

south african
Jewish Report

■ Volume 21 – Number 33 ■ September 15 2017 ■ 24 Elul 5777

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Photo: Robert Shack

**From adversity to
10 Downing Street**

Dr Beverley Jacobson helping out at
Kisharon's Tuffkid Integrated Nursery.
See page 8



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Academic boycott is a long way off...

NICOLA MILTZ

Dr Max Price, vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town (UCT), told the SA Jewish Report that there was a long way to go before a decision would be made about an academic boycott of Israel.

The matter is still with the first committee, namely the Academic Freedom Committee (AFC) which is still considering two long presentations that were made to it recently by The South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) and the Palestine Solidarity Forum (PSF).

The AFC will debate the idea of an academic boycott and make recommendations to the Senate, he explained. The Senate will then advise UCT about its discussion.

Price says academic freedom was a global concern.

“My personal position is that there should never be an academic boycott anywhere and this coincides with the position of UCT up till now. Things can change depending on the debate.

“We should be concerned about academic freedom globally. This year we have been called upon to re-think our position as a university,” he said.

He insisted that this is an institutional issue, not a personal one.

The idea of an academic boycott will be rigorously debated. The AFC will consider things like restrictions placed on both Palestinian university students and Israeli students.

“Academic freedom is important anywhere in the world,” Price stressed. He mentioned that there were travel restrictions at Palestinian universities where visitors are searched and



Dr Max Price

sometimes detained.

Likewise, at certain Israeli universities, some Israeli students face victimisation for their opposing views.

“They are ostracised by their university administrations for supporting boycotts. At some universities, there is an infringement of academic freedom for even debating the issue of a boycott.”

When a university gets a formal request from a student body, like the PSF for an academic boycott it is not torn up and thrown away, it gets seriously considered.

Said Price: “The debate will centre around the principle of an academic boycott. It’s not primarily about Israel and Palestine – this will only start once you decide a boycott has a role to play.”

National chairman of SAUJS, Gabriel Zollmann, said the student body was waiting for the outcome of the AFC’s debate.

“UCT should reject the proposal of an academic boycott against Israel, as proposed by

the PSF,” said Zollmann. “Boycotts targeting the academic institutions of any particular country are discriminatory and politically motivated.

“They unavoidably violate the fundamental principles of academic freedom which underpins the entirety of the academic profession. An academic boycott of Israel poses a great risk to academic freedom, resources and the quality of intellectual discourse and it undermines dialogue necessary for achieving peace.”

Shabbat & Yomtov Times		
Shabbat Times		
September 15/24 Elul / September 16/25 Elul		
Parshat Selichot Nitzavim Vayealech		
Starts	Ends	
17:43	18:32	Johannesburg
18:15	19:12	Cape Town
17:30	18:21	Durban
17:50	18:40	Bloemfontein
17:51	18:43	Port Elizabeth
17:42	18:34	East London
Rosh Hashanah Times		
September 20/29 Elul / September 21/1 Tishrei		
Candle-lighting	Candle-lighting	
17:45	18:34	Johannesburg
18:15	19:15	Cape Town
17:33	18:24	Durban
17:52	18:43	Bloemfontein
17:54	18:47	Port Elizabeth
17:45	18:37	East London
Shabbat Times		
September 22/2 Tishrei / September 23/3 Tishrei is this week		
Parshat Haazinu		
Starts	Ends	
17:46	18:35	Johannesburg
18:15	19:17	Cape Town
17:34	18:25	Durban
17:53	18:44	Bloemfontein
17:56	18:48	Port Elizabeth
17:46	18:38	East London

YOMTOV PUBLISHING DATES

We will not be publishing the SA Jewish Report next week as it is Rosh Hashanah. There will be an edition on September 29, but not on October 6 and 13. We wish all our readers and advertisers a Shanah Tovah u'Metukah.

Parshat Nitzavim Vayealech

Rosh Hashanah 5778

Let us remember to stop and take stock

Rabbi Ryan Goldstein, West Street Shul



In most years the parshiyot of Nitzavim and Vayealech are read together and in most years, this double portion falls out just before Rosh Hashanah.

Simply put, the powerful statement of “You shall choose life” from Parshat Nitzavim, is very apt for the approaching Days of Judgement, but think there are more subtle and profound messages in the very names of the two parshiyot.

A simple translation reveals that “Nitzavim” means: “standing” and “Vayealech” means: “he went”. The Torah is perhaps hinting to the fact that in order to be successful in

our Avodas Hashem, our spiritual growth, we need both components of “going” and not so obviously, “standing still”.

On our climb up the levels of spirituality year by year, we have a tendency to speed ahead. However, on so many occasions I have seen eager Ba’alei Teshuvos crash and burn. An equally if not more important step in growth, is the ability to stop and take stock (and maybe even wait to let our family catch up).

In the prayer of Hashkiveinu that we say at every evening service, we ask Hashem to protect us from the Satan that is before us and the Satan in front of us.

We have all met Satan in front of us. It’s the desires before our eyes that blind us and side-track us. But there is a Satan behind us, pushing us forward and not letting us stop to take stock of our progress.

In trying to understand the machinations

of the war with our personal Satan/Yetzer Hora, Rav Eliyahu Dessler, the great mashgiach and spiritual guide, explains with the following analogy:

When Israel and Lebanon are at war, for example, the war is not the whole of Israel against the whole of Lebanon. The war takes place on a thin frontline somewhere near the borders of the two countries. As one nation becomes victorious, they move forward just a little, while the defeated nation moves back just a little.

When we take on our Yetzer Hora this year, with our positive and exciting new resolutions, let us remember that we can’t jump ahead of ourselves into uncharted territory, until we have successfully defeated the ground already covered. And let us also remember to stop and take stock of our progress, leaving no-one behind.

South African Jewish Report

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Johannesburg doctor guilty of unprofessional conduct

NICOLA MILTZ

A well-known Johannesburg doctor has been found guilty of unprofessional conduct and has been suspended for a year for performing acts of a sexual nature on female patients over a number of years.

The Professional Conduct Committee of the Medical and Dental Professions Board, has found Dr Steven Levy – whose practice is in Sandringham – guilty of performing acts of a sexual nature on three patients dating back to 2011.

A handful of female patients lodged complaints with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) as early as 2012. Dr Levy’s practice was still open for business up until a few weeks ago when he was finally ordered by the HPCSA to shut its doors.

He has been ordered to remove his name from the practice door, close shop and only allow patients to retrieve their medical files. All signs that he is the owner of the practice have to be removed.

Almost five years after the first complaint was lodged, he was finally found guilty on July 31 and suspended on August 23 from practising as a doctor for a period of three years. Two years of this period would be suspended on condition that he is not found guilty of a similar offence committed during the period of his suspension.

His WhatsApp profile picture announced: “Temporarily closed for spiritual maintenance.” This has since changed to: “Be the best version of you”.

not been medically indicated as well as unnecessary vaginal examinations also not medically indicated.

To date he has not offered an apology to the women and has not informed his existing patients of the reason for closing his practice.

In a letter to his patients on August 24 – the day after the suspension – he said: “To all my valued patients after 20 uninterrupted and committed years of service as a general practitioner, I have decided to take a well-needed and deserved sabbatical for a year. My commitment to each one of you remains and thus I will endeavour to find a suitable locum Dr to fill in at the practice and continue caring for you and your family in the interim.”

His WhatsApp profile picture announced: “Temporarily closed for spiritual maintenance.” This has since changed to: “Be the best version of you”.

One of the victims said this week: “We have gone down this long, painful path to show other victims of sexual abuse that this is not acceptable.”

When asked to comment, Levy told the SA Jewish Report: “It would not be appropriate for me to comment due to patient confidentiality. I have co-operated fully with the HPCSA investigation.”

Yael Band, a sexual abuse survivor and activist, sees the guilty finding as a victory. She has been closely following the case.

“This is an incredible victory. People don’t believe that a doctor can do this and people believe it less when it is a religious doctor. Even if the penalty is considered lenient, if it serves to save one patient from his abuse, it is a life saved.

“If this frum doctor is prevented from practising for one year, just think about all the potential victims who will be spared from this suspension.

“These women have shown the most incredible courage and self-sacrifice by coming forward. To be able to stand up in our community, which is so judgemental, and to put yourself out there at huge risk,

knowing you will be judged harshly, is huge.

“They have done this not just for themselves, but for dozens of other potential victims and for those who are too afraid to come forward.”

Clinical psychologist Dr Aliza Bilman, who has been close to the case, said this week: “Being a victim of sexual abuse is an extremely lonely and vulnerable place. If the abuse is covered up, it serves to further silence the victims and allow for future abuse to occur.

“If the abuse is reported, it may allow other victims to feel supported and empowered and give them the strength

they need to come forward.

“Sexual abuse is a serious issue that can have devastating consequences for those affected. It impacts mood, self-esteem, relationships and the general ability to function. It has taken these women a lot of courage to come forward and seek help.


“Sexual abuse must be addressed in the wider community in order to prevent further abuse and to help those who have been abused. Fortunately help is available and there are organisations in the community offering support. It is making strides in terms of empowering people to come forward.”

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Dr Yossi Unterslak
Medical Perspective

Specialist gynecologist working as a reproductive medicine assistant at Vitalab - Centre for Assisted Conception, Yossi has a special interest in the prevention of recurrent pregnancy loss.



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The determination of the Adventurer Ambassador

PETA KROST MAUNDER

The new Israeli Ambassador to South Africa Lior Keinan, says he is “just a shy guy”, which I totally believe, because he clearly doesn’t find it easy to talk about himself. He comes across as an intellectual, quite serious, very determined, with exacting standards – and my guess is, he is tough on himself to ensure he maintains those standards – but with the soul of an adventurer.

And he has found the perfect career for himself, one in which he gets to travel the world, meet interesting people, learn about new cultures and get paid for it.

Keinan has very clear goals about what he wants to achieve in his four-year stint in South Africa and he knows he has his work cut out for him. But, this 47-year-old career diplomat has done his homework about what it takes to tackle his role in our strange and wonderful country.

Having been here a number of times and having a South African-born wife and extended family in South Africa, surely helps. His love of rugby will also go a long way in integrating him into our society.

And in a few short weeks, he has already hosted a group of Israeli Knesset members, met with a former president of South Africa, a potential future president, the Leader of the Opposition and the Mayor of Johannesburg.

He has also handed his credentials to President Jacob Zuma – having whispered in his ear just a few possibilities they would have if they worked together – and been

a special guest of Zionist Christian Church Leader Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane at a gathering of over three million.

Yes, he is a man on a mission and he hit the ground running in South Africa.

Keinan hails from Rehovot in central Israel, where he says he had a simple childhood as the oldest of three children. At school, it was his passion for sport that stood out, particularly basketball, in which he excelled.

Back then he wanted to be a diplomat and decided to study international relations once he finished the army. Being someone who loves meeting new people, especially those from other cultures, he loved the army.

“As a child, you grow up in an environment where you mix with people just like you and you don’t get to meet others and then, in the army, you are thrown into a tent with people from all over. It is a melting pot and you mix and learn from each other and come out as an Israeli,” he says. Being a leader by nature obviously showed and he became an officer in the air force.

Instead of taking the opportunities to remain in the military, he chose the road less travelled and took his chances outside. “I wanted to look for other adventures, not taking the predictable route,” he says.

But like most young Israelis straight out of the army, he got on the first plane out of the country for a year. But on that first fateful flight, he met a young woman, Sarit is her name, who was going to go on a



Lior Keinan

bazaar had been the day before, but I saw there was an introductory cadet course for the foreign ministry the following day,” he says. “I remembered then that I had always wanted to be a diplomat and so I was there the next day.”

He found a telecoms position while pursuing the tough nerve-wracking year-long process to become a diplomat. “I knew it was for me. I get paid to travel the world, learn new cultures, and if I can do it for the cause of Israel, what more could I ask for?”

“Every day in this job is different. One day I could be focusing on economics, the next on the media and I could be in a rural area surrounded by people of another culture the following day.”

Keinan never looked back and has held foreign positions in Peru, Mexico and Portugal, before taking up his role here.

“Our families pay a big price for our diplomatic careers. It is hard for a diplomatic spouse because they leave their positions in Israel and go to another country for a few years, not knowing if they can work there and then they come back and may find it impossible to find work in their careers.

Like most young Israelis straight out of the army, he got on the first plane out of the country for a year. But on that first fateful flight, he met a young woman, Sarit is her name, who was going to go on a lifelong journey with him.

“And when they do, they might be uprooted again,” he says. “Also, when I arrive in a country and enter the embassy, I disappear into this job and someone has to deal with settling the children, setting up home and all the other things. It requires a really strong bond and an understanding spouse.”

Because his wife works for the ministry of education, they are obligated to offer her a job on her return and she also has a part-time job at the embassy. He says that for children it is also really tough, having to be uprooted from their schools and friends every few years.

“Some children really love the adventure and others just want to stay home. Each one takes this package in their own way.”

Coming to South Africa was much easier because they have close family here and are familiar with the people, country, language and sport.

As posts for Israeli diplomats go, he says, this is a “challenging one”.

“Things here are not easy, but they are by all means not impossible, nor hopeless,” he says.

Continued on page 35>>

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A teenage girl becoming a boy

NICOLA MILTZ

“Today we lost our daughter but... gained a son.”

Fitness guru, Steve Uria, posted these words on his Facebook page on August 29 at 19:49.

Just hours before this, his once long-haired “princess” of a daughter “came out” on Instagram with a bold declaration: “Hey guys most of you already know but I’m transgender. If you don’t know what that is just educate yourselves and look it up instead of assuming things and feel free to ask questions.” It received over 3 000 views.

Meet Luke Uria, 13 of Cape Town. Up until recently Luke was a petite teenage girl, olive-skinned, with long, wavy locks and dimples – a trapped, intense soul desperate to be in a different body.

By all accounts the Urias seem like the perfect modern-day nuclear family: Fitness visionary Steve the dad, built like a Jewish Jeanne-Claude Van Damme, Robyn the yoga-loving wife and their three gorgeous children.

But there was always something that set their youngest apart from her peers. She would obsess over boy-like characters in movies and toys like Spiderman, or the character Chandler in the US sit-com Friends, and Harry Potter.

The sporty tomboy could not relate to girly peers and over time, as puberty approached, the baby of the family became more and more isolated and emotionally entombed.

“When I was about five I told my mom that I felt like a boy,” said Luke this week. “She told me that she was a tomboy too.”

Robyn says even to this day she doesn’t own a pair of high heels, and wears little make-up. “I thought she was just being like me, how cute, and I ignored it.”

But with time, and the full-on onset of puberty, Luke became more and more unsettled with anxiety and frustration.

“I couldn’t understand why my daughter was so miserable and anxious. Everything was an issue. When it came to Shabbat the hair and the outfits were always a problem, it was a fight to go to shul.

“To wear a dress for a batmitzvah or

barmitzvah was so uncomfortable. Shabbos was unbearable, it came with a refusal to look nice and dress up. It was heart-breaking.”

Like Robyn, Luke showed great potential at netball and swimming. “I couldn’t understand why these sports were a problem; my daughter showed great promise as a shooter, I played Southern Transvaal netball.

“Swimming was such an issue, and I’m a swimming teacher! It was so frustrating, seeing the refusal with so much potential,” said Robyn.

“She often told me: ‘Mom I wish I was a boy,’ and I’d say so did I!”

The misery and torment became intolerable when Luke was 11 years old.

One night when Robyn settled down in bed with her laptop, she decided to go onto Luke’s profile history to check out what her daughter was busy with.

And there it was – an online history trail of transgender research. It hit her like a ton of bricks. This “new obsession was not fine”, feared Robyn who informed her husband that “something was up”.

And so began the torment-filled journey into the previously uncharted territory of transgender discovery. Hopping from one doctor to another, to a psychologist, psychiatrist and even a gender specialist, the road has been rough. The diagnosis: gender dysphoria.

Well-known clinical psychologist Dr Eve explains on her website that gender dysphoria is the diagnosis typically given to a person whose assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

“How do you explain to people as you watch your young child struggle to understand why toys, clothes, hair and body don’t align with how they feel inside?” said Robyn, “This was not a choice. Not for me, not for my child.”

Dr Eve says that this is a “hard space” for parents, caregivers, relatives and the child. The idea of children transitioning is traumatic for all concerned.

“The question being asked is: Do the kids know best? Is a six-year-old... or a 12-year-old really able to make informed enough decisions and the consequences of a

complete shift in their gender?”

Gender dysphoria is a highly complicated, individually-centred and highly controversial issue. Parents are bearing the brunt of global pressure from gender activists, clinicians and social media.

“The activists believe... the children know best,” says Dr Eve, and this is becoming a mainstream view, which is according to her being endorsed by the media, politicians, schools and medical practitioners.

“Children identifying as transgender, are given hormone-blocking drugs after the onset of puberty, and then move onto high doses of hormones... and then perhaps consider surgery.”

Dr Eve says there is research suggesting that many kids “grow out of it” and “reconcile with their birth gender”.

She encourages parents to use their rights to be holistically informed and adequately assisted by professionals at every level before embarking on the biomedical transition.

Right now, though, Luke is resolute and says: “I need to live for now and not worry about the future. I want to be me now.”

This week, he started the extremely expensive medical process.

Steve Uria, who commutes between New York and South Africa with fitness studios


Continued on page 22>>

ב"ה

Celebrating the Siyum


Completion of The Rambam Learning Cycle

TORAH TALKS



Judge Sharise Weiner
Judicial Perspective

A Judge of the High Court of South Africa, Sharise was nominated in 2016 for appointment as the Public Protector of SA. The founder of **Warm the World** she was awarded The Absa Jewish Achievers' Award for Women in Leadership in 2016.



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Jewish Report

We can't keep quiet in the face of wrongdoing

We have been threatened and cajoled and told that we are bad Jews today as we put this bumper Rosh Hashanah edition to bed. What kind of person runs a story during the month of Elul about a man who made a mistake? Have you no heart? What about his children? The newspaper is destroying his life, we were told by the numerous callers and e-mailers who lambasted us this week.



These people were determined to stop us from running the story of Dr Steven Levy who was found guilty by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) of “performing acts of a sexual nature on his female patients” over a number of years. He was found guilty as charged of violating not one, but three women.

And when he was ordered to stop practising for effectively one year, the pro-forma complainant of the HPCSA requested leave to appeal this sentence. He believed the punishment did not fit the crime. He felt the doctor had got off too lightly.

Should we really have kept quiet about a doctor – in general practice – who was doing this to his own patients? Would we be morally right to ignore this and not alert the community? We think not.

Although he has been ordered to suspend his practice for a year, he has chosen not to tell his patients the truth. Telling them that he has “decided to take a well-needed and deserved sabbatical for a year” is not the truth. He knows that, but his patients and those who trust him, don't.

As the SA Jewish Report, it is our duty to protect the community and to alert them to situations that could harm them. It is also our duty not to be bullied by people who are trying to silence the messenger because they don't want this man to be seen in a negative light.

We are not trying to caste aspersion on him – he did that perfectly well himself. What we are trying to do is to let the community know the facts so they can make their own decisions.

What will he do one night when one of his patients can't get hold of his locum, they know he is home and they call him for help? Will he turn them away if they plead with him because they trust him? On what grounds would he turn them away? He is only believed to be on sabbatical... This is just one of the possible scenarios that could potentially put someone at risk if we did not do our job by telling you the truth.

We are strengthened by the fact that the real heroines in this situation are those women who stood up to constant harassment and threats to get them to stop pursuing the case against the doctor at the HPCSA.

They didn't do it for self-gratification; quite the opposite. They stood to gain nothing from this. They did it for those innocents who could potentially unwittingly fall victim to this doctor.

They are brave and are examples to all of us of how important it is to pursue what is right. They are the epitome of being a light unto the nations. Being brave and fighting the good fight is never the easy route – but the right one.

This Rosh Hashanah, these women and their families can be proud. They will start the New Year afresh, knowing that they can let go of the nightmares and the horror of abuse and they have done all they can to prevent this doctor from doing this to any other patient.

We live in a country where sexual violence and abuse is almost endemic. Perpetrators get away with it all the time. Because they get away with it, the cycle continues and worsens.

So many women are afraid to fight the status quo – particularly when there are generally huge odds stacked against them doing so.

We know those people who contacted us today were doing it for what they believe are the right reasons. They wanted to protect someone they care about and his family. We respect that. We also feel for children and families who get caught in the tailspin of exposing wrongdoing.

It is not their fault and they didn't do any harm. We need to protect them as far as possible. But surely, the person who did the harm could have safeguarded them by seeking help before violating an innocent person?

If the doctor had stopped himself, we would not be in this situation and neither would his family. The situation this doctor is in is not our fault, nor is it the fault of the women who took it to the HPSCA, it lies squarely at the feet of this doctor.

Next week is Rosh Hashanah and this is our special bumper edition to celebrate the festival. We understand that this kind of story is not what we want to read on the High Holy Days, but we could not ignore it either. We need to live in our integrity and follow what we believe is right.

We wish you a Shanah Tovah u'Metukah!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Dateline: Middle East

The migrant crisis – another baffling headache for Israel

PAULA SLIER

Europe's migrant crisis is far from over. The United Nations is warning that only 10 per cent of those currently on the move from Africa, Asia and the Middle East have reached the continent – eight to 10 million are still on their way. A very small number appear to be genuine refugees, fleeing warzones.

Europe is grappling with a problem that for years now, Jerusalem, on a much smaller scale, has been trying to solve. Tens of thousands of Africans have entered Israel illegally and the population is divided over whether they are legitimate asylum seekers or economic migrants.

Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, thinks the latter. He's vowed to “remove illegal aliens who don't belong here”. Some right-wingers have gone so far as to call them “a cancer”.

“A country within a country,” the Israeli Immigration officer groans as we drive through the streets of south Tel Aviv. I'm sitting in the back of a police van and the shop signs are changing from Hebrew to Tigrinya (Eritrean language) as the streets become more grimy and the buildings more rundown.

A former cinema is now a shopping centre blaring reggae music, while hairdressers, bars and cafes donning the sidewalk, serve African dishes and sell traditional clothes.

According to the African Refugee Development Centre, there are more than 45 000 Africans in Israel, mostly from Eritrea and Sudan. The migrants insist they're asylum seekers, fleeing conflict, persecution and even genocide, in their home countries. Their stories of oppression and war are harrowing.

Salah tells me he arrived in Israel from Darfur nine years ago on foot. Like hundreds of thousands before him he made the arduous journey from Sudan to Egypt to Israel after paying Bedouins the equivalent of three thousand rands to smuggle him in. His son was born in Israel, speaks only Hebrew, has Israeli friends and identifies as Israeli. But like his father, he could be deported at any time.

Steven arrived from Nigeria on a tourist visa and then decided to stay on to train as a missionary. Two years later his plans fell apart when he became a victim of a Palestinian suicide bombing and lost the ability to walk properly. He now struggles to find work.

I meet him in a rundown room in the back of an apartment block in south Tel Aviv. The only reason he's still in the country is because he's taking the Israeli government to court for compensation and is engaged to an Israeli woman.

Many Israelis are abhorred by their country's treatment of these black foreigners. They argue that Israel was founded by – and for – refugees and as such has a moral obligation to assist people seeking asylum.

What's more, they point out, their numbers are not that high and Israel's response has been minimal – approving fewer than one per cent of asylum applications since it signed the UN Refugee Convention six decades ago.

Then of course there's the race card – Filipinos and Chinese and other foreigners are not treated as badly, some tell me. African migrants are frustrated and have held protests in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, holding up banners reading: “Black lives matter,” and “Don't force us to leave

and look for refuge elsewhere”.

But “South Tel Aviv is now South Sudan”, a pensioner living in the area bemoans. She tells me: “I'm afraid to leave my apartment and we had two rapes not so long ago in one of the alleyways. I put my life in danger every time I walk out of my building.”

Many Israelis blame the spike in crime on these migrants. They insist they're not genuine refugees but rather people looking for economic opportunities. Israel, they say, has taken in a lot of foreigners relative to its size and it's unfair for critics to focus on her when there are many other countries who've taken in far less.

In trying to deal with the problem, seven years ago Jerusalem built a fence along her border with Egypt. She now directs many of the foreigners to a desert detention facility and in a largely unprecedented move in the Western world, also sends them to third-party countries in Africa.

This is often argued to be inconsistent with international law and the 1951 convention on refugees – to which Israel is a party. Some of the refugees transported from Israel to Rwanda and Uganda, have reportedly been declined legal papers on arrival, been threatened with repatriation back to their homeland and not been given promised assistance from the Israeli authorities.

Recently, the High Court of Justice ruled Jerusalem could continue with this controversial practice but only so long as the third country was safe. It also said the government could not jail those who refuse to go, for more than 60 days. Both human rights groups and the government are unhappy.

Several thousand Africans have left Israel over the years; many of those who remain have learnt Hebrew and work in restaurants, hotels and other services, which Israelis do not want to do.

On Monday, the Israeli justice minister proposed that Palestinians in the West Bank should be encouraged to replace these Africans. It would help improve the Palestinian economy and contribute to coexistence between the sides, she argued.

Palestinians were once employed in these sectors but their numbers were cut back over the years because of security considerations. The problem with the minister's suggestion is that there are no indications these threats have been sufficiently dealt with. By comparison, the Africans do not pose – or haven't so far – security risks to the Jewish State.

As Europe looks for a solution to the refugee crisis, she's now employing some of the practices Jerusalem has already tried – tightening borders and deporting people.

These solutions can work – but not necessarily in the long term. Brussels has the added problem of an estimated 50 000 terrorists who have infiltrated among the millions seeking refuge across the Mediterranean.

With global migration on the increase, the problem is not easily going to disappear. While there is no foreseeable solution in sight for Europe, Israel will hopefully fare better at containing the problem.

• *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.*



Anti-Semitism in South Africa: Should we be concerned?

