Africa becoming another Zimbabwe. She would rather move overseas than to another city in South Africa, as she is happiest when living in Cape Town: “I am who I want to be when I am here....I like the people, I like the views, I like the way we live — [the] cosmopolitan lifestyle. There is something for everyone here”.

Larry Hartmann⁶⁰ is a 29 year-old Cape Town-born fashion designer. Both his late father and mother are natives of Cape Town, but his grandparents arrived in South Africa as children from Germany and Lithuania. Larry’s mother belongs to the 43% of South African Jewish parents whose children over the age of 22 all live in South Africa, as Larry and his older brother both live in Cape Town.⁶¹ Typical of a South African Jewish family, his relatives are dispersed all over the world: His aunt lives in Switzerland, and he has five first cousins in the US and Israel. Unlike Dean, Ryan, and Kelly, Larry holds only South African citizenship. Having been raised by a single mother, he comes from a less privileged background relative to the rest of the Jewish community, and began working seven days a week at a pharmacy at the age of 16. He has not yet been overseas.

Unlike Ryan, Dean, and Kelly, only Larry has friends who have *both* been positively and negatively impacted by Black Economic Empowerment (BEE):

I have a black friend who is a designer. To her credit, she is incredibly talented and good at what she does, so it is not like she gets by on being black. However, it is certainly easier for

her to get a job than my white friends who are designers. I think that in concept it [BEE] is a good idea and is important for the previously disadvantaged community, the black community. If you did not have BEE, white people would have all the good jobs, and blacks would stay where they are.

Although Larry says that he has not personally been very affected by BEE due to his field (“I am not in a corporate industry, where it is so prevalent”), he tells of how he will never apply to work at his dream company due to his skin colour:

I would not even bother applying, because I know when we were studying at Tech, all the retailers would approach our college and ask for our student portfolios, and this company in particular would only ask for the black students’ portfolios, and not even look at the white students’ portfolios ... which is why the lecturers would not give them *anything* ... They said, ‘If you are not willing to look at all of our students, you are not going to look at any of them.’

Like Ryan and Kelly, but unlike Dean, Larry never considered choosing a career based on the possibility of taking it out of South Africa. He agrees with all three that a higher education was not necessary during *apartheid* for Jews to procure employment, and says that “now you need to be a little better than everyone else because there is BEE, and because the marketplace is more saturated.” Although Larry was not hired at his first fashion job due to a Jewish connection, he believes that young Jews are often hired by other Jews due to a sense of familiarity:

Jewish people have a reputation for being hard workers and for being successful. When I think about the Jewish people I know, and the jobs they are in (a lot of them are in property), they are in the same companies owned by Jews, or they are in finance, and are in the financial companies owned or run by Jews.

Most of Larry’s good childhood friends have left South Africa, with the vast majority having immigrated to Israel for a “sense of community” and others going to the US, Dubai and Australia. He believes that they were not actively pushed out of South Africa, but rather “left for better opportunities”. He adds that when they do visit, they are “in awe of Cape Town, and love it”, but nevertheless did not wish to live there.

Larry was attacked and injured in a mugging, and his best friend’s father was murdered in a robbery. Despite these traumatic events, he intends building his life in Cape Town. He is optimistic about the strengthening Rand, which he believes was partially the result of the 2010 World Cup. He mentions Wal-Mart’s interest in opening stores in South Africa as an indicator of a bright economic

future, and does not see the crime situation as deteriorating. Larry feels relief knowing that he could easily leave the country tomorrow for Israel should the situation in South Africa become unbearable. As to why he chooses to remain in Cape Town, he answers: "Because it is home. I love Cape Town. I do not love South Africa."

Conclusions

History has shown that when South African Jews sense a perceived catastrophic change about to take place in the country, a great many leave in droves. Jews have always been uneasy with their role in South Africa, whether it is through being seen as a barrier to Afrikaner success, accomplices or enemies of the apartheid system, or a minority ruled by a black majority government. The 2005 Kaplan Survey and interviews I conducted confirm a growing sense of cautious optimism among young Capetonian Jews. I observe that in the year 2010, there has been a growing sense of optimism among them as the result of a successful World Cup, a stronger Rand, the opposition party's takeover of the Western Cape, and a stable Zuma presidency. However, the rise of Julius Malema and the uncertainty over the future implementation of BEE were mentioned as serious causes for concern, and possibly (though not unanimously) warning signs that the country will become "another Zimbabwe".

Despite common complaints over BEE, young Jews appear to be weathering the perceived difficulty for whites to gain employment by obtaining higher levels of education and seeking employment from other Jews. It would be interesting to see data on whether the general white population also became more educated in the years 1998-2005, and if so, whether BEE serves as a motivator for young whites to pursue a higher education. An alternative explanation may be that the saturation of the job market in the post-apartheid era now means that all South Africans with professional aspirations (regardless of colour) must pursue a higher education, and thus this would be neither a uniquely Jewish nor white phenomenon.

It is noteworthy that talking of and actually leaving South Africa appears more prevalent among the 25-34 year-olds, such as Kelly's friends, who are split on whether or not to remain, and Larry's friends, of whom have already left. The younger Ryan and Dean say that the majority of young people in their social circle do not discuss leaving. While it is possible that their friends do not discuss doing so because they are still studying and are only now launching their careers, it is also possible that because this younger generation grew up entirely in post-apartheid South Africa, they are less compelled to leave because they never experienced the shock of the transition to black majority rule and general escalation in crime. One common denominator that both the

18-24 and 25-34 year olds share is constantly thinking about hypothetical "escape plans", whether it be applying for foreign citizenship or reassuring oneself that Israel offers open immigration to all Jews. The 2005 Kaplan Survey and all the interviewees indicate that young Cape Town Jews are more focused on the future of the city rather than that of the country, as any future migration would be transnational rather than to another South African city.

Young Capetonian Jews will most likely remain in South Africa for the foreseeable future, as there are many positive signs that both the city and country are heading in a positive direction. However, history has shown that sudden political instability can contribute so heavily to a South African Jew's *aggregate of events*, that the benefits of staying in South Africa, and more specifically in Cape Town, are overshadowed by fears for the future, and thus lead to emigration. I predict that if the Democratic Alliance becomes stronger both provincially and nationally, the more confident young Jews will be that they have a future in the country, even if their political involvement is limited to voting. While young Capetonian Jews are not necessarily leaving due to crime per se, they will not stay if they believe they are living in a "sinking ship", as the Solomon family realized in Zimbabwe.

The Capetonian and South African Jewish narrative is the quintessential story of migration. Just as their European ancestors emigrated due to an *aggregate of events* that included professional restrictions on Jews and widespread government-sponsored pogroms, so was the Jewish reality in South Africa marred with extreme fear for the future which culminated in another *aggregate of events* that led almost half of them to leave for more politically stable countries. This migration has created transnational networks of Capetonian Jews living at home and abroad, and is being maintained through online communities, class reunions, and more accessible international travel in a new South Africa embraced by the world.

Although the majority of South African Jewish emigrants do not return permanently to their land of birth, my interviews indicate that a more fluid outlook on migration is being created in the 21st Century among Capetonian Jews, in which dual citizenship and personal links abroad make two-way transnational migration far less challenging than before. While it is only safe to assume that Capetonian Jews will continue to leave and return to the Mother City in flux, the implications of the events of 2010 both at home and abroad may result in a greater number of them choosing to build their lives at home, due to post-World Cup cautious optimism and the country's relatively stable economic situation. As long as young Jews feel that there is political stability and promising economic opportunities in Cape Town, but at the same time know that they *can* leave should the country head in the direction of neighbouring

Zimbabwe, they will remain for the foreseeable future, living in cautious optimism, albeit with one foot in and one out.

Notes

- 1 Colin Tatz, *Worlds Apart: The Re-migration of South African Jews* (New South Wales: Rosenberg Publishing Pty Ltd, 2007), 14.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Tatz, 163.
- 4 Richard Mendelsohn and Milton Shain, *The Jews in South Africa* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2008), 149.
- 5 Mendelsohn and Shain, 214.
- 6 Herzlia Alumni Association, "Alumni Chairman's Message." <<http://www.herzlia.com/content/?ContentID=acbb20b8-ca77-4356-8b09-a2c9e7e17ee7&Section=3>> (accessed 2 November, 2010)
- 7 Note that this period is *before* the end of apartheid
- 8 Mendelsohn and Shain, 183.
- 9 Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, 2006, 93: Quoted in Tatz, 38.
- 10 A region to which most Jews in the Russian Empire were restricted to living prior to the 1917 revolution
- 11 Ibid., 162.
- 12 The November 1938 government-sponsored pogrom in Nazi Germany and Austria, in which thousands of synagogues and Jewish business were destroyed, 91 Jews killed and 30 000 Jewish men detained.
- 13 Patrick J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1991), 51,54.
- 14 Gideon Shimoni. *Community and Conscience: The Jews of Apartheid South Africa* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2003), 21.
- 15 Tatz, 165.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid., 171.
- 18 Ibid., 185.
- 19 Ibid., 166.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid., 168.
- 22 Ibid., 169
- 23 Ibid., 171
- 24 Tatz, 174.
- 25 Tatz, 176.
- 26 Tatz, 185.
- 27 Ibid., 46.
- 28 Ibid., 177.
- 29 Ibid., 185.
- 30 Ibid., 177-180.
- 31 Ibid., 182.
- 32 Quoted in Tatz., 180.
- 33 Schonteich and Louw, 4: Quoted in Tatz., 198.
- 34 BBC News, 16 April 2002: Quoted in Tatz., 198.
- 35 Quoted in Tatz, 199.
- 36 Tatz, 184.
- 37 Belling, Suzanne. *A new wave of South African emigration*. JTA. October 23, 2008.
- 38 Mendelsohn and Shain, 181.
- 39 Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research at the University of Cape Town (Kaplan Survey). *The Jews of South Africa 2005 – Report on a Research Study* (Shirley Bruk Research, May 2006) , 1-9
- 40 Tatz, 182.
- 41 Kaplan Survey, 11.
- 42 The South African government defines BEE as "an integrated and coherent socio-economic process that directly contributes to the economic transformation of South Africa and brings about significant increases in the numbers of black people that manage, own and control the country's economy, as well as significant decreases in income inequalities." See <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=70187>
- 43 Kaplan Survey, 237.
- 44 Ibid., 97.
- 45 Ibid., 99.
- 46 Ibid., 101.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid., 105.
- 50 Ibid., 64.
- 51 Ibid., 91.
- 52 Ibid., 88-89.
- 53 Ryan and Dean Solomon, interview on 03/10/2010.
- 54 Tatz, 38.
- 55 The brothers visited Bulawayo one week prior to the interview for their mother's birthday. They tell of both optimism and despair in Zimbabwe, with new government restrictions making it very difficult for their father to run his supermarket, while at the same time young expats (such as their first cousin) have returned to the country for economic opportunities.
- 56 The Democratic Alliance took control of the Western Cape in 2009. This is the first time that a non-ANC political party has taken control of a province since the 1994 elections.
- 57 Kelly Berzack, interview on 04/10/10.
- 58 Kaplan, 75.
- 59 41% of Cape Town respondents in the 2005 Kaplan Survey live in the Sea Point area. See Kaplan, 8.
- 60 Larry Hartmann, interview on 04/10/10.
- 61 Kaplan, 16.

JEWISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UPGRADING OF THE JOHANNESBURG INNER CITY

*

Naomi Musiker

According to the Urban Management Department of the City of Johannesburg, the Inner City is divided into four quadrants: Greater Ellis Park and Jeppestown, Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville, The City Centre (CBD) and finally Newtown, Fordsburg and Braamfontein.¹

Jewish tradesmen, entrepreneurs and property developers played an important role in the original establishment of the inner city. Examples of these are Isaac Sonnenberg, Leo Rosettenstein (Rosettenville), Samuel and James Harris Goldreich (Hillbrow) and Hyman Morris, who invested in the city centre. One of the most important of these early entrepreneurs was Barney Barnato, who founded the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company which developed Doornfontein and Berea.

Johannesburg inner city began experiencing massive degeneration in the 1980s following the relocation of many businesses to the outer suburbs. By the late 1990s, there was an urgent need to remedy the urban crises in the areas of safety and security, service delivery, urban management, traffic management, refuse collection and road rehabilitation.

Even prior to that date, some private initiatives were undertaken to regenerate the Johannesburg inner city in the form of the transformation of old buildings into theatre and restaurant facilities.

In 1967 **Adam Leslie**, musical entertainer and theatrical personality, took over a building in End Street, Doornfontein, that was first designed by Sir Herbert Baker for Lady Farrar, wife of the mining magnate Sir George Farrar. The foundation stone of the South African College of Music was laid in 1906 and contained a small but impressive concert hall. Leslie became interested in restoring the little theatre in End Street after his lease at the Intimate Theatre expired. He converted the

building into a musical hall of 200 seats, with the help of his then partner, Joan Blake, and used it for his musical revues. He also established a restaurant and two bars. The Music Hall nostalgically captured the early days of Johannesburg as a mining town. Bill Hudson became manager after the departure of Blake. In 1975, partly for reasons of health, Adam Leslie sold the Music Hall, which sadly was never again used for this purpose².

Another talented theatrical personality who, from 1968 onwards, transformed unlikely venues into viable theatre spaces was **Mannie Manim**. The Arena Theatre in Doornfontein, which later made way for the Wits Technikon, used to be an old house. It was at the Arena that famous names in the theatre world such as Mannie Manim, Barney Simon, Vanessa Cooke, Janice Honeyman and Danny Keogh formed the theatrical group known as The Company. Later theatrical transformations included that of the Blue Fox restaurant, The Village Theatre from an old store, and the old church in Braamfontein which became The Nunnery where numerous productions were staged. The most ambitious project was in 1984, when the old Newtown Market was converted into three theatre venues and included, on the suggestion of Barney Simon, a so-called 'Rehearsal Room' which was used for up-and-coming performances by amateur companies who could not afford the cost of lavish theatre productions.³

The **Alexander Theatre** in Siemens Street, Braamfontein, was named after the founder of the Johannesburg Repertory Players (JRP), **Muriel Alexander**, a renowned actress, director and teacher of speech and drama. The idea for the theatre was first mooted in 1929 by the JRP but it was not until 1951 that the theatre could be built as a result of life memberships and donations from the public. Once opened, it played host to a myriad of productions and plays, including dramas, both classical and modern and musicals.

Unfortunately, the theatre became the victim of the urban decay that threatened the inner city and resulted in dwindling audiences and the closure of the theatre in 1997. Due to the efforts of the JRP and the theatre's owners, including **Jack Ginsberg**, who shouldered the burden of keeping the theatre intact, the Alex underwent a

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

R2.5 million refurbishment and reopened in 2001.⁴ The theatre today forms part of the portfolio of PlayBraamfontein, an investment company owned by the property developer **Adam Levy**, who refurbished 151 Smit Street into luxury apartments, converted 70 Juta Street into a successful retail and studio development and converted the Milner Park Hotel into offices⁵.

The regeneration of the Inner City is largely due to the efforts of the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA), working in tandem with various private sector bodies such as the Johannesburg Inner City Business Coalition, the Central Johannesburg Partnership and the Johannesburg Housing Company. The JDA is a wholly owned agency of the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, which supports area-based development initiatives throughout the Johannesburg Metropolitan Area.⁶

The JDA was formed in 2002 as part of the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality's iGoli 2002 re-engineering process and the 'iGoli 2010 framework'. Its aim was to regenerate decaying areas of the city, unlock public and private sector investment in marginalized areas, promote economic empowerment, promote productive partnerships and cooperation between all stakeholders in area-based initiatives and develop best practice and organizational expertise on area based initiatives. The JDA also established the Halala Awards, presented annually to individuals, developers and projects in recognition of those who are transforming Johannesburg and supporting the rebirth of the city.

From 2005 to 2010, **Lael Bethlehem** served as Chief Executive Officer of the JDA, with Adam Goldsmith as Company Secretary. Projects initiated during her term included the rapid bus transit system (Rea Vaya) to Soccer City, the revamp of areas around the High Court Precinct in the Central Business District, replacement of paving in the Smal Street Mall and the regeneration of the Fashion District at the eastern end of the CBD^{7 8}.

The core area of the Fashion District is bounded by Polly, President, Troye and Pritchard Streets. Its planned centre was named the Fashion Kapitol in Pritchard Street, which would house an open square and amphitheatre for public meetings and events, a catwalk for low cost fashion shows, a curio/craft shop and coffee shop⁹. **Rees Mann** co-founded the Fashion District with the City of Johannesburg. He felt a particular affinity with this project because of his family connections to the clothing industry. Mann was appointed executive director of the square and buildings and manager of the Fashion District Institute (FDI). **Adam Levin**, the award winning fashion author became Specialist Fashion Consultant. The FDI aimed at encouraging local retail, food and beverage operations, local designers, manufacturers and fashion businesses.

Jewel City, consisting of four blocks on the

eastern end of the CBD with entrance in Main Street, was another development promoted by the JDA. The private sector, largely in the form of Apex Hi, contributed generously to the upgrade of this area. Jewel City consists of offices and workshops for about 300 diamond dealers and manufacturers. The Diamond Board and Bourse, a training school, Diamond Merchants' Association, the Rough Diamond Master Cutters' Association and the Jewellery Council are housed there¹⁰. The area is bordered by Commissioner and Main Streets in the north and south and Berea and Phillip Streets in the east and west.

The development of the Fashion District and Jewel City served as a stimulus for the upgrading of other areas in the eastern end of the CBD through private initiative. One of these was the Maboneng Precinct in Fox Street established by Jonathan Liebmann, head of the development company, Propertuity¹¹. Maboneng included Arts on Main, a converted early 1900s bonded warehouse, and Main Street Life, consisting of art galleries, restaurants, theatres and shops. Main Street Life is home to the 12 Decades Art Hotel and Bioscope. This project won a JDA Halala award in 2010¹².

The set of four buildings directly opposite Jewel City precinct on Berea Street was bought by developer Ricci Polack who planned to establish a mixed-use development with loft apartments, offices, a piazza, restaurant and art collection. The JDA was also responsible for the creation of the Greater Ellis Park Precinct (later renamed the Coca-Cola Park Stadium) with improved bus and taxi transport facilities; the creation of improved social housing and parks in Bertrams and other areas and the upgrading of streets and pavements in Hillbrow, Berea, Yeoville and Doornfontein. The Maurice Freeman Park in Bertrams was upgraded into the Bertrams Cricket Oval, managed by the Johannesburg Cricket Club.

Various public art works were also erected to beautify the city centre including a dynamic structure by William Kentridge and Gerhard Marx on the Nelson Mandela Bridge and various art works in prominent positions such as the Library Gardens Station, Carlton Station on Market Street, Johannesburg Art Gallery Station on Twist Street, all along the Bus Rapid Transport System.¹³

An agency which has a marked influence on the regeneration of Johannesburg's inner city suburbs, is the Johannesburg Housing Company (JHC), which was formally launched in 1995 and pioneered social housing development and inner city regeneration. **Taffy Adler**, a former trade unionist, became the first CEO of the JHC in 1996, a position he held until 2010¹⁴. The agency's goal was to improve the poorest of neighbourhoods plagued by crime, inadequate municipal services and empty office buildings. It sought to provide accommodation for people with low incomes and co-operate with communities and building owners to encourage the creation of clean and safe

environments. The Makhulong A Matala community development project was created to support tenants in their social upliftment¹⁵.

One of the JHC's most successful projects was the Brickfields Housing Company in Newtown, a private company which was partnered by both the public and private sectors. This company won a Halala award in 2008. Another project of the JDA was the E'Khaya Neighbourhood in Hillbrow, which brought together property owners to clean their neighbourhoods and make them safe¹⁶. **Josie Adler**, sister-in-law of Taffy and a professional community organizer and consultant to the JHC, was much involved in the project, which commenced in a derelict five block district in Hillbrow between Pietersen and Claim Streets. Property owners in areas around Plein Street and northern Hillbrow were so impressed by the E'Khaya Neighbourhood model that they decided to follow it in their areas.

In 2006, with the help of property owners in the suburb of Berea, including Trafalgar Properties and Ithemba Properties, Josie Adler established Legae La Rona CID, the first formal city improvement district in a residential area in Johannesburg, in terms of CID legislation.¹⁷ By 2010, the organization had provided low cost housing to 9000 people in 3322 units across 27 buildings in the inner city of Johannesburg. The JHC is a non-profit organization which relies on rental fees and grants.

