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# south african Jewish Report

www.sajr.co.za

February 10 2017 / 14 Shevat 5777  
Volume 21 - Number 4



Photo: Deaan Vivier

## Farewell to a champion

In 2011 the rugby world - and general public - listened in disbelief to the death sentence pronouncement on Joost van der Westhuizen, who many believe to be the best scrumhalf the world has ever seen. He was diagnosed with motor neuron disease. Joost, the consummate warrior who never gave up on the rugby field, was determined to fight - and beat - this incurable and debilitating disease. It was heart-wrenching to see the athletic Van der Westhuizen broken down and confined to a wheelchair, with his speech badly affected. On Monday Joost eventually lost the fight. On our sports page Joel Stransky (pictured here with Joost) and renowned rugby referee Jonathan Kaplan pay a moving tribute to Joost, remembering precious moments with this astounding player. See page 20



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**Only G-d holds the reins of power**



Parshat Beshalach  
Rabbi Yonatan Landau  
Ohr Somayach Savoy

Parshat Beshalach details the climax of our Exodus from Egypt. In it we experience the supernatural splitting of the sea where even the lowest Jew received higher visions than even the prophet Yechezkel.

The Jews are accompanied by at least 50 new miracles in the midst of the sea, while the Egyptians meet their bitter end for the years of oppression of our people.

On reading the parsha one craves to have been there, and each Pesach we aim to re-experience it.

On closer look, though, something seems puzzling. The Jewish people travelled in the desert for three days when the Egyptians decided to assemble their army and chase

us. They caught up with us and shot arrows at us.

The Jews were frightened and while stuck between the Egyptian army and the sea, began to suggest different solutions. Only after this trauma were we saved.

Now, if Hashem wanted to shower upon us the multiple miracles of the sea, why couldn't He have just spared us the torment and suspense? Why not instead kill the Egyptians before they came in sight of the Jews?

The Great Netziv, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah, answers that Hashem had to make us face the full power of our enemies before saving us, in order to teach us that salvation is in Hashem's hands.

It is the way of man to fully recognise his dependence on Hashem, only when his options run out, when his back is against the wall. This imbues in us Emunah, rock-like trust in Hashem.

Today we are surrounded by people who

claim to have answers to all our problems. Politicians, analysts, specialists, fashion moguls and journalists all sport their expertise backed by the clamour of advertising.

Yet we know that none of them can guarantee success and all too often we place all our hopes and aspirations in their frail hands.

Parshat Beshalach teaches us that there is only One who holds the reins of power. Only One Who is powerful enough to ensure the goal is reached.

When we are facing a problem, before we take action, let us look up to our Creator and say a prayer: Hashem, only You can do this.

**Shabbat Times**

**February 10/14 Shevat**  
**February 11/15 Shevat**  
**Parshat Beshalach**

Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:27	Johannesburg
18:20	20:19	Cape Town
18:15	19:21	Durban
18:15	19:39	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:50	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:39	East London

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**Hitler remark stuns young KDVP actors**



King David Victory Park High School is well known for its exceptional theatrical productions. This photograph was taken from last year's performance of 'Fiddler on the Roof'.

**PETER FELDMAN**

Suggesting to Jewish children that "...Hitler was right" - even if the person making the statement is Jewish - is bound to be shocking. And so it was last week when theatre director Adam Pelkowitz lost his temper with his student cast at a King David High School Victory Park rehearsal for "A Chorus Line".

Pelkowitz - a King David alumnus - was enraged with the unruly behaviour of his cast and exploded, shocking the pupils and their parents. Referring to the choreographer who is not Jewish and was not there at the time, he said that if they showed the same disrespect to the choreographer he would think "that Hitler was right".

"We were horrified! We couldn't believe he said that. It would have been much worse if he wasn't Jewish, but it was still so ugly," said one pupil who asked not to be named for fear of reprisal.

"He was furious, swearing and calling us names. He was upset out of frustration because we were certainly not on our best behaviour. I guess in the real world it is okay to behave like that and perhaps most actors and actresses are better behaved than we are."

King David Victory Park Headmaster Andrew Baker said: "Pelkowitz immediately realised what he had said and regretted it. But the words were already out. He agreed to step down as di-

rector of the production and we think it was the right thing to do. Words said in anger are not wise."

Commenting on what happened, he said that Pelkowitz had been struggling with learners who were not co-operating with him. "It was late into the evening and he was frustrated and lost his cool," Baker told the Jewish Report.

"He made a reference to the learners about how a non-Jewish outsider might perceive their unruly behaviour and then made the unfortunate reference to those who say Hitler was right."

The headmaster contacted the parents, spoke to the children and explained the situation and apologised on behalf of the school for what had happened.

"It was a distressing situation because we aim to provide an environment that is safe for the children," he said, "It was an unfortunate incident but things are now back on track and we've turned the corner. Everything is going well."

He added that Pelkowitz is a King David Victory Park alumnus and they were still very proud of his achievements.

In an e-mail, Pelkowitz stated that in his view the facts and circumstances concerning the events were dealt with between him and Andrew Baker.

"In my opinion, this matter was fully, finally and satisfactorily resolved," he said adding that he would not like to deal with this matter through the press.

"However, should it become necessary to deal with the events in greater detail, I will do so at the appropriate time and in the appropriate forum."

**South African Jewish Report**

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# Edward Zuma hysterical anti-Jewish rant ‘troubling’

STAFF REPORTER

The (by now) infamous open letter penned by Edward Zuma, son of President Jacob Zuma - in which he lays into Jewish business leaders - is extremely troubling. Is this an ominous prelude to something far worse for the community, or is it simply the rambling of a mad man?

The hysterical rant of the missive and the snide Jewish reference is contained in the following paragraph:

“They are also in charge of the PIC [Public Investment Corporation] under the chairmanship of the holy Mcebisi Jonas [deputy director of finance], Gordhan’s partner in business and colleague in government, this institution countrymen (sic) is their base and playground for total control and capture of the country as the likes of shoprite checkers (sic), bidvest (sic), white fund managers and many more Jewish based entities are running the show without interference from government and with the help of the government officials who have shares in the companies that get money from the PIC, including (Save South Africa convener, prominent businessman and fierce critic of Jacob Zuma) Siphon Pityana’s company and if they dispute my assertion let’s go public I will expose all this.”

Director of Political Futures Consultancy, Daniel Silke, believes the letter is cause for concern as it comes from the president’s son. Further, it should be viewed within the context of an “acute battle currently raging” between the president and his supporters on the one side, and (Finance Minister Pravin) Gordhan and business leaders like Siphon Pityana on the other.

Silke has suggested that the concern is exacerbated by the fact that the accusations made by Zuma further risk eroding confidence in South Africa, both from the foreign and local investment sector. “There is also a deliberate attempt to deligitimise the minister of finance and Treasury.”

Zev Krengel, vice-president of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) says: “This type of rhetoric is unacceptable - and the SAJBD will be following up on it.”

Ben Swartz, national chairman of



Edward Zuma in full flight.

the South African Zionist Federation, is convinced that Edward Zuma has been used as a pawn to circulate his letter - a ploy instigated by his father’s camp in their determination to undermine so-called “white monopoly capital”.

“It is a strategy that uses the Jews as sacrificial lambs to promote a particular political agenda. The irony is that Jewish businesses employ hundreds of thousands of workers and are committed to bring about the country’s economic success.

“Indeed, South Africa’s leading Jewish business people have been working closely with Deputy

President Cyril Ramaphosa and Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan to help salvage the nation’s stagnant economy. The anti-Jewish tirade stems from a policy designed to undermine Ramaphosa and Gordhan, with the Jews being used as the scapegoats.”

Swartz predicts that the Zuma camp’s anti-Jewish strategy will fail. “You can fool some of the people some of the time; you can’t fool all the people all the time.”

Several leading Jewish business people canvassed by Jewish Report were extremely reticent about airing their feelings in public. As one

expressed it: “Those who put their heads above the parapet during the era of the Third Reich were snuffed out quicker than a yearzeit candle.”

Some nevertheless were prepared to speak anonymously. A cross-section of their observations:

- “The ultimate irony is that Jewish South Africans account for a miniscule 0,12 per cent of the country’s population. Why, then, target so few when the nation’s leaders are faced with such monumental challenges?”
- “Those who so glibly trot out the ‘white monopoly capital’ sobriquet should pause to consider the fact that without the taxes paid by this ‘beastly fraternity’, 17 million social grant recipients would starve. And that’s not counting the millions of jobs created by ‘white monopoly capital’.”
- “Ramaphosa, Gordhan and Jonas have demonstrated great perspicacity through having consulted with the nation’s top business brains (not all, of course, Jewish) to help boost the economy and ward off ratings downgrades. The Zuma enclave would do well to emulate this initiative. After all, who knows the economy better than those operating at its coal-face.”
- “Edward Zuma shows scant understanding of economics 101 by asserting that Jewish-based entities ‘are running the show without interference from government’. In fact, were it not for the government’s gratuitous and all-embracing interference in the economy via excessive regulation

and widespread corruption, our GDP would be growing at a rate considerably above its current number - one that would make meaningful inroads into South Africa’s unemployment predicament.”

The SAJBD urges all South Africans to avoid resorting to anti-Semitic hate speech, including sinister invocations of behind-the-scenes Jewish financial domination. It is becoming more commonplace for those in leadership to refer to “Jewish-based entities” somehow being behind financial institutions and manipulating politics through economic power.

“Conspiracy theories such as these thrive in societies experiencing high levels of socio-economic and political turmoil. When those in positions of power make such statements, there is a real cause for concern, according to a statement the Board put out following the release of Zuma’s letter.

“This kind of discourse is clearly racist, and is antithetical to the kind of democratic, anti-racist values on which any socially cohesive society is predicated. Negative Jewish stereotyping, and the innate irrationality of attributing extraordinary, as well as malign power to members of a particular ethno-religious group, is further indicative of something fundamentally unhealthy in our society.

“For all its current travails, the requisite democratic structures are in place in South Africa to enable its people to confront and successfully overcome the many serious challenges currently facing our country.

“That presupposes, however, that South Africans are united by a common desire to strive together to achieve those goals, and for that, sufficient levels of mutual trust, empathy and respect are needed. This is why the growing prevalence of hostile racial rhetoric, of which anti-Jewish conspiracy theories are just one part, poses such a serious problem to the national well-being.”

SA Jewish Report approached the Presidency for comment but had not received a response by the time of going to press.



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# All quiet on the university front



## ANT KATZ

South African universities began opening their doors this week, with the entire nation waiting in anticipation to see what happens. This follows an 18-month-long period of intermittent chaos during the

#feesMustFall protests, which culminated when the universities finally ended their 2016 academic year.

Parents, students, scholars, university staff, faculty and management... are still holding their breath, should there this year be a repeat of last year's violence. So far so

good.

Would campuses be safer spaces this year? Would militants in the name of academic freedom be allowed back into the same places and communities that they vandalised last November?

However, when most of the country's 17 public universities opened on Monday, there was nary an incident. Both Wits and UCT ended on a high note - reporting very successful results in 2016.

"Who knows what the next couple of weeks will bring?" David Rozen of Pretoria told Jewish Report on Sunday. David and his wife, Lore Dana, are the parents of University of Pretoria (Tuks) student Gary Rozen, who last year found himself under "a lot of pressure".

"Tuks closed for three weeks and we weren't sure if he would be able to write exams," said his father, David. This Monday, their younger son, Zach, started his first year.

The Rozens have nothing but praise for Tuks' management of the "student uprisings" last November. But they have clearly discussed their dilemma at length and the boys have plans to do their post-graduate studies abroad.

But the potential of renewed student unrest remains the elephant in the room.

Wits Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Habib, told the 6 500 first-year students at their "Welcome Day" last week that, "while Wits supports the rights of students to peaceful protest, these protests should not violate the rights of those who wish to work and learn".

Habib told Jewish Report on Tuesday that he did not anticipate any protests at this stage, "given the number of concessions that we have made to

enable the majority of students to register. "However, should any protests develop, we have contingency plans in place to ensure that the academic programme continues unhindered."