MILTON SHAIN

South African Jews were justifiably outraged at a recent Holocaust-related tweet (and subsequent comment) from Andile Mngxitama, the leader of Black First Land First (BLF). Of concern is that Mngxitama’s intervention follows upon similar outbursts from people who should know better. Ugly incidents are becoming increasingly common. Social media too reflects a disturbing turn. “Kill the Jew”; “May you burn in Hell”; “You must get out of South Africa and don’t come back, you Jewish bastards”, can be read online. “Keep calm and Kill the Jews” was even posted on the ANC Youth League website.

Are such comments harbingers of rising anti-Semitism and do they threaten the well-being of South African Jews in the foreseeable future?

Clearly one needs to go beyond fringe statements to assess public opinion. On the other hand, even calibrated polls are often contradictory and present difficulties for those wishing to gauge the national mood.

By way of example, some years back the SA Jewish Report led with the headline “Low anti-Semitism in SA – but don’t be complacent”, while a week later the SAZF in Israel reported that “South Africa almost tops anti-Semitism charts”.



The former article was based on a talk by David Saks of the Board of Deputies who reported that South Africa had a relatively low rate of anti-Semitism. It was, he noted, 10 times higher in the UK, France and Argentina, 15 times higher in Australia and 20 times higher in Canada and Germany.

Saks’ figures had been calibrated in terms of anti-Semitic incidents. The SAZE, on the other hand, based its claim on a Pew Global Attitudes Survey which found that South Africans, along with Spaniards, Mexicans and Brazilians, held some of the most negative views of Jews outside of the Muslim world.

According to the 2008 Pew Survey, 46 per cent of South Africans harboured unfavourable views of Jews and of those 46 per cent, two thirds disliked Jews in the extreme. A much lower figure of 11 per cent was recorded in Australia which had more incidents.

Are these figures a cause for panic?

In the first instance, it seems to me important to separate ideas of the Jew from actions against the Jew. For example, measures of anti-Semitism in the United States in the 1930s were horrific – yet anti-Jewish traction in public life was minimal.

But ideas are important and should not be minimised – especially within certain political contexts. Consider our radical white right in the 1930s.

Heightened Afrikaner ethno-nationalism at that time ensured a “Jewish Question”. On the other hand, in the 1980s Eugene Terre’Blanche’s Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) failed to present a threat.

Political context is everything. In the “new

South Africa” the white right is of marginal concern.

But what about the black majority? In the first instance, it is important to note that historically blacks never focused specifically on Jews when articulating grievances and aspirations. The struggle was to overthrow white minority rule.

Nonetheless, studies from the early 1970s have shown that blacks are not immune to anti-Semitism. In more recent times industrial protests have identified specifically “Jewish capitalists” and anti-Semitic placards have been displayed at a number of strikes around the country.

All in all, however, the black population cannot be accused of serious anti-Jewish actions.

Where we do see ugly manifestations of Jew-hatred is in anti-Zionist discourse. Few will forget the infamous United Nations Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001. Deep-seated anti-Semitism – cloaked in anti-Zionism – was perhaps best illustrated when, at an anti-Zionist rally in Lenasia in 2009, South Africa’s deputy foreign Minister, Fatima Hajaig, spoke of “Jewish money” controlling the US and Western Europe.

For some anti-Zionists, Jews are diabolically evil. They have even latched onto Holocaust denial. In 1996, Radio 786, a Muslim radio station, had to apologise for airing an interview with Dr Ahmed Huber, who spoke of the “Holocaust swindle”. Two years later, the same radio station interviewed Dr Yaqub Zaki who, besides claiming that the “million plus” Jews who died in the Second World War, had died of infectious diseases, spent much of his time engaging in elaborate Jewish conspiracies.

The outbursts of Mngxitama thus have a long pedigree.

Yet for all that, post-apartheid South Africa has a strong anti-racist ethos and one need not necessarily fear the worst. Classic Jew-hatred has no place. Importantly, Hajaig had to apologise for her anti-Jewish tirade.

Our respect for pluralism – including religious pluralism – mitigates against vulgar anti-Semitism. Constitutionally enshrined Chapter Nine institutions such as the Human Rights Commission, are a further bulwark. In trying to assess the significance of contemporary anti-Jewish outbursts, we should perhaps separate what the historian Todd Endelman has called “private” from “public or programmatic” anti-Semitism.

By “private” anti-Semitism, Endelman means expressions of contempt and discrimination outside the radius of public life, as opposed to “public” anti-Semitism which is the injection of anti-Semitism into matters of policy and the manipulation of anti-Semitism for partisan political ends.

In that sense, South Africa does not have a “Jewish Problem”. No political movement is calling for the curtailment of Jewish rights. On the other hand, that some individuals have questioned Jewish support for Zionism is of concern. It certainly limits full Jewish expression.

Also worrying is a creeping African racial nationalism. But the turn to racial chauvinism targets Indians, coloureds and whites, rather than specifically Jews. It does, however, suggest that the “rainbow” nation is unravelling and in this sense, Jews, like other whites, will feel the pressure.


• *Milton Shain is Emeritus Professor in the Department of Historical Studies and a former director of the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town. His latest book, ‘A Perfect Storm. Antisemitism in South Africa, 1930-1948’, published by Jonathan Ball, won the Recht Malan Prize (Media 24) for English and Afrikaans Non-Fiction for 2016.*

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SA doctor celebrates Rosh Hashanah with British Prime Minister

TALI FEINBERG

When Dr Beverley Jacobson’s eldest daughter was born on Yom Kippur 22 years ago, she had no inkling that this life-changing event would lead to her celebrating Rosh Hashanah with a British prime minister in 10 Downing Street on the same day this year.

It has been a long and very fruitful journey – one that many have gained from – but certainly not an easy one for this doctor and humanitarian who hails from South Africa.

When she received the invitation card that read: “The Prime Minister requests the pleasure of your company,” she was surprised but honoured.

Being invited to celebrate Rosh Hashanah with Theresa May, is an acknowledgement of the tireless work she has done for her daughter and so many others with serious learning disabilities.

“It’s very exciting, but I don’t see it as a personal honour – rather a reflection of my team,” Jacobson (whose maiden name was Phillips) told the SA Jewish Report from London.

“Over recent years, prime ministers have hosted receptions like this for Chanukah, and there have been similar events to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. I believe this is the first event in recent times marking Rosh Hashanah,” says Philip Rosenberg, director of Public Affairs at the British Board of Deputies.

“Being invited to these events is a great honour and represents the value that the Government places on working with our community and with our organisations.”

The Rosh Hashanah tea falls on Jacobson’s daughter Talya’s birthday, which felt for her like she had come full circle as it was Talya who led her to become CEO of Kisharon, for which she is being recognised.

Kisharon is a Jewish organisation founded in 1976 to provide an education, support and equality for children and adults with complex and profound learning disabilities. Similar to Selwyn Segal or Astra Centre in South Africa, individuals supported by Kisharon are taught the skills they need to live independently within the community and to lead fulfilling lives.

“When, on Yom Kippur of 5755, Talya was born, having contracted a Group B meningitis and septicaemia, she rallied against all odds and pulled through with the help of medical intervention, life support and Hashem’s blessing. She did, however, suffer extensive damage to her brain, which left her with mild quadriplegic cerebral palsy, a severe visual impairment and learning disabilities.

“Suddenly I found myself catapulted into what was, for me, the unseen world of disability,” she writes in the British Jewish News Online website.

“Talya’s early years passed in a blur – therapy, stimulation, frustration. Tentative attempts at nursery and school settings, and the all-too-frequent rejections. Medical consultations, assessments and form filling. Navigating local council bureaucracy.

“Advocating. Negotiating. Tribunals and legal challenge. Each transition became a fight for Talya’s rights. It was



Dr Beverley Jacobson

a very draining and lonely path. And in the background was a young alienated family with subjugated needs,” she continues.

These challenges led Dr Jacobson to Kisharon, which showed her that “with the right support, an individual with a learning disability can take control of his or her life and achieve just about anything”.

She explains that before Talya’s birth, she had experienced little contact with disability, and she now hopes that Kisharon and similar organisations can change that reality for others.

With this vision in mind, Dr Jacobson set about improving and expanding the organisation. Says Kisharon Chairman Philip Goldberg: “Not only has Bev revolutionised Kisharon’s operating culture and efficiency over the past eight years, but her energy and ambition for individuals with learning disabilities is palpable, and outstanding outcomes are being achieved.”

Having qualified and worked as a doctor in South Africa prior to moving to the UK where she completed a Master of Business Administration at the London Business School, “South Africa’s loss is London’s gain”, say her parents, Ros and Bentley Phillips.

Delving into her past, Dr Jacobson explains that “the most interesting part of my life is that it did not go according to plan”. While she was working as a new doctor in South Africa she suffered an HIV needle stick injury, and “there was not a lot of support” in the medical community in dealing with it.

She then chose to do her MBA in England and stayed in London. “Learning of Talya’s global disabilities was a real blow and I had no support structure,” says Dr Jacobson. Emerging eight years later when her daughter finally started to walk and talk, she wanted to “give back”.

“Joining Kisharon was empowering and cathartic, and helped me make sense of a difficult situation,” says Jacobson. Her daughter now enjoys the infrastructure that she has worked to put in place, and “she leads a very independent and full life”.

Jacobson adds that it was community support that got her through her darkest times.

Her passions and talents are broad – she recently ran a marathon through the Antarctic ice to raise money for a new Kisharon-supported living home for young people with learning disabilities.

“It’s taking on a challenge like this that has helped me get through tough times,” says Jacobson. She advises that others who are going through difficulties take on something that can help them regain their confidence and take their mind off things.

As someone who has endured challenges, Bev’s Rosh Hashanah message is that “there is a silver lining to everything” and that if you want to reach out to others, “small gestures are what change the world”.

In a Rosh Hashanah message to the South African Jewish community, Rosenberg says: “We share many common challenges and collaborate well together, including the Board of Deputies in both countries.

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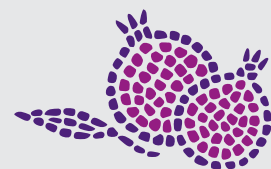


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Rugby star with a yarmulke

NICOLA MILTZ

When young Golden Lions rugby player Hacjivah Dayimani asked for a new yarmulke for his birthday last year, he was blown away when he received tzitzit as well, making it one of the best days of his life.

“I asked for a new kippah and I was given tzitzit, man I was excited!” said the tall, muscular eighth man who considers himself Jewish. The Christmas before he received a tallit.

The presents were given to him by his unofficial adoptive parents, Leyla and Kobie Smook of Dowerglen, who formed a close bond with Dayimani several years ago while he was at Jeppe Boys’ High School.

“As a boarder, he would come to us on weekends and during school holidays. One Pesach he came to stay and we provided him with kosher for Pesach food,” said Leyla who is Jewish.

The relationship developed over time and now Dayimani, who mostly resides with the Smooks, considers them his family, regularly WhatsApp-ing Leyla during the night to say he will be coming “home” late or telling her where he is.

“They are like my parents,” he says with affection and gratitude.

The 19-year-old rugby star in the making, who recently signed a contract extension with the Lions, has travelled a very long, often lonely and uncertain road to get to where he is today.

Born of a Xhosa mother, who is a sangoma, and a devout Nigerian Jewish father, Dayimani’s life story reads like an intricately woven Chinua Achebe novel.

Not always happy, and splattered with tragedy and poverty, it starts off somewhere in a dusty, region of the Cape. It moves to an even poorer township in Cradock in the Eastern Cape where he lived with his grandmother and countless other children in a shack.

Seeing something great in the youngster, his grandmother sent him to the town school to get a better education. It was during these early primary school years



that he realised he was gifted with athletic ability, speed and natural talent.

He watched Bryan Habana, one of his all-time rugby heroes, flying through the air during one of his many tries at the 2007 Rugby World Cup and grew to love watching the sport. He never knew then that rugby was in his stars.

Born of a Xhosa mother, who is a sangoma, and a devout Nigerian Jewish father, Dayimani’s life story reads like an intricately woven Chinua Achebe novel.

When his grandmother could no longer afford the school fees, she contacted Dayimani’s father in Johannesburg who had since moved on with a new family, and told him his son was special.

Dayimani’s late father, a Sabbath-observing Nigerian businessman, claimed he was an

Igbo Jew, a member of the Igbo people of Nigeria who practise a form of Judaism observing many of its core customs.

He brought his son up to the City of Gold and enrolled him into his first big city school in Kibler Park, south of Johannesburg. This was a culture shock for the young boy who had grown up with no electricity or running water.

These were very difficult years for the young sportsman who started to show early promise on the athletics field. His speed and agility got him noticed and a spot at Hoërskool President.

His first lucky break came after shining at the Linden Easter Rugby Festival where he was spotted and snapped up by Jeppe Boys’ High who offered him a rugby scholarship. Playing on Saturdays caused tensions in the house as Dayimani’s father didn’t want him doing this on Shabbos.

Dayimani represented the SA Schools team before winning gold for the SA Sevens at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Samoa.

Only one year out of school,

Dayimani is part of the Lions’ extended Super Rugby squad, and while he is not a regular starter in the Rugby Challenge, he is a noteworthy try scorer and this is thanks to his hard work ethic as well as his lightning quick speed and ball handling skills.

Under contract with the Lions he was sadly denied permission to represent South Africa at the Maccabiah this year, a trip to Israel being high up on his bucket list, he says.

Some of his career highlights so far include being part of the winning U19 Currie Cup team and making his Currie Cup debut this year.

Said Dayimani: “It’s easy to get to the top, it’s another thing to stay on top. Always remember the wolf on the hill is not as hungry as the wolf climbing the hill. The underdog will always be working hard to catch up.”

This attitude coupled with positivity and a fierce determination to prove himself, will stand him in good stead, believes Leyla Smook who said he was very upset when he was not chosen for the U20 Junior Springbok team.

“These difficulties seem to make him stronger; he remains positive, never dwells on his past and has a phenomenal outlook on life.”

Dayimani lost his father to brain cancer during his matric finals last year, which dealt him a

tremendous blow. “Hardship has made me strong and has given me a hunger,” said the 1,89m and 99,6kg youngster. He is grateful to the Smooks who pushed him to study hard during matric, paying for extra English lessons, being in contact with his teachers and helping him out financially.

“My dream is to get to a point where I’m in the starting position in the Lions and to one day play for the Springboks.

His Lions U19 Currie Cup coach, Joey Mongalo, says Hacjivah has something special. “They talk about players who have the X factor, Hacjivah is one of those. He is an exceptional athlete and ball carrier, he gets around the field well and gets himself into good positions.

“He has a very calm demeanour and his quiet confidence in his own ability and the awareness of what he is able to do, allows others in the team to live out their confidence.”

“Hacjivah has more than enough talent to go all the way. It’s now all about character and whether he can pass the character test. How will he grow as a person, how will he deal with the fame and the money, how will he recover from injury, these things are important in a player going forward.

“If Hacjivah can align his talent with his character, his future will be a bright one.”



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She redefined the notion of religious art



ROBYN SASSEN

Collagist extraordinaire, talented painter and printmaker, dedicated teacher of adults and relentlessly prolific maker of quintessential Jewish art, Naama Nothmann has passed away after a long illness.

An institution in her own right, Nothmann effectively redefined the notion of religious Jewish art, in a world where the concept is dominated by a softened mediocre sense of clich  . Armed with her strong opinions and her instinctive understanding of what works, Nothmann effectively branded Jewish art with a delicate and fierce sense of luminescence and boldly made it her own.

Born in Jerusalem on February 12, 1943, Nothmann passed away in Johannesburg on September 9, from a pulmonary thrombosis, related to other medical conditions. She was 74.

A daughter of renowned Chassidic teacher and community activist Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, Nothmann was always something of a maverick because of her great talent, which she followed as she held onto her Haredi roots.

But like an iconic fictional artist character, such as Chaim Potok’s Asher Lev, the young Nothmann was deeply supported by her father to grow into the best artist she could possibly be. Indeed, she was sent to begin studying art in Paris, during her formative years.

She later studied printmaking and painting in Israel and then relocated to the prestigious Delahanty School of Architecture in New York.

In 1981, she immigrated with her young family to South Africa, where she developed her skills and her exhibiting practice. Nothmann was endowed with a very sophisticated understanding of colour and texture and it lent to an approach to collage which was both innovative and outstanding in its sense of audacity and possibility.

Armed with her strong opinions and her instinctive understanding of what works, Nothmann effectively branded Jewish art with a delicate and fierce sense of luminescence and boldly made it her own.

Effectively, Nothmann’s use of collage was a blending of her architectural ethos with her fine art skills and she “painted” with the strips of coloured paper that comprised her work, which remains universally fresh.

Not only a collagist, Nothmann also chose to work in gouache and silkscreen and was deeply influenced by great 20th century modernists of the ilk of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, enjoying the way in which

they smashed rubrics of art-making with Cubist thinking. Not an imitator but an innovator in her own capacity, Nothmann had a penchant for images that were shattered and put together again through the medium of frosted glass and mosaic. While in some respects, critics have over the years compared her work to the kind of ethos seen in the late work of Jewish modernist Marc Chagall, Nothmann was always very much her own person and her enormous body of work, owned and shown the world over, bears testament to this.

Immensely prolific, Nothmann was deeply respected for her repertoire and was known to create enormous bodies of work for an exhibition in the space of just a few years. And while she successfully redefined the notion of religious art, her subject matter was not limited and ranged widely from the prosaic landscape and still life, the glorious image of children playing in the rain, to biblically evocative images. An artist who intimately understood the precepts and taboos of religious art, she also implicitly knew how far she could stretch her own skills. Far, very far.

Quickly becoming the darling, or the proverbial poster girl, for local Jewish institutions who wanted to develop and market beautiful products, from the time she began making South Africa her home, over the years Nothmann was often commissioned to illustrate greeting cards for Rosh Hashanah, opportunities which went a long way in making her work very central to a Jewish art ethos in South Africa.

Life for a full-time frum woman artist in South Africa was complicated by the need to earn a living and Nothmann was able to diversify a rich and full exhibiting programme with teaching adults the wonder and magic of artmaking. She proved to be a deeply beloved teacher to many.

With work housed in galleries as prestigious as the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Nothmann was well-known on the international gallery circuit. During the height of her career, she mounted over 40 solo exhibitions, not only in South Africa, but in Japan, Belgium, Hong Kong, Israel, England and the United States, to name but a few.

Nothmann had a great sense of savvy when it came to getting the image of her work into the public mindset, and while she was shown at galleries of the ilk of the Royal College of Art in London and Johannesburg’s Goodman Gallery, she didn’t consider herself above contributing work to communal drives and her pieces have often been shown through ORT, the Jewish Board of Deputies, the JNF and the like, for promotional reasons as much as fine art reasons.


Nothmann will be buried in Israel. She was divorced from her husband Moshe, and leaves three brothers and two sisters, three daughters and several grandchildren.

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Israeli solutions to African problems?

STEVEN GRUZD AND
CARMEL RAWHANI

Africa is increasingly attractive to external powers. China, France, Iran, Turkey, the UK, even South Korea, have, to varying degrees, vied for soft power, markets and camaraderie with African presidents. They compete with African powerhouses like Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa. Of late, Israel has re-entered this multi-dimensional chess game with a vengeance.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda in June 2016, met African leaders in New York at the UN in September, and was the first non-African leader to address the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at their July summit in Liberia.

In October, the first-ever Africa-Israel Summit was due to take place in Lomé, Togo, but was postponed on September 11 due to ongoing violent protests against Togolese President Faure Gnassingbé.

Naturally, Israel's advances have not gone unnoticed. South Africa was urging a boycott. Morocco had worked through the Palestinian Authority to squeeze the Togolese to scrap the summit, before the (unrelated) unrest manifested. Observers had predicted a good turnout in Togo.

So, why is Israel targeting Africa now? Will it succeed? And what does

this mean for the continent? In the 1950s and 1960s, Israel Foreign Minister Golda Meir championed building good relationships with newly-independent African countries, through projects in agriculture, defence, medicine, and infrastructure (airport construction, educational training institutions, establishing shipping companies, etc).

Hundreds of experts from MASHAV (the Israeli Foreign Ministry's Centre for International Co-operation) took part in channelling these efforts through over 30 embassies across Africa.

But these relations took a hit when the 1973 oil crisis struck, followed by the Yom Kippur War. Claiming that Israel had "invaded Africa" due to its incursion into Egypt, the Arab League pressurised the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to encourage member states to sever ties.

Most embassies were closed, leaving relations only with apartheid South Africa, and its handful of small African allies – Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland.

So why come back? The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs says there was no official "grudge" towards Africa, believing that the Arab League bullied African countries in 1973.

First, Israel has unashamedly said it seeks to break the powerful African

voting bloc in international fora, which has consistently voted against Israel.

Second, Israel needs new allies, with an EU increasingly critical of Israeli settlements and a US under Donald Trump tearing up the global diplomacy rule book (although it remains Jerusalem's most vital supporter).

Third, there are significant commercial interests in Africa for Israel, for both the state and private firms. Israel, the self-branded "Start-up Nation", has a wealth of technological products and know-how to improve the lives of Africans, from water use in drought-stricken climates and combating terrorism, to dramatically improving agricultural yields and medical breakthroughs. Yet, Israel's two-way trade with Africa is currently low:

ISRAEL			
	2014	2015	2016
Imports from Africa as a percentage of global	0.46	0.43	0.36
Exports to Africa as a percentage of global	1.98	1.65	1.46

Source: Author's compilation based on <http://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx>

Finally, Israel sees a shared history and kinship. "The Jewish people and the people of Africa have a sense of

sharing a common destiny. Both have suffered from discrimination and foreign rule. In this way both nations are united by a common historical struggle against colonisation.

Israel is extremely active in humanitarian crises. It was one of the first to send assistance to Sierra Leone after its devastating mudslides in August, and provided assistance to communities ravaged by wildfires in Knysna in South Africa.

Israel's Africa strategy is already bearing fruit. In September 2016, an International Atomic Energy Agency resolution that would have forced the country to open its undeclared nuclear facilities to UN Inspectors, failed to pass, due (in part) to supportive votes from some African states.

The president of Cape Verde reportedly announced that his country would no longer vote against

Israel at the UN (but since backtracked) and Senegal and Guinea, two Muslim-majority countries, both sent non-resident ambassadors to Israel for the first time. Senegal announced support for Israel's long-standing bid to join the AU as an observer.

If it happens at a future point, the Africa-Israel Summit will crown these initial successes. Over 150 Israeli

firms were expected to exhibit in Lomé. High on the agenda was Israel offering its technology as a solution to many of Africa's problems.

The consequences for the continent are significant. Will Israel be a more committed partner than Africa's many suitors? Israel seems genuinely interested in sharing its remarkable model for growth and development, and the tools it has honed along the way. It is willing to share expertise and resources.

But this will come at a price. Israel wants to dissolve "this giant bloc of 54 African countries that is the basis of the automatic majority against Israel in the UN and international bodies", said Netanyahu before the ECOWAS summit.

African countries stand to gain significantly in trade, investment, knowledge-sharing and subsequent development. Some leaders are clearly prioritising their own needs over solidarity with the Palestinians, much to the latter's shock and horror.

Israel's return to Africa comes at a key moment in history. With the continent's previously-reliable supporters, the US and EU, scaling back their financial assistance, influence is up for sale.

The Holy Land's second crack at Africa has already begun to pay off.

• Steven Gruzd and Carmel Rawhani are analysts at the South African Institute of International Affairs.



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SA rabbis focus on ensuring shuls are the centre of Jewish life

SIMON APFEL

This year’s Rabbinical Conference had around 75 rabbis and 15 rebbetzins focusing purely on how to ensure South Africa’s shuls remain at the centre of Jewish life. It was as one day of sustained, intense debate and discussion with that single vital objective. The event follows the findings from the Bright Spots study and conferences held in Johannesburg and Cape Town, where ideas were put forward by youth leaders, committee members, and rabbis and rebbetzins themselves, to address the challenges and replicate the successes.

The Rabbinical Conference was about fleshing out those ideas, creating solid, practical outcomes and taking concrete steps to improve the shul. “To a large extent the vibrancy and dynamism of the community is entwined with that of our incredible shuls,” said Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein. “The challenges are mounting, and we need to respond proactively, promptly and creatively, if we are to ensure they remain the beating heart of our special community.”

Throughout the deliberations, there was a willingness from the rabbis to grapple with their own limitations. “Not every rabbi can be a cutting-edge educator, administrator, social media maven, spiritual guru and psychologist rolled into one,” said Rabbi Yehuda Stern of the Sydenham “SpiritShul”. The key is humility – to realise we can’t do everything, and use support from the community when we need it.”

Rabbi Gabi Bookatz of Waverley Shul encouraged colleagues to take courses in life coaching, social work and rabbinic counselling.

For many of those surveyed in the Bright Spots study, shul sermons were a pivotal factor.

“People are looking for short, concise messages,” said Rabbi Stern. “Eight minutes is the ideal, 12 to 15 minutes for High Holidays. Create a spark, leave a question, encourage people to discuss and debate around their tables. And use Facebook Live as a platform to broadcast weekday shiurim.”

In the area of “Fun and Education”, Rabbi Dr David Nossel, also of Waverley Shul, outlined three principles: “Firstly, shul events should be attractive, innovative, exciting and energetic; secondly, it’s not just about getting people through the door – it’s about keeping them there and making them want to come back; and thirdly, we need to create platforms and engage

people in such a way that they become leaders of, and contributors to, these events and initiatives.”

In pursuing these principles Nossel mentioned practical ideas such as joint-shul gatherings and events; tapping into trends and concepts that are popular (he cited a recent MasterChef competition on a Pesach retreat that proved wildly popular); and “not reinventing the wheel” – using the vast educational resources and activity ideas available on the Internet.

“In general, we need to cultivate leaders at a younger age. If they’re more engaged while at school, they’ll be more engaged after school.”

Above all, he said, “every interaction should be governed by one overriding concern – care; that I genuinely care about you, even if you aren’t a member of my shul”.