Private Property Developers

One of the first of Johannesburg City Improvement Districts was Gandhi Square¹⁸. In 1998 **Gerald Olitzki**, a law practitioner at the time, bought his first building on the square, then known as Van der Bijl Square. In 1994, he entered into negotiations with the City of Johannesburg for a lease over it. After seven years of negotiations, he received the go-ahead in 2001 and commenced the rejuvenation of what was known to be one of the crime hotspots of Johannesburg. The Gandhi Square Consortium was formed to raise money to upgrade the area. The square became a thriving transport hub and several high profile companies have their businesses stationed around the square. The success of the square resulted in the redevelopment of Main and Fox Streets which became a vibrant pedestrian precinct with restaurants and coffee shops.

In 2008, Olitzki Property Holdings received a Halala Award, sponsored by the JDA in the category 'Relaxing and Playing Johannesburg'.

Gerald Leissner, business leader, Jewish communal leader and philanthropist,¹⁹ began his career in inner city development after becoming managing director of Anglo American Properties (Amaprop) in 1974. He was involved in redevelopment projects including the Diagonal

Street upgrade and the Carlton Centre upgrade. In 2001, he took over 15 properties from Anglo which formed the original core of Apex-Hi, a loan stock company, later expanded to 400 properties nation-wide. He became involved in the turnaround of Braamfontein and the Johannesburg CBD which were declining rapidly. He was one of the founder members of the Central Johannesburg Partnership, established in 1992 as a private non-profit company²⁰. The CJP instituted the establishment of City Improvement Districts, defined geographic areas within which property owners agree to certain payments over and above the normal rates and taxes, for outsourced services such as cleaning and security. The CJP created employment opportunities, and aided developments such as the Constitutional Court and Gandhi Square, and advised local government on inner city policy and informal trading by-laws.

Leissner was also a member and donor of the JHC and the Inner City Housing Upgrading Trust and Foundation 2000. He decided to keep his company headquarters in Braamfontein and was involved in the revamp of Total Centre, the Civic Towers and 61 Jorissen Street.

Leissner further encouraged other property developers to invest in urban renewal. An example is Aengus Lifestyle Properties, owned by **Richard Rubin** and **Gavin Meskin**, who in partnership with Apex-Hi created various upmarket apartment buildings for rental in the CBD and in Braamfontein. Aengus has worked closely with the universities of the Witwatersrand and Johannesburg to meet the needs of students for accommodation close to campus. Loft apartments have been created in Ameshoff Street, De Beer Street, Bertha Street, Stiemens Street and Biccard Street²¹.

Leissner's application of South Africa's BEE policy to his company, Apex Hi, was a truly remarkable endeavour²². He created a model that encouraged listed shareholders to sell their shares to new BEE partners, ensuring that they benefited from the transaction. While 50% of the BEE allocation went to a black commercial partner, the rest was offered to a broad-based empowerment trust. In 2008, Makhulong A Matala, the JHC community development project, was able to realize a return on its participation in the Apex Hi Black Economic Beneficiaries Trust and set up an endowment type investment to ensure its long-term sustainability. This business model resulted in Leissner receiving a special nomination in the Drivers of Change Awards sponsored by the *Mail & Guardian* and South African Trust in 2007²³. In 2010, he was awarded the South African Council of Shopping Centres' distinguished lifetime award.

Affordable Housing Company (Afhco) is one of the longest performing development agencies in the Johannesburg inner city. It was started by **Wayne Plit** in 1996. His brother, **Renney Plit**, joined him in 2001. In 2006, Old Mutual became

a 50% shareholder, enabling Afhco to build up a property portfolio of over 5500 affordable inner-city homes. The company's residential target market is tenants earning between R3 500 and R10 000 a month with rentals starting from R1 500. The Company purchases old and derelict office buildings in the inner city and converts them to residential units²⁴.

Renney Plit is involved in organisations which focus on Johannesburg property regeneration, including the Chairmanship of the Johannesburg City Council Mayoral Charter-Housing Plan Focus Group and various directorships including the Retail Improvement District, JHB Inner City Business Coalition, Property Owners and Managers Association and Fashion District Improvements Steering Committee.

One of Afhco's social initiatives was the conversion of an old, abandoned Indian school in Mooi Street into an inner city pre-and primary school called City Kidz for inner city children.²⁵ Renney Plit contributed R3 million to the refurbishment of the school and also received a grant from the JDA. Another project is the employment of deaf cleaners in the buildings. Security was enhanced by the appointment of 'community ambassadors', unemployed youths who were given some skills training and commissioned to patrol the streets of the inner city with radios.

Afhco also purchased buildings in the Doornfontein area, one of which was the old Nedbank in End Street. The derelict End Street Park opposite the building was upgraded and soccer fields, toilets, security guards and CCTV cameras installed. In 2010, Afhco was given a JDA Halala award in the corporate category for the refurbishment and upgrading of Cavendish Chambers in Jeppe Street. It was an old office block converted into 130 luxury affordable housing units with 24 hour security²⁶. Another Afhco nomination in this category was the Greatermans building in Commissioner Street.

Alec Wapnick,²⁷ CEO of City Property, pioneered the conversion of derelict office blocks in the Pretoria CBD into secure and attractive residential accommodation. He subsequently used the same model to transform industrial properties in the Johannesburg CBD. Wapnick developed an initiative called WORKS@registry, which bought up 70 to 80 properties which were then converted to middle income level apartments. One of its purchases was Registry House, which had been overrun by illegal occupants. A ten-storey building opposite the afore-mentioned Fashion Kapitool, this was upgraded to house small businesses at affordable rentals. In the Troye and Pritchard Street areas, WORKS@Registry established an area in which small operators in trade, manufacturing and the storage of non-harmful products could function, close to their market and to means of transport²⁸. In 2008, WORKS@Registry received a JDA Halala Award

in the Working and Buying Johannesburg category.

A small section of Berea is Johannesburg's first residential City Improvement District (CID). Its formation was largely due to the work of developer **Brian Miller** of Ithemba Property Trust, established in November 2005²⁹. The Berea CID consists of seven blocks running from Barnato Street in the north to Olivia Road in the south, bordered by Fife Avenue and Lily Avenue in the west and east respectively. There are plans to establish further CIDs in Berea and eventually Yeoville and Hillbrow.

Miller worked closely with the JDA to clean up buildings, streets and public open spaces and bring back services such as shopping centres, coffee bars and internet cafes. He also facilitated the Makhulong A Matala Project, which brought together property owners to clean up their neighbourhoods and introduce security services. He was assisted by the Property Owners' and Managers' Association, which works to upgrade areas in street lighting, grass cutting and street signage. Since 2006, crime in Berea dropped dramatically due to the installation of security guards, CCTV cameras on street corners.

Miller has his base in The Metropolitan, a large residential block of some 402 units at affordable rentals. He owns seven blocks in Berea with a total of 1000 units, with trained building managers and maintenance teams. In 2008, Makhulong A Matala was nominated for a Halala award in the Caring Johannesburg category.

Difficulties Experienced by Property Developers

Building owners in the inner city complain of bureaucratic errors in the City of Johannesburg's revenue department. Property developers who are buying up old and derelict office buildings and converting them into residential units continue to be billed commercial tariffs for rates, water and electricity, despite various meetings with city officials³⁰. Electricity is 70% higher for commercial use.

Another problem is huge interim readings charged to building owners, despite the fact that independent meter readers took monthly readings and submitted them to the council. Unresolved billing problems slowed down the issue of clearance certificates and held up the upgrading of buildings.

Private property developers in lower Braamfontein were also faced with the problem of area degradation in the vicinity of the Nelson Mandela Bridge, including vagrancy and neglect of pavements and infrastructure by the City Council.³¹ The latter insisted that the matter could only be resolved if property owners joined the Newtown and Braamfontein improvement districts, at an additional cost to themselves, a prospect which developers find unviable.

There is the danger that if the various problems facing property owners are not resolved, regeneration of the inner city would grind to a halt. The problems have been taken up by organisations such as the Property Owners and Managers Association.

The regeneration of the Inner City of Johannesburg is without doubt one of the highlights of the past decade, in the development of the megacity, widely acknowledged as the commercial hub and power house of the African continent. The Jewish contribution to this significant achievement has been the focus of this essay. It is further proof that the shrinking but still vibrant Jewish community has made and continues to play a crucial role in the development of Johannesburg.

NOTES

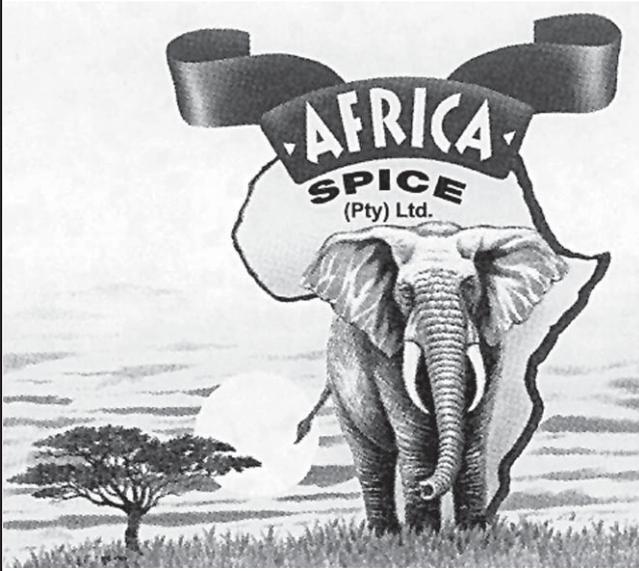
- 1 Garner, Gerald, *Johannesburg: Ten Ahead: A Decade of Inner-City Regeneration*, Craighall: Double G Media, 2011.
- 2 Lawrence, Peter, 'Adam's farewell to End Street', *Sunday Times TVTimes and Colour Magazine*, 31/8/1975.
- 3 Kramer, Pam, 'Mannie makes more happen at the Market', *Sunday Express Review*, 30/9/1984.
- 4 <http://www.thealex.co.za/about/history>, http://www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=15223
- 5 Brodie, Nechama, 'Regenerate behaviour: Making the city sexy', *Mail & Guardian*, 16-22/9/2011.
- 6 Johannesburg Development Agency. Annual Report 2009/10 Financial Year.
- 7 Cox, Anna, 'Revamp for area around high court and other Johannesburg sites', *Star*, 30/6/2008.
- 8 'Lael Bethlehem's myriad monuments dotted all over Johannesburg', *SA Jewish Report* 16-23/6/2010.
- 9 http://www.ifashion.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=791&Itemid
- 10 'Jewel City to sparkle soon', http://www.joburgnews.co.za/2007/may/may9_jewelcity.stm
- 11 Brodie, Nechama, 'Regenerate behaviour. Making the city sexy', *Mail & Guardian* 16-22/9/2011.
- 12 JDA names inner-city regeneration award winners. <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/jda-names-inner-city-regeneration-award-winners-2020-05-14>
- 13 Thurman, Chris, 'Beauty rises out of the Big Smoke's concrete', *Weekender. Review* 31/10-1/11 2009.
- 14 Tonge, Diane, 'Transforming the lives of thousands in South Africa through social housing: Taffy Adler, CEO of the Johannesburg Housing Company', <http://knowledge.insead.edu/SouthAfricaSocialHousing.cfm>
- 15 'Funding Community Development/Johannesburg Housing Company'. http://www.jhc.co.za/funders/funding_community_development
- 16 Jews well at the forefront of Johannesburg CBD upgrade. *SA Jewish Report* 26 September 2008, p.32
- 17 Goldberg, Alison, 'Josie Adler-Champion of the dispossessed and homeless', *SA Jewish Report* 27/8/2010. <http://www.jda.org.za/news-and-media-releases>
- 18 'Mr Property' calls it a day after well on 45 years, *SA Jewish Report* 6-13/11/ 2009.
- 20 About the CJP: Overview. See the web site of the Central Johannesburg Partnership.

- 21 Stylish student digs are Jozi gold. Affordable accommodation not too hard to find, thanks to Aengus. *Saturday Star*. 28/1/2012.
- 22 'Well-deserved accolade for Gerald Leissner', *SA Jewish Report* 16-23/11/2007.
- 23 Special Commendation-Drivers of Change Award: Gerald Leissner. <http://mg.co.za/article/2007-10-25-for-the-common-good>.
- 24 'The Plit brothers - drivers of the inner city development', *SA Jewish Report* 29/10-5/11 2010.
- 25 Cox, Anna, 'Flying colours for City Kidz', *Star* 5/11/2010.
- 26 JDA names inner-city regeneration award winners. www.engineeringnews.co.za/article
- 27 www.cylex.co.za/company/city-propety-17419208.html
- 28 'Jews well at the forefront of Johannesburg CBD upgrade', *SA Jewish Report*, 26/9/ 2008.
- 29 Davie, Lucille. Berea: Jozi's first residential CID/Inner city. www.joburg.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2121&Itemid=254
- 30 Cox, Anna. 'Billing glitches will damage inner city, Property owners and developers say they are owed millions', *Johannesburg Metrowatch, Star*, 5/11/ 2010.
- 31 Cox, Anna, 'Council sits on sidelines as Braamfontein sinks into decay', *Star*, 18/2/2010.

6 Vickers Road
City Deep
Johannesburg

Tel: (011) 623-1332
Fax: (011) 623-2188
Email: info@africaspice.co.za

P.O. Box 86268
City Deep 2049



SUPPLIERS OF: *Spices *Castings *Packaging material and all Butcher Requisites

ART AS PROTEST: JEWS INVERT THE MEANING OF THE CRUCIFIXION MOTIF

*

Gwynne Schrire

To Jews, the crucifixion motif is an unhappy reminder of two thousand years of persecution, oppression and discrimination, a blood-soaked symbol associated with the Inquisition, pogroms and annual fears at Easter-time.¹ The aversion Jews feel towards the image features in Chaim Potok's novel *My Name is Asher Lev*,² which recounts the anger in a Hasidic community when artist Asher Lev, son of the Rebbe's assistant, decides to paint a crucifixion theme:

My name is Asher Lev... the notorious and legendary Lev of the Brooklyn Crucifixion. I am an observant Jew. Yes, of course, observant Jews do not paint crucifixions. As a matter of fact, observant Jews do not paint at all – in the way that I am painting. So strong words are being written about me... I am a traitor, an apostate, a self-hater, an inflictor of shame upon my family, my friends, my people; also I am a mocker of ideas sacred to Christians, a blasphemous manipulator of modes and forms revered by Gentiles for two thousand years.³

The narrator is advised by the Rebbe to move to Paris because of the pain he is causing his family and community. No such shame is attached to Christian portrayals, as attested to by rooms full of paintings of crucifixions found in the most prestigious Western art galleries.

Christians view the figure of Jesus on the cross as the symbol of their God's self-sacrificing love, hope and redemption, an emblem of peace and a symbol of martyrdom and salvation. To Jews, the symbol of martyrdom and redemption is the *Akeida* - the Sacrifice of Isaac – which is frequently used in poetry and art to represent the Holocaust. The crucifixion is an image of dread.

With modernism Jews, even religious Jews like Asher Lev, have been exposed to the symbols of the outside world. Some Jewish artists have used the crucifixion motif but with an inverted meaning, implying that it is a symbol not of redemption but of suffering. This has resulted in protests by both communities. To Jews, the symbol is taboo because of its historic implications; to

Christians, the misuse by Jews of an image they regard as singularly holy has led to charges of blasphemy and heresy.

Much has been written about the role Jews played in the struggle for democracy and human rights in South Africa⁴. However, the use by Jews of art as a means of protest has received little attention, aside from a recent exhibition at the South African Jewish Museum on Zapiro's Mandela cartoons.⁵

The writer's attention was drawn to this accidentally through an exhibition, hosted by the South African Jewish Museum in Cape Town, on the work of the Hungarian sculptor Herman Wald⁶. Looking for some information on Wald in Esmé Berman's invaluable *Art & Artists of South Africa*, I was surprised to find only one passing reference to Wald, in which he is listed as having been one of the teachers of the artist Harold Rubin.⁷

Who was this Rubin? The information Berman provides about him is intriguing. Amongst other things, he was charged with blasphemy for exhibiting a drawing of a crucified figure entitled 'My Jesus'.⁸ That was in Johannesburg in July 1962. In Cape Town, too, a painting of a crucifixion was banned in that same month. This was Ronald Harrison's 'Black Christ'. Harrison's death in Cape Town in June 2011⁹ attracted considerable media coverage. Amongst the mourners at his funeral were Chief Albert Luthuli's daughter, Dr Albertina Luthuli.

Both these pictures – one by a Christian, one by a Jew - were provoked by the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960 and were intended as visual statements attacking apartheid. Both pictures caused an uproar and were banned by the Censorship Board. The latter body was established in 1956 to censor books, films, and other materials imported into or produced in South Africa which were deemed indecent, obscene or on any grounds objectionable.¹⁰

The State reaction to the artists themselves differed. Rubin, who was 'white', was tried for blasphemy. Harrison, who was 'coloured', was detained on several occasions, interrogated and tortured.

The Crucifixion Motif in Art

The symbol of Jesus on the Cross appeared relatively late in Christian art. To portray him on a cross dying a criminal's death would have made a mockery of his claim to be the Son of God

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

during the first centuries after the Common Era. It was only after 315 C.E., when Emperor Constantine abolished crucifixion, that the stigma attached to that kind of death sentence was forgotten. From the early Middle Ages till the 19th Century, the crucified figure meant to Christians that God's son, to whom they prayed for mercy, died because he took upon himself the sins of the world, which were to be abolished by his death.

In Western iconography a Christian crucifixion painting traditionally shows Jesus on the cross; below him to the right stands his weeping mother Mary and an apostle consoling and supporting her. To the left stands a Roman soldier or centurion with a lance who tests whether the victim has breathed his last.

Naturally, it was unacceptable for Jews to paint such Christians symbols. Such taboos, along with many others, began to be broken in the 19th Century, but as much as it was unacceptable to Jews for Jews to paint a crucifixion, so was it unacceptable to Gentiles for Jews to do so. "A Jew has no right to depict 'our' Russian rulers and our Christian saints", the Russian Jewish sculptor, Mark Antokolsky (1843-1902), was told when he dared to portray Jesus Christ as a Jew: "The Jews rebuke me: why did I do 'Christ'? And the Christians rebuke me: why did I do 'Christ' like that?"¹¹ Antokolsky wrote. He added that if Jesus returned, he would be horrified at what the Christians had done in his name, and for this the Christians would crucify him again.

Chagall's "Crucifixion"

Marc Chagall (1887-1985) also challenged the taboo. He considered himself to be an emancipated Jew accepted by the Christian world which had then turned on them. Chagall reversed the symbolism, making his crucified Jesus represent not a Christian dying for people's sins, but a persecuted Jew dying as a result of Christian sins perpetrated on Jews throughout the ages.

Chagall said, "For me, Christ has always symbolized the true type of the Jewish martyr. That is how I understood him in 1908 when I used this figure for the first time ... It was under the influence of the pogroms. Then I painted and drew him in pictures about ghettos, surrounded by Jewish troubles, by Jewish mothers, running terrified and holding little children in their arm"¹²

Chagall's 'White Christ' was painted in 1938 to protest the persecution of Jews, specifically the German 'Aktion' on 15 June, in which 1500 Jews were sent to concentration camps; the destruction of the Munich and Nuremberg synagogues on 9 June and 10 August; the deportation of Polish Jews at the end of October and the *Kristallnacht* pogrom on 9-10 November.

Chagall's figure of Jesus is clearly Jewish, with his *tallith* as his loincloth, stretched in all his immense pain above a world of horror. At his feet burns the Menorah surrounded by a halo like that

which frames his head (the only steady circle in this tumultuous structure). Above his head is written the Biblical "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews" in the traditional Latin abbreviation (INRI, John 19:19) with its Hebrew translation underneath (*Yesu hanazeri melech hayehudi*), thus providing Jewry's confirmation of Pilate's words.

But most important of all, this Jesus' relation to the world differs entirely from Christian representations of the Crucifixion. It lacks the Christian concept of salvation. For all his holiness, the figure is by no means divine. Chagall's Jesus is a Jew who suffers, who is eternally burned by the fire of the world and yet, being an archetype, remains indestructible. It is not his divine but his human nature that is suffering.

