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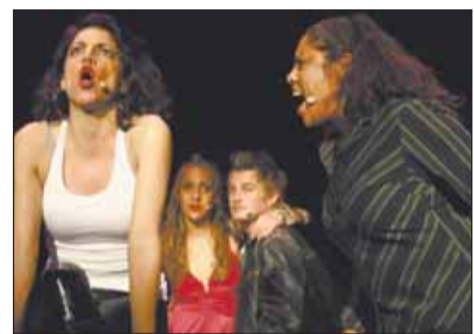
www.sajewishreport.co.za Friday, 27 July 2007 / 12 Av 5767 Volume 11 Number 28

Chief Rabbi powers a Bill of Responsibilities

The idea is to generate a culture of responsibility that will start in schools and grow to incorporate all SA citizens. The goal is for learners to take on their Bill of Responsibilities which will be on the wall in every classroom. This project was presented at a meeting with President Thabo Mbeki, senior Cabinet ministers and the NRLF. **PAGE 4**

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Russia stays close to Hamas

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Tisha B'Av reflections

COMMEMORATING Tisha B'Av in Jerusalem is an exercise in paradoxes. We live in an era when the Jewish people have the good fortune of being able to live freely in our own state in the place our ancestors prayed about for millennia. But for most Jews living in this sacred land, there is a sense that 60 years since the state was established and 40 years since Jerusalem was liberated, somehow there is something rotten in the State of Israel.

URIEL HEILMAN ponders the mood in Israel on Tisha B'Av. In the picture, young Israelis read the Book of Lamentations.

(PHOTO: BRIAN HENDLER/JTA)

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PARSHA OF THE WEEK

The purpose of prayer

MOSHE REBEINU implored Hashem that he should be allowed to enter Eretz Yisroel. This is a good opportunity to discuss prayer in general.

G-d is all knowing and knows exactly what we need. In fact he knows better than our own selves what we really need. What then is the purpose of prayer, surely it cannot be to change G-d's mind?

The greatest challenge of faith is to see G-d's providential hand in this world of causality. Our world works according to cause and effect; almost everything can be explained without having to bring G-d into the picture.

The scientific method doesn't even entertain the possibility that G-d might be the true cause of what goes on in world politics, in our health and wealth and so on.

The goal of prayer is the realization that we are living in G-d's world and at every moment we



PARSHAT VE'ESCHENAN

Rabbi Nitzan Bergman
Ohr Somayach, Cape Town

are in His good hands. He is the true cause of everything that happens to us. The nature of cause and effect is most often the tool He uses, but we must never forget the Craftsman who wields them.

The wise sages of the Talmud tell us to pray before hard times come. When we are feeling really healthy we should pray our hardest for health. When everything is going well that's the time to pray. When we aren't well and things are tough, that's not the best time to pray.

This advice sounds very strange, what could be the reason for this? The reason is because the temptation in tough times is

to pray to G-d to change His mind. We don't want what He's given us so we beg Him to reconsider!

We ask G-d who knows exactly at every moment what the very best thing is for us to rather do things in the way we would like them!

That's not what prayer is about. Prayer is to remind us and educate us that we are in G-d's world, He is running it according to His infinite wisdom and whatever happens is the very best thing that could happen.

True prayer is easier to do when things are going well.

The world we live in values wealth more than anything else. Through prayer you can achieve true wealth. The peace of mind which enables one to deal in a positive and truly rich way with all of life's ups and downs, is attainable through prayer.

A practical example: The prayer for health in the shmonei esrei:

"Heal us G-d and we shall be

SHABBAT TIMES

July 27/ 12 Av
July 28 / 13 Av

Starts	Ends	
17:21	18:12	Johannesburg
17:45	18:39	Cape Town
17:03	17:55	Durban
17:23	18:15	Bloemfontein
17:17	18:10	Port Elizabeth
17:09	18:03	East London



healed" I acknowledge that the true source of our state of health is you, G-d. I beg you to make us healthy, not to change your mind about the state of health that you know is the best for us, but to remind myself that you are the true source of our health and whatever state we do find ourselves in it is from you and therefore for the best.

Northcliff Hebrew Congregation turns 50

OWN CORRESPONDENT

ONE OF the pioneering shuls in the outlying northern suburbs of Johannesburg is the Northcliff Hebrew Congregation. Founded in the early 1950s to cater for the growing Jewish population of the Northcliff area, it initially met in the homes of various members, such as the Cohens and Reichenbergs.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services were held in the Plastic Theatre, a popular entertainment venue on Northcliff, which looks out to the Magaliesberg.

At that time the area was semi-rural. What today are major metropolitan arteries, such as Beyers Naude Drive, were then dirt roads. There were no streetlights, or gleaming shopping centres such as Cresta and the fire brigade was manned by volunteers.

Much of the original population of the Northcliff area, which was developed largely by the Cohen family, was Jewish.

As the Jewish population grew, the community began to develop its own unique character and expand beyond providing only shul services. A spirit of volunteerism and creativity permeated so many of the activities of the congregation.

A vibrant cheder, a large nursery school (it counted over 110 Jewish children at its height), a talented choir for Shabbat and Yomtov and an active ladies guild were all part of the vibe of the shul.

Of special note were the cultural activities that emanated from the shul. Semi-professional plays, mock weddings and talent shows, created a unique bond among its members. In a similar vein, the annual communal seder would attract over 200 people and was a labour of love.

On Rosh Hashanah, 1956, tragedy struck. The Plastic Theatre, where services were being held, and the

Torahs that were temporarily housed there, were destroyed in a fire. Arrangements were hastily made for that Rosh Hashanah, with Torahs being carried from the Greenside Shul to a home in Northcliff so that services could continue for the rest of Yomtov.

"After a fire one becomes wealthy," goes an old Yiddish saying. And so it was. Out of the huge setback of the fire came the inspiration to build a permanent home for the congregation.

Albert Herder, a leading non-Jewish citizen of the Northcliff area donated a large piece of land for the erection of a synagogue.

When completed, in June, 1957, the shul was debt-free - perhaps a first (and last?) in Jewish history!

Fifty years have passed since the erection of the shul - fifty years of nurturing Jewish life and families.

Numerous bar- and batmitzvahs, brissen, baby namings and weddings, have taken place, countless shul services and Torah classes and a steady stream of communal celebrations and activities.

Under the able leadership of a host of outstanding layman and the rabbinic guidance of Rev Isaiah Reichenberg, Rabbi Phillip Heilbrun, Rabbi Menachem Fohrman and for the last 13 years Rabbi Pesach Fishman, the shul has been an anchor of Jewry of north-western Johannesburg.

The Northcliff Shul has been an integral part in the lives of the numerous families and individuals who were enriched by it and who experienced some of the most important milestones and most memorable moments in their lives in its confines.

Over the years, the demographics of Johannesburg Jewry has changed. Many more shuls exist in the northern suburbs now than in the early decades of the Northcliff community.



A photograph taken at the opening of the Northcliff Hebrew Congregation on June 16, 1957, shows (then) Chief Rabbi Dr Louis Rabinowitz, Tim Teron and Albert Herder.

