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Jewish Report

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New Israeli Ambassador to South
Africa, Lior Keinan presents his
credentials to President Jacob Zuma

Israeli ambassador presents credentials to President Zuma

NICOLA MILTZ

When President Jacob Zuma playfully asked the newly-appointed Israeli ambassador if he had paid lobola for his Johannesburg-born wife, he took no time in answering: “Of course I did”.

This exchange took place last week when Israel’s Ambassador to South Africa, Lior Keinan, presented his credentials at a formal ceremony at the Presidential Guesthouse in Pretoria.

During the auspicious ceremony, the Israeli ambassador spoke to President Zuma,

appealing for South Africa to play a more crucial role in resolving the Middle East conflict. Keinan said: “South Africa had experience in peaceful conflict resolution, which would be advantageous in the region.”

He told the SA Jewish Report: “I introduced my wife Sarit to the President and he was very pleased to hear she was born in South Africa. He liked that a lot.”

Zuma in fact referred to Keinan by the Zulu word “umkhwenyana” (brother-in-law), because of his South African wife.

At the ceremony, President Zuma said South Africa can play a role in the Middle East and will help resolve conflicts there if given the opportunity.

“This world must be at peace with itself and I hope there will be more time to discuss the solutions,” Zuma said while receiving the letters of credence from heads of missions. Representatives of Pakistan, India, China, Ghana and Uganda were present.

Keinan said that Israel has extensive knowledge that it shares with the world. “In less than 70 years we turned our



President Jacob Zuma flanked by Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan and his wife Sarit

desert into green fields and became a start-up nation with our own Silicon Valley, second only to the US.”

Zuma said he was confident that the two countries would help contribute to mutually beneficial relations and to attaining the United Nations’ sustainable development goals by 2030.

Parshat Ki Teitzei

Hippies and Holiness

The anti-establishment movement of the sixties questioned the core values of Western society. This movement was born by a motivation to challenge societal norms in the search for truth, meaning and morality. Unfortunately, all too often these noble intentions became blurred in the chaos of rebellion.



Rabbi Danny Sackstein, Sunny Road Shul

The Torah teaches us the essential value of order. Even during times of war, there was no free-for-all as is usually the case during war. This is seen in the Torah’s account of the war against Midian where there was an exact count of the spoils, from the captives down to the different types of animals.

Only through order in every aspect of our being can we develop in a positive way.

Order is an integral part of G-d’s creation. From the tiny building blocks of matter, such as atoms and cells, to the massive celestial bodies, there is meticulous order that characterises all of Creation.

This order testifies to the existence of a will that governs the universe – the will of the Creator. The staggering sophistication and order of the universe is clear proof there is a Creator. If there is order there must be a being who establishes that order.

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe points out that the same is true in this world. If we see someone who is organised, we know that person must have a strong desire motivating that order. Likewise, in business, order in an organisation usually comes from the management implementing efficiency from the top down.

The same applies to our spiritual development. We need to have an orderly, organised approach. The starting point is a strong determination to improve ourselves and grow. The next step is the implementation of a framework with thought and wisdom.

There are two basic components in creating this framework. What goal am I aiming to achieve in life? What can I do to reach this objective? Serious thought must be put in to answer these two questions clearly and truthfully, and the answer should form a basic vision of how to structure our days and live our lives.

As Jews we are blessed to have been given the Torah. G-d answers the first question for us.

We were sent to this world to rise above our mundane physical existence and connect to the transcendent essence of our souls. We do this by fulfilling the commandments of the Creator – the mitzvot. Once we have the goal clear, it up to us to create an organised programme in our daily lives to implement these objectives in a practical way.

This goal is the destination in our spiritual GPS. Even if we sometimes veer off course and the route changes, we still have the ability to recalculate and adjust, eventually reaching our destination.

Jewish lawmakers ascend Temple Mount

JERUSALEM – Two Jewish Knesset members visited the Temple Mount – the first time lawmakers have been allowed there since October 2015 – as part of a trial to gauge whether such visits can be reinstated.

Yehuda Glick of the Likud party and Shuli Mualem-Refaeli of Jewish Home, visited the site on Tuesday morning. Arab-Israeli lawmakers from the Joint Arab List boycotted the trial visit.

“Arab lawmakers will enter [the Temple Mount] whenever they want, not whenever Netanyahu decides to give the OK,” said Knesset member Ahmad Tibi.

In November 2015, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered lawmakers to stay off the Temple Mount amid a wave of Palestinian terrorism linked to claims that Israel was trying to change the status quo. Israel denied the claims.

Glick, a longtime activist for Jewish prayer rights at the Temple Mount, filed a petition against

the ban, and Netanyahu in early July decided to allow the trial visits.

However, on July 14, before the decision went into effect, three Arab Israelis shot dead two policemen on the site. Israel responded by suspending the plan and installing walk-through metal detectors at the Muslim entrances to the site.

Amid prayer sessions, riots and regional pressure, Israel eventually removed the metal detectors. But the ban on visits by lawmakers had remained in place.

The rules for Tuesday’s visit were set by the Knesset security office.

“I prayed for me and my family and my children and my wife, and I prayed for world peace,” Glick said on Tuesday.

Prior to becoming a Knesset member, Glick led many groups of Jewish visitors to the Temple Mount. In 2014, a Palestinian terrorist shot and nearly killed Glick.

Since capturing the Temple Mount from Jordan in 1967, Israel has controlled access but allowed Jerusalem’s Islamic authority to manage the site, which is holy to Jews and Muslims. (JTA)

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17:41	18:34	Port Elizabeth
17:33	18:25	East London

South African Jewish Report

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Mngxitama taking hate speech to another level

NICOLA MILTZ

“You motherf***ers! You Jews, you killing Palestinian babies, white racist oppressors.”

Welcome to the mouth of Andile Mngxitama, president of the Black First Land First (BLF) political organisation and a Steve Biko-wannabe who strives to be the local hero of the Black Consciousness Movement and Africa’s downtrodden.

He is reported to have an MA in sociology from Wits and is a racist. He claims whites stole all the land in South Africa from the blacks and it’s time they give it back.

“You Jews have no capacity to self-reflect on your shocking, consistent, ongoing oppression and racism against black people,” he ranted and raged at the SA Jewish Report.

“You can’t deny the Holocaust but you deny the black holocaust,” he said, making little sense in his outrageous ramblings.

One week ago, Mngxitama – described by political commentators this week as a “depraved fascist” – tweeted his true colours.

At 05:20 on Thursday, August 24 – just as the Twitter world was waking up – he stuck a knife deep into the belly of the Jewish community with a deplorable tweet: “For those claiming the legacy of the holocaust is ONLY negative think about the lampshades and Jewish soap.”

It was out of the blue and caught the community off guard.

This was done on the same day that the BLF faced off with the Premier of the Western Cape Helen Zille, in the Equality Court, following charges Mngxitama laid against her for her controversial tweets on colonialism.

In a series of tweets she made in March this year she said: “For those claiming the legacy of colonialism was ONLY negative, think of our independent judiciary, transport infrastructure, piped water etc.”

Later on the same day, he tweeted: “I concure (sic) with @Helenzille that the aroma of the burning flesh from the furnace of the Holocaust may wet (sic) the appetite of the SA cannibals.”

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) was quick to issue a statement in response to the hateful tweets. Complaints flooded the South African Human Rights Commission. Social media was set alight and Mngxitama gloated in self-satisfaction, pleased that he’d successfully “proved his point that black lives don’t matter” to other people and upped the ante in anti-Semitic, anti-white hate speech.

Dozens lambasted him. Even the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) – of which Mngxitama was an ousted member – Julius Malema, that night tweeted: “Let’s



meet. I want to give you the experience the Jews went through during the holocaust. Start by gassing you and then burning your body.”

However, there is a strong group who support Mngxitama. One follower tweeted: “Haha Mngxi is a champion, he brings discomfort to the enemy. I see us getting our land back soon.”

An unapologetic and defiant Mngxitama told the SA Jewish Report that Jews had not apologised for their role in the “historical oppression of blacks and that blacks continue to live through the holocaust.

“You Jews have no capacity to understand irony, to understand that I was paraphrasing Zille to make a point. You claim to be the most civilised but you are so self-absorbed.

“Jews helped enslave the black people, you took over our land. Who put Nelson Mandela in jail?

“I’m not your garden boy. Go ahead and write your original interesting Zionist bullsh**t. You think I’m here to entertain you? I’m not Mmusi Maimane.”

Mngxitama claims to be a champion of the poor and oppressed black person in a country that he says is “capitalist, racist, white supremacist and essentially anti-black”.

He was expelled from the EFF in 2015 when he grew disgruntled with the way in which the party discarded his ideas on land reform – namely expropriation without compensation.

Mngxitama, was found guilty of speaking to the media after his suspension, implicating party leaders in alleged theft of party funds and leaking party information to the media.

At one point, he was reported to have earned about R80 000 a month as an EFF Member in Parliament. Today he is self-proclaimed “broke” staring financial ruin in the face and having had his houses repossessed by Nedbank.

The BLF has come out in strong support of

the ANC’s President Jacob Zuma, despite his numerous corruption charges and has shown support for the controversial Gupta family, who have been accused of state capture through their various dealings with the Zuma family.

In recent months, he has grown increasingly vitriolic in his anti-white rhetoric and often taunts his former colleague, Julius Malema, by accusing him of being a sell-out and a Democratic Alliance (DA) “house nigger” and “noisy poodle”.

However, Mngxitama has lost credibility and has been exposed as a fraud for allegedly

aligning himself with the controversial Gupta family in a desperate bid to keep his flailing political organisation afloat.

Leaked Gupta e-mails have shown how Mngxitama – an outspoken Gupta supporter – had asked the family for money in 2016. He has dismissed these claims saying they were “absolute nonsense” and that they were “based on a strategy to attack whoever was opposed to white monopoly capital”.

Mngxitama has been mocked on social media for his “pot belly” indicating that he has money for food, while his supporters


Continued on page 13>>

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Photos: Howard Sackstein and Lilly Harmse

Singing the Doll House blues

NIA MAGOULIANITI-MCGREGOR

The Doll House, a 50s-inspired American dream that Joburgers took to their hearts like a toasted cheese sarmie to Coke, has mixed its final banana milkshake. No more will a wonky steel tray attach itself to a car window. The neon sign that insisted: “No Hooting Please Flick Lights” to generations has flickered out. The place has seen its last illicit liaison, covert political meeting, last first kiss as well as the end of those famed bruiser brawls after drive-in jols. A developer is set to build low-cost housing and a retail space in its place. It was many things to many people. A haven of familiarity, a place to play Jewish geography, a Grove guy haunt, a West Side Story in the East where rumbles and the occasional inter-cultural love story that lasted only till the next Saturday night kept patrons coming back for more. It proved so popular that the concept was replicated in Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. Now, the Doll House has become the stuff of Johannesburg Jewish mythology.

So, it was no surprise that hundreds of 40, 50 and 60-somethings swung by Highlands North last Saturday, August 26. Some brought their children, others came holding hands with their new squeezes and old memories. Most had their hands in their pockets, prepared to fork out one last time for their final favourite double thick, or to hear the rattle of the serving tray on their window once more, reminisce about drag racing (“police turned a blind eye until someone died,”) and curse the rise of the malls. (On this night, not even Hyde Park Corner was completely safe from derision, doll!) Anyone who was anyone took the road less travelled to 377 Louis Botha Avenue, and ordered toasted cheeses like it was 1974. Financial adviser Mike Jankelowitz, 56, says he bumped into an old mate there. “Lance and I commiserated on how we used to eye out the girls on dates when we were just jolling with the guys and how envious we were of the Alfa Guys.” He says anyone with Alfas parked on the extreme right. “Any other car parked on the left. Even sports cars wouldn’t dare turn right.”

When Jankelowitz and his buddy bought Alfas and could finally park on the right, it was, he says, “like Saturday Night Fever”. “We strutted around. We loved how much we were envied. Of course, our selection of dates increased.” Jankelowitz remembers most poignantly the lure of forbidden fruit. “My mother used to say, ‘don’t eat the food, you don’t know what’s in it’. We, of course, knew the hamburgers were 100 per cent beef and never pork! I loved the soft serve vanilla ice cream, the waffles and the banana double thicks. “But the chips? The chips were the coup de grace. Home-cut and thick, thrown into hot oil so the outsides were crispy and the insides light and fluffy. Then those big salt cellars and the glass jug with black vinegar! Those chips were so hot, your fingers almost couldn’t handle it. You had to breathe with them between your teeth to cool them down!” There were fights all the time, says Jankelowitz. “It was a testosterone competition every week.” Ah yes. Howard Sackstein, Saicom CEO, remembers too: “The Doll House in many ways represented the ground zero of Joburg masculinity. In the



Brett Morris, Dan Chaitowitz, Tammy Levin and Tami Morris



Raphael Lidchi and the Basserabie family

unsophisticated days of Brylcreem when Jews and Lebs would battle, the Doll House was the starting point for many of those brawls. “Today, times have changed and Jews and Lebs join each other for a whisky over Shabbos dinner instead.” Food journalist Anna Trapido says her friend Joanne Yawitch once confessed a more traditional form of forbidden fruit: “In the 70s, there was a synagogue next to the Doll House where socials were held for Jewish youth. Nearby was a hall where the Lebanese kids had their socials. The Doll House – in the middle of both – was where Romeo and Juliet-style forbidden romantic trysts took place.” Built in the 30s or 40s, Trapido says: “Modern motorists, who regard their automobiles as mere modes of transport, cannot truly grasp the mid-century significance of owning a car. Driving represented modernity and independence. It was also central to social rituals.” It seems the thrill of never having to leave your ride was widespread – and sometimes just practical in the apartheid era. Anti-apartheid stalwart Joe Slovo revealed to Trapido that the Doll House was the go-to place for activists. “On April 7, 1960, the Unlawful Organisations Act No 34

resulted in the banning of the ANC. That afternoon Joe and Helen Joseph went to the Doll House to discuss the way forward. “Apparently, your car was less likely to be bugged by the security police and you could sit with people of other races.” The other kind of race was also prevalent. Former Rabbitt drummer Neil Cloud, now 63, remembers bruisers drag racing up and down Louis Botha before the guys would go to the Doll House for a “graze”. “These were nice boys from nice homes. It was usually just a show. “I hope the new owners keep the old relics in a cabinet somewhere. Maybe the old milkshake machine or an old tray...” Andy Nossel, a therapist in Johannesburg, was at the final goodbye. She recalls the night when she realised the Doll House was “home”. “I was 15 and on a double date with older guys who could drive. They took my friend and I to a place in Buccleuch – very far from home in Orange Grove. They started drinking and we became increasingly anxious. Finally, they decided to take us to the Doll House for chocolate double thicks. “The relief at being back on ‘home





Jeff and Tanya Midzuk, and their nieces Tammy and Kim Noriskin

ground’ was profound. Anyway, I drank my milkshake too fast and threw up – probably from nerves – all over his Ford Escort. I suppose I just couldn’t stomach that whole night,” she laughs.

Former film producer, Susan Levy, 62, who runs her own company The Organiser, remembers everyone had their favourite milkshake. “Mine was lime.”