Chagall used the symbols deeply embedded in the art of the Christian West. The theme does not address Jews. It is addressed to Christians. It condemns their actions against the nation of Jesus. In this way, the holiest Christian symbol, the crucifixion, is used to indict Christianity: "An image which had been anathema to Jews has become a symbol of Jewish martyrdom."¹³

In his book *Night*, Wiesel describes a young child hanged at Auschwitz between two adult - like Jesus crucified between two thieves. "Where is God now?" a witness asks, and Wiesel writes, "I heard a voice within me answer him: Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows."¹⁴



Marc Chagall: "White Christ"

Rubin's "Crucifixion"

Harold Rubin, a Johannesburg architect, was both a gifted jazz clarinetist and a talented artist who had five solo shows addressing socio-political issues between 1956 and 1962. He was 24 when he held his first exhibition. By then, he had his own jazz group, which played in townships with black musicians, despite laws forbidding this.

Horrified by the Sharpeville shootings, Rubin responded in the best way available to him, with his drawing pen. In 1961, he publishing a series of drawings focusing on apartheid brutality, entitled 'Sharpeville'. The following year, he submitted a crucifixion, 'My Jesus', for a closed competition on religious art. It was included in a July 1962 solo exhibition in Johannesburg's Gallery 101¹⁵ together with another picture of a naked figure on a cross with two men, one firing a light machine gun, the other stabbing the machine-gunner with a spear.¹⁶

Rubin's *My Jesus* has an immense artistic power. It is an expressionistic rendering of Jesus as the Man of Sorrows in the tradition of the Isenheim Altarpiece of Matthias Grunewald (1460-1528). In this tradition viewers are addressed directly and an appeal is made for their reaction through a feeling of identification with the figure of Jesus. The suffering face and upper torso is rendered in frenzied, transparent strokes. His upper torso in side-view, is wrung in curved agony. Jesus does not wear a loincloth and his nakedness emphasises the horror of his suffering. The colour contrast between the brown cross, the blue sky and the writhing sickly coloured figure of Jesus are exceptionally powerful.

Most controversially from the Christian viewpoint, Rubin replaced the words "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" with "I forgive you, O Lord, for you know not what you do" in his handwriting. This is a direct accusation against the Christian God.

Rubin's crucifixion was not a Christian symbol of redemption nor did he, as had Chagall, replace the suffering Jesus with a suffering Jew as a reproach to Christian antisemitism. He used the language of Christianity to express what has been done to Jesus not as a Jew but as suffering humanity, a victim of the apartheid legislation enacted by the Nationalist Government whose members were in the main ardent supporters of the Afrikaner Calvinist churches.

Here was a Jewish man using Christian symbols to indict Christianity. There was such an outcry in Johannesburg that the police were sent on 27 July to seize the picture, returning a few days later to seized the other crucifixion picture as well. Both were sent to the Censorship Board in Cape Town and Rubin was charged with blasphemy.

Die Vaderland reported under large headlines – *Godlastersaak, Baie Belangrik*.¹⁷ The *Cape Times* disagreed: "My Jesus is a religious painting. People who make a sex-scandal of it distort the very purpose of the painting. People who complain that it is blasphemous do not realise that Christ was a human being and the Crucifixion was one of the greatest humiliations that could be inflicted on Christ as a human being."¹⁸

Harrison's Crucifixion

Ronald Harrison (1940 – 2011) worked at

Wilmill textile factory designing garment labels for Fritz Raphaely, whom he described as a kind and principled Jewish man who never exploited his workers.¹⁹ Harrison had been looking for a non-violent way to express the anger he experienced as a coloured man under apartheid.²⁰

Harrison wrote that he "became obsessed with the idea of taking some constructive action in the liberation movement through the medium of my artistic talent. One evening, while lying on my bed, a thought flashed through my head. How could a government that professes to be Christian perpetrate such immoral deeds and inflict so much pain and suffering on its own countrymen simply because its supporters were of another race, another colour, and another creed? ... (I)n fact all races that were not classified as 'white' were being crucified... The vision forming in my mind's eye was rather unusual... that the figure on the cross was a black man... I realised that I could depict the suffering of the black people and equate this to the suffering of Christ."²¹

Worried about blasphemy, the deeply religious Harrison consulted his priest. The latter enquired of Anglican Archbishop Joost de Blank, who reassured Harrison on this score. Harrison then visited the SA National Gallery, studied the crucifixion paintings on display, went home, screwed a canvas onto the wall of his home and started painting. It took him six months. Archbishop de Blank visited and told him it was good, but "very, very dangerous". When it was completed in June, it was put on display at the Anglican Church of St Luke in Salt River, Cape Town.

Mediaeval artists often painted the portraits of their patrons into the religious scenes they had commissioned. This is what Harrison did - with a difference. He followed the rules of crucifixion composition strictly but rendered the figures in portraits which were recognisable to any South African, thus turning a pictorial compositional element into a political statement.

The work's originality lies in the specific use that Harrison made of the crucifixion motif. He, too, used the crucifixion not as the customary Christian symbol of redemption, but in the form of the Jewish symbol of reproach. He painted the suffering Jesus as a black man, specifically as the banned ANC President Chief Albert Luthuli, who two years previously had become the first African to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. At the top of the Cross, instead of the usual inscription "INRI", is written out "HIC EST REX JUDEORUM" - This is the King of the Jews.

Harrison added a 'Coloured' Madonna, an Asian St John and, at the foot of the cross, two White Roman centurions holding lances.²² The people responsible for the crucifixion were clearly the Roman centurions, identified as Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd (with a fatuous expression on his face) and behind him, holding a sponge for vinegar and gall, Justice Minister

(later Prime Minister) Balthazar Johan Vorster with a self-satisfied grin. Vorster had recently tightened the repressive noose by passing laws allowing people to be detained for 90-days without trial. He had formerly been a general in the pro-Nazi *Ossewabrandwag* and was interned during the war at the Koffiefontein detention camp.

Here was a Christian man, regarded as a second-class citizen in the pigmentocracy of the time, using Christian symbols to indict apartheid laws introduced by deeply religious politicians by portraying the banned Luthuli as the suffering Man of Sorrows. Although Harrison's work has less artistic merit than Rubin's, its power is in the originality of his use of portraits for a religious iconographical motif and thus turning it into an accusation. There is no feeling of redemption in either of these crucifixion pictures. The suffering is on-going; it does not end and neither does the accusation.

Harrison wrote that he "was satisfied that the crucified figure did indeed echo the suffering of black South Africans"²³ He told his friends and soon reporters were knocking on his door. He proudly wrote in his autobiography: "The following day, the story was in practically every major daily newspaper – all said it was going to cause a nationwide controversy."²⁴

On 11 July, *Die Burger* contacted Harrison to ask if they could publish a photo of the painting. Harrison told them the painting was not political. He was astonished to read later that *Die Burger* had accused him of blasphemy.²⁵ The Afrikaans



Ronald Harrison: "The Black Christ"

press arranged a press briefing to urge the Government to respond quickly.

Harrison was arrested and beaten up. He was asked who was behind the idea of making such a painting? Was there a conspiracy to humiliate Verwoerd and South African whites?²⁶ This was the first of several arrests, interrogations, torture and beatings.

Die Kerkbode, official mouthpiece of the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, which was headed by Vorster's brother, demanded that Luthuli publicly reject any claims to being a crucified 'Black Saviour'. Dawie, *Die Burger's* political columnist, pointed out that there was "just one problem. If [Luthuli] were to make such a statement of disapproval, nobody would know about it because the newspapers would be contravening the "Sabotage" Act if they were to publish it"²⁷ (Luthuli, as a banned person at the time, was not allowed to comment in the media).²⁸ Condemnation of the crucifixion was not unanimous. Harrison received support from his church, as well as from the Catholic, Methodist and Evangelical churches. He was summonsed to go to the police station and issued a sworn statement describing Luthuli as a perfect image of Christ because he was a man of peace and saying that the painting showed that "racial discrimination should not be practised, for we are all united in one bond with Christ".²⁹ Rather disingenuously, he stated that he had the deepest respect and admiration for the Prime Minister as a man and felt that Verwoerd, as a true Christian, would not mind representing humanity.³⁰

Harrison was released and allowed to hang the painting in his church but the Government then had second thoughts. A few days later, the Ministry of Interior prohibited any further display of *The Black Christ* until the Board of Censors had issued its ruling.³¹ In due course, the Censorship Board banned the painting on the grounds that it was "calculated to give offence to the religious convictions and feelings of a section of the population", and its public exhibition was prohibited.

What Happened to Rubin?

In September 1962, the Censorship Board informed Rubin that he was forbidden to exhibit the two protest works described above.³² Although both were sent to the public prosecutor, Rubin would only be prosecuted for blasphemy for the one picture, *My Jesus*, because he had drawn Jesus as "a naked being with a man's body and the head of a thief or a sort of monster" and added to it the words "I forgive you O Lord, for you know not what you do".

The blasphemy trial started in November, with evidence for the defence given by artists Cecil Skotnes and Prof Heather Martienssen and writers Uys Krige and Richard Daneel. The Prosecution's argument was provided by the Malvern *Nederduits*

Gereformeerde Kerk's Dominee Cruywagen and a policeman.

Judgement was delivered in the middle of January 1963. The *Rand Daily Mail* reported "Rubin Not Guilty - Court Remarks on 'Middle Ages'".³³ In a two-hour judgement, Magistrate PJ Nel concluded that what was considered to be blasphemy in the Middle Ages was no longer considered to be so in South Africa and that the works had to be judged from the standpoint of the ordinary reasonable man, not from those of a theologian or a detective. The prosecution had brought in no art experts and it was significant that no non-Christians had given evidence for the defence. The charge that the head of Jesus was animal-like or monster-like relied solely on the evidence provided by a *dominee* and a detective-sergeant. The defence had proved to the magistrate's satisfaction that inversions of Biblical texts were not blasphemous and were frequently used by great writers. Regarding doubts of God's omniscience and infallibility, these were often expressed with no question of there being a prosecution for blasphemy. Thus, Rubin had not slandered Jesus and/or God in the exhibition of *My Jesus*. The ruling was regarded as a victory for freedom of expression in South Africa.³⁴

Having been acquitted, Rubin left South Africa in disgust. Like the architect Arthur Goldreich, also a talented artist, he settled in Israel. He went on to design buildings in both Israel and Nigeria, and exhibited in South Africa, Europe, England and the USA. Rubin continued his activism, only now he concentrated on anti-war themes as part of the peace movement. He produced a series called the 'Israeli War', which showed highly stylised modernistic figures in contorted poses, as symbols of the anguish and pain of war.

His work continued to shock, and a biting *Homage to Rabbi Kahane*, which showed Kahane as a Jewish Nazi was pulled off the wall of a Haifa gallery in 1985 by an outraged member of the Knesset.³⁵ He continued playing jazz and recording albums and received the Landau Award in 2008 for his contributions to jazz. His latest exhibition in South Africa was in 2007 at the Goodman Gallery, entitled *Diary Pages*, accompanied by a one-hour documentary film on his life and work called 'A Magnificent Failure'.

What Happened to Harrison?

Ronald Harrison's *Black Christ* was smuggled to London with the help of the exiled Neville Rubin, a former president the UCT SRC and NUSAS and a founder member of the underground African Resistance Movement. Rubin was the legal adviser to the International Defence and Aid Fund in England,³⁶ and the painting was displayed to raise funds in Britain and Europe.

After the demise of apartheid, Harrison commenced searching for his painting. He asked the Department of Foreign Affairs, which enquired

of the British Council, which in its turn approached Ruiradh Nicholl, South Africa correspondent for *The Observer*. Nicholl's subsequent *Observer* article, which appeared in July 1997, was read by 92-year-old Jewish activist Julius Baker, who scribbled across the top of his newspaper: "Well, I'll be damned. I've got it". It was leaning against a wall in the basement of his home in Hampstead, London.³⁷

Baker was a lawyer and Communist Party member who had owned a bookstore in Johannesburg and had worked with Ruth First, Joe Slovo, Walter Sisulu, Bram Fischer, Oliver Tambo, Brian Bunting, Chief Luthuli, and Nelson Mandela. Arrested in 1960 under State of Emergency laws for helping raise money and disseminate propaganda for the ANC, he was released from custody for one day. Recalled Baker, "One of the police said, 'I'll get you tomorrow', and I left for Swaziland."³⁸

Harrison flew to London. On 24 September 1997, Heritage Day, he was reunited with his painting, which had been the cause of so much personal suffering, and brought it back to Cape Town. It was displayed in St Georges Cathedral before being acquired by the SA National Gallery, who put it back in the basement.³⁹ Replicas are on display at St Luke's Church and in the offices of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and 21 life size reprints (seven-feet high) were produced in aid of the Spirit of Africa Arts Foundation for young disadvantaged artists. As for the National Party, to show that all was forgiven, it gave Harrison a special merit award for his contribution to the visual arts!⁴⁰

Zapiro's Crucifixions

Like Rubin, Cape Town-born Jonathan Shapiro studied architecture before switching over to graphic design when he decided to become a cartoonist. He was arrested under the Illegal Gatherings Act in 1983, when he had become involved in the UDF, and released after a court hearing. Two years later his mother (a refugee from Germany) and sister were arrested. That was the year that the apartheid government, wanting to protect itself from artistic criticism, banned the pictures of Rubin and Harrison. In 1987, Zapiro became a cartoonist for *South*, an anti-Apartheid paper. It was not long before his cartoons raised the ire of the ruling National Party, which banned his UDF calendar poster. Zapiro continued to use his cartoons to draw attention to apartheid human rights abuses and was arrested by the Security Police and placed in solitary confinement. He left South Africa shortly after, having been awarded a Fulbright scholarship. In New York, he studied under Will Eisner, Harvey Kurtzman and Art Spiegelman, a second-generation Holocaust survivor, who had portrayed his parents' sufferings in ghettos and concentration camps in two graphic novels, *Maus 1* and *Maus II*.⁴¹

On his return to South Africa, Zapiro started drawing cartoons for the *Sunday Times*, the *Sowetan* and *The Times*, remaining true to his own opinions and beliefs without fear or favour. Zapiro, art historian Dr Ute Ben Yosef has stated, uses his artistic talents, his ability to put to paper his summary of the faults and foibles of current events and people in power and his sense of humour to criticize the great and speak truth to power whenever their actions go beyond what he, with his sharpened understanding of integrity, of ethics and justice, believes to be wrong.⁴²

Zapiro's cartoons have angered Clinton, Bush, Zuma, the ANC, the SACP, COSATU, the ANC Youth League and the Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities, yet he has continued to comment on events as he sees them, not as others would like him to see them. For this, he won the Courage in Editorial Cartooning Award at the annual Cartoonists Rights Network International in the USA.⁴³

Zapiro also found the crucifixion motif an ideal tool to portray not Christian martyrdom and redemption, but the Jewish interpretation as representing a persecuted victim as a reproach to the perpetrators. At different times the victim has been people with HIV/AIDS refused adequate treatment, boys abused by priests with a denialist pope, or even a persecution that backfired, with Julius Malema using the opportunity of his 'crucifixion' as a platform to get an audience.

Like Rubin and Harrison, Zapiro addresses the socio-political issues in South Africa and the viewer is summoned to identify with the figures on the cross. But like them, he has found that the crucifixion motif, although ideal for his purpose, is a dangerous symbol to use, guaranteeing a backlash from offended believers.

In his cartoon *Black Easter*,⁴⁴ Zapiro portrayed Jesus as Harrison had done, as a black man on the cross, with emaciated features, a crown of thorns and an inscription above his head reading "People with HIV/AIDS". The figure was representative of all South Africans suffering from the disease. Behind him, nailed to the cross of the "righteous criminal" of Christian iconography, are other victims, one a skeletal black woman, the other a dying baby. Marching towards the viewer is a Roman centurion gleaned straight from an Asterix cartoon. Ronald Harrison had made his centurions people recognizable to any contemporary South African, the apartheid politicians Verwoerd and Vorster. Zapiro did likewise. Now, in place of the Apartheid perpetrators, the centurion figure represents a grim-faced Manto Tshabalala Msimang, Minister of Health, holding the hammer with which she has nailed her victims to the cross. Imprinted on her armour are the words: "Refusal of treatment". It is a brilliant cartoon, with its fragile balance between wry comedy and abysmal tragedy.

This crucifixion is an expression of reproach, an act of protest in the tradition of Chagall. The

black man on the cross is not dying *for* the sins of the world, but *as a result of* the sins of the world, specifically as a result of the sins of a government that denies him life-saving antiretroviral medicine. This was understood by the satirist Pieter-Dirk Uys, who in a letter of support wrote, "If anyone is dying for the sins of others, it is the people in South Africa who don't have access to salvation through care and communication. The main criticism of the cartoon is simply - why only three crosses?"⁴⁵

What Happened to Zapiro?

Nothing. It is now a new South Africa, with freedom of the press. Its constitution guarantees freedom of the media, religion and opinion, which ensures that a portrayal of a crucifixion, no matter how offensive some viewers might find it, cannot lead to a trial on charges of blasphemy, nor to its being banned or its creator arrested.

That does not mean there was no criticism of *Black Easter*. 'Cartoon was blasphemy' was the caption of the *Sunday Times* report, quoting a reader, Gerrit Myburgh, who considered it "blasphemous to the highest degree". Another reader, Willem Schoombie, while not going as far as calling the work blasphemous, pointed out that the crucifixion was a highly sensitive subject and should not be depicted in a derogatory manner, "even by a talented artist" like Zapiro. He asked the newspaper to consider rejecting art that could offend the religious convictions of the reader.⁴⁶

Zapiro also raised ire with a cartoon portraying three victims of child abuse nailed to the cross, with the centurions being represented by two bishops and an arch-bishop, still holding crucifying hammers.⁴⁷ On the right stands Pontius Pilate, portrayed as the Pope, washing his hands as a ritualistic declaration of innocence. Here, Zapiro used the Catholic Primate to indict the silence and inaction of the Catholic clergy against those of their members who were perpetrating the abuse. Surprisingly, this cartoon got praise from a reader who found it powerful and heart-breaking, writing "You may get criticism from the Catholic Church. But...you got it absolutely right."⁴⁸

The crucifixion motif as a genre is itself lampooned by Zapiro in a cartoon depicting the then ANC Youth League President Julius Malema hanging in mid-air from a cross.⁴⁹ Malema's folded arms reveal an oversized luxury wristwatch. He smugly turns to the crowd and declares, "Now let me tell you more about the struggle I conducted before I was born". The crowd cheers: 'Our hero, our martyr'. Three centurions represent the elders of Afriforum, who remark with sour faces: "Well, that didn't go exactly as planned". The theme of the Man of Sorrows has here turned into the hero-as-victim, leading the crucifixion motif as a cartoon image to its utter extreme.

Harold Rubin, Neville Rubin, Julius Baker, Fritz Raphaely, Zapiro - the story is full of Jewish

names involved directly or indirectly in these stories of artists who used the symbol of the crucifixion to criticise the apartheid regime. Each artist adapted the Western iconographic tradition as an accusation of inhumanity, of suffering and despair. The crucifixion is no longer the Christian symbol of their God's self-sacrificing love, hope and redemption, an emblem of peace, but the Jewish symbol of persecution, oppression and discrimination. It has become an indictment of the failure of humankind and a form of protest.

These tales of artistic representation and the passionate reception they obtained show how the meaning of an iconographical symbol such as the Crucifixion can be turned into a message of high potency. Through this, it becomes possible to transcend the boundaries of aesthetics and religion, gaining political ramifications and assuming a defining message of morality understood by everyone.

- **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:** All the information in this article on art history and the art evaluation on the works portrayed comes from Dr Ute ben Yosef, for which very much gratitude. Much was drawn from a 2009 Limmud talk she gave on "The Image of Jesus in Jewish Art".