Habib told his new students that it pleased him that "Wits students are active social citizens and they leave their mark on society", pointing out that the #FeesMustFall campaign was started by Wits students.

This, said Habib, had achieved the goal of bringing to government's attention "the underfunding of universities by government over the last two decades". In 10 days, he said, "the students placed student funding on the national agenda - a feat that vice-chancellors had been unable to achieve over 10 years".

Another issue that has troubled university communities is the question of "troublemakers" who were denied access to campus last year.

At UCT, Vice-Chancellor Max Price says that his university is putting the final touches to a new structure to deal with these individual cases (of unrest) in future. He agrees that some of what he calls the "disruptors" against whom UCT "obtained interdicts" and even expelled some for

## Exciting model on the table to 'fund the missing middle'

### ANT KATZ

There are two contentious issues on the university table. They are finding funding for the "missing middle" and "decolonisation".

#### Funding missing middle

The government-funded NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) provides student loans for the lowest income earners (where the family earns a maximum of R120 000 a year), to make tertiary education accessible to them; upper-income families pay their own way.

But that leaves a huge middle in-between section, "falling between two chairs".

The race is now on to find a solution to this conundrum.

A private/public partnership, headed by Sizwe Nxasana (past CEO of Telkom and FirstRand) has been working with banks to design a scheme to tackle this segment's funding issues.

"They worked very hard in 2016," says Dr Max Price vice chancellor of the University of Cape Town, and came up with a private bank-funded, government-underwritten, "income contingent loan scheme" which allows students to pay back loans once they start earning, based on what they earn. This funding model is being piloted at seven universities this year.

As it is in the "pilot stage" cases would be assessed individually to determine whether applicants qualify for funding or whether they are deemed to be able to pay their own university fees.

Price says that with the very high dropout rate at universities, "it makes financial sense to provide investment in support systems for students coming from schools in poorer areas.

He suggests that tutorial help, more student councillors, extra lessons and even degree-options and planning to spread study over additional years, are some of the interventions being considered.

#### Decolonisation

Price says that many of the rituals and pageantry at South African universities are modelled on European designs. UCT's buildings, for example, are designed to look like Oxford colleges. This has the effect of making many students feel they don't belong at the almost 190-year-old institution. They don't see any of their own heritage.

UCT is "escalating the timeframes" in renaming buildings and some residences have even had their old names removed while new names are being decided upon.

Curricula have to become more inclusive, says Price. This can be as simple as English literature incorporating African authors. Even in the natural sciences, he says, "maybe we are teaching these things incorrectly".

There is a lack of awareness of the negativity that sublimity can cause. Teaching about snow, for example, should be more sensitive to those who have never experienced it.

And, in medicine, for example, Price believes "that it behoves us to respect the 80 per cent of students" who have some belief in traditional medicine.

So, he says, the "default reaction of a specialist consultant at a bedside" when a patient may say they consulted a traditional healer first, is often dismissive, evident through, say, a rolling of eyes.

A black student who came from a rural background could "feel diminished and that they are out of place," he points out.

#THELAND

YAAKOV KATZ

In the age of hashtags, likes and check-ins, editor-in-chief **Yaakov Katz** has a nose for news that keeps the pages of the *Jerusalem Post* relevant in print and online. He is the go-to guy on all things Israel as the paper's previous military correspondent and defence analyst. He served as a senior policy advisor to Minister Naftali Bennett in the ministries of Economy, Education and Diaspora Affairs. Katz holds a post as a faculty member at Harvard's Extension School, lecturing on journalism and media, and co-authored *Weapon Wizards - How Israel Became a High-Tech Military Superpower*, and *Israel vs Iran - The Shadow War*.

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criminal activities last year, “became the centre of conflict”.

In the end, he says, “we had to weigh up not finishing the academic year and losing exams for 20 000 students, against dropping the disciplinary cases”. The cases were dropped.

Prof Habib told Jewish Report that Wits “is dealing with each student matter individually, in line with the university’s policies and processes”.

Rafi Friedman, who completed an honours degree at Wits last year, says there is an expectation among students that there will be “some sort of trouble” on campuses this year - but much less of it.

He remains upbeat that the authorities can turn things around in the next year or two because “they have to!” He believes the momentum of the #FeesMustFall movement has broken down somewhat.

“I know of people in grades 10 and 11 who are doing two or three A-level subjects rather than continuing with their IEB (local) matric” and others who are availing themselves of the option to write the American SAT exams through self-study.

Private universities in South Africa (such as Boston) are proliferating and offering degree courses backed by the University of South Africa (Unisa) - which would otherwise have been a home-study option.

However, says Rafi, a degree from a private university still doesn’t compare to Wits or UCT when competing in the job market.

The free high school in Israel Programme, Na’ale, is booming with 10 South Africans having gone over to complete their high school there in the past 10 months.

It seems that, in general, Jewish students and parents are remaining loyal to public universities – while discussing back-up plans and alternatives if the SA public university system were to break down.

As far as the SA Union of Jewish Students is concerned, Dean Weil, the newly-elected chairman of Wits SAUJS told Jewish Report that there had been no signs of anything untoward on the Wits campus on the first day of study this Monday.

Last week’s orientation week had gone well, he said, although the university’s computer had had a glitch and so they are still processing the numbers of members who had signed up. He expects them to be high.

“O-week (Orientation Week) was a great success,” he said. “We changed the way

we interacted with new students this year by asking them what they would be looking to us for - as an organisation - and we have been following up with them telephonically.”

SAUJS campus committees and their national executive are going on a hadracha weekend to meet together and plan for the year ahead, says Weil. As UCT only opens next month, an interim committee has been formed and they will be participating.


Some of the students’ big-ticket issues have been solved. Others can easily be solved if there are open-minded stakeholders around the bargaining table. Still others will be more difficult and take more time.

But, on the fringe are the noisiest “student” demands that emanate from political groupings looking to be disruptive. These demands are unrealistic (like, for example, free education for all) and cannot be solved. Both Dr Price and Prof Habib are adopting a take-no-prisoners approach to these issues.


## Notable quotes from the university scene

ANT KATZ

- “Zack considered going overseas for his first year but has now started at Tuks, His older brother David will finish his degree this year. Both plan to do their post-grad studies overseas, David in Israel and Zack in Italy” - Pretoria parents David Rozen and Lore Dana
- “Let us be clear about 2016 - Wits lost only three teaching days in total. We completed our examinations, albeit with a heavy police presence on our campuses and students graduated as planned” - Prof Adam Habib, vice chancellor of Wits
- “Many more people I know than usual are moving to study at IDC other universities in Israel, and internationally.” - Rafi Friedman, who completed his honours at Wits last year
- “I have no time for the small group of anarchists who led the #RhodesMustFall campaign and whose 2015 misguided protest put Max Price (UCT vice chancellor) in an untenable situation” - Prof Jonathan Jansen, former vice chancellor of University of the Free State
- “In 2016 UCT generated 30 per cent more research funding; published more research papers and had more citations than ever before; it opened the first Welcome Trust project (on infectious diseases) outside the UK; launched a school of design thinking; endowed a chair in climate change...” - Dr Max Price, UCT’s vice chancellor



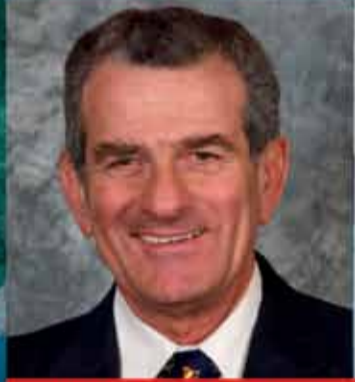
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## South African Jewish Report

# 'I have come full circle'

As the new editor of the SA Jewish Report, I feel like I have come full circle. For many years, I have worked in the mainstream media, starting out in newspapers, then onto television and finally working on magazines (among other media), but my career all started on Jewish newspapers.

Fresh out of university, I got a job on the then

Jewish Herald and after three months working under Maurice Dorfan there, I was headhunted by the now defunct Zionist Record to take on the position of deputy editor.

I was all of 21 at the time and I spent two years working there, under Mervyn Lax, during a time of great upheaval in this country in the last years of apartheid. I really cut my teeth there, learning everything from covering events, doing features, layout, knocking other people's work into shape and writing my first profile column, which was called Krost Lines.

I loved that column, I got to interview Jewish luminaries, like Jane Raphaely, Gus Silber, Jonny Clegg, Joan Joffe, Reeva Forman to name just a few.

After two years in a country that I found frustrating in its inability to change - and a youth steeped in first Bnei Akiva and then Habonim - I chose to make aliyah with a group from Habonim.

I spent time on kibbutz and eventually fulfilled a childhood dream of working on the Jerusalem Post. I had a love-hate relationship with Israel, but I was extremely happy there. But when Nelson Mandela was released, I just wanted to come home to my family and old friends. That was back in 1991.

On my return, I started on the Sunday Times, working on the consumer column with the late Gwen Gill, and then moved into more serious news. After six years, I moved to what was then across the road, to launch the Sunday Independent with the Independent Group.

After six years there, I moved to television, working as managing editor of Carte Blanche. After another six years, I went out on my own. I edited the Wits Business School Journal, The Media magazine, consulted to various people and did media training.

And now, so many years later, I am back on a Jewish newspaper and I am not the deputy... It took me a long time and an amazing journey to get from deputy to editor.

As editor of your newspaper, I am 100 per cent committed to doing whatever I can to ensure you get the best quality news and stories.

This is such a strong and vital community with many differing views. I love that every Jewish person I know has firm opinions and beliefs and we all want answers to the many questions we have. That is who we are. I am going to endeavour to always give you the best possible food for thought.

This newspaper will continue to reflect the wide diversity of Jewish religious, social and political thought, trying to ensure we give you the gamut of views. Our news coverage will range from in-depth investigations to communal news and I will do my best to bring you leading commentators and analysts.

I will bring you fascinating features and cover arts, food (very close to our hearts) and sport. I will also make sure you get the most comprehensive coverage of Israeli news and view.

In fact, I am thrilled to inform you that from this edition onwards, former Eyewitness News news editor Benita Levin will be writing a column on her experiences making aliyah. Just a few weeks back, she and her family went to live in Israel and she is going to give us a fly-on-the-wall view of what making aliyah is like from her perspective.

As your editor, I want to invite you to let me know about stories in and about the community. I may not use every one of them, but I give you my word I will weigh each idea carefully before deciding. E-mail me on editor@sajewishreport.co.za

Shabbat Shalom

Your editor

Peta Krost Maunder



# Trump meets Netanyahu: Where it can go right (and wrong)

RON KAMPEAS  
WASHINGTON

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is going to stride in through the White House front door. President Donald Trump is not going to grimace while Netanyahu lectures.

The talk in Washington this week is about how the Bibi-Donald romance, taking centre stage on February 15 at a White House summit, is going to be easy.

Netanyahu and Barack Obama definitely had their ups and downs - Obama's grimace during Netanyahu's Oval Office Middle East history lecture was real enough.

And now, it's going to be all good. What did President Trump say last month on Fox News Channel about the US-Israel relationship? "It got repaired as soon as I took the oath of office."

And what was it Bibi said on Twitter on Inauguration Day? "Congrats to my friend President Trump. Look fwd to working closely with you to make the alliance between Israel&USA stronger than ever."

There's greater agreement between Netanyahu and Trump in areas that dogged the Obama-Netanyahu relationship.

Both Trump and Netanyahu have said the Iran nuclear deal is a bad one, and Trump's White House upended US policy last week by saying settlements are not an impediment to peace.

But there are areas where agreement is tentative and vague - and plenty could go wrong.

Where are Netanyahu and Trump likely to agree and where could it go wrong?

## Iran

Where they agree: Both of them think the 2015 deal exchanging sanctions relief for a nuclear rollback gave away too much to Iran. Trump has called it the worst deal he has ever seen.

Where they may not agree: Trump's top officials - most prominently James Mattis, the defence secretary - also don't like the deal, but say dismantling it now that it is in place would do more harm than good.

The argument is that the sanctions relief - removing the main means of pressuring Iran - came at the outset of the deal, and that rebuilding the international sanctions regime now is all but impossible.