“I would go break my fast every year on Yom Kippur with an orange freeze straight after Sydenham Highlands North Shul. Then we would go out as a family to the breaking of the fast dinner.”

Editor and publisher Toby Shapshak, 46, says the Doll House was popular in an age where fast-food didn’t exist. “I was the youngest of six kids. I remember the trays being clipped to the window and the chocolate double-thick. The toasted chicken was legendary.

“My mother was strict about sweets and sugar so this was a real treat.”

He took his mom there recently to say goodbye, “for old time’s sake. She ate a toasted cheese. I had the toasted chicken. The food wasn’t as good as we remembered.”

Still, it was a blast from the past. “I remembered the beers we’d drink as teenagers in the back seat. We’d go there to ‘shwank’. Every generation has spent time there.

“We live in a world that’s not big on longevity,” he says. “Life is fast-paced. Eating patterns of people have changed. There’s more of a health culture and instead of picking up food, we download UberEats. Louis Botha was the hub of the Jewish community. Now the malls attract the crowds.”

Steven Gruzd from the SA Institute of International Affairs, says he went for a last meal recently, the first in 20 years, with his wife and kids. “When I was born, my parents lived across the road in a flat above the shops. My late mom loved the place, as she grew up a few streets away in Highlands North.

“We hooked the tray onto the passenger window for old time’s sake. My girls even said the food was better than they expected.

“I think cities just go through demographic shifts. Apparently, Zimbabweans and Nigerians who live in the area often prefer to eat at home.

The place was definitely looking shabby.”

Art consultant Matthew Krouse, who organised the final bash with photographer Marc Shoul which included an outdoor photography exhibition Night By Roadhouse, is more upbeat.

“The Doll House was a hangover from the rock ‘n roll era. It was an American craze and my parents used to go there during the war. It was probably one of the few places in the apartheid era where people of all races could eat in the same venue.

“It was affordable and socially, an even playing field. I believe there was a lot of illicit rendezvousing going on.”Krouse may feel nostalgic about the Doll House demise, but as for the prevailing “decaying area” justification, he disagrees. “I live in Houghton – the Louis Botha side of Houghton. Far from degenerating, this is a lively and dynamic environment with a multi-cultural community of people.

“It’s a place to be explored and celebrated. There are pool halls and beer halls and second-hand shops. It’s a cosmopolitan place full of life, 24 hours a day. There are West African tailors, kosher places close by, and a new medical centre.

“When something leaves, something new always comes along.”

Still, as Mike Jankelowitz says about the farewell party: “My mate Lance and I had a good laugh after all the reminiscences. We shook hands and I left. It was strange how sad I felt.”

Down memory lane:

“I remember nothing except chicken mayo toasted sarmies.” Jodi Bieber

“I came here as a teenager and also after a few dates in the 80s. There was nowhere to go late at night except here. We all used to park and get a toasted sandwich with thick door-step bread.

“More recently, my sister came from overseas with her kids, and we piled all the kids in the back of the car and came and ordered those sandwiches. I have a very soft spot for the place. I love road houses. They spell fun to me.” Claudia Davimes

“After each of my children were born, my wife Jodi and I stopped at the Doll House for a curry.” Mike Jankelowitz

“I haven’t eaten there for 20 years, but it’s iconic, a part of Johannesburg history. It’s like burning your childhood pictures.” Neil Cloud

“As the Counting Crows song goes: ‘You don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone. They paved paradise and put up a parking lot.’ Steven Gruzd

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South African
Jewish Report

Do we ignore the devil and hope he will go away?

When I first read Andile Mngxitama’s anti-Semitic tweet, it got stuck in my throat. I couldn’t actually read it aloud without feeling like I was going to be sick. What kind of person would consider that using the bodies of human beings to create lampshades and soap was anything but abhorrent?

My first thought was that he couldn’t be serious and was going to apologise profusely, explaining that he meant something completely different or he was out of his head on alcohol or drugs (not that that is an acceptable excuse).

But no, not this person... Instead he proudly attempts to justify his tweet with words that were just as demeaning and horrifying. Who is this person? What is he thinking?

Of course, our intrepid investigative journalist gets on her horse to find out. And she then has a hideous, sullyng experience with this person.

I contacted a former extremely well-respected colleague – who has had his own horrible experiences with this person – to find out if he would speak to us. His response was simply: “Peta, if you don’t mind, I’d rather not. He thrives on publicity. Don’t give him any.”

This had me thinking: Do we ignore him? Do we make as if his comments are just ridiculous rantings of a madman and still ignore him? Or do we tell our community what happened and do our best to paint a picture of who this person is and why on earth he would do such a hateful and racist thing?

After a fitful night, I was resolute that we don’t turn the other cheek. He may well thrive on negative publicity because it is better than no publicity. It also fuels his ego and ensures that people know his name.

I understand that he probably enjoys the fact that we are furious, indignant and outraged and he continues to want to lash out and hurt us. He clearly enjoys angering people. It gives him a sense of power and strength – albeit borne out of ignorance and anger rather than wisdom and education. In this, I am not calling him uneducated per se, only uneducated in the horrors of the Holocaust.

My belief is that if he had even the slightest understanding of what happened, even he would not be able to write these things. Maybe I am wrong... Maybe he is simply a despicable human being!

As Jews, we don’t have a choice but to fight this... We have to stop people from believing they can just vomit out this venom at us and we will just take it.

First off, it is against the law to utter hate speech and this is so clearly racist hate speech. So, someone like this should be stopped by the authorities, but I don’t see anyone in authority taking a stand against him.

That is, other than our own Board of Deputies. They were quick off the mark and I believe they will stop at nothing to get him to back down and apologise. And so they must!

My only question is: To what end? I can’t help but think about Cosatu’s Bongani Masuku who at the end of June was ordered by the Equality Court to apologise for his hate speech against us. It took nine years to get a court of law to order this and has he apologised? Has he even shown a move in that direction? Not a chance!

So, if we go down this same path with this person, whose utterances were diabolical, will we get a different result? Is it worth it? Yes, we cannot sit by and watch while someone of this ilk does his best to denigrate us.

So, I understand that this person – who may only have a handful of followers – may well be on the lowest rung of the Gupta payroll. He may well have had his 15 seconds of fame before disappearing into oblivion, but we still need to do our best to tell you as much as we can about the kind of person who would stoop to this unconscionable level.

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Dateline: Middle East

Netanyahu’s crown is toppling

PAULA SLIER

Every Saturday night for the past 40 weeks, the crowds have been growing in front of the home of the Israeli attorney general, Avichai Mandelblit, demanding the dismissal of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

And each Saturday night, without fail, the security guards controlling the neighbourhood check our press credentials, becoming more wary and nervous as the weeks drag on.

The protests have sparked counter-demonstrations in support of the prime minister across the road and sometimes the furore between the two groups threatens to dissolve into chaos and confrontation.

For every protester who tells me Netanyahu is a thief, there is another on the opposite side of the street praising him and blaming the media for demonising him. As much as we are welcomed by the anti-Netanyahu crowd, we are hated by those who support him.

But the Saturday demonstrations are starting to get under the skin of the prime minister – and with good reason. They’re in reaction to a long-running corruption scandal against him and his wife, Sara, who will probably be indicted soon in a separate case.

Things recently got a whole lot worse for them after a former chief of staff signed a deal with the Israeli police to become a state witness in two criminal investigations in which the prime minister is a suspect. One involves receiving gifts from billionaires abroad; the other concerns an alleged attempt to negotiate favourable press coverage.

The final decision as to the fate of Netanyahu lies in the hands of Mandelblit, who no doubt is also getting fed up with the noise outside his Petah Tikva home.

Last week, Israel’s Supreme Court ruled no more than 500 people could attend the weekly protests, a far cry from the thousands who’ve been coming recently.

Loudspeakers have also been banned. When those speakers were allowed, they questioned – and noisily – the prime minister’s financial misdealings and illicit business ties.

The allegations have yet to threaten Netanyahu politically, although they’re having some impact. They’ve seen his approval ratings drop amid repeated questions over his conduct and integrity.

Netanyahu has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and like his friend, US President Donald Trump, blames “the left and the media”. As he said: “We know that it’s the same thing... an unprecedented hunt against me and my family to bring down the government.”

This is a dangerous and slippery slope for the prime minister to embark upon. While he might be right that there is a sensationalist streak to some of the Israeli media’s coverage of what he and his family are doing, reputable journalists are asking fair questions about his business dealings that he should answer.

One case, for example, known as the “Submarine Affair”, involves allegations of bribery in a more than a billion dollar submarine deal between Israel and Germany. While the prime minister is not himself a suspect, his personal lawyer and cousin is.

Should Netanyahu ultimately be found guilty, he will lose his job and maybe even land up in prison. If this happens, he won’t be the first.

Ehud Olmert, also a former Israeli prime minister, was released from jail in July this year, having served 16 of a 27-month sentence for obstruction of justice, fraud, bribery and breach of trust.

Moshe Katsav, a former Israeli president, was imprisoned for five years for rape.

The list of government ministers and mayors who’ve served time for crimes they carried out while in office, makes for sober reading. It also explains why many of the Saturday night protesters say they’re demonstrating not only against Netanyahu, but against the much bigger problem of corruption among Israeli leaders.

If Netanyahu was to end up behind bars, it would be a sad ending for the second longest-serving prime minister in Israel’s history, after its founder, David Ben-Gurion. However, it would definitely speak to the strong Israeli democracy and judicial system.

Most analysts, though, agree that Netanyahu’s tenure is far from over. This is not the first time he has found himself embroiled in such scandals and he’s escaped them before.

He has the backing of his ruling Likud Party and key conservative coalition partners - at least for now. Even among those who want him gone – and there are plenty – there is a reluctant acknowledgement that he has no visible successor.

There is an understanding that ousting him would throw the country into a leadership vacuum, which no-one, regardless of where on the political spectrum they stand, really wants.

But be fair, however, the latest accusations do seem the most serious he’s faced to date. His supporters charge that the Israeli opposition has no real political alternatives to offer and are therefore piggybacking on the police investigations.

Newspaper editorials support the claims, suggesting Netanyahu’s critics should be clamping down on his policies and not jumping up and down over stories that his wife allegedly used state funds to buy ice cream, makeup and the like.

Still, with charges of bribery and fraud looming, the “King of Israel”, as Time magazine once called him, is looking vulnerable and no doubt wishes the whole affair would go away.

• Paula Slier is the Middle East Bureau Chief of RT, the founder and CEO of NewshoundMedia and the inaugural winner of the Europcar Woman in Leadership Award of the South African Absa Jewish Achievers.



People demonstrating for the dismissal of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Billy Joel wore a yellow Jewish star. Thanks, but the trend should stop there



ANDREW SILOW-CARROLL
NEW YORK

Few artefacts of the Holocaust move me like the yellow star. Homely and seemingly innocuous, they sit in museum cases either by themselves or still attached to a jacket or blouse, the stitching rough and the lettering surprisingly crude.

They are almost comically, cartoonishly blunt, a child’s idea of how to single out and shame an enemy. And in their bluntness and homeliness they make vivid the obscenity that was Nazism, the way a single bloodstained feather on the sidewalk conjures a vision of the violence that produced it.

So, it was more than a little shocking to see Billy Joel wear a yellow star on his jacket during a concert a week after the violent white supremacist rallies in Charlottesville. After all, Joel is not the first artist who comes to mind when you think of bold or provocative political gestures.

It’s been his luck and his curse to be wildly popular while rarely courting controversy or inspiring deep critical analysis or respect. The critic Chuck Klosterman wrote famously that Joel “has no extrinsic coolness. If cool were a colour, it would be black – and Joel would be kind of a burnt orange.”

His wearing the star should have been the wrong thing to do in so many ways. Jewish groups are always worried about appropriations of the Holocaust and carefully designate the boundaries of acceptable Holocaust analogies (that is, none).

The same week that Joel wore his yellow star during the encore at one of his regular Madison Square Garden gigs, the fashion house Miu Miu discontinued a clothing line that featured a yellow star that was only reminiscent of what the Jews were forced to wear (the World Jewish Congress had complained).

Joel’s gesture might have been especially meaningful because his Jewishness, as he once put it, stopped at his bris.

Earlier in August, the Donald Trump mouthpiece Jeffrey Lord, lost his commentary job on CNN essentially for calling one of Trump’s liberal critics a Nazi (and presumably casting Trump’s defenders in the role of the Nazis’ victims).

But if any Jewish group had a complaint about Joel’s gesture, I haven’t heard it. The singer’s gesture came across as sincere and pointed, not tasteless.

Although he didn’t say why he wore the star, his former wife, model Christie Brinkley, took to social media to write that the star symbolised the “painful, excruciating, memories of loved ones who wore that star to their death”.

“Thank you, Billy for reminding people what was... so it may never ever be again,” she added.

Although Joel has never made much of his Jewish background, he has talked of his father, a German-born Jew who, according to Joel’s biographer, had vivid memories of the Hitler Youth and SS training near his childhood home in Bavaria, and who lost relatives in the Shoah.

Joel’s gesture might have been especially meaningful because his Jewishness, as he once put it, stopped at his bris.

The star seemed to be saying to the neo-Nazis who gathered in Charlottesville – and the political figures, ahem, who seemed unable to fully condemn them – that even he, a secular celebrity and multimillionaire, would still have been a victim of their perverse ideology.

The Nazis made the Jews wear the yellow star so they couldn’t hide. The stars on Joel’s lapel and back seemed to say: “I’m not hiding. I can’t hide. Come and get me.”

Contrast that with another celebrity’s decision to wear the star this week. When Nev Schulman, star of MTV’s sort-of reality show “Catfish”, wore a yellow Star of David at MTV’s video awards show last Sunday, the gesture, while well meaning, seemed forced.

I don’t think anybody wants the yellow star to become this year’s Aids ribbon or Livestrong bracelet. The wearing of the yellow star seems the kind of gesture that can be made once, or sparingly, lest you diminish its shock value or begin to insult the experiences and memory of the people you are purporting to identify with and honour.

But at least Schulman, like Joel, is Jewish. I can’t think of a non-Jewish celebrity who could get away with wearing the star. They’d be accused, rightly, of appropriation, the way the artist Dana Schutz was excoriated by black folk after her painting of the mutilated face of Emmett Till – a 14-year-old who was lynched by white men in Mississippi in 1955 – was shown at the Whitney Biennial in March.

Critics of Schutz’s painting said the circumstances and symbolism of the black teenager’s death are still too raw to be translated by a white woman into art.

That’s not to say (or at least I wouldn’t say) that only members of a particular ethnic group or religion can depict their own suffering. (What is widely considered the most powerful anti-lynching song, “Strange Fruit”, was written by a Jew, Abel Meeropol, although it was Billie Holiday who sang it most famously.)

But certain gestures of interethnic solidarity – “Anne Frank, c’est moi” – are landmines. Writers from William Styron to Yann Martel have been accused of cheapening the Holocaust through allegory or by universalising the Jews’ suffering.

Jewish artists like Art Spiegelman or Agnieszka Holland are given the latitude to depict the Holocaust in ways that might seem misguided or offensive if done similarly by a non-Jew. Authenticity can be earned, although it’s a lot easier to be born with it.