In terms of making the services themselves more compelling, suggestions included having explanatory interludes; reading aloud specific parts of the service and appointing “Kaddish Mentors” and “Shul Buddies” to help those unfamiliar with the liturgy; and even introducing meditation sessions to heighten the experiential factor.

For Rabbi Levi Avtzon of Linksfield Shul, one of the ways to create a sense of belonging and community is to turn shuls into community centres.

“Shuls are not the only portal of entry to Judaism. You can invite people to meals who don’t come to shul. We have a member who doesn’t come to shul but attends every single chesed event – is someone like that not a connected member?”

The involvement of women also featured prominently in the discussions, with a strong contingent of rebbetzins present at the conference. Rebbetzin Gina Goldstein urged a “shift in thinking” on the role of the rebbetzin.

“There is often a lot of emphasis on backstage work – setting up, organising, co-ordinating. That is important work but should not be at the expense of what I believe should be the rebbetzin’s primary role connecting one-on-one, building relationships, guiding, doing the parts of her job which ‘no one else can do’.

“Each of us has a circle of influence whether we acknowledge it or not. The shul is not only a place for davening and learning, it’s also a place for nurturing friendships, finding and providing social support, family time, for bonding and networking on many

levels. “If we as women can embrace our opportunity to contribute, and can access this empowering shift in our thinking, we can play a very real and dynamic role in the process of uplifting and renewing our shuls.”

Perhaps the most pressing topic was how to re-engage youth.

Rabbi Dovi Goldstein of Ohr Somayach Savoy, emphasised the need for strong youth leadership – empowering young people through youth-led dinners, activities and services.

“A dedicated youth minyan is a really great way to provide kids with a space at shul with their peers,” he said. “It requires a facilitator though, someone to delegate but also provide oversight and structure.

“In general, we need to cultivate leaders at a younger age. If they’re more engaged while at school, they’ll be more engaged after school.”

Partnering with schools was also mooted as an excellent avenue to bring youth to shul, a case in point being Rabbi Asher Deren of Chabad of the West Coast’s “Flying High on the High Holidays” programme, which last year brought 250 Herzlia kids to shul over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Avtzon meanwhile pointed to the success his own shul has had with a youth-dedicated rabbinical couple.

“Often when you hire a 21-year-old university student youth director, it’s quicksand – in two years, he/she leaves or gets bored. If you can, reallocate funds for a youth rabbi and rebbetzin whose exclusive focus is 25 and younger.”

Rabbi Jarred Bloch, the co-founder of Ohrsom Student, which has proved enormously popular with 19-22-year-olds, was asked to share the organisation’s formula.

“It’s obviously the same Judaism – our ancient, holy heritage is what makes us who we are – but we present it in a way that’s refreshing, modern, stylish and attractive so students really don’t want to go anywhere else.”

These were just some of the main talking points at the conference. Now the work begins in earnest, collating and further refining the ideas, and then rolling them out.

“In the coming months, we will be going full steam ahead with implementation,” says Chief Rabbi Goldstein.

“This is an ongoing journey of innovation to ensure our shuls are as relevant, engaging and inviting as they possibly can be, and that they remain bustling, vibrant hubs of inspiration and creative Jewish expression, especially for the next generation.”

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Remembering the heady days of King Kong 1959

LIONEL SLIER

When I finally sit down to watch a performance of King Kong this week, 58 years after this African jazz opera came into my life, it will be with joy and many, many memories. It will also be the first time I actually watch it.

The last time I didn't see it was in 1959 when it debuted in Johannesburg for six weeks. Each night I was there, backstage, schlepping scenery around because "the show must go on".

I've had to wait all these years to finally catch it and so my walking stick and I will be in the front row. I'll be watching the scene changes as much as the action on the stage. And yet, as famous as the musical has proven to be, few people know the origin of its name.

In 1933 there was a movie about a group of American explorers who go to a remote island where they encounter a gigantic gorilla whom they call "King Kong". They capture it and bring it back to New York. The film has the iconic ending of King Kong climbing the Empire State Building, holding the heroine in his fist.

Twenty years later South Africa had its own King Kong, so named because, like his namesake, he was strong and fearless. He was a black boxing champion by the name of Ezekiel Dlamini, whose strength was legendary. But because of apartheid, he was not allowed to fight against white boxers, which caused him terrible frustration.

Dlamini apparently also had a short fuse. He killed a gangster in an argument, but was acquitted as it was ruled self-defence.

Later, he murdered his girlfriend in a shebeen fracas and then shouted to people to call the police. At his subsequent trial for murder, he disrupted proceedings continuously, calling to be hanged. The white judge sentenced him to 12 years. After a few weeks in Leeuwkop Prison, he drowned himself.

At the time there was an organisation called "The Union of South African Artists" run by Ian Bernhardt, who was a tireless agitator for black advancement. Its members were fine musicians, dancers, thespians and singers. Bernhardt organised concerts which were called "Township Jazz" and which were often staged at the Selborne Hall, part of the Johannesburg City Hall complex.

The audience was often racially mixed and the shows were very well-attended. Bernhardt asked me to assist with the concerts. Actually, I did not do much more than sell sweets and Coca-Cola (sixpence a can) at intervals.

Enter Leon Gluckman, a leading actor and director. He and Bernhardt decided that, with such an abundance of talent, they should do a major show.

Well-known members of the Johannesburg Jewish community, Clive and Irene Menell, became involved in promoting this idea and a musical based on the life of Ezekiel Dlamini was mooted.

The production team consisted mostly of Jews and the cast was made up of many black performers who would later become big names in South Africa.

Well-known Johannesburg lawyer and author, Harry Bloom, wrote the script and a gifted musician,

Lionel Slie and King Kong lead actor, Andile Gumbi



Todd Matshikiza, composed the music together with local journalist Pat Williams who contributed the lyrics.

Gluckman was the obvious choice as producer; Spike Glaser was the musical director. Anti-apartheid stalwart – although it wasn't known at that time – Arthur Goldreich, created the scenery, the programme cover and the record sleeve.

Altogether, the cast consisted of 63. Nathan Mdledle, leader of the prominent group "The Manhattan Brothers", starred as King Kong, with three other members of his group, together with the "4 Woody Woodpeckers", another prominent group. Rising star Miriam Makeba was Joyce, King Kong's girlfriend. Kippie Moketsi was among 14 musicians, one of whom was young Hugh Masekela.

On February 2, 1959 the show opened to thunderous applause at the Witwatersrand University Great Hall to a multiracial audience, something unheard of during those apartheid days and certainly illegal. Yet the Security Police – the Special Branch – were surprisingly quiet.

The first night was a sensation. Oliver Walker of The Star described it as, "my greatest thrill in twenty years of South African theatre-going".

The Golden City Post, a leading black newspaper, called it "a milestone in the history of non-white entertainment". Drum Magazine lauded it as "a smash hit".

Virtually the entire backstage crew were Jewish, including myself, although all I did was bring on and take off scenery as required.

Tickets for the show were at a premium and queues formed daily in Eloff Street at Percy Tucker's Show Service booking office and stretched around the corner to the main Post Office a block away in Jeppe Street.

Leon Gluckman said, "There has been genuine co-operation between black and white and in a small way it has brought understanding, which is much better than the fear which informs the relations between the two sectors."

He also remarked: "I would like to say that the Jewish spirit has to some undefined extent entered into the production of King Kong."

For the participants, performers, musicians and backstage crew, plus hangers-on, there was an added bonus. There were after-show parties held regularly, mostly in the suburb of Orchards where in High Street many so-called "leftists" lived.

The parties were racially mixed. "European" liquor was available and everyone danced together, which was highly illegal. Why did the police allow this?

Speculation was that the apartheid government thought that King Kong was an example of people developing along their own traditional lines and it was to be encouraged. However, at those parties, we never knew whether the Special Branch would barge in and arrest everyone or not.

Away from the group, apartheid still reigned. This was evident when a group of us asked Miriam Makeba out for dinner before one show. We went to several restaurants in the area around Wits and they all said they could not allow us to be served.

Eventually we found a restaurant – an eating place rather – in Fordsburg where the Indian owner nervously allowed us in. Indeed "Sad Times, Bad Times", as one of the show's songs was called. That was the South Africa that was.

King Kong ran for six weeks in Johannesburg and then toured the country, except for Pretoria where it was refused permission to play. I remember those weeks well – they felt like a six-week suspension of apartheid.

The show is currently on in Johannesburg and at last I am going to see it!

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Praising Herzlia pupils’ good deeds in face of anti-Israel harassment

In response to our article last week on the Herzlia pupils who were faced with anti-Israel posters at a school where they were doing outreach work, the leadership of Defend, Embrace, Invest (in), Support Israel (DEISI) sent the following messages to the grade 11 pupils:

Yesterday, DEISI International became aware of the unfortunate experiences you recently experienced at Vista High School. This is just a brief note to let you know that there are many non-Jewish South Africans who not only recognise and appreciate your efforts, but who stand with you as Zionists and who have your back!

Thank you for reaching out to those outside of your community who need help. Thank you for playing an active role to better the future of others. Thank you for exuding courage, maturity, dignity and diplomacy when faced with hurtful opposition.

Please know that the message communicated by the deputy principal to you is not a message that represents the view held by many South Africans. Yes, at times the political and social climate seems to be more hostile towards the Jewish community than it seems to be friendly.

However, I hope you will be able to see from the messages attached from a small number of our members (all of whom are also youth) that you are

loved and appreciated.

The tikkun olam and gemilut chasadim shown by you, other students at your school and your teachers through your outreach programmes over the years, is very similar to the African principle of “ubuntu”.

This is but one example of the fact that as fellow South Africans, we share more similarities than differences.

G-d bless you and Am Yisrael Chai!
Olga Meshoe
DEISI International CEO

What an admirable, positive attitude you guys have, initiative such a project, to help other learners. I am extremely impressed by your understanding of the need to help others. Thank you very much for your perseverance and courage, especially having to deal with the unreasonable behaviour from the deputy principal and his colleagues.

I wish you all the best with your “Discover 2017” programme. I truly hope your message against anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism gets across not just to children and youth, but to adults as well, and all across South Africa. Lastly, please remember that DEISI stands with you!

Refilwe Maphisa

As a young South African Christian Zionist (I believe Israel has the right to exist) who loves and supports

the Jewish community and people, I would like to indeed thank the Herzlia High School grade 11 pupils, for their maturity, dedication and disciplined conduct they’ve shown under difficult measures facing hate and misjudgement from Vista High School.

I would like to also inform the pupils not to be discouraged from taking part in good initiatives as they have done, despite the critics and all kinds of negativities and can assure you that some of us out there recognise and admire your efforts.
Zamokuhle Shabalala

The grade 11 pupils of Herzlia High School should be commended for the work they are doing in the Bo-Kaap. Their selfless service at Vista High School is undeserving of the anti-Semitic attacks they have experienced.

The pupils of Vista High School deserve better from their deputy principal and the advancement of their education should not be hindered by hate. Keep up the good work Herzlia High, DEISI International stands with you!

Emmanuel Olusegun

I recently had an opportunity of speaking to grade 11 pupils of King David High School as a DEISI representative during what they called their “Encounter Programme”.

The topics and conversations tackled there, were sobering,

challenging and thought provoking. I noticed a strong, fresh breed of young people who dared to question the status quo and who refused to accept wrong, though widely accepted as the norm. I knew that South Africa was in good hands and that there was hope for our beloved country.

As a fellow youth member and South African, I congratulate you all for the great work you’re doing and encourage you to continue against all odds, because we’re all in this together for a better South Africa.
Gladys Modise

I wish to commend all grade 11 pupils and educators who are involved in driving the Herzlia/Vista project. It is encouraging to hear of pupils and teachers joining hands to help create a better learning environment for the Vista High School grade 8 pupils.

This is living evidence that there are still people, who embrace “ubuntu” as their core value and that we should continue embracing it.

However, it is saddening that there are individuals who instead of supporting such great initiatives, use them as platforms to promote hatred, intolerance and division with their narrow ideologies.

To hear of the matured and dignified conduct that the pupils and teachers displayed during this unfortunate if not painful experience, is more encouraging in

that we should never allow anyone or anything to stop us from being kind to people. May the G-d of Israel bless and protect you all.

Sifiso Ngweni

As a DEISI International member, I would like to congratulate you on the good work you’ve started in renovating the Vista library. Your attitude demonstrates the selflessness we’ve come to appreciate from our Jewish brothers and sister in and out of Israel.

Please continue with your good work and may Hashem continue to bless and keep you.
Tlotliso Mphuthi

We offer our apology too, to you, your staff, the pupils and to the parents who have been affected by the unpleasant situation.

DEISI is also in support of the removal of the offensive posters. As a democratic society with a diverse population of different cultures, languages, nationalities and religions, schools are bound to ensure that through our diversity we develop a unity of purpose and spirit that recognises and celebrates our diversity.

We wish you all the very best with the director of education in the Western Cape. Please do not get weary of doing good through this project. May the L-rd be your strength.

Zanele Masia



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Every year we find what we hope to be a different or unusual cover for our Rosh Hashanah and Pesach bumper editions. This year the SA Jewish Report team decided to put out a request to Jewish schools all over the country to send us their most creative, colourful, unusual depictions of Rosh

Hashanah for our cover.
All the schools responded with such enthusiasm and sent us the most incredible photographs. It was such a tough decision to choose one. We chose one from Sydenham Pre-Primary.
However, we decided that while we can only have one cover, we can certainly showcase the other schools' work and we wanted to show our readers the best of the photographs that were sent to us.
Well done and thank you! With this kind of response, we will definitely do this again soon. – *Editor*

Runner-up cover: King David Linksfield High School



Our finalists



King David Victory Park Primary School



Torah Academy Nursery School



Minnie Bersohn Nursery School



King David Victory Park High School

A selection of photos



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Fear and trembling about High Holidays services

JOSHUA RATNER
RABBIS WITHOUT BORDERS

Fear and trembling make a triumphant return to the Jewish calendar with the month of Elul and the initiation of the holiday countdown that leads to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

As a rabbinical colleague wrote, Elul itself carries spiritual significance as a time to begin soul-searching and stock-taking of our individual behaviours over the past year.

Elul carries with it a particular sense of urgency, if not dread, for those officiating at High Holidays services. Summer vacation is now officially over. The lists of details for the myriad services that will take place – who is leading each reading, getting each aliyah, opening or closing the ark – can be truly staggering.

A recent Pew Research Centre survey found that for those looking for a new house of worship, “Americans look first and foremost for a place where they like the preaching and the tone set by the congregation’s leaders.”

At 83 per cent, the quality of the sermon was the single highest factor in determining Americans’ choice of congregation. So, the pressure many rabbis feel, myself included, to craft and deliver sermons of high quality is tremendous.

But if I am honest with myself, the sermon actually is the easy part of transmitting meaning and content on the High Holidays. It is conveyed in the vernacular and crafted to connect, deeply and personally, with those in attendance. What is truly hard, and what really fills me with fear, is how to make the rest of the services resonate.

There are (at least) three fundamental



challenges posed by the Yamim Noraim (Days of Awe) services. (I will speak specifically about Conservative Jewish services because those are the ones I am most familiar with.)

First is the sheer volume of Hebrew used during services. From Maariv on Rosh Hashanah Eve through Neilah on Yom Kippur, worshippers confront a relentless onslaught of Hebrew poetry and prose. While there are opportunities to inject English readings or inspirational messages (“kavanot”), these are usually the exception rather than the rule.

Why do we inundate ourselves with so much Hebrew? Because the machzor, the prayerbook

we use for the High Holidays, simply has a ton of content and we know that most synagogue-goers only have a limited time span during which they will sit in the pews. This leaves two options: cut out some Hebrew and replace it with more English translations, or chant our way through the Hebrew as fast as we can so we can finish the service on time.

Since rabbis and ritual committees tend to decide on the content of the services, and simultaneously tend to be the most conservative when it comes to modifying prayer content, we wind up with a very Hebrew-centric service. To make matters worse, the Hebrew is often from mediaeval sources and differs in content from the Hebrew some may be used to from Shabbat or daily worship. This makes it even harder to follow.

Finally, when we do slow down for more melodic chanting, it often is done by a cantor or other prayer leader in a tune that is so stylised that it is difficult to join.

The second major challenge of our High Holidays services stems from the content of the liturgy. The key themes are repeated again and again to the point that it can be challenging to feel personal resonance the fifth time I decry my sins or proclaim God’s sovereignty. The liturgy is intentionally redundant to hammer home key themes (created at a time when liturgy was recited orally, not written down), but this redundancy raises the moral hazard of emotional boredom.

Another major component of the High Holidays liturgy is the use of liturgical poetry (“piyyutim”) that were comprised by skilled poets 1 000 or more years ago. Their poetry

is subtle and relies upon an encyclopaedic knowledge of biblical references and connections that are incredibly challenging for modern audiences to unpack. With these raw ingredients, it is easy to see how the final prayer product often comes out dry and flavourless.

Perhaps the largest impediment to meaningful services, though, lies in the gulf between life experience and contemporary sensibilities on the one hand and traditional rabbinic theology on the other. I am sure there are some who embrace the liturgical themes of the High Holidays, especially the metaphor of G-d as King sitting in judgement on a heavenly throne.

But for the many others who reject this outlook, how can they derive meaning from the High Holidays while reciting a liturgy predicated on this very outlook?

If we adhere to different metaphors of G-d and different theologies about our relationship with G-d, are we left with a choice between cognitive dissonance or a wholesale rejection of the liturgy we have used for hundreds of years? Conversely, if we preserve the traditional liturgy, are we doing anything more than enabling a superficial and shallow spiritual experience?

Or, as I once wrote, do we intentionally seek out boredom to serve as a protective barrier during the High Holidays, so that we don’t have to get introspective?

I’m not sure how to resolve these questions, but I intend to spend much of Elul trying to do so. (JTA)

• Rabbi Joshua Ratner is the rabbi of Congregation Kol Ami in Cheshire, Connecticut.



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A community that prays together

ROSH HASHANAH MESSAGE FROM CHIEF RABBI WARREN GOLDSTEIN

So much has happened in the year since last Rosh Hashanah. Many members of our community have celebrated wonderful simchas. And yet, at the same time, many have suffered much pain, some through the loss of loved ones, others through illness or other challenges.

To be part of community means that we share in and feel each other’s joy and pain. To be part of a community is to look around us and feel deep empathy with other people and what they are going through.

And especially, at this time of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, our Sages teach us that by connecting ourselves to community and connecting ourselves to the plight of others in kindness, we achieve great merit before Hashem.

We need to move beyond feeling for others to action, to doing something for them. By attending a simcha, such as a wedding, and dancing and fully participating, we create joy for the simcha families.

And at a time of loss or illness, when we visit, we bring the comfort of our presence and words to those who are in situations of pain. Let us all look out for opportunities to perform acts of kindness and to reach out to as many people as possible in our community to share with them what they are going through.

One of the most powerful things we can do for somebody else is to daven for them, to pray. We cannot underestimate the power of prayer. Our Sages teach us that G-d willingly gave us power to change the world through our prayers.

We can and must turn to Him for our every need and request. Each day at the end of the weekday Amidah, just before we take the three steps back, we have an opportunity to mention our own particular needs in our own words before G-d.

The Amidah covers all of the general needs of the individual and community and indeed the entire Jewish people and the world. But at the end of the Amidah we have the opportunity to ask for things specifically in our own words – and we should seize that opportunity. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are important times to pray for a good and sweet new year.

When we pray, we don’t only pray for ourselves, we pray for others. That is why all of our prayers are formulated in the plural, because we daven on behalf of everybody.

The experience of praying for others opens our hearts to them and demonstrates great kindness. We need to feel and think about the needs of others and to pray for them. In this spirit there will, please G-d, be a special unity prayer service for a good year for the community, taking place on the Fast of Gedaliah on Sunday, September 24.

It is an opportunity to come together in a true spirit of community unity, in a spirit of love and caring for one another,

and in the spirit of deep empathy. It is an opportunity to pray for those who are sick, that they should be healed, to pray for the comfort of those who are in mourning and to pray for all, that the year ahead should be filled with simchas and nachas.

This is what it means to be part of a community. This is what it means to believe in the power of prayer. This is what true unity means. Let’s stand together. Let us all make an effort to attend this service, but most importantly of all, let us all make an

effort to harness the power of prayer now during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and, indeed, throughout the coming year as a way of changing the world for the good.

May Hashem bless us all with a good and sweet year, filled with His abundant goodness.

The community unity prayer service will take place on Sunday September 24, at 17:15 at the Yeshiva College Shul, in Cape Town at 18:00 at the Marais Road Shul and in Durban at 17:00 at the Silverton Road Shul.



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Looking through the lens of freedom

MARK OPPENHEIMER AND CECILIA KOK

The South African Constitution is premised on the three foundational values of freedom, dignity and equality. Much of our discourse is centred on the latter values. We talk about the dangers of inequality and we worry about impairing the dignity of vulnerable people. However, we often forget about the value of freedom. Using this value as a lens, we can examine various topics like religion, identity politics, and border control, among others.

Religion
Religious groups have a complex relationship with the state. Theocracies endorse one religion above all others and encourage citizens to adhere to the tenets of a favoured faith. On the other end of the spectrum, an authoritarian secular state would prohibit all displays of religious adherence in public institutions and, in extreme cases, ban private rites of worship. A commitment to freedom would denounce both of these extremes. Liberal states often adopt a value-neutral approach to religious belief and refrain from championing the beliefs of one religion over another. Citizens are free to practise their faiths without interference, provided that such customs do not interfere



‘Freedom versus’ podcast hosts: Mark Oppenheimer and Gwen Ngwenya, the COO of The Institute of Race Relations

with the freedoms of others. South Africa’s courts have recently tackled the issue of religion in public education and have held that a public school cannot proclaim itself to be a school of one particular faith, but must instead cater for a diversity of religious beliefs as well as atheistic beliefs. A public school may thus not read solely from the New Testament during assembly, but would need to accommodate readings from the Torah, the Qu’ran, and even from

Richard Dawkins’ “The God Delusion”. **Identity politics**
Jews may share an instinctive aversion to group classification. Under Hitler’s regime, Jews were forcibly racially classified on the basis of blood laws regardless of their religious beliefs. Ultimately, that classification was the first step in a project of differentiation, scapegoating and, finally, annihilation. The apartheid state was built on racial classification,

a legacy which South Africans have struggled to escape. Today, there is an emerging consensus that race and gender are social constructs. However, these constructs are treated inconsistently in public discussion. On the one hand, there is a growing trend of people selecting their own gender identities and it is not uncommon for people to use unique pronouns that escape a binary classification of “he” and “she”. There seems to be an increasing societal acceptance of individuals transitioning from one gender identity to another. However, people like Rachel Dolezal, who identify as transracial, are met with ire. Instead of respecting their decision to identify with a particular race, such individuals are persecuted and accused of cultural appropriation. This apparent inconsistency could be resolved with reflection and debate, but when the feminist philosophy journal Hypatia published an article on the topic, the publication was vehemently attacked. Instead of having an open debate on the topic, the journal capitulated and unpublished the piece. **Closed borders**
After Hitler’s rise to power, Jews went to great lengths to escape Germany and sought refuge in other countries. While some nations opened their borders and granted those in dire

need refugee status, others callously turned ships away, condemning the passengers to certain death. Today, many Syrian refugees find themselves in a similar situation and have, in contrast to the past, received the greatest assistance from Germany. Other states have been reluctant to accept foreigners into their borders, citing a desire to protect the cultural integrity of their nation, preserve the security of their citizens and safeguard the well-being of their economy. It is therefore necessary to weigh up a state’s freedom to decide who may enter its borders against an individual’s freedom of movement, while bearing in mind the ethical, economic and cultural implications. Debates tend to split people into “for” and “against” camps. We hope to move beyond division and encourage nuanced discussions on these topics of perennial importance.

- The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom has launched a podcast entitled “Freedom versus” - currently being aired on CliffCentral.com - using the value of freedom to examine these and other topics.
- Mark Oppenheimer is a practising advocate at the Johannesburg Bar.
- Cecelia Kok is head of research and advocacy projects at the South African office of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.

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A teenage girl becoming a boy

>>> Continued from page 5

in both, chose Facebook to welcome his son Luke to his wide network of family and friends around the world.

He said: “When our child told us of this, initially we had the same response, this is a phase, this is attention seeking, this is not real!” That this “does not happen to us.

“But watching the anxiety since such a young age and replaying all the past years, it all started to make sense. Imagine being trapped in the wrong body... we had to study and educate ourselves and get through the what ifs and disbelief.

“Today we learned about pride! Today we learned from our child the true meaning of strength of conviction, belief in self and being true to you...

“Today our child broke the chains of societies (sic) code. Today in the face of everything one fears our child rose and became what they always knew they were.”

He said when he asked his child if he wanted to move from Camps Bay Primary School, the answer was an emphatic ‘No!’

“I want to help others come out, I want to be a role model!,” is what he told his father. Says Steve: “We knew that moment we had an extraordinary soul...

“Today we lost our daughter but today we gained a son who has taught us all the biggest life lessons. Luke Uria, we welcome you to our family.”

His once deeply unhappy daughter has literally morphed into his happy and confident son.

The Uria family

The wandering Jews

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Epitomising what it means to be wandering Jews, intrepid traveller Karen Kallman, her husband Evan and their five children, have travelled around the world meeting Jewish communities in the unlikely places, sharing Shabbats, Yomtovs and making memories.

Having travelled to almost 50 countries to date, Kallman shared some of her most memorable trips in a talk at the recent Limmud conference, examining her “Jewish Jet-Setting”.

From finding mikvehs in Casablanca and Iran, to chasing a man in a kippah in St Petersburg in Russia to find the Chabad, Kallman and her steadily growing family have had unimaginable travel experiences.

Through it all, the connections they’ve forged with mainly Jewish communities around the world, have been truly enlightening.

Kallman’s always had an insatiable appetite for travel. Having gone on Rotary Exchange to Turkey as a student, she’s also learned to be open-minded. “My host family was Muslim. They were overwhelmed that I was white and Jewish! They only saw our similarities though and it was a positive experience.”