That also, reportedly, is the posture of the Israeli defence establishment.

But Netanyahu has consistently spoken in terms of scrapping the deal, and said not long after Trump was elected that he would present those options to him when they meet.

"There are ways, various ways of un-

doing it," Netanyahu said in December.

Where they could compromise: After Iran tested a ballistic missile last week, Trump's national security adviser, Michael Flynn, put Iran "on notice" and the Trump administration slapped new non-nuclear sanctions on that country.

The Obama administration smacked Iran with similar sanctions the last time it tested missiles, a year ago. But the tough talk and the threat of additional sanctions could provide a space for Netanyahu and Trump to appear on the same page.

"I welcome President Trump's insistence on new sanctions against Iran," Netanyahu said to British Prime Minister Theresa May on Monday. "I think other nations should follow suit."

"Netanyahu will want to know how much reassurance can [Trump] give Israel that he sees Iran as the locus of evil in the region," Shoshana Bryen, the senior director of the conservative Jewish Policy Centre, said.

## Settlements

Where they agree: The Trump administration, releasing a statement last week on Israel's announcement of new settlement building in the West



Donald Trump, then a candidate for president, meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in New York, on September 25, last year.

Bank and eastern Jerusalem, said that while new settlement announcements "may not be helpful in achieving" peace, they are also not an impediment to peace.

That upends decades of policy, through presidents Democratic and Republican, declaring settlements were indeed an impediment to peace.

Where they may not agree: As much the Netanyahu government welcomed the reversal of decades of policy of settlements as an impediment to peace, the thrust of the White House statement was to caution Israel: "The construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements beyond their current borders may not be helpful in achieving that goal."

On Monday, the Knesset passed a bill that would retroactively legalise settlements on Palestinian-owned land. Sean Spicer, Trump's spokesman, declined on Tuesday to comment on the measure, except to tell reporters at the daily briefing that "it will be a topic of discussion" when the leaders meet.

Russia, whom Trump would like

to cultivate as an ally, is likely relaying messages that Israeli settlement expansion could undermine efforts to rally Arabs to help crush the Islamic State terrorist group.

Where they could compromise: Netanyahu, still committed to the two-state solution, is said not to be overly thrilled with the legislation. If there is one thing he misses about Obama, it's using him as a foil to put the brakes on the ambitions of the settlement movement.

## Syria

Where they agree: Trump sees Syria as a theatre to crush the Islamic State. Israel is all for crushing the Islamic State.

Where they may disagree: This could be the knottiest problem afflicting Trump-Netanyahu comity. Trump wants to work with Russia in crushing the Islamic State. Russia is formally allied with the Assad regime in Syria, which means it is informally allied with Israel's deadliest enemy, Iran, and with Iran's Lebanese proxy. The last thing Israel wants is Iran and Hezbollah looming over its northern border.

Where they could compromise: Netanyahu will likely make the case

to Trump that any lasting deal in Syria's southwest - bordering the Golan Heights - needs to keep Iran and Hezbollah far away.

Another compromise - less to Israel's liking - would be to have Bashar Assad's forces, and only those forces, move into the region.

Israel once favoured the Assads as the best of the worst: a dangerous

enemy, but at least able to keep the northern border quiet. The civil war, and Bashar Assad becoming beholden to Iran and Hezbollah, have shattered that outlook.

## The Holocaust

Where they agree: Umm.

Where they may disagree: Trump's International Holocaust Remembrance Day statement omitted the salient fact that the victims of the Holocaust were Jewish. Netanyahu is all about protecting Jews.

He told in London: "I think that question will be addressed fully during the visit [to Washington] and will be answered fully."

Where they may compromise: There's no compromise on who the victims of the Holocaust were - and Trump's team, if anything, is doubling down on its claim that the statement was appropriate and its critics misguided.

A way out may be Netanyahu gently explaining to Trump why getting the history right is in the US interest. (JTA)



## Life Esidimeni: Jack Bloom's 2015 warnings went unheeded



*This is the launch of the Jewish Report Newsmaker of the week column. From now on we'll select a newsworthy person every week to be introduced to our readers.*

*Jewish Report will put some pertinent questions to our newsmaker. This week we feature Jack Bloom, Democratic Alliance shadow MEC on Health in the Gauteng Provincial Legislature. Of course the horrific Life Esidimeni story has to feature prominently... So far the Health Ombudsman has told of 94 deaths. It is expected that this figure will rise.*

### Why do you believe the Gauteng Government gave notice to terminate their contract with Life Esidimeni?

The stated reason was to save costs as they were paying R330 million a year to Life Esidimeni for about 2 000 (mentally disabled) patients. The other claim was that this was part of a deinstitutionalisation policy in terms of the Mental Health Act, but I think this was a cover for the real motive: to save money.

### What do you believe was their contingency plan, if any?

The Legislature was told that various unused government buildings like the old Germiston Hospital would be renovated and used for the patients, but nothing came of this.

### Why didn't it work?

The whole exercise was poorly planned and extremely reckless bearing in mind the specialist care requirements of the patients.

### On November 30, 2015, you warned of an impending disaster. What did you say, to whom and why?

On November 30, 2015 I spoke in the debate in the Gauteng Legislature on the Health Department's annual report. I said that the department was facing a "looming disaster" with the transfer of patients from Esidimeni and my direct words were: "Please, please reconsider."

### What was the response to your warning?

Health MEC Qedani Mahlangu brushed aside all criticism and said arrangements were on track.

### How could this disaster have been averted?

It could have been avoided if the MEC had listened to all the warnings from various quarters and accepted professional medical advice.

### Who do you believe is actually responsible for this and why?

The initiator of this was Qedani Mahlangu who bulldozed everything to get her way. Senior officials colluded with her and the Gauteng Premier (David Makhura) must also share in the blame because he

failed to monitor what was happening and should have fired Mahlangu as soon as the deaths became known. And there were unscrupulous people in NGOs who wanted the department's subsidy and took the patients even though they could not care for them adequately.

### What did you do to stop this disaster from happening?

From the very beginning I asked questions in the Legislature and spoke out against the project. On September 13, 2016, I asked the key question as to how many patients had died. Mahlangu was forced to reveal that 36 patients had died, and after the public furore the Health Ombudsman was appointed to investigate it, and the full ghastly truth was revealed.

### Has the crisis been averted now that these 94 deaths have been exposed and Qedani Mahlangu has resigned?

The Health Ombud's report and the resignation of the Health MEC opens the way to prevent more deaths and ensure that mental health patients are properly looked after.

### What do you think of Qedani Mahlangu accusing Life Esidimeni of sabotage?

Her accusations against Esidimeni were an attempt to deflect the blame from herself and the department.

### What steps need to be taken now?

Patients at unsuitable NGOs need to be transferred to reputable institutions where they will get proper care.

### In the longer term, what needs to happen to safeguard mental and other vulnerable patients?

I hope that this whole shocking episode leads to mental health issues getting the resources and attention that they deserve. Politicians and medical professions should get the message that the vulnerable shouldn't be ignored just because they are weak and less able to fight for their human rights. There should be no more "silent deaths" through neglect in our health system.

The SA Jewish Report is looking for an intern with a university degree (preferably in journalism).

The intern would need to be passionate about news-gathering, a great writer, a stickler for facts, an intrinsic understanding of what makes news, tech savvy and be eager to make a name for her or himself as journalist.

If you fit the bill, please email the editor, Peta Krost Maunder, at [editor@sajewishreport.co.za](mailto:editor@sajewishreport.co.za) with a CV and covering letter.

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# Home buyers pay R1 million premium to live in the 'shtetl'

ANT KATZ

Why are Jewish home buyers in Johannesburg prepared to battle it out and bid against each other for the privilege of living in Glenhazel?

Simply put, says Vered Estates' Mike Rod, the answer is Yeshiva College and the Jewish community and social lifestyle. But, he adds, the market is cooling off somewhat at present due to the fact that many buyers, particularly those holding cash, are sitting on the fence and watching to see how the country's economic and political stability pans out.

Glenhazel, says Joel Harris of Jawitz Properties, "offers to the Jewish community a 'Little Israel' with so many kosher restaurants and shops". The proliferation of the kosher establishments is "making it so sought after". Big money has also gone into shuls and school campuses, he adds.

Developer Daniel Rubenstein, whose grandfather was one of the original developers of the Glenhazel suburb, confirms that there is a premium price of 20 to 30 per cent, or around a million rand, for land in the core Glenhazel area.

"A 2 000 square metre plot on which one would knock down the existing house and build a new one," he told Jewish Report, would have a value of "R4 to R5,5 million in Glenhazel, depending on position and shape, whereas a comparable property in Melrose or Illovo would be priced at R3,8 to R4,8 million".

Rod says about the market having cooled off: "Two years ago you could put a property up at any price and there would be a buyer." Now it is taking him up to four months.

Another agent, who asked not to be named, agreed. But he said: "Money isn't the issue. Sellers were asking for too much and buyers are concerned that interest rates are going to go up. Seller expectations are making it hard to buy."

Rod's experience indicates that "the sentiment in the country at the moment is causing people with cash to hold on to it." He cited "the political situation and the lack of financial stability - they feed off each other".

Add the instability within the ANC, he says, and people with cash "rather keep it offshore. People who would be buyers are staying liquid and waiting."

One anonymous developer who is looking for a large property - between 1 500 to 2 000 square metres - in what he refers to as "the absolute prime" area says he has been offered many properties over the past few months. But in every case the seller wanted an "absolutely ridiculous price".

For what he describes as a "bash-down" property, in other words the homestead will be demolished and a new home or sectional title development built, he says he can buy in Melrose for R4 million, "but in Glenhazel the sellers want R5 to R5,5 million".



Estate agent Joel Harris pointed out that the absolute prime locations sought out in Glenhazel is the area defined in this Google Earth map. "It is definitely the 'wanna-be-living-in' area of choice," he says. However, he adds, other roads north towards Northfield Avenue also demand a premium price.

Rod mentioned a house in Fairmount, just next to Glenhazel, that he listed on a Friday last winter. He had a potential buyer who he called to meet him there and on his way in, Rod planted a 'for sale' board outside. The client duly made an offer on the spot, a little under the asking price.

"While I was still inside the house," says Rod, "someone saw the board, called me and we made an appointment to show it on the Sunday". With the Friday offer in hand, Rod told the other interested party that they had better make a quick offer if they had a genuine interest. They put in a higher offer and, by Sunday evening, the house was sold.

But with the market cooling off, he has eight or 10 properties on his books at the moment, but there is a 20 per cent gap between what sellers want (an average of R4 million) and what buyers are prepared to pay (R3,2 million).

Harris recalls listing a house near the Yeshiva College campus in November 2016. "The next day I organised an open hour and invited nine buyers to view, achieved two offers, and closed within 24 hours within 10 per cent of the asking price."

Another of his success stories was a property in Study Road.

Again he organised an open hour, this time for 10 buyers. "I received three offers and also closed within 24 hours."

"What was interesting is that the three buyers (making offers) all had different intentions. The one was going to knock the house down and build their dream home; the second was going to 'gut' the property and spend approximately R3 million renovating it; and the third was going to give it a paint job and some small cosmetic changes and move in."

The only spark in the market right now is the demand for cluster housing, says Rod. A family with a reasonably high monthly income of R100 000 simply can't afford Glenhazel today.

Harris says he holds the record price for sales for a cluster in Glenhazel - a whopping R10,1 million, back in 2011.

Prime property that fetches the highest prices are in Tanced Road and Mejon Avenue, says Rod, where three-bedroom houses on a 1 500 square metre plots can go for up to R4,5 million. They would not be considered to be worth even R3.9 million elsewhere, he says, but buyers pay the premium for the proximity to the area's biggest single drawcard, Yeshiva College.

The lifestyle and communal living that attracts buyers, he says, is not to be found anywhere else. In any other suburb, says Rod, one may see one's neighbours once a month and may never go inside their homes.

In Glenhazel, if you eat a Shabbos meal alone with your family it is because you choose to.

A developer who asked not to be named, said that Glenhazel had become "unaffordable for young couples". Rod says that, while sales have certainly slowed down, the demand is still there for the lower end of the market and at more reasonable prices.