Many families have left the area, through retirement, emigration and semigration. Yet, at a time when other shuls of similar age and circumstances have closed or downsized, Northcliff has maintained a healthy equilibrium and vibrancy.

Many younger Jewish families have moved into this sought-after area and in the last decade the community has experienced a resurgence of new members and activities.

With a confident eye to the future,

the shul facility has undergone a number of significant and striking upgrades, especially over the past year. Among these, the interior of the shul front façade has been redone in Jerusalem stone, the hall has been refurbished, beautiful stained-glass creations by Tandi Weinstein on the themes of Shabbat, each Chag and Jerusalem, grace the 10 large windows in the hall and a utensils mikvah has been constructed.

To celebrate the past 50 years, to dedicate the now completed significant upgrades of the shul complex and to launch the community with renewed energy into the future a "Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration" is to be held. On Saturday evening, September 1 Chief Rabbi Goldstein and the Johannesburg Jewish Male Choir will be joining us for this prestigious black tie occasion, highlighted by a rededication Maariv service and dinner.

* If you are a past member of the Northcliff community and would like to attend, please call Elana on 082-889-1861 or e-mail rabbif@iafrica.com

Keeping Bloemfontein up to speed



Michael Bagraim, national chairman of the Board of Deputies (right) and Wendy Kahn, executive director of the Board, visited the United Hebrew Institutions of Bloemfontein on July 17 to update them on the current events in South Africa. With them is Dr Mickey Hellman, Free Sate representative of the Board.



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SABC ME 'even-handedness' in the offing

DAVID SAKS

THE SAJBD is upbeat over prospects of genuine even-handedness by the SABC in its future coverage of the Middle East conflict, following its meeting last week with SABC Group Executive, News and Current Affairs, Dr Snuki Zikalala.

In the course of the meeting, described by SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn as "very constructive", it was agreed that an independent monitoring organisation would be brought in to analyse the coverage of the Middle East conflict on SABC TV for a year.

This organisation would give quarterly report backs, which both the SAJBD and the SABC editorial staff would attend.

It was also agreed to arrange a meeting

between the SAJBD and the SABC editorial staff to give the latter an understanding of who the Jewish community was and its views on the Middle East.

The meeting was the second to have taken place between the Board and Zikalala this year. It came about as a result of a complaint laid by the Board against the SABC with the Independent Complaints Commission of South Africa (ICASA) based on reported comments made by Zikalala regarding why the Jewish journalist Paula Slier was not to be used as a reporter on Middle East issues.

According to last year's commission of enquiry into blacklisting and related matters at the SABC, Zikalala said regarding Slier: "From the movement where I come

from we support the PLO. But she supported what's happening in Israel."

"While we were prepared to go ahead with the hearing if necessary, we felt that first prize would be to first meet with Dr Zikalala to see whether our differences could be amicably resolved through constructive dialogue," said SAJBD National Vice-chairman Zev Krengel, who headed the Board's delegation.

Krengel stressed this principle during the meeting itself, pointing out that the true miracle of the South African transition to democracy had been how South Africans themselves had chosen negotiations over conflict. For his part, Zikalala said that the Jewish community were key stakeholders and pledged an open-door policy to prevent

an adversarial situation coming about.

It was the responsibility of the SABC to give views to all parties and to achieve editorial balance, and to that end both sides had to be given a platform.

Krengel pointed out that previous debates on the Middle East had presented extremely polarised views, which did nothing to promote genuine debate. He suggested in this regard that the SABC actively seek to use more moderate spokespeople from either side who would at least acknowledge the other point of view.

The Board was invited to bring any stories it believed to be newsworthy to the SABC news desk and given the assurance that if they were indeed newsworthy, they would be given a slot.

Portrait of a Kess leader of the Ethiopian Jewish community in Israel



A photo from the "Ethiopia in Israel" exhibition and book launch by Ilan Ossendryver which will open on July 26 at Museum Africa in Johannesburg.

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SEF Code: 1093

Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment (GDACE)
 Ref no: Gaut ref 002/05-06/840

The amended Draft Scoping Report for the abovementioned project will be available for public review, from **Monday, 30 July 2007 to Friday, 21 September 2007** on SEF's web site (www.sefsa.co.za), and at the following public venues:

Venue	Address	Contact Person	Hours
Huddle Park Golf Complex. Linksfield Golf Club	Club Street, Linksfield	Willem Froneman 082 048 6328	Tuesday - Friday 08h00 - 16h00
The Royal Johannesburg and Kensington Golf Club	1 Fairway Avenue, Linksfield North	Terry Wittwen 011 640 9402	Monday - Friday 8h00 - 16h00
Sandringham Police Station. Front Desk.	Cnr Modderfontein Road and Rietfontein Road at the entrance to Sizwe Hospital on the cnr of George Street and Club Street.	Client Service Centre 011 719 4821/2/3	Monday - Sunday 24hrs

* Kindly note that the amended Draft Scoping Report may not be removed from the abovementioned venues.

Please complete the viewing register on the overleaf of the report. Should you have any comments on the amended Scoping Report, please forward your comments by e-mail or fax to Strategic Environmental Focus, fax: (012) 349 1229 or e-mail: ctu@sefsa.co.za on or before **Friday, 21 September 2007**.

Two Public Open Days will be convened on **Saturday, 1 September 2007** from **13:00 - 17:00** and on **Wednesday, 5 September 2007** from **16:00 - 20:00** at the Linksfield Golf Club, Club Street, Linksfield.

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Chief Rabbi powers Bill of Responsibilities

ALISON GOLDBERG

CHIEF RABBI Warren Goldstein is spearheading an initiative to establish a Bill of Responsibilities together with the Department of Education and the National Religious Leaders Forum (NRLF) of which he is a member of the executive.

The project, which will include a national schools campaign and a draft Bill of Responsibilities - based on the Bill of Rights - is in the process of being drawn up. The idea behind this is to generate a culture of responsibility that will start in schools and grow to incorporate all South African citizens.

The ultimate goal within schools is for the learners to take on their Bill of Responsibilities which will be on the wall in every classroom around the country.

Learning about the Bill of Responsibilities would also form part of the Life Orientation syllabus. Through this training, the youth will learn to understand the Bill of Rights and how this translates into personal responsibility.

Rabbi Goldstein presented this project at a meeting with President Thabo Mbeki, senior Cabinet ministers and the NRLF. The idea was warmly endorsed by the president and religious leaders, with the president stressing the urgency of the matter.

The idea for a Bill of Responsibilities is "very much based on Judaism", which nourishes youths with a diet of duties and responsibilities from a young age, says the

chief rabbi. One may have a right to parental care but is duty bound to honour parents. Similarly, one may have a right to dignity but is called upon to respect one's fellow man in the same vein. There are numerous examples cited by the rabbi.

Once both drafts - the Department of Education has its own draft - have been fused, the bill will be offered to the public for comment.

"The Torah speaks in the language of tomorrow" expounds Rabbi Goldstein. The significance of the bill for South Africa in the 21st century is to transform the society into a better one, the country into a better place, its thrust comes from the Torah itself and to remind us that "G-d's wisdom is for all time".