Decades later, Kallman returned with her family to Turkey, after reconnecting with her Turkish host brother on Facebook. Aside from revisiting her host family, Kallman and her family also spent Rosh Hashanah in Istanbul.

“This really connected us with the uncertainty of Jews there,” she said. “We went to a very small shul near the train station and we were allowed in even though we hadn’t given advance notice. There’s always the threat of anti-Semitic attacks and there have been bombings in shuls, so there’s a double layer of thick metal doors as you enter. Under all the shul seats were helmets in case of an attack.”

The family combined their Turkish trip with a journey to Iran – somewhere not many Jews would consider going. “We wrote to the Iran Jewish Committee who advised us not to come!” laughed Kallman. This only made her more eager to take the trip, though, and so she and her family found themselves travelling through Tehran.

While they didn’t find the shul they were looking for on one of the longest streets in the city on the eve of Yom Kippur, they managed to do so with assistance the next day and were immediately absorbed into the city’s incredibly warm and friendly Jewish community who have deep roots in Iran.

Before Kallman and her husband had children, they travelled to Hong Kong over Rosh Hashanah as it coincided with a six-week trip through China. There were

various mishaps along the way.

“We’d tried to contact the Hong Kong Jewish community numerous times without any luck so we took a packed train ride to Guangzhou where we thought we could get a ferry to Hong Kong, only to find out that that ferry ride no longer operated,” explained Kallman.

“So we caught a bus, which actually got hijacked – a man got on the bus and tried to exhort more money from the passengers to stay onboard. So, even though my husband and another woman tried to stand up to him, we all needed to eventually get off the bus.

“Fortunately, another bus came along and we eventually arrived at the correct ferry port. We finally reached Hong Kong on the afternoon of erev Rosh Hashanah and the tourist office had direct lines to numerous organisations, including, amazingly, Chabad. But they needed verification from a Chabad rabbi in South Africa confirming that we were Jewish and upstanding citizens.”



Karen Kallman and her family in Istanbul

Not being associated with Chabad, the couple wracked their brains for contacts and managed to get a good report from a Chabad rabbi. They were then allocated a family with whom to spend Rosh Hashanah and they raced to get there in time.

“We stayed with a couple who were American and Israeli and went to services at the Chabad Shul which was on the seventh floor of a hotel building.

“We returned to Hong Kong for breaking of the fast. We also had one of our Rosh Hashanah meals at an expat South African family who introduced us to all new fruits”

On another trip, this time to Djerba Island in Tunisia, Kallman encountered Jews with a very strong sense of community. “They use a communal fire to prepare for Shabbat with various levels of success – if one has a bad cholent, they all have a bad cholent!”

Along their travels, the family has also visited Ethiopia, where they were inspired by the Jewish community’s commitment to Judaism and Zionism.

“The people in Gandor were very proud to show us their two kosher community kitchens.”

The family also had an amazing Pesach experience closer to home in the Karoo. “We love the AfrikaBurn Festival in the Karoo and when it was scheduled on Pesach, I thought what better way to spend Pesach than in the desert!”

And so, the family packed their trailer with enough Pesach food for a week – and set up seders, one of which served almost 120 people. Hosting seders or Shabbat meals at the festival is fast becoming a tradition.

Asked how the travels have affected her children, Kallman said that they’re less prejudiced and more open than other children.



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SIMON APFEL

What follows will most certainly test the boundaries of incredulity. Indeed, during the episode I am about to recount, there were times when I myself could scarcely believe what was taking place in front of my eyes.

In 2015, having spent a couple of weeks at yeshiva in Israel, I decided to head off to London to spend the High Holidays with my mother.

There had been whispers going around the British contingent at yeshiva concerning a mysterious website offering filthy cheap airline tickets from Tel Aviv to London, with one insufferable person claiming he'd paid just 10 quid for a return fare. Without thinking twice, I went online and booked my flight on a new budget airline, called "Budget Airline". The 10 pounds opening special was over but the ticket was still incredibly cheap.

I arrived at Ben-Gurion Airport filled with a spirit of adventure.

Slowly, however, that spirit ebbed away while I waited and waited and waited to board the plane. Some kind of problem with the system. The queue of people that had formed at the boarding gate gradually returned to their chairs. As the wait continued, some went shopping at duty free. Towards the second hour of waiting, a few even popped back home to check whether they'd left the stove on.

Eventually it was discovered that the problem wasn't the computer at all, but rather the employee – in his late 70s and dressed, quite inexplicably, in dungarees – trying to operate it. One of the passengers was recruited to operate the system and we were on our way.

I boarded the plane, and felt calm as I looked out at the runway from my cozy little window seat, legs tucked up underneath me. That feeling turned to alarm as a morose, mustachioed, liquored-up Russian with red eyes and seven chins took up the seat next to me. Next to him a foul-smelling person from Mea Shearim with dreadlocks hanging from his ears, alien-like features and binoculars for spectacles.

As the engines began to warm up, a troop of animals stormed the aircraft – a football team from Haifa. These guys must have been about 17 years old, all with greasy, peroxidized hair. Raucous and randy, they stamped their way up the aisle – one throwing obscene gestures and comments at every female in sight and then turning to his cackling cronies, another had dried shawarma meat all over his face, a third spitting great globules of mucous all over the place.

They were all chattering like chimps and I moaned in despair when they took up their seats almost directly behind me. Their farts combined with the stale cabin air, the petrol coming through the vodka-saturated Russian's nostril hairs and the rich smell of the chossid's underarms, to envelop me in a thick blanket of fumes.

The time came for the safety procedure presentation. It was then that I noticed the most interesting-looking airhostess. She had short fat arms, thighs like tanks, bum-cheeks that had to contract and be clutched in whenever she wrangled her way down the aisle.

Her granite-like features and her lack of a neck made her look like a rugby loose forward. It was

this unfortunate soul that was tasked with doing the safety presentation for our section of the plane.

The wolf-whistles and snide comments from the football team started immediately and soon reached a fever pitch. With a ferocious scowl, she stopped in the middle of her presentation, her arms froze in mid-air, and then she just sat down.

Everybody sat there, waiting impatiently for take-off so that the air-conditioners could come into effect. Everybody that is, except the Russian, who by this time had passed out with his head on my shoulder, dribble spilling out of his half-open mouth, vodka fumes from his nostrils.

Take-off finally came, but to everyone's dismay, the air-conditioners remained off. Arms began to pop up all over the place, fingers fumbling in futility to coax the air from the nozzles.

It seemed that if this carried on any longer, the perspiration from the 300-plus passengers would start collecting in pools and form raging torrents of sweat down the aisles. But then something crazy happened: the air-conditioning vents whirled to life... and started blowing out hot air!

Once again arms started popping up all over the place in a fumbling frenzy, only this time they were trying to shut off the airflow; but again, these endeavours were in vain. Things were about to reach breaking point, when the air-conditioning was eventually sorted out to a chorus of relief.

The entire cabin crew suddenly descended upon us armed with cans of Axe deodorant – spraying them at our armpits, our clothes, our faces. And the crew just kept on coming.

And while the passengers choked and sputtered – too incensed to even say anything – the absurdity of the whole situation dawned on me, and I began to laugh very, very hard as I thought: "This will make a great story."

I think I've painted a fairly complete picture of the three-ringed circus that mistakenly called itself an airline. It was almost as if Basil Fawlty himself had ventured into the aviation industry, such was the complete incompetence on show.

The command "Kindly make sure all seats are restored to their upright position during take-off and landing", was utterly superfluous. The button to tilt the seat back didn't work. On any of the seats.

When we finally got going after a 90-minute delay, the aircraft circled and then re-circled the runway dozens of times. And just when the engines began to warm up, they would die down again, and the plane would continue circling the runway. This continued for over an hour.

After the air-conditioner debacle, the airhostess came around with some much-needed refreshment. I couldn't care less that it was tap water. But what I did care about was that after I'd drained my first cup, she refused my request for a refill and she grunted: "Only one water per person!"

By the time we landed, nerves jangling amidst the terrifying touch-down of a four-hour flight that had taken nearly seven, the thought dawned on me that the person who paid 10 pounds for his ticket had just about got value for money.

I changed my return ticket to El-Al. The enormous price difference was not a factor.



THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Netanyahu: Either change Iran deal or cancel it



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Argentina's President Mauricio Macri during a press conference this week. AFP/JUAN MABROMATA

RAPHAEL AHREN
BUENOS AIRES

Israel wants the Iran nuclear deal to be amended or cancelled altogether, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday.

Delivering statements to the press alongside Argentine President Mauricio Macri, Netanyahu rejected recent reports claiming that Israel and Saudi Arabia are no longer interested in scrapping the landmark deal, which was reached between Iran and six world powers in 2015 and aimed to end Iran's nuclear weapons development programme.

"In the case of Iran, there have been some news stories about Israel's purported position on the nuclear deal with Iran. So, let me take this opportunity and clarify: Our position is straightforward. This is a bad deal. Either fix it - or cancel it. This is Israel's position," said Netanyahu.

Reuters reported on Tuesday that US officials familiar with discussions about the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), said Israel and Saudi Arabia would rather the pact remains intact.

Netanyahu is scheduled to meet with US President Donald Trump later this month in New York. The meeting will be held amid growing speculation that Trump will declare Iran not to be in compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal. In October, Trump must certify to Congress whether Iran is abiding by the pact.

During the 2016 US presidential campaign, Trump called the nuclear

accord "the worst deal ever" and vowed to tear it up upon taking office. Trump has since moderated his tone, although he said last month Iran is "not in compliance with the agreement" and said he did not believe he would again declare Iran to be abiding by the deal come October.

A US pull-out would effectively bring the agreement to an end.

Netanyahu on Tuesday also condemned Iran's involvement in global terrorism, saying the regime and its proxies continue to operate even in Latin America.

Addressing reporters at the Casa Rosada presidential compound, Netanyahu said there was no doubt that Iran was behind the two major terror attacks that struck Jewish and Israeli sites in Buenos Aires in the early 1990s. He thanked Macri for his commitment to find out the truth about the attacks and to bring the perpetrators to justice.

"Iran's terror has not stopped since then. They have a terror machine that encompasses the entire world operating terror cells in many continents, including in Latin America," Netanyahu said.

"In the case of Iran, it's not only merely terror but the quest for nuclear weapons that concerns us and should concern the entire international community. We understand the danger of a rogue nation having atomic bombs."

The prime minister noted the significance of his visit, the first by a sitting Israeli prime minister.

High Court strikes down law that postponed ultra-Orthodox draft

TOI STAFF

In an eight-to-one decision, the High Court of Justice on Tuesday struck down Knesset legislation from 2015 that was meant to delay efforts to increase the rate at which ultra-Orthodox youth are drafted into the military.

The 2015 amendment to the Equal Service Law cancels a more aggressive 2014 law pushed by the centrist Yesh Atid party that sought to mandate more ultra-Orthodox youth to enter military service.

The later amendment was passed under pressure from the Charedi parties Shas and United Torah Judaism, which rejoined the Likud-led coalition after the 2015 elections and the change is a condition for joining.

The ruling on Tuesday set a one-year deadline to implement a different framework for handling the ultra-Orthodox draft.

The court was responding to four separate appeals - three of which claimed the current arrangement discriminated against non-

Charedi Jews, and a fourth that argued it discriminated against Charedi Jews, who are being asked to increase their military draft rate while other minorities, especially Israeli Arabs, are not required to serve at all.

Eight judges, led by Chief Justice Miriam Naor, ruled that the current arrangement was increasing the inequality in the "draft burden", rather than reducing it, which was the law's stated purpose and the grounds for its constitutionality. That made it an "unconstitutional law", the justices ruled.

The ruling was met with a furious response from ultra-Orthodox MKs.

Deputy Education Minister Meir Porush of the UTJ party said the High Court's rulings made any legislative effort to reach an agreement on the issue into a "dead letter".

"The High Court of Justice's judicial activism completely empties Knesset legislation of importance, turning it into a dead letter. Today's decision just drives another stake into the coffin."



Soldiers in the IDF's ultra-Orthodox 'Netzah Yehuda' unit at the Peles Military Base in the northern Jordan Valley. YAAKOV NAUMI/FLASH90

FACING AMERICAN, ISRAELI PRESSURE, PALESTINIANS PULL BID TO JOIN UN TOURISM BODY

The Palestinians on Wednesday retracted their request for a vote on becoming a member state in the United Nations' World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) amid American and Israeli pressure, a source in Jerusalem told The Times of Israel.

The vote, which was supposed to take place on Wednesday, was postponed until the organisation's next plenary session, in two years' time.

The Foreign Ministry welcomed the decision and said it was due to "great Israeli efforts spearheaded by [Tourism] Minister Yariv Levin, who led the Israeli delegation".

The PA submitted its request for membership in UNTWO in September 2016.

According to the agenda for UNTWO's 22nd session, which began on Monday in Chengdu, China, the PA was up for membership, along with the Union of the Comoros and the Federal Republic of Somalia.

To become a member, the Palestinians would have required a two-thirds majority vote.

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Avoid Sinai and Turkey, Israeli holiday travellers told

TOI STAFF

Israeli authorities on Monday issued severe travel warnings, urging Israeli travellers to avoid places where they would be prime targets for jihadist terrorists, including Turkey and much of the Middle East.

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis are expected to travel overseas during the parade of Jewish holidays which starts with the Jewish New Year on September 20 and ends with the Sukkot festival, from October 4 to 12, when most travellers head abroad.

The Counter-Terrorism Bureau in the Prime Minister's Office, which issues the warnings ahead of most holiday seasons, noted that the list includes some of the most popular tourist destinations for Israelis, including the Sinai Peninsula and Turkey.

Warnings were also in effect for Jordan and the rest of Egypt.

In all those places, terror groups are known to be planning attacks in crowded areas, and may be looking to target areas where large groups of vacationing Israelis are likely to be found.

The most severe warning is for the Sinai, where beachfront tourist venues have long drawn many tens of thousands of Israelis during prime vacation periods.

The Bureau noted that Sinai was struck by Islamist terror as recently as mid-April, when Islamic State gunmen attacked a checkpoint near Saint Catherine's Monastery in the peninsula, only one of countless recent incidents of bloodshed in an ongoing Islamist insurgency.

Last Thursday, 18 Egyptian police were killed in an attack in northern Sinai.

Israelis should avoid travel to Sinai in the foreseeable future, and leave the peninsula immediately if they are already there, the warning stated.

UK survey finds half of Britons agree with anti-Israel statements

ROBERT PHILPOT
LONDON

Nearly one in three Britons holds at least one anti-Semitic attitude and more than half endorse at least one hard-line anti-Israel statement, finds a major new study published this week.

It also establishes an “unambiguous” link between anti-Semitism and hostility towards Israel – suggesting that the stronger the level of anti-Israel feeling, the more likely it is to be accompanied by anti-Semitic attitudes – and probes the attitudes of those who support the far-left and the far-right, as well as British Muslims.

But the report – the largest and most detailed survey of attitudes towards Jews and Israel ever conducted in Britain – also concludes that the proportion of what it terms “hardcore anti-Semites” in the population is small, while most Britons hold a favourable opinion of Jews and the vast majority do not harbour any anti-Semitic views.

Moreover, it found that only six per cent of Britons believe Israel has no right to exist, and less than 10 per cent back the BDS movement.

“Levels of anti-Semitism in Great Britain are among the lowest in the world. British Jews

constitute a religious and ethnic group that is seen overwhelmingly positively by the absolute majority of the British population,” writes the report’s author, Dr Daniel Staetsky, senior research fellow at the London-based Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR).

Almost 70 per cent of Britons hold a favourable opinion of Jews, with a further 20 per cent holding no view. The figures are in line with views towards some other religious minorities, such as Hindus, and rather more positive than attitudes towards Muslims.

Moreover, 80 per cent of those surveyed agreed with the statement: “A British Jew is just as British as any other British person,” while around 60 per cent backed the view that “British Jews make a positive contribution to British society”.

The study suggests that an open dislike of Jews, combined with developed negative ideas, is confined to no more than 2,4 per cent of British adults. A further three per cent are termed “softer anti-Semites”.

They endorsed fewer, but still multiple, statements that are generally perceived by Jews to be anti-Semitic.

“This relatively small group of about five per

cent of the general population can justifiably be described as anti-Semites,” argues the report.

Nonetheless, the study suggests that anti-Semitic attitudes are more widespread. It found that around 15 per cent of Britons endorsed two or more of the anti-Semitic statements put to them, while a further 15 per cent agreed with one of them.

The report strongly rejects the notion that 30 per cent of the British population is anti-Semitic, noting that a majority of those who backed only one of the anti-Jewish statements, also agreed with one or more of the positive statements.

Their way of thinking about Jews are “complex, combining both positive and negative aspects”, the study ventures. At the same time, the 30 per cent figure “captures the current level of the diffusion of anti-Semitic ideas in British society”, writes Staetsky, who believes that a distinction should be drawn between “counting anti-Semites” and “measuring anti-Semitism”.

Dr Jonathan Boyd, executive director of the JPR, hailed some of the “very positive” indicators in the report.

“Seventy per cent of adults in Great Britain, given multiple opportunities to even mildly agree with an anti-Jewish view, do not do so.”

Yair Netanyahu exposes Israel's own version of the 'alt-right'

ANDREW TOBIN

For many Jews, Nazis are public enemy No 1, and using Nazi imagery to make a political point is strictly verboten. But some young, right-wing Israelis aren't buying it.

Inspired by the so-called alt-right abroad, their online community makes liberal use of anti-Semitic and Nazi imagery to mock and malign what it sees as the real threat: Israeli and Jewish leftists.

“We're fighting back in a new way,” said Guy Levy, 40, the manager of an advertising office in Beersheba and a member of the community. “Our messages aren't politically correct, but that's what makes them funny, and stinging.”

Many Israelis heard about this community for the first time last Saturday when Yair Netanyahu, the prime minister's 26-year-old son, credited its main Facebook page as the source of an anti-Semitic themed cartoon he shared.

The page, called Tight Memes Against Kakihomoshit Leftists, has since been heavily referenced in the local media. The publicity significantly expanded its following.

Netanyahu posted the cartoon last



Yair Netanyahu
MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/POOL/FLASH90

Friday with the caption “food chain”. It pairs the Jewish billionaire and philanthropist George Soros – who the alt-right regularly portrays as a leftist “puppet master” – with at least two other figures associated with the far right and conspiracy theorists, a robed “Illuminati” figure and a lizard creature.

Jewish leaders in Israel and the United States rushed to rap Netanyahu over the post. “The cartoon that Yair Netanyahu posted contains blatantly anti-Semitic elements,” the Anti-Defamation League's Israel office tweeted last Sunday in Hebrew. “The

dangers inherent in anti-Semitic discourse should not be taken lightly.”

Meanwhile, leading white supremacists, including former Ku Klux Klan grand wizard David Duke and those behind the US neo-Nazi website The Daily Stormer, purported to embrace Netanyahu as one of their own.

“Welcome to the club, Yair – absolutely amazing, wow, just wow,” Duke tweeted on Sunday.

However, members of the community centred on the Tight Memes Facebook page, responded very differently.

Dan Gefen, 36, a libertarian economist and longtime member of the community, said the cartoon is meant as a criticism of anti-Zionist meddling in Israeli democracy, including by Jews like Soros, who has funded left-leaning Jewish groups like J Street and civil rights groups in Israel. The anti-Semitic themes are simply a sendup of political correctness, he said.

“The general idea is every small thing a right-winger does, they're calling you a Nazi or a fascist. So, it's making fun of that. It's a lie that tells the truth.”

“The [left-wing] reaction is very important,” he added. “Without the reaction, the joke doesn't work.”

Our messages aren't politically

correct, but that's what makes them funny, and stinging.

In recent days, the Tight Memes Facebook page has filled with posts mocking the media's reaction to the cartoon as humourless and hypocritical. Many have highlighted past examples of Israelis comparing using Nazi imagery to condemn trends on the right, sometimes to the delight of Duke and other white supremacists.

Asked for comment in a Facebook message, an administrator of the group replied: “We don't co-operate with journalists. Especially not the fake news.”

Yair Netanyahu, who took down the cartoon last Sunday evening but did not apologise, has shared several of the posts along with his own comments, including on one, “The left is so sensitive that it's something”.

Gefen said the Tight Memes community borrows “culturally and even ideologically sometimes” from the alt-right.

While it operates on a variety of Facebook pages that come and go, Gefen said, the Tight Memes page is the community's central meeting place.

Some 3 000 people followed Tight Memes prior to Netanyahu's post, and that number is now over 4 000.



Israelis on holiday at a Sinai beach resort in 2006
YOSSI ZAMIR/FLASH90



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British chief rabbi urges more inclusiveness for LGBTQ Jews



Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

JTA and TOI STAFF

British Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis last Tuesday called on a meeting of more than 100 Orthodox rabbis to be more inclusive toward the LGBTQ community.

At his annual pre-High Holidays conference for the rabbinate, Mirvis called for extra concern for other special groups as well.

“Every person is precious. Single parents, women, the unaffiliated, LGBT Jews – let no person feel they have no place in our shuls,” Mirvis said at the conference, this year titled “Every One Counts”.

His remarks came on the heels of the controversy surrounding Rabbi Joseph Dweck, Britain’s top Sephardi rabbi, who was nearly pushed out of his position this summer following his comments welcoming the growing acceptance of homosexuality.

Dweck, who serves as senior rabbi at London’s S&P Sephardi Community, came under fire after saying at a July lecture that societal acceptance of homosexuality is a “fantastic development” because it opens the door to a more loving society.

His remarks sparked outrage in the Orthodox world, with leaders from all over the world calling on him to be fired.

In the wake of the controversy, Dweck apologised for some of his comments and agreed to step down from his position as a judge on a rabbinical court as well as to have his rulings vetted by senior colleagues. He was allowed to keep his job under a deal reached between Mirvis and senior rabbis from the London Beth Din.

Following the resolution of the controversy, Mirvis said he was “appalled” by the behaviour of those who rejected Dweck’s teachings.

At the end of last Tuesday’s conference, Mirvis said: “As rabbis, we have now a responsibility to carry the inspiration we have taken from the last two days and use it to build ever more engaging and inclusive communities, which would be inclusive of every person,” the London-based Jewish Chronicle reported.

Sixteen years on, US and Israel mourn 9/11 attacks

TOI STAFF AND AP

Holding photos and reading names of loved ones lost 16 years ago, 9/11 victims’ relatives and others marked the anniversary of the attacks at Ground Zero on Monday, with a solemn and personal ceremony.

In Israel, an estimated 500 people gathered at the KKL-JNF Jewish National Fund’s “Living Memorial” in the Jerusalem Hills at the US Embassy’s official memorial ceremony for the attacks of September 11, 2001, which took 2 977 lives, including those of five Israelis.

The victims died when hijacked planes slammed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, hurling America into a new consciousness of the threat of



global terrorism.

Speaking at the 9/11 Living Memorial Plaza in the Arazim Valley outside Jerusalem, US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, lauded the strong friendship between the US and Israel.

“Israel and the United States will always stand together and fight for the total defeat of radical Islamic terrorism,” Friedman said.

Israel “mourned for America” in the wake of the attacks, he added, noting that the Jewish State was the only country other than the US to erect a memorial with all of the victims’ names.

Knesset opposition leader Isaac Herzog, also attended the ceremony, along with other Israeli officials. Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, in Israel on a visit, attended as well.

“9/11 was not only an attack on the US, but on democracy and freedom. Israel and the US are bound forever by these basic values,” Herzog said.

In New York, about a thousand 9/11 family members, survivors, rescuers and officials were gathered as the ceremony at the World Trade Center began with a moment of silence and tolling bells.

Harvey and Irma: Jewish groups push for FEMA houses of worship aid

ERIC CORTELLESSA
WASHINGTON

In the wake of two hurricanes that wreaked enormous havoc in Texas and Florida, Jewish groups are reasserting themselves in a policy battle over whether the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should direct disaster relief toward houses of worship.

The longstanding FEMA principle is that it shouldn’t – a decision guided by the First Amendment of the US Constitution’s Establishment Clause, which forbids the government from making any law “respecting an establishment of religion”.

But several US Jewish organisations are pushing to reverse that rule in the wake of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

Most adamantly among them is the Orthodox Union, the right-leaning political wing of the Orthodox Jewish movement. “This is a long-running issue we’ve been working on, and a battle we’ve been having with FEMA, for nearly 20 years,” said Nathan Diament, executive director of the OU

Advocacy Centre.

Diament, however, thinks the tide may be turning. US President Donald Trump indicated recently that he supports religious institutions receiving monetary aid from the federal government after a natural disaster.

“Churches in Texas should be entitled to reimbursement from FEMA Relief Funds for helping victims of Hurricane Harvey (just like others),” he said in a tweet last Friday.

Another development cited by Diament was this June’s Supreme Court ruling that Missouri could not deny public funds to a church just because it is a religious institution. The case, decided by a vote of 7-2, arose after the state rejected the Trinity Lutheran Church for a grant to resurface its children’s playground.

But not every Jewish leader agrees. For Rabbi Jack Moline, president of the Interfaith Alliance, changing the FEMA rule would infringe on a precious constitutional principle.

“FEMA, like the rest of the federal government, is prevented by the First Amendment from steering taxpayer funds to houses of worship,” he said in a statement.

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Director Jenkins signs up as Gal Gadot heads to ‘Wonder Woman 2’



Patty Jenkins and Gal Gadot at the 2016 San Diego Comic Con

Reporter said on Monday. The Israeli actress “already is attached to the follow-up”, the report said.

With “Wonder Woman” grossing over \$800 million worldwide, both Gadot and Jenkins, who each only had a one-movie deal, had the upper hand in negotiations for the next instalment of the story of the Amazonian princess.

Sources told the Hollywood

Reporter that after “challenging” negotiations, Jenkins will earn directing and writing fees in the region of \$7 to \$9 million, making her the highest-paid female director in history. She was reportedly paid only \$1 million for the first movie.