History’s most famous appropriation of the yellow star, meanwhile, turns out to be a myth. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum states flatly that “there is no truth” to the story that Denmark’s King Christian X wore a yellow star in solidarity with the Jews. Instead, the museum tells us, the king was heard to say to his finance minister: “Perhaps we should all wear it.”

If this were 1941, the answer would be yes – everyone should wear it. In 2017, everyone should at least imagine what it would be like to be persecuted because of their race, religion or nationality, and what it might feel like to be literally marked for death. I think that’s the kind of empathy Joel tried to inspire.

Very cool. (JTA)

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Going barmy while at Maccabi

NICOLA MILTZ

Jeppe High School pupil, Cameron Smook, got more than just a gold medal for cricket at this year’s Maccabi Games.

The 17-year-old grade 11 pupil went to Israel a boy in the eyes of Jewish law and came back a man after his team-mates encouraged him to do his barmitzvah at the Kotel.

After an inspiring tour of the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem on July 9, members of the SA under-18 cricket team learnt that fellow team-mate, Cameron, had never had his barmitzvah at the age of 13. They decided there and then to persuade him to undergo this spiritual rite of passage.

Said team manager, Joanne Tankel, of Johannesburg: “The boys were very moved by their visit to the Kotel. Many of them laid tefillin. Afterwards they got a bee in their bonnets that Cameron had to have his barmitzvah and they planted the seed in his head. Once he agreed, the excitement started to mount.”



It was a simple, no fuss affair and team-mates were called up to read from the Torah. Afterwards the team and the rabbi surrounded Cameron in song and dance.

The unassuming all-rounder never expected to read from the Torah among all of his team-mates, dressed in green and gold.

“I was going to Israel to have fun and play cricket for my country. This was unexpected and made it more special,” he said.

“The boys really wanted this. You’d expect



boys of this age to only be interested in the jol in Israel. But I think being in the Holy Land brought them closer to their connection with Hashem and it was their coaxing that eventually got Cameron to agree to it,” said Tankel.

During the Games, Maccabi offers athletes who have not yet had the opportunity to have a bar/batmitzvah to have one. This event is a fairly new Maccabiah tradition allowing sportsmen and women the opportunity to explore their Jewish roots.

On two separate days during the sporting event, a special ceremony is conducted at the Western Wall.

According to Cameron’s mother, Leyla, who is Jewish but not observant, this ceremony was “very meaningful and special”

She said her husband, Kobie, who is not Jewish, was always keen for Cameron to have his barmitzvah when he was 13.

“He wanted him to have it then and told him that he needed to start cheder and not eat treif.

He encouraged Cameron to have a barmitzvah for the right reasons and not just for the party.”

He was originally going to have it in Israel where most of Leyla’s very religious family live. Plans got scuppered for various reasons and it never happened.

So, when the opportunity arose during this year’s Maccabi Games, Kobie was “all in favour and excited” that his son was finally going to do what he should have done years ago.

“He actually insisted”, said Leyla, whose Israeli-based family is very observant.

“The whole Maccabi experience has changed Cameron’s life. He has met so many people and it’s opened up his social life,” said Leyla.

The team consisting of 15 players between the ages of 14 and 17, drove the mission.

Said team captain, Greg Ber of King David Victory Park High School: “Cameron’s

barmitzvah was a special moment for us. It brought us closer together as a team and made us one big family.

“I could really see the passion and unity every single boy had for the team and for each other. It was truly an honour to be at this barmitzvah at the Kotel.”

It was a simple, no fuss affair and team-mates were called up to read from the Torah. Afterwards the team and the rabbi surrounded Cameron in song and dance. “It was very special,” said Cameron who usually shies away from the limelight. The team then continued the celebrations at Moshikos on Ben Yehuda Street for falafels and shawarmas.

“Cameron’s barmy was the highlight of the Maccabi Games for all of us. It was not only about competitive sport, but also about connecting spiritually. It is the one thing we will all remember forever,” said Tankel.



Turning 108 – just another birthday for Rosalie Wolpe

MOIRA SCHNEIDER
CAPE TOWN

It is remarkable enough to reach the age of 108 – how much more so when one enjoys good health, both physical and mental. Such is the good fortune of Rosalie Wolpe, Highlands House’s oldest resident by several years, who celebrated her special day on Friday August 25..

For her it is no big deal, though. “I’m just a year older,” says the woman who was born during the reign of Edward VII, a year before the Union of South Africa came into being.

When the SA Jewish Report interviewed Rosalie on her 104th birthday, she said that she had always been healthy, had never had an operation or even been in hospital. This is still the case.

“Her only ailment is tiredness,” comments her 73-year-old son David, who planned a family tea for the occasion, as he does annually. Is he still scared of his mom?

“Ooh, she’s vicious!” he jokes, before adding that he still relies on her for advice and visits every other day. “David’s very good,” Rosalie comments.

Her daughter, Janet Dickman, lives in Australia. Rosalie has five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

David chuckles as he remembers that a few years ago, when people used to comment on how well and healthy Rosalie looked, she would take something from the Pick n Pay shelves and say very laconically: “No, I’ve passed my sell-by-date.”

Rosalie’s only concession to old age is her

walker, but she doesn’t need any care and lives in her own room at the home.

She moved to Highlands House in Cape Town seven years ago from another retirement home. She was born in Johannesburg, but came to this city as a child and has spent all her life here.

There is a genetic component to her longevity – her grandmother lived to the age of 99 and that was before the era of antibiotics. Her female cousins all lived to their mid-90s.

What is her recipe for good health? “I never had a car,” she states. “I used to walk a lot.” In addition, she never smoked and tried to eat healthily.

Rosalie remembers assisting her mother who ran the Café de Luxe, a big tearoom next to His Majesty’s Theatre in Muizenberg, in the 1920s. “I used to help her put the cakes on the plates,” she recalls of events of nearly a century ago.

Those were the days when lunch was two shillings and sixpence and tea was four-pence. “Scones and cream were four-pence,” adds David.

In the 1930s her mom had a boarding house – Chambers de Luxe, now The Tudor Inn – in Greenmarket Square in the city. The 40 rooms were often occupied by parliamentarians during their six-month sojourn in the city for parliamentary sittings and they “often didn’t pay”, says David. “Nothing’s changed!”

In the 1950s and ‘60s, Rosalie ran her own grocery business, Belvedere Stores, in Claremont, before the advent of Pick n Pay.

“She had two African men who delivered your groceries on bicycles; customers could phone through their orders,” David relates.

“Half a loaf of bread!” Rosalie exclaims.

A standout memory for David from his childhood is that, because his mom worked, she would organise someone to take him to the beach or the museum during the school holidays. “She was a very dedicated parent but very worried that she had to work,” he remembers.

“Work wasn’t simply five and a half days a week, it was also clerical work at night, balancing the books.”

Referring to the fact that his mom never drove a car, he recalls: “She would often not ask for a lift on a boiling hot Cape summer’s day, she’d walk a couple of kilometres. She didn’t want to trouble people – she’s always been very independent and self-denying.”

Rosalie occupies some of her time these days playing bingo and she still reads large print books, with murder mysteries being her preferred genre.

Jenni Burnett, chairman of the residents’ committee at Highlands House, is full of praise for Rosalie. “I’ve never heard a cross word or her being irritable – she’s always the same, always got a smile, always sitting in this chair.

“She’s just the loveliest person in the home. She’s just great – everybody adores her.

“Another thing – she’s got lovely legs, better than mine! She only wears shoes with heels. She’s always dressed like she’s going to a garden party; she doesn’t wear glasses

unless she’s reading.”

Rosalie attended Springfield Convent in Wynberg as a boarder her whole school career. She regards as a highlight of her life a trip to Japan after she closed her business in the late ‘60s.

She pronounces “the view” the best part of Highlands House as she gazes wistfully over the city rooftops towards the harbour in the distance.



Chabad says yes to better parenting, relationships and life

NICOLA MILTZ

“We are the most outdated parents in the history of the world,” well-known Johannesburg psychologist David Abrahamsohn told a packed Chabad House Miracle Drive fundraiser. “This has created fear and we’ve lost our confidence as parents,” he lamented.

Abrahamsohn was one of three guest speakers at this event last week. He was speaking about how to “Say Yes to Better Parenting”. US guest lecturer, Shaindy Jacobson spoke on “Say Yes to a Better Relationship”, while funny man Nik Rabinowitz tried – albeit unsuccessfully – to keep it clean during his “Say Yes to a Better Life” talk.

Abrahamsohn painted a bleak picture of how Jewish parents had sadly, due to various factors, discarded their successful parenting formula of the past. The ever-changing, fast-paced world had contributed to the widening generation gap which was placing parents and children under too much pressure.

Because of globalisation and social media, parents have become increasingly anxious that their children will not be able to compete globally, which has shifted the parenting parameters.

He spoke about how parents today are obsessed with the idea of “not depriving their children” which

has led to over-parenting, over-scheduling and over-indulging.

He referred to this as lawnmower or helicopter parenting, “gefilte fish parenting where the child is the fish ball and the parents are the carrot on top”, he said.

“Over-parenting comes not from giving too much, but from giving too little of what is essential,” he said.

The rates of depression and anxiety among young teenagers matched those of juveniles in prison, he said.

“Over-parenting is under-parenting,” he stressed.

On a positive note, Abrahamsohn said there were solutions.

We should “trust our intuition”, he said, and know that each child is different, requiring them to be parented individually. “What is good for one child cannot logically be good for all,” he said.

He emphasised the vital and important role of play.

“Let them play”, he urged, stressing the need for children to “just be”; this helped foster “out-of-the-box thinking, so necessary in today’s changing world.

“Stay out of the way and let your child play... let them loose in the garden and let them be creative.”

Children today need cognitive skills, imagination and creativity and play was essential in developing these, he said.

He said it was important to delay a child’s gratification.

Delayed gratification helped children to develop self-control, conquer stress and sustain effort.

“It’s not what we give our kids, it’s what we don’t give to them,” said Abrahamsohn.

“Every child wants to be a



superhero,” he said, encouraging parents to “give the gift of contribution”. Parents should provide opportunities for children to contribute to the world around them by encouraging small acts of kindness and caring, like donating their toys for instance. In this way, they become the superheroes they want to become.

And finally, he said, parents should actively engage with their children on a daily basis in debate and conversation.

Be “heroic and courageous parents” he encouraged. “Do not be driven by fear or anxiety, but by a deep instinctual connection with your child, always encouraging a healthy amount of chutzpah. In this way, you can “say yes to better parenting”, he offered.

Jacobson, director of the women’s studies division at the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute (JLI) said: “Grab this moment to do whatever you can.

“This moment will never come back again. Today I have an opportunity to do something, and it will never come back again.”

She highlighted the importance of communication in a marriage.

“A marriage is the meeting up of two halves of one soul – where the halves are as different from each other as humanly possible.”

It was essential to acknowledge these vast differences and this could be done by performing certain mitzvot such as lighting the Shabbos candles, abiding by the laws of family purity, and having respect for one’s partner.

She also spoke about the importance of music, love and laughter in the home and not to take one-self too seriously.

“Music and song are the languages of the soul – when you find the person you love, sing, laugh, dance and have music in the home.”



David Abrahamsohn, Shaindy Jacobson, Nik Rabinowitz and Rabbi Ari Kievman

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Treasure trove of letters spotlights Jewish life in Nazi Germany

MOIRA SCHNEIDER
CAPE TOWN

If it was not for an accidental fire that engulfed the Johannesburg home of Norman and Carol Schwab in 1986, a treasure trove of historical value might never have seen the light of day.

One of the few objects to have survived the fire was a large wooden trunk tucked away in the corner of the garage, containing thousands of letters. They belonged to Rudolf Schwab, Norman’s father, who had fled Nazi Germany in 1933 aged 21 and eventually found refuge in this country in 1936.

The extraordinary collection spans almost four decades – from the time of his arrival to his death in 1971 – and five continents across which his family had dispersed. The unique aspect of the correspondence is that it is more of a dialogue, since Rudolf kept not only the letters he received, but made carbon copies of those that he sent.

The letters are now the focus of an exhibition, “Letters of Loss and Refuge” at the South African Jewish Museum.

This exhibition is based on the book by Professor Shirli Gilbert, “From Things Lost: Forgotten Letters and the Legacy of the Holocaust”. Gilbert, who is professor of Modern History and director of the Parkes Institute for Jewish/non-Jewish Relations at the University of Southampton, wrote and curated the exhibition, having catalogued the letters.

Rudolf was born in 1911 to a prominent Jewish family in Hanau, a small city east of Frankfurt on the Main River. He fled the city in 1933, having been warned by his close childhood friend, Karl Kipfer, then a Nazi official, that he was to be arrested the next day.

In that year, there were 477 Jews living in Hanau who held prominent positions as doctors, lawyers, academics and businessmen. The persecution of its Jews began soon after the Nazis came to power.

Speaking at the exhibition’s opening, Gilbert said that the find was “by far” the largest collection of correspondence related to the Holocaust that she had encountered.

Poignantly, the collection includes letters until mid-1942 from family in Nazi Germany who were unable to get out.

Gilbert highlighted several threads in the exhibition: firstly, that the letters constituted a “vivid contemporary perspective” of Jewish life in Nazi Germany, rather than a retrospective one, as post-war testimonies are, describing the experiences of those who survived, when the outcome of events is already known.

“The letters, by contrast convey all the uncertainties and ambiguities of life as it was lived at the time, when the future was unclear.

“How did the family make sense of what was happening as new laws and restrictions were passed,

as international opinion ebbed and flowed, as life around them disintegrated? What did they talk about and think about as the months and years rolled on?” she asked.

Secondly, it portrayed the tragedy of European Jewry in microcosm, with the scattering of Rudolf’s family to Shanghai, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Stockholm and Montreal. While they

encouraged him to leave. “This was a very unexpected aspect of the correspondence,” Gilbert noted.

Though the two had lost touch after Rudolf left, they reconnected in 1948 and rekindled their friendship until Kipfer died in 1955. “This is probably the warmest and most prolific set of exchanges in all of Rudolf’s correspondence,” she commented.

Despite talking frequently about his “undemocratic past”, Karl never divulged to Rudolf what he actually did, but he devoted the remainder of his life to pursuing reparations from the German government for Rudolf and all his surviving relatives.

“His work on Rudolf’s claims was perhaps a way to process his sense of complicity, and restore his moral agency,” Gilbert suggested.

“As Karl put it, to ‘relieve the sorrows of my existence’

“He doesn’t fit neatly into the mould of perpetrator, but gets us closer to some of those questions at the heart of the Holocaust about the very complex motivations and inclinations that make us human,” Gilbert stated.

The letters were discovered eight years ago by Rudolf’s grandson Daniel Schwab who has devoted himself to having his grandfather’s collection archived, catalogued and studied. At the exhibition opening were Rudolf’s son Norman and granddaughter Ricci Lyons who is named after him.

“Until relatively recently I knew



Rudolf Schwab’s passport photograph, circa 1935

may be regarded by history as the lucky ones to have escaped with their lives, in many cases their suffering was just beginning.

“The letters are proof that victimhood is a broad category, and that though it might be tempting, survival should never be romanticised,” Gilbert stated.