NOTES

- 1 Joseph Bonsirven. *Les Juifs et Jésus: Attitudes nouvelles*. Quoted in Ziva Amishai-Maizels, 'The Jewish Jesus', *Journal of Jewish Art*, vol. 9 Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1982.
- 2 Potok, Chaim, *My Name is Asher Lev*, Heinemann, London, 1972, p3.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 The theme of an exhibition and book by the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research at the University of Cape Town., 2001.
- 5 'Jiving with Mandela', SA Jewish Museum, 2011.
- 6 The SA Jewish Museum will be hosting an exhibition of his work early in 2012.
- 7 Berman, Esme, *Art & Artists of South Africa*, Balkema, 1970, p15. The lack of information about Wald was surprising as Wald had been living and exhibiting in Johannesburg since 1937, had designed the Kria in front of the Jewish Aged Home in Sandringham, the Holocaust Memorial at West Part Cemetery, the Impala Fountain in Braamfontein and the Diamond Diggers' Fountain in Kimberley.
- 8 ibid
- 9 28 June 2011
- 10 I had a friend on the Board with a private viewing room in his home, who would invite friends to come and watch potentially bannable films sent to him to assess. Books by Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee, Andre Brink and Breyten Breytenbach were banned as well as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Anna Sewell's story about a horse *Black Beauty* – the censors did not look beyond the title.
- 11 Personal Letter to his friend. From Zeva Amishai-Maizels, p99.
- 12 Amishai-Maizels , p84.
- 13 Ibid. p.104

- 14 Wiesel, Elie, *Night*, Bantam Books 1982, pp61-62
- 15 Together with a series of drawings entitled 'The Beast and the Burden'.
- 16 *Rand Daily Mail*, 28/7/1962
- 17 'Blasphemy Case, Very Important', *Die Vaderland*, 21/11/1962
- 18 *Cape Times*, 25/7/1962
- 19 Harrison, Ronald, *The Black Christ: A Journey to Freedom*, Claremont, David Philip Publishers, 2006, p26
- 20 Barron, Chris, 'Harrison and his Painting', *Sunday Times*, 17/7/2011
- 21 Harrison, p25
- 22 Vinay Lal, 'In Memoriam: Ronald Harrison, 18 March 1940 Cape Town – 28 June 2011', Cape Town, 11/7/2011, Journeys of the 'Black Christ': Art & Resistance in Apartheid vinaylal.wordpress.com/.../journeys-of-the-black-christ-art-resistan... cached.
- 23 Harrison, p29
- 24 Ibid, p30
- 25 *Cape Times*, 17.7.1962
- 26 Journeys of the 'Black Christ': Art & Resistance in Apartheid.
- 27 Harrison, p32.
- 28 Ibid, p31
- 29 Ibid, p35.
- 30 *Cape Times*, 17.7.2011.
- 31 Harrison, op cit, 39.
- 32 *Rand Daily Mail*, 12.9.1962.
- 33 Ibid, 18/1/1963.
- 34 Marilyn Martin, op cit.
- 35 Shipler, David (2002). "Holocaust". In *Arab And Jew: Wounded Spirits In A Promised Land*. London: Penguin Books. WNYC New York Public Radio. Retrieved 21 May 2010. From Wikipedia
- 36 Now Hon Professor of Law at UCT, Neville Rubin was awarded an honorary doctorate for his 3 500-page Code of International Labour Law. With his father Senator Leslie Rubin, who had been the Cape Provincial African representative in the South African senate until black representation was abolished in 1959, he wrote a textbook on apartheid. Terry Bell, *Apartheid in Practice*, IOL, 12.12. 12 2007
- 37 <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/13/world/art-that-condemned-apartheid-will-end-its-exile.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>
- 38 David Baker, Obituary of Julius Baker, *Guardian*, 8/7/2006
- 39 [A Ripple of Hope: Resources](http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/black_christ.php), [rfksafilm.org/html/black_christ.php](http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/black_christ.php) - [Cached](#)
- 40 Barron, 'Harrison and his Painting'
- 41 www.zapiro.com
- 42 Ute Ben Yosef. Interview with Zapiro and unpublished overview on Jonathan Shapiro's life for South African Jewish Museum, 24.4.2011
- 43 www.cartoonist.co.za/zapiro.htm
- 44 *Sunday Times*, 20.4.2003
- 45 Letter to the editor, *Sunday Times*, 29/4/2003
- 46 *Sunday Times*, 27/4/2003
- 47 1/4/2010
- 48 Moira Sessions, 1/4/2010
- 49 *The Times*, 26/4/2011,
- 50 Joseph Bonsirven. Quoted in Ziva Amishai-Maizels

HERMAN WALD – HIS LIFE AND WORK¹

*

Ute Ben Yosef

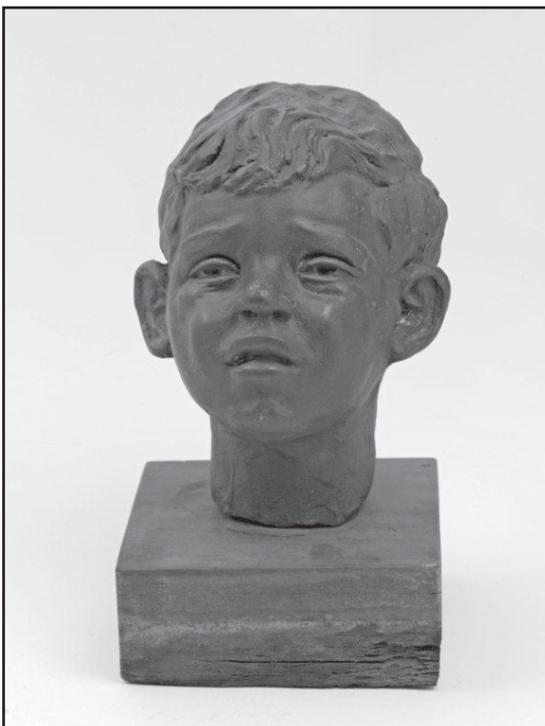
On 2 June 2011, Deneys Kottler and Louis Wald met for the first time at Louis's home in Finchley, London. Both are sons of great South African Jewish sculptors and both had grown up, close to each other, in Johannesburg, the Kottlers in Parkview and the Walds in Parktown North. Both had fathers who had immigrated to South Africa from Eastern Europe, studied in Paris, become artists of high standing and representatives of the 20th Century avant-garde and struggled to find acceptance and commissions in the conservative South African art scene.

Moses Kottler (1889/90-1977) hailed from Lithuania and Herman Wald (1906-1970) from Hungary. Although they both participated in local exhibitions (once, in 1944, even together under the auspices of the South African Academy of Arts and Sciences), they did not know each other well. In retrospect, this is astonishing as they had so much in common. During their London meeting, Deneys and Louis had a long discussion about growing up with fathers with foreign accents and who were talented, creative outsiders. Raising as

many questions as answers, the only concrete explanation can be found in the works their fathers produced and the loving tenderness manifested in the portrait heads both made of their young sons.

To rectify the lamentable fact that Herman Wald has been virtually forgotten in the wider art historical context, the South African Jewish Museum in Cape Town is currently hosting a remarkable retrospective exhibition of his work. This exhibition raises the possibility of a serious and engaged reassessment of Wald's world and enables viewers to appreciate Wald for themselves.

Wald was born in 1906 in the city of Cluj, or Kolozvár (in Yiddish: *Kloiznburg*) in what was then, and is again, Rumania. He was one of eight children of Rabbi Jacob Meir Wald (1866-1928),² who was descended from seven generations of Rabbis and served as Dayan, and later as Rosh Beth Din, in the Rabbinical Court in Cluj³. His



Herman Wald: Portrait of Louis.



Moses Kottler: Deneys. 1939. Bronze. H. 26cm

mother, Pearl, was the daughter of Rabbi Moshe Shmuel Glasner (1856-1924), Rabbi of Cluj from 1877 to 1923 and who established the Mizrachi movement there.

Herman was a precociously talented child, intensely musical and very creative. From his early childhood he loved life, and was brought up in an environment of intense Jewish learning. However, he was different from his brothers and sisters, for he was impulsive and impetuous. Besides his strictly devout upbringing and the fact that the Orthodox community had a well-established religious school, Herman also received a secular education at the local state school, proof of his father's open-mindedness. In this school Herman learned to read, write and speak Hungarian. Growing up, he developed a magnificent baritone voice, which he exercised enthusiastically during Jewish festivals. His father had him trained for choral singing and wanted him to become a cantor⁴.

Herman's greatest passion, however, was to carve, to shape and to form, inspired as he was by the towering contours of the Carpathian Mountains and the Transylvanian Alps around him. In the eyes of his worried father, this urge strayed dangerously close to a contravention of the Second Commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image".⁵ The struggle continued until Herman presented him with a portrait head of Theodore Herzl, which had such an impact on him that he at last consented to his son pursuing his artistic vocation.

Wald won a scholarship to the National Academy in Budapest, where he underwent thorough basic training for one year. His main subject was sculpture, under the tutelage of the well-known **Zsigmond Kisfaludi Strobl** (1884-1974).

When Wald was twenty-one years old, his father died, shortly after violent antisemitic attacks carried out by the Iron Guard, a Christian fascist movement which simultaneously targeted the Transylvanian cities of Brasov, Oradea and Cluj in December 1927. Jewish shops were plundered, synagogues invaded, religious books burned and Jews violently assaulted. Rabbi Wald, the Rosh Beth Din, would have been an obvious target and, although it cannot be conclusively proven, the circumstances point to his having died as a result of the violence. The date of his death is recorded in the register of the deceased of the Cluj congregation as 5 January 1928, a few days after the pogrom.

Wald never spoke about this to his family in South Africa,⁶ but the shock of those events left deep scars in his psyche. His awareness of the threats posed by antisemitism resulted in such personal insecurity in the face of it that he frequently uprooted himself and moved to other, safer, countries.

After the Cluj pogrom, Wald left Budapest and moved to Vienna, where he registered for one

semester at the School of Applied Arts (*Kunstgewerbeschule*), and worked in the studio of the prominent monumental sculptor **Anton Hanak** (1875-1934). Mounting antisemitism, in part caused by the collapse of the global stock market, saw his moving on Berlin, Germany, to further his studies.⁷ There, he worked in the studio of the sculptor **Totila Albert** (1892-1967), a poet and mystic born in Chile. Due to his childhood trauma of the separation of his parents, Albert sought to unite the forces of love between man and woman and to transmit them through a portrayal of the universal principle of love. He rendered his love-themes in swirling, organic configurations which seem to defy the force of gravity. This had a liberating impact on Wald, who also absorbed Albert's technical virtuosity and craftsmanship.

In 1933, in the context of the rise of Hitler and the commencement of a wave of antisemitic violence, Wald moved to Paris. There he absorbed the international modern art movement, especially cubism. However, he did not settle there and at the end of the year left for London, joining his sister, Yolande, and brother, Marcus. The latter then held a rabbinical position while completing his Ph.D. degree, and he later immigrated to South Africa, serving the congregations of Kimberley and later East London. In London, Wald was influenced by the work of the British school, Henry Moore and Frank Dobson, and especially by the great Jewish sculptor **Jacob Epstein** (1880-1959). He managed to obtain a post as a teacher of sculpture at the Working Men's College in Camden, North London.

In 1937 Wald, anticipating the catastrophe that was approaching European Jewry, left London after four fruitful years and followed his brother, Rabbi Dr Marcus Wald, to South Africa. Rabbi Wald, who then held a pulpit in the East London Hebrew congregation, had obtained permission for him to come to South Africa, which was not easy in the anti-immigrant climate then prevailing⁸. Wald arrived in November of that year, bringing with him a number of sculptures. He settled in Johannesburg, where he established a studio in Smit Street, Joubert Park, and started to work, teach and participate in exhibitions. He later described South Africa as "God's virgin country and unspoiled civilization..." with "a very talented urge for culture". He hopefully postulated that "the culture that was the twilight of European decay is now becoming the daylight of South African awakening"⁹.

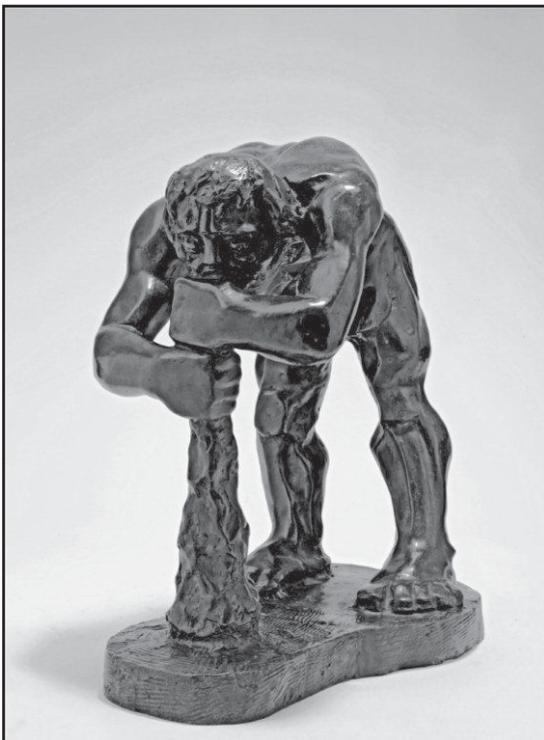
Wald now faced the challenge of establishing himself as a professional sculptor. His exhibitions were successful, he sold his work and he received positive reviews in the press, yet something was lacking in his official reception. He was a prolific sculptor and a representative of the modern movement in Europe with many years of artistic training. He created more than 400 outstanding works of sculpture and in his Biblical and love

themes, was a kindred spirit of Marc Chagall (1887-1985), whom he greatly admired. Despite this, none of his works are represented in the collections of the official South African art museums and his name scarcely appears in any of the prominent handbooks of South African artists.

In September 1939, the Second World War broke out. Of this, Wald wrote: "1939 was the Doomsday of Heaven. The devil tore up the agreement between good and evil."¹⁰ As a Jew, he felt that he had to become involved, even though his age did not allow him to be active in combat. As he later wrote, "It is every democratic person's first duty to fight war to his utmost power"¹¹ In 1940, he joined the South African Defence Force. First, he was assigned to the Medical Corps and later was transferred to the Engineers Camouflage Unit, holding the rank of Sergeant. During his free time, his creativity found an outlet in recording his reminiscences of his formative years in Europe in a personal unpublished memoir entitled "Carved Thoughts".¹² They reveal his keen judgment of political situations.

In 1942, Wald married Vera Rosenbaum, whom he had met through his brother. In her boundless loyalty, she became his anchor and his muse. They had three children, Michael Jeffrey, Pamela and Louis. Discharged from the army in 1944, Wald returned to Johannesburg, where he began working in a studio in Parktown North. Later, he opened a studio in Pritchard Street, where he established the Beaux Arts Gallery and in which he presented several of his own solo exhibitions.

The shocking news of the Holocaust began to reach South Africa through reports from the Jewish



Cain. 1937/46. Bronze. 42x47x27cm

Agency in Palestine and the Inter-Allied Committee. Wald created sculptures referring to the genocide, one of which is the figure of **Cain**. This figure, rendered in a bulky expressionism, stands apart from any iconographic tradition of the figure of Cain in Western sculpture. He wrote about the sculpture: "Let these lit-up eyes be an eternal warning to mankind, that they should never relapse into this animalism that has shocked mankind beyond all forgetting".

In 1952, Wald undertook a trip via Israel through Europe to New York. In Israel, he visited one of his other brothers, Rabbi Ernest Wald. He was deeply impressed by the Jewish State and stayed there to work for several weeks, capturing, in the style of Social Realism, the different types of Israelis in their everyday life and also created works with themes of redemption.

He next spent time in Rome, London and Paris, absorbing there the latest trends in modern art, before arriving in New York to prepare for the exhibition of his life-time. This exhibition was crucial for his career. He was in a feverish state of hope and optimism about it, alternating with abysmal anxiety. These feelings he shared with Vera in his correspondence with her. He greatly missed his family during this time. In this situation, he began to work on his Adam and Eve theme, which would later culminate in his Mystical Union motif. In these works, the love between man and woman creates a force that brings harmony to the world.

The New York exhibition opened on 7 September at the New Gallery, West 44th Street. He showed over thirty works, some of which he had created on his travels to Israel and Europe and others which were sent directly from South Africa.¹³ The exhibition was successful and he received positive reviews in the New York press¹⁴.

Wald was elated. As a result of this success, he held further successful exhibitions back in South Africa and received commissions for monuments. One was commissioned by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, which engaged him to create the Monument to the Six Million for the West Park Cemetery in Johannesburg. Unveiled 1959, it has become the venue for the annual Yom Hashoah ceremonies to this day. So impressed by this monument was the visiting American Zionist leader, Rabbi Israel Goldstein, that that wrote of it as follows in his autobiography *My World as a Jew* (1984): "At the West Park Cemetery, we saw an impressive memorial to the six million victims of the European Holocaust. It had just been unveiled there to the design by a leading sculptor, Herman Wald, and incorporates three giant pairs of hand clutching six-foot-high *shofarot* that formed a triple arch. Prominent in the centre are the Hebrew words, *Lo Tirzach* (Thou shalt not kill)."¹⁵

Wald's beautiful Impala Fountain, commissioned by Harry Oppenheimer in honour of his father, was unveiled in Johannesburg in

1960. It captures the vitality of Africa, with its eighteen Impalas - their number symbolizing *Chai*, which means Life - jumping in an arch over a fountain. Typically for a pacifist, he chose the gentle gazelle over beasts of prey. The sculpture was recently vandalized and restored by his oldest son, Michael, who followed in his father's footsteps by becoming an artist. It has since been moved from the Ernest Oppenheimer Park on Joubert Street to the front of the Anglo-American headquarters at 44 Main Street. Wald also received a commission from Oppenheimer for the Diamond Digger Fountain in Kimberly. Likewise unveiled in 1960 it depicts, in the style of Social Realism, five mineworkers holding up a sieve, the sound of the fountain imitating the crunchy filtering of the diamonds.

In 1959, Wald presented thirty-four Biblical works in a prestigious exhibition held at Queens Hall in De Villiers Street, Johannesburg. Sponsored by the *Histadrut Ivrit*, then under the chairmanship of N Rutstein, it was opened by his admirer and friend, Alec Gorshel, at the time Deputy Mayor of Johannesburg. The exhibition was a very important breakthrough for him. In a lecture entitled 'The Bible in Sculpture', he stated, "I apply these Biblical stories to our present day happenings ... they do have the undercurrent of timelessness which repeats itself in the history of mankind unchangeably."¹⁶

Wald regarded his Biblical figures as personal representations of his thoughts on religion and



Jacob Wrestling with the Angel. 1949. Bronze. 77x29x24cm

philosophy. Among them was the figure of **Jacob wrestling with the Angel**. This pre-empted Wald's last period of the whirlpool core of his abstract works. It depicts a crucial scene in the Bible, in which Man wrestles with God. After this struggle, Jacob's name becomes Israel. Wald's angel plunges down from heaven like a flame. The heads of the two opponents meet in a central swirl of centrifugal force, which is a fusion between the human and the Divine.

During his last period, Wald began to re-explore the motive of the archetypal mystical union of man and woman, a force which would bring harmony to the world. One of the culminating examples is his **Man and his Soul**, which was erected last year on the West campus of the University of the Witwatersrand (Department of Law). With this work, he had reached a peak in his creativity. In his own words, he depicts in this work the "circle between Life and Death running with such unaccountable centrifugal speed that could take man an eternity to catch up with its secret."¹⁷ Here he entered a realm beyond personal experience. Death is a force difficult to grasp. Two stylized androgynous figures, arms above their heads, float in a circle, their torsos split, forming a mandala, the Jungian symbol of self and of transformation. With Jung, the collective subconscious is manifested in archetypal symbols. But there is a difference in the concept of archetypal symbols in the Jungian sense and the archetypal symbols of Jewish artists, such as Marc Chagall and Herman Wald. The Jewish archetypal symbols cannot be conceived without a Godhead.

The art historian and artist Abigail Sarah Bagraim, who is a student of Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah, kindly elaborated on this question to the author:

This question of Jungian archetypes and the Kabbalah is such a complex one especially when relating it to an art-work. This image of Herman Wald [i.e. **Man and his Soul**] is so beautiful and is a perfect symbol of the androgyne.

I think that to say that Jungian archetypes dismiss any understanding of the godhead would be unfair as Jung himself was known to have related to the Kabbalistic concept of the *Ein-Sof*¹⁸. The difference is that Jung viewed the *Ein-Sof* as the collective-unconscious, the unseen chaos - and like the *Ein-Sof*, the collective unconscious contained within itself all the opposites such as light and dark and good and evil.

Kabbalists are responsible for *Tikkun Haolam* (restoration of the world), to bring the 'Divine' and the '*Shekhinah*' together again so that our world may be healed and peace may once again return to earth and to the higher worlds. In order for this to come about the sexual union of the *Sefirot*¹⁹ of *Tiferet*²⁰ and *Malkuth*²¹ needs to take place, and this will restore order in the cosmos.

In Jungian terms, one needs to balance one's own individual psyche, which consists of the anima and animus, and this should lead to psychological harmony.