Gadot has reportedly also signed for an undisclosed sum to play the Diana Prince in the sequel, which is tentatively set

to be released on December 13, 2019.

But the Goddess of Truth will return to the silver screen before that, appearing in the upcoming “Justice League” this November.

It’s not unusual for high-power studios to start new directors off with one-film deals these days, and Gadot’s initial deal was standard for an emerging actress. But with global earnings of \$813 million, the two have become hot property in Hollywood.

Jenkins in an interview with the Toronto Sun over a month before the film’s June 2 release, says she was already planning Diana Prince’s next steps.

“I’m excited for her to come to America and become the Wonder Woman we are all familiar with from having grown up around her as an American superhero,” she told the Sun.

There is little doubt that the film wouldn’t have achieved such instantaneous blockbuster status without Gadot’s on-camera

charisma, and she’s as celebrated abroad as she is at home - where she is touted as one of Israel’s best exports.

Critics and audiences (except, perhaps, in Lebanon and Jordan) have enthused about the 32-year-old mother of two, who has been celebrated as a symbol of female strength. There has been a barrage of analysis on the role of feminism in the film - most of it positive.

While director Jenkins was excited about “Wonder Woman” from the beginning, she was initially somewhat less enthused with the studio’s choice of star. She revealed that she was initially disappointed with the fact that she wasn’t able to cast the role herself. But, she acknowledged, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

“Frankly, I think they did a better job than I could have because I don’t know that I would have scoured the earth as hard to find her,” she told the magazine.

Israeli film ‘Foxtrot’ snags prize at Venice but culture minister decries win



Director Samuel Maoz receives the Silver Lion - Grand Jury Prize for his movie “Foxtrot” during the award ceremony of the 74th Venice Film Festival last Saturday at Venice Lido. AFP PHOTO / TIZIANA FABI

TOI STAFF AND AGENCIES

Israeli film “Foxtrot” won the second-place Grand Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival on Saturday, and drew criticism from Culture Minister Miri Regev over its portrayal of the Israeli army.

“It’s outrageous that Israeli artists contribute to the incitement of the young generation against the most moral army in the world by spreading lies in the guise of art,” said Regev in a statement.

The Likud minister accused the film of giving “a tailwind to BDS [the Israeli boycott movement] and haters of Israel all around the world,” while calling for the State to end funding to films that “become a weapon of propaganda for our enemies”.

Regev, who formerly served as the IDF spokesman, later specifically singled out a scene in the film that showed Israeli soldiers killing and burying an Arab family.

“Foxtrot” director Samuel Maoz defended the film, saying no society can flourish when “critics are considered to be traitors”.

“If I criticise the place I live, I do it because I worry. I do it because I want to protect it. I do it from love,” he told reporters.

“Foxtrot” opens with an affluent Tel Aviv couple (Lior Ashkenazi and Sarah Adler) being informed their soldier son has died in the line of duty.

The parents are floored by grief, and the film has more shocks in store for them as it explores the way trauma scars individuals and societies, and ripples across generations.

Maoz’ 2009 Venice winner, “Lebanon”, was a claustrophobic portrait of an Israeli tank crew, inspired by the director’s own experiences as a young soldier.

While “Foxtrot” has real-life roots, the director says he structured the film like a Greek tragedy, with three acts in which “the hero creates his own punishment and fights against anyone who tries to save him. And he is unaware of the outcome that his actions will bring about.”

The film’s middle section depicts the son’s experience as one of four soldiers manning a desolate roadblock. It is a life of muddy tedium with the potential for sudden violence.

Maoz has said the roadblock is more allegorical than real, a way of exploring conflict-scarred Israel “and the distorted perceptions that come out of terrible past trauma”.

When retiring Vanity Fair editor Graydon Carter pretended he was Jewish

JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY

Vanity Fair editor Graydon Carter announced that he is stepping down after 25 years at the helm of one of the world’s best-known magazines.

Carter, 68, said last Thursday that it was “simply time” for him to move on and enjoy some time off before deciding on a “third act”.

He had planned to leave a little earlier, he told Vanity Fair in an interview published online, but he wanted to stick around for Donald Trump’s presidency.

In 2000, the New York Magazine revealed that Carter for years had pretended to be Jewish during the 1970s.

A friend of Carter’s, Craig Walls, recalled one time when Carter told other journalists and writers at a party that his mother “would kill” him for eating pork. Asked why, he said: “Because I’m Jewish,” Walls recalled. Carter confirmed to the New York Magazine that he had pretended to be Jewish.

“I was reading a lot of Kerouac and a lot of Ginsberg,” Carter told New York Magazine. “And I thought: If you’re going to be an intellectual in New York, you’ve got to be Jewish. It wasn’t some experiment, like ‘gentleman’s agreement’, or anything like that. It was just... I thought... I just found it... I don’t know. It was so much more



exotic than what I really was.”

Carter has for years had a gleefully hostile relationship with Trump, ever since he attacked the then swaggering New York property tycoon as a “short-fingered vulgarian” in Spy, a magazine Carter co-founded in 1986, prior to ascending to Vanity Fair in 1992 as successor to Tina Brown. In June this year, he excoriated Trump in a widely read editorial.

Carter created A-list parties each year in Los Angeles after the Oscars, which attract gaggles of celebrities. He left his mark on the magazine also by creating a complementary annual Hollywood issue with a fold-out portfolio of stars lavishly photographed by Annie Leibovitz, whom Carter helped turn into a legend.

But the magazine also honed its reputation with serious business and crime investigations, news analysis and a who’s who of upcoming business hotshots, moguls, and upstarts from Silicon Valley to Wall Street.

Symposium to honour journalist who saved Chagall and other artists from Nazis

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK

Authors and art experts will participate in a sold-out weekend symposium commemorating a little-known New York City journalist credited with saving scores of writers and artists from the Nazis during the Second World War.

The New York Times said that Varian Fry was 32 when he volunteered to go to France in August

1940 to help some of the world’s most famous artists escape from Nazi-occupied France.

Fry helped some 2 000 people slip out of France before returning to the US a year later.

He aided such prominent artists as Marc Chagall and Max Ernst, and such intellectuals as anti-fascist writer André Breton.

Fry died in 1967 and is buried at Brooklyn’s historic Green-Wood Cemetery, where Saturday’s sold-out symposium is being held.



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1 - 3 Oct:	8:00am - 8:00pm
4 Oct (Erev Sukkot):	7:00am - 4:00pm
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Must we pay to pray?

SUZANNE BELLING

In the build-up to the Yamim Noraim over the years, some members of the community have felt embarrassed, annoyed, or quite despairing, when encountering the often high cost of synagogue membership or reserved seats for the festivals.

“We are not paying to go to the opera,” I have heard people moan. With some shuls boasting outstanding choirs, this may not be that far off the mark.

However, to pay to pray goes against the grain, especially in this tough economic climate. All synagogues approached by the SA Jewish Report this week, have gone out of their way to accommodate everyone. Some do not charge membership fees or for tickets for High Holy Day seating at all.

“According to Jewish tradition, on the Jewish New Year, the doors of heaven are open. G-d accepts prayers from everyone. The least we can do is open our doors as well, to the entire community...” says Rabbi Ari Kievman of the Sandton Central Shul at Chabad’s Goodness and Kindness Centre.

“During the High Holy Days, accessibility can translate into different factors for different people, such as a non-judgemental atmosphere, affordability of the services, or the ability for a beginner to follow along.

“Our goal is to lower the barriers of entry and encourage each and every Jew to actively participate in these most holy and introspective days.”

Rabbi Kievman says that he has encountered some Johannesburg Jews who still have no plans to attend High Holy Days services. “Some of them aren’t affiliated with a community, others will be travelling on business, and a sizeable percentage simply don’t feel comfortable in a synagogue setting.

“Another alarming issue, particularly in light of today’s flailing economy, is that many cannot afford the cost of membership, which these days can cost thousands for a family. Whatever the case, many of these would-be worshippers are feeling the pangs associated with being left out of the holiest days of the Jewish calendar.”

He says his services are “user-friendly”, making it enjoyable and meaningful for both the beginner and the advanced. Song, commentary and the use of English-Hebrew prayer books, enable those of all levels to become active participants in the services. “Accessibility can translate into different



factors for different people, such as a non-judgemental atmosphere, affordability of the services, or the ability for a beginner to follow along. Our goal is to lower the barriers of entry, and encourage each and every Jew to actively participate in these most holy and introspective days.”

Rabbi Yossy Goldman, senior rabbi of the Sydenham-Highlands North Hebrew Congregation, felt so strongly about the topic, he covered it in a sermon.

“Why must we pay to pray?” he said some would demand. “They will decry the shameless commercialism of organised religion. “And, yes, a shul should have a heart. And our houses of prayer should not be allowed to become materialistic and mercenary, lest we lose the young, the poor and the idealistic.

“At the same time, individuals need to be sympathetic to the hard facts of congregational life. We cannot take for granted or take advantage of our established – and costly to maintain – infrastructures. The tension is sometimes tangible as we struggle to balance these two seemingly exclusive imperatives of Jewish life.

“In some communities, not more than 30 per cent of Jews are officially affiliated. In others, the figure is much higher. The community must be sensitive, welcoming and embracing of every individual who seeks to belong. Still, individuals must be fair too. If everyone demanded a free ride how would a congregation support itself?”

The shul had a multi-million budget, which had to be funded, “but no Jew is turned away

“At the same time, individuals need to be sympathetic to the hard facts of congregational life. We cannot take for granted or take advantage of our established – and costly to maintain – infrastructures.

for lack of money. This shul is very liberal when it comes to collecting fees.”

According to Sydenham’s chairman Stanley Seeff, membership levels begin at R3 600 to R7 000 per annum (individuals and families) for the shul and the shtiebel. “But we are user-friendly and are willing to go out of our way to accommodate people who cannot afford seats.” All requests would be treated in the strictest confidence, he said.

Rabbi Greg Alexander, of the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation, said the temples did not sell or reserve seats, as was done in former years, when people could not gain entry without tickets.

The policy had changed. “It is not a private club, or a laager. We are not Virgin Active, which requires membership fees. I would rather be welcoming than a ‘bouncer’.”

If congregants could not afford material contributions, there were other ways in which they could compensate, like standing guard outside the shul or assisting with a brocha. For those who could bear the cost of membership

of the congregation, Eric Beswick, executive director, said it would cost a family R7 200 per year, R4 900 per couple or R3 700; but there were no reserved seats. He underscored the rabbi’s statement: “We don’t turn anyone away.”

Chabad of Savoy charges no shul membership whatsoever, according to its spiritual leader Rabbi Eitan Ash. There were also no reserved seats for the High Holy Days. “If the shul gets full, we merely bring in more chairs, of which we have plenty.”

Rabbi Ash said the shul raises funds through golf days and other programmes. “We do battle, we are not wealthy,” he said.

Ohr Somayach Sandton operates on annual membership fees – R9 420 per annum for a family, or R600 per seat for the festivals. However, the spiritual leader, Rabbi Ze’ev Kraines, says people who cannot afford it do not have to pay.

“We are an outreach congregation and try to make things as easy as possible. We keep seats for those who cannot afford membership.

“We don’t believe religion is about money. We believe in education and that religion is not predicated on financial concerns.”

Reb Shlomo Wainer, of Chabad of the North Coast, also does not charge fees, but welcomes contributions – especially if people want to reserve seats. They do not specify the amount, but will keep seats for anything from R25 to R500 or R1 000.

“We rely on people’s generosity at that time of the year and money donated for aliyot and from other sources. But, being in the resort of Umhlanga with many tourists and holidaymakers, we do need some form of identity document for the CSO as they are not familiar with all the congregants.”

Rabbi Osher Feldman, of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, reiterated the statement of the other rabbis. “We don’t turn anyone away. We don’t make it about money.”

But, he said, the shul relied heavily on the Kol Nidre appeal and other ways of funding his historic Gardens Shul, which seats 1 400 people.

For those who can afford membership, it costs R5 649 a year for a family. Seating for the Yamim Noraim can be obtained from R209 (women) or from R415 (men).

Yet again, Rabbi Dovid Hazdan, of the Great Park Synagogue. was insistent that no person would be turned away because of lack of funds and could be accommodated within the main shul or the overflow service.

Payment of membership was to enable the services to be conducted in a professional and dignified way.

“But we don’t charge to be part of a spiritual home.” Full paying membership of his shul is R3 450 per seat.

Overall, it can be deduced that the shuls take the difficult economy into account and, unlike in bygone years, nobody – especially if he or she can’t afford it – is expected to pay to pray.

Community Notice: JHB Jewish Cemeteries

It is a time-honoured custom to visit the graves of parents and family before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. At the time one visits the graves, it is appropriate to give some tzedakah in the name of the deceased. This mitzvah benefits the soul of the departed.

VISITING TIMES:

West Park: Sunday - Friday from 07:00 - 16:00.

Please note: West Park will be closed to drive-in traffic to graves on Sunday 17 & 24 September & 1 October.

Unfortunately we are not in the position to make any exceptions. The cemetery will, however, provide transport during these times.

Brixton: This cemetery has 24 hour security and may be visited on any day except Shabbos and Yom Tov.

Braamfontein: No security is available. Should you wish to visit please contact West Park Cemetery to make the necessary arrangements. The community is encouraged to visit this cemetery in groups of at least two.

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What would we do without Rosh Hashanah?

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN

Rosh Hashanah is more than just a holiday. It is Judgement Day. That’s why the traditional greeting at this time is not Happy Holiday, or even Good Yomtov or Chag Sameach, but rather Shana Tovah or, in Yiddish, Ah Gut Yohr.

The Heavenly Court will be deciding our destiny and determining our fate for the New Year, so we wish each other that these days of reckoning go well and that we each be blessed with only good things for the New Year.

And this is precisely what makes our New Year observances distinctively different from those of so many others around the world. For Jews, New Year’s Day is sober and sombre. No late-night partying for us. No “Happy, Happy!” and no drunken revelry as the clock strikes midnight.

Actually, I’ve often wondered whether New Year’s Eve partygoers are just having a harmless fun night out or is there some kind of subconscious drowning of sorrows in drink as they mourn the passage of another year and all its unfulfilled dreams.

And I’ve also often wondered what we Jews would do without Rosh Hashanah. This is the season of Cheshbon Hanefesh – spiritual stocktaking and making our most personal, intimate inventories.

We reflect on the year gone by, our successes and also our shortcomings. We consider and reconsider our relationships with G-d and with our fellow men and women. We try to pinpoint our failings so that we may correct them for an improved New Year to come.

We make amends with those we may have been hurtful to in the year gone by. We put an end to the petty faribels of life and look forward to a better, happier, more serene and peaceful future.

But what if we didn’t have Rosh Hashanah? What if there was no annual season dedicated to appraisal and self-assessment? Would we create it on our own? And if not, would we ever emerge from the rut we work ourselves into over a long, hard year?

In all probability, I imagine we would just continue along the same tedious treadmill of life until something drastic might suddenly arrive out of the blue to jolt us from our lethargy.

Would we ever stop to consider whether this is the way we really want to live? Would

we ever pause to become pensive enough to rethink life’s game plan? More than likely, we might just keep running the rat race and, as some wise man once observed: “In the rat race, even if you win you are still a rat!”

Unless we are on the absolute fringe of Jewish life, Rosh Hashanah is a time when we are virtually compelled to sit up and take notice; to put the brakes on the mediocre merry-go-round and shout “Stop the world, I want to get off!”

These Days of Awe compel us to think about life, about ourselves, about our families, relationships, and our way of life. And if necessary, to do a re-think. It gives

us the chance for at least a once annual “compass reading” to establish our sense of direction, so that if necessary, we may alter course and re-route ourselves.

How does the lady inside our GPS put it? “Recalculating”. Most of us do need to recalculate from time to time.

So, if we didn’t have this once-a-year challenge and opportunity of personal introspection, what are the chances we would actually sit down of our own volition to do it? Probably very small indeed.

Well, thank G-d we do have Rosh Hashanah. And the time for stocktaking is now. And, as the legendary Hillel put it

in Pirkei Avot: “If not now, when then?”In our chaotic, often mad world, we ought to appreciate and embrace this wonderful annual opportunity. Honestly and truly, what would we do without Rosh Hashanah?

I wish you and our community – and indeed the world – Shana Tovah. May we all be inscribed in the Book of Life for a happy, healthy, peaceful, prosperous, safe, secure, and spiritually rewarding New Year.

• *Rabbi Yossy Goldman is Senior Rabbi of the Sydenham Highlands North Hebrew Congregation since 1986 and is President of the SA Rabbinical Association.*

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Just do it: A High Holidays call to action

RABBI DAVID MARKUS
RABBIS WITHOUT BORDERS VIA JTA

As the High Holidays tides approach and soon over-wash with their poignant waters of joy, awe, solemnity and introspection, it’s tempting to imagine that this season is only for emotional and spiritual internals.

This season of teshuvah (returning, repairing, forgiving) is for thinking and feeling teshuvah – but mainly as springboards for action.

It’s good to think teshuvah in our minds and feel teshuvah in our hearts. It’s healthy to commit to change behaviours that don’t serve us, others or the world. It’s right to arouse intention to seek and give forgiveness. Good, healthy and right as our inner turns can be, they aren’t fully teshuvah until they spur action where action is possible.

Jews are called to action. Our spiritual ancestors answered Sinai’s call by responding “na’aseh v’nishma”, “We will do and we will hear” (Exodus 19:8) – doing is paramount. Shabbat doesn’t just happen magically: “The Children of Israel will... do Shabbat for all their generations as an eternal covenant” (Exodus 31:16) – doing makes Shabbat. Doing is our covenant.

Doing is the goal of the inner return and repair we call teshuvah. The riveting High Holidays Avinu Malkeinu liturgy pleads to G-d “Aseh imanu va’chesed” – “do with us justice and lovingkindness”.

On Yom Kippur, we hear anew the call to emulate G-d – “Be holy, for I [the Holy One] am holy” (Leviticus 15:2) – so this season calls us to do likewise. We are to do the same justice and loving kindness that we crave for ourselves.

What is a teshuvah of doing? It depends on context, but usually includes action knowable to others. It can mean actually speaking apology to people we wronged (not just thinking or feeling it).

It can mean correcting a rumour we spread (even if we can’t undo all of a rumour’s harm). It can mean sending an e-mail to begin repairing a relationship. It can mean communicating forgiveness long restrained by grudge. It can mean returning an item that belongs to another.

In all of these cases, teshuvah means doing: Thinking and feeling are the fertile soil of teshuvah, but action is the harvest – the purpose and fulfilment.

Teshuvah often is risky: action risks rejection and failure. But in most cases, that’s exactly the point. Except in abusive or dangerous contexts in which repair is not safely feasible by action in this world, risk is part of what we must do to heed the call of teshuvah.

A true teshuvah of action asks courage to risk our hearts in service of doing true repair and healing. Our hearts and souls – and others’ hearts and souls – are worth it.

That’s the call of this season – a teshuvah of action that’s riskier – and far more healing and liberating – than thinking or feeling alone.

Justice and loving kindness, community and spirituality, compassion and mercy, forgiveness and repair, Shabbat and Jewish life – all of these call us to do. So, in this season of teshuvah, what are you waiting for? Make that call. Send that e-mail. Just do it.

• Rabbi David Evan Markus is co-chairman of ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, the umbrella organisation for the Jewish Renewal movement, and co-rabbi of Temple Beth-El of City Island in New York City.

The Adventurer Ambassador

>>>Continued from page 4

“Our work is building bridges between people and showing them the difference between what people think and the reality. We also introduce people to those realities and help improve lives in the countries we work in,” he says.

“I know we have so much to offer South Africa, as I mentioned to President Zuma when I presented my credentials to him. We can help with water technology, agriculture, hi-tech and so many areas.

“Just looking at water, we are a country with little rain but no shortage of water. One of our ways of ensuring this is with no wastage. When we pump water from lakes, we perhaps lose a maximum of three per cent in pipes, whereas here there is a 30 per cent loss, which is not logical.

“That 30 per cent could be supplying a city.

“I also want to improve trade and business relations between us. I want to help facilitate tourism and travel, by improving the number and the cost of flights, among other things.”

We have the technology to find the leaks and fix them. We could help South Africa with that, among other things.”

He said that Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba, was very interested in what he had to offer around water technology and Keinan said

he would pursue it with him.

Keinan noted that while he hasn’t had much time with President Zuma, he believes Zuma heard his call for using what was learnt in South Africa’s peaceful transition to help broker peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

“But this can’t be done without objectivity to both sides. If you hold a view that one side is totally right and the other is wrong, it won’t work for us. But we do believe South Africa can play an essential role for us in this.”

This issue falls in with Keinan’s goals for his time in South Africa.

“I really want to advance relations between our two countries. I believe in engagement and don’t know this world of boycotts. We look to engage, whether we agree with each other or not. You can never advance anything with the approach of boycotts.

“I also want to improve trade and business relations between us. I want to help facilitate tourism and travel, by improving the number and the cost of flights, among other things.”

He also wants to introduce people to the charm of Israel, the training it offers and its cultural contribution, including dance, television, and so much more. “Social media today could bring you Israel in less than 140 characters. We are working on this,” he says, with a chuckle.

His first month has been a success and from what I have seen of this man, he will make sure the rest of his tenure (or adventure) here will be as successful. Did I mention that he has already been to watch a rugby match and met former Springbok captain Francois Pienaar?



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It’s how we deal with ‘hard weeks’ that defines us

HOWARD FELDMAN

Every Thursday night my parents would entertain their more or less adult grandchildren for dinner. The menu was always the same. Fried soles and chips. Salad and sushi. And when the grandchildren left, as they moved towards the door, they would always take with them some chocolate that their own budget would not allow them to purchase. In this way the sweetness of the evening would linger well into the next week. Through the years, as the grandchildren

matured, the group expanded with the introduction of spouses and then great-grandchildren. No parents were invited and Thursday nights remained a grandchildren event only. Life demanded that it was not possible for them all to be there each week, but Thursday nights were a constant for year and years and years. To some extent Thursday nights in some way mirrored our family’s Rosh Hashanah ritual. Each year, like most Jewish families, we would gather and celebrate. First night was always at my parents. The menu was

always the same. The décor never differed. And year-on-year the conversation never changed. There was stability in the predictability and nurturing in the consistency. There was nothing that distinguished last year from the year before or the year before that. We had no sense that the year that followed would bring such change. Last year Rosh Hashanah my mom was healthy. And then a few days before Purim we learned of her illness. Pesach, we gathered as a family, knowing it would be our last.

We reminisced, took stock and cherished what we had. Shavuot came, and she was no longer with us. Someone had hit the pause button. Life was suspended. Thursday nights were lost in the blur of chemotherapy and treatments. Hospital visits replaced dinners. Saying goodbye no longer involved the sweetness of imported chocolates. Eight weeks following diagnosis, my mother had passed on. She left with the clear instruction: Thursday nights were to continue at her home with my father as the host. He followed her wishes and implemented his own flavour to the evening. Each grandchild now would get the opportunity to share something interesting about the week. A few weeks ago, one of the granddaughters who works at a financial institution, began by saying, “I had such a hard week” and hoped to move on to the next person. “We all have hard weeks” was my father’s response.

Sometimes there are days when being an adult is just not fun. When the pain of loss is overwhelming and when the struggle to comprehend how life can change with a single phone call.



“Everyone has a hard week. That much we know. What is important is what makes it interesting, what we can learn from it and how we can make that hard week into something positive.” Tentatively, she began to tell of the issue she had had and by the end of it not only felt unburdened but also guided and blessed to have had the challenge she did. My son of 19 came home and recounted the events. He was blown away by it. He hadn’t thought of adulthood in this way, and the conversation completely shifted his perspective. Sometimes there are days when being an adult is just not fun. When the pain of loss is overwhelming and when the struggle to comprehend how life can change with a single phone call. It’s how we deal with the “hard weeks” that defines who we are.

Thursday nights cannot be easy for my father. It would no doubt have been a lot simpler to suspend the gatherings and to rather remember them nostalgically. He didn’t choose the simple option. So, slowly and nervously following the mourning period, the grandchildren began once again to gather on a Thursday night. The void was unmistakable, but with good humour and with resilience and with the comfort of the knowledge that this what she wanted, they shared soles and chips and salad and sushi. And as they left, they took with them the imported chocolates that made their week a little sweeter and lot richer. Rosh Hashanah is a time to reflect. It is a time to gather, to take stock and to look ahead at the year that will be. There is little way of knowing how this year will differ from the next and what changes might occur. We can’t predict whose chair will be empty. What we can do, is celebrate what we have, be grateful for the now and make sure that the taste of chocolates lingers as long as possible.