Also on the agenda at the meeting with President Mbeki were a number of welfare projects to be run on the ground by faith communities, the matter of crime, an update of South Africa's role in the negotiation process in Zimbabwe as mandated by SADC (Southern African Development Community).

Indeed the week was a busy one for the chief rabbi who last Wednesday also attended an inaugural meeting of the Global Elders, an initiative led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former President Nelson Mandela to coincide with Mandela's 89th birthday on July 18. Also present were former US President Jimmy Carter, former Irish Prime Minister Mary Robinson, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, among other dignitaries.

MaAfrika to build 3 new Diepsloot centres

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY
 JOSH SCHEWITZ

OUTREACH AGENCY MaAfrika Tikkun is starting construction of three new community centres in Diepsloot near Johannesburg.

On the cards are an early childhood development centre; a youth development centre; and an administrative and palliative care centre.

The early childhood development centre will provide disadvantaged kids from the age of six with a daily meal as well as taking them off the street and providing sports and recreational facilities. Counselling and life skills development will also be provided.

The youth development centre will have a library and a computer centre to provide disadvantaged kids with the same opportunity to learn, as can be found "in the homes of Sandton kids" says Marc Lubner CEO of MaAfrika Tikkun.

The administrative and palliative care centre will provide disadvantaged elderly people with a place they can be cared for and supported.

"We have become intimately involved with the people of Diepsloot over the last six years. There is a great need for formal services and facilities in the community," says Lubner.

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein who is the president of MaAfrika Tikkun, says: "The name of this organisation is drawn from the

Talmudic doctrine of contributing to the greater society around us which is called Tikkun Olam - meaning to fix the world.

"The world, we are taught, is in a state of disrepair, and is filled with human suffering, and it is our sacred duty to repair and heal it."

MaAfrika Tikkun is a Jewish founded and run charity. It is also an example of how Jews, Christians and Muslims can work together to alleviate poverty and suffering.

The ground that the centres will be built on, is leased from the Diepsloot Methodist Church. Pastor Rita Mkhwananzi attended the launch ceremony last week Wednesday and spoke about Cain and Abel and ended affirming that we are indeed our brother's keeper.

Sariah Khan is a Muslim woman who works for MaAfrika Tikkun. "As a Muslim working for this Jewish organisation, I just feel a tremendous amount of pride... it's about humanity. We (Muslims and Jews) can live and work together."



Grade 1 learners from Basa Primary School in Diepsloot.



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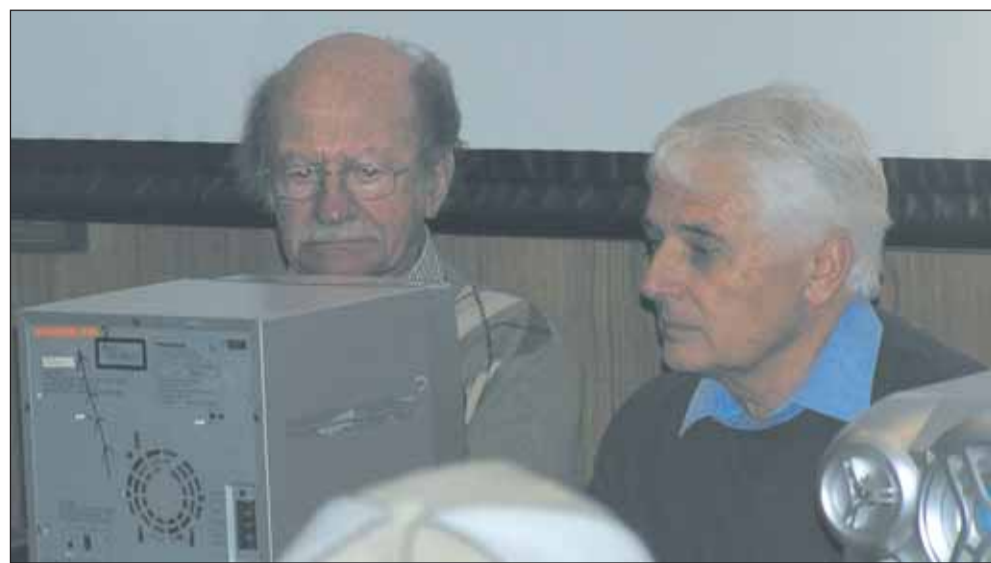


SOCIAL SCENE

Rita Lewis jont@global.co.za



Barney Segal, the Big Band's publicist with Mike Kimmelman.



Dave Goldstein and Harry Fidler in charge of this function's selection of music and the playing of it.

Recreating era of the big band

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY
RITA LEWIS

HOW MANY times does one hear the words, "and they call this music" when "older" people hear modern-day music. But in turn, youngsters most times feel the "old" music is boring and slow and they just don't want to listen to it.

Barney Segal in charge of publicity for the Big Band Appreciation Society which held one of its meetings in Johannesburg recently, said the society would like to encourage more young people to join them so that could become acquainted with, and therefore get to appreciate, the type of music that the society played - Big Band music from the '30s and '40s.

Despite his wishes, there was no getting away from it that although the venue was almost full, there were few "young" people there, although those who were there really seemed to appreciate the rhythm and beat of the music.

Segal who joined the Big Band Appreciation Society around 1994, says they were then housed in Sable House in Braamfontein. They moved four years later to their present location at the Jeffrey Auditorium at St John's College in Houghton, Johannesburg.

Jack Mink, who has been chairman of the society since 2000, reiterated the need for more young blood. He said the society now met every second Sunday of the month and has as its motto: "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing" the famous words of a song which ably describes the type of music that is played.

He said different people took turns in playing and showcasing music of this genre - often taken from their own collections which have often taken years to accumulate.

At the last meeting, avid music collector and cognoscenti, Harry Fidler, brought along a selection of some of his favourite bands, singers and soloists including Tommy Dorsey, Don

Albert, Artie Shaw and Mel Torme. He said he had called his selection, "These are a few of my favourite things" - coincidentally one of his favourite songs.

Interspersed between the recordings, Fidler related amusing stories of the musicians whose music he was playing, including an anecdote about trumpeter Barry Banagan who often pitched up to performances drunk. Once asked how he always managed to play fantastically well even when he had really had had "one too many", he replied: "Because I practise playing drunk."

One unusual rendition played that day was a jazzed up version of Ravel's "Bolero" which Fidler had found in Brazil and brought home.

During the afternoon a video was shown on the life of clarinetist, Artie Shaw who experienced a great deal of anti-Semitism when his name was Arthur Ashavsky.

He left school at 15, taught himself orchestration and finally made it big after many years of getting nowhere.

* Enquiries should be made to Mink on (011) 782-7111.



Doreen Fidler and Alysia Rose.