Therefore (...), the one is a religious experience and the other is a psychological experience - although the two do most certainly overlap".²²



Man and his Soul. 1965. Bronze. 50x44x18cm

Wald's creativity is inextricably linked to the Jewish God while his iconography belongs to the art of the 20th Century. He was a prolific sculptor. Apart from his monuments, more than four hundred works are known today, each one original in its concept. This is a formidable amount of work for one artist in one lifetime.

Herman Wald died of a heart attack on 4 July 1970 in Salisbury, Rhodesia, whilst erecting a public sculpture there. He was buried in the West Park Cemetery in Johannesburg, beside his great Monument to the Six Million. After his death Vera, together with their youngest son, Louis, began the mammoth task of gathering information about his sculptures from all over the world. Louis, a structural engineer by profession, entered the information gleaned from the research into a software program which he had created for the project. As a result of this, he became a distinguished software engineer.

For many years Louis and Vera worked tirelessly on the research of Wald's vast *œuvre*. When Vera died in 2007, it was left to Louis to move all the sculptures stored in her house to another venue. The renewed personal contact with his father's work had a powerful impact on him. In due course, he sold his software engineering business and dedicated himself fully to the research project on Herman Wald, linking his father's immense body of work to the momentum of art history. The retrospective exhibition at the SA Jewish Museum is based on his tireless commitment and his formidable effort

of documentation.²³ As these wonderful sculptures were shown, it became vastly evident that Herman Wald's artistic *œuvre* is strikingly relevant in our present age.

NOTES

- 1 For the information about Rabbi Jacob Meir, his family and that of his wife, Pearl, and about the Jewish community in Cluj at the first half of the 20th Century, I am indebted to the Jewish community of Cluj-Napoca under the directorship of Mr Ossi Horvitz (email communication, 27 April 2011).
- 2 Letter from Herman Wald to the Director at Yad Vashem, 30 August 1962.
- 3 Edgar Bernstein, 'The Art of Herman Wald' in *Jewish Guild New Year Annual* 19 (105), 1951
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 We are indebted to Louis Wald for his personal reflections regarding this catastrophe in the life of his father.
- 6 Sometime around 1931. The exact date could not be established.
- 7 With the financial help of Sir Donald Harris, as stated in Herman Wald's personal CV.
- 8 Op. cit. (*Carved Thoughts*)
- 9 Herman Wald. Aphorisms
- 10 "He is preoccupied with war", *Sunday Express*, (undated newspaper fragment).
- 11 www.hermanwald.com.
- 12 Ibid
- 13 In the *New York Times*, *The Forward*, and the *Amerikai Magyar Nepszava* (The American people's Hungarian I)
- 14 Israel Goldstein, *My World as a Jew: The memoirs of Israel Goldstein*, 1984, p53.
- 15 'The Bible in Sculpture', 1959, Lecture presented by Herman Wald on the occasion of the exhibition.
- 16 <http://mail.google.com>.
- 17 I am indebted to Abigail Bagraim for pointing out this difference between the Jungian archetype and the Jewish archetype of the *Shekhinah*, which she studied during her research on Marc Chagall, namely that in Jewish Mysticism the "*Hieros Gamos*", the Holy Wedding is submitted to the Godhead (personal interview, 4/8/2011).
- 18 The Kabbalistic concept of God.
- 19 The ten emanations of the Kabbalah through which God created the world.
- 20 The sixth emanation in the Tree of Life in the Kabbalah which has the power to reconcile *chesed* (kindness) and *gevurah* (justice).
- 21 Kingdom, also known as *Shekhina*.
- 22 Abigail Sarah Bagraim. e-mail communication, 18 January 2012.
- 23 Accessible on www.hermanwald.com.

JEWISH LAW AND ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF HERMAN WALD

*

Natalie Knight

When I interviewed Herman Wald in his studio in 1970, three weeks before his sudden death at the age of 64, I was intrigued to find an artist who was conflicted about religion. He was frustrated by the second Commandment, “Thou shalt not make graven images.” This, after all, was his calling.¹

Wald was forced to take the Ten Commandments very seriously. He grew up in a religious home where his father was a Rabbi and his mother came from a distinguished line of Rabbonim. Knowledge of the Bible was something the young Herman imbibed in his mother’s milk and his sculptures include his interpretation of Cain, Jacob, Moses, Job and many others.

Wald recalled that when he was a teenager, his father refused to allow him to make three-dimensional art forms. However, being a rebel, he secretly made a realistic portrait bust of Theodore Herzl, which he finally showed to his father: “While inspecting it I noticed a veil gradually lifting from his eyes - a screen that separated the religious prejudice from the instinctive understanding of the fine arts. He only shook his head in a noncommittal way, not knowing whether to be for or against my career”.

Rabbi Wald realized that he could not fight his son’s passionate calling and sent him to study at the National Academy in Budapest, and later to Europe and the UK.

I interviewed Rabbi Avi Amittai co-Rosh Kollel of the Beit Mordechai Campus Kollel at Yeshiva College, and asked him about the interpretation of the commandment “Thou shalt not make a graven image”. Does this include the words and “bow down to them”? Would it be acceptable to make a sculpture purely for aesthetic reasons?

Rabbi Amittai, said that the two parts were not one sentence but two. There was no getting around the fact that we are commanded not to make graven images – even if we don’t intend to bow down to them. Jewish law not only allows but encourages the skilled artist or craftsman to make beautiful objects for use (the first artist so commanded was Bezalel,² *Shemot* 35:30:33).

Natalie Knight is an attorney, art critic and freelance feature writer, who further works as an art consultant, curator of exhibitions and lecturer. She is the author of two books on the Ndebele and has written and produced two plays, Barmy Days and There’s No Sugar Left.

There are fewer objections to two-dimensional art, and for thousands of years skilled Jewish artists have decorated and illustrated books and manuscripts.³ The purpose of the art is to glorify Hashem and to refine the character of the artist.

R’ Amittai referred to the fact that the prohibition against making graven images has come to mean that a sculptor cannot create a human figure, detailed and life-size, but that an abstract sculpture or part of the human form would be acceptable.

I asked him how to reconcile this stricture with the fact that there were two winged cherubs (*Kruvim*) in the Temple that had human features. To this, he replied, “Hashem commanded man in general *not* to make graven images and he commanded Bezalel to make the *Kruvim* for a particular purpose. They are two different commandments, each coming from Hashem”.

The Rabbi pointed out that we live in a time where people are asking questions and want to understand. They are not prepared to accept the *Halacha* blindly as they did in the past.

He agreed that there was a different mood in the 21st Century world. Art today is no longer as connected as it was to religion and idol-worship. However, he re-iterated that Hashem instructed us to stay away from graven images, remarking that the Torah wants to protect us from ever reverting back to those wild, dark elements within man.

In this connection, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks comments, “The aesthetic dimension of Judaism has tended to be downplayed, at least until the modern era, for obvious reasons. The Israelites worshipped the invisible God who transcended the universe. Other than the human person, God has no image. Even when he revealed himself to the people at Sinai, ‘You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice’ (*Devarim*, 4: 12)”.

I posed the predicament of Rabbi Jacob Meir Wald to Rabbi Amittai, who said, “The father was a very wise man. He saw that his son was talented and did not want to forbid him from creating art. Rather than have his son defy him, he taught him the *halochas* and how to work within the law.”

Herman Wald knew that he could make art that was abstract and did this whenever he was involved in a Jewish public commission. His commercial works, however, often included realistic figures such as the *Diamond Diggers* in Kimberley and the impalas in *The Stampede*, for

the Oppenheimer Memorial Fountain in Johannesburg.

In 1959 Herman Wald presented thirty-four Biblical figures in Queens Hall, Johannesburg, regarding these works as his personal representations on religion and philosophy. When an admirer complimented him on his work but expressed his regret that he could not buy a “graven image”, Wald responded, “Do you keep the other nine commandments so rigorously as well?”

Herman Wald was very conscious of his heritage and the mitzvah of honouring his parents. It had been a harsh struggle to go against the will of his father and become a professional sculptor. He found a way to justify his choice saying, “Though the religious environment into which I was born seemed to clash with my calling, later when I discovered that religion and art do not ultimately exclude each other, but go hand-in-hand, my mind was at peace and I accepted the calling.”

The Biblical and humorous shtetl figures Wald made were more than depiction of colourful characters. He emphasized that form in itself was not sufficient justification for creating a sculpture. The work had to either create an emotional impact on the viewer or have a symbolic connotation.⁴

Wald may have seen the work of German artist, Kathe Kollwitz, who conveyed intense emotional grief in her sculptures. Her son was killed in World War 1 and she created *Mother and Child* 1936.

Wald’s response to the deaths in his family and the horrifying accounts of those being transferred to Auschwitz (including his mother and siblings) resulted in a major work entitled *Kria*, rending of garments expressing Jewish mourning from biblical days until the present

time. This work was originally placed at Sandringham Gardens in 1950 and is currently on exhibition in Cape Town. It will be permanently installed at the Holocaust Museum in Westcliff, Johannesburg, once the construction of the Museum is complete.

At times Wald was compliant, trying to observe Jewish law, but at others he lashed out at the restrictions saying that he had a bone to pick with Moses: “Hashem forbid carving and then Moses himself carved out the Ten Commandments in stone. Moses understood the power of carving. If he had not he would have created a document not a monument”, he said.

Wald was able to work in two dimensions and his drawings capture in fine economical lines the essence of his ideas. Had he developed this area of his talent, he would have been successful in satisfying rabbinical law and also in creating works which took him to places where his sculpture could not follow in the conservative art environment of South Africa. It is instructive to compare the sculpture of *Jacob wrestling with the Angel* with the original drawing. Note the way in which Wald conceived and executed his idea in both two and three dimensional form.

In an article I wrote on Wald in *Buurman* (1970), I described an underlying sense of frustration that he felt: “He was very earnest and tightly involved with his work. He spoke about his successes but there was an undercurrent of regret and he felt that he had not achieved what he wanted to for himself. He referred to the maquettes which were really planned as monuments which he hoped would one day come to fruition.”⁵

I wonder if the maquette of *Man and his Soul*, created in 1965, was in the studio that day. It would be ironic or maybe poetic justice to think that I was instrumental in realizing the beauty and



HERMAN WALD - *The Stampede - Impala Fountain* by Herman Wald - Commissioned by Harry Oppenheimer in memory of his father Sir Ernest in 1960 (Bronze - 7.5m wide)
Photo by Jac de Villiers

power of the work. Forty years later, in my capacity as Art curator on the West Campus of the University of the Witwatersrand, I submitted the maquette to Prof Kathy Munro, the then acting Dean of the Faculty of Commerce Law and Management. I proposed the work for installation on the Wits West Campus and the idea was accepted. Herman Wald would have been delighted to see how the small maquette was expanded, using modern technology and cast as a work almost three meters in height and diameter.⁶ The semi-abstract work floats in a circular motion defying gravity, eschewing detail and, despite the title, leaves the form open to individual interpretation.

I also proposed the sculpture the *Unknown Miner* for installation in the Chamber of Mines building.⁷ I saw the mould lying face down in a make-shift studio. Wald's son, Louis, offered to donate the two sculptures to the University (asking only that they pay for the casting). In November 2011, *Unknown Miner* was installed at the entrance of the Chamber of Mines Building on the West Campus and unveiled in March, 2012 as an important event in the 90th anniversary celebrations of the University.

With the *Unknown Miner* and *Man and his Soul*, Wald incorporates what he absorbed from his studies in Budapest, Europe and London. He includes the detailed realism and vigorous surface modelling of Rodin and Jacob Epstein in *Unknown Miner* and the smooth, fluid attenuated forms of Brancusi and Totilla Albert in *Man and his Soul*. The two works are examples of his conflict with the *Halacha* – the need to create and the need to survive financially.

Wald found himself part of a momentum that had begun in the late 19th Century where Jewish artists wanted to create sculpture. This began with the Russian artist, Mark Antokolsky (1843-1902), followed by Jacques Lipchitz, Jacob Epstein, and in South Africa, Moses Kottler, Lippy Lipshitz, Ernest Ullmann and Solly Disner.

Of the works commissioned from Wald by the Jewish community, the best known is the *Monument to the Six Million Martyrs* at the West Park Cemetery, Johannesburg.

The current retrospective exhibition, hosted by the Jewish Museum in Cape Town, takes its title from the work *The Wings of the Shechinah* which Wald made for the Berea Synagogue. This was a very significant commission for the artist. Wald wrote, "When I was approached to design the main Wall of the Berea Synagogue, I felt that I was faced with a number of problems. It is no simple matter to reconstruct a conception derived from Biblical days, when the Covenant was carried in the desert."

In Jewish mysticism the *Shechinah* represents the highest level of spiritual growth and is the mystical awareness of the Eternal One. Wald distilled the image from the description of the cherubim rendered by Bezalel: "I have attempted



HERMAN WALD - 'Monument to Six Million' by Herman Wald (West Park Cemetery JHB), Photo by Jac de Villiers

to reinterpret the conception that Bezalel used. I had to take into account that the law forbids the use of living figures in sculpture, so I could use the non-figurative part of the Cherubim theme – namely, wings - to embrace the ark in which the Law is carried."

Floating above the wings, enhanced by "chains of continuity" which also symbolize the link between man and God, are the tablets of the Ten Commandments rendered in copper, "to give the impression that the message they carry is floating across the whole world".

The Hebrew term *Shechinah* refers to the Divine Presence. It is derived from the Hebrew word *shochen* - to dwell, the *Shechinah* seeks to dwell with us on this physical earth. Judaism teaches us what we must do so that Hashem will draw near to us in 'this' world and explains that the essential dwelling of the *Shechinah* is in the lower world of this earth.⁸

The *Shechinah* represents those attributes of Hashem that are 'feminine'; thus, when we speak of the 'motherly' closeness of Hashem (who seeks to nurture and protect us), we are speaking of the *Shechinah*. One of the metaphors, which Judaism uses to describe this closeness, is that of a mother bird, (an eagle) who takes her young under her wings. When we come close to Hashem, we have come "under the wings of the *Shechinah*."

Sanctum, the carved wooden choir-screen made for the Springs shul, is one of the highlights of the exhibition at the Jewish Museum. The work contains different facets of Jewish history and symbols, including hands in prayer, a menorah and the Lion of Judah, all encompassed by a tallis. In modern times, the thinker who spoke most

eloquently about aesthetics was Rav Yitchak HaKohein Kook. In his Commentary to the Siddur, he wrote, "Literature, painting and sculpture give material expression to all the spiritual concepts implanted in the depths of the human soul, and as long as even one single line hidden in the depth of the soul has not been given outward expression, it is the task of art [*avodat ha-umanut*] to bring it out" (Olat Re-ayah, II, 3).

Evidently these remarks were considered controversial. In later editions of the Commentary the phrase, "Literature, painting and sculpture" was removed and in its place was written, "Literature, its design and tapestry."

The name *Bezalel* was adopted by the artist Boris Schatz for the School of Arts and Crafts he founded in Israel in 1906, and Rav Kook wrote a touching letter in support of its creation. He saw the renaissance of art in the Holy Land as a symbol of the regeneration of the Jewish people in its own land, landscape and birthplace. Judaism in the Diaspora, removed from a natural connection with its own historic environment, was inevitably cerebral and spiritually, alienated'. Only in Israel would an authentic Jewish aesthetic emerge, strengthened by and in turn strengthening Jewish spirituality.⁹

Rav Joseph B. Soloveichik says that from his perspective, "human creativity and initiative in science and technology are ... desirable, because they reflect the dignity conferred upon creatures bearing the divine image." This stance is usually rejected by the so-called "yeshiva world", which assigns religious significance to creativity only insofar as it is directly and immediately related to the field of Torah. Rav Chaim of Volozhin makes the point that while human beings are mandated to imitate the creativity of the Creator, this emulation is possible only in the exercise of spiritual creativity.¹⁰

This is in keeping with the Kabbalistic doctrines which affirm that only Torah study and observance of the Commandments create new spiritual worlds in the higher regions. Rav Soloveichik objects to this denigration of secular activities. He feels that scientific and technological creativity also constitutes an intrinsically valuable mode of imitating the Divine Creator.¹¹

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says, "When art lets us see the wonder of creation as God's work and the human person as God's image, it becomes a powerful part of the religious life, with one proviso. The Greeks believed in the holiness of beauty. Jews believe in *hadrat kodesh*, the beauty of holiness: not art for art's sake but art as a disclosure of the ultimate artistry of the Creator. That is how *omanut* enhances *emunah*, how art adds wonder to faith."

Herman Wald is an artist whose roots formed him, whose environment restricted him and whose familial obligations directed him. Nevertheless, he was able to transcend his constraints through his passion and skill. He produced an amazing

variety of works which are tactile, expressive and appealing. He lived a life imbued with Jewish values and the sacrifices that he made for his family are appreciated and have borne fruit. The donation of the works to Wits by his sons, Michael and Louis and the mounting of the major exhibition *Wings of the Shechinah* were all done to honour their father. In the end, Wald succeeded in creating major, meaningful works within the parameters of *Halacha*. Through these unique and unparalleled monuments, he is remembered today for his ability to encapsulate the "beauty of holiness".

- *Wings of the Shechinah - The Sculptural Art of Herman Wald*, SA Jewish Museum, 88 Hatfield Street Gardens Cape Town, 20 February to 15 July 2012, Sunday to Thursday 10am to 5pm, Friday 10am to 2pm, Sculptures, Sketches, Writings and Audio Visual Displays. Group tours by prior arrangement. Contact: 021 465 1546

Notes

- 1 For biographical details on Herman Wald, see accompanying article by Ute Ben Yosef in this issue.
- 2 For more details on the commandment to Bezalel see Knight, N, 'Jewish Art' in *Jewish Affairs*, Winter 2005.
- 3 No depictions allowed of the sun, moon, constellations and angels, Talmud *Avoda Zara*. 3: 10-1.
- 4 Knight, N, 'Wolkekrabbers kan nie bid nie: 'n waardering van Wald se werk', *Buurman*, September 1970 pp45-7
- 5 See note 4
- 6 See Ute Ben Yosef's article, in this issue
- 7 Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, University of the Witwatersrand.
- 8 Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in his commentary on *Bereishis* 9:27. *Shmot*, 25:8. The term also refers to the conversion process. Three converts said "The humility of Hillel brought us under the wing of the *shechinah* (*Shabbos* 31a).
- 9 Perhaps the most moving of all remarks Rav Kook made about art came in the course of a conversation he had with a Jewish sculptor: "When I lived in London I used to visit the National Gallery, and my favourite pictures were those of Rembrandt. I really think that Rembrandt was a *Tzaddik*. Do you know that when I first saw Rembrandt's works, they reminded me of the rabbinic statement about the creation of light? We are told that when God created light [on the first day of creation, as opposed to the natural light of the sun on the fourth day], it was so strong and pellucid, that one could see from one end of the world to the other, but God was afraid that the wicked might abuse it. What did He do? He reserved that light for the righteous in the world to come. But now and then there are great men who are blessed and privileged to see it. I think that Rembrandt was one of them, and the light in his pictures is the very light that God created on Genesis day."
- 10 See Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, *Nefesh Hayyim*
- 11 Wurtzburger, W, 'Posek of Post Modern Orthodoxy', *Tradition*, Vol 29, 1994.

SIDNEY GOLDBLATT: THE ARTIST AND THE MAN

*

Frank Startz, Wendy Goldblatt

Sidney Goldblatt was born in Johannesburg, of Lithuanian Jewish parents, in 1919. He grew up in Johannesburg and attended Parktown Boys High School. After matriculating, he spent ten years in business and was employed by the O.K. Bazaars, where his maternal uncle was Managing Director. Goldblatt was never happy in the business world, however. He always longed to be an artist, and so during this time attended evening art classes at the Johannesburg Technical College.

In 1946, Goldblatt forsook the business world to devote himself entirely to art. He took this decision after a painting holiday in Sabie. His first one-man exhibition was held in 1948 in the Jewish Guild Memorial Hall in Johannesburg. At this early stage he was hailed by art critics as “a gifted artist with a strong feeling for line and form”.

After this early success, Goldblatt studied overseas for some eighteen months. Through the recommendation of Maurice van Essche, he enrolled at the Anglo French Art Centre in London, studying there until 1950. While in England, he became interested in the early works of Paul Klee, the Swiss artist.

Prior to his arrival in England, Goldblatt had not been much interested in abstract art and contemporary ideas. Having visited art galleries there, however, he came to the conclusion that contemporary art was an extension of the classical and consequently drastically changed his attitude towards modern art.