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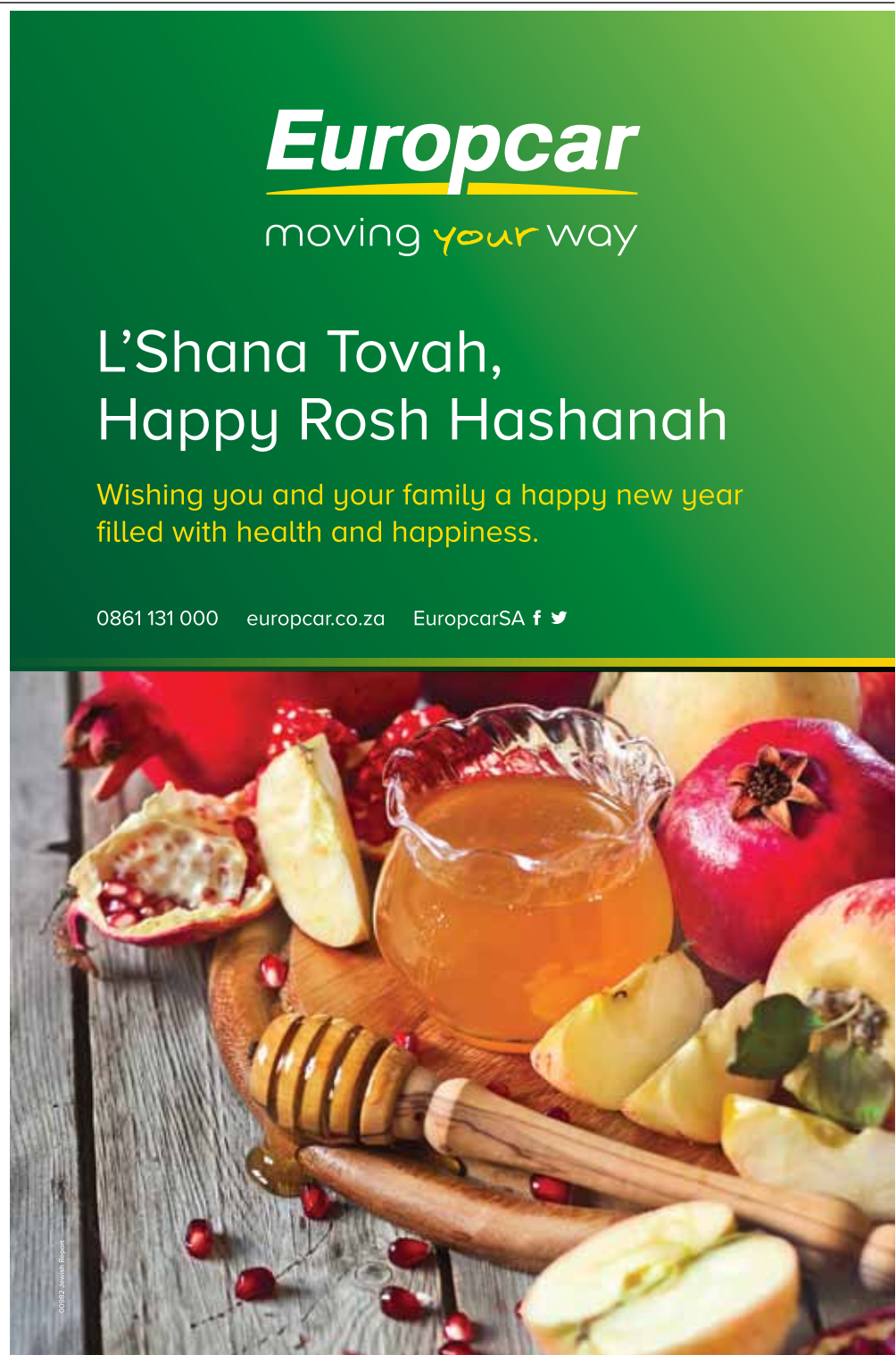
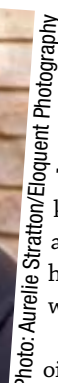
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Jewish trends to look out for in the New Year

TALI FEINBERG

Last year babka was big, this year bagels are making a comeback. Here’s what to look out for in 5778 in the Jewish world and beyond.

Baby names

According to kveller.com, the American-Jewish parenting website, the name Eve and its sister names Eva, Chava and Ava, are all trending. Lila (meaning “night”), Abigail (meaning “my father is joy”) and Sarah or Zara (meaning “princess”) are also popular.

For boys, the name Asher is at the top of both Jewish and general naming lists. Meaning “happiness” or “joy”, Asher was the eighth son of Jacob and is one of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Two other sons of Jacob and 12 tribes, Levi and Benjamin, are also popular, while classics like Ethan or Eitan, Zachary, Judah, Ezra and Elijah or Eli, are rising up the ranks.

Home

You may have seen the word “hygge” (pronounced HOO-gah) in various magazines – the Danish concept of finding well-being and satisfaction through coziness and simple things. A more complete definition is “it is a holistic approach to deliberately creating intimacy, connection, and warmth with ourselves and those around us”, according to The Cozy Life by Pia Edberg.

Hygge is a huge trend at the moment, but it may have come from a much older tradition – Shabbat.

“My family already enjoys some of the best aspects of hygge every Friday night. I thought about the checklist for hygge and realised Shabbat hits all the big ones.

Birthday cake babka is also making a splash – it’s a cross between funfetti birthday cake, coffee cake, and a traditional sweet babka.

Candles? Check. Unplugging from devices? Check. Wine? Check. Family? Food? Check and check!” writes Marlene Kern Fischer.

“It does seem ironic that the obsession du jour is embodied by a ritual observance instituted in the Ten Commandments. I guess it’s another example of the adage, ‘What’s old is new again’,” she says.

So, start with Shabbos, and let it guide you to bring more “hygge” into your home. On the opposite end, minimalism is also very popular, and you could aim to create a “capsule wardrobe” and clean out your cupboards to give tzedakah.

Food and drink

Firstly, the Cheesecake Factory has made its way to Israel’s north, and will soon be expanding around the country. It is currently not certified kosher, but is working on gaining certification. Secondly, the Jewish deli is far from dead. “Fifty years ago,” says Jake



Dell, owner of Katz’s Delicatessen on the Lower East Side in New York City, “there were thousands of traditional Jewish delis in New York City”. Now, you may find five.

“But it is not going away,” says Dell. “A new generation is coming along, young people who remember the deli taste from childhood and are opening delis across the US, not just in New York, many of them with some new twists on the old formulas.” So, watch this space!

Locally, the hippest restaurants are serving “Jew food”, like Sea Point’s Jarryd’s serving a smoked salmon bagel with “caper popcorn” and Kleinsky’s making traditional food the trendiest in town, with home-baked challah, French toast, chicken and kneidel soup, a huge selection of bagels, and hot pastrami on rye.

Following the trend of all things unicorns and rainbows, we may be seeing more “rainbow challah” on our Shabbos tables, with each strand a different colour – a real showstopper for a celebratory Shabbat!

Birthday cake babka is also making a splash – it’s a cross between funfetti birthday cake, coffee cake, and a traditional sweet babka.

Fashion

In 2014, kveller.com noticed a trend of more modest fashion on the red carpet, and it only appears to be growing. Vogue reports that sisters Simi Polonsky and Chaya Chanin are Orthodox Jewish fashion designers with a booming business.

The pair run The Frock NYC, a label that produces modest clothing and provides tailored, on-trend looks, such as long-sleeved silk dresses and oversize shirtdresses.

“The rise of a brand like The Frock NYC comes at a time when fashion as a whole is adapting to become more sensitive to religious styles of dressing,” reports Vogue.

Locally, Rebbetzin Sarah Feldman has her own “modest and modern” fashion line: “The way I see it, adhering to modesty guidelines does not mean that one needs to be frumpy and not look after yourself. My range respects the laws of modesty, but is still stylish, fashionable and can be worn and treasured by all women regardless of faith, background or religious preferences,” she says.

Weddings

According to Jewish wedding website Smashing the Glass, we might see more brides choosing to incorporate a bit of colour into their bridal looks, while others will

have “overskirts” that lead to two different looks for the chuppah and party. Long sleeves are also a big trend at the moment. One bride suggests choosing a long veil, so you can use it to hang over your future

child’s crib!

Couples are also getting creative with the actual chuppah, using fabric, glass, foliage and lighting to make an out-of-this-world wedding canopy.

Many of us have special memories of machaneh and summer camp wedding venues can be seen on Pinterest. “Who doesn’t have fond memories of the warm days and nights spent among pine trees and around the campfire? Campgrounds harken to a simpler time, making us sentimental in the process, so it’s no wonder that they’ve become a big trend for weddings,” writes Tara Block on Popsugar.

“If you’re planning an outdoor wedding, then having it at a campground or a summer camp could be an affordable and fun option. The natural setting requires little more than some handpicked wildflowers to make it wedding-ready. But really, the sky’s the limit!” she says.

What is Judaism’s approach to New Year’s resolutions?

TALI FEINBERG

It’s a New Year, and you may feel the need to start afresh, make a list of “New Year’s Resolutions” or simply promise yourself to do better or work harder. What does Judaism say about this?

While it may first appear as a secular custom, making “resolutions” has roots in Judaism. “Elul is the month that leads up to the Jewish New Year, and it is the month in which Jews are supposed to be involved in the process of cheshbon ha-nefesh, an accounting of the soul – our spiritual preparation for the New Year.

It is a time to look inside ourselves and engage in the process of teshuvah – usually translated as “repentance” but it literally means “turning” – we seek to turn toward wholeness in our relationships with others in our lives, with G-d and with our true selves,” writes Rabbi Robyn Frisch on the Interfaith Family Network blog.

“When I make my resolutions in the month of Elul, unlike in December, my resolutions aren’t about being thinner, healthier, wealthier and happier (not that I would mind any of those things).

“Instead, I make resolutions about how I will relate to my family, friends and community and how I will engage in the world. I contemplate not just my physical wellbeing, but more important, my spiritual wellbeing,” she writes.

Rabbi Steve Gutow, president of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs in the US, says his January 1 resolutions – which often revolve around losing weight or actually taking his leave days – are “trivial” compared to those he makes during the Yamim Noraim.

“If I break the secular resolutions, in some ways I’m disappointing my understanding of myself,” he says. “If I break the High Holiday resolutions, I am disappointing my relationship with G-d, the commitments I make in G-d’s name, and I am disappointing my community.”

But sometimes these spiritual goals can be overwhelming. “Promises, promises, promises. As Rosh Hashanah approaches, I always find myself making promises,” writes Elana Mizrachi on JewishWomen.org.

She resolves this by pointing out that the sages of the Talmud tell us that when a person tries to grab a lot, they end up with nothing, but when they try to grab a little, they end up getting it.

For example, Abraham told his guests that he was going to bring them a glass of water and some bread to eat. He didn’t make them any big promises that he would bring them a glass of wine and a gourmet meal. His words were small, but his actions were big.

“He ran into his home and asked Sarah to help him. They made cakes, brought cream, milk and a lavish five-star meal to their guests. Say little, do a lot, was Abraham’s motto.

So, start small, and you can always build from there. A tiny gesture like giving a small donation to a cause that means something to you, or popping in to an old-age home to bring cheer to the residents, can go a long way to fulfilling your spiritual resolutions.



Aish.com advises five ways to stick to your Rosh Hashanah Resolutions: Firstly, like the advice above: focus only on today. Don’t worry about having messed up in the past. It’s over and you can change and grow today.

And don’t worry about the future; you’re not there yet. Just take it one day at a time. As it says in the Torah: “You are all standing today before G-d” (Deut 29:9).

Secondly, develop a strategy. You can’t do a complete overhaul of your entire life all at once. Break it down into manageable baby steps that you’re confident you can keep to and will lead to results. The simpler the better. Each small step you take in the right direction, is monumental!

Thirdly, “Make it happen automatically.” If there’s a way to create a situation that almost forces you externally to do what you know deep down is the right thing to do, you stand a much greater chance of getting the job done.

“For instance, if you decided you should be giving R200 a month to charity, arrange with your bank to automatically send this sum to the organisation of your choice on a certain day every month.

“If you want to increase your amount of Torah learning this year, get a study partner. Knowing that someone is counting on you to be there and learn, increases the chances that it will happen.”

Fourthly, say it out loud. This is one of the 48 Ways to Wisdom, mentioned in Ethics of the Fathers (Avot, 6:6). Speech is a uniquely human characteristic. It is the way we translate a spiritual thought into a physical reality. Articulation makes an idea real. It also forces you to focus on what the words mean and achieve clarity and inner resonance with the concept.

When it comes to our Rosh Hashanah goals, it’s easy to think highly idealistic thoughts, but they may not be practical or concrete until we verbalise them.

Once you articulate clearly what you truly desire to accomplish and how you plan to achieve your goals, you get to know yourself better: what are your blocks and obstacles, and you stand a much greater chance of bringing potential into actuality.

Finally, involve a friend. A spouse, friend, confidante or mentor can help you keep track of your goals, motivate you, and check in with you on a daily, weekly or monthly basis so that you have the support you need to achieve your aspirations.

Not wanting to tighten your belt, but still maximise your wealth...

SIMON SHEER

“Who is rich? He that rejoices in his portion.” Of course, our sages were right that true wealth means being happy with what you have. But you still need to pay off your bond. This new year, we should resolve to maximise our wealth more efficiently, so we can pay for what we need and what we want.

Unfortunately, saving has come to be associated with deprivation. That’s a mistake. Of course, any responsible personal budget means being realistic about our spending habits. But building wealth effectively, is about saving smarter not eating Shoprite baked beans for dinner six days a week (and treating yourself to Woolworths baked beans on Shabbos).

Here are four smarter ways to maximise your money. Over time, these money-saving resolutions can have a profound effect on your wealth.

Investment fees are eating your gains: Management fees and charges don’t seem like a big deal month-on-month. Can an extra two per cent in fees make all that much difference?

The answer lies in the immense power of compound interest. By reinvesting your gains, you effectively earn returns on your returns. Over a long enough time, that exponentially magnifies your investment. The cumulative effect of even apparently small monthly deductions can be a substantially reduced nest egg when you wish to cash in your investment.

Examine the fees and charges connected to your investments. Don’t be afraid to ask hard questions. Don’t be intimidated by technical jargon. Are the fees justified? If not, you may wish to consider investments with lower management fees.

There’s no substitute for time: There’s an even more important corollary to the power of compound returns. There’s nothing like investing over time. If you haven’t started investing, start now. If your children don’t have investments yet, they’re missing out on a chance to really grow their wealth. When it comes to investing, there really is no time like the present.

there’s no reason to overpay for insurance anymore, price should not be your only consideration when choosing a policy. Reliability and service are also important.


Be careful also to ensure you make relevant comparisons. A cheaper premium with fewer benefits or a higher excess, may not offer value.

The unifying concept behind these wealth maximising concepts is efficiency. Rather than depriving yourself, the emphasis is on setting your money to work more effectively. Over time, even small gains can produce

astonishing results.

Finding better value in financial service seems daunting because finance is complex and there are few incentives for providers to make their products transparent. But by knowing what to look out for, and demanding clarity on fees and returns, it’s possible for any of us to get a fairer deal.

• *Simon Sheer is co-founder of mytreasury.co.za, the website that finds the best bank account for you and demystifies personal finance.*



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We live in a golden age of comparisons: The Internet has made it easier than ever to compare prices. Yet many of us are complacent about financial products. We wouldn’t travel without comparing the price of flights, yet we stick with the same insurance policies for years, perhaps because of the perceived hassle of switching. It only takes a few moments to get a quote and you could save a lot of money.

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The Holy Day that makes us agents of change

RABBI GREG ALEXANDER

If you survey the average person in the month of Elul, I really think the High Holy Days are equally welcomed and dreaded. On the one hand, we can't wait for the apples and honey, for sitting around the table with family and friends, and to hear the sound of the shofar. On the other hand, there is the serious side of Rosh Hashanah – the 10 days of Repentance and the Yom Ha-Din (Day of Judgement) side of our New Year.

“Who by Fire and Who by Water!” That's not exactly champagne and Auld Lang Syne!

Transformation

This takes you back to what it is that you want to get out of this. If you are looking for time with family and nice food, you will not be disappointed. Add a brief drop-in to shul for the shofar and you're set.

But you might want more. Deeper down there is a part of us that yearns for nothing less than a miracle, a revelation – a transformation in our lives. We have had enough with the “same old”.

We feel the weight of tiredness, lack of energy, lack of meaning. We want to bounce out of bed inspired. We want to feel the fullness of our

strength and happiness. And here is where Judaism gives us some great tools for achieving this transformation. In fact, the very name Rosh Hashanah, gives us some clues.

Shanah

Let's start with the Hebrew word shanah (year), which is a marking of the cycle of the seasons. It's linked to the word mishnah (repeating), which is the way a lot of rabbinic teachings were learnt – by repeating again and again.

This is also linked to Mishneh Torah, the rabbinic term for the last book of the Torah, D'varim or Deuteronomy, which was Moses' repetition of the teachings of the previous 40 years.

So, Rosh Hashanah, the head of the year, repeats each September. It marks the beginning of another cycle of seasons to come. And the difference between a cycle and circle is that you don't end up at the same point where you began – time has moved on and you're (hopefully) a bit higher.

When you get to Rosh Hashanah, you are never the same person you were last year. The prayers are the same, the same shofar notes, the

food might be too, but you are not.

Shoneh

And this brings us to another Hebrew link to Shanah. Shoneh (different) – we are different to who we were last year and we can make a difference. We can make a difference in the world or in our world. We can make a difference in who we are and who we want to be.

G-d created us as the Chosen People and the Choosing People, so that we could consciously choose to be better. Not that we don't make mistakes – that's a given. But that we choose to fix them – that's the key to change.

The gift the High Holy Days give us, is to actively, consciously choose the change that we would like to bring about in ourselves and the world around us.

Shinui

And that nicely sets us up for the last Hebrew word association – shinui, which means change.

If there is one things we know for sure, it's that everything must change. I will change, you will change, the world is premised on change.

The gift the High Holy Days give us, is to actively, consciously choose the change that we would like to bring about in ourselves and the world around us.

Tools

Fortunately, our tradition knows that transformation is not easy and gives us a few tools to help us along. The one tool I mentioned already is the shofar, helping us with three calls beginning with T'kiah – a pure unbroken shout that calls out to our ears, to our soul to “Turn, turn!”

The High Holy Days are upon us and the year is about to begin. Sort out your stuff, get rid of the unwanted baggage of the year, of your life, and turn to who you are and who you want to be truly be.

And next the Sh'varim and T'ruah are broken sobbing cries that remind us that our hearts have been broken, that our lives are complicated and often cause us pain, and that is hard but we will be all right.

We realise that broken is healable, that pain can be a teacher, that life gives us what we need to be resilient, to survive and even to thrive.

We learn this because after the broken notes, the shofar always returns back to T'kiah, taking us from broken to whole and from pain to healing.

It takes us from crying to calling out – our soul calling out. Our soul sings with the shofar, calling us to return to who we are, to what we are and want to be.

Change now

Now, as we prepare for this Rosh Hashanah, let us take time to think about the changes we would like to see in our lives. What are the habits, the insecurities, the barriers to being that we would like to cast out, to dump and not shlep into the New Year?

Dump them

What are our goals and aspirations for the coming year? What do we want to do and what do we want to be? Write them down, put them on the fridge, and bring them with you to shul.

May this be a time of upcycling, of change, of making a change and making a difference. May we begin 5778 with our best intentions and may we see them fulfilled.

Shanah Tovah

• Rabbi Greg is part of the rabbinic team at the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation. Write to him at ravgreg@templeisrael.co.za

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Outrage and outstanding – the lure of the outliers

RABBI RAMON WIDMONTE

One of (EFF leader) Julius Malema’s G-d given talents, is an ability to capture our guts. When he began the chant, “Pay back the money!” it transcended racial, religious and class boundaries. He had reached into our collective consciousnesses and trawled through our deepest fears and hurts and squeezed out the very essence of our outrage into a single, bull-red bellow, “Pay back the money!”

On the other hand, one of Nelson Mandela’s blessings was the ability to channel a fine distillation of our most outstanding hopes. When he donned the Springbok jersey and was hoisted on the shoulders of a mostly-white rugby team, a symbol of apartheid-sport, he had reached into our collective souls and sifted our aspirations for the finest diamonds of destiny. It was outstanding.

What is common to both of these gestures, as opposed as they are in polarity (one rooted in repulsion and the other in aspiration) is that they are both aligned to the outliers.

They gain their power and impact through the extraordinary outrageousness and extremism they employ. Mandela’s act was like a beacon, way beyond our reach, but showing the way, even if most of us would never get there; while Malema’s mantra was like a lighthouse, warning of a direction and destination to be avoided like the plague.

But neither of these speak to our daily lives in a practical fashion.

Malema captured our outrage and focused it on one man; but if we are honest with ourselves, we have been and are complicit, in the creation of the context of corruption in South Africa.

How many of us drive while talking on our cell-phones, endangering our fellow citizens; and when we’re caught, are all too happy to pay a bribe? How many of us misstate our earnings at tax time or are all too creative with VAT returns?

It is childishly simple to create an external locus of our deepest demons and burn the effigy of all we hate, and then never look inward and see that that effigy is partially in our own image.

Similarly, Mandela concentrated our vision and striving on a single moment of national unity and joy in excellence and achievement beyond race.

But again, if we are honest with ourselves, most of us did not get up the next day and ask: “How do I change the life of the five black people closest to me to ensure they and their children have a more hopeful future?”

“How can I make a difference in their education, housing and healthcare, so that our country and society can develop in a more moral fashion and also practically bring all our collective energies to bear in forming a powerful, productive, caring and cohesive society?”

And when we saw the lack of progress in the

Malema captured our outrage and focused it on one man; but if we are honest with ourselves, we have been and are complicit, in the creation of the context of corruption in South Africa.



building of schools and hospitals, how many of us got stuck in, using our voices and time to make a positive difference; and how many of us were happy to delegate the blame to government, as if it wasn’t our issue?

This is the genius of Torah.

We have the prophets who tap into our wild, creative, protesting energies. But we also have a finely-meshed network of tiny, everyday actions which move us inexorably towards personal and communal involvement and implementation of the big ideas.

A few examples of this.

The product of this system was the first welfare state in every Jewish community worldwide for thousands of years, before any thinker, Western or Eastern, began to construct theories around social nets.

The Torah’s requirement never to close one’s hand to a needy person, results not only in a flow of small change, but in a tidal wave of care and sensitisation to the needy, which is unattainable merely through isolated, grand acts performed every few months or years.

A further product of this system was the first national and international network of basic education and literacy for men and women; and the first free system of education in human history.

What is the source of the grand vision of state-sponsored free education, medical care, social welfare and basic needs, which is now the standard of enlightened states? It is big Torah ideas, and small mitzvot.

The Torah focuses on a growth path which nudges us as individuals towards real involvement in the implementation of majestic ideals on a personal and communal level. It also creates a societal fabric which nurtures and encourages the growth of this morality.

This is the difference between the outliers (whether outrageous or outstanding) and a system which cultivates change through incremental personal and societal development. Of course, you need both, but we are too often overly impressed by the loud minority, while

ignoring the ultimate question of creating a system and a culture of real, long-term, sustainable growth.

And it is in the latter area where the average “Jo” and “Joanne” make the difference. In fact, a Mandela can never create a society-wide change, only the individuals therein can.

One of the things that often disturbs me is when a fellow Jew steps forward to repudiate the entire system of Jewish life due to an issue about which they feel so passionately. It may be a perennial weak point or something new which they are raising, but in their eyes, it becomes proof of the vacuousness and invalidity of the entire system.

Yes, we do have a heritage of outlier prophets speaking truth to power; but they were always humble enough to appreciate the value and contribution of the complete framework.

Incredulously, I sometimes hear the thunder and rumble of the self-righteous, trumpeting outrage, without an iota of understanding that the values which attune them to moral issues are a product of the very system they deride, and without any recognition of the success of the system over the past thousands of years, and definitely without any suggestion of a better system which can effectively uplift both individuals and society.

At such times, I pray that they do not find themselves one day, standing over Laius’ corpse, dedicating themselves to justice and then years later realising their own hand in the unknitting of their patrimony and society. Unlike Oedipus, we need all our eyes.

As we step into a period of self-examination and review this Rosh Hashanah, I pray that we are all able to see the strength in our becoming more involved, more active in the weaving of a strong communal fabric (Jewish and general), recognising our own indispensable contributions and also never forgetting the echoes of the modest outliers (modern and ancient) who challenge us to grow upwards and onwards.

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Jews and food – why the intense connection?

TALI FEINBERG

Have you ever wondered why Jews place such a strong emphasis on food? And have you thought about why the chaggim and Shabbat are based around a meal, and specific delicacies? Also, why is a Jewish simcha simply not complete without eating?

This distinction is made even clearer when one attends a non-Jewish function, where food is rarely the focus.

As we approached the Yamin Nora'im, food is even more foremost in our minds, as we prepare the Rosh Hashanah meal, teach our children about apples dipped in honey, and fast from sunset to sunset over Yom Kippur. We eat in abundance, then fast, then eat in abundance some more. It's just one of the patterns that make food almost an obsession in the Jewish world.

“There is no way you can practise Judaism religiously or culturally without food. Food has been intrinsic to Jewish ritual, life and culture from the outset,” writes Gil Marks in Moment magazine.

“What is the very first act that the Israelites in Egypt are commanded to do? It's to have a communal meal – roast lamb and herbs, some nice shawarma. And with that, the beginning of the Jewish people is through a meal. The famous joke – ‘They tried to kill us, we won, now let's eat’, is not really that far from the truth.”

But why? Some suggest it is about identity. “The process of identity formation though food consumption, a phenomenon by means of which social distinctions are created and distinct communities are enacted and maintained, is epitomised in Judaism.

In the case of Jewish identity,



the tremendously powerful influence of food can be traced back to the profusion of food taboos contained within the Hebrew Bible,” writes Shannon Leavitt in her thesis “How is Jewish Identity Manifested Through Food?” (University of Santa Barbara, California).

She goes on to explore how Shabbat, kashrut, the seder and other food rituals around chaggim, lead to Jews maintaining a strong focus on food; and how for many American Jewish immigrants who assimilated, food became the main connection to their Judaism.

For South African Jews, our history is also deeply steeped in gastronomy, and some foods in particular. As Leah Konig writes in The Forward, Jews who came here from Lithuania brought deeply cherished recipes and food customs, from our unique name for challah (kitke – a term which likely stems from the German word for putty and is today exclusively used among South African Jews of Lithuanian descent) to our enduring love of teiglach and the tendency to pair kichel with herring.

“Over the centuries, South Africa’s Jews held tight to their Lithuanian food traditions, blending them with flavours from the foods of South Africa’s indigenous and immigrant communities and periods of Dutch and British colonisation”, continues Konig. The results were dishes like curried fish balls, kosher biltong and mock crayfish.

But is it healthy to be so emotionally connected to food, or particular dishes? And why are we naturally inclined to serve food in abundance, sometimes to the point of wasting food?

“I think it comes from identifying with a deep fear of scarcity, shortage and the threat of there not being enough,” says Cape Town-based psychologist Cara Browde.