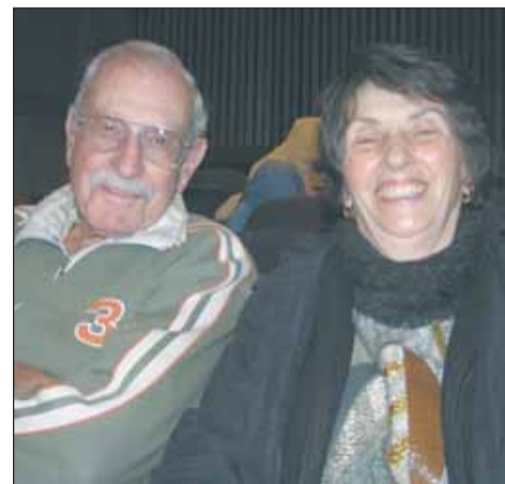
Two Jacks - Jack Gross and Jack Mink, the Big Band Society's chairman..



Trevor Derry and Liz Simmonds from the JHB Light Music Society enjoy their tea.



Leila Goldberg with Norma Silverman.



Zammy Freedman with Sylvia Zulman.

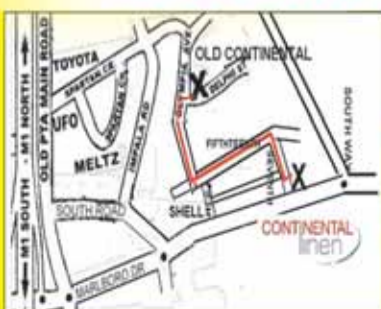


Lorna Sonnenburg and Lily Chemel enjoying the music.



Sara Goldstein and Ray Goldstein who are not related but who have been making and serving tea for the Big Band Society for some 30 years.

CONTINENTAL



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SPRINGBOK

The little dorp of Springbok is in the Northern Cape, 550 km almost due north from Cape Town on the N7. It is in the heart of Namaqualand which is well known for the late winter display of daisies which draws thousands of visitors every year to the nearby Goegap Nature Park.

A few kilometres north of Springbok is the small copper mining village of Okiep. (Okiep means "brackish water" in the local Khoisan language).

This month The Jewish National Fund presented its Golden Book Certificate to Jopie Kotze, an Afrikaner resident of Springbok. The illuminated address read: "In appreciation of your efforts in maintaining the Jewish Cemetery at Okiep and the Jewish historical sites in Springbok." It was presented to Kotze by Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, the country communities rabbi of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies.

"It is a great honour," said Rabbi Silberhaft.

The South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth in Book 2 of their projected five volume series of "Jewish Life in the South African Country Communities" give quite a lot of information about Springbok and Okiep. For instance, the first Jewish grave at the Okiep cemetery dates back to 1913. Also the Namaqualand Hebrew Congregation was founded in 1918 and closed down in 1972. One cannot speak about the Namaqualand and district Jews without mentioning the name of "Jowell" - a family which has always been prominent in the area.

JOHANNESBURG

The Victory Cinema on Louis Botha Avenue at the top end of Orange Grove, has just reopened after standing derelict for many years. It has been upgraded, revamped and modernised as a theatre. The opening show is "Africa Umoja", called a "spectacle of song and dance".

The original cinema was built in 1929 when tramcars still rolled down Louis Botha Avenue to the terminus at Gallagher's Corner. Its first name was the "Grove Kinema" and the "K" in the name was deliberate - it is not a misprint.

For many years it was the only cinema for people living in or near Orange Grove. Later on, the Royal and Astra cinemas were built further down the avenue.

After the war ended in May 1945 with the Allies victorious, the name was changed to The Victory Cinema, but somehow it was the poor relation of the two other cinemas or bioscopes as they were referred to in the local jargon.

Somehow the Victory lacked the plushness and comfort of the newcomers. Yet it struggled on gamely as an independently-owned cinema, attended by loyal patrons, until it gave up some years ago.

Now it has been given a new lease of life as a live theatre.

EAST LONDON

From "The Zionist Record" Friday, January 4, 1952:

"A tragic accident occurred on Wednesday last week when Morris Weiner, the 14-year-old son of Mr and Mrs Sam Weiner of Hendon Road, Yeoville, was drowned in the sea at the mouth of the Hickman's River, near East London.

"Morris was a pupil at Athlone High School in Johannesburg and he came to East London with the Hashomer Hadati camp. He came from an Orthodox and Zionist family.

"Morris was the grandchild of Lazar Katz, collector of the Johannesburg Old Age Home and nephew of Morris Kirson, son of the veteran Zionist, A Kirson. His mother was a cousin of the late Abraham Katz, one of the founders of the Hapoel Hamizrahi movement in this country who lost his life in 1937 while defending Hanitha (an early settlement in Israel)."

BRAKPAN

From E E Waner, President, United Hebrew Institutions of Brakpan:

"On July 29 2007 at the Brakpan Shul Hall at 14:30 we will be holding a joint birthday party for the following persons:

"The most senior is Jack Armband from Sandringham Gardens, who attends services every Saturday and who celebrated his 97th birthday on July 17. Next is Ike Hyman from Boksburg, who turns 94 on July 30. He reads Maftir every week at our Shul and has been doing it for the last 15 years.

"Monica Russell, our sprightly secretary, who still plays tennis every Wednesday morning, turned 80 on July 13. Bernard Epstein will be celebrating his 80th birthday in August this year. My aunt, Nettie Krost from Sandringham Gardens turns 88 on July 31 and my auntie Betty Josephson, from Our Parents Home turns 91 on August 1, 2007.

"Unfortunately, my late mother,

Edith Waner, who was 90, passed away last October. She would have loved to have been at this event.

"It must be the air and the life which is good on the East Rand that promotes long life. We wish them all a happy birthday and many more."

JOHANNESBURG

Here is a shocker! Gems of which Johannesburg Jewry can be proud are the I H Maisels Library and the S Rochlin Archives at Beyachad. Both are excellent but are woefully under-utilised, which does not reflect to the credit of the Jewish citizenry of the city, but they are there for whomever wants to use them.

Norma Shulman is an extremely helpful librarian and Naomi Musiker looks after the archives.

Despite the fact that there are some very valuable and irreplaceable books on the shelves, a pleasant informality exists. Perhaps too much so, because someone walked off with a copy of "My Book" by Brian Joffe, a beautiful and expensive book of photographs.

Of course anyone determined to do such a heinous thing can possibly succeed, but the question really has to be asked: Is this the way we want to see members of the community behave?

OUDTSHOORN

From Sylvia Shapshak:

"I remember Pauline Shear - or Harris as she was - and her brother, as small children when I lived in Pretoria and was married to Henry Woolfson's elder son. I knew Henry and his twin brother, Victor. They were fraternal twins and not a bit alike. They were the youngest sons, the second and third youngest of the family.

"Pauline's mother, Ada, was the youngest child. She is correct that Sam lived in England. Moss, the second son, lived in Johannesburg as did Victor. Victor had two children, a son, Paul and a daughter, Irma.

"Joyce who lived in (the then) Rhodesia, was killed in a car crash on the way back from a holiday in the Cape and was buried in the Pretoria Cemetery.

"Pauline's mother, Ada Harris, was an estate agent when I knew her. Her father was Austin and they lived in a Herbert Baker house.

"I hope this correspondence is closed."