Between 1950 and 1951, Goldblatt was in Paris, where he was tutored by Fernando Leger and Andre Lhote. It was here that he derived his greatest inspiration. During his period at Leger’s studio, Goldblatt became acquainted with many artists and students from all parts of the world. On his return to London, he studied sculpture at the Sir John Cass Academy in London’s East End.

In 1951, Goldblatt returned to South Africa, visiting Italy and all its art treasures en route. Once back, he once more established himself in Hillbrow. This suburb, which had developed during his childhood into a vast steel and concrete jungle, had left a lasting impression on him and to it can be traced his cubistic approach and the division of some of his work into facets or planes.

Goldblatt’s second one-man exhibition was held in 1952 at the Whippmans Gallery,

Johannesburg. In this exhibition, he showed his love for subjects from his own surroundings - landscapes, city scenes, and the people around him.

In May 1955, Goldblatt married English-born Wendy Webster. At the same time, he moved to a larger flat, where the main room became his studio. From here, he supplemented his income with teaching and was able to paint without being influenced by public demand or popular concepts. His art school continued until his untimely death in 1979.

At this time, Goldblatt began to make use of linoleum. While he was on honeymoon, the Lidchi Gallery held an exhibition of his early lino-cuts.

In 1957, Goldblatt and his wife went overseas for a year. They lived for more than six months in Spain, where they imbibed the atmosphere and color of the Spanish landscape and peoples. They lived for a while in Marbella, a small Southern Andalusian fishing village, and also spent some time in Toledo, Seville, Ronda and Cordoba and in the little harbors in that area. Goldblatt drew fresh inspiration from his sojourn in Spain, reveling in the light of the sharp Andalusian sun. He especially loved to paint the villages, boats and fishing scenes and their bright colorful palette as reflected in the strong Spanish sunlight.

After leaving Spain, the couple motored through Southern France, Italy and Switzerland. They ended up in London, where they spent three months. There, Goldblatt drew inspiration from the big art galleries and their wonderful collections. During the same year Goldblatt showed two oil paintings and two lino-cuts at the exhibition of South African art in London.

After returning to South Africa in 1958, Goldblatt took part in several exhibitions, with his Spanish paintings dominating. This won him recognition both locally and abroad. At the invitation of the SA Art Association, he sent three paintings to the Venice Biennale. They were acclaimed by overseas art critics, one of whom wrote in the *Manchester Guardian*, “South Africa has only one painter, Sidney Goldblatt, who gives one a rich feeling of the crowded predicament of his country. Goldblatt’s work sang from the canvas...”

Goldblatt’s work was slowly changing in style with every exhibition and a non-figurative element came to the fore, showing more sensitivity to color, more compact compositions and an ever increasing freedom of technique. He used linoleum in his paintings for the first time as a collage into which he engraved, painted and molded the

Frank Startz is an artist and a former student and long-time friend of the late Sidney Goldblatt. Wendy Goldblatt, the widow of Sidney Goldblatt, is a well-known South African potter.

medium. One of these paintings won the Cambridge Shirt Art Award on the Art SA Today exhibition, held in Durban in 1967.

Goldblatt believed that it was essential for local artists to acquaint themselves with artists in Europe and elsewhere abroad. In November 1969, he went overseas for six weeks, visiting Israel, the Greek Islands, Athens, Istanbul, and London, and taking with him paintings to show the art galleries there. In 1972, he took a further trip, visiting Toronto and the USA. In the American galleries, he was stimulated by the contemporary art scene, and the visit had a profound effect on his subsequent work.

In 1973, Goldblatt took a group on an art tour to Europe, visiting France, England, Italy and Greece and spending many hours, lecturing to the group in leading art centres and museums. He visited Scandinavia in 1975, and was impressed by the high standard of the crafts in those countries.

Goldblatt was a graphic artist, sculptor and oil painter. The medium he used for his graphics was linoleum, into which he carved and then took a print. After his visit to America, he also used acrylic paint and found that mixed media gave him interesting results. From 1966, he created compositions consisting of a combination of linoleum, oil paints and hessian in which his spontaneous use of textures was strongly expressed. He often used one color in these works, for example brown or silver. Initially, Goldblatt used pieces of linoleum as collage elements in his compositions. Two years later linoleum developed in its own right into panels, upon which the artist carved or cut out a design. These works depict a strong linear element.

Goldblatt's sculpture is influenced by his paintings and lino-cuts, and also by African sculpture and cubism. When he started a sculpture, he had no preconceived ideas about the end result, allowing shapes to emerge naturally as he progressed. He never made these works on a big scale, and the work is non-figurative, yet the artist holds that they elicit images of perhaps a knight's helmet or the body of a woman. His sculptures were cast in aluminium or in green and black bronze.

Goldblatt, who always sought to improve with every exhibition, did not hold any complicated art theories. He painted as he felt and his later paintings consisted of non-figurative compositions in which he concentrates on the relationships and the arrangement of color planes on canvas. He strove for a balance between tradition, abstraction and reality. In his earlier period, he was inspired by nature, but latterly it was more a question of seeing and feeling. He used natural shapes as symbols, retaining a feeling for realism, yet expressing it in the modern idiom.

Goldblatt used often to work on two or three canvases simultaneously. He would put uncompleted works aside and continue working on them at a later stage until he was satisfied that

they were finished. His method of working is essentially a process of analysis; he often used his older paintings to build on and serve as an inspiration for newer ones.

In contrast to his earlier work, Goldblatt did not give his non-figurative work titles, because he maintained that these often evoke the wrong images rather than being open to interpretation. Sometimes, he was influenced by world events as, for example, during the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Listening to his radio in his studio, he was very moved by the needless massacre that was taking place and did a series of paintings which reflected the turmoil in the desert.

In 1977, Goldblatt was invited to design a label for wine by a leading liquor distributor. This was the first time in South Africa that a label had been designed by an artist, and followed in the wake of those designed for Chateau Mouton Rothschild by Picasso, Chagall, Motherwell and Dali. Towards the end of his life, he was also often commissioned to do portraits.

Goldblatt lived, worked and taught in Abbotsford, Johannesburg, with Wendy (a potter who runs her own studio for teaching and producing ceramics) and their four children, Amanda, Lisa, Paula and Simon. He tutored many pupils, upon whom he exerted some measure of influence. Several of his pupils have been successful in both group and one-man shows.

Sidney Goldblatt died in 1979 following a heart attack. His sudden passing was a tremendous shock to the art world and to all who loved him. He still had had so much to contribute to the art scene in South Africa.

REMEMBERING SIDNEY GOLDBLATT: FRANK STARTZ IN CONVERSATION WITH WENDY GOLDBLATT

FS: Wendy, how and when did you and Sidney first meet?

WG: I first came to South Africa from England for a month's holiday to visit my aunt in 1953 - I was only twenty. I left for South Africa as a young girl on a boat all alone and landed in Cape Town. After three weeks, I flew up to Johannesburg, where my mother's sister lived.

I had a South African cousin, Catherine, who was taking art lessons with Sidney. He had just come back from overseas and started the Giotto Art Academy in Hillbrow with a German artist. Catherine said, "You have to meet my art teacher. He's too old for me, but he's just right for you". Her then boyfriend, Kurt, arranged for the four of us to go on a date. Sidney was 34 or 35 at the time, which to me was ancient. He told me that he had never before met anyone that he felt he could marry but that if he had money, I'd be the one he would marry. So he started to teach more earnestly, broke away from the Giotto Art Academy and started teaching in his bachelor flat. We then married and rented a small two-bedroom flat. It

was really minute but we envisaged it as a means to an end.

I worked for the French Bank (at that time I spoke fluent French) and Sidney taught and we saved as much as we could manage for about two years. We then went overseas because Sidney very much wanted to paint in Spain. We finally settled in the south of Spain, which was very cheap in those days, and we lived there for about five months in idyllic surroundings. Each day, Sidney would go out to paint the local scenes – and there were so many to choose from.

Following our return Maurice van Essche, a good friend of Sidney's, wrote to him that he was going on a protracted holiday and suggested that Sidney take over his position as head of art at the famous Michaelis School of Art in Cape Town. Sidney thought it a great idea, but then Maurice was taken ill and on his recovery went back to his old job. Later, when he retired, he offered the position to Sidney again, but by then Sidney had decided that he did not want to be an administrator – which, of course, was mostly what the job entailed.

FS: What can you tell us about the time when Sidney went to study art in the UK?

WG: It was a few years before we met and were married. I was at school at the time and still lived in London. He was in London for about two years, studying painting and drawing at the Anglo French Art School. It was a small school, but they had very good professors. Then he went for about six months to the Sir John Cass Academy where he studied sculpture. Next, he went off to Paris for a few months, where he studied in the studios of Fernand Leger and Andre Lhote. He said they were unbelievable. He used to go there and work and about once a week they would pop in, have a look around and give a crit. Their approach was never "hands on".

Before he went overseas, he featured in some small group exhibitions and then held his first solo exhibition at the Whippman Gallery soon after his return from Europe. When I knew him, he'd started exhibiting at the Lawrence Adler Gallery and also at the Lidchi Gallery.

FS: Who was running the Lidchi at the time? Was it Harold Jeppe?

WG: Yes, and Harold wrote a couple of articles on Sidney. Then Joyce Fourie took it over. She and Sidney got on very well.

FS: I remember Joyce, as well as Harold Jeppe. He gave me my first professional break. Joyce correctly described Sidney to me as being a very earthy man. And she was right.

WG: Yes that's true. Sidney and I were very friendly with Joyce. Sidney was also friendly with Bill Ainslee and Cecil Skotnes, long before Cecil went to Cape Town to work at the Michaelis (I still have a beautiful Jobst copper bowl he gave us for a wedding present). Other friends were Dirk Meerkoter and Ronnie Mylchreest. Another name from that period was George Boys.

FS: Boys was my first art teacher. I joined him after he'd left the Tech and set up the Visual Arts Lab. I remember he would physically impose his own work on that of his students. One time the committee from the Lichtenburg Art Museum came to look at some of my work and one of them remarked on a particular painting, "What a credible copy of a Boys work". This is what precipitated my leaving Boys and joining up with Sidney, where I really came face to face with the bare basics of the craft. Those lessons have stayed with me ever since.

Sidney was never critically harsh. He would examine a student's work and would never say "that is a cowardly solution" (you knew in your heart that it was in fact just that). He would rather say encouragingly, "You are a better painter than that". I remember him once telling me that he painted out of necessity. He had this great urge to always be working.

WG: He used to get terribly frustrated when he wasn't painting. He loved travelling because he liked the influences – great art and great architecture. But would always itch to get back and start his own work again.

What fascinate me was that Sidney would never agree to give lectures. If he had to do so, he would stumble over his words. But in the studio, the words would just flow. He could talk about all the artists and their lives and their work.

It took me quite some time to persuade Sidney to visit America. Somehow he always resisted it, but eventually I won him over and we went off to New York, Boston and Washington. Once there, he couldn't get enough of it. The enormous buildings, the seemingly narrow streets running through them, the way the light reflected into these chasms - and as for the galleries, we visited them all. At last, Sidney was able to view in the original those artists whose work he so admired - Picasso, Monet, Matisse, Rothko, Paul Klee, among others. You can immediately see the influences of the New York landscape in the work he did after his return.

FS: I recall that in 1981, some two years after Sidney died, you, Natalie Knight, John Brett Cohen and myself first got together to organise a major retrospective of Sidney's work at The Pretoria Art Museum. At this meeting, John described Sidney as being the last of the great painters of the African landscape. How true this observation is.

Concerning Sidney's Cape Town exhibitions, what do you remember of them?

WG: He had never exhibited in Cape Town, but one day he received a letter from Issie Cohen, principal of Herzlia School. He wrote that as a hobby he collected paintings, that he knew Sidney's work, and that he would like to hold an exhibition of it in Cape Town. One of those Issie named as a reference happened to be a good friend of ours - Norman Eisenberg. And so, Issie arranged the first Cape Town exhibition. For the duration

he and his wife, Reva, put our whole family up (all six of us) at their house in Oranjezicht - over two weeks.

In all, we had three exhibitions in Cape Town, one of which was Sidney's District Series which was practically a sell-out. Then Issie achieved his life-long ambition by opening his own gallery, the Atlantic Gallery in Church Street. Sadly, he got cancer shortly afterwards and passed away. Reva took it over and has run it very successfully ever since.

FS: Joe Roff and I also exhibited there.

WG: Yes, I remember. Then, after Sidney died, I arranged a retrospective exhibition of his work at the Irma Stern Gallery in Cape Town. His paintings also hang in The National Gallery. They are in fact represented in every major gallery in South Africa with the exception of The Johannesburg Art Gallery.

FS: I remember, before he died, that he also had a major showing at the then RAU gallery, together with some of his students. Thinking back, a number of students coming out of his studio achieved professional status, with none of us painting like the other, or even like Sidney.

WG: Maintaining that individuality was central to Sidney's teaching philosophy.

FS: Sidney was so taken with his children – it was almost as if he couldn't believe his own luck, he was totally besotted. And it was great to witness this relationship.

WG: I once asked a psychiatrist if he thought Sidney's death would leave a permanent mark on Simon (our youngest) who was not yet 13 at the time. He assured me that because of the very close relationship that he had had with Sidney, the result could only be positive.

FS: Lisa (the eldest daughter) once told me that she regretted not having learned to paint under her dad's guidance. Have any of your other children been involved in visual arts in any meaningful way?

WG: Lisa does draw and paint, but struggles with it. I would say they were all interested and appreciative of good art but perhaps it was too competitive for them, Sidney being well-known artist and my being a potter. None of them are really involved directly.

FS: Sidney came back very enthusiastic from his trip to the US - he couldn't get over the scale and size of everything. He recalled meeting with Salvador Dali, who insisted on referring to himself in the 3rd person - what gigantic arrogance! Sidney himself was one of a very few non-expendable artists of his time, certainly in this country. He died far too early, leaving many of us with a feeling of having been robbed and cheated.

WG: He was only sixty at the time. What I always feel sad about was that he had so much more to contribute. In all our life together, we only had three big arguments. He was so kind and laid back, making him very easy to live with.

APPENDIX: SIDNEY GOLDBLATT EXHIBITIONS, 1948-1981

- 1948 Jewish Guild Memorial Hall. Johannesburg.
- 1952 Whippman Gallery Johannesburg.
- 1952 Santacade Zoo Lake. Johannesburg.
- 1955 Henri Lidchi Gallery. Johannesburg.
- 1956. 1st. Quadriennial Exhibition of South African Art.
- 1956 Whippman Gallery Johannesburg.
- 1956 Henry Lidchi Gallery Johannesburg.
- 1958 Lawrence Adler Gallery. Johannesburg.
- 1958 Kunstzaal Plaats. The Hague.
- 1959 Modern Homes Gallery. Johannesburg.
- 1959 – 1960 ZOA House Tel Aviv and artists house Johannesburg.
- 1960 Yugoslavia and Ghent.
- 1960 2nd Quadriennale Exhibition of South African Art.
- 1960 Lawrence Adler Gallery Johannesburg.
- 1961 Neil Sack Gallery. Durban.
- 1961 Gallery Walbrook. Adler Fielding Gallery. Johannesburg.
- 1961 Lawrence Adler Gallery. Johannesburg.
- 1962 Lidchi Gallery. Johannesburg. African Life Centre. Cape Town.
- 1962 Adler of of South African Art. S.A. Arts Association. Provincial Building Pretoria.
- 1964 3rd. Quadriennale Exhibiton of South African Art.
- 1964 Adler Fielding Gallery. Johannesburg.
- 1964 Rembrandt Art Centre. Milner Park Johannesburg.
- 1965 Adler Fielding Gallery. Johannesburg.
- 1966 Republic Festival Exhibition. National Museum. Bloemfontein.
- 1967 Art – S.A – Today Exhibition. Durban.
- 1970 S.A. Association of Arts Gallery. Johannesburg.
- 1971 S.A. Association of Arts Cape own.
- 1972 Art Society. Durban
- 1973 S.A.Association of Arts. Pretoria.'
- 1974 Inernational Gallery. Cape Town.
- 1974 Lidchi Gallery. Johannesburg.
- 1975. South African Art. Bologna. Italy.
- 1976 Tuis Gallery
- 1977 Atlantic Gallery Cape Town
- 1978 Atlantic Gallery Cape Town.
- 1978 SA Art Rhodesia.
- 1978 Graphic Work: Third Olympiad, Sao Paulo. Brazil. & USA; Travelling exhibition. Freschen West Germany
- 1978 Arts Fair Preview – Total Gallery. Johannesburg.
- 1979 Art from South Africa in Germany. Neuss, Mannheim, Baden Baden, Strassburg..
- 1979 Retrospective Exhibition at RAU with some of his earlier students.
- 1980 Atlantic Art Gallery. Cape Town.
- 1981 Retrospective Exhibition. Pretoria Art Museum (116 Works).

GRANDMA'S FUR COAT

*

Annette Dubovsky

My grandmother was a really seasoned traveller. She had made four overseas trips in her time – counting the first, that is, when she originally came out from Kovno to join my grandfather. But that particular one may be considered quite ordinary; thousands of young wives did the same in similar circumstances in the 1890s. By the time I came on the scene, the marvelling about the wonders and hardships of that momentous period must have been more or less “talked out”, for I cannot recall hearing very much about it.

On her fourth trip, in the thirties, my grandmother accompanied our family on a Palestine-Continent-England holiday. On reflection, it occurs to me that she must have been all of sixty-five then, and trudged and toured with far more verve and energy than I, an overweight 10-year-old, could do! I remember my father's unspeakable irritation at the fact that grandma's ‘potty’ had to go with us all the way. How it escaped a watery grave through one or other porthole I can't imagine...

But the Grandma's Overseas Trip I'm thinking of was the one when she and her adored youngest son accompanied an older son and his bride on their honeymoon – and I'm not joking. I've asked that loved aunt of mine why she didn't protest, but it seems that in the early twenties it was perfectly acceptable that a son's devotion for his mother was at least as strong as that for his wife. I can only conclude that an infatuated husband and the prospect of an overseas honeymoon – (that was really *something* in 1924) – was all my starry-eyed 19-year-old aunt could think of.

Let us leave the newly-weds to themselves. What I want to emphasise is the fact that it was less usual, let us say, to ‘do’ an overseas holiday in those days than it is today. I was too young to remember anything of this trip, apart from what I'd been subsequently told, – and the souvenirs in the form of mother's brown lace dress, a similar one for Auntie Minnie, a ‘pure’ wool Shetland shawl for my baby sister – and Grandma's fur coat. In fact, in after years it seemed to me that the prime object of the trip was the purchase of that coat.

Oh! And the Sugar-Babies – I'd almost forgotten them. They were the most precious possession of my entire childhood. There they

were, snugly wrapped between layers of tissue paper, the dearest little coverlet wrapped ‘babies’ made of pink and blue sugar-candy, in an oval blue and gold tin . . . And I was allowed only to look at them, as a special treat on occasion (like the time when one was in bed with measles or chicken-pox) – “You wouldn't want to eat them all up, now, would you?” – Well, I would and I wouldn't . . . it was an impossible decision to make, so I let it be made for me – and they rotted away with mould, years and years later . . . but I digress.

Grandma's fur coat was black seal skin with brown beaver collar and cuffs. My earliest recollection of it was its softness . . . and then later I realised that it was something very special – not everybody had a fur-coat “from the finest shop in London”. In the days before plastic bags it hung in lonely splendour encased in a specially made calico cocoon, breathlessly smothered in mothballs and naphthaline. I remember the palaver before some occasion – like the opening of the new Synagogue, or a wedding or a barmitzvah, when The Coat was brushed free of its protective flakes and then hung in the sun to air . . .

. . . And thereby hangs my tale. It was in those golden days when everybody – or so it seemed to my limited child's world – lived in rambling houses with spacious grounds, where you grew all your own vegetables and fruit, and where you had a ‘field’ with its ‘hok’ for the fowls and the odd turkey, and where grazed a cow or two. Over our field hung the washing-line. When I think of it now I can't imagine why it was never considered that the cow might prove a hazard to the week's wash. It may well be that she was not there during the day, having been herded out to pasture as she was each day. But by some sneaky turn of fate she was there on a hanging-out day for The Coat.

Whether Boesman had neglected to allay her hunger in his routine manner, or whether she did it for the sheer hell of the thing we shall never know – but our next awareness of The Coat was when a distraught Mieta carried it tenderly up to *Oumiesies* . . . minus a great square, roughly chewed out of the centre back . . .