Thirdly, it put the spotlight on Rudolf’s friendship with Karl Kipfer, the Nazi official who had

The Met at Marble

HOWARD SACKSTEIN

It looked like a scene from a swanky Hollywood movie and one could easily have imagined that you were walking the red carpet at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

The glitterati social set of South African Jewry gathered last week at celebrity Chef David Higg’s Marble restaurant in Rosebank, for the South African Friends of the Israel Museum annual dinner and charity art auction.

In a stroke of creative genius, the South African Friends of the Israel Museum committee convinced Master Chef Higgs (previously of 500 at the Saxon) to kasher his award-winning kitchen for the event. The restaurant which opened last year, has consistently had month-long waiting lists for a booking.

Glitz and glamour were the order of the day as guests were treated to a super salad filled with pomegranate seeds and edamame beans, a rare Scotch fillet topped with marrow bone and an unsweetened chocolate cake on a pineapple base.

Under the careful eye of both his mashgiach and kosher caterer and cookbook author Estelle Sacharowitz, Higgs produced a kosher meal that could rival any top restaurant in South Africa.

Director emeritus and international president for the museum’s worldwide activities, James S Snyder regaled the audience



Photos: Greg Mulford

with tales of the Israel Museum. The museum boasts one of the world’s finest art collections and is considered among the top 100 museums in the world.

In his newly-created role, Snyder is responsible for developing the museum’s international network of Friends organisations, of which South Africa is one.

More than a million visitors walk the halls of the Israel Museum each year. The highlight of the museum is undoubtedly the Shrine of the Book, which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls. The 2 000-year-old Scrolls are 950 manuscripts discovered by Bedouin shepherds between 1947 and 1956 in 11 caves near Qumran, on the shores of the Dead Sea.

The white dome of the Shrine of the Book is shaped to resemble the lids of the jars in which the manuscripts were found. Opposite the dome-shaped shrine, is a stark black wall, a contrasting homage



Norman Schwab and Ricci Lyons at the exhibition opening

of my grandfather Ralph (Rudolf) as my father’s very stern father whose divorce from my grandmother necessitated my father spending all his school years in a Catholic boarding school,” Lyons told the gathering. There was also an absence in their lives of family from her father’s side.

“Jewish holidays were always spent with my mother’s family. Before the celebratory dinners we would go to Reform shul always thinking we were following our German grandfather’s family’s traditions.”

Thanks to her brother Daniel, Gilbert, the German translators and the Kaplan Foundation, Lyons said that she and her father now had “a very different and much deeper understanding of who we are and where we come from.

“I feel so blessed to be able to witness my father going through an incredibly cathartic process in his

70s by the realisation, through the medium of the letters, that whatever his father did, was well thought out and with the clear purpose of being in his young sons’ best interests.

“Now, from the letters, and the carefully written book, we know that the Schwab family was actually a very Observant Jewish family in Hanau Germany and that the main reason for Grandpa Ralph being Reform in South Africa was that was the community where he found acceptance and comfort and where he was able to continue his family’s commitment to their heritage and community by being an active member.”

The exhibition, which was designed by Angela Tuck, runs until October 8. The book’s website is <http://www.wsupress.wayne.edu/fromthingslost/index.html>



Mark Kaplan, Jarrod Friedman, Paul Salomon, Jonathan Debasc, Ryan Friedman

to the “Sons of Light” fighting the “Sons of Darkness” referenced in the Scrolls.

Although the art collection of the Israel Museum is one of the greatest collections in the world, one of the most controversial archaeological pieces in the collection is a small ivory pomegranate with the inscription in ancient Hebrew reading: “Belonging to the Temple, holy to the priests”.

For years many scholars believed that this tiny ornament once adorned the sceptre of the high priest of the

Temple during the Second Temple period. While its origin is unknown, the Investigative Committee of Israel in 2004 concluded that the inscription is likely to be a suspected archaeological forgery, although the ivory pomegranate itself appears to be over 3 000 years old.

The evening concluded with a high energy art auction with a David Goldblatt photograph of domestic workers in Johannesburg in the 1970s, fetching an astounding R200 000.



THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

White House unfazed by Netanyahu pledge not to evacuate settlements

ERIC CORTELLESSA
WASHINGTON

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s vow to not evacuate any further Israeli settlements in the West Bank, ruffled a few feathers in Washington on Tuesday, with the White House saying it would not derail efforts to restart the moribund Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

On Monday, at an event celebrating 50 years of Israeli settlements in Samaria – the biblical name for the northern West Bank – Netanyahu told a crowd of thousands: “We are here to stay forever. There will be no more uprooting of settlements in the land of Israel.”

His speech came days after he met with a high-level White House delegation seeking to bring the sides back to the negotiating table.

“It is no secret what each side’s position is on this issue,” a senior White House official told The Times of Israel on Tuesday. “Our focus is on continuing our conversations with both parties and regional leaders to work towards facilitating a deal that factors

in all substantive issues.”

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, denounced Netanyahu’s remarks and urged the Trump administration to intervene.

“This is an Israeli message to the US administration, which sought through an important tour in the area to do something in order to rescue the peace process,” he told the Associated Press.

“We call upon the US administration to deal with these provocations,” which he said impede US peace efforts and are “an attempt to return things to square one”.

Last week, Abbas and Netanyahu separately met with Trump’s senior adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner, peace envoy Jason Greenblatt and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategy Dina Powell.

After the delegation met with Netanyahu in Tel Aviv, where Kushner told the prime minister that Trump is “very committed” to help broker a peace deal, Netanyahu responded by saying he believed peace with the Palestinians was “within our reach”.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara attend an event marking 50 years of Israeli settlements in Samaria, in Barkan, in the West Bank.

Mandelblit defends ‘democratic’ anti-Netanyahu demos outside his home

ALEXANDER FULBRIGHT

Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit on Tuesday defended the right of protesters to demonstrate near his home against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying the weekly protests calling for the premier to be indicted in a pair of corruption investigations, are entirely legitimate and protected by freedom of expression.

“Freedom of expression and the right to protest are fundamental rights in a democratic state,” Mandelblit said at a conference in Tel Aviv of the Israel Bar Association.

“It is especially important to uphold the right to freedom of expression in areas where the views are grating,” Mandelblit said, adding that because the issue of the demonstrations relates to him personally, he would not comment further.

Responding to the protesters’ claim that he is dragging his feet over the investigations, Mandelblit said there were “no short cuts” in a probe of this nature, and that it



was being conducted properly and seriously.

Last week, the High Court of Justice allowed the weekly protests to resume near Mandelblit’s home in Petah Tikva. The court said no more than 500 demonstrators could attend; in the event, 1 500 to 2 000 gathered. Police had blocked a demonstration the previous week and arrested two of its leaders.

The protests have been condemned by members of Netanyahu’s ruling Likud party, who say they are part of an undemocratic effort to oust the prime minister.

Netanyahu charged at a Likud

rally earlier this month that the demonstrations were part of an attempt by the left and the media to use the ever-widening corruption investigations against him and his family to oust him from power, which he called “a coup against the government”.

“Listen carefully to what the organiser of the left-wing protests said there in Petah Tikva. ‘We won’t be able to take down Netanyahu through elections, so let’s bring him down through investigations.’ I am quoting him,” Netanyahu said.

He also told the August 9 gathering: “They don’t want to just take me down, they want to take us all down... They know that they can’t beat us at the ballot boxes, so they are trying to circumvent democracy and topple us in other ways.”

The demonstrations, which have taken place every Saturday evening since December 2016, have grown dramatically in recent weeks amid developments in the corruption cases involving Netanyahu. Earlier this month, over 2 500 people took part.

US THREATENS TO HIT ISIS FIGHTERS EVACUATING UNDER HEZBOLLAH DEAL

The US-led coalition said on Wednesday it is monitoring a convoy of IS fighters that evacuated the Lebanon border headed toward eastern Syria under a controversial agreement brokered by Hezbollah and may strike at them.

Coalition spokesman Col Ryan Dillon, told The Associated Press the coalition has already struck a small bridge and punched a crater in a road to keep them from moving further east toward the border with Iraq.

“We are monitoring their location in real time,” he said, adding that the coalition “will not rule out strikes against IS fighters being moved”.

Syrian opposition activists said the convoy, which left the Lebanon-Syria border on Tuesday, is still in government-held territory in eastern Syria. The IS militants were allowed to evacuate the area in buses following a Hezbollah-negotiated deal that allows them to go to IS-held territory near the Iraqi border.

“We are not party to any agreements that were made by the Lebanese Hezbollah and ISIS or the (Syrian) regime,” Dillon says. (AP)



Lebanese Army Commander General; Joseph Aoun, right, and Spanish Defence Minister Yacoub Sarraf, left, listen to Lebanese President Michel Aoun.

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TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

It’s an operation that only takes one hour, but it allows hundreds of children to face the future with a smile.

That’s the contribution of two plastic surgeons from the Rambam Medical Centre in Haifa, who recently returned from Africa where they corrected facial deformities in local children.

Doctors Omri Emodi, a craniofacial surgeon, and Zach Sharony, a plastic surgeon, were working in Ghana on a mission organised by Operation Smile, a US based humanitarian organisation, along with a team of surgeons and medical staff from 12 countries.

“If a child has a facial deformity, it can affect eating, drinking, speaking and, of course, his or her own self-image,” explained Emodi. “You walk with a sign on you, especially in Africa. You could easily be an outcast.”

Their patients ranged in age from a few

Israeli doctors return smiles to African children’s faces



months old to young men and women in their 20s. They came from all over Ghana, some as far as 350 km away. Most of the operations were on cleft lips and palates, while others dealt with more complex surgeries on facial deformities.

The doctors worked non-stop in seven makeshift surgery rooms in the city of Ho, and, together with an international team of surgeons, technicians, nursing staff and anaesthesiologists, completed 155 operations in eight days.

“You work with a team that you don’t know and who come from another culture. But once you get into the rhythm, everyone becomes one team, motivated by the desire to help these people,” said Emodi.

“It takes only less than one hour to carry out the operation,” Emodi said, but can change the life of a child. “The

mission is so satisfying,” he added, smiling. “It’s like a gift from G-d.”

The procedures are done at no cost to the children or their families, and are funded by the NGO.

The challenge, according to the organisation, is to reach as many people as possible in the short time available.

“In Ghana – with a population of 20 million – there are only 20 qualified surgeons who can perform these operations,” said Emodi.

Emodi and Sharony have a long tradition of taking part in missions to Vietnam, Ethiopia, the Philippines and other countries, treating dozens of patients wherever they go.

At the Rambam Hospital in Haifa, they also treat patients, including Palestinians and those from war-torn Syria and neighbouring Arab countries.



News and views from the Fed Protecting academic freedom at the University of Cape Town

ROWAN POLOVIN
CHAIRMAN, SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST FEDERATION (CAPE COUNCIL)

The University of Cape Town’s “Palestine Solidarity Forum” (PSF) is an anti-Israel student pressure group on campus, with direct connections to the anti-Semitic BDS movement.

The PSF is running a nefarious campaign, pushing for an official academic and cultural boycott of Israel at the University. The PSF’s demands predictably follow the guidelines of the “Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)”, an arm of BDS that publishes lengthy documents attempting to systematise anti-Israel policy at universities.

These demands include the cessation and severing of all university connections to Israeli academia and academics (although always claiming not to target individuals), research projects, normalisation projects, study tours and all cultural and intellectual exchanges.

The PACBI attempts to appropriate the language of academia and human rights in order to appeal to academics. However, this grandiloquence fails to mask the striking parallels between its campaign and anti-Jewish policies at German universities from 1933 until the mid-40s, when Jews were victimised and banned from all academic life simply for being Jewish.

The PSF is hoping that Israeli academic institutions and academics, are victimised and banned from academic life in South Africa simply for being Israeli. Since Israel is the sole Jewish state, the inherent anti-Semitic nature of the campaign is patently obvious to anyone willing to see.

The overwhelming majority of universities around the world have rejected calls for academic boycotts of Israel on the basis of them being discriminatory, bigoted and counter to the ideals of academic freedom, the pursuit of knowledge and the freedom of ideas.

One hopes that sanity prevails at UCT, which falls under South Africa’s world-class Constitution, its outstanding anti-discrimination laws and the excellent Higher Education Act, which specifically promotes academic freedom and the advancement, not derailment, of academic values.

It is deeply worrying that UCT’s Academic Freedom Committee (AFC), a body currently tasked with making a recommendation to the university on whether or not to impose this boycott, contains individuals who have made anti-Zionist and in some cases blatantly anti-Semitic comments in the past, yet will not recuse themselves from the decision.

It is also troubling that the AFC honoured Columbia University Professor Mahmood Mamdani, a well-known BDS-supporting academic who actively promotes academic boycotts of Israel, to deliver the committee’s annual TB Davie Memorial Lecture on Academic Freedom at UCT in August.

The Cape Town Jewish community and all South Africans who value academic freedom and the overwhelming benefits of working with, as opposed to against, Israeli academia, should pay close attention to this decision and its implications for the future of the University of Cape Town.

Israelis renew emotional debate on price of a soldier’s body

ANDREW TOBIN

Israel’s defence minister reignited the emotional national debate over what price the country should be willing to pay for the return of kidnapped soldiers, particularly the bodies of those who have been killed.

Avigdor Lieberman said last Sunday that Israel must not repeat the “mistake” of the 2011 Gilad Shalit deal, in which it released more than 1 000 Palestinian security prisoners in exchange for the return of its soldier from Hamas.

The argument, which never really ends here, was on.

Some Israelis responded that the government should simply be forcing concessions from the terrorist group, which governs the Gaza Strip. Others said Lieberman’s suggestion that limitations be placed on prisoner exchanges, amounted to abandoning captured soldiers.



Simcha and Leah Goldin, parents of late Israeli soldier Hadar Goldin, at a ceremony marking three years since Operation Protective Edge

The defence minister’s comments came in a statement responding to two recent developments. Earlier last Sunday, Simcha Goldin, the father of missing soldier Hadar Goldin, held a news conference in which he called Lieberman “weak” and “cowardly” for failing to bring home the remains of soldiers, including his son, whose body was never returned by Hamas after Israel’s 2014 Gaza war.

Last week, Lior Lotan resigned from his position overseeing Israel’s

efforts to retrieve from Hamas the remains of Goldin and another soldier, Oron Shaul, as well as three citizens still believed to be alive.

Lieberman said he understands and accepts Goldin’s criticism and that the return of the soldiers’ remains is still a top priority.

“I consider this to be of the utmost moral and ethical import, first and foremost to the families and to the IDF and the State of Israel,” he said.

However, he argued that Israel could not afford another Shalit deal, which he said saw the release of 1 027 “murderers and their agents”, including Mahmoud Kawasme and Yahya Sinwar. Kawasme helped fund the 2014 kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenagers. Sinwar was recently elected to head Hamas in Gaza.

Lieberman said 202 of the released prisoners have since been rearrested for alleged involvement in terror, resulting in the deaths of seven Israelis. He said 111 of those rearrested are still in prison.

Hamas has been holding the remains of Goldin and Shaul since the two were killed in the Gaza Strip during Israel’s Operation Protective Edge. The three living Israelis being held are said to have freely entered Gaza.

Israel reportedly has been conducting indirect talks with Hamas about a possible prisoner exchange.