CONNECTING PEOPLE:

Eugene Woolfson, grandson of Rev Meyer Woolfson e-mailed Community Buzz on June 25 with information about his family in Oudtshoorn. Masha and Charlie Berger would like to make contact with him. Their e-mail address is mashchas@mweb.co.za

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Lila Bruk, Registered Dietician

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Fat-free milk is much lower in fat while still being an excellent source of protein.

• Eat more vegetables.

Vegetables are an excellent source of fibre, vitamins and minerals. Therefore it is essential that veg-

etables form the basis of all main meals.

• Choose lean meats and chicken without skin.

Lean meat and chicken without the skin are excellent sources of lean protein. However, fattier cuts of meats and chicken skin provide unnecessary fat and therefore should be avoided.

• Drink water.

Water is the best way to hydrate your body and is essential for many metabolic processes (eg digestion). Coffee contains caffeine, which acts as a diuretic and thus causes the body to lose water. Soft drinks and fruit juice are also not ideal, as they have high sugar content.

• Take the stairs instead of the lift.

Incorporating small amounts of exercise in your daily routine is a great way to get enough physical

activity. Try to walk wherever you can rather than drive, and walk around a shopping centre as fast as you can, rather than strolling. Accumulate 30 minutes of physical activity per day and you'll soon be reaping the benefits!

• Snack on fruit instead of crisps and chocolates.

Fruit is the ideal snack! It's portable, healthy and filling. Pop an apple into your bag or keep an orange in your car to keep hunger pangs at bay and to prevent you from reaching for sugary or salty snacks.

• Eat more wholegrain starches.

Choose high-fibre starches (eg seed loaf, brown rice, bran flakes), as they are more filling and keep you sustained for longer than low-fibre starches (eg white bread, white rice, corn flakes).

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For more information call Lila on (011) 728-8909 or 083-244-0163

Limmud - an open forum for any Jewish topic

LIONEL SLIER

LIMMUD IS one of the most exciting and innovative educational organisations in the British Jewish community. In its 25 year history, more than 20 000 people have attended a Limmud event. The Limmud model of cross-communal Jewish education has been replicated in 13 countries.

Every year over the August Bank Holiday, Limmud holds a five-day residential conference at the University of Nottingham, known as the Limmudfest. More than 2 000 participants attend and there are 900 educational sessions with 350 presenters.

There are 13 Limmud communities around the world and on August 9, South Africa will be joining in. It must be noted that these international Limmuds operate independently of the original Limmud in Britain.

Limmud SA aims to provide a similar platform here. It will

enable people to experience the full richness that is found in a diverse Jewish identity embracing all aspects of Jewishness from culture, religion, history, philosophy, music and, of course, food.

Limmud means learning, particularly with an emphasis on adult education and development with the exchange of ideas and opinions on all subjects. It is in no way prescriptive and every point of view is open for discussion.

Limmud's mission statement, to which the South African group will adhere to, is to allow each Jew to take one step further on his/her Jewish journey. It will provide a space in which all Jews can explore the various facets of their identity.

Limmud SA will be holding, what they are calling a "Festival of Jewish Learning and Culture" at the Wits Medical School on Wednesday August 9, starting at 08:30 until 23:00 and even later.

The ninth is a public holiday - Women's Day - so a large attendance is expected.

There will be at least five sessions an hour covering a wide range of topics to get everybody engaged in a wide range of Jewish experiences and discussions.

Among the speakers will be international participants such as Prof Nathan Aviezer from Bar-Ilan University; Benjamin Pogrud of the Yakar Centre for Social Concern, Israel, who will be joined with Bassam Eid from the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group; Enoch Keki Mainah and Moshe Yasiira Madoi, Jewish teachers from Uganda; David Gerbi, psychoanalyst and author; and Mikhael Manekin talking about being a moral soldier on the West Bank.

Many prominent local speakers are also taking part and *The Jewish Report* will be publishing the full programme in next week's issue. Rebbetzen Ann Harris, widow of the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, will be one of the headline speakers.

Limmud states: "This will be an excellent opportunity for those attending to get exposure to world class educators as well as to hear individuals from this country who may not generally have had exposure.

"It also provides a platform for established and aspirant musicians, filmmakers and artists to share their creations (where Jewish-themed works of art sometimes struggle to find these platforms)".

Limmud has brought a cultural renaissance to Jewish com-

munities wherever it has existed and it can offer a space for creativity and Jewish learning to flourish in South Africa.

The day will be a wonderful opportunity for everyone to socialise, meet others and share interests, ideas and opinions. There will also be music, melody, theatre, drumming and dance - in fact a total Jewish cultural extravaganza. It must be emphasised that Limmud is for the whole family with programmes for children, teens and young adults. At lunch, for those who wish to take part, there is Chevruta Learning.

* For full details contact Coreen Horwitz. E-mail limmud-sa@gmail.com or telephone 076-480-2896 or Linda Mark 084-485-1289. The website can be visited at www.limmud.org.za

Apartheid Museum hosts White Rose exhibits

THE WHITE ROSE was a German student group which protested against the Nazi movement and the persecution of Jews. Its main members were convicted and executed.



Mr Zwelinzima Lucas Sizani, secretary of ANC Political Education with Holocaust survivor, Mija Abramowich at the White Rose exhibition.



Holocaust survivor, Mija Abramowich discusses a photograph at the White Rose exhibition at the Apartheid Museum with students Tarisha Adame (left) and Julian Darries from Fred Norman Secondary School in Ennerdale. (PHOTOGRAPHS: ILAN OSSENDRYVER)



Limmud UK remembered

ANN HARRIS

I'VE ONLY been to UK Limmud once - it started its meteoric rise to being the thing to do over the end of year holidays, after I left England.

But I was invited back some years later to present several sessions like "Observations on the Jews of South Africa", "Status of Women in Jewish Law" and "Tikkun Olam".

That year it took place at Manchester University and I found myself living for a few days in the city where I was born at a University I didn't go to.

My elder son, Michael, rabbi of the Hampstead Synagogue in London, also took part - he is one of the few Orthodox rabbis who have taken part in and been faithful to Limmud activities for many years.

So, there we were. It was a freezing, dark, miserable English winter. We decided to make the most of a wonderful opportunity! We piled into the university residences. My granddaughters, then primary school age, disappeared for the entire duration in a whirl of exciting children's activities. They have been devotees of Limmud ever since.



We presenters got on with the job. I was amazed at the numbers of people who turned up to listen to me: and not only listen, but question, argue, put up different points of view. Every session was an exciting adven-

ture.

Rabbi Michael, one of the foremost exponents of modern Orthodoxy in the UK, worked on texts with groups at every level and debated all aspects of Jewish faith and life with controversial zeal.

The quality of teaching and learning was generally of the highest standard and many eminent scholars and educators were willing to give of their time and expertise. The list of Limmud presenters over the years reads like a Jewish Hall of Fame.

The only hassle was - choice! There was so much of interest, often running parallel, that we didn't know what to choose first. And in addition to quality, what quantity of Jewish people wanting to be together for such an opportunity - that year there were about 1 000, now grown to well over 2 000.

On Shabbat, the participants organised several types of serv-

ice; everyone could find his or her own spiritual and educational level and feel comfortable.