Asked if heavily bonded buyers are able to get banks to see the premium value in these properties which are selling at as much as R1 million above similar houses elsewhere, Rod says: "Banks are quite clever; they will often back the jockey."

Emerging in between this very small number of highly sought-after homes over the past few years has been an ever-increasing number of kosher businesses - and businesses that service the needs of the Jewish market. Even office space in this unique "shtetl" goes at a huge premium, if one can find premises.

Harris has the final word: "I think the choice for the observant Jewish community is Glenhazel vs Ra'anana!"



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# Close shave as two South Africans survive Berlin Christmas Market attack

**JANINE SIMON MEYER**

South African Ashley Sweke, chorister and chairman of Johannesburg's Lewandowski Chorale, and her husband Desmond came way too close to being mowed down in a terrorist attack in Berlin recently.

They were a part of the non-denominational liturgical choir who was in Germany over the festive season to perform at the 2016 Louis Lewandowski Festival.

The two were standing next to the last stall, when it was smashed by a truck driven by a terrorist who ploughed into people attending

The truck ploughed through the market at top speed mowing down everything and everybody in its way."

These were the words all the chorale members received via What's App soon after the first reports of the attack went out.

The Festival had ended the night before. The choristers and their families were fanning out across the city and continent on their way back to South Africa, or other travels.

My husband, chorister Jeff Meyer, and I had been with friends on a U-bahn to the suburbs, fresh from an Italian feast two blocks from the

Müller in a shul that survived Kristallnacht (the fire department doused the flames to save the adjoining buildings) had the hairs on my arms standing erect. Seventy years after being re-inaugurated in 1947, the Pestalozzi Straße Shul felt alive, familiar.

In days after the attack flags flew at half-mast and memorial flowers spread across the pavements around the square.

When Amri was killed in Italy on Friday, December 23, the news flashed up on the U-Bahn TV. No-one around us seemed to notice; the carriage stayed a sea of earphones,

and hours in the Checkpoint Charlie Mauer Museum, unpicked that perception.

A section of wall stands preserved in the Topography of Terror Documentation Centre, a place of remembrance constructed on the site of the buildings that had housed the 'central institutions of Nazi terror', the Gestapo, SS and Reich

Security Main Office.

The Centre's permanent exhibition is a systematic, detailed display of the 12 years of Nazi rule. It is a gutting account of disenfranchisement, dehumanisation and slaughter.

But it makes Berlin in 2017 feel like history thought through, not hidden. And

history humanised, as through the stumbling stones (stolpersteine), the small brass plaques that embed the names and fates of victims of the Holocaust in the pavements in front of their former homes.

Stolpersteine lie unannounced outside Crowne Plaza City Centre Hotel, in the mattress-littered pavements of Neukölln, south Berlin, around the street corners in Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg, and outside the eclectic coffee shops and cafes for which Berlin is becoming famous.

Many of these owner-run establishments were closed for the Christmas break. Still, we hung out in a decent enough number of them

to get a glimpse into hipster Berlin, where the waitrons are gentle, food is organic, and the furniture faded and welcoming.

*\* The non-denominational Lewandowski Chorale began its 2017 programme this past Wednesday with an open rehearsal, to enable anyone interested to experience choral singing.*



Photo: Desmond Sweke

"We were in the stall behind the Christmas tree on the left of the photograph."

the Christmas Market at Berlin's Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche Cathedral on December 19, leaving 12 dead and dozens injured.

The truck shrieked to a halt a hair's breadth away from them that Monday night.

The driver of the truck, Amis Amri, a Tunisian refugee, fled the scene and was eventually shot dead in Italy on December 23.

"I cannot get the sight and sounds out of my head.

market.

Stunned we watched the live coverage of Berlin's governing mayor Michael Müller speaking at the scene.

Just four days earlier he'd been speaking at the Festival opening in the Pestalozzi Straße Synagogue in a courtyard in Charlottenburg, welcoming choirs from Basel, Berlin, London, Leipzig and Johannesburg and the celebration of the Jewish liturgical music that is part

septum piercings and blank expressions.

Similarly, little seemed to change when people walked up and down carriages to beg. We asked a young Berliner why they appeared to be all but ignored. 'Everyone knows they can get a place to stay and help from the government. They beg because they want to.

For a South African that answer was hard to compute.

First glimpses of the remains of the Berlin Wall along the River Spree were also a surprise, showing an unprepossessing stretch of grey concrete. A walking tour

Photos supplied


of the city's cultural heritage. Listening to mayor



The segment of the Berlin Wall that still stands on the east side of Mauerpark in Prenzlauer Berg.



The massed choir Grande Finale Concert of the Lewandowski Festival in the Rykestraße Synagogue, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin.



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# Kuper shows the human face of capitalism through doing good

SUZANNE BELLING

Launching a new - and different - investment company in the US only one week after the beginning of the 2008 worldwide financial crash, might seem crazy and deluded. But South African-born Dr Andrew Kuper, then 33, did just that.

He did it with LeapFrog Investments, a billion dollar company that today has multinational interests. It is involved in supporting over 100 000 jobs and shows the human face of capitalism and globalisation through doing good.

Former US President Bill Clinton, who Kuper met through a friend, was so impressed by the new company. Clinton invited Kuper to share the stage with him at the 2008 meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative. This is an annual gathering of global leaders to create and implement innovative solutions to the world's most pressing challenges.

Clinton was impressed by Kuper's ambitious plans and vision for LeapFrog - to transform the lives of hundreds of millions of people in the developing world and help pull them out of poverty.

The company serves close to 100 million people in many countries, not by providing aid, but by investing in companies. It selects companies, mainly in insurance and healthcare, to provide opportunities for people and keep them healthy. LeapFrog also helps these indigenous companies to expand and grow.

Kuper attended Woodmead School in Johannesburg, a multiracial institution even under apartheid, and then King David. After a BA from Wits, he was given a scholarship to Cambridge University, where he completed the MPhil and doctorate in political philosophy degrees. He then moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was a visiting scholar at Harvard.

From there, Kuper moved to New York and Washington DC, followed by a brief stint in Delhi, India. He now lives in Sydney, Australia.

In India in the late 1990s, he worked in the desert in Rajasthan.

"I realised that farmers and others had many

opportunities to improve their families' situation, like planting new seeds or drip irrigation," he told the SA Jewish Report.

"But they didn't take the risk, because they lacked a safety net - and failure meant their children could starve.

"This made me realise the importance of insurance, as well as other protective financial services."

He said LeapFrog has been in the forefront of "profit with purpose", putting together "money and meaning".

This is impact investing - "when you intentionally invest in companies to achieve both financial rewards and social impact - generating returns while changing lives.

'Working in Africa and emerging Asia is constantly exhilarating and challenging and ultimately very worthwhile.'

"Some people think it is impossible to make money while doing good. But we often find that exciting businesses want to partner with the good guys. Moreover, company leaders and teams who have a driving and shared purpose tend to outperform more conventional companies.

"LeapFrog invests in financial services and healthcare companies that serve excluded and emerging consumers - the four billion people globally who live on under US\$10 a day.

"There are powerful business models to reach many millions of people with quality and affordable tools, so they can lift themselves and their families into secure existence," he said.

"Working in Africa and emerging Asia is constantly exhilarating and challenging and ultimately very worthwhile. Our first investment

was in AllLife, an amazing company in South Africa, that provides insurance and wellness services to people living with HIV or diabetes.

"AllLife has grown at an incredible rate, while providing protection to people often excluded from not just insurance, but the economy, because without insurance you struggle to get a home, business or education loan.

"We also own stakes in inspiring African companies like Resolution Insurance in Kenya, Jumo which provides loans via mobile across many African countries, Petra which is Ghana's leading pension provider and UT Life and ARM Life respectively in Ghana and Nigeria.

Backed by many of the world's leading institutional investors, LeapFrog is now the largest dedicated equity investor in financial services and healthcare for emerging consumers.

Kuper has gained wide recognition for his work as an investor and entrepreneur, apart from being the author of two books and many articles on globalisation and governance.

He has been hailed by Clinton for "opening up new frontiers for alternative investment" and The Economist group for demonstrating how "to change the way we invest as individuals, institutions and societies".

For his work as a pioneer of profit with purpose business, Kuper won the Ernst & Young National Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2013. He was selected as a Davos World Economic Forum Young Global Leader in 2012.

He also received the

Photo supplied



Dr Andrew Kuper - pioneer of "profit with purpose".

Social Engagement Networks (SEN) Leadership award from among the 25 000 chief executive members of the international Young Presidents Organisation.



Rabbi Dr Samuel Lebens is a senior research fellow in the Philosophy Department at the University of Haifa. Born in England, Rabbi Lebens holds a PhD in metaphysics and logic from the University of London. While studying, he was heavily involved in student politics and a prominent defender of Zionism on British campuses. Rabbi Lebens holds rabbinic ordination from Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg and chairs the Association for the Philosophy of Judaism. If he had enough spare time, he'd like to be a playwright.

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SINAI INDABA VI

## Renowned artist Anish Kapoor wins \$1m Jewish prize



Photo: Jean-Philippe Ksiazek/AFP/FILE

Anish Kapoor whose huge works of public art are landmarks in cities stretching from London to Chicago, was born in Bombay (now Mumbai) in India in 1954 to a Hindu father and a Jewish mother.

OWN CORRESPONDENT  
JERUSALEM

Sculptor Sir Anish Kapoor was on Monday named this year's winner of the million dollar Genesis Prize,

awarded for commitment to Israel and Judaism.

British-Indian Kapoor, who to the surprise of many fans is also Jewish, "is one of the most influential and innovative artists of his generation", the

award organisers said in a statement.

He won the prestigious Turner Prize in 1991 and was knighted in 2013.

"Kapoor will use this award, and the global platform provided by the Genesis Prize, to raise awareness of the

plight of refugees in order to engage the Jewish community in a global effort to help alleviate the refugee crisis," they said.

The award is granted by the Israeli government, the quasi-government Jewish Agency and the Genesis Prize Foundation.

"It recognises individuals who have attained excellence and international renown in their fields and whose actions and achievements express a commitment to Jewish values, the Jewish community and the State of Israel," the statement said.

Last year's winner was virtuoso Israeli-American violinist Itzhak Perlman. Other past laureates include former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and US actor Michael Douglas.

Kapoor, whose huge works of public art are landmarks in cities from London to Chicago, was born in Bombay (now Mumbai) in India in 1954 to a Hindu father and a Jewish mother.

"As inheritors and carriers of Jew-

ish values it is unseemly for us to ignore the plight of people who are persecuted, who have lost everything and had to flee as refugees in mortal danger," the Genesis statement quoted him as saying.

"To lose one's home, one's land, one's sense of belonging, is bewildering. All that is left is one's body.

"Outsider consciousness resides at the heart of Jewish identity and this is what motivates me, while accepting the honour of the Genesis Prize, to re-gift the proceeds to refugee causes," Kapoor said.

Genesis said the million dollar award has in the past been swollen by matching funds from other donors which go to laureates' projects.

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# Aliyah – the good, the bad and the meshuga

## Benita Levin



This is the first of a weekly column by former news editor of Eyewitness News, Benita Levin, who we will be following as she settles into her new home in Israel. We will literally be walking through her process of integration with her.

If you'd told me six months ago, I'd be writing this column in Israel as an Olah Chadasha - (new immigrant) - I'd have said you must have the wrong person. Truth is, I thought we'd always live in beautiful South Africa.

Our children would grow up in a magnificent country, they'd be blessed to have doting grandparents and family in all the main cities and they'd be privileged to receive a good education.

We'd pass on the values and lessons taught to us by our parents, and then the world would be their oyster.

What's not to love in South Africa? My husband and I had jobs we loved, our children were happy to go to school each day, we were part of a vibrant, active community in Johannesburg and in our own private way, we could be involved in work that helped make a small difference in the country. Our family of four were happy. Life was good. In fact, it was close to fabulous.

It took a crime incident of less than five minutes to change our outlook. While no-one was physically hurt, there is no doubt our sense of safety and security had been rocked. It saw us asking a lot of questions about our children's future and it saw us acting very swiftly.