On Monday, Housing Minister Yoav Galant criticised Lieberman for supporting the Shamgar Commission, which in 2012 recommended severely limiting the concessions that Israel can make to free a captured soldier. Among other things, the report opposed releasing security prisoners in exchange for the bodies of Israeli soldiers.

“The adoption of the Shamgar report would sentence a captured soldier to death,” Galant told Israel Radio.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formed the commission but never brought its findings to a government vote that would make them binding. He has yet to weigh in on the recent debate.

Attorney Liron Libman came out on Tuesday with specific recommendations for the kind of restrictions Israel could place on prisoner releases.

Now a researcher at the Israel Democracy Institute think tank, he said the government should consider freeing only prisoners who have not violated the law of war, for instance by killing civilians as opposed to soldiers.

Many Israelis can relate both to Lieberman’s desire to prevent the release of terrorists and the Goldins’ need for closure.



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Houston Jewish community ‘impacted’ by Hurricane Harvey

JTA AND TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

The Jewish community of Houston was hit hard when Hurricane Harvey bombarded the city last Saturday and Sunday, causing massive flooding and killing at least six people.

“Parts of our community have been impacted by the severe weather of the past two days,” the Jewish Federation of Houston posted Sunday morning on Facebook.

“We are working with our partner agencies to assess the current situation in our community and determine priority on action items.

The post did not specify what in the Jewish community had been damaged.

Prior to the onset of the hurricane, the Federation wrote on its website that it was “preparing to mobilise a community response to Hurricane Harvey in the event it is necessary... We are here to help manage the recovery, as needed.”

The Federation said it had met with Jewish Family Service, the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Centre, and Seven Acres, to spearhead a community-wide recovery response.

The Houston JCC announced on Facebook that it would close on Friday and remain closed until Sunday, with an update on Sunday evening. Prior to the hurricane, it collected emergency supplies for the community. The Texas Jewish Herald-Voice reported that homes in heavily Jewish populated Houston subdivisions, including Meyerland, were

reporting flooding on Sunday morning, for the third time in as many years.

“I am sad to report that many of our friends who flooded in the recent past are flooded once again, and there are many others who have never been flooded before,” Rabbi Chaim Lazaroff of Houston told Chabad Org. “The rain is not stopping,” he said.

Chanie Lazaroff added: “There is a lot of tension, and the hard part is that it’s far from over. There’s a lot of rain coming, and safety is the most important thing.”

“I’m on the kitchen counter right now with my daughter and our cats,” Goldstein said. “We’re stuck.”



Photo: Mark Mulligan/Houston Chronicle via AP

A family evacuates their Meyerland home in Houston.

Another leader of a volunteer emergency response team, Jenelle Garner, told the news site that people were not prepared for the extent of the flooding.

“People who have never flooded before are flooding now,” she said. “It’s really bad here, we might be forced to leave also. This is the first time I would ever think about leaving.”

The hurricane first made landfall last Friday evening near Corpus Christi, Texas, about 320 km southwest of Houston.

The Jewish Community Centre of Corpus Christi was closed on Friday and Sunday, and said in a Facebook post it hoped to resume normal operations on Monday.

Congregation Beth Israel in Corpus Christi closed from Friday, cancelling all Shabbat services and Torah studies, it said in a Facebook post.

Harvey, now a tropical storm, is expected to continue to drop torrential rains and catastrophic flooding on the region for the coming days. Some 38 to 76 cm of rain is expected in the Houston area, South Texas and parts of Louisiana. Thousands remain without power.

Into the eye of the storm: The Jewish heroes of Hurricane Harvey

YAAKOV SCHWARTZ HOUSTON

After making sure that his wife Basya and their three children were safe and well-supplied, Tomer Ben Shushan took advantage of a brief lull in tropical storm Harvey’s torrential rains last Sunday to “commandeer” a rescue truck.

Together with a friend, Ben Shushan braved 50 km of flooded Houston streets to get to their mutual friend’s construction vehicle, a heavy truck with a small crane, which was parked near the city’s George Bush Intercontinental Airport. The rig was so waterlogged it required a jump start.

With record-setting downpours and flooding taking even seasoned Houstonians by surprise, hundreds of people are being rescued by both public forces and private citizens from upper storeys of homes heavily submerged in floodwaters. Officials estimate that 30 000 people will be left temporarily homeless by the storm.

The rain is so heavy that the Houston police department warned residents not to climb to the attic level to avoid the rising waters unless they had “an axe or means to break through onto your roof”.

Shushan and his friend, both Israeli former military men, were putting their army experience to good use helping families and the elderly unable to escape their homes. The duo were out until 02:00 on Monday, wife Basya Ben Shushan told The Times of Israel, and were back to extracting helpless residents later that morning.

“My husband is evacuating a home... The house is completely floating. He is able to rescue the lady and her two dogs but the husband is attached to oxygen tanks and we need a medical

truck to evacuate him,” read the post. A reply two hours later reported that the man had been rescued.

Houston native Basya said the city was taken by surprise. “We’ve dealt with hurricanes and floods – every year we go through this, but this is very, very scary,” said Basya.

Houston’s Jewish community, clustered in the city’s southwest, is hit particularly hard by the storm. Dozens of Jewish families are displaced, according to the Jewish Family Service, whose building itself was damaged by the flooding. Also affected are several synagogues and a JCC.

United Orthodox Synagogues of Houston “suffered catastrophic damage,” according to a Facebook post which featured an appeal to help rebuild the synagogue.

Rafi Engelhart, director of the UOS branch of the Worldwide B’nei Akiva movement, helped save the

lives of eight people when one of the neighbours, an EMT, managed to procure a rubber life raft.

The 29-year-old shliach, or emissary, for WBA, spoke to The Times of Israel from that home, which was one of 100 000 without power on Monday, while the family planned their next move.

Engelhart said the EMT swam over a block through waters up to nearly two metres high when she learned that the inflatable raft was in the garage of another family hunkering down nearby, whose house was submerged.

When Engelhart saw the raft, he didn’t hesitate to jump in. “I wasn’t going to just let her go out there alone,” he said.

The pair went out to rescue a family trapped on the top level of their home. “They were okay,” Engelhart said, “but they were stuck in the attic and the water just kept coming up and we were afraid they’d have no place else to go.”

Along the way, they passed another stranded family who was waiting to be picked up by a relative. “We weren’t going to wait for that to happen,” said Engelhart, “so we took the mother and daughter and brought them back here before going out again to get the others.”

With dozens of homes abandoned in the Jewish community, Basya Ben Shushan said there were cases of looting. “People who have evacuated their homes are having their things taken – it’s very sad,” she said.

Still, she said, “we’ve never seen water this high. Coming in the first floor, up to the second floor, we’ve never experienced this type of flooding. People at this point are just happy to get out of their house alive.”

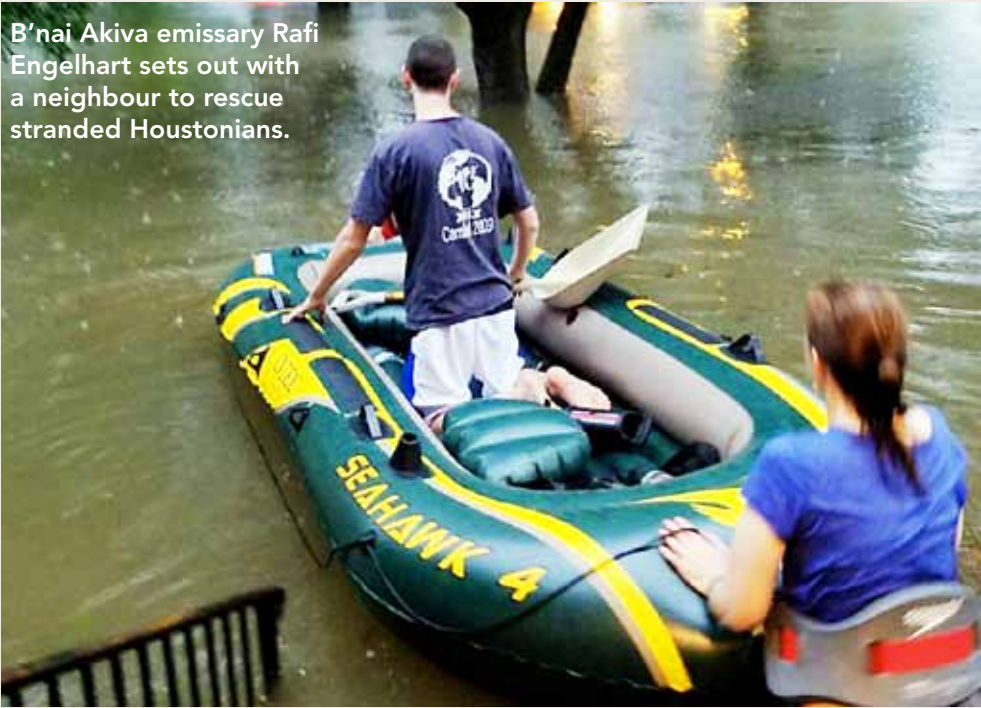
The storm is dumping unprecedented rainfall onto the fourth-largest city in the United States, causing devastating flooding – and with the storm only travelling at eight kilometres per hour, things are only looking to get worse.

The Jewish community is banding together to provide emergency aid to those in need. The Evelyn Rubenstein JCC had collected emergency supplies prior to the storm’s arrival and is a distribution point.

Chabad representatives are helping people find shelter, delivering kosher meals to people in shelters and hotels, and are already raising funds for rebuilding.

Current estimates put the death toll at 10, but that number is expected to rise as the waters recede.

“People are on roofs, floating on inflatable mattresses, and there are people out there who have no way to communicate that they’re in need,” Basya Ben Shushan said.



B’nai Akiva emissary Rafi Engelhart sets out with a neighbour to rescue stranded Houstonians.



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Jerusalem Backgammon Champs – rolling winning dice for Jewish-Arab coexistence

DAVID HOROVITZ

In the end, it all came down to one throw of the dice. If Itzik Yakobovitch, he of the snazzy white hat and the implausibly youthful dance moves, could manage double 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6, he would be crowned Jerusalem’s first-ever backgammon champion. If not, the title

– Jerusalem Arabs; a garage owner from Ramle; a Russian-born, Israeli-raised professional backgammon player once ranked World No 1 and generally known as “Falafel”; and the 2009 World Backgammon Champion Masayuki “Mochy” Mochizuki, who had flown in especially for the occasion.

Worried that “Falafel” (real name Matvey Natanzon) and “Mochy” would defeat all the locals and spoil the fun by making the final, the organisers had drawn them to play each other in the first round, so that at least one would be eliminated early on.

They needn’t have worried.

Backgammon involves a fair amount of skill, but the rapid-fire, best-of-three format used in Thursday’s tournament, meant that luck played a leading role.

After “Mochy” had defeated “Falafel”, the Japanese champ faced off next against Ayal Amari, the multi-tattooed Ramle garage man.

Reputation counted for nothing: World champion or not, “Mochy” was undone when a series of throws rolled usefully for Amari.

Thoroughly unfazed, “Mochy” spent the rest of the evening cheerfully playing informal games against all-comers – notably a stream of young ultra-Orthodox boys.

The 32 finalists were an overwhelmingly male, Sephardi and Arab bunch. The crowds were more diverse – lots of spouses and kids, shouting in Arabic and Hebrew for their loved ones or for the underdogs, and hundreds of fans and curious onlookers.

Finally, after three hours of play, it all came down to Gadi and Itzik. Every game of the night had been dramatised for the crowd by the two relentlessly



The fateful throw: Itzik Yakobovitch rolls the dice at the Jerusalem Backgammon Championships beneath the Old City Walls on August 24. At left is his rival Gadi Carmeli.

cheerful commentators – one a West Jerusalem soccer announcer, and the other an East Jerusalem actor known for his part in the drama “Fauda”, trading off in Hebrew and Arabic.

This last contest was not a best-of-three encounter, but a single game. Do or die. And there was no second prize – it was a case of winner takes all: NIS 25 000 or nothing.

Each man briefly held the advantage, but then Gadi nosed in front. Now the end was nigh. Only double 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 could save Itzik. He got to his feet. He briefly took off his hat. He told the organisers what a terrific event they’d arranged. “Roll the dice,” the crowd hollered back.

With an extravagant, theatrical flourish, Itzik rolled. Incredibly, he threw a double. But it was the only double that couldn’t give him victory. Double 1. So near. But victory was Gadi’s. He shot out of his chair, held both hands aloft, shook hands with Itzik, and essayed a short victory strut.

Israeli firm sees the spy agencies behind the sexy images

SHOSHANNA SOLOMON

This looks like a fake one,” said Eyal Sela, head of threat intelligence at Tel Aviv-based firm ClearSky Cyber Security.

The Facebook profile on the screen of Sela’s computer is that of a dark-haired young woman, a low-cut white T-shirt and cut-off blue-jean shorts hugging her voluptuous body. Definitely pretty.

On the side, there is a picture of the same young woman with a fun Snapchat face – mouse ears and snout. And there are other photos of her partying with her friends, liking links and commenting on posts. She’s formerly an IDF soldier, according to the profile, which also identifies the Israeli city in which she lives and other details.

Except she is not who she says she is. ClearSky’s Sela smoothly searches for the photographs on Google and, bingo, discovers that the images on the page are actually of a young Australian woman. The former IDF soldier’s identity profile is fake, the pictures stolen.

“Generally, these fake profiles are of beautiful women who seek to befriend men even if they don’t know them,” said Sela. “They gain their trust, coming across as a legitimate person, and then trick them into clicking on malicious links or a virus by texting them or sending them personal messages, asking them to read an interesting article perhaps, but

with links to malicious websites.

“You think that person is legitimate, but actually it is an espionage agency, or some other party that wants access to your information.”

ClearSky offers cybersecurity intelligence services to customers.

Founded almost seven years ago by Boaz Dolev, who formerly set up the Israeli government’s electronic services platform, e-Gov, ClearSky is also part of the Israeli Cyber Consortium, a group led by Israel Aerospace Industries that includes heavyweights like Check Point Software Technologies Ltd, Verint, and ECI Telecom Ltd, which provides a comprehensive basket of cybersecurity services to clients globally.

ClearSky’s clients include utility and financial companies in the United States, Portugal, Scotland, Spain, and Israel, as well as many financial, governmental and industrial institutions in Israel, according to the firm.

“We serve the top 50 corporations in Israel,” Sela said.

The company provides clients with round-the-clock cyber intelligence alerts, cyber war games and advice on protecting their systems. They teach customers to identify threats and report them, practise threat scenarios and set out crisis management instructions for when an attack is underway.

Jay-Z defends ‘anti-Semitic’ lyric as gross generalisation

JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY

Jay-Z defended his decision to include a lyric in a song on his latest album that has been called anti-Semitic, saying he exaggerated images of black people in the same song.

The rapper was discussing his song “The Story of OJ,” which appears on his “4:44” album, during an interview with the Rap Radar podcast last week.

The song lyric says: “You wanna know what’s more important than throwin’ away money at a strip club? Credit / You ever wonder why Jewish people own all the property in America? This is how they did it.”

Following the release of the album, the Anti-Defamation League expressed concern about the lyric, but emphasised it did not believe Jay-Z intended to promote anti-Semitism. The ADL said that “we know that Jay-Z is someone who has used his celebrity in the past to speak out responsibly and forcefully against the evils of racism and anti-Semitism”.