On Motzai Shabbat, we presenters were asked to entertain. Oivey! Michael and I prepared a presentation on the life of the rabbi and his wife. It's something on which we are both experts.

About a hundred people listened to us tearing communal life into shreds - after all, lay people complain all the time, so why miss a chance to turn the tables? It brought the house down!

Of course Limmud can be controversial and has attracted criticism from many different viewpoints. But it is a genuine attempt to disseminate a wide variety of Jewish knowledge to the Jew and Jewess in the street and to help Jewish people from diverse backgrounds feel comfortable with one another.

There is no doubt of its resounding success in the UK. I am sure we can do it in South Africa.

* Ann Harris will be speaking on several topics at Limmud South Africa which will take place in Johannesburg on August 9 (Women's Day) at Wits Medical School, Parktown and in Cape Town on August 10-12 at The Strand Hotel. See www.limmud.org.za for more information on these events.

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PROGRAMME (this programme is for Johannesburg with many of the same sessions **and more** in Cape Town. It is subject to change)

09h00-10h00

- Session 1 : **David Bilchitz** - Must we obey G-d under all circumstances? A Literary and Philosophical Approach to Shaul and the Amalekites
 Session 2 : **Alan Lipman** - A History of Socialist Jewish Thinking
 Session 3 : **Ray Perkel** - The Enigma of Jewish Music in a Global Context: A mystical perspective
 Session 4 : **Allan Kolski Horwitz** - Contemporary South African Poetry And Jewish Identity - The Botsotso Experience
 Session 5 : **Rhona Lief** - Struggling to Embrace the New: Exploring the Apocrypha Texts and their insights into ancient Jewish Life
 Session 6 : **Ofer Dahan** - Topic tbc

10h10-11h10

- Session 1 : **Adina Roth** - Magic versus Religion: A Textual Look at their Differences and Similarities in the Epic Story of Bilaam
 Session 2 : **Immanuel Suttner** - The Twelve Tribes of Israel: Filmic Representations of Diversity in the State of the Jews
 Session 3 : **Louis Marcus Finn** - How does one Paint the Holocaust?: An Exploration of the Art of Eric Kahn and Erna Bodenstern
 Session 4 : **Natan Aviezer** - Have Scientists Discovered G-d? The Anthropic Principle and Jewish Belief
 Session 5 : **Moshe Singer** - Between the Lines: An anecdotal Journey through Jewish History with Antique Books
 Session 6 : **Meet 7 Visiting Young Israeli Leaders:** What kind of future do we see for Modern Israel?
 Session 7 : **Barney Hurwitz** - The Carter Regime and world opinion on Israel TBC

11h20-12h20

- Session 1 : **Dennis Davis** - Delving into Parshat Hashavuah: New Insights into Re'eh
 Session 2 : **Selma Browde** - Palliative Treatment for All: Past, Present and Future
 Session 3 : **Stephen Finn** - Forbidden Flesh- The challenge Vegetarianism poses for the Ethical Jew
 Session 4 : **Howard Sackstein** - Is Jewish Activism Dead?
 Session 5 : **Guy Lieberman and Tzemach Mendelow** - Exploring Kabbalah through a film lens: Meditation and Mystical Traditions in Jewish Life
 Session 6 : **Victor Gordon** - Harry and Ed: A Unique Friendship Without Which there would not have been a State of Israel
 Session 7 : **Charles Wallach** - Life & Death: If everything is foreseen how can we talk of free choice?

12h30-13h30

- Session 1 : **Jeremy Wanderer** - Exploring the Mysteries of Mt. Sinai through Text: Where did Revelation End and Interpretation Begin?
 Session 2 : **Mikhael Manekin** - Breaking the Silence: How can one be a moral Israeli Soldier in the West Bank?
 Session 3 : **David Gerbi** - Making Peace with Qaddafi TBC
 Session 4 : **Karen Lazar** - Resisting Labels: The Challenges Nadine Gordimer poses to a fixed Jewish identity
 Session 5 : **Miri Eitan** - Strictly Come Dancing: A Crash-Course in the Varieties of Israeli Dancing
 Session 6 : **Ronnie Mink** - Bonded in Death? Jews, Poles and the Memory of the Holocaust
 Session 7 : **Fran Buntman** - Liberated or Lite?: A South African Reflection on the Diversity of Judaism in the United States

13h30-14h20

Lunch and Chevrotah

14h30-15h30

- Session 1 : **Ronnie Gotkin** - Separating Fact from Fiction: Exploring the Complexities of Jewish Life under Islam during the Medieval Period
 Session 2 : **Geoff Sifrin** - The Jewish Press in South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities
 Session 3 : **Larry Benjamin** - The Crisis in the Middle East: Can Israel Survive?
 Session 4 : **Hayley Berman** - Judaism, Kabbalah and Psycho-analysis: Exploring the Interconnections
 Session 5 : **Enosh Keki Nainah and Moshe Yashiira** - How to be an Observant Jew in a Ugandan Village
 Session 6 : **Robert Jacobs** - Haggadah shel Pesach: Midrash in Action
 Session 7 : **Kim Lieberman** - Contemporary Art and Judaism: Exploring the Connections

15h40-16h40

- Session 1 : **Ann Harris** - Second-Class or Equal? Exploring the Legal Status of Women in Jewish Law
 Session 2 : **Marcia Leveson** - Exploring the Writing of Bertha Goudvis: Identity, Feminism and Judaism
 Session 3 : **William Kentridge Exclusive:** A Filmic Exploration of his Jewish Roots with an Introduction by Neil Dundas
 Session 4 : **Clive Engleberg** - Meeting a Partner in C21: Judaism, Romance and the Internet
 Session 5 : **Jocelyn Hellig** - Growing Jewish and Muslim Fundamentalism: is this a Response to Insecurity?
 Session 6 : **Avrom Krengel** - Maintaining a Delicate Balance: the Story of the Evolving Relationship between South Africa and Israel
 Session 7 : **Gila Sacks** - In Search of a Jewish Work Ethic

17h00-18h00

- Session 1 : **Ilan Baruch** - The Buoyancy of the Israeli Economy: an analysis
 Session 2 : **Kim Berman** - Can Art be a medium for Tikkun Olam? Transforming South Africa Through the Visual Arts
 Session 3 : **Tali Nates** - Never Again?- Lessons for Humanity: the Holocaust to Darfur
 Session 4 : **Farryl Roth** - Ancestral Judaism vs Traditional African - the musical link explored using real instruments
 Session 5 : **Lael Bethlehem** - Is the Jewish Family Being Re-defined? Same-sex couples, single parents, inter-marriage and multiple parenting
 Session 6 : **Mendel Kaplan** - Topic Tbc
 Session 7 : **Elliott Goldstein** - Limmud: An Emerging Model For Global Jewish Education

18h10-19h10

- Session 1 : **Nathan Aviezer** - On Contradictions Between Torah and Science: the Creation of the Universe
 Session 2 : **Benjamin Pogrund and Bassam Eid** in Conversation - Is South Africa's Unitary State a Model for Israel?
 Session 3 : **Enosh Keki Mainah and Moshe Yashiira** - Being Jewish in Uganda: the Unfolding Story of the Abayudaya
 Session 4 : **Karen Batley** - 'Uncovering the Jewish past: Excavating the Dura-Europos synagogue'
 Session 5 : **Gila Sacks** - Is Community Code for Conformity?
 Session 6 : **Chaya Herman, Joseph Gerassi, Ronnie Gotkin** in conversation - What kind of Jewish education do we want for our children?