### You are doing what? Are you meshuga?

I can't help but smile when I think of the range of responses to our plans - they included "Mazeltov - it's where all Jewish people belong", "Wish we could come too", "We'll be there in a few years", "Do you know how hard life is in Israel" and "Are you guys crazy meshuga?"

I've worked in radio news for more than 22 years, a job I love and see as a true privilege.

My colleagues know how much I love South Africa, how positive I was each day in the newsroom and how much I believe the country will overcome the many challenges it faces.

They also understood that as parents, we all want our children to be safe. They were concerned about our chosen destination:

### "Is it safe there? What about the rockets? Are you really going to a war-zone?"

People in the Jewish community were equally shocked, but the response was so different. "We're devastated to lose your family from the community, but mazeltov," "How lucky are you to be going home" and "You're living the dream".

### Making the decision

As a life coach, I am lucky enough to help guide people to make life changing decisions. The same "rules" applied for this personal and heart-wrenching process; once you've listened to your gut instincts and made a final decision, things suddenly start falling into place.

A huge weight had been lifted from our shoulders as soon as we made the call. It wouldn't be easy saying goodbye to incredible family, friends and colleagues. It would be surreal leaving the special country we've called home all our lives.

We were taking a huge risk. But as I've said many times in lead up to our arrival: "It may be a lot easier to do this when you're 28-years old, but we're not 88".

We are starting with a blank canvass, and we have no idea what lies ahead... It's all been about stark contrasts. How terrifying. How exciting. How right it all feels...

**The question I used most this week** - "Atah medabair Anglit"? - Do you speak English?

**The phrase I heard others use most often this week** - "Rega rega" One moment.

**New word for the week** - Koom koom - a kettle.

**Laugh of the week** - ordering a coffee in my best broken Hebrew attempt and getting a reply from the smiling waiter in English, with a strong Australian accent!

## World News in Brief

### Poll: Half of Israeli Jews unsure about continued settlement construction

JERUSALEM - A new poll found that 50 per cent of Israelis are hesitant about expanding construction in the settlements. The Peace Index, a monthly survey of Israeli opinion conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute, reported on Tuesday that half of Israeli Jews are sure that settlement expansion is unwise or think it might be. Another 45 per cent of Israelis are sure or think the opposite is the case. The findings come as some right-wing Israeli politicians are feeling emboldened to expand settlements with the election of Donald Trump as US president and his choice of a pro-settlement ambassador to Israel. On Monday evening, the Knesset passed a controversial law paving the way to the legalisation of some West Bank outposts built on Palestinian-owned land. A majority of Jewish Israelis, 53 per cent, believe that the current political environment should not be exploited to press ahead with the annexation of large portions of the West Bank, the study found. A little more than one-third of respondents, 37 per cent, took the opposite view. The survey was conducted between January 30 to February 1, by telephone and Internet by the Midgam Research Institute. It included 600 respondents - 100 Arabs and 500 Jews - and has a margin of error of 4,1 per cent. (JTA)



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# Why are matrices getting so many distinctions?

School marks achieved today by learners appear to be much higher than in their parents' time. And the students seem to be under much more pressure. The media is jammed packed with eye-opening matric results – three distinctions are often the norm – but it is not unusual to see learners attaining up to 11 distinctions and average marks by top achievers of over 90 per cent. In fact, in both National Senior Certificate and Independent Examination Board, some matriculants are even achieving up to 100 per cent, particularly in science and mathematics. Are they smarter than their parents and grandparents or are they simply putting in much more work? The SA Jewish Report questions principals and educationists about this.

## SUZANNE BELLING

**Marc Falconer**, principal of Herzlia High School in Cape Town, termed the matric exams “a bankrupt measure of an educational output”. He insists that the increased marks did not mean more employment; better GDP; more people equipped to start businesses or to think creatively or problem solve, or even to do better in tertiary study? “Matric testing seems to be a summative assessment for a world that doesn't actually require whatever skills the matric exams do elicit,” he says.

He confirms there was “grade inflation” and that there were far more distinctions achieved than in bygone years.

He cites political narrative as a dominant reason. “The government is invested in showing that there is an ongoing improvement in matric pass rates. Educational commentators have made the point that Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in further Education and Training, have inflated marks for various reasons, one of which may be to improve the perception of government's performance in this key area. This is in spite of the fact that South Africa, on international benchmarking scales such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), is one of the worst performing countries in the world in literacy, maths and science.”

The country now has a school-based assessment mark, worth 25 percent of the final matric mark which allowed for a different engagement with subject matter and better individual responses and, consequently, better marks.

“Exam assessment has also changed (possibly this is more true for the IEB assessment than in the State assessment). Assessing exams is a test for various levels of learning and engagement. There is also more specialised teaching (and when they can be afforded, extra specific teaching, to ‘crack’ the exams. This is not to do with better learning, but rather a way of ‘working the system’.

“But in spite of the better matric marks, the stats for performance at university have dropped over the last years. The latest stats are that five years ago the dropout rate at university study was 59 per cent. The latest figure is 68 per cent even though the school pass and distinction rates have increased.

“Universities are increasingly using the national benchmarking tests to offer candidates a place at university and for international universities thinking skills tests or the SATs are used,” Falconer said.

**Elliot Wolf**, former principal of King David High School Linksfield, said the subject matter was more demanding and students wanted higher marks to enable them to gain admission to universities, especially in the faculty of medicine. He adds that there are great changes in the marking standards, a situation that brought South African schools in line with other countries like Israel and the United States. This fact was clearly illustrated in earlier years when many families emigrated from South Africa and the students in these families entered overseas universities and colleges. Many of them in a short time were listed on the Deans' Honour lists, and this proved that our marking standards in the past were perhaps a little too stringent.

As a specialist in the humanities, Wolf said in previous years it was unheard of to obtain full marks for an English essay. “But today, the students are no longer required to write



Marc Falconer.



Elliot Wolf.



Denese Bloch.



Rabbi Steven Krawitz.

a creative essay under exam conditions, and have the advantage of help from knowledgeable outside sources. The final work is submitted to the teacher for recommendations and improvements and finally is assessed as a true indication of the students' ability to express themselves in English. So, today, a really good

essay could get full marks even though it is not a true reflection of the student's efforts and literacy.”

Advanced programme subjects had been introduced in English and mathematics for students who were gifted in these subjects.

“Life orientation, a compulsory subject, is not an examination subject. The marks are based on the submission of essays involving research and other project work. Most of the better students gain an additional distinction in this subject.”

Previously most students were offered only six subjects for the matriculation exam, occasionally some taking seven. “Today it is not unusual for students to take eight, nine or 10 subjects. This situation obviously lends itself to the multi-distinction candidates we read about every year when the matric results are released.”

He emphasised that that his comments were “simply my opinions to explain the plethora of distinction candidates in today's school system.

“May I offer a word of comfort to my former students and all the parents of today's matriculants. Do not be embarrassed that your results were not as remarkable as those of your children. Remember that you were just as intelligent, but were simply the products of a different, more conservative school system,” Wolf said.

**Denese Bloch**, principal of Yeshiva College Boys' and Girls' High Schools, confirmed that over several years “we have seen a great increase in the number of distinctions attained by learners in their final matric results.

“I am sure that there are a number of reasons for this. We are living in a much more competitive environment. Under the heinous, immoral and iniquitous apartheid system, a white skin and average marks were enough to guarantee one a place in university.

“No matter how good a learner's marks were, if he were classified as black, coloured or Indian, he would not be admitted into most of the universities in the country. Today learners are competing against a much larger group and therefore have to achieve much better results in order to secure a place at university.”

This meant that learners set their goals much higher in previous years, Bloch said.

**Rabbi Steven Krawitz**, principal of Hirsch Lyons Boys' and Girls' High Schools, felt the increased number of distinctions obtained by learners was that there was more competition to enrol in universities today and to be accepted for prestigious courses, especially actuarial science, medicine and engineering.

This put learners and parents under pressure to generate better results.

“The syllabus has changed to include more – and students are going for extra lessons to be coached to do well in exams. The marking is not more lenient.”

Schools were preparing students for their final examinations – to the best of their ability – and the learners were working harder than they had decades ago.

“This is not only for themselves, but to bring honour to their school.”

Krawitz said syllabuses had changed to include more up-to-date material, especially for IEB.

“Skills for tertiary education have become a big component.”

He did not believe there was a drop in standards, but there was extra pressure on teachers and learners in the present system.

## Letters

### Disclaimer

The letters page is intended to provide an opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed. Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff or directors of the Jewish Report.

### Guidelines for letters

Letters of up to 400 words get preference. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime phone number. We do not publish letters under noms de plume. Letters should preferably be e-mailed. Letters may be edited or shortened.

The Editor, PO Box 84650, Greenside, 2034  
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### SIFRIN'S NEGATIVITY TOWARDS ISRAEL HAS NO PLACE IN JEWISH REPORT

I would like to fully endorse the words of Jack Miller in his letter regarding his criticism of Geoff Sifrin's Taking Issue column in last week's issue of Jewish Report.

I would like to add that week after week Sifrin makes statements about Israeli policies which consist of blatant untruths which are both obscene and odious in the context.

Last week it was, as Miller pointed out, about Israeli settlement construction on “Palestinian” land. The previous week it was about “West Bank” settlers.

Sifrin should know that hundreds of thousands of Israelis reside in the biblical heartland of Judea and Shomron. Many of these have sacrificed their very lives to defend the entire Land of Israel. Is this the West Bank Sifrin refers to? Is this (stolen) Palestinian land?

In the past Sifrin has written many articles negatively criticising the Israeli government's stance on the Arab-Israeli conflict. While he is entitled to express his opinions as he understands the issues, I find it hurtful and offensive when his opinions are in my view outright obscene.

Last year he suggested that it would be a good idea to release the arch-terrorist leader of the PLO, Marwan Barghouti who is presently serving five consecutive life terms in an Israeli prison. Barghouti is in jail for being the master mind in the murder of multiple Israelis.

Sifrin would like to see him freed for the purpose of meeting Israeli leaders to discuss peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Anyone with pure emotions would feel literally sick to their stomachs at such a suggestion.

It is regrettable that a highly respected Jewish newspaper, the only Jewish weekly published in South Africa, should allow its leading and popular columnist to write weekly articles with opinions such as those mentioned above, and many more, which contain blatant untruths, and more importantly are distortions of our Torah.

Such untruths about Israel are read and believed by our gentile hosts and have a negative effect on the Jewish community as a whole.

### Miriam Davidowitz

#### Golden Acres, Johannesburg

The SA Jewish Report goes out of its way to include as many opinions as possible. - Editor

### TORAH ACADEMY GIRLS' HIGH ALSO SHARES THIS 'EXCELLENCE' HONOUR

We are very proud of our school's achievement as best performing independent school which was recognised at the Gauteng Education Department District Awards last week, as covered on the youth page of the SA Jewish Report.

But the headline “Torah Academy Boys' High awarded for excellence in Matric 2016” erroneously implies that it was the Boys' High School only which achieved this singular distinction.

In fact it was the combined Boys' and Girls' High School and due credit must be given to Rebecca Sarchi, principal of the girls' school.

### Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

#### Principal, Torah Academy Boys' High School

Alas, those gremlins! Apologies! - Editor

# A nostalgic trip down Eastern European memory lanes

**LIONEL SLIER**

South African Jews have an enduring fascination with their genealogy - their roots - as a "full-house" Great Park Shul hall attested to on Sunday evening, when expat South African Eli Rabinowitz shared this passion with a South African audience.

"I have a passion for Jewish genealogy," Rabinowitz said as he traced Jewish lineage through East European shtetls.

Rabinowitz, now living in Perth, explains in his give-away "Souf Effriken" accent that his mother came from Latvia and his father from Volksrust in Mpumalanga!