Well, I don't really know what happened in between. But, for as long as I can remember, thereafter, my grandmother wore a short black sealskin fur jacket, a muff made of brown beaver cuffs reposed in mothballs and naphthaline in the mysterious great wardrobe – and my dear Aunt Fanny became the proud possessor of a fur cape which started its career as the collar of a certain black sealskin coat. I may add that my much loved aunt had a great sense of humour and always referred to it as a “feh!”

Annette Dubovsky qualified as a teacher in Senior English and Afrikaans at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is a veteran contributor to Jewish and other publications, including her many years as ‘Aunt Betty’ in the Farmers Weekly.

A LAWYER'S LIFE IN IAN SMITH'S RHODESIA

*

Norman Sher

EDITOR'S NOTE: *In our Chanukah 2011 issue, we published Norman Sher's account of his years as a member of the Department of Justice Prosecutor's Staff in Johannesburg during the early 1960s. In this follow-up memoir, Mr. Sher describes his subsequent career in the Rhodesian courts during the early years of UDI. The illustrations of some of the personalities mentioned in this article are by Norman Sher's son, Eric, a Johannesburg-based graphic artist.*

Following our marriage, my young bride and I returned to Rhodesia in 1965, where I went into partnership with Sherwood Wilmot, a Member of Parliament and the shadow Minister of Justice. Through him, I met the Prime Minister, Ian Smith, and his wife, Janet, both delightful people and completely down to earth.

I decided to concentrate on criminal work and my prosecuting experiences made a tremendous difference. I soon acquired a reputation in this field and was in court almost every day. One of the most tragic memories of my entire legal career occurred when I defended a young man accused of attempted murder. The complainant was a beautiful young woman who maintained that my client had tied her to a tree and attempted to murder her with a knife. I managed to get my client acquitted and my comments were published in the local newspaper. Three weeks later, to my extreme remorse, the girl was brutally murdered by my client. The latter approached me from the death cell asking me to assist him with an appeal, something I adamantly refused.

The Rhodesians accepted my wife with open arms and the friendships I made have endured until this very day. I was very friendly with the Irish community through my friend, Mike McGoey, who had been my articled clerk at Lazarus & Sareff. I recall attending a farewell party for one of his friends, at which Paddy McCarthy, one of the local Magistrates, was present. On his way home the person for whom the party was given was arrested for drunken driving, and the following morning, I appeared before McCarthy to defend him. McCarthy expressed extreme disapproval at drinking and driving. It was indeed a peculiar comment to make as Paddy was renowned for his drinking abilities.

The other Irish Magistrate was Jack Riley, a

Norman Sher studied at the University of the Witwatersrand, and for many years was a partner at Werksman's Attorneys. He has served on the committees of the Law Society of South Africa and of Rhodesia, and today runs his own attorneys firm.

real personality. In those days, the Magistrate used to play the roles of District Commissioner in the outside rural areas. Many months later, I appeared before Riley in one of the rural areas and before lunch he informed me that he was adjourning the court until the following morning. When I said that I had to get back to Bulawayo, he rejoined that this was impossible as the trial could then not be proceeded with. He called me in his chambers and said "You are an idiot, as I wanted you to stay over as my guest." The District Commissioner lived like kings, with their beautifully dressed servants and a full time chef. We had a great evening together with a gourmet meal. I also renewed my friendship with Anthony (Tony) Gubbay, a Jewish barrister who later became Chief Justice. I used to brief Tony when he was a young bachelor and a junior member of the bar. Like me, he loved his tennis and every Wednesday afternoon would see us battling it out on the tennis court. He and his late wife, Wilma, were often guests at our home. I still correspond with Tony, who now lives in retirement in London.

Three weeks after we arrived in Bulawayo, UDI was declared. This led to a complete change



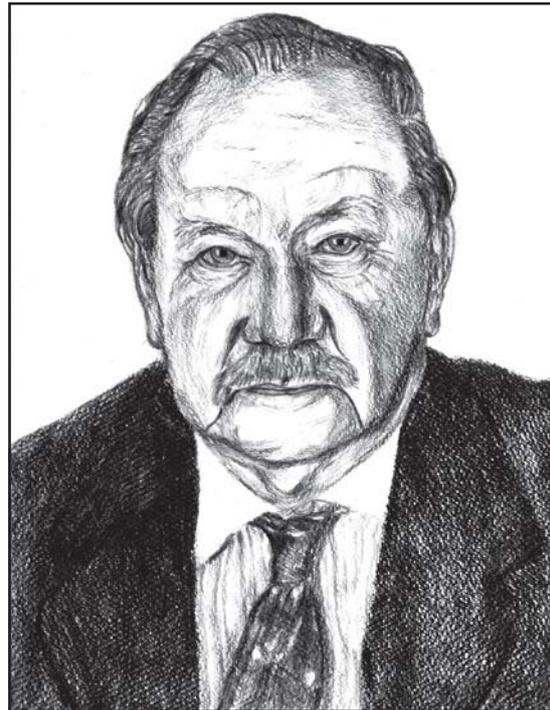
Chief Justice Tony Gubbay (artist: Eric Sher)

of lifestyle and tremendous shortages of petrol. Luckily for us, my parents-in-law sent us petrol from South Africa, which arrived in convoys.

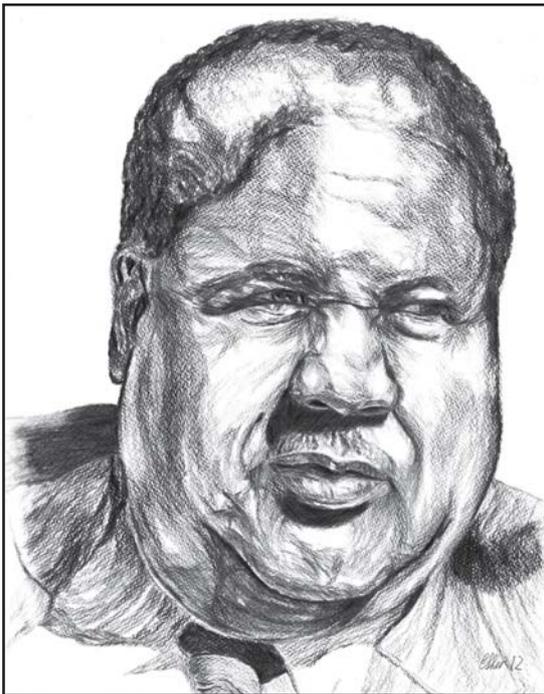
Joshua Nkomo was my client, and a more colourful character you could not hope to meet. My wife and I recall with pleasure the time we met him at the Victoria Falls, when he entertained us to a magnificent meal concluding with after-dinner cocktails prepared by himself (and which nearly set us alight!).

There was tremendous support for Ian Smith. His picture was prominently displayed in all businesses and offices, with the caption, "Good Old Smithy!" Sir Hugh Beadle was then the Chief Justice. He was a magnificent orator, something fully demonstrated when he gave a lecture to the law society (of which I was a member) and told us all about the so-called 'Tiger Talks', the abortive negotiations between Smith and British Prime Minister Harold Wilson that took place of the *H.M.S. Tiger*. He commented that Smith and Wilson had behaved like two school children.

The legal profession was conducted in a very honest and straightforward manner. You could



The author, by Eric Sher



Joshua Nkomo (artist: Eric Sher)

trust and rely upon your colleagues, which was certainly not the case in Johannesburg. (We have since been besieged by a new breed of lawyers who have no scruples whatsoever). The relationship between prosecutors and attorneys was an open one. Prosecutors used to hand attorneys their dockets for perusal and inspection, which was in complete contrast to the practice employed in my prosecuting days.

Despite UDI, life in Bulawayo was care-free and easy, without the pressures of the big city. My tennis matches were particularly enjoyable, with my great rival Sammy Sher (no relation) and I on

one occasion contesting the club final which Sammy won in five sets. The following day an article appeared in the paper stating that "Sammy Sher had beaten his younger brother, Norman in a thrilling final."

I returned to civil litigation, and recall representing a Greek trader who traded as "Pick I' Pay". The big Pick I' Pay in South Africa brought an interdict against him, which was overturned as he had been trading before that name had become known in South Africa. He was awarded a substantial claim to cease trading under the Pick I' Pay name and, in typical Greek tradition, he threw a special banquet for my wife and I.

I was involved in a number of important High Court matters. My favourite counsel was Advocate Charles Allan, Q.C., Chief Legal Adviser for the British Admiralty in London. It was wonderful dealing with Charles. At the end of his cross-examination, he used to turn to me and say, "Have you any further questions old chap?" He and his wife, Laura, became our bosom friends and we spent many eventful evenings together. A particular case I recall (which was reported in the law reports) concerned acting for an elderly Jewish gentleman who was being sued for the refund of estate agent's commission as it was alleged that he was not a registered property salesman. In court, Charles asked him if he was in possession of an estate agent's certificate, whereupon my client produced a crumpled certificate from his pocket, and that put an end to the Plaintiff's case.

During UDI, new legislation was imposed. One of the changes was that it was an offence to incite people to encourage an atmosphere of fear and despondency. My client, Morseby White, was one of the first persons to be charged under

this law. Charles, after a brilliant court appearance, managed to get him discharged.

In those days, disputes between blacks were resolved by an African Affairs Commissioner, a certain Mr Alec Saunderson. He was extremely fair and administered justice as it should be. I recall appearing in the Water Court, which is the only court with High Court jurisdiction in which an attorney has the right of appearance. The presiding judge was Sir Hugh Beadle who, beside his impeccable knowledge of the law, was known for his abruptness and short temper. During my cross-examination, he announced the court would adjourn and I was to appear in chambers. There, he told me that I had no knowledge of water law and should consult the relevant authorities, while he would postpone the matter for two weeks. On the strength of his recommendations, I prepared adequately and obtained a favourable result.

During this period, terrorist attacks were frequent and alarming. I was once in a rural part of the country on a criminal case and I slept over at my client's farm. During the night, I was rudely awakened by rifle shots. My client told me to look through the window, which his three sons and daughters were guarding with rifles. I must admit I froze in my boots. Luckily, the incident passed over without any casualties.

The political position in Bulawayo having changed dramatically, we decided to return to South Africa. We were given a magnificent farewell party, presided over by our great friend Dr Bernie Tatz, chairman of the Jewish community. He presented us with a beautiful set



Chief Justice Sir Hugh Beadle (artist: Eric Sher)

of travelling cases, remarking that this was "the biggest case that Norman has ever handled." We left with wonderful memories of our stay in Bulawayo, which remain firmly implanted in our lives.

Wishing all our
Jewish friends
a happy Pesach
Chag Sameach



CITY PROPERTY

Addressing the Future

PRETORIA 012 319 8700 JOHANNESBURG 011 378 3200
www.cityproperty.co.za

L.A. GROUP LTD

*LA Group Limited
wishes all its Jewish
friends, business associates and
customers a very
happy and blessed Pesach.*



THE FINAL PRIZE: MY LIFE IN THE ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE

*

David Saks

Do we really need yet another ‘Struggle’ autobiography, some might ask? After all, since the demise of apartheid, and indeed before that, a host of memoirs by former activists in the anti-apartheid sphere have appeared, not only by such acknowledged giants as Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada, Walter Sisulu, Joe Slovo and Lionel Bernstein, but also by those who might be described as ‘foot soldiers’ in the broader struggle for democracy in South Africa. Have we not by now reached a stage where new autobiographical accounts do little more than rehash the same historical material, albeit from a slightly different perspective?

In the view of this reviewer, one cannot have too many first-hand testimonies to this crucial period in South Africa’s history from those who played an active part in it. Each activist’s role and background was unique, and each therefore brings singular new insights into the events in which he or she was in some way involved. It is this kind of multi-perspective record, and the rich archive of first-hand testimony it provides, that prevents our understanding of history from becoming static and one-dimensional.

The Final Prize: My Life in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle by Norman Levy is one of the most recent of these memoirs to appear in print. What makes it distinctive, adding considerably to its overall value, is that in addition to the material directly relating to the author, it is also an extremely well-written, in-depth and intelligent general history of the rise and fall of apartheid. Levy himself was a school history teacher, later obtaining his doctorate and lecturing on the philosophy of history at Middlesex University. His book is also the product of a life-time of study and research into the making of modern South Africa.

David Saks is Associate Director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and Editor of Jewish Affairs. His recent book, Jewish Memories of Mandela was published last year by the SAJBD-Umoja Foundation.

While Levy weaves his own specific experiences into the narrative where appropriate, in much of the book, he does not appear at all. One is struck here by the author’s evident modesty. Some former activists have come across as overly anxious to get on record what they personally did in “The Struggle”, but Levy, despite his admirable record in this regard and the high personal price he was made to pay for it, is remarkably self-effacing.

The son of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants, Levy was born in Johannesburg in 1929 (his twin brother, Leon, likewise, became prominently involved in the anti-apartheid resistance, primarily in the labour field). It was a public speech by Hilda Watts that first attracted him to left-wing resistance politics. Born Hilda Schwartz in the United Kingdom and later the wife of the famed activist Lionel Bernstein, Watts was at the time a Municipal candidate for the Communist Party of South Africa in Johannesburg. Levy, still in his early teens, in due course became involved as a volunteer for the Party, selling its literature on the street before graduating to more responsible roles on the various regional committees. Like so many other Jewish activists of the time, he lived in the Johannesburg suburb of Yeoville.

The Final Prize naturally contains much detailed discussion of resistance politics, with its complex and often tortuous internal debates, strategies and programmes of action. In addition, however, it also devotes a great deal of space to discussing developments within the white political establishment, and in particular to how this came to be taken over by a far right-wing, ethnically supremacist and racially exclusive form of Afrikaner nationalism from the mid-1940s onwards.

Levy writes that he became especially interested in this last phenomenon, which occupied much of his thoughts during the long periods he spent behind bars for political offences. His insightful account of how – in great part through the relentless, behind-the-scenes dominance of the *Broederbond* – it imposed a stranglehold not

just over the country's political structures, but throughout South African society at every conceivable level, provides a necessary reminder of just what it was the liberation movements were up against.

As was typical with Jews who became committed communists, Levy was not an identifying Jew, although he was by no means hostile to that heritage. In the early chapters, he provides some interesting insights into the South African Jewish experience, observing, for example, that a great many Jewish immigrants, although officially part of the privileged white minority, had more in common with migrant black labourers than they realised during the difficult early years of their struggle to establish themselves. Of the latter, he writes, "They were probably unaware of the affinity they shared with the migrant streams of African labourers who travelled back and forth to their families over a regular cycle of time, sending monetary remittances and replenishing the family and labour force" (p16).

Levy writes frankly of the often blinkered loyalty to the Communist ideology and its champion, the Soviet Union, that he and his fellow Communist Party members displayed. This continued long after the revelations over the true nature of the Stalin regime had emerged in the mid-1950s. He also recounts the difficulty he would experience, as a disciplined Party cadre, in having to justify the movement's frequently tortuous and morally contradictory standpoints on the issues of the day. On the Left's initial opposition to supporting the war against Nazism, for example, he writes, "It was intriguing to note the ways in which some of the ways most profound political analysts on the Left got themselves entangled in inextricable knots" (p22)". What resolved the Left's dilemma in the end was the launch of Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union, on 22 June 1941.

In addition to enduring lengthy spells in detention as one of the original accused in the Treason Trial (1956-1961), Levy ultimately served three years in gaol for offences under the Suppression of Communism Act. He was one of the fourteen accused in the so-called 'Braam Fischer Trial' of 1964-5, one of the key political trials of the decade through which the State broke the back of the underground anti-apartheid resistance movements. All but one of the accused was found guilty and sentenced to terms varying from a couple of years to life. Levy himself received a three-year sentence, which was served at various times in the Local or Central Prison in Pretoria.

The chapter dealing with his incarceration makes a valuable contribution to the prison memoirs that have since emerged concerning this period, including those of other Jewish political detainees like Baruch Hirson, Hugh Lewin, Ben Turok and Paul Trehwella.

Prior to his trial and sentencing, Levy spent 54 days in solitary confinement, during which he was subjected to lengthy periods of interrogation. His account of this harrowing experience, and particularly the psychological tools he devised to withstand what was specifically designed to break down his will to resist, makes compelling reading and bears interesting comparisons with how such fellow detainees like Ruth First and Lionel Bernstein reacted under the same circumstances.

After his release, Levy joined many other fellow activists in exile in the United Kingdom in 1968. In the course of the next 23 years, he obtained his doctorate and served as Head of School of History at Middlesex University. He continued to be involved in anti-apartheid activities, inter alia conducting research for the International Labor Organisation on the South African labor system. As he acknowledges, for the majority of exiles like himself, the primary goal was simple survival, with continued political activism having to take a back seat before the pressing need to establish oneself in a new country.

On his return to South Africa in the early 1990s, he was much involved in the post-apartheid transition process, playing an important role in restructuring the public service and in creating a framework for Affirmative Action for government. He also served as Professor in the School of Government at the University of the Western Cape and as a member of the committee of the Classification and Declassification Review Committee for the placing of apartheid documents in the public domain. Now retired, he lives in Cape Town.

Characteristically, Levy's assessment of what South Africa has achieved, and still needs to achieve if the ideals of the movement he was part of for so long need to be realised, is dispassionate and realistic. Never one for sweeping rhetorical flourishes, he sees the country as a work in progress, where the struggle for democracy has been supplanted by a new set of challenges. It is with this thought that Levy concludes this admirably detailed, judicious and wide-ranging memoir-cum-historical analysis of the apartheid phenomenon and the successful fight to overthrow it, writing:

After sixteen years of democracy the euphoria of liberation remains, but it is marred by contradictions that in our innocence we did not contemplate. For all our imaginings of a new society and a harmonious rainbow nation, these are ideals still in the making. There is no promised land, no earthly paradise, only the imperfect place we ourselves create and the vision we have to change it for the better.

The Final Prize: My Life in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle by Norman Levy, South African History Online, 2011, 478pp, with index, bibliography, endnotes and photographs.

SOUTH AFRICA'S BRAVE NEW WORLD: THE BELOVED COUNTRY SINCE THE END OF APARTHEID

*

Ralph Zulman

Born in 1943, R W Johnson describes himself as “a working class kid” who grew up “in a house overlooking the Mersey Docks”. He was educated at Natal and Oxford universities and was for 26 years a Fellow of Magdalen College at the latter institution. He has lived in South Africa since the late 1990s, working as a journalist as well as being, until 2001, director of the Helen Suzman Foundation. He has written several books, the most recent prior to this one being *South Africa: The First Man, The Last Nation*. He is well known as an analyst of South African history and politics and, latterly, as a severe critic of the ANC government.

South Africa's Brave New World: The Beloved Country since the End of Apartheid, first published in 2009, is Johnson's latest book. In his review in the *Daily Telegraph*, author and academic Andre Brink described it as “a massive volume in which in its attempt to leave no political stone unturned confronts the reader with an avalanche of information”. The book is 702 pages in length, with illustrations, abbreviations, a preface, some 15 chapters of text, notes and a comprehensive index.

Johnson expresses the somewhat controversial view that there never was a Mandela miracle – the “real miracle”, he contends, was how President FW De Klerk “led the white minority to surrender its power peacefully”. Mandela, for Johnson, was little more than a “charismatic pawn for the Marxist-Communists who had hi-jacked the ANC in exile and who were really only interested in getting their snouts in the trough.” In his review in *The Independent*, Ivan Fallon describes Johnson as “one of nature's (or certainly South Africa's) great pessimists, a man who has looked very closely at modern events and seen little to please him.”

In Johnson's assessment former president Thabo Mbeki, who he sees as the real power behind the throne during the Mandela years, would “give Hitler or Stalin a good run for their place in history. Mugabe, who plays his part, is a minor villain by comparison”. Fallon writes:

Johnson sprays his venom fairly generously across the ANC, but the bulk of it is reserved for

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

Mbeki, whom he pictures as obsessed by race and racism, violently anti-white and paranoid, amidst a myriad other failings. His contribution in Johnson's view has been worse than disastrous, particularly on aids and Zimbabwe but also on lots of other issues as well. He surrounded himself with sycophantic cronies, including the “awful” Manto Tshabalala-Msimang who made South Africa a world laughing stock with her Aids policy and mismanaged the country at every level, causing crime and corruption to blossom, irreplaceable white expertise to leave the country, the public health system to break down, and infrastructure and power-generation to run down. A vibrant and potentially incredibly wealthy country has been brought to the edge of ruin. And it has been done in a secretive and sinister manner, driven by a twisted and racist Marxist ideology.