19h10-19h40

Dinner

19h40-20h40

Limmud Jewish Cultural Extravaganza
 Steve Barnett and Musical Drumming
 Stand-up
 Abayudaya in Concert (Video Journey)
 Israeli Film

20h40-22h00

Farryl Roth
 Ray Perkel
 Israeli Youth Orchestra
 Theatre
 Guy Lieberman: Universal Face
 (Film on Kabbalah)

22h00-

Limmud Café
 Dancing
 Scrabble



Iran's fancy footwork around Israel issue

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister in Legal and International Affairs Dr Seyed Abbas Eraghchi and Prof Hussein Solomon of the University of Pretoria.

JOSHUA SCHEWITZ

THE CONTROVERSIAL "Iran nuclear programme" was the hot topic of discussion recently when Iran's deputy foreign minister in legal and international affairs, took part in a discussion at the Centre for International Political Studies at the University of Pretoria, hosted by Prof Hussein Solomon.

The Iranian deputy foreign minister also mooted a "one state solution" for

Israel, saying that would mean that the country might not necessarily be "wiped off the map" militarily.

Dr Seyed Abbas Eraghchi spoke about the history of his country's nuclear programme, the development and achievements that have been made and the international reaction to it. He repeatedly emphasised that the programme was peaceful and that his country was trying to build confidence with the international community.

Iran has repeatedly stated that nuclear energy is its right and that it will not give up that right.

Iran was a signatory to the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) and the country had been trying to produce nuclear energy since the 1950s. Iran had invested millions of dollars in its nuclear programme and did not want to submit that easily to international demands that they stop the programme - which the United States inter alia saw as the precursor to producing nuclear arms.

A question put to him was why his country was investing so much in nuclear energy "for peaceful means", when they had such an abundance of oil and natural gas.

On March 24 this year, the UN instituted sanctions (Resolution 1747) against Iran, having expressed its doubts about Iran's protestations that its nuclear programme was solely for peaceful purposes.

The IAEA is still trying to verify the nature of Iran's nuclear programme. The IAEA has encountered co-operation as well as non co-operation from Iran.

Iran has at times suspended its nuclear programme and allowed access to its nuclear facilities. Most notably, it suspended its nuclear programme on November 14 2004 as part of the Paris Agreement.

But Iran restarted its nuclear programme in August 2005. UN officials saw this as a breach of the Paris Agreement. In February 2006 the IAEA voted overwhelmingly to refer Iran to the United Nations Security Council, as a result of the country's non-compliance and after traces of highly enriched uranium had been found by IAEA Director General Mohammad el Baradei at one of Iran's nuclear plants.

The UN Security Council set a deadline for Iran to cease all nuclear activity. When the deadline passed on March 24 this year, Resolution 1747 was passed by the Council. Iran is rationing petrol because it believes further international sanctions are going to target its petrol imports. Due to insufficient refining capacity, Iran imports some 50 per cent of its petrol, despite having one of the biggest crude oil reserves in the world. On top of it the country has very large natural gas reserves.

Dr Seyed adopted a very conciliatory note at the discussion, saying his country had been trying "to build confidence" with the international community.

When asked how Iran expected to build such confidence, considering that President Mahmoud Achmadinejad had repeatedly called for the absolute and total destruction of Israel, to quote the president: "to wipe Israel off the map", Dr Seyed was very diplomatic, saying that his country was free to voice its opinion and that opinion was a "one state solution".

Although he realised that most countries supported a two state solution, his country did not. The resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict into a one state solution, did not necessarily mean that Israel had to be destroyed militarily. Change could come through diplomatic means.

From Dr Seyed's answer it became evident that his country would not consider the Arab/Israeli and Palestinian issues solved if Israel still existed in its present form.

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DON'T LET WINTER CATCH YOU OUT

Our short-term insurance series takes a look at some of the problems that typically occur during winter.

The article is contributed by Howard Cohen, General Manager, Claims, at leading short-term insurer, Mutual & Federal.

HOWARD COHEN

Seasonal patterns affect many industries, including short-term insurance. The first rains of summer bring a spate of motor claims following the annual surge in 'bumper bashings' while the onset of winter often brings with it an increase in geyser problems.

Power failures, dips and surges can affect certain appliances, and geysers are notorious for giving out at the worst possible moment. The cost of geyser replacement can be annoying in itself, but associated costs are often much higher.

Water damage to walls and ceiling boards can be substantial while a major leak will also cause damage to furnishings, carpets, furniture and light fittings. The good news is that some simple precautions can extend the life of your geyser and minimise the damage in the event of failure.

The cost of electricity is going up and energy-saving is high on the national agenda. Energy efficiency is improved by installing insulation in ceilings. As electricity costs mount, this simple home improvement will increasingly be undertaken by prudent householders.

When fitting ceiling insulation, it is advisable - for a small additional outlay - to insulate the geyser and water pipes as well. The optimum method of guarding against geyser failure is planned maintenance through your own plumber. But few home-owners invest in this type of safeguard. This means it is up to the individual householder to take timely action to 'soften the blow' when a geyser gives signs of trouble.

One common danger sign is water boiling and bubbling in the geyser. You often hear rumbling in the ceiling - the usual spot for a geyser installation. Alternatively, steam may sputter out when you turn on hot water taps.

Don't ignore these warning signs. You can save a lot of money and inconvenience by heading off the prospect of a sudden burst. Four commonsense steps are advisable:

1. Switch off the geyser's electrical isolator on the main distribution board.
2. Turn off the water at the main meter box. Most homes have a stopcock fitted to the inlet side of the geyser.
3. If you can reach up without undue difficulty, look through



Howard Cohen
General Manager, Claims at
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the trapdoor in the ceiling. If the geyser is in plain view, it may be possible to see if the geyser, pressure-reducing valve or pipes are leaking. This may help your plumber identify the problem.

4. Contact your insurer or your insurer's helpline.

You will be given the names and contact numbers of reliable plumbers close to you.

Despite your best efforts, it may be impossible to save your existing geyser and a replacement may have to be installed. Ask the plumber who carries out the installation to also fit a drip tray and outlet

pipe. In the event of future problems, this will ensure the water is carried away and doesn't gush out into the ceiling. This simple expedient reduces the danger of water damage.

Leaking geysers are not the only problems to watch out for in winter.

The first reaction to a cold snap is to plug in electrical fires or bring out the gas heaters. Sometimes these appliances are quite old and last saw the light of day nine months earlier. They have not been cleaned for some time; they are dusty and may be in need of basic maintenance. Electrical cords may be in a tangle. Wires may be loose.

Don't just switch on and hope for the best. Make sure fires and heaters are clean and in good working order.

Long dry summer months also have an effect on gutter and down-pipe maintenance.