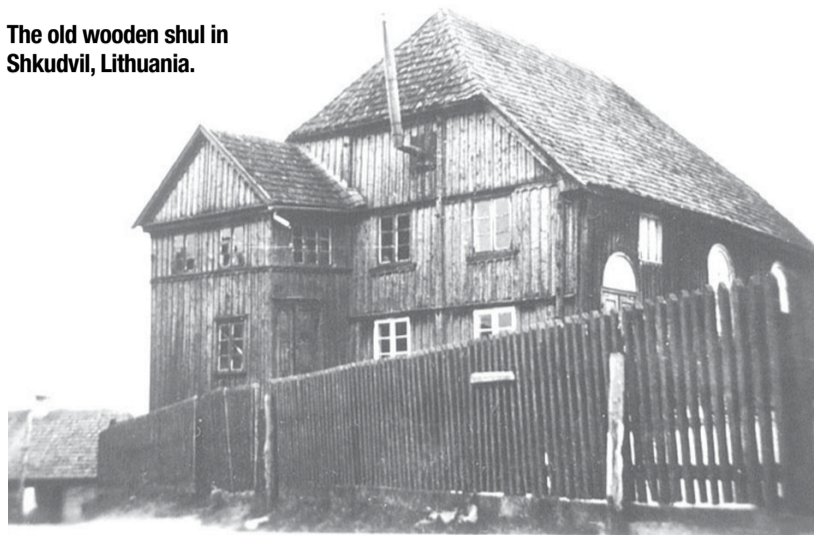
Rabinowitz has a popular website "Transgenital Travel" and he is a constant blogger - all about Jewish family connections. He mentioned other sites one could visit to get more information to trace one's genealogy, such as the well-known Jewish Gen based in the United States.

A valuable source remains Google with its excellent Google Maps, according to Rabinowitz. If one has an uncertain place name, he said that Soundex will call up the original shtetl name.

Rabinowitz also mentioned "Kehillah Links" where one may be able to locate past and present family names.

The presentation took the form of a photo show, put together from six visits to Eastern Europe by Rabinowitz. He culled this from more than 18 000 photographs he had taken.

The old wooden shul in Shkudvil, Lithuania.



Many of the photographs were of restored synagogues, repaired cemeteries and local non-Jewish people who were involved in memorialising the Holocaust. There were photographs of people who were previously from South Africa, although none have a connection in South Africa today. There were depictions of 200 shtetls in Lithuania and some of the names in the photographs resonated with the audience.

He showed a "Holocaust Map of Lithuania", which brought a shudder of reality to the audience.

When he showed photographs of tombstones in Latvia, two well-known South African connected names cropped up. One was Anstey and the other Skikne, the renowned British actor, Laurence Harvey was a Skikne.

From Estonia, we saw photographs of Grodno which once boasted a sizeable Jewish presence. In

a cemetery in Sedova we saw restorations paid for through South African funds. He showed pictures of locals there who are educating their fellow citizens about the Holocaust. There are centres where such lectures take place on a regular basis.

It was heartening to learn that in Kiev in the Ukraine there is an ORT day school with over 1 000 children.

Then there was a clip of an Australian boy (about 12 years old) singing The Partisan Song in excellent Hebrew. The song recalls the Bielski Brothers in Belarus who fought in the forests for years against the German invaders.

Said Rabinowitz: "My mission is to help people in their searches for their lost families. Then, when a connection is made it should be shared. This way you can possibly/probably connect with other unknown family members. As I said, you never know."

## Splendid work on Lithuanian Jewry done by this 'accidental genealogist'

**MICHAEL BELLING**

Rose Lerer Cohen is an "accidental genealogist" who was "provoked" into following that career path.

Born in South Africa, but living in Israel since 1978 - she and her husband Ronnie Lerer now live in Jerusalem - she has specialised in genealogy and archival research in this field for some 25 years.

Her personal life and work previously moved in other directions. "I changed caps often," she told SA Jewish Report.

She spoke on Lithuanian Jewry at an event last Sunday arranged by the Jewish Genealogical Society of South Africa at the HOD Centre in Johannesburg.

She outlined the history of Lithuania, discussed the migration of Jews from there to South Africa and examined the destruction of Lithuanian Jewry in the Holocaust.

Lerer Cohen grew up in Parow in Cape Town and completed her schooling at Herzlia after her family moved to Oranjezicht. She obtained a BA degree at the University of Cape Town, before moving to Israel with Ronnie.

She then studied at the Israel Theological Seminary in Jerusalem, obtaining a Masters degree in early childhood education.

"I was always interested in the Holocaust," she said, "and decided to combine early childhood education with the Holocaust."

This led her to complete her doctorate at the Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford in the UK, on the resilience

and achievement of Lithuanian children who survived the Holocaust. She examined whether their early learned experiences before the Holocaust provided them with tools to help them achieve in their lives after the war.

"Their lives were divided into three periods, life pre-Holocaust, the Holocaust and making a life later," she said. "They drew on their early experiences to give them the strength to continue post-Holocaust."

In interviews with Lerer Cohen in the late 1990s, the children often used the word "mensch". Their parents had told them when they parted, "always be a mensch, remember to give to the community, don't fall apart, just carry on.

"This gave them an astounding amount of strength," Lerer Cohen said.

Resilience today has become an important part of her study.

She donned this most recent cap while still working in early child education and bringing up three children.

She was three months pregnant with her third child, Ari, when her father died in Israel - Ari is now 27. Her father's tombstone bore the words: "In memory of his parents, brothers and sisters who perished in the Shoah."

"I did not know their names," Lerer Cohen said. "I never asked. I don't know if many South Africans do ask.

"This provoked me into turning to genealogy."

Her main book is a collection of names of Lithuanian Jews killed in the Holocaust. It was published in 2002, before the completion of the online archives. The lists are from the ghettos and the death and labour camps.



Photo: Michael Belling

Rose Lerer Cohen speaking on Lithuanian Jewry to the Jewish Genealogical Society of South Africa.

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# Meet the Jews in Donald Trump's administration

**JOSEFIN DOLSTEN**  
WASHINGTON

American Jews are watching the beginning of Donald Trump's presidency with both fear and hope.

Many have expressed worries about some of his supporters' ties to the so-called "alt-right" movement, whose followers traffic variously in white nationalism, anti-immigration sentiment, anti-Semitism and a disdain for "political correctness".

Those fears intensified when Trump named as his chief strategist Stephen Bannon, the former chairman of Breitbart News, a site Bannon once referred to as a "platform" of the alt-right. Trump's strongly conservative Cabinet picks also back policies on healthcare, the environment, abortion and civil rights often diametrically opposed to the views of most Jewish voters.

Others have praised Trump's stance on Israel and his nomination of David Friedman, a bankruptcy lawyer who supports West Bank settlements and has expressed doubts about the two-state solution, as US ambassador to Israel. Trump won 24 per cent of the Jewish vote, with especially strong support in the Orthodox community.

The president's Jewish advisers:

## Jared Kushner

Trump's Orthodox son-in-law (36) is serving as a senior adviser to the president. Scion of a prominent real estate family from New Jersey will focus on the Middle East and Israel as well as partnerships with the private sector and free trade, according to The New York Times.

Kushner, who married Trump's daughter Ivanka in 2009, played a crucial role in the president's campaign, especially on Israel.

Trump appears to be smitten with Kushner, often referring to his "fantastic" son-in-law when boasting of his pro-Israel credentials.

Kushner in 2006, at 25, bought the New York Observer newspaper. Two years later he became CEO of Kushner Properties, four years after his father was sent to jail for tax evasion, illegal campaign donations and witness tampering. In 2015, Fortune put Kushner on its 40 "Under 40 list", an "annual ranking of the most influential young people in business".

## David Friedman



Friedman, a bankruptcy expert and long-time Trump attorney, was tapped as the US ambassador to Israel. Trump's transition team in December said Friedman would serve from Jerusalem, but White House press secretary Sean Spicer has said that Trump had yet to decide on moving the embassy from Tel Aviv.

Friedman, who is in his late 50s, is the son of a Conservative rabbi with a family history of ties to Republican presidential candidates.

Friedman has expressed support for and funded construction in Israeli settlements, and has expressed doubt about the future of the two-state solution.

## Jason Greenblatt

Greenblatt, the long-time chief legal officer for

the Trump Organisation, is working as special representative for international negotiations focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, US-Cuba relations and American trade agreements with other countries.

An Orthodox Jew and Yeshiva University graduate, Greenblatt studied at a West Bank yeshiva in the mid-1980s.

Greenblatt said he speaks with people involved in the Israeli government but has not spoken to any Palestinians since his yeshiva studies. He has helped draft Trump's speech at the lobbying group's annual conference last March.

Greenblatt, who has said he supports the two-state solution, has implied that Trump will take a laissez-faire approach to peace building.

## Steven Mnuchin

Trump picked Mnuchin, a former Goldman Sachs executive who worked as Trump's national finance chairman during the campaign, to serve as Treasury Secretary.

Trump and Mnuchin are old friends and prior to being in charge of Trump's campaign finances, Mnuchin, 54, served as an adviser. He is what The New York Times describes as one of Manhattan's "most influential families". Both became wealthy working at Goldman Sachs.

Some saw Trump teaming up with Mnuchin as unusual, considering that the real-estate mogul had consistently bashed Goldman Sachs during his campaign - but it doesn't seem to have hindered a good working relationship.

## Stephen Miller



Trump named Miller, who played a crucial role in his campaign by writing speeches and warming up crowds at rallies, as

senior adviser for policy.

Miller (31), who has described himself as "a practising Jew", joined the Trump campaign in early 2016, quickly rising through the ranks to become "one of the most important people in the campaign".

Previously he worked for seven years as an aide to Trump's choice for attorney general, Senator Jeff Sessions, helping him draft materials to kill a bipartisan Senate immigration reform bill.

Though Miller grew up in a liberal Jewish home in Southern California, he was drawn to conservative causes early.

## Carl Icahn

Icahn, a businessman and investor, is serving as a special adviser on regulatory reform issues. He is working as a private citizen rather than a federal employee or special government employee.

An early supporter of Trump's candidacy, Icahn, 80, is the founder of Icahn Enterprises, a diversified conglomerate. He has also held substantial or controlling positions in numerous American companies over the years.

Icahn is a major giver to Mount Sinai hospital in New York City, among other philanthropies.

## Gary Cohn

Cohn (56), the outgoing president and chief operating officer at Goldman Sachs, heads the White House National Economic Council. At Goldman Sachs, Cohn, answered to CEO Lloyd Blankfein and was considered a strong candidate to lead the bank.

Cohn has a reputation for abrasiveness,

but also for getting things done, according to a Wall Street Journal profile last year. In a 2014 New York Times op-ed, Goldman Sachs executive Greg Smith wrote on the day he resigned that Blankfein and Cohn were responsible for a "decline in the firm's moral fibre" that placed its interests above those of its clients.



## Boris Epshteyn

Epshteyn, a Republican political strategist who appeared as a Trump surrogate on TV, is working as a special assistant to the president. Epshteyn, who is in his mid-30s, also is serving as

assistant communications director for surrogate operations. An investment banker and finance attorney, Epshteyn was a communications aide for Senator John McCain's presidential campaign in 2008.

He defended Trump on major TV networks over 100 times, according to The New York Times. TV hosts have described Epshteyn, who moved to the United States from his native Moscow in 1993, as "very combative" and "abrasive".

## David Shulkin

Dr David Shulkin, the undersecretary for health at the Department of Veterans Affairs, leads the department as secretary under Trump. He would be the first holdover appointment from the Obama administration, in which he served since 2015.

Shulkin, 57, is an internist who has had several chief executive roles, including as president of hospitals, notably Beth Israel Medical Centre in New York City. He also has held numerous physician leadership roles.

As an entrepreneur, Shulkin founded and served as chairman and CEO of DoctorQuality, one of the first consumer-oriented sources of information for quality and safety in healthcare.

## Reed Cordish



Cordish, who is friends with Jared Kushner, will serve as assistant to the president for intragovernmental and technology initiatives

responsible for initiatives requiring multi-agency collaboration and also focusing on technological innovation and modernisation.

Cordish's father, David, chairman and CEO of The Cordish Companies, is a friend of Trump.

Cordish, who is in his early 40s, was introduced to his now-wife Margaret by none other than Ivanka Trump. Cordish and his wife were listed as co-hosts for a Manhattan fundraiser for Trump's presidential campaign in October, Jewish Insider reported.