“With the Jewish people’s history, we tend to hold on to abundance to manage that anxiety of being

persecuted and victimised. It goes very deep and is transmitted non-verbally,” she continues. But she emphasises that we don’t have to follow these patterns and say: “This is just how we are.”

“We can be more thoughtful about eating abundantly, and try and understand the reasons why. We don’t have to carry on identifying with that fear, as it’s mostly not our reality anymore. Rather, we can focus on a sense of gratitude, and trust that there will be enough,” she suggests.

On the other hand, Judaism’s connection to eating could also lead to a healthy relationship with food. Gathering around a table for a family meal, cooking a hearty dinner as opposed to fast food, and teaching children the importance of wholesome dishes and being with family, are simply priceless in a world of rushed, packaged consumption.

For South African Jews, our history is also deeply steeped in gastronomy, and some foods in particular.

Indeed, “on a higher spiritual level, food stirs emotion and memory”, writes Rabbi Joshua Rose, senior rabbi at Har Hashem in Colorado.

“For Jews, food also connects us to a broader connection than just personal memory. When I eat herring in sour cream – oh yes, I do – I am aware that I’m eating my people’s food, Jewish soul food. For Sephardic Jews, haminado or shakshuka are tied to the cords of mystic memory as well,” he writes.

“There is a higher spiritual level still to which food connects us. Food is an intersection of body and soul, because it connects us to the entire web of creation. The Jewish approach to food is to have us consider the origins of our food, to encourage us to be mindful of its source, the connection between our heart and soul, and the rest of the world.”

New Year across cultures



GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Make resolutions. Drink. Watch fireworks. Drink some more. Break said resolutions. This basically sums up a typical New Year celebration in the Western world. While there's no shortage of food, drink, or celebration, Rosh Hashanah has more serious undertones. Here's how various cultures mark the beginning of their New Years.

Although the beats heard at your basic New Year's Eve party may reverberate through your ears, the only fallout may be a slight headache. On the other hand, the sound of a shofar is a more sober reminder to start repenting before the Book of Life is closed on Yom Kippur.

While it's a time of celebration and family, Rosh Hashanah is also marked by introspection as we pray for a sweet new year. Food, prayer and celebration also feature in numerous cultures that follow unique new year traditions.

Chinese New Year

Celebrated over 15 days, Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, is typically marked by global celebrations and family get-togethers. While different parts of the country have some different traditions, there are hallmarks of the festival.

Based on the traditional Chinese lunisolar calendar, New Year falls between January 21 and February 21, depending on when the new moon appears. Each year is assigned an animal zodiac sign, which occur in 12-year cycles – a tradition functioning much like horoscopes.

As is the case with Rosh Hashanah, family plays a large role in the rituals surrounding the festival with “New Year’s Eve” marked by a family reunion dinner, where those near and far come together.

Fish and dumplings which both signify prosperity, are often served at this meal known as Shou Sui. Fireworks are set off after midnight to ward off evil forces.

During the second day, some host religious ceremonies to honour the gods, while on the third, ancestors are typically honoured. Culminating in a beautiful lantern festival on the 15th day – Yuan Xiao – the period is also marked by New Year markets, cleaning house, red packets containing money – given to children to suppress evil and give them long life – and beautiful decorations.

Thai New Year

Lesser known but also fascinating, Thai New Year called Songkran, is a Buddhist festival which means “astrological passage”. It follows the Buddhist/Hindu solar calendar. Marking the end of Thailand's dry season, it looks ahead to the country's first rains in April and occurs between the 13th and 15th of that month.

In light of this, observers follow a cleansing ritual by visiting their temples and washing their Buddha statues (and their homes) to bring luck for the New Year. Some also bring bags of sand to their temples “returning the dust they’ve carried on their feet in the past year”, which is then sculpted and decorated to honour the Buddha, according to The Telegraph. They also offer food to the monks to remember their ancestors. People dress up in colourful clothing and prepare to celebrate.

The highlight of the three-day festival is the throwing of water to symbolise the hope of good rains for the coming year – be it from the massive water guns operated by excited children or directly from buckets they throw. Tourists are particular targets. Talc powder is also thrown, adding a white magical – but messy – look to the streets.

Islamic New Year

Determined by a lunar calendar, much like Rosh Hashanah, Islamic New Year occurs on a different Gregorian date each year, and the two dates sometimes coincide. New Year marks the beginning of Muharram – literally translated as forbidden – the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar and one of the four holy months in the year, according to The Independent.

Many fast during this period and it's also a time of prayer. It's generally a low-key holiday and customs vary for Shia and Sunni Muslims.

The first day of Muharram is known as Hijri New Year as it commemorates the emigration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, known as the Hijra.

Much like Rosh Hashanah, the New Year is a period for self-reflection and prayer for many Muslims. It's also a time of historical awareness and the tenth day of the month is known as Ashura, when the massacre at Karbala is remembered – when Muhammad's grandson, Imam Hussein ibn Ali, was killed. The period is also marked by family time.

So, with this in mind, as you go into our unique New Year, may it be a meaningful one!

The ‘gratitude’ of shul shareholders



Howard Feldman

I was unsurprisingly late for shul. And because I was rushing I got caught behind two senior female members of the congregation who were in front of me on the makeshift path that led towards the entrance.

The ladies were deep in conversation and there was little chance that I could manoeuvre around what seemed to be the latest models of titanium walkers that they were sporting.

They were “tut-tutting” as they ambled and gestured at the construction that had caused the need for the temporary pathway. “No progress since last week!” said the one shaking her head, clearly unimpressed. The other, agreeing with her said: “It’s quite remarkable. The builders must be paid by the hour.”

The background to this non-event is that the shul is remodelling the area where it holds the kiddush (brocha) each week. There is no danger that either of the seniors in front of me were either funding the project, being asked to manage it, or were participating as brick-layers.

Their involvement will unquestionably be limited to attending the kiddush where they will note the poor behaviour of the children, the unacceptable quality of the herring and that sushi is a waste of community funds.

“It’s no wonder,” they will note in a few weeks’ time when enjoying the new piazza that shul fees (which they most likely don’t

pay) are so expensive.

The reality is such. Shuls don’t have members, they have shareholders. Active ones. And whereas they might never actually pay for the shares, their expectations are massive. Much like the SA Jewish Report has a community of editors, not readers.In a quest to understand the challenges of managing the shul “company” shareholders, I asked our community chairman to name one thing he never hears from members. He didn’t pause to breathe before answering:

The High Holidays are no joke. Not for the rabbi, not for his wife, not for the chazan and not for the committee of the shul.

“Thank you! I never hear that.” Then he did (pause). And he said: “Or maybe it’s ‘How did they get the seating so right for Yomtov?’”

I could see he was about to launch into a list of other unheard comments like:

“Wow, the air-con and shul temperature was so pleasant this year!”

But his voice had gone up an octave and he was clearly becoming hysterical. So, I left before he broke down and sobbed from the overwhelming pressure of it all. I do feel a bit guilty about opening him up emotionally and then leaving him in the lurch.

I was going to ask the rabbi the same question. But I already knew what his answer would be: “The sermon was the perfect length, it was easy to hear you and of course,

your rebbetzin is so involved it is truly wonderful.”

He might even have ended with: “It’s fantastic that you knew I had a head cold and that you called me to find out how I was even though I passively aggressively didn’t mention it because I wanted to test your love for me.”

The treasurer’s answer was exactly as I would have imagined:

“Where do I pay?”

And: “I can’t believe that I get such good value for money from my shul membership. You provide daily services, employ spiritual leaders, youth leaders, cleaning staff, you feed us at the kiddush, provide goodies for our children, you invite guest speakers and make sure that the siddurim and facilities in the shul are well-functioning.

“What is amazing is that most of you are volunteers. Gosh – we should be paying double!”

The strange thing is that our Facebook feeds are filled with messages about gratitude. I even have a list of 40 “inspiring motivational quotes” about the very subject for anyone interested. They include gems like: “Feeling gratitude and not expressing it, is like wrapping a present and not giving it”, and “You cannot do kindness too soon because you never know how soon it will be too late!”

The High Holidays are no joke. Not for the rabbi, not for his wife, not for the chazan and not for the committee of the shul.

It’s rough out there. Perhaps this year at least we should try and cut them some slack, complain only half the amount we normally do and understand that the construction site, like our titanium walkers, won’t last forever.

World News in Brief

Russia scandal: Some Trump lawyers suggested Kushner step down

WASHINGTON - Some lawyers for President Donald Trump recommended that Jared Kushner step down as senior White House adviser over the Russia scandal.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday that the president’s lawyers were not united in the opinion. The article also said that Trump believed Kushner had done nothing wrong, thus there was no reason he should quit.

Due to the concerns of some members of the president’s legal team, press aides to the team drafted a statement explaining Kushner’s departure, the newspaper reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

Kushner reportedly had several meetings with Russian officials during and after the election campaign. He also failed to disclose on his application for a security clearance a meeting he had with a Russian official, along with his brother-in-law Donald Trump Junior, to receive damaging information about Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate for president, during the 2016 campaign.

In July, Kushner appeared before the Senate Intelligence Committee as part of its investigation into Russian interference in the election. Afterward he released an 11-page statement denying collusion.

Some of Trump’s attorneys worried that keeping Kushner as an adviser could involve other White House officials in the Russia investigation, including his discussing the probe with the president without a lawyer present. (JTA)



Jared Kushner

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Recipes



POMEGRANATE AND HONEY-GLAZED CHICKEN

LIZ RUEVEN
THE NOSHER VIA JTA

Pomegranates, or rimonim in Hebrew, are among the most recognisable and highly symbolic fruits in Jewish culture. Originating in Persia, these reddish, thick-skinned fruits (technically a berry) begin to appear in markets at the end of summer and are readily available for holiday cooking by Rosh Hashanah.

According to Gil Marks in “The Encyclopaedia of Jewish Food”, the abundance of seeds, nestled into a white membrane and encased in a protective and leathery skin, is associated with the 613 commandments in the Torah.

Holiday chicken is potent with pomegranates goodness as this symbolic fruit is used in three ways: juice, molasses and arils (seeds). The flavours are bold, tangy and slightly sweet – a Middle Eastern-influenced sweet and sour.

Pomegranates are highly symbolic in Jewish tradition, most often associated with fertility and good deeds. By combining the tart flavours of pomegranates with honey here, the sweetness balances the tang and positive energy is imbued in this main course for Rosh Hashanah.

Note: The simmer sauce may be prepared two to three days ahead and refrigerated until ready to prepare the chicken.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1,8 kg chicken cut in eighths (breasts cut in half if large)
- 4 tablespoons canola oil (separated: 2 tablespoons for simmer sauce and 2 tablespoons for browning the chicken)
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup pomegranate molasses

- 1/2 cup sweetened pomegranate juice
- 1/2 cup honey
- 2 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon powdered ginger
- 1/8 teaspoon allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric
- salt and pepper to taste

For the garnish:

- 2 tablespoons parsley
- 2 tablespoons pomegranate arils (seeds)

DIRECTIONS:

- Heat 2 tablespoons canola oil in a large pan (you’ll need a lid for later).
- Sauté chopped onion until soft and translucent. Add minced garlic and sauté for 2-3 minutes (do not brown).
- Add pomegranate molasses, juice, honey, broth and spices.
- Stir and bring to boil. Reduce to an active simmer, and cook uncovered, for about 20 minutes or until sauce is reduced by about half the volume and slightly thickened.
- Taste sauce and adjust seasoning. Too tart? Add 1 to 2 tablespoons honey. Want more kick? Crack more black pepper.
- Remove sauce from heat and pour into bowl. Set aside.
- Wash pan.
- Rinse chicken parts, pat dry, season with salt and pepper.
- Heat remaining 2 tablespoons of oil in pan and place chicken parts skin side down. Brown on one side and flip to second side. Do not crowd chicken in the pan, as this causes chicken to steam rather than brown.
- Lower heat, pour prepared simmer sauce over the chicken. Cover pan and simmer on low for 35-40 minutes.
- Remove from pan and platter, garnishing with chopped parsley and pomegranate arils.

• *Liz Rueven’s blog, Kosher Like Me, features restaurant and product reviews, tips on events where like-minded eaters like her can actually eat, and news about people in the food world.*

SUMMER CORN AND ZUCCHINI LATKES

SHANNON SARNA
THE NOSHER VIA JTA

Who says latkes are just for Chanukah? Well, it’s not me. And summer is a great time to try using seasonal produce to make some crispy, delicious latkes.

I recently fried up some fresh wheat and zucchini latkes, served with herb sour cream (or yoghurt) and thinly sliced radishes. The texture of the fresh wheat with zucchini and potato was delicious.

If you’re looking for other ideas for non-potato latkes, try broccoli stem latkes or even these healthful spaghetti squash and quinoa fritters from Julia’s Album, which after all, is just another name for latke.

These wheat and zucchini latkes are great for a light dinner, or paired perfectly with some poached eggs for brunch.

Ready to cook?

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 russet potato
- 1 medium-large zucchini
- 2 ears of corn, kernels removed (corn will be raw)
- 2 large eggs
- 3-4 tablespoons whole-wheat flour (can also use unbleached AP flour or matzah meal)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup Greek yoghurt or sour cream
- 1-2 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs, such as coriander, dill, mint, basil and/or parsley
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon zest
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS:

- Cut ends of zucchini and coarsely grate. Place in a large bowl with 1/4 teaspoon salt. Allow to sit for 20 minutes. After 20 minutes, place shredded zucchini in a kitchen towel and wring out excess water.
- Place shredded potato, zucchini, corn kernels, eggs, flour and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Mix until combined.
- Heat 2-3 tablespoons vegetable oil in a large sauté pan over medium high heat.
- Form mixture into patties, size should be approximately 1/3 cup.
- Cook latkes until golden and crispy on first side, around 3-4 minutes. Flip and cook for another 2-3 minutes.
- Place onto a wire baking rack and add a pinch of salt immediately.
- To make the herb sour cream (or yoghurt): combine sour cream, chopped herbs, lemon zest and 1/8 tsp salt. Combine and serve with hot latkes.
- Garnish with thinly sliced radishes if desired.

• *Shannon Sarna is the editor of The Nosh.*



APPLE AND HONEY PIE POPS

SHERI SILVER
THE NOSHER VIA JTA

Like most Jewish holidays, Rosh Hashanah brings to mind certain traditional food customs – the best-known being the dipping of apples in honey. And while a classic apple pie or cake is a lovely way to commemorate our hopes for a “sweet new year”, I thought it would be fun to change things up a bit. These apple and honey pie “pops” are a cinch to make – and even more fun to eat! They can be assembled (and frozen) in advance, and are especially nice to serve for a crowd – no cutting or forks needed! Even better, you only need a few simple ingredients, yet wind up with something truly delicious – and a little different. Sweet indeed.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled and diced
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 package (2 crusts) refrigerated pie crusts, set out at room temperature for 15 minutes
- 1 egg, beaten with 1 tablespoon water
- Raw or “sanding” sugar, for sprinkling

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:

- 4,5 - 7,5 cm cookie cutter (or drinking glass)
- Lollipop sticks

DIRECTIONS:

- In a medium pan combine the apples, sugar, honey, cinnamon and salt. Bring to a simmer and cook over low heat for about 10 minutes, or until the apples have softened and the juices have thickened. Remove from heat and let cool.
- Preheat oven to 205 Celsius. Line two baking sheets



with parchment paper. Unroll one pie crust on a work surface. Use your cutter to make as many circles as you can; place on your prepared baking sheets. Put a lollipop stick in the centre of each circle, pressing down lightly to secure.

- Place a teaspoon of cooled filling on each circle. Use a pastry brush to brush a bit of the beaten egg around the edge of each circle.
- Unroll the second pie crust and cut out an equal number of circles to the first crust – place atop the filled crusts and press lightly to seal. Crimp the edges with a fork, and make a few small incisions in the centre to allow steam to escape.
- Brush tops with the egg and sprinkle with the raw sugar (pops may be frozen at this point – reheat directly from the freezer, adjusting baking time by a few extra minutes).
- Bake pops for 20 minutes; transfer trays to wire racks to cool completely.
- Serve warm or at room temperature (pops may be kept tightly sealed, at room temperature, for 3-5 days).



SHARON GLASS IS ONE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREMOST CHEFS AND COOKBOOK AUTHORS, HAVING WRITTEN NINE BESTSELLING COOKBOOKS. GLASS WROTE THIS ORIGINAL RECIPE SPECIFICALLY FOR SA JEWISH REPORT READERS.

SNOEK BALLS WITH LEMON SAUCE

Sharon Glass



These light-as-a-feather snoek fish balls are the perfect starter for your Yomtov table. They can be prepared and rolled the day before, kept in the fridge and only cooked the day you need them.

I like to keep them on a baking rack uncovered, until we are ready to eat, so that they don't go soggy. And to finish them off, the lemon sauce is the perfect accompaniment.

Ingredients

- 350-400g hake, cooked
- 200g smoked snoek, flaked
- 2-3 tablespoons pickled cucumber, finely chopped
- ¼ cup mayonnaise (optional)
- 1 egg + 2 eggs (for dipping)
- 1-2 heaped tbs Italian parsley, chopped
- 1-2 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped
- 2 tablespoons lemon rind
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Panko crumbs
- Grapeseed oil for frying

Method

- Boil the hake in a pot of water until cooked – about 10 minutes. Remove and drain and then cool completely.
- Flake the snoek, remove the bones and add to the hake. Combine them well.

- Add the pickled cucumber, mayonnaise, egg, parsley, dill, lemon rind, salt and pepper. Mix everything again.
- Shape into small balls.
- Beat the remaining 2 eggs lightly in a bowl.
- Place the panko in another bowl.
- Dip the fish balls first into the egg and then the panko crumbs.
- Place them on a baking tray in the fridge overnight to chill.

Heat the grapeseed oil in a thin layer in a frying pan on medium-high heat. Cook the fish balls on all sides until golden. Drain on a paper towel. Keep them uncovered on a baking rack until ready to eat.

Lemon sauce

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoons wholegrain mustard (optional)
- 1 tablespoons Italian parsley, chopped
- 1-2 tablespoons lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Method

Whisk all the ingredients together in a bowl. Serve with the fish balls.

Makes about 30-34 balls.



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Lions Shul still open for business 116 years later

MICHELLE BLUMENAU

Thursday, September 7, 2017:
Doornfontein Shul in Johannesburg, (more fondly known as the Lions Shul), is now 116 years old. It is the last of 10 shuls which were in the area and remarkably, it still has a bright future thanks to the love of its congregants.

Reverend Ilan Herrmann recently left by mutual agreement, after serving the congregation for 18 years and there are major restorations happening to preserve the beauty of this Johannesburg jewel.

Services are to be held over Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Simchat Torah, and the regular Wednesday mincha ma’ariv and Friday night services will continue, as well as the famed Saturday morning minyan which begins at 06:00 and is over by 08:15.

Says Mike Baum, chairman of the shul: “Despite some recent rumours and lies, the shul will please G-d continue for another 116 years. We welcome everyone to join us for services, whether a member or not, and to experience the warmth of our congregation which has endured against the odds.

“Lions Shul has managed to keep the flame of Yiddishkeit burning in what was the centre of Johannesburg Jewry. There are many famous people in our community, here and abroad, who played on the lions as children – rabbonim, chazonim, doctors, lawyers, politicians and businessmen.

“So many stories of people’s lives: Reverend Smith who was the assistant spiritual leader and shammos, had his first barmitzvah in the shul at the age of 83, as he was fleeing persecution

in Europe and on a train the day of what would have been his barmitzvah.”

The shul survived a fire in 1935 as well as the “semigration” of the Jewish community to the northern suburbs. Now it is the oldest remaining shul in Johannesburg in what was once the equivalent of the Glenhazel “shtetl” in its day.

Named for the two large cast-iron lion statues adorning its entrance, it is known for its beautiful architecture and décor, both inside and out. The shul has managed to keep the flame burning thanks to the brainchild of some dedicated and determined men who created the early morning Shabbos minyan. These included Morris Mirels, Alderman Issy Schlapobersky, Cyril Goldstein, Maurice Turiel, Morris Win, Mottel Frymer and Cyril Jacobs.

Originally aimed at those who were in mourning and who worked on Saturdays, the shul was ideally situated near the city centre and after a couple of biscuits and tea, the men could leave to arrive early at work. At the time, the founders could not have imagined that it was this service with a kiddish which would sustain the shul.

Baum continues: “The early morning minyan is internationally renowned, so much so that when members who have emigrated, make a

Doornfontein started in 1886 (the year Johannesburg was founded) as the grand old suburb for the well-to-do. Many of the Randlords built their homes there, as did wealthy businessmen.



point when they visit South Africa, of coming back to the shul on Shabbos and having a l’chaim.

“We also frequently get guests who nostalgically remember their barmitzvahs or weddings very many years ago.”

History

Doornfontein started in 1886 (the year Johannesburg was founded) as the grand old suburb for the well-to-do. Many of the Randlords built their homes there, as did wealthy businessmen.

Construction on the shul began in 1905 and was completed at a cost of £4 000. At the time, it was described as small, but “probably the most beautiful in South Africa”. It was built to serve Doornfontein’s mainly German and Lithuanian immigrants.

With the exception of some minor alterations, the building is still in its original state. It is a proud example of the heritage of the Jewish population of Johannesburg in the most popular residential area from the early 1900s until the late 1960s.

Surprisingly, it is not a national heritage site but the shul committee have made an application and believe they will be successful.

It is situated adjacent to Beit Street in which many Jewish delicatessens and food stores thrived for so many years. When Mervyn King spoke at the shul’s centenary, he reminisced about, “the twinkling of candles through lace curtains on a Shabbos evening”.

He recalled how his father, who owned the bottle store, exchanged whisky with Fehler’s butchery for meat, later Wachenheimer’s, Goldbergs, for their wonderful sausages, Crystals for the best challah and the lox at Fehler & Flax.

As late as the 1980s, he used to go to Wachenheimer’s to have pastrami on rye.

Memories of Doornfontein and the Lions Shul

The first time I walked into the Saturday morning minyan, I was welcomed like a lost friend. I was part of the Doornfontein Shul family and I see it continues now with every person who walks in. – Ruby Lipshitz

This is the only minyan I go to in the dark and come home in

the light. There has been so much davening over the years in this shul, that the walls actually respond to your davening. – the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris

I have been attending the Lions Shul since 1933 and it is with pride that I can say that I was part of the second generation. We are today in the fourth generation attending the shul. My family moved out of Doornfontein in 1945. – the late Solly Frymer (written in 1996)

I proclaim in Yiddish “Ich ben ein Doornfontein bocher”, brought up in the suburb, rode the Beit Street trams, parked cars at Ellis Park Stadium during the rugby matches and humbly defended Jewish honour at the Doornfontein Talmud Torah when the ‘chateisim’ invaded. – the late Jack Shapiro

As a young girl, I used to sit downstairs with my dad. Reverend Smith had huge thick glasses and he couldn’t see so well. My mom had my hair cut really short because she couldn’t cope with my curls, so the reverend thought I was a boy (despite my wearing a floral dress). He asked me to open the ark for Anim Zemiro! – Michelle Blumenau



Shana tova umetuka



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Master stories and their multiple virginities



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

Nigerian poet and novelist Ben Okri wasn’t referring specifically to South Africa when he wrote: “To poison a country, poison its stories... A people are as healthy and confident as the stories they tell themselves.” But he might as well have been, if measured by the toxicity pervading our body politic today.

As the ANC’s December conference to elect a new president approaches, rumours are heard that powerful politicians fearful of losing control, might create such chaos that it would be aborted.

The “poisoners” of this nation propagate carefully-timed smears such as the supposed extramarital affairs of presidential contender Cyril Ramaphosa, with objectives so obvious that a child could see through them: Can you trust a politician who has an affair (even if Ramaphosa has admitted to one several years ago)?

Previous ominous smears have said opposition to the ANC is a Western plot for “regime change” rather than democracy at work. Or that former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela who revealed the curse of state capture, was a CIA agent.

But politicians will be politicians. Okri also said: “The magician and the politician have much in common: they both have to draw our attention away from what they are really doing.”

The next few months will be a roller-coaster of magician-like, dirty tricks as President Jacob Zuma fights Ramaphosa’s rising popularity.

Not only South Africa lives in almost surreal times; it is everywhere. No-one knows what to believe, as fake news goes viral through Twitter and Facebook. Historians 50 years down the line, will try, with the benefit of hindsight, to penetrate the fog. But even historians always differ on the “real” story.

This week marked the 16th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York’s World Trade Center. A moving memorial and museum containing names

of the 3 000 people killed, was created at Ground Zero.

But that story is far from finished or understood. Will future historians call it the beginning of the Third World War? Or the West’s wakening to the scourge of terrorism from which even America was not immune, and the beginning of the fightback? Or the grossness of powerful politicians whose reactions created more hatred and chaos rather than less?

Stories are told differently as events recede. Barney Simon, icon of South African theatre and co-founder of Johannesburg’s Market Theatre, whose craft was story-telling, remarked: “A story has a thousand virginities.”

What does this mean? On the street, for example, immigrants to this country from Eastern Europe or elsewhere – such as the Jews and other refugee communities – often arrived with nothing but a suitcase and a story. Many were unable to even speak the language.

Forced to reinvent themselves, their families now tell stories of resourcefulness and success – within a generation many children of these people were educated professionals.

So, are the master stories South Africans are telling about themselves, healthy or poisoned? Is it still triumph over apartheid and inspirational attempts by blacks and whites on the ground to overcome racism?

Or the epic of great reconciler Nelson Mandela which made us the darlings of the world – though some young people call him a “sellout” for negotiating with the apartheid government to avert a civil war?

Or a tale of intense disappointment at the country’s decline to junk status economically, socially and politically, so soon after the Mandela euphoria?

Stats SA says one in two South Africans – about 30 million people – live under the poverty line, more than ever before. Is this fixable, and who can do it?