In his podcast interview with hosts Elliott Wilson and Brian “B Dot” Miller, the rapper said of the accusations: “It’s

hard for me to take that serious because I’ve exaggerated every black image in the world.”

He added, referencing the song’s music video: “If even you, as the Jewish community, if you don’t have a problem



Hip-hop star Jay-Z performs in Cape Town in 2006

with the exaggerations of the guy eating watermelon and all the things that was happening, if you don’t have a problem with that, and that’s the only line you pick out, then you are being a hypocrite.

“Of course I know Jewish people don’t own all the property in America. I mean, I own things! So, I know that they don’t own all of the property in America. It was an exaggeration.”

He added that “context is everything”.

Mina Lopato meets the wife of its founder

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Few parents or children at Mina Lopato Nursery School in Greenside, Johannesburg, know how the school got its name.

People started putting the picture together when 99-year-old Holocaust survivor, Madeleine Lopato came to a recent Friday Shabbos ring at the school.

Madeleine, together with her husband, the late Isaac Lopato, built and founded Mina Lopato Nursery School back in 1961.

Isaac Lopato was a member of the Emmarentia Shul, and the congregation had been discussing for some time the need for the shul to have a nursery school.

Eventually, Isaac agreed to come on board and build the school. He named it after his first wife, Mina, who had passed away.

When asked whether the naming of the school was conditional to the deal, Madeleine said, with a wry smile, that she couldn't confirm it.

The school was originally located next to Emmarentia Shul. Madeleine had attended the school's move to Greenside Shul in 2006, but had since lost touch with it.

Principal Leanne Upiter Beer was thrilled when she made contact with this remarkable woman.

Upiter Beer explained: "Out of the blue, I got this call from a lady who visits Madeleine at Randjeslaagte every Friday, an initiative of The Union of Jewish Women. Madeleine still has vivid memories of those early years of Mina Lopato and often refers to the school."

As it happens, Madeleine has a coffee table

book in mint condition with photos from the inauguration of the school.

Born in Poland, she moved to Brussels when she was four years old and managed to survive Hitler's tyranny.

She was able to evade Nazi capture during those years when, with her mother and young son, who was born in 1943, they were hidden from the Nazis by a close friend, Jeane Hofstadt-Swinnens. In 1988, Hofstadt-Swinnens was recognised by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations.

Lopato's son was the esteemed specialist paediatrician, the late Dr Rene Heitner.

Madeleine's first husband and her sister, who was seven months pregnant at the time, perished in the Holocaust.

But in an amazing turn of events, Madeleine found her father alive, 30 years later, in the south of France. Her father had assumed for all those years that all his family had died, but Madeleine had never



Shabbas Ring



Madeleine and Isaac Lopato at the opening of the school back in 1961

stopped looking for him.

She knew her father's last known location was Paris, so Madeleine wrote to every mayor of every town in France, and as she proudly says, "I managed to do what the Red Cross couldn't manage."

Today, Madeleine's legacy is decorated all over her lounge wall, with photos of grand-children and numerous great-grandchildren. Her late son was renowned for his pioneering work in the treatment of lysosomal storage disorders and saved many a young life in his time.

Madeleine's story highlights to the children and parents at Mina Lopato: "He who saves one, saves the world!"

World News in Brief

Israeli ministry drops opposition to adoption by same-sex couples

JERUSALEM – Israel's Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs has reversed its opposition to allowing same-sex couples to adopt in the country.

The ministry said there is no problem in principle with adoption by a same-sex couple in a brief filed with Israel's Supreme Court, Israel's Channel 2 first reported on Tuesday evening.

The brief was filed in response to a petition regarding adoption by same-sex and common-law couples filed by the Association of Israeli Gay Fathers, with the Israel Religious Action Centre of the Reform movement, against the Social Affairs Ministry and the attorney general.

The reversal came at the request of Welfare Minister Haim Katz, according to the report. In July, Katz had asked the court for an extension on

issuing an opinion to re-examine the issue, saying he wanted to seek more professional opinions.

The ministry stressed that the rules regarding such adoptions can only be made by amending existing legislation.

"In these circumstances and in a matter that has such significant social implications in today's Israeli society, it appears that the proper place for further discussion of this issue is the legislature," the opinion said, according to Channel 2.

Although adoption by same-sex couples has been legal in Israel since 2008, in practice it has been nearly impossible. Because opposite-sex couples have been given priority, only three same-sex couples have adopted in Israel out of 550 applicants. More than 1 000 opposite-sex couples have adopted in the past nine years. (JTA)

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Future-proofing South African shuls

SIMON APFEL

“Your committee guys are generally 40-plus, and I think it’s important to have the youth giving their take on things,” says Kevin Pogrund, a second-year mechatronics student at UCT, at the Chief Rabbi’s Bright Spot leadership conference in Johannesburg last weekend. Kevin was one of many young, old, rabbis, shul leaders and other interested community members who attended one of two high-energy conferences in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Their aim was to brainstorm and innovate ideas to future-proof South Africa’s network of Orthodox shuls. The twin conferences drew 85 leaders in Cape Town and 180 in Johannesburg. “I felt the conference raised some important issues, especially about youth involvement, and we’ve come up with some seed ideas to address them. It’s the start of a conversation,” says Pogrund, one of many young voices to be heard. “The purpose of the conference is to identify the bright spots within our shuls – to find what’s really working – and develop innovative strategies to amplify those successful practices,” explained Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein. Discussions centred on three primary themes: “Sense of Belonging”, “Sense of Meaning”, and “Food and Fun”, corresponding to “three real,

insights into the reasons people do and don’t go to shul, to find out what would encourage them to attend more frequently, and how they could gain more from the experience,” says Greenblatt, who led the survey. Around 60 per cent were regular shul -goers (attending either every day or just Shabbat), while 40 per cent were irregular shul-goers, many only coming to shul on the High Holidays and bar/batmitzvahs. “The factors that people are happy with and less happy with are the same across the demographic groups,” says Greenblatt. “This is a very positive result because every initiative we come up with, every intervention we devise, isn’t just going to be for a specific subsector of the Jewish community, but will benefit and appeal to all.” In terms of the scores themselves, in the “Sense of Belonging” category, people generally felt known and welcomed by their community, felt connected to the rabbi, and were not looking to change shuls. At the same time, those aged 18 to 24, as well as single people, did not see shul as a good place to meet new people. Of the three themes tested, “Sense of Meaning” is the aspect the community as a whole feel most comfortable with. Shul services were generally found to be meaningful and

In addition to the general study, a separate survey gauged the views of 113 shul leaders. MSDA also hosted three different focus groups – for women (Johannesburg), and men and women (Cape Town) and teenagers (Johannesburg). Significantly, it was the latter that offered the most encouraging findings. “If we are looking for bright spots, the focus group for teenagers indicated we have an emerging community that are very receptive to the kinds of innovations we are planning to put forward,” says Greenblatt. “They are interested in the shuls, and see a place for themselves in them.” After hearing the survey results, participants broke up into groups of 10 – each group a cross-section of different shuls and demographics – to discuss the findings and come up with novel ideas and suggestions for enhancing the shul experience. “Leaders came together across the shuls to brainstorm and problem-solve, which doesn’t happen very often. In general, the conference engendered a generosity of spirit, a concern not just for the needs of one’s own community but for the wellbeing of the community as a whole,” Rabbi Dani Brett, director of Cape Town’s “Torah Citywide” organisation says. “The most inspiring thing was the positive, ‘can-do’ attitude,” says Nina Cohen, a committee member of Greenside Shul in Johannesburg. “It was great to be working with other shuls in a spirit of camaraderie, sharing expertise as partners. Shuls are generally strong in some areas, weaker in others. This was about pooling our strengths so we could address our challenges.” Natanya Porter, a grade 11 pupil at King David Linksfield, representing the Diller Teen Fellows leadership programme, shared similar sentiments. “It was great to have a platform for giving our shul leaders constructive criticism. We need as many teenagers involved in this process as possible – hundreds of teenagers from all the schools. We all want to be invested in making our shuls as fabulous as possible.” Among the numerous ideas put forward were a “shul buddy system”, in which experienced shul-goers are appointed to mentor and assist those less familiar with the services; centralised Shabbatonim for kids, alternating at different shuls to ensure a critical mass; empowering and equipping families – religious and not – to host Shabbat meals in their homes; and turning shuls into community centres – places for people simply to hang out or have a braai. The ideas from the two conferences are currently being collated, and will be discussed and formalised at this week’s South African Rabbinical Conference. “From there, we will be bringing on board consultants and project managers to help with implementation and make these innovative plans and ideas a reality,” says Rabbi Goldstein. “It’s not just a one-off conference that everyone forgets about the next day – Bright Spots is an ongoing journey with what we expect to be real, practical outcomes.”

Robert Fridjhon



Rally to help Fridjhon meet mounting medical bills

PETER FELDMAN

Actor Robert Fridjhon is slowly recovering from suffering a stroke earlier this month. Meanwhile, friends in South Africa and abroad, are rallying to an online call to help fund his mounting medical bills. The stroke has drained him of funds and, being without a medical aid, he has been placed in a financial jam. Getting Fridjhon back to full recovery, will cost hundreds of thousands of rands, which he does not have. Ashleigh Harvey, a fellow actress and close friend, launched the Robert Fridjhon Fund and is appealing to the public to help with donations. Asked what kind of money he needs, Harvey told the SA Jewish Report: “Funds raised will cover a host of costs which are the cornerstones of recovery and these include occupational therapy (R6 000 per week), speech and language therapy (R6 540 per week) physiotherapy (R13 340 per week) and R880 on weekends, and a potential psychologist (R1 500 per week). Effectively, he needs almost R30 000 a week.” So far, more than R122 000 has been raised (most of it in American dollars) and more is expected, as the word gets around. Harvey said they are using social media (mainly Facebook) as their main mode of communication. “We have also contacted the media to cover the story.” People, she said, can contribute by logging onto the website: <https://www.generosity.com/medical-fundraising/robert-s-recovery/x/17182760>. They can also go to the Facebook page to keep up-to-date with Robert’s progress: <https://web.facebook.com/RobertsRecovery/> Asked how he was doing, Harvey said it was still early days. “Rob is paralysed on his left side. But he is taking each day as it comes.” Doctors are still assessing how long it will take, based on his day-to-day performance in rehabilitation. “The more rehab he undergoes, the better the prognosis,” she added. His acting future depends on the amount of rehab he receives. “Rob is a fierce lion-heart and the idea that he won’t return to the stage is unthinkable. We hope and pray that with the right medical treatment and intense rehab, he will be back on the boards in time to come,” said Harvey.



Photos: Guy Lerner

deep human needs”. Participants were presented with the findings of a recent community-wide survey gauging people’s shul experiences – what they felt was working and where they felt improvements were needed in each of the three areas. The study – the first of its kind in South Africa – was carried out by Data Management and Statistical Analysis (DMSA), a Wits University-based independent research company, through CEO, Dr Mark Paiker and senior business strategist, Jenny Greenblatt. Around 3 000 community members were surveyed, representing a wide range of demographics. “The purpose of the research was to gain enjoyable, though there does appear to be room to make Torah learning at shul more relevant to people’s daily lives. Many expressed a wish to develop a more personal, authentic connection with their rabbi. Another unsurprising finding was that choirs appeal far more to the older generation than their younger counterparts. The “Food and Fun” component seems to be where there is most room for improvement, with perhaps the overriding concern being a general dissatisfaction with children’s programming. Somewhat surprisingly, respondents seemed ambivalent as to whether the brocha was an important part of their shul experience.

Aliya – the good, the bad and the meshuga

Benita Levin

Long-term lessons learnt after a five-month course...

It's been a good few years since I sat down to write an exam. But I don't ever remember being as excited before a test, as I was at the end of our five-month Hebrew language course.

Our charismatic, enthusiastic teacher had made it clear from the start that the oral and written exams weren't the real test. The true test lies ahead – how we communicate in the streets, the butchery and our children's school – how we engage and how much we understand.

But, I left the course feeling that there were several important lessons I'd learnt that had nothing to do with the language, text or grammar of a complicated language – nothing to do with singular, plural, male or female word formations!

Long-term lessons learnt after a five-month course:

1. English is not necessarily enough: It's humbling realising that not only were most people in the class not first-language English-speakers, there were just five of us – two Americans, two Brits and one South African. Brazil had the largest number of “representatives” in the class, followed by France. Other “pupils” were from Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Mexico and Columbia.

So, when most of your new friends are speaking Portuguese or French during the coffee break, the best way for us all to communicate was in our slightly awkward, broken-Hebrew. In this environment, English most certainly wasn't going to help...

2. It's never too late to learn: “Are you fluent yet?”, people ask when they hear you're are at ulpan! Most certainly not. I understand much more than I did five months ago and am more comfortable having an informal conversation, especially with a stranger. WhatsApp messages in Hebrew are do-able and filling out official forms are much easier now.

The truth is, we are surrounded by “Anglos”, so much of our weekends or free time is spent talking English to other

South Africans, Brits or Americans. The challenge now is using the foundation we've just learnt and to keep practising. Much will depend on the time spent engaging with people in Hebrew, watching television, listening to radio and of course, reading. Several more advanced courses are offered too, including specialised areas, like law or medicine. We have a good start. The basics. It's up to us now...

3. Trying is better than not trying at all: An exceptionally patient barista at the nearby coffee shop has sweetly watched my “progress” over five months as I placed my order in Hebrew. He'd gently correct my grammar, or help me with the correct words. But he reiterated what so many others have said: Trying to speak a language – no matter how foolish you might feel – is so much better than not giving it a chance. For a generally assertive nation on-the-move, Israelis are incredibly understanding when you at least try to speak the language.

4. Attitude of Gratitude: Having “homework” every day, including over weekends, is not fun, especially when you've just arrived in a new country. Regular tests were set to assess how we were progressing as a class. Again, those weren't fun. But spending time with new people from all over the globe – ranging in age from early twenties to early sixties – is priceless. Our group made a collective effort to meet socially out of class on many occasions. We all face similar challenges ahead – the bonds are strong. It has truly been a privilege meeting the people in our class – I feel lucky at this age and stage in life, to be sharing this journey with new people from all over the world.

So, as I walked up the stairs of the absorption centre (Mircaz Klitah) to write the exam, I bumped into a former Durbanite who was waiting in the foyer. He was there to sign up for the next course, which starts in a month. “Is it worth it?” he asked.

“Betach” – for sure, I smiled, “for so many reasons...”

New phrase of the week – Kafe Natool – decaffeinated coffee. (For any order after 5pm.)

Mngxitama hate speech

>>Continued from page 3

remain poor. He was recently bust for being seen driving away from a media gathering in Cape Town in former Eskom chief Brian Molefe's son's bright red Audi. He has also been teased for drinking lattes and cappuccinos – not exactly a poor black man's drink.

Mngxitama launched a series of attacks on journalists who had been reporting on the Gupta leaks and state capture. The BLF and Mngxitama held a protest on June 29, at the home of Tiso Blackstar editor-at-large Peter Bruce in Parkview, harassing him and Business Day editor Tim Cohen and Karima Brown, who visited Bruce's house that day.