## Avrahm Berkowitz

Berkowitz (27), is serving as special assistant to Trump and assistant to Jared Kushner. Berkowitz and Kushner met on a basketball court during a Passover programme. The two stayed in touch and Berkowitz went on to work with Kushner in several capacities.

He later went on to write for Kushner's paper, the New York Observer. In 2016 Berkowitz, who was then finishing up his last semester at Harvard Law School, directed a Facebook Live talk show for the Trump campaign. (JTA)



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**Closing date: 17 February 2017**

*Please note: the submission of a CV will not automatically result in an interview. United Herzlia Schools reserves the right not to appoint anyone to this position. Herzlia is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; applicants must be willing to undergo screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers.*

# How 'girl from Queens' beat arch Holocaust denier in court



A scene from the provocative film Denial.

**PETER FELDMAN**

*Film: Denial*  
*Cast: Rachel Weisz, Timothy Spall, Tom Wilkinson, Andrew Scott*  
*Director: Mick Jackson*  
*Classification: 7-9 PG*

Denial is a provocative and thought-proving film. It's about infamous Holocaust denier, David Irving and the riveting courtroom battle with an American academic being sued by him for libel.

This illuminating study will mesmerise audiences with its intelligence and wit, vividly illustrating how facts can be manipulated to support a person's warped arguments.

What makes Mick Jackson's film so powerful is that it's based on a true story, one that grabbed world headlines in 2000.

Jewish actress Rachel Weisz is superb in her portrayal of Deborah Lipstadt, an American academic who teaches Jewish history courses at Emory University in Atlanta. She was sued for libel in England by Irving, a prejudiced, controversial and widely hated English historian and Nazi sympathiser.

In England, the burden of proof in a libel case is always placed on the accused and you are assumed guilty until you can prove your own innocence. Lipstadt had no choice but to defend herself...

Working from a magnificent screenplay by the distinguished British playwright David Hare, director Mick Jackson has forged a truly memorable production that brings back searing memories of the Holocaust.

The key role of Irving is brilliantly played by English actor Timothy Spall, imbuing his character with an understated but creepy mien, while the august Tom Wilkinson, another British screen legend, is cast as the eccentric and renowned Scottish barrister, Richard Rampton, hired to defend Lipstadt. He plays the character with a blend of cunning and warmth.

In her 1993 book Denying the Holocaust, this celebrated academic had labelled Irving a Holocaust denier. It was a charge which he claimed - despite insisting there were no gas chambers and the Holocaust was a myth perpetrated by publicity-seeking Jews - had damaged his career.

Over the years Lipstadt had constantly refused invitations to publicly debate Irving on his assertion that the genocide of six million Jews was a hoax, saying that she "won't debate facts".

But Lipstadt was shocked when she was forced to fight prejudice in a British court of law and her ensuing two-year battle forms the crux of the film, based on her book Denial: Holocaust History on Trial.

In England, the burden of proof in a libel case is always placed on the accused and you are assumed guilty until you can prove your own innocence. Lipstadt had no choice but to defend herself in a heated trial with excellent support from a top-notch legal team that comprised Richard Rampton and ace solicitor, Anthony Julius, played with "cut-glass" pucker English accent by Andrew Scott. Julius gained fame as Princess Diana's lawyer in the famous divorce case against Prince Charles.

Here was a scenario where Irving, a wealthy, prickly and formidable British anti-Semite is pitted against a Jewish girl from Queens whose task was to prove the Holocaust was actually one of history's most defining events.

The outcome is no secret, but the mastery of the storytelling art will have you standing up and cheering.

Some of the scenes remain a disturbing reminder of the past as the legal team head on a fact-finding mission to Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp in Poland, where one-million prisoners were murdered.

The team observe, through the mist and rain, the enormous gravesites at the camp and view a section where thousands of discarded spectacles were left behind by people on their way to the gas chambers. It is a harrowing and unforgettable experience.

Denial is accurate in recording the specifics of the court case and the characters involved and, in the end, it leaves one extremely absorbing and emotionally drained.

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# A blind eye in exchange for Israel support is risky



## TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

Fallout for South African Jewry from Donald Trump's controversial presidency in the United States has not been felt directly thus far. It is experienced more as general anxiety about the rise of nationalistic demagogues with anti-Semitic leanings - open or disguised - in many countries and fear about the future.

For Jewish interests specifically, this challenges attitudes towards Jews' and Israel's situation in the world.

South African Jewry, with its history of passionate Zionism, is internally divided similar to other Diaspora communities about Israel's place in Jewish life: Is it primarily a Jewish sanctuary in an untrustworthy, hostile world, or a society representing the best universal Jewish values?

Some people cling to idealistic Zionism as the Jewish people's liberation movement in the process of creating a flourishing Jewish state which must do whatever it takes to survive; others support Israel as a Jewish state with every right to exist, but criticise it for various human rights considerations. Israel's complex

situation means neither side is always correct.

To what extent should support for Israel outweigh other considerations? If someone practises objectionable policies yet backs Israel - as Trump says he does - should he be embraced?

Jews who are appalled at Trump, ask why Israel is so supportive of him when he represents much of what Jewish history tells us should be rejected.

His polarising effect on local Jews was illustrated by the anger against this column for criticising Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently for showing such warmth to Trump and publicly calling him "my friend" after Trump's inauguration.

Support for Trump comes at a price. This is already apparent in Israel's muted reaction to the omission of any reference to Jews in his Holocaust Remembrance Day statement.

Trump's administration said it is better not to single out Jews in order to be "inclusive" of others who suffered. But Jewish individuals and organisations - such as the Anti-Defamation League - were shocked and saw it as a case of disguised Holocaust denial. Netanyahu's silence on the matter, however, was deafening.

American white supremacist Richard Spencer, ideologue of

the so-called "alt-right", said not mentioning Jews or anti-Semitism was an important step in the "de-Judaification" of the Holocaust. The White House press secretary called critics of the statement "pathetic".

the two-state solution?

There are unfortunate echoes of this sort of policy in South African Jewish history. Israel openly criticised apartheid in the 1950s and 60s, building alliances with post-colonial African governments. But after African states broke ties after

Minister Yitzhak Rabin said both countries faced "foreign-inspired instability and recklessness".

Many Jews were embarrassed by this support for an apartheid leader.

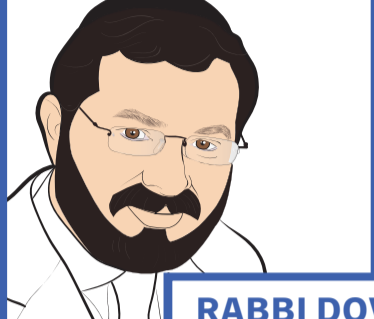
Others justified it by saying Israel was unfairly branded a pariah state and needed support, even from another pariah state such as South Africa.

Negative reaction about this perceived closeness to South Africa - including military co-operation - was a reasonable price to pay, they argued. Until today, Israel still faces an abiding coolness towards it from South Africa, despite having diplomatic relations.

Jewish and Israeli leaders seem to risk repeating this by ignoring Trump's threats to important progressive global alliances and his offensive attitudes towards women, the LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) community, immigrants and Muslims which are causing a furore in his own country, in exchange for support for Netanyahu.

And given Trump's intemperate nature, this support could change whenever it suits him.

• Read Geoff Sifrin's regular columns on his blog [sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com](http://sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com)



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**SINAI INDABA VI**

Israel seems scared to criticise Trump. Is Netanyahu prepared to give up recognition of Jews' central place in the Holocaust, hoping Trump will be his friend, allow more settlement building in Judea and Samaria and sabotage

the 1973 Yom Kippur War, it drew closer to the apartheid regime in Pretoria.

In 1976 it invited Prime Minister John Vorster - a former Nazi sympathiser - to visit. At a state banquet, Israeli Prime

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### What's On

Friday (February 10)	Wednesday (February 15)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UZLC hosts David Fleminger on "Fair Game". Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Contact: Gloria 072-127-9421 or (011) 485-4851.</li> <li>• Lunch hour classical music concerts at the Auto &amp; General Theatre on the Square every Friday at 13:00. No booking. Unreserved seats at R50 (incl coffee and biscuits) available at the box office from 12:30. The Tony Yoko Jazz Trio with Sophia Nemand (piano/vocals), Marc Duby and Tony Yoko. Information: Daphne Kuhn or Mika Stefano (011) 883-8606.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCHCC in partnership with the SAJBD hosts communal stalwart Marlene Bethlehem on "Connections, Reconnections and Returning to Roots" She reflects on German-Jewish relations 70 years on. Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Time: 19:30. Donation: R90.00 (incl refreshments). Booking: Hazel or René (011) 728-8088/8378, a/h (011) 728-8378 or e-mail: <a href="mailto:rchcc@telkomsa.net">rchcc@telkomsa.net</a> or <a href="mailto:rene.s@telkomsa.net">rene.s@telkomsa.net</a> or <a href="http://www.greatpark.co.za">www.greatpark.co.za</a></li> <li>• WIZO holds its 103rd AGM. Venue: Beyachad Auditorium, Raedene. Time: 09:30. Guest speaker is Ayellet Black, Israeli Deputy Ambassador to South Africa. Contact: Jenny (011) 645-2515.</li> </ul>
Sunday (February 12)	Thursday (February 16)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCHCC hosts a rescreening of the documentary, Seymour, a film by Ethan Hawke. Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Time: 19:30. Donation: R80 (incl refreshments). Booking: Hazel or René (011) 728-8088/8378, a/h (011) 728-8378, e-mail <a href="mailto:rchcc@telkomsa.net">rchcc@telkomsa.net</a> or <a href="mailto:rene.s@telkomsa.net">rene.s@telkomsa.net</a> or <a href="http://www.greatpark.co.za">www.greatpark.co.za</a></li> <li>• Second Innings hosts Dr Leonard Carr on "Reassessing Your Life Investments - Becoming The Beneficiary Of Your Own Goodness". Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors (incl tea and light refreshments). Information: Linda Fleishman (011) 532-9616.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A ladies-only evening of inspiration to meet and hear Dvori Blumenau, international hypnotherapist (MEISA), educational psychologist/psychotherapist on "Self-awareness as a Tool for Self-evolvement" followed by an optional hypnosis session. Venue: Emunah Beit Midrash, 60 Mejon Street, Glenhazel. Time: 19:30. Cost: R60 (incl tea). Booking: <a href="mailto:Nadine.nade@mweb.co.za">Nadine.nade@mweb.co.za</a> / SMS 082-891-8252 <a href="mailto:dvoriblum@gmail.com">dvoriblum@gmail.com</a> or <a href="http://www.jhbnorthpsychologist.co.za">www.jhbnorthpsychologist.co.za</a></li> </ul>
Monday (February 13)	Friday (February 17)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UJW adult education division hosts Itai Melchior, Embassy of Israel to South Africa, Head of Trade &amp; Economic Mission on "Israel's Water Story". Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton Time: 09:30. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW Office (011) 648-1053.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lunch hour classical music concerts at the Auto &amp; General Theatre on the Square, Fridays at 13:00. No booking. Unreserved seats at R50 (incl coffee, biscuits) at the box office from 12:30. Marimba and Flute Duo, starring Magda de Vries (marimba) and Malanie Hofmeyr-Burger (flute). Daphne Kuhn or Mika Stefano (011) 883-8606.</li> </ul>
Tuesday (February 14)	Sunday (February 19)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JWBS presents "From Addiction to Recovery and Beyond" by Tanya Joselowsky. Venue: King David High School Linksfield. Time: From 08:30 for coffee, tea &amp; treats. Cost: R180 per person. Information: (011) 485-5232.</li> <li>• JJAC invites Jewish singles and dating couples ages 27 - 49 to a Valentine's Day Outdoor Movie. E-mail <a href="mailto:whatson@jjac.co.za">whatson@jjac.co.za</a> for details.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Johannesburg Light Music Society meets at Roosevelt Park Recreational Centre. Time: 14:00. Audio and visual presentations will be made by members of the society. Refreshments R20 pp (optional). Information: David (011) 678-9725 or 076-574-1446.</li> </ul>



A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

## Core Board mission is to build bridges

At the time of writing, the country is looking ahead to the annual State of the Nation address, to be delivered in Parliament on Thursday. It is likely that President Jacob Zuma will focus on such issues as improving service delivery, confronting unemployment, the question of funding higher education (as we know, a particularly challenging question in today's environment) and similar such issues.