It is not clear whether this country will drown in its poisonous stories, or negotiate the current mess and thrive heroically in its healthy ones. Okri never gave us a crystal ball.

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

Community Column

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies



Above Board
Shaun Zagnoev

health, happiness and peace.

For South African Jewry, we can also look back on and be grateful for another year of being able to live a full Jewish life, and indeed, to thrive, in peace and safety.

Rosh Hashanah marks the start of the Jewish festival season, which lasts for just over three weeks and concludes on Shemini Atzeret/ Simchat Torah. It is a time of spiritual growth, celebration, goodwill and togetherness, for those in our immediate circles, and for the Jewish community as a whole.

As always, however, we have to be particularly aware around this time, of the need to be aware of our environment and to be vigilant against any possible threats.

For the Community Security Organisation (CSO), the Yomtov period is an especially busy time. As always, its professional and volunteer workers, working in conjunction with the police, can be relied upon to maintain the highest standards of vigilance and professionalism in protecting our community and its installations.

For our part, we must make every effort to co-operate with and assist the CSO to the greatest extent that we can, both by complying with the security recommendations they provide and

by following their directives, particularly when travelling to and from shul.

In addition, we need to be constantly on the look-out for suspicious activity, particularly over this period, and to be sure to immediately report anything out of the ordinary to the CSO on 086 1800 018.

Those requiring any advice in improving the security of their installation, should e-mail jhbroutine@cs0.org.za.

Milestones in the history of modern Israel
South African Jewry has always been an intensely Zionist community, and this devotion to the ideal of the great Jewish national rebirth in the Land of Israel, continues unabated to this day.

For this reason alone, the latest issue of Jewish Affairs, the prestigious journal that has appeared under the auspices of the SAJBD since 1941, should be of wide interest, since it focuses on the important milestones in the history of modern-day Israel which are being remembered this year.

The year 2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the 70th of the UN Partition Resolution which gave international sanction for the creation of a Jewish state and the 50th of the Six Day War and liberation of Jerusalem.

It is also the 120th anniversary of the inaugural World Zionist Congress in Basel. For non-subscribers to Jewish Affairs, printed copies can be obtained from our offices. Those happy to read it online can do so at <http://sajbd.org/pages/jewish-affairs>.

• 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

Friday (September 15) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UZLC hosts renowned journalist Paula Slier on “Fundamentalism”. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Contact: Gloria 072-127-9421 or (011) 485-4851.	an Orchestra”. Venue: Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting at 10:30. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors (incl tea and light refreshments). Contact: Linda Fleishman (011) 532-9701.	Some Notable Religious Buildings in SA”. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 10:00. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW Office (011) 648-1053.	Cost: R295 adults and R150 children. Information: 072-801-7491 or e-mail batya@chabad.org.za
Sunday (September 17) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second Innings hosts conductor Brian Buch, “A performance by	Monday (September 18) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UJW hosts author and lecturer Philippe Menache on “The History and Architecture of	Wednesday (September 20 & Thursday September 21) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sandton Central Chabad hosts two Rosh Hashanah dinners at 19:00 on the two consecutive evenings. Bookings essential.	

World News in Brief

Germany drops case against Auschwitz medic

NEUBRANDENBURG - In what could be the end of high-profile Nazi trials, a German court officially dropped its case against a 96-year-old former Auschwitz medic because he has dementia.

The decision on Tuesday came after Hubert Zafke was found unfit to stand trial for his role in the murder of more than 3 600 people at the Nazi death camp. German prosecutors submitted a motion last month to the Neubrandenburg state court asking it to dismiss the case.

The conviction of John Demjanjuk in 2011 had launched several high-profile trials of Nazi camp guards, including Oskar Groening in 2015 and Reinhold Hanning in 2016, according to AFP

Zafke was charged with being an accomplice to the murders of 3 681 people at the death camp. Prosecutors say the medic’s unit in which he served

placed the Zyklon-B pesticide crystals into the gas chambers at Auschwitz, where up to 6 000 Jews were killed per day, and was “supportive of the running of this extermination camp”, according to Deutsche Welle.

Zafke, who uses a wheelchair, was diagnosed with dementia in October 2015, which led to doubts about his ability to stand trial.

His trial had failed to begin as planned in February last year after a doctor ruled he was unfit to be transported to Neubrandenburg state court, and the next month Zafke was ruled unfit for trial. Subsequent medical examinations this year by at least two independent physicians backed that assessment.

Zafke does not deny he served at Auschwitz, but he has said he did not see or participate in any of the murders. His attorney says he knew people were being murdered at Auschwitz but never took part in the killings.

Reportedly he was on duty when the teenage diarist Anne Frank arrived at the death camp on September 5, 1944. She

was transferred later to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where she died of typhoid. (JTA)

Rabbi installed as head of Yeshiva University

NEW YORK - Rabbi Ari Berman, a graduate of Yeshiva University and its rabbinical seminary, was installed as its fifth president and said the university “is in my heart and it is in my soul”.

More than 2 000 people attended the ceremony at the university on Sunday.

Berman, who succeeds Richard Joel in the post, outlined his vision for the future of the university, which is facing some major financial challenges.

“Most new presidents of universities need to learn the story of their institutions to understand its purpose, but I do not need to read a history book to understand Yeshiva University - it is in my heart and it is in my soul,” Berman said.

“In an era in which there is a breakdown

of civic and civil conversation, Yeshiva University is uniquely positioned to address the most pressing moral issues of the day. Moving forward, we will continue to be steadfast in bringing to bear our vast, interdisciplinary resources on these fundamental issues for the general public and also internally for our students. We stand proud as educators, thought leaders and moral voices for our generation.”

A special viewing event was held in Jerusalem, preceded by a lecture by Michael Oren, deputy minister of public policy in Israel, on the centrality of Israel to the Jewish people.

British Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis delivered the ceremony’s invocation. Mark Wiif, honorary chairman of the Investiture Committee and member of the YU board of trustees, offered welcoming remarks. Rabbi Jacob J Schacter, professor of Jewish history and Jewish thought, introduced Berman.

Berman served for 14 years as a rabbi at The Jewish Centre, a prominent modern Orthodox congregation on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, until immigrating to

Israel in 2008. He taught Talmud at YU beginning in 1998.

During his time in Israel, Berman earned a doctorate in Jewish thought at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He served as rosh hamerkaz, or head of the centre, at Hechal Shlomo, The Jewish Heritage Centre in Jerusalem. He was also an instructor at Herzog College, a teachers’ college in the West Bank settlement of Alon Shvut, outside Jerusalem.

Berman will face several challenges in his new position. YU lost money in the Bernard Madoff Ponzi scheme in 2008 and ran an operating deficit for seven straight years.

Last year, it sold the Albert Einstein College of Medicine to the Montefiore Health System, losing half of its endowment in the arrangement. YU also has been rocked in recent years by a series of accusations of physical and sexual abuse that took place at its affiliated boys’ high school in the 1970s and ’80s. The cases could not be prosecuted because they exceeded the statute of limitations. (JTA)

Letters

WE SHOULD NOT CREATE A RELIGION OF VICTIMHOOD

Lord Jonathan Sacks, (the former Chief Rabbi of Britain) has said that if the focus of Judaism is only on the Holocaust, then young people won't want to remain Jewish. In fact, I know of a young man with a Jewish mother who hides his religious origin in case he somehow gets shipped off to a concentration camp.

While the Holocaust is by far the worst tragedy to have befallen us, we have come to almost believe that it is a common occurrence, thus adding tragedy to tragedy in our minds. Having experienced a rich, 4 000-year history, it would be a pity to focus mostly on this event. And doing so would be a victory for Hitler.

A recent study has found that young European Jews are not interested in identifying with a religion of victimhood. While there have been difficult times, there is no need for us to wallow in self-pity

SMALL MINDS CONCENTRATE ON DIFFERENCES – GREATER MINDS ON BUILDING BRIDGES

For Jews to defend Black First Land First (BLF) leader Andile Mngxitama's horrendous tweet, is not only baffling but is also reminiscent of other Jews who (regrettably) turn against their own people in order to have their 15 minutes of fame and be popular among those who are anti-Semitic.

It indicates that they are unfortunately far removed from our people.

Shockingly, Kim Heller confesses that she has "great respect for Mngxitama as a politician"! What calibre of person "respects" a "politician" who belittles a people's lowest point in recent history; who sums up the murder of millions into a grotesque "joke"?

It's not only sickening, but it points to the low levels that Mngxitama is willing to stoop to get some publicity and to appeal to the lowest common denominator in the masses. His comments reflect his baseness. If one "respects" such a person, then one should really question one's own standards, even motives, etc.

As far as Mngxitama is concerned: If he were in Nazi Germany in the 1930s, he would have been sterilised (so as not to produce more non-Aryan offspring) or he too would have been murdered. People of colour were also considered to be subhuman.

People are generally not so different, but it takes a small mind to concentrate on our differences and exacerbate them... Greater minds see the similarities and build bridges.

Michele Engelberg
Johannesburg

This Yom Tov give a Jewish couple the ultimate gift of a child by assisting them as a surrogate mother.

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because there have also been good times and we have contributed so much.

Since it would require an entire book to describe how much our nation has contributed towards the world, consider just a few of them:

Jews have transformed the world by introducing monotheism, the bible and the Ten Commandments. The two greatest religions (Christianity and Islam) are offshoots of Judaism.

There are those who believe that Hinduism and Buddhism are also derived from Judaism (see Rabbi Glazerson's book on the subject). More recently the Kabbalah has caught the popular imagination of

gentiles.

While Jews make up less than one per cent of the world population, they have received over 20 per cent of Nobel Prizes.

Here in South Africa, most of the white anti-apartheid activists were Jews.

Rather than being proud of these and other contributions, we tend to spend much of our time worrying about the negatives and experience high levels of depression and anxiety, instead.

Some might argue that it is necessary to be vigilant to ensure our survival. This is true, but too much vigilance will wear us out and weaken us.

Historian Max Isaac Dimont has written that Jewish historians have exaggerated the extent of our sufferings. He also wrote that various Jewish expulsions were not motivated by hatred, as we assume, but so that the kings could get hold of our people's property.


We are living in an era with low levels of anti-Semitism, but heightened fears of this dread remain.

Although many government leaders support the Palestinians, the vast majority of black South Africans are not anti-Semitic.

**Martin Zagnoev
Johannesburg**

You can beat your breast this Yom Kippur- but you can't beat ours.

Whether you're feasting or fasting, we hope your holidays are fired up with family, forgiveness, good food and fortune. Have a PERilicious and sweet new year.



Nando's

Durban – a Jewish community that punches far above its weight

LAUREN SHAPIRO

“Our mandate remains unchanged: to safeguard, unite, represent and follow the value of tikkun olam.” These were the words with which Jeremy Droyman, current president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) KwaZulu-Natal Council, opened the 86th Annual General Meeting on September 4.

Droyman applauded the fact that the levels of anti-Semitic behaviour in South Africa are significantly lower than is the case in other major Diaspora countries but emphasised that the community should remain vigilant.

On a physical level, the community has upgraded security at communal installations.

Droyman noted that the past 12 months had brought a rapid decline in the socio-economic climate. “We need to adapt, should we wish to continue to perform our mandate. We need to embrace change.”

The SAJBD KZN Council’s impact, with its 18 affiliate organisations, is not restricted to the Jewish community. After the devastating floods in KwaZulu-Natal in August, the Council appealed to the community and was able to give a substantial donation of blankets, towels and foodstuffs for those affected by the tragedy.

On her maiden voyage to Durban, the SAJBD’s diplomatic and newly-appointed parliamentary liaison, Chaya Singer, reported: “We are increasing our presence and impact in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

“This holds tremendous benefit for all of us in that we can bring provincial, regional and local concerns of our community – which are matters often ignored in favour of national issues – to the attention of members.”

The keynote speaker was Sipho Nzuza, who took up the post of city manager in May. “As the city, we truly value your contribution towards ensuring sustainable economic growth in



**Chaya Singer,
Parliamentary and
Diplomatic Liaison
for the SAJBD**

eThekwini.”

He noted that large-scale catalytic projects are poised to create massive economic growth over the next 10 to 20 years, creating thousands

of investment and employment opportunities, including in excess of 600 000 permanent jobs.

Honorary Life President John Moshal described how “we as a community have set about destroying prejudice” and appealed to Nzuza to include in his mandate, collaboration with Israel for the good of the greater community, especially with regard to issues such as IT and water desalination.

“The character of the Jews is that they spread their largesse to other parts of the community,” Moshal said. “We may be small in numbers, but these 1 200 souls punch far above their weight.”

For 2017-2018, Droyman and Susan Abro retain their positions as president and vice president respectively. Marc Thom continues as honorary treasurer, and Ronnie Herr keeps his position as chairman of the financial management committee. Elected members are Clive Bernstein, John Goldreich, John Patlansky and Michael Selikow.

CNN Hero,to speak at Jewish Cape Care AGM

Mariuma Ben Yosef, 2017 CNN Hero, will be the keynote speaker at the combined AGM of all seven welfare organisations under the Jewish Care Cape umbrella, on October 18.

Ben Yosef founded the Shanti Houses – “Warm Homes for Youth at Risk” – 33 years ago. To date, the association has assisted more than 46 000 youths in Israel. The houses accept youths regardless of religion, race, gender or nationality, from the ages of two to 21. About 80 per cent of the Shanti children return to normal life, acquire an education, enlist in the army and grow to be law-abiding citizens who contribute to society in Israel.

Ben Yosef is the first Israeli to be featured in CNN’s prestigious flagship project – CNN Heroes. Shewas selected from among thousands of candidates from 187 countries.

With a problematic past of her own, involving homelessness in her early teenage years, Ben Yosef knew the horrible reality so many others experienced. She welcomed youth off the streets to share in her Shabbat meals. Those who came through the door were all different but had all escaped some sort of mental or physical abuse, drug use, crime, or unhealthy relationships at home. No matter what their backgrounds, those who came to Ben Yosef’s home were never turned away.

In 2000 Ben Yosef was invited to light one of the beacons at that year’s official Independence Day Eve Ceremony and in 2007 she was awarded the title of Woman of the City of Tel Aviv. While in Cape Town, she will be conducting workshops with the professionals in the seven welfare organisations under the JCC umbrella, as well as with the broader community.

The JCC AGM on October 18, will be the only opportunity for the public to hear this inspirational speaker.



• For further information, contact Shifra Jacobson (021) 462-5520 or 083-509-7154.

Connecting across generations for New Year sweetness

Jewish day school pupils and residents from Chev facilities visited honey farms to commemorate Rosh Hashanah on three consecutive days last week. The Chev’s Chesed Co-ordinator Yali Friedman arranged these visits in which school pupils were matched with Chev facility residents.

On day one Highveld Honey farm welcomed 15 residents from Our Parents Home along with 20 grade 9 pupils from Yeshiva College. The following day 29 residents from Sandringham Gardens and 38 grade 7 girls from Yeshiva College, visited and on day three, 28 Selwyn Segal residents visited 29 girls from Hirsch Lyons High School. Each day two beekeepers taught the the groups about bee-keeping, the life of a bee, the benefits of honey and how honey is made.

Afterwards the pupils teamed up with residents to decorate honey jars. Each person decorated a jar for another in the group and made the effort to connect across generations.

“Brett Falconer, owner of Highveld Honey, was so kind and helpful in allowing us to arrange these visits”, said Yali. “Everyone thoroughly enjoyed them and they were not only delightful, but also very educational.”



Shelley Solomons, Jodee Shaftoe, Nicole Tozzi, Pnina Minkowitz enjoy the challah bake

Challah bake in preparation for Rosh Hashanah

The Chabad of Sandton women held a pre-Yomtov challah demonstration this week in preparation for Rosh Hashanah.

Pnina Minkowitz gave a demonstration that included different braids, shapes and topping that can be used to bake challah.

A tree as a metaphor for different aspects of life



Trees and exhibits from the #iExist exhibition in the mini hall of King David Linksfield

ERIN AND TALI ATIE, & CHAD AND DANIEL CLASS

It’s been six weeks of confusion, six weeks of uncertainty, as to how the I Exist project at King David Linksfield would actually come together. Six weeks of teamwork, co-operation, contemplation and understanding of where we have come from and where we are on our way to. But the mayhem and confusion finally culminated into an exceptional exhibition.

A tree represents many aspects of life. It symbolises new beginnings, growth and development, as well as the different paths and journeys people take in their lives.

As the grade 8s, we were required to understand elements of our roots and heritage in the form of understanding our parents’ and grandparents’ values, where our great-grandparents came from and tying key themes of everyday life to our Jewish heritage.

Just like a tree’s roots give foundation and strength, so do the trees of our family, heritage and past, give us strength to be tall, proud and involved Jewish South Africans.

As the grade 9s, we were given different topics which questioned aspects of our lives and Judaism. We were required to link our themes through a thought-provoking question to our Jewish values.

We had to create flowers, posters, poems and smaller trees,

which were displayed at the exhibition.

Just like a tree’s branches support and maintain its structure, so too our Jewish values give us structure and support.

Our participation in this project has taught us that just like a tree starts off as a small sapling in a dark space, not fully aware of what its journey entails, it slowly blossoms and grows into a strong, sturdy, fully-grown tree, representing knowledge and understanding.

The project taught us a number of critical life lessons:

- 1) Always remain connected to your Jewish values and heritage.
- 2) Team work and communication are key to success.
- 3) Life is a journey, not a destination. Embrace the challenges for that is what we learn from.
- 4) Our family and those who came before us, are our foundation and the reason we are who we are.

As sets of siblings we realise how important family is to ensure a strong, solid foundation. This foundation enriches our lives and makes us want to #iExist!

- The writers are in grade 8 and 9 at King David Linksfield
- To find out more about the #iExist exhibits, go to <http://hashtagiexist.weebly.com>

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Roy is the fastest 3km man over 50 in the water

JACK MILNER

Three months back Roy Lotkin became the fastest South African 3km swimmer over the age of 50.

Swimming coach Lotkin, has contested the South African Masters Swimming Championship for the last 16 years with some very decent results, but this year in East London he capped it all when he won the 3000m swim in his age group.

Lotkin, who has been a professional swimming coach for almost 30 years, attributes his success this year to having a better “spiritual approach” to the sport.

Much changed for him over the last year when he started attending Emmarentia Shul. The old shul in Barry Hertzog Avenue in Johannesburg, has been closed for a number of years but it continued to exist in a smaller form.

He started attending Friday night service there and found Rabbi Rodney Richard very inspiring.

“He kept me spiritually focused and that helped me a lot when I was competing,” he said.

Lotkin attended King David Victory Park and matriculated in 1977. He was always a top-class swimmer and in 1977, after setting a number of South African and provincial swimming records, he was named Sportsman of The Year at King David and also became a member of the first group of pupils to receive Maccabi scholarships.

“It was a big honour for me, but the scholarship was specifically available for me to continue my swimming in Israel and I never took it up.”

After that Lotkin did his military services and was sent up to what was then South West Africa and was based at Katima Mulilo in the Caprivi

Strip, right along the banks of the Zambezi River. Often a soldier benefited from being a top sportsman in the army, but for Lotkin it turned out to be a curse.

“I happened to be the only one in my battalion who had experience in swimming, so they wanted me to swim across the Zambezi into Zambia and do some reconnaissance on the strength of the Swapo troops who were based on the other side of the river.

“The Zambezi is infested with crocodiles and is one of the few rivers with freshwater sharks. At the beginning I refused but I was sent to detention barracks for disobeying a direct command, so eventually I agreed.”

The distance across the Zambezi at that point was around 800m. “We would survey the river and look where there was a lot less activity. It was very dangerous. It’s wild country up there. I then had to survey the camp, look how many troops there were and what sort of weapons they had and report back. I did it about four times in all.”

Once out of the army, Lotkin travelled to the US where he spent five years swimming on the competitive circuit and also coaching in California.

He returned to South Africa, but in 1995 his family emigrated to Australia and he decide to join them in Sydney.

“I had to study at the Institute of Sport – professional swimming coaching – in Sydney for three years in order to obtain citizenship. I graduated but did not take up citizenship and came back to South Africa.

“I have to admit that their facilities are spectacular, but I just wasn’t happy there.”

He then started coaching at the Linden Indoor Swimming Pool and that is when he got very involved in masters swimming.



“I’ve now competed in 16 South African National Masters Championships. Then on my 16th attempt over 3km, I finally won the gold medal, who now officially ranks me No 1 in men over 50 in 3000m in the country.”

Lotkin has been coaching at Linden for around 19 years but is still disappointed at the lack of up-and-coming Jewish swimmers in the

country.

“Somehow we still seem to lack that top level of Jewish sportsmen and women in the country and swimming seems to be particularly poor.

“It would be great to see some top SA swimmers again, because we did have a few when I was swimming competitively.”

Chelsea calls on fans to stop anti-Semitic chant about new player



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LEICESTER

Chelsea were forced to plead with their fans to ditch an anti-Semitic song about the club’s new striker Alvaro Morata after they sang the offensive chant during a 2-1 win at Leicester City last Saturday.

Morata scored his third goal for Chelsea since his club record move from Real Madrid to open the scoring.

But the adulation for the Spain star turned ugly as Chelsea’s travelling fans unveiled a song aimed at their hated London rivals Tottenham Hotspur, who have traditionally attracted support from London’s Jewish communities.

“Alvaro, Alvaro. He comes from Madrid. He hates the f***** Yids,” sang Chelsea supporters at the King Power Stadium.

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte was asked about the song and its anti-Semitic content at the post-match press conference, but head of communications and public affairs Steve Atkins

quickly stepped in.

“I don’t think Antonio was aware of the song so if I can just speak on behalf of the club,” Atkins said.

“The club and the players appreciate the fans’ passionate support away from home, of course. But the language in that song is not acceptable at all.

“We’ve spoken to Alvaro after the game and he does not want to be connected to that song in any way and both the player and the club request that the supporters stop singing that song with immediate effect.”

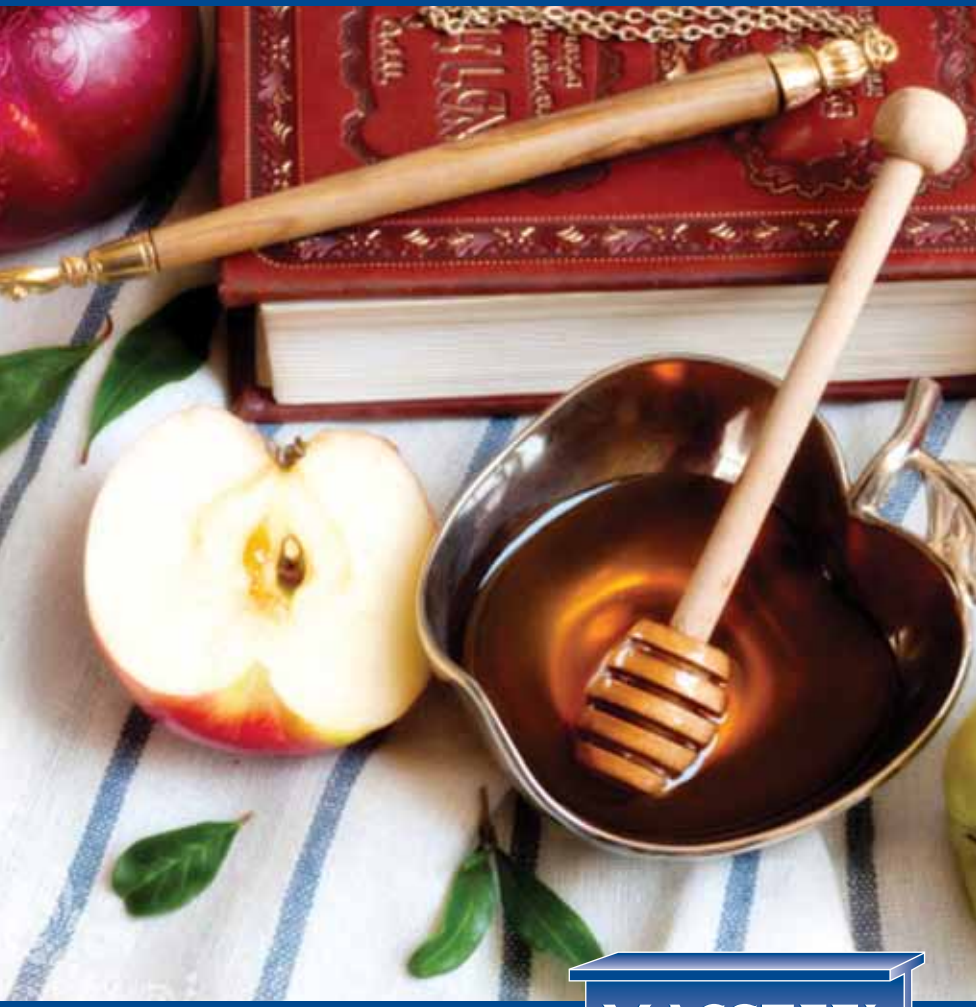
It is not the first time Chelsea fans have been caught making offensive chants in recent years.

Videos appeared on social media of some supporters singing anti-Semitic songs ahead of their FA Cup semi-final against Tottenham in April.

Chelsea fans also pushed a black commuter off a Metro train in Paris in February 2015, ahead of a Champions League tie.

L'Shanah Tovah

Wishing you health, happiness and success in the New Year!



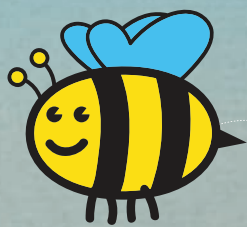
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A still life composition on a rustic wooden surface. In the top left is a whole pomegranate. Next to it is a wooden honey dipper. To the right is a white ceramic pitcher with a gold-colored rim. Below the pomegranate is a single dark apple. In the bottom left corner, a shofar (ram's horn) is partially visible, resting on a white cloth. In the bottom right corner, a golden chalice or goblet is partially visible. The text 'Shanah Tovah' is written in a large, red, serif font across the center of the image.

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