That resulted in an urgent interdict to stop the harassment and intimidation. On July 7 Judge AJ van der Westhuizen granted an order to Sanef (the SA National Editors' Forum) and 11 journalists, interdicting BLF and Mngxitama from harassing, threatening, intimidating, or coming to the homes of any of these journalists, or from threatening them on social media.

Then, Mngxitama and BLF members disrupted a debate hosted by amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism in Braamfontein on July 27. Because of this, on August 8, Judge Sharise Weiner found them to be in contempt of Van der Westhuizen's order.

She sentenced Mngxitama to three months in jail, suspended indefinitely and he was warned that if he continued to threaten and intimidate journalists, he would be imprisoned.

Judge Weiner did not impose the R100 000 fine which the applicants, Stephen Patrick, Sam Sole, Ferial Haffajee and Sanef had asked the court to impose.

Sanef chairwoman, Mahlatse Gallens, said the purpose of the targeted harassment of these journalists “is to keep allegations of corruption and state capture out of the public domain.”

SAJBD President Mary Kluk this week said: “The SAJBD unequivocally condemns the offensive tweets. They have caused immense hurt and pain to members of our community and cannot be ignored.”

She said the Board will be instituting proceedings against Mngxitama in the Equality Court.

We believe that there is no justification whatsoever for these hateful tweets... speech that impugns the dignity of a community and causes such enormous hurt should be responded to, and to suggest otherwise, compounds the offence,” Kluk said.

The day before Mngxitama fired his anti-Semitic tweets, Sowetan journalist Salom Shilongo wrote an opinion piece about “a new bunch of confused clowns and lost lunatics calling themselves intellectuals”.

With reference to Mngxitama he said: “They see themselves as some Messiah for Africa... They are hungry for fame and power... and they are desperate to be recognised as great thinkers, philosophers... Sometimes they act as attack dogs for someone... in return they get rewarded with a handful of bones.”

Shilongo wrote that a “hungry lunatic is more dangerous than a mad dog”.

Steve Biko would be turning in his grave and this time Mngxitama has gone too far.

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The art of remembering

NIA MAGOULIANITI-MCGREGOR

“Art is a universal language” says former Capetonian, international speaker, artist and educator Leora Raikin. She should know. She’s made it her life’s mission to exhibit her great-uncle David Labkovski’s art work around the globe.

The exhibition, called “From Prisoner in Siberia to Artist in Safed, Israel. The story of Jewish destruction, survival and renewal as seen through the images of artist, David Labkovski (1906-1991)” has travelled the world. In South Africa, it went to Durban and will be exhibiting in Johannesburg on September 3.

Now living in Los Angeles, Raikin is in South Africa to talk about Labkovski’s art, as well as the David Labkovski Project, an educational programme she helped develop, that teaches students about Eastern European life before, during and after the Holocaust, through his art.

Raikin’s grandfather, Arthur Spektor, was Labkovski’s wife Rivka’s brother. He moved to South Africa from Lithuania in the 1920s. Arthur and Rivka were the only two Spektors who survived the Holocaust, the rest were killed by the Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators in the forests of Ponar.

Rivka and David were never able to have children of their own and so Raikin’s mother, Barbara Barishman and her siblings Patricia

in South Africa, it’s in my DNA,” she says. And as an artist and educator herself – as she travels throughout the US speaking on the Jews of South Africa, African tribal arts and the “Impact of Art as a Witness to History” – she recognises their artistic and historic significance.

“Labkovski’s art depicts pre-war Jewish life in Vilna in Lithuania, his time in a Siberian prison and stories recounted by Holocaust survivors living in Lithuania after the Second World War,” says Raikin. His work also shows the time of Labkovski’s “renewal” when he arrived in Israel in 1958.

“His art is a visual diary – it’s almost like finding an intimate journal,” she says. “It’s also a missing piece of history. That’s because, unlike Germany, Russia (where he spent many years) was on the same side as the Americans and there was no ‘liberation’ as such – no video footage or photos of the gulags.”

Labkovski lived in Vilna before the war, from 1908 to 1932. “Vilna was known as the Jerusalem of Lithuania. In the 1920s, he was part of a group of learners, thinkers, writers and other artists called the “Jung Vilna”, says Raikin.

Painting portraits and scenes of everyday life, he held his first art exhibition in 1922. In 1932, he was accepted into the prestigious Art Academy of Leningrad.

“He had these intense blue eyes,” says Raikin. “He’d look at you for a few seconds



Patricia Flaum, Caryn Horowitz and Leora Raikin

But Labkovski was hauled out of art school and forced to enlist in the army before being sent to Siberia on trumped-up charges. His job became cutting logs in extreme temperatures.

“He was not the most physically robust man,” says Raikin. “He survived his eight years there only because, after word got around he was a painter, he became the prison’s sketch and tattoo artist. He received a few extra pieces of bread and it also meant he could now work inside.”

His artwork over that period are in muted colours. His self-portraits show an old man, though he is young, with hollow eyes. Prominent are steel buckets that would hold whatever food prisoners received. There is a painting of Labkovski sleeping with one of those buckets.

When he and his wife Rivka (who had also been in Siberia) returned to Lithuania after the war, they found the town and their community obliterated. They discovered that in 1941, some 70 000 people, mainly Jews, had been shot dead by Nazis.

“Labkovski painted the stories of the few survivors and he also drew on memory to paint how it used to be – the vibrant market place, the peddlers, the rabbis, the mothers – just average people going about their business.”

But the artworks showed evidence of

impending doom, says Raikin. “A man struggling to push a cart, someone carrying a heavy load...”

As Raikin says: “You can see his soul is in his paintings. You feel the loss, the longing, the desperation, the grief...”

The couple – they’d had no children – moved to an artist colony in Safed, Israel, in 1958. He displayed his work there and while it was critically acclaimed artistically, it was unpopular with an audience who were in the process of trying to put recent horrors behind them. “They were trying to build a new life,” says Raikin.

Painting portraits and scenes of everyday life, he held his first art exhibition in 1922. In 1932, he was accepted into the prestigious Art Academy of Leningrad.

“But David and Rivka were devastated at this reaction,” she says. “They decided they wouldn’t sell his art until a new generation would be open to the enormity of the destruction and the loss.”

Today, under the auspices of The David Labkovski Project, his work is being used to teach young people about life lessons, survival and the Holocaust, using a multidisciplinary programme of creative writing, art, history and social studies. “It allows young people to curate his work into an exhibition.

“It’s a slower introduction to the Holocaust,” she says.

Raikin is planning a training session for teachers in South Africa next year. “In order to fully grasp all that was lost in the Holocaust,” Raikin says, “it’s important not to teach about it in isolation. You have to understand this vibrant Jewish community, with its artists and writers who were celebrated and admired. Only when you understand what was, can you understand what was lost.”

• A portion of the originals of the exhibition will be exhibited at the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre on September 3 at 18:00.



Flaum and Robert Spektor, were like their own children.

Raikin says she has a personal connection to Labkovski and his work. “I grew up looking at his art hanging on my grandparents’ walls

and then be able to draw you in perfect detail. Not only your physical characteristics, but your emotions, what you were thinking, what you were feeling... You couldn’t hide your emotions from him.”

Open letter to the Cape SA Board of Deputies

We write to you as a group of women integrally involved in and committed to the Cape Town Jewish community; we write to you also as women who are deeply cognisant and appreciative of the role that the Cape Board plays as the elected representative body of the Cape Town Jewish community.

With this in mind, we want to express our sincere distress at the Cape Board event hosted on August 30, “Women with a Voice – Advancing Leadership: Women Within the Community”. Our distress emanates from the recent Cape Board elections, where the only two people voted off the Board, were women.

Our distress was exacerbated by the fact that the women voted off were the standing vice-chairperson, Bev May, and former chairperson of the Cape Board, Li Boiskin – two senior women leaders, in a community where we have so few women in roles of such senior leadership.

Further, not only are they two senior women leaders, but they both happen to be two leaders who are well-known champions of women’s voices (and women’s rights).

They have played this role with dignity for many years and have

served as highly respected leaders who are role-models to so many other Jewish women and men, alike.

Considering that the current Board of 18 members now has only four women representatives, we must express our distress at the message the Cape Board is sending out to our community about its commitment to women’s rights and gender equality.

It seems particularly shocking to host an event titled “Women with a Voice”, when two of the most audible women’s voices in elected leadership have effectively been silenced.

We write to you as concerned Jewish women, but this is and should be the concern of the entire Jewish community.

The community deserves an explanation.

Signed by:
Karen Kallmann, Caryn Gootkin, Shirley Phillips, Kelli Lunsky, Dayle Benjamin, Gabi Nudelman, Nicole Levin, Tamar Lazarus, Judy Sacks, Lisa Chait, Andrea Kuti, Hayley Galgut, Rebecca Hodes, Helen Lieberman, Karen Cohen, Barbara Miller, Heidi-Jane Esakov Jacobson, Nancy Krisch, Esta Levitas, and Dana Lieberman.

Chai for Chabad of Strathavon

OWN CORRESPONDENT

“We’re not a kichel and herring shul,” Rabbi Ari Shishler told the crowd of 300 at Chabad of Strathavon’s 18th anniversary dinner. “Our vision is to translate Judaism into the 21st century; to provide Judaism that is relevant, meaningful and welcoming for every Jew,” he said last Wednesday night.

Chabad of Strathavon started as a typical shtiebel in Shishler’s garage in 1999. At the time, many were sceptical about the shul’s chances of growing in an area which then had a limited Jewish population.

But, with the boom of the Sandton CBD, the rabbi’s vision proved correct and Jewish families began streaming into the area to live close to the business hub. The community began to grow, aided by the rabbi and rebbetzin’s appetite for making a difference.

By 2009, the community had far outgrown the garage. Rather than simply renovate, Rabbi Shishler built a far larger building and launched the Jewish Life Centre. His vision included a centre of experiential learning, a social Jewish

hub and a hive of children’s activities.

Today, the Jewish Life Centre hosts over 30 classes a week and boasts a buzzing function hall and one of Sandton’s most popular playgrounds.

The community celebrated its 18th birthday with a gala dinner held at the centre. Popular actor and comedian, Harry Sideropoulos compered the evening, tickling the crowd with hilarious, yet powerful insights into the uniqueness of the Jewish community.

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein and head of Chabad South Africa, Rabbi Mendel Lipskar, each lauded the Chabad of Strathavon community on pioneering a modern approach to Jewish activity and education in Sandton.

The evening was a celebration of growth and community-building experience, as it was a rousing call to engage every Jew in Sandton in a meaningful experience of Judaism.

Rabbi Shishler highlighted that the dinner, like the shul’s High Holiday services, did not have assigned seating, because the centre aims to provide a warm and inclusive experience of Judaism.



Charles Meyerowitz, Marc Friedman, David Shochot, Craig Gerber, Hazel Lerman, Neil Dove and Larry Krug



Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein, Rusell Feigen, Rabbi Ari Shishler, Darren Gordon and Hazel Lerman

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 - Grade 8 & 9 History outings
 - Grade 11 Geography outing
 - 6-a-side Soccer tournament
 - Dynamic Assemblies
 - Johannesburg Junior Council
 - 1987 Reunion Assembly
 - Cycle Tour to KZN
 - Weekly Shabbat collections
- Various Committee initiatives
 - Gr 10 Macbeth Murder Mystery
 - Gr 9 Romeo & Juliet Ball
 - Diller Programme
 - Polar Plunge
 - Casual Day
 - Shinshinim
 - GYLC Conference
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Statues and heroes: the dangers of erasing too much



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

Wits faculty members have been warned to prepare for trouble, as universities brace for protests against university fee hikes for 2018, amidst vehement demands for “decolonisation” in academia and abolition of symbols of the country’s racist past.

Symbolism contains potent energies everywhere. Recent displays in alt-right marches in Charlottesville in the United States of swastikas and anti-Jewish and anti-black slogans, evoked calls for removing Confederate statues across America for celebrating people who defended slavery.

What about statues of anti-Semites? An Israeli organisation on Tuesday demanded New York City remove memorials to Peter Stuyvesant, the last Dutch director-general of

New Amsterdam (now New York), because of his anti-Semitism, saying he “targeted Jews and other minorities including Catholics” and tried prohibiting them from settling there.

Yet New York has one of the largest, most successful Jewish communities in the world. Most Jews probably don’t even know of his attitudes and smoked the eponymous brand of cigarettes for years.

The potency of symbolism and stereotypes spills into literature and film. Should Shakespeare and Dickens be banned? Critics say the former’s portrayal of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* is anti-Semitic. And Dickens’ fictional character Fagin, portrayed as a Jew in his novel *Oliver Twist*, is described as a “receiver of stolen goods”.

Fagin has evoked much debate. In an introduction to a 1981 reissue of *Oliver Twist*, writer Irving Howe said Fagin was considered an “archetypical” Jewish villain.

A theatre in Memphis, Tennessee, recently stopped showing the movie *Gone with the Wind*



for being “racially insensitive”. The 1939 classic which won eight Oscars, tells the story of a Georgia plantation owner’s daughter during and after the Civil War, based on a Pulitzer prize-winning 1936 novel.

Considered a great American work, it is criticised for romanticising slavery. Celebrated writers, Roald Dahl and Graham Greene have been similarly fingered.

In South Africa, myriad symbols of our unhappy past, including statues, street names, the old flag and parts of the national anthem, remain all around us. Four people were arrested last weekend for disturbances at a Cape Town pub after complaining about the old South African flag hanging on the wall, symbolising apartheid.

Some people call for Die Stem, the apartheid-era national anthem, to be removed from the current multi-language national anthem.

The Voortrekker Monument near Pretoria – now renamed Tshwane – remains intact, with its dramatic frescoes portraying heroic-looking Afrikaners seeking freedom from English domination, fighting off assegai-wielding black warriors defending their land.

Any attempt to tamper with this potent symbol of Afrikaner history would provoke violence. However, there have been numerous name changes of streets and towns from apartheid leaders to anti-apartheid fighters,

which have been well received. At Cape Town University, in contrast, removal of a statue of arch-colonialist Cecil John Rhodes, provoked confrontations.

It is right for people to resist being bombarded with public symbols of oppression, particularly in public spaces. But what about private spaces? In the name of freedom of expression, should people be allowed to display whatever they want there? Such as in a pub?

There are no easy answers. Where is the red line for “acceptable” content? Sanitising everything is dangerous – changing the past, rather than putting it into context.

If we sanitise everything because of unsavoury aspects, we leech rich texture from history and culture, ending up with only the “party line” dictated by political correctness guardians.

Such was the Soviet Union. And in fascist societies, past and present, the only permitted symbols are those glorifying the regime and its leaders.

Politicians have a significant role. Exploiting symbols for populist, sinister goals is always tempting. For students, part of a university’s role is to teach them the danger of this, and being able to discern the healthy red line.

• Read Geoff Sifrin’s regular columns on his blog sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com

Friday (September 1)

• UZLC hosts Sheri Hanson on “Gefilte Fish for my Children”. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45-14:00. Contact: Gloria 072-127-9421 or (011) 485-4851.

Sunday (September 3)

• Second Innings hosts Dr Karon Marx on “Against the Tide”. Venue: Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Time: Tea

WHAT'S ON

at 10:00. Meeting at 10:30. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors (incl tea and light refreshments). Contact: Linda Fleishman (011) 532-9701.