Johnson describes the late Kader Asmal as “witheringly, passed for an intellectual within the ANC, but clearly wasn't up to much as he rushed around the country opening water schemes while local women ululated and photographers snapped.”.. He had failed to grasp the task of government and “presided over many blunders”.

As Fallon points out, the book “is laden with similar glancing insults of ANC figures, some of whom deserve all they get, others who do not. Between them, Johnson argues, they have “created a society in meltdown, where ‘things fall apart’ in the apocalyptic Yeatsian sense.”

Ironically, as Johnson writes, Mbeki's enthusiasm for the Palestinian cause created a major foreign policy debacle in 2001, with the hosting of the now notorious antisemitic United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban that year. The previous year, at Mbeki's instigation, the South African Human Rights Commission held an anti-racism conference, “a veritable festival of white-bashing, to give vent to Mbeki's inclusive vision of a rainbow nation”.

Johnson comments as follows on former judge Richard Goldstone:

An extremely able lawyer, Goldstone had attracted criticism within the legal profession even on his way up as an advocate, when he had socially entertained at his home the attorneys who might bring him cases. Such behaviour, seen as touting for custom, was greatly frowned upon. Throughout his career he had been criticized for his sheer ambition... it was rumoured that he saw himself as succeeding

Boutros Boutros-Ghali one day as UN Secretary-General, leading to his nickname 'Richard Richard-Goldstone'. Unlike other judges in the Constitutional Court, he had been careful to avoid anti-apartheid activism. Indeed, his decision to take silk in 1980 had drawn criticism from liberal circles, for many anti-apartheid lawyers refused promotion to the judiciary, where they would have to apply apartheid laws.

Under De Klerk, however, Goldstone made up for lost time, heading up the high-profile Goldstone Commission into the causes of political violence. The most remarkable fact about the Goldstone Commission was that while it was supposed to investigate all armed groups, it simply failed to investigate MK or any form of violence organized by the ANC. Writes Johnson, "Then, just weeks before the 1994 election, Goldstone dramatically reversed himself, pointing to a systematic and silent war waged by the police from a farm called Vlakplaas against the ANC and its allies."

Johnson deals with two other Jewish judges. He describes former Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson as a long-time ANC supporter who had helped to defend Mandela at the Rivonia Trial. Albie Sachs is categorized as "a Communist Party apparatchik "who bore a "badge of honour" in the new South Africa through having had his

"blown off in the struggle".

Brink compares the book to that of Mark Gevisser's biography of Thabo Mbeki. He comments that Johnson, unlike Gevisser, "is more concerned with data than interpretation. Consequently in spite of its great length, it is rather a survey of the already-known, gleaned mainly from newspapers than a treasury of new insights and diagnoses."

Other reviewers are complimentary. In the *Evening Standard*, Antony Sampson wrote, "Johnson shows his mastery of both the broad sweep and the complexities of history without bias" while the reviewer in the *Economist* wrote, "Johnson is a historian, but also a polemical journalist, and he writes with passion about the present. He provides a robustly liberal critique of the new South Africa". Justin Cartwright in the *Daily Telegraph* is equally complimentary, commenting, "This is a well-written and necessary book which challenges the myths draping the Rainbow Nation".

All I can add, echoing Christopher Hope in the English *Sunday Times*, is that the book is "essential reading".

South Africa's Brave New World: The Beloved Country since the End of Apartheid by R W Johnson, Allen Lane, Published by the Penguin Group, 702pp, photographs, index, endnotes

THE OCHBERG ORPHANS AND THE HORRORS FROM WHENCE THEY CAME

*

Lionel Slier

2011 could be called "The Year of Isaac Ochberg." In the course of it, two memorial ceremonies in his honour, including the unveiling of commemorative plaques, took place in Israel and Johannesburg (see Appendix). The year also saw the publication of *Ochberg Orphans and the Horrors from whence they came*, a compilation of stories and memories from Ochberg Orphans and their descendants by David Solly Sandler.

Isaac Ochberg was born in the Ukraine in 1878 and followed his father to Cape Town at the age of sixteen (1894). He became a successful entrepreneur and businessman, involved in ship buying, ships' salvage, property and fashion shop, and also being responsible for building Cape

Town's first cinema. He was a philanthropist of note, and served as President of Cape Town's Jewish orphanage (today's Oranjia Jewish Child and Youth Centre).

The First World War (1914-18) was fought on many fronts, but it was on the Eastern Front where the German and the Russian armies confronted each other on territory that was part of the Pale of Settlement and caused devastation, destruction and death to the Jewish communities living there. When the war ended, the suffering of civilians did not. The Great Flu Epidemic that now swept the world is believed to have killed as many people as had died in the fighting. Inevitably, among the worst affected were children. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee estimated that almost half a million Jewish children were left as orphans – homeless, verminous, hungry, helpless and dying, Something

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

had to be done to help them.

In Cape Town, Isaac Ochberg was approached to assist, and he readily agreed. He approached Prime Minister Jan Smuts with a proposal to bring children into the country, hoping that the local Jewish communities would adopt them. Smuts agreed but imposed conditions, namely that the local Jewish community had to bear the entire cost of the operation, only orphans aged sixteen and below could be brought out, no families were to be broken up and no physically or mentally disabled children were to be taken. The number of children was fixed at 200.

In March 1921, Ochberg set out for Eastern Europe. In London, a visa was arranged for him by Fridjon Nansen, the Polar explorer who had been involved in food relief for Russia. Russia itself was in chaos. The Bolshevik Revolution had taken place, followed by a civil war; hunger and disease were rife. Ochberg, accompanied by a British Jew, David Dainow, went to Warsaw, then on to Belarus and the Ukraine. Travelling by any means he could find, including by donkey cart, he visited orphanages and shuls collecting children. Ignoring Smut's conditions in many cases, he ultimately collected 235 orphans, and brought them to England.

After a three-week stay at the Shelter for Jewish Poor in London's East End, Ochberg having taken ill, 187 children accompanied by Ochberg, set out for Cape Town on the *Edinburgh Castle*. They arrived on 21 September, 1921. 100 children went to the Cape Town orphanage and 87 were sent to Johannesburg where, after some problems regarding accommodation, the Jewish Board of Deputies bought the Arcadia home of Lionel Phillips, a wealthy Randlord, in Parktown. The Jewish Orphanage at that time was in Benbow Street, Kensington. The children there were brought to Arcadia, where they lived with 'The Russians'.

Born in Johannesburg in 1952, David Solly Sandler spent the years 1954-1969 at Arcadia. In 1976, he qualified as a Chartered Accountant and in 1981 immigrated to Perth, Western Australia. He has produced two books about Arcadia, *100 Years of Arc Memories* (2006) and *More Arc Memories*.

The Ochberg Orphans is divided into three parts and eleven sections. Part One is about the Pale of Settlement and what took place there – the war, the pogroms in the Ukraine, the starvation and the death of the children's parents. There is horror piled upon horror, with what *The Hebrew Standard* (28 July 1922) called 'The Ukraine Gehenna.' There is some relief in the next section, which tells about the help given by Jewish communities, including 'The South African War Victims Fund.'

Section 3 is devoted to the Pinsk Orphanages and the outrages that occurred there. A sainted man is written about; he is Alter Bobrow, who involved himself in looking after the children as

best he could. Bobrow came to South Africa and spent time assisting at the Cape Jewish Orphanage. There is an excellent chapter about him written by Liebe Klug. David Sandler has a work in progress about the three Pinsk Orphanages, in which Bobrow will inevitably feature.

Sections 4 and 5 relate some stories of Ochberg in Eastern Europe, including photos and documents together with an extremely moving story of Feiga Mirel Shamis and her struggle. This was written in Yiddish and later sent to her son Mannie Favish and daughter, Rose Miller, both of whom were both brought out by Ochberg. It is a story of a struggle to survive typical of the Jews of that place and era. Mannie had it translated, and it fills fifteen pages of the book.

Part Two is about Oranjia, the Cape Jewish Orphanage, and includes 37 stories about Ochberg orphans who went there – all riveting, all similar but nevertheless recording distinct, unique experiences. Part Three moves to Johannesburg, with a history of the Jewish Orphanage, the relocation to Arcadia and the stories of a further 35 Ochberg children.

In Isaac Ochberg, the Jews of South Africa had a man who did not hesitate to go and render crucial assistance to their distressed brethren. In the annals of the narrative of South African Jewry, it is a story that the community can justly be proud about. Sandler's book is a social history about some of the Jews who escaped from the horrors of their existence in Eastern Europe and who were given a new life in South Africa. All their stories are important and Sandler has collected and saved them for us. Lauren Snitcher of Cape Town, herself a grand-daughter of an Ochberg Orphan, has a database of descendants. It currently has over 3000 names of those who owe their lives to one man who was brave enough to go to war-ravaged Eastern Europe and bring out 187 children to a new life. Twelve years later, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany.

Isaac Ochberg will now never be forgotten and David Sandler has, with this book, presented us with a fitting memorial to him. Besides the narratives, there are many documents reproduced as well as a great number of photographs. Remember this, "No one stands so erect than when they stoop to help a child."

- *Ochberg Orphans and the Horrors from whence they came*, as well as D S Sandler's previous books on Arcadia, can be obtained in Johannesburg: Sandringham Gardens, 85 George Ave, Sandringham, Jules Gordon (082 552 3148, 011 786 9918) and Max Goldman (011 327 1158); Cape Town: Colin Rosenkowitz (crosenkowitz@mweb.co.za, 021 439 3321, 082 445 0885) and David and Beth Miller (lockman@lockshop.co.za, 021 510-1555); David Solly Sandler, sedsand@inet.net.au.



**SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATES OF THE BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

“Created to make the desert bloom, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev has proven that local solutions can have a global impact.” University President, Prof. Rivka Carmi

**THE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATES OF THE BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV, BASED IN HYDE PARK,
JOHANNESBURG, HAS A VACANCY FOR AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Responsibilities

- To maintain an ongoing relationship with the University of Johannesburg in the Water Purification Programme and the Algae Programme, which is presently being conducted with BGU, UCLA and University of Gent;
- Investigate other opportunities for BGU to extend its world class expertise in subject matters that have a major interest – not only for Israel and the Middle East, but also for the Southern African region;
- Interface with South African universities and institutions and government, both local and national;
- To undertake ongoing fundraising activities with the accent on the continuity of funding, inter alia monies for research, bursaries and to cover specific needs that the University has from time to time;
- To ensure the continuity of existing programmes which include current fundraising programmes;
- To evaluate with the President and executive, the appointment of relevant sub-committees in order to assist in Fundraising, PR and general support for the work that is being undertaken, on a voluntary basis;
- Prepare a budget, illustrating anticipated income and expenses, to coincide with the budget periods of BGU.

This position requires the individual to report to the President and Board on a regular basis as follows:

- Prepare a budget for the next ensuing period;
- Report on the financials;
- Report on the progress of existing joint scientific and research programmes;
- Attend to PR issues for the University, relating particularly to its activities locally and internationally;
- Maintain close relationships with relevant members of the Ben-Gurion Executives in Israel and in South Africa;
- Reporting and interacting with donors, government, media, communal institutions, etc.

Personal Profile

Competent, highly motivated, assertive, honest, person of integrity, friendly, initiative taker who is flexible and has good attention to detail. A go getter, enthusiastic, willing to work hard and fast, quick learner, someone who feels that no small task is too much to ask of them!

Experience and Skills

- Several years' experience in general management.
- Good interpersonal relationship building skills and presentation skills.
- Competent in MS Office package, especially Word, Excel, Outlook.
- Good project scheduling and organisational skills and ability to plan.
- Excellent verbal and written communication in English.
- Numeracy skills, an ability to draw up, allocate and manage budgets.
- Relevant experience in Community and Skills Development and Capacity Building.
- Organisational skills, an ability to structure, organise and analyse information and processes in a logical and meaningful way (numeric / non-numeric).
- Team member management – working co-operatively with team members or independently and be accountable.

The remuneration, which includes the use of a car, is to be negotiated, depending on time commitments and experience.

Applicants are invited to submit their CV's to Herby Rosenberg, Vice President of South African Associates of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev by email to herbyr@afrikatikun.org or contact may be made by telephone (011) 325 5914 to arrange an appointment for an interview.

READER'S LETTER

*

I had the good fortune to come across David Saks' well-written (and precisely described) article on the beginnings of the Bnei Akiva Yeshiva/Yeshiva College ('The B'nei Akiva Yeshiva and the Founding of Johannesburg's Yeshiva College', Rosh Hashanah, 2011).

As one of the first pupils who, with three others, began that experiment, I can vouch for the veracity of the facts and commend the writer for preserving them as a heritage for our South African Litvak Orthodox community.

I would like, if I may, to add several additional points. Firstly, regarding the photograph of students studying with Rabbi Kossowsky, there are a few mistakes/omissions. The correct list is (clockwise): Pinky Fisher, Eliyahu Illos, Joey Rosenbaum, Mendy Katz, hidden/obscured, Baba Davidowitz, Rabbi Michel Kossowsky, Zalman Kossowsky, Irving Lissoos, Benny Isaacson, Mike Wolfson and Alec Bassin.

Something missing in the article is the huge part played by the 'ewige student' (as he was called by *rabbonim* and his teachers), my brother Advocate Avrohom Yitzchak 'Mitzi' Katz. While our brother Zelik was officially at the head, Mitzi was in on every nuance of planning the yeshiva, and hugely influenced all concerned. He was a close associate and friend (and eventual *mechutan*) of Rabbi Joseph Bronner. He, Rabbi Bronner and Rabbi Fogel would meet on Shabbos for Torah learning and Kiddush, and eventually formed a *Shomer Shabbos* nucleus for this. Mitzi was further the legal advisor on secular law vis-à-vis *halachic* questions for the Beth Din. He was hugely respected among members of the government (they were highly suspicious of Jewish left-liberals) for his honesty and was chosen by them for many legal cases. For some fifteen years, he studied as a *chavrusa* with Rabbi Kossowsky (besides attending his *shiurim*). After the Yeshiva was founded, he would come straight from work to the classes, sitting in with us (who, by comparison, were dwarfs in learning). Once, I showed his doctorate and other essays to a number of learned *rabbonim*, and they were astounded to hear that these were written by someone who had not formally been in yeshiva). When Mitzi died, Rabbi Aloy was *maspid* him, and he and others wept profusely when describing his love of Torah.

Saks writes that I was a senior *Ram* in Kfar Haroeh, which is both true and not quite the case. I was the most senior member of staff (with some 38 years behind me when I retired), serving as *Mashgiach Ruchani* for a number of years. Insofar as I have two secular degrees besides *semicha*, I was also a teacher of secular subjects. I gave talks and began a very renowned tradition of a Chassidic *tisch* on Friday nights, with upwards of 200 people attending. Except for one year, though, I never taught the upper two classes.

It is noted that Rabbi Suchard was away from his family for many years while studying overseas. That was in fact true for all of the first Yeshiva graduates, with all of us spending some 7-8 years away from our families. When my father, of blessed memory, was seriously ill with stomach cancer, there was some hesitation over my returning. Rabbi Kossowsky told him, "Mr Katz, I cannot promise anything, but if there is merit/*zechus* for the good, it is that your son should learn Torah". That did it. My parents were not doing so well financially, but for two reasons they would not let me accept a scholarship: One, because someone else who needed it might be encouraged to go and learn Torah and two, so that I should not be in a position where I might lose my independence of thought and action or be beholden to anyone – that no-one would educate me in Torah but my parents.

Nearly eight years passed, and on the day I was due to leave Baltimore for Detroit (a short time before I was due to get married), I received a call to come home as my father had suffered a stroke. He had never sat or lain down to *davven*, ill as he might have been, but now he could no longer stand. I came home to find him unconscious. When he came round, he followed me around the room with his gaze before closing his eyes again. Two weeks later, he passed away.

Of my mother, o"n, the Chevroner Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Simcha Zissel Brodie said, "I saw the wife of the Chafetz Chaim and the wife of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, and I tell you that your mother could have been among those famous *tzidkoneiyos*". In our house, the talk was always of *rabbonim*, *chazonim*, *dayonim*, *shochtim*, *shamosim* – anything to do with Torah and *tefilla*. It was really hard to be *frum* in the early years of their struggle (except for the Adath Jeshurun congregation, who kept all its youth intact).

Perhaps *Jewish Affairs* could one day feature something on the saintly "The Loafer" Reb Chaim Sadovsky, an ex-Slabodke Yeshiva man from the Fordsburg-Mayfair area who gave his life to helping the sick. He would walk in the dark from Mayfair-Fordsburg on a Shabbos to go help the sick in the general and other hospitals. When he needed support in the annual *gemilos chasodim* meetings, to prevent embarrassing questions to people getting loans, he would come before to my brothers to tell

them to come: “*vyle mier geyenzach fighten*”. People could get in to see any doctor, and even not pay by his just sending them. When they would ask who they should say sent them, he would say: “Tell them, the Loafer”. When Reb Chaim passed away, the hospitals flew their flags at half-mast.

Then there was Dr Chatskelson, a frum Jew who was doctor to the nuns – they never let in a Jew, or indeed a man, except him.

A third remarkable figure was the famous *Geyores* – convert – Sarah Cohen. As long as her husband was alive, the late Rabbi Landau would not convert her. When he died, she threw herself in front of the *aron kodesh* and said she would not leave until he converted her. All the chief rabbis paid her tremendous *derech erez*. She said to Rabbi Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, “Rabbi Rabinowitz, *ky is n* good boy [sic!], *maar nie soos Doktor Landau nie*”. About a non-Jewish neighbour who had pushed her (and she was already old and sick), she said to my mother, “*Moenie worry nie, daar is 'n G-d in hemel en elke dog has his day*”. Her *emunah* (faith/trust in G-d) was unbelievable. She would stand in the dark in winter time outside Wolmarans Street shul, waiting for the *shammes* to open the doors.

In the early days of Johannesburg, Sarah and her husband owned the Pioneer Hotel, and on Pesach she would move out. Despite the fact that she did not exactly lick honey from some of her Jewish relations, who took some of her money, she never failed to praise *Yidden* and refer to the ‘*goyim*’. She dressed in black, a remnant of her strict Calvinist Afrikaans background, and her speech was interspersed with an unmistakable *boere meisie* Afrikaans. During the Anglo-Boer War, when the Boers came to question her about the whereabouts of her husband and held a loaded pistol to her head, she replied with her usual “*daar is 'n G-d in hemel*”, and either out of respect or thinking she had gone mad, they left her alone.

One Shabbos morning, two young girls showed up in the Wolmarans Street shul bare legged (i.e., without stockings) and in shortish skirts. Sarah indignantly said to them, “Are you not ashamed *nie* to come to G-ds [Afrikaans pronunciation, of course] house like that with those bare *MIELIESTOMPERS???*” She lived in great poverty in Jeppe Street and ate at our house on Friday night; if she did not come, my mother would send us with Shabbos food on Friday afternoon.

Sarah Cohen (*Soroh bas Soroh Imeinu*) is buried in the last rows of Brixton cemetery, near our *zaydeh* and *bobbeh* (Raichel and Mendel Levin). *Zaydeh* was one of the ‘*griene*’ founders of the old Chassidic shul when it was in Ferreira’s Dip. Mrs Cohen asked us to please say a prayer over her grave when we visit our family graves. I did so, and I also recite *yizkor* for her every time *yizkor* is recited.

All three of the above (who died childless) were saintly individuals, a larger-than-life part of the South African Jewish community.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Katz
Kfar Haroeh, Israel

We'd like you to meet the
Family...



ALL OUR PRODUCTS ARE
KOSHER & KOSHER FOR PASSOVER.

PRODUCED BY:
ZANDWIJK WINES (PTY)LTD



REGIONAL AVAILABILITY:

GAUTENG: Contact Person: Mr. Leslie Berman, Tel: (011) 483 3118 or 084 616 3410, Email: leslie@great-wines.co.za. WESTERN CAPE, KWAZULU-NATAL, EASTERN CAPE: Contact Person: Stephanie Swart, Tel: (021) 863 2368, Email: swarts@capegate.co.za

Tel: +27 (0)21 863 2368

E-mail: zandwijk@capegate.co.za

www.kosherwines.co.za

www.macsteel.co.za



Africa's Leading Steel Supplier

For reliable, sustainable service



THE MACSTEEL GROUP

Why is this bank different from all other banks?

Because we lean
your way

Wishing all our clients, staff
and associates a meaningful Pesach

www.sasfin.com
0861-sasfin(727346) • info@sasfin.com

sasfin bank
a partner beyond expectations