In addition to addressing matters of immediate, practical concern, we hope that President Zuma will also deal in a meaningful way with the more intangible but no less important issue of maintaining harmonious intergroup relations in our society.

It cannot be denied that these have been under increasing strain in recent years and that this is seriously undermining the ability of South Africans to work together in meeting and overcoming the many common challenges we face.

Elected leaders have a particular responsibility to try to heal divisions between different sectors of the population while always adhering to strict moral and ethical principles.

Already this year, the Board has on several occasions felt the need to speak out against anti-Semitic allegations of Jewish financial domination, which are frequently advanced as the root cause of South Africa's problems.

Generally, racist conspiracy theorising is confined to the darker fringes of the Internet and

social media, but there are concerning signs that they are starting to gain a degree of acceptance in mainstream society. A reprehensible comment to this effect, for example, was made last week by Edward Zuma.

When Jews are commonly seen as being behind a society's problems, then it is a sure sign that that society is in trouble. Nor, as history has invariably shown, does the racism stop with the Jews; all too often anti-Semitism is simply a prelude to the rights and dignity of other groups being trampled on.

Last week, a letter appeared in Business Day claiming that the Jewish community had been silent in the face of rising Islamophobia, both locally and abroad. We were of, course, able to respond unequivocally that this is far from the truth (which the letter writer would have discovered himself had he investigated more carefully).

Reference was made to the decisive manner in which our Cape Council condemned the recent cases of mosque desecration in the Western Cape and expressed unreserved solidarity with the Muslim community. This included hosting an interfaith meeting attended by over 40 different faith community leaders, who joined in condemning such unacceptable behaviour.

In this way, the Board seeks to realise a core part of our mission, which is to lead our community in building bridges of friendship and solidarity with our fellow South Africans. Through this, one hopes, we can be a meaningful part of the solution to what is one of our country's most urgent problems.

• Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Jewish Board Talk, 101.9 ChaiFM every Friday 12:00 - 13:00

*This column is paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies*

A column of the Chevrah Kadisha

## When dreams come true

It was a historic moment for the Chev last week when the doors to the beautiful new Arcadia campus were opened to donors who were given the honour of affixing mezzuzahs to the doorposts.

Community visitors were offered guided tours around the residence and day care centre and reactions could not have been more rewarding - people were quite literally moved to tears.

The project has taken three years from conception to completion. The actual construction work - from the time the first shovel of dirt was moved to the moment the beds were made up and the books un-

packed onto shelves - took just 12 months. I remember asking Arcadia General Manager Adina Menhard three years ago to provide us with an ambitious wish list for Arcadia. She did and at the time thought her list was the stuff of dreams. Now she knows that dreams can come true!

This magnificent project has been a collective effort on the part of professionals, donors and staff.

While there are so many things about it that are wonderful, I am most delighted about the consultative and collaborative effort between the modern architectural design and the needs of the children occupying the space.

The focus in the residence is on normalising the children's environment and making it family-centred. For example, the dining room and kitchen are the heart of the home and meals are eaten together.

Each child has his or her own bedroom and only two share a bathroom. The house is designed to provide a perfect balance between their need for privacy and for company.

Care-workers are housed close to the younger children and, as a result of Arcadia being caught unprepared to accommodate new-borns in the past, the nursery is fully equipped.

All common areas in both the residence and day care buildings are modular, making them versatile and multipurpose. While quite separate from the residence, there is access

to the swimming pool, playground and outdoor equipment from the day care area.

I want to express gratitude to everyone involved and to pay tribute to my hard-working colleagues on Exco and to the Arcadia operations, revenue and marketing teams for their dedication to this heart-warming project.

The children will move in soon, after which access to the residential building will be restricted in order to protect their privacy. We, like everyone in the community, are thankful, excited and delighted about this wonderful milestone in the development of Arcadia.

May our partnership continue to thrive [feedback@jhbchev.co.za](mailto:feedback@jhbchev.co.za)

*This column is paid for by the Chevrah Kadisha*



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# Minnie Bersohn tots enjoy a visit from two rabbis



Photo: Michelle Vinokur

Rabbi Ziggy Suchard; Jonah Vinokur; Lia Grusin; Rabbi David Shaw; and Adam Kelman.

### OWN CORRESPONDENT

Last week Friday, Rabbi David Shaw and Rabbi Ziggy Suchard from Sandton Shul visited the kids at King David Minnie Bersohn Pre-Primary School. Rabbi Shaw explained in great detail the reasons and meaning of why Jewish boys over 13 years of age wear tefillin and showed the young boys how to put them on. The children were spellbound by the interesting discussion and look forward to the next visits by the rabbonim.

# KDHL tangibly assists ORT's Second Chance Programme

### OWN CORRESPONDENT

There was a buzz and a good vibe at King David High, Linksfield last week when hundreds of pupils answered the call of the Outreach Committee to make sandwiches for the learners of the ORT SA Second Chance Programme and other schools in Alexandra township in north-east Johannesburg.

ORT SA's Second Chance Programme runs daily for more than 60 learners who failed maths and science last year but passed all the other four subjects. The class of 2016 obtained a 95 per cent pass rate.

"One cannot study on an empty stomach, so sincere thanks to King David pupils. Now we just need to furnish the rooms we use with desks and chairs," says Mpho Matlala, head of the ORT SA STEM Academy.



Photo supplied

KDHL pupils working together to make sandwiches.

# Yeshiva elects 2017 house captains

### OWN CORRESPONDENT

Yeshiva College Primary School has elected its House Captains for 2017, for Tzion, Judah and Israel. The school is already in full swing, looking forward to a super 2017.



Photo supplied

Back: Yakira Aires; Rachel Kahn; Adinah Kahn; Joseph Beer, principal of Yeshiva Primary; Daniel Zimmerman; Gidon Romberg; and Benjamin Bayhack. Front: Sara Lapiner; Mikaela Weinstein; Julia Hurwitz; Aaron Joffe; Jake Weinstein; and Jesse Mamulis.

# Move over Spiderman... here comes Sydenham!

### JENNY MILLER

Sydenham Hebrew Pre-Primary School's senior garden has undergone an extreme makeover. The jungle gym has been refurbished and the children are testing their climbing and co-ordination skills on the new spider web.



Photo: Lisa Kahn

Making their way to the top are (top): Ricky Cohen; Saul Brest; Yoni Gelbart; Dovv Levy; Samuel Licht; and Chad Diamond. Front: Gavi Porter; Jaron Riesnik; and Jarren Rosenthal.

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In the run-up to Tu B'Shvat our schools dug down deep in celebration.



Photo supplied

**Sydenham:** Trimming the trees for Tu B'Shvat. Dovy Levy; Ricky Cohen; Samuel Licht; Jaron Riesnik; and Gavi Porter (sitting).



Photo supplied

**King David Pre-Primary Linksfield:** Tu B'Shvat being celebrated at King David Pre-Primary School Linksfield with Kira and Noah Arnold watering a pomegranate tree that was planted last year on Tu B'Shvat.



Photo: Nirvana Rogers

**King David Pre-Primary School Victory Park:** The playschool hosted a special birthday party for the trees. The junior group made bird feeders. The senior group visited the Botanical Gardens in Emmarentia. The grade Rs will be planting vegetable seedlings. Pictured are: Ruby Cohen; Elyashiv Saban; Samantha Blend; and Samuel Green.



Photo supplied

**Sandton Sinai:** The children at Sandton Sinai Nursery and Playschool have been learning about trees and the environment, to tie in with Tu B'Shvat. The children explored the school environment and used items from the garden to produce beautiful works of art. Pictured are: Hannah Frank; Liat Fitinghoff; and Minah Kaufman.

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# Joost - 'a great player and a great man'



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The good die but live on in the example they provided. That is a quote in the Talmud and in so many ways it applies to a man like Joost van der Westhuizen.

We all knew that moment was coming but the former Springbok scrumhalf and captain had lived with the threat of death from motor neuron disease since he was diagnosed in 2011 in such fighting spirit that we believed he could go on indefinitely.

So, when the news broke on Monday that he had finally given up his brave fight at the age of 45, it still came as a shock.

At 1,85 metres, he was tall for a scrumhalf. But he changed the whole concept of that position: previously a scrumhalf had traditionally been seen as merely a link between the forwards and the backline. But Joost, with his devastating speed and keen "reading" of the game, changed all that.

International rugby referee Jonathan Kaplan and flyhalf Joel Stransky, whose drop goal sealed a World Cup win for the Boks in 1995, shared some thoughts on Joost.

On the rugby field Joost thrilled the public with his great pace, physicality and self-belief. "He was a very combative, very physical," said Kaplan on Tuesday. "His greatest attribute was his speed off the mark. That was what helped him to get a world record 38 tries for a scrumhalf."

Tributes have been pouring in from all over the world as the rugby fraternity mourns one of its all-time greats.

"I refereed him in a number of Currie Cup matches but in only one final and that was in 2002," said Kaplan.

"The only time I blew in a Test match in which he played was at Newlands against Namibia.

"Joost played to win and when

he was on the field he was in control. He played in a number of winning games and he was the central figure in most of them. It was him leading (the leaders on the field) Fourie du Preez and Victor Matfield.

"As a referee we would clash at times. As I said, he was very combative and sometimes that stretched to referees too. He was very vocal and could be quite strong in making his point, but he was never aggressive.

"I was not part of his circle so we did not mix off the field much, but when we did he was nice enough," said Kaplan.

One person who knew him a lot better and was part of that circle was 1995 World Cup teammate, flyhalf Joel Stransky.

"There was none better than him," Stransky told John Maytham of Cape Talk. "He was devastatingly dangerous with ball in hand... that is just unbelievable!

He was unique, absolutely devastating with ball in hand."

But, Stransky pointed out, there was also quite a fun side to the Springbok scrumhalf. "He was a naughty little imp - there was always chaos around him! I remember him crawling under the table and setting my shoelaces on fire.

"But every team needs those guys. That's the heart and spirit and soul

of the team environment and he was part of that in every team he played."

Then the defining moment of the 1995 World Cup final against the All Blacks at Ellis Park in Johannesburg. Joost got the ball out of the scrum, flung out a bullet pass to Stransky who coolly kicked over the drop goal

pass.

"But it was one of his better passes. He was always looking for opportunity to use his great pace. Every now and then you got the chance to kick a drop goal because Joost created that space. And that drop goal changed my life as much as it changed his."

In 2015 many of those World Cup players from all over the planet got together for the 20-year anniversary and when Joost was brought into the dinner reception in his wheelchair, he received a standing ovation. There were these massive rugby players openly crying.

His Australian counterpart, George Gregan, went over to Joost and hugged him.

"There is a saying in the rugby fraternity that you don't make friends but create family and those relationships

last forever," said Stransky.

"All the guys he played against were recognising him as the best in the game. That respect you saw was not just for him as a player, but for him as a person.

"In life you learn from people in different stages. In his younger years we learned about him as a player and as a naughty little imp who caused chaos off the field but in the later years we learned about courage and fighting spirit and how to adapt to new challenges and fight and live through them."

Jean de Villiers, who also captained the Boks, remembered a special moment with Van der Westhuizen in 2012. "The day before every Test match we get a special person to hand over the Springbok jerseys.

"That year we were in Argentina and it was left to Joost to hand over the jerseys. He was in the wheelchair and it was very emotional. We could still see the pride he had in that jersey. The message he shared with us that day was very meaningful."

It is fitting to let Stransky have the last word. "His tackle on the massive All Black wing Jonah Lomu in the 1995 World Cup was legendary. His crawling under the table and burning all our shoelaces was memorable, but I think the greatest moment for him as a running scrumhalf was the try he scored at Twickenham shortly after the World Cup, to beat England.

"No defence in the world would have fancied him to get past them in that little corner but he found a way. It was game changing and a massive win for all of us. We all celebrated with him that night.

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