Leaves mount up and may block the gutters. When the rains come, the water can well up and spill over in the most inconvenient places. Water staining on exterior walls is one result. In some circumstances, the water could spill or seep into the roof and through the ceiling, damaging furnishings inside your home. If an assessor finds that this type of damage was caused by long-term neglect of obvious household maintenance, it is possible for a claim to be rejected. Problems can be solved by cleaning out the gutters during the winter dry spell.

That way, you ensure fallen leaves are not around to create a blockage. Our winters can be glorious. Simple precautions enable householders to enjoy them to the full.



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OPINION AND ANALYSIS

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JERUSALEM

Tisha B'Av reflections

COMMEMORATING Tisha B'Av in Jerusalem is a bit of an exercise in paradoxes.

On the one hand, the remains of the Holy Temple whose destruction we lament on this national day of fasting and mourning, are just a stone's throw away, on the same hallowed ground where generations of Jewish soldiers died fighting for their land.

On the other hand, we live in an era when the Jewish people have the good fortune of being able to live freely in our own state in the place our ancestors prayed about for millennia. We read the Book of Lamentations and the Kinnot prayers that bemoan the destruction of the Jewish nation-state and our subsequent dispersion to the Diaspora, yet we have returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Jewish state.

Today, our holy temple is the State of Israel.

In 1948, when Israel was founded, and again in 1967 after Jerusalem was returned to Jewish hands, some Jews saw the victories as the beginning of the Age of Redemption - the most crucial step toward transforming Tisha B'Av into a celebration of the reconstruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

But for most Jews living in this sacred land, there is a sense that 60 years since the state was established and 40 years since Jerusalem was liberated, somehow there is something rotten in

the State of Israel.

It's in the news every day, it's talked about at dinner table conversations, mocked by satirists, lamented by rabbis and analysed by pundits.

Sixty years on, the temple we have built seems on the verge of ruin.

The threats come from within and without.

Not far enough away from Jerusalem, the modern-day king of Persia, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, threatens to wipe Israel off the face of the earth, and he's building the nuclear capacity to make that happen.

Closer to home, Hamas is acquiring the weapons it needs to turn southern Israel into the firing range that northern Israel was for Hezbollah during last summer's war. Hezbollah, for its part, has restored the weapons arsenal it lost last summer and appears eager for another opportunity to humble Israel's no-longer-invincible military.

And from Durban to The Hague, from Geneva to New York, the nations of the world bear witness to the castigation and delimitation of Israel, at times lending their own voices to the clamour calling for Israel's destruction, either explicitly or implicitly.

At home in Israel, the sense of

ruin is palpable in other, more immediate ways.

The state built on socialist underpinnings now has one of the highest rates of poverty in the developed world. The leaders of the government we hoped would be a light unto the nations, have proven either grossly inept or corrupt. Even when found guilty by the courts, Israeli leaders seem impervious to punishment.

In the last month alone, former President Moshe Katsav escaped rape charges in exchange for a deal to plead guilty to sexual harassment and indecent acts; Omir Sharon, son of the former prime minister, had his jail sentence for a fraud conviction reduced by two months and postponed yet again; and just this week former Knesset member Naomi Blumenthal had her eight-month prison term for bribery commuted to two months probation and six months community service.

The preponderance of cases like these give the Jewish state the appearance of a place where power, not justice, prevails.

It's not only the government's corruption and ineptitude that has Israelis lamenting the ruination of the Jewish state. It's the people, too.

Secularists blame the Orthodox for ruining the state, siphoning off tax money to schools whose

kids who won't serve in the army, don't believe in the legitimacy of the state and will uphold the Orthodox stranglehold on issues like marriage, conversion and religion in Israel.

Orthodox Israelis say secularists are purging the state of its Jewish character through short-sighted education policies, unfair court decisions and lax immigration policies.

Settlers feel abandoned by a government that uprooted 9 000 Jews from the Gaza Strip during the 2005 disengagement and still contemplates trading away the West Bank for a false peace that will only hasten Israel's demise.

Left-wingers say the settlers have wrought Israel's moral corruption by turning the Jewish state into an occupying power that persecutes an entire people in order to survive.

It's not just about ideology, either.

Israeli drivers have turned the nation's roads into avenues of death, where fatalities from car accidents far exceed those from wars and where even a normal car trip becomes an exercise in rage and survival.

Real estate developers snap up Israel's few remaining open spaces and transform them into apartments, roads and office buildings while the government planning boards responsible for

land management authorise wide-ranging construction projects with alarmingly short-term vision, all in exchange for easy money. Even the walls of Jerusalem's Old City, a national treasure, are now blocked from view by a new mall that has gone up right outside the Jaffa Gate.

Thirsty cities divert water from Israel's few freshwater sources and turn a blind eye to wealthy corporations' dumping toxins back in. Some of Israel's most prized sites - among them the polluted Jordan River, the shrinking Dead Sea and the increasingly toxic Mediterranean shoreline - seem in various stages of ruin.

Israel's best and brightest are moving overseas to take higher-paying jobs, government-controlled food prices are rising and every day seems to be hotter than the last.

So what do we do about all these problems?

First, we lament. In our tradition, the collective "Oy vey" we express on Tisha B'Av is meant to be our wakeup call.

Then, we act, however way we can: We vote, we write letters to our representatives, we put a dime in the pushke, we volunteer, we make aliyah, we support worthwhile causes, we treat our fellow Jews and Israelis with human decency, we act like men-sches even when no one's looking.

Will this fix the problems of Israel and the Jewish people? No. But it's a start, and we've got to start somewhere. Perhaps today it can start with us. (JTA)

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What is it about Harry Potter?

Russia's Hamas ties complicate ME role

must take into account the interests of the entire Palestinian people.

"It is necessary to address the concerns of all Palestinians, including those who voted for Hamas," he said. "We proceed on the assumption that Bush's call is not an excuse to neglect the other half of Palestine and to conduct talks with just one group. Any attempt at a comprehensive settlement must be inclusive in its approach."

Russia in recent years has tried to boost its role in the peace process beyond its membership in the so-called Quartet, which also includes the United States, the European Union and the United Nations.

After curtailing its military aid to Arab countries following the Soviet break-up and normalising its relations with Israel, Russia has sought to leverage its traditional contacts with the Islamic world by cultivating relations with Syria, Iran and Hamas.

Last spring, Moscow received a high-level Hamas delegation despite international pressure to isolate the group following its dominant showing in Palestinian parliamentary elections.

Russia has failed, however, to capitalise on its close links with Hamas and to make a convincing case to Israel and other members of the Quartet on the benefits of a continuing engagement with the group.

Following the eruption of hostilities in Gaza and Hamas' takeover of the strip last month, Russia has continued to argue in favour of involving the group's leadership to find the middle ground, even as this position has diverged from the international consensus.

In turn, Russian officials pressed Hamas to moderate its line and offer a broad acceptance of Israel, something the group has still forcefully declined to do.

During his June visit to the Middle East, Lavrov met with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and then Deputy Premier Shimon Peres. Russia's top diplomat bowed to Abbas' entreaty that he cancel