• Emunah Movement is having a “Mad Hatter’s Tea Party” followed by a cookery demonstration by Carol Cessman. Time: 10:00. In aid of the Achusat Sara

Children’s Home in Bnei Brak, Israel. For tickets, contact Ethne 083-400-5312. * Venue to follow.

Monday (September 4)

• UJW hosts Peter Terry, actor, stage director and Classic FM presenter on “Isaac Rosenberg – Jewish Poet of the First World War”. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 10:00. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW Office (011) 648-1053.

Community Columns

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies



Mngxitama will have to explain his anti-Semitism in court

The past week at the Board has been dominated by the fallout following the posting of two repulsive Holocaust-related tweets by Black First Land First leader Andile Mngxitama.

In addition to our activities in the media, we are preparing to lodge a formal charge of hate speech in the Equality Court. Our general approach in hate speech cases has in the first instance been to follow the conciliation route, through which the offending party agrees to issue an apology and retraction for what was said.



However, in this case, the offending comments were of so extreme and demeaning a nature, added to which Mngxitama, far from expressing any kind of contrition, responded to criticism by making further grossly anti-Semitic remarks, that it was decided to approach the court directly. It is in that forum, where he will be required to justify his conduct under cross-examination before a High Court judge that Mngxitama will have to be called to account, just as Cosatu’s Bongani Masuku earlier this year had to answer for the various threats he had made against our community.

We can be thankful that we live in a country where the Constitution enshrines the protection of the dignity of all its citizens and where the courts have consistently censured any form of hate speech.

Furthermore, as a tolerant society, predicated on the values of dignity and equality for all its members, we cannot allow any person or institution to use any form of anti-Semitism to galvanise support for their cause.

In our press statement, which formed the basis of most of the many media reports on the incident,

the Board observed that Mngxitama’s scoffing references to the Holocaust displayed “outright contempt for basic humanitarian, non-racial values”.

They constituted “a flagrant attack on the fundamental rights to dignity and equality of Jewish South Africans” and as such should be strongly condemned by all right-thinking people.

By and large, the comments were indeed greeted by widespread revulsion. However, at least some of the outrage was qualified by echoing to some extent Mngxitama’s charge that because of its alleged silence when it came to hate crimes against other sectors of society, the Board had somehow forfeited the right to be taken seriously when denouncing anti-Semitism.

The logic is doubly flawed. Firstly, as stressed by our National President Mary Kluk in a radio debate earlier this week, the right of Jews – or any other South African citizens – to dignity and equality, is not conditional on their first taking a stand on behalf of others whose rights have been infringed.

Secondly, the Board has in fact a commendable track record of speaking out in such instances. Indeed, on the very day that our statement on the Mngxitama tweets was issued, we issued another statement condemning the placing of a pig’s head on the site for a new mosque in Scottburgh. Combined with this is our work on the steering committee of the Hate Crimes Working Group, of which we are founder members, and the regular submissions we make to Parliament regarding human rights-related legislation.

So far as playing our part in upholding democratic, non-racial values in our society, we will continue to involve ourselves in this area, not because it is required of us in order to ensure that our own rights are protected, but because it is the right thing to do.

• 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 Yad Aharon & Michael

Some food for thought

One of the key qualities which drew me to volunteer at Yad Aharon & Michael some 19 years ago, was the aura of holiness, integrity, humility and simplicity which has remained a hallmark of the organisation to this day.

As the largest and leading Jewish weekly food parcels distribution organisation in South Africa, we rely on communal funding to fulfil our focused and niche mandate in a manner which guarantees our families’ anonymity and the preservation of their self-worth.

Our unique and challenging journey and our commitment to going about our business in a characteristically unassuming manner, and in accordance with Torah principles, has earned us the support and respect of the Johannesburg Jewish community over our 22-year existence.

In today’s challenging economic climate, we as South African Jews, need to remain humble and support each other for the benefit of the clients. We are firm believers in networking and cross-referencing with the other worthy community organisations, and we salute their valuable contributions in their particular fields of expertise.

Their referrals to Yad Aharon of families in need of food, further cements our working relationships.

On Rosh Chodesh Elul, we launched our Rosh Hashanah Appeal which is one of the year’s key fundraising campaigns, bearing in mind our focused line of business. In addition to our weekly clients, past recipients and families who “make do” during the year, request our Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot hampers to enable them to provide their families with a “sweet and plentiful Yomtov”.

This brings the estimated number of food parcels we will be distributing over the forthcoming High Holy Days to an unprecedented 600, and our families are counting down the days with eager anticipation.

We are renowned for being transparent, and we invite you to our bayit to witness first-hand the manner in which your donations are being utilised to make a tangible and meaningful difference to the lives of Jewish families in our midst.

At Yad Aharon, we are committed to following in Hashem’s ways, the paths of chesed, compassion and grace. In the words of His holy prophets: “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does G-d require of you – but to act justly, to love chesed and to walk humbly with your G-d.”

With sincere wishes for a Shana Tova uMetukah



Alice Friedman

This column is paid for by Yad Aharon & Michael Food Fund

Taking Africa into the future with Singularity

TALI FEINBERG

“If we don’t embrace exponential technology, we will fall behind as a continent.” This is the sentiment of the Mann brothers – Shayne, Mic and Kevin – and their reason for bringing Singularity University (SU) to South Africa last week.

“But if we embrace it, we can ‘leapfrog’ the rest of the world as we don’t have the old industrial legacy to overcome,” says Mic Mann. “We also have many challenges that could be solved with technology. It is Africa’s time to be a leader.”

The Mann brothers saw the potential of SU, a global learning and innovation community that uses exponential technologies to tackle the world’s biggest challenges.

With this, they can build an abundant future for all, according to its website. They also recognised the need on the African continent and so they brought the event to South Africa.

They made the conference focus to “future-proof Africa”. Robots, drones, artificial intelligence, neuroscience and nano-tech security, were just some of the topics discussed at the Singularity University South Africa summit in Johannesburg on August 23. SU’s collaborative platform is said to empower individuals and organisations across the globe

to learn, connect, and innovate breakthrough solutions. SU was founded in 2008 by renowned innovators Ray Kurzweil and Peter Diamandis and is partnered with leading organisations like Google, Deloitte, Genentech, and UNICEF.

The brothers, especially Mic, have been deeply involved in SU since 2010. After visiting Silicon Valley and training with the company, they bought the licence to host it in South Africa.

“With only four months to plan it, everyone said we could never pull it off. But we ignored them, and with the support of our incredible headline sponsor Standard Bank, global partner Deloitte, and strategic partners MTN and SAP, we made it happen,” explains Shayne.

“The 1 300 tickets, at R15 000 each, were sold out, and we have only received positive feedback – with many people saying it changed their lives.”

Jared Ungar, who is involved in start-ups Crypto Currency and Green IQ technology, says the summit was way above par. “Speakers from Silicon Valley shared up-to-the-minute technology that can’t even be found online, and they looked directly at South African issues, demonstrating how there is an opportunity in every problem South Africa faces, from education to transport,” he explains.

“For example, an untouched area where



Shayne Mann – co-organisr of the Singularity University South Africa / MD Mann Made Media

there is money to be made, is in solar energy, especially because Africa is the continent with the most sunshine.”

Rob Nail, associate founder and CEO of SU, agrees that “South Africa represents a microcosm of the challenges facing humanity worldwide and is fast gaining a solid reputation as a global centre.

“Through this summit, we hope to connect and inspire leaders in the region to effect global impact,” he says.

While the ticket prices are steep, the Manns explain that they are actually half the price of SU summits overseas.

“People travel worldwide to attend these conferences, and we took out airfare, bringing the best international speakers to South Africa.”

Examples include MC of the event Jason Silva, who has over a million followers on Facebook, and 500 000 subscribers on YouTube, and who hosts a show on National

Geographic; Dr Adriana Marais, who spoke about space mining and going to space; and Sarah Bergbreiter, who discussed robotics.

The summit also showcased African entrepreneurs and innovations in interactive exhibitor halls, served three hearty meals a day and had entertainment like drone races and silent discos.

Jonti Brozin, who participated in the event, points out that the summit was an investment, where one is surrounded by world experts and also a top-quality audience. He adds that local speakers were equally excellent.

“It’s so important that events like these happen in Johannesburg, which is poised to become a technology hub,” he says. “Now we just need to own the space.”

Hilton Wolman, who owns an online travel company, plans to send all his staff to next year’s summit. “It was very progressive, very different. Every person walked out with something useful.”

He hopes that the organisers will maintain the excitement and innovation in the year ahead, hosting “incubator” discussions to implement some of the ideas discussed.

Mic says that South Africa is a particularly good place for a conference such as this one, as it has brought back a “glimmer of hope” for the future that this country needs with its current challenges.

“There is so much negativity in the media and the difficulty of seeing beyond the daily grind. This summit has allowed people to stop and think about how we are actually living in the most peaceful time in history, entering an age of abundance, where there will be food and energy for all... It’s coming fast – the rate of change accelerating!”

A love letter to the art of podcasts

STEVEN KRAWITZ

While local author Steven Boykey Sidley has a stronger following in France than in South Africa, he is now likely to grab more American readers with his latest book, Free Association.

Free Association is Sidley’s fourth novel and displays the local author at a new high point in his writing career. The trajectory from debut novel Entanglement (2012) to his new one clearly reveals his growth in confidence, depth and maturity.

Free Association is the story of Maxwell Lurie, a single thirty-something, battling to navigate his way in contemporary Los Angeles, dealing with a dying father, family revelations that recast his entire life, lack of a girlfriend and his current gig as a podcaster.

The book is an extended love letter to the nascent art form of podcasts, downloadable good quality recorded talks on any topic that remind one of a cross between good radio and documentaries.

Sidley says that he enjoys listening to podcasts so much; they are all he listens to in the car and looks forward to traffic jams as they afford him the opportunity to listen to more of them.

Sidley spent 17 years living in Los Angeles and returned to South Africa in the 1990s for a family emergency. On that trip, he met his future wife Kate and decided to make South Africa his home. His knowledge of LA infuses Free Association with an authentic backdrop for the unfolding drama, but the story is universal and could just as easily have been set in Johannesburg.

Like another local Jewish South African artist, Johnny Clegg, Sidley has a strong following in France. This is not a surprise as French literary fiction is proudly philosophical, as is Sidley’s.

Sidley uses Maxi Lurie’s podcasts and ruminations to explore the major issues we all face, to test morality codes, analyse relationships, assess the value of psychological therapies, ponder on technology’s impact on society and to ask what a good life and success is today.

Within the framework of English literature, Sidley brings to mind the writings of Ian McEwan, especially Saturday and his recent retelling of Hamlet, Nutshell.

Whereas some of McEwan’s observations on society can feel like a journalism primer for the left leaning Guardian newspaper, Sidley’s critiques are spot on, making this reader a little jealous he could not express them as succinctly.

Another literary reference, used to great effect is Chekhov’s Gun: “if you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off. If it is not going to be fired, it should not be hanging there.”

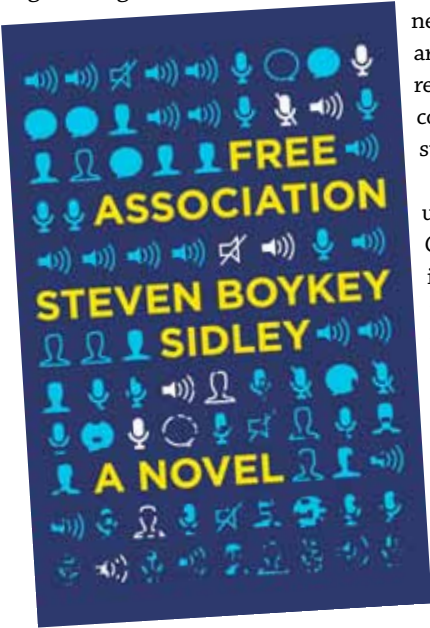
While researching how easy it is to buy an illegal gun on the dark web, Lurie buys the gun in question which then links many of

the characters and their personal motives.

After having broken into the South Africa, French and British book markets, Sidley is making his debut in the all-important American market with Free Association, as good a reason as any for setting it in Los Angeles.

Sidley has created a broad cast of colourful characters: a black South African podcast producer, a mini-celebrity tech guru, a damaged homeless man who sleeps in the alleyway next to Lurie’s apartment block who holds a PhD in physics, and a college friend whose golden-boy trajectory was destroyed by a sexual assault allegation.

This is a novel of raw, imperfect humans finding their way forward, profound and exquisitely told.



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Rabbi Motti Hadar explains origins of ‘Jewish vuvuzala’

Dovi Zukerman, a grade 8 pupil at Torah Academy Boys’ High, (pictured) blew the shofar at the inter-schools’ fun sports day at Torah Academy for grade one and two learners from seven schools last Wednesday.

Rabbi Motti Hadar, principal of Torah Academy Primary School, explained that a shofar was “a sort of Jewish vuvuzela”.

Each child was given a Chabad ARK (Acts of Random Kindness) bag to keep the money they collect for charity as it is customary to give charity during the weeks preceding the Jewish High Holy Days. It is also customary to hear the shofar daily on weekdays leading up to the festivals which begin on the evening of September 20.

He appealed to the children to collect charity and put it in the ARK for anyone who was needy.

Rabbi Hadar said this was the first of what would become an annual sports day – no scores would be kept as “it is not competitive, only fun”.

Participating schools were Torah Academy, Maryvale College, King David Victory Park, Sandton Sinai, Yeshiva College, Hirsch Lyons and Houghton Primary.



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Crawford Bnot Mitzvah learnt about Ruth

The grade 6 Crawford Preparatory Sandton girls celebrated their batmitzvahs at the Sandton Shul over the weekend. With their theme being Ruth, they explored the concepts of modesty and humility.



Jaime Melamdowitz, Carmen Smith, Kerri Metlitzky, Toni Metlitzky, Sienna Kramer, and Thea Moodley

Good sportsmanship at Sydenham Pre-Primary

At Sydenham Pre-Primary School sports day last Wednesday, war cries and shouts of encouragement echoed throughout campus.

Each class participated in a fun race for their specific age group. Good sportsmanship prevailed and each participant was encouraged to do his or her best. Each participant received a medal at the end of the day.

Enjoying the day are (top): Gavi Porter, Middle: Jaden Gordon, Yonatan Gelbart and Maytal Shin. Front: Saul Brest and Emunah Wolpe.



The money rolls into KDVP bingo evening

Alanda van Staden, Karen Maitland, and Kim Shapiro



The King David Victory Park Pre-Primary School PTA and the Victory Park Shul hosted a bingo evening as their annual fundraiser.

Approximately 360 guests attended and enjoyed a night of delicious food and great fun. The prizes had a total value of R380 000.

Venetia Connors won a prize to the value of R121 500, which also included a weekend at Tsogo Sun and a Soulstice Spa voucher.

Generous donations ensured that enough funds were raised for the school’s capital and maintenance projects.

A photograph of Glenn Lazarus, a man with glasses and a white jacket, smiling and standing next to a young girl. The girl is wearing a dark blue jacket with a blue zipper and a small logo. They are in front of a yellow background with the text 'GOLI SQUASH' and a red and white circular logo.

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