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End of an era for banking leaders

TALI FEINBERG

“One of Stephen and Bernard’s great contributions to South Africa’s business landscape was their chutzpah,” said Business Day editor Tim Cohen about Investec CEO Stephen Koseff and managing director Bernard Kantor, who announced this week that they were stepping down after 40 years at the helm.

Koseff and Kantor said on Tuesday that they would retire from their leadership roles over the course of the next year, as part of a succession process which was first announced in November 2015.

Koseff – 2003 winner of the Absa Jewish Business Achiever Award (Listed Companies) – is one of South Africa’s most well-respected business leaders.

Hendrik du Toit, the founding CEO of Investec Asset Management, and Fani Titi, the non-executive chairperson of Investec Plc and Investec Ltd since November 2011, will assume the role of joint CEO from October 1. They will become CEO designates from April 1.

“They never let the comparatively small Johannesburg business community, or the very competitive banking sector nationally or internationally, become an overwhelming obstacle to their ambitions,” said Cohen. “Along the way, I think they demonstrated that great businesses are built on great ideas, not great circumstances.

“They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and it’s to their enormous credit that almost every major South African bank now has a division which aims to ‘out-Investec’ Investec.

“More importantly, they have



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Debating Israel’s future

Legendary South African journalist Benji Pogrund, academic Na’eem Jeenah and former Israeli Ambassador Alon Liel at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia. See page 5.

weathered some great storms, contributed to the wellbeing of a large number of employees, been active citizens of South Africa, and have left a prosperous business to a new generation. Hard to beat that. I’m sure they leave with a little sorrow, some notable scars, but overall with enormous and deserved satisfaction.”

Discovery CEO Adrian Gore, who is a close ally of Koseff in Business Leadership SA, agreed that the two Jewish businessmen “had a profound impact on South Africa”.

“To build a business of that scale

is rare, and it is a unique beacon of innovation,” added Gore.

“Stephen, in particular, has had an effect on the country. With his honest and open ‘boykie’ style, he speaks truth to power. He is respected for it because he is always authentic, honest and calls it like it is.

“The two have also been an inspiration to the Jewish community and are proud Jews.”

Indeed, all of Investec’s founders “had a very strong sense of where they came from, and strongly identified with their Jewish roots”, Investec’s

group development director Douglas Krikler told *Jewish News Online* in the UK earlier this year, discussing the bank’s humble beginnings.

Investec began in Johannesburg in 1974 as “a small group of people within the Jewish community who saw a gap in the market”, explained Krikler.

“The founders of the bank believed that professionals should be backed. It’s what we know today as leasing, but it was very new and innovative in South Africa then.”

Krikler explained that one of the

founders’ early decisions was not to deal with the apartheid regime, “something remembered by Nelson Mandela when he was eventually freed from prison and became South Africa’s first black president”.

“It was a very difficult and courageous thing for a young bank to do within that kind of society and environment. Investec became one of Mandela’s first banks for development and reconstruction in South Africa; he retained a very close

Continued on page 3>>



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Malema expresses interest in Israel's proposed solutions to SA's water crisis

NICOLA MILTZ

Julius Malema, commander-in-chief of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), said this week that if Israel could solve the water problem across South Africa in a "real" and "permanent" way – and not just in Cape Town – his party would start lobbying its support.

This is the first time ever that Israel's water shortage solutions for South Africa have been given any public attention – and by an unlikely voice.

Malema mentioned Israel when he spoke to journalists during a press conference at the EFF headquarters in Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

He was giving a report-back on the party's fourth plenum, held in Johannesburg last weekend.

This is significant, considering it follows the EFF's historic introductory meeting last week with the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD). The country's water crisis, as well as several other issues, came up for discussion at the meeting, in which several Jewish communal leaders and leaders of the EFF were present.

A week later, Malema told journalists that if Israel could solve the country's water problems, his party would be behind it.

Referring to Israelis as "people we must listen to", Malema went on to say that Cape Town's water crisis was not an issue for the EFF as it was equally, if not more, concerned with shortages in other parts of the country such as Blouberg municipality and Giyani, both in Limpopo, whose residents – the majority of them black – were living without water.

"South Africa has a problem with water. Black people have stayed without water

for a very long time. They are still without water today. They don't know what Day Zero is because they have never had Day One in their lives," he said.

"The water issue is a national

phenomenon. We treat the Cape Town issue in the same way we treat the Giyani issue. There's



nothing special about Cape Town water. It must not be because it has white people in it that therefore we must hear a lot of noise about it. There is a problem of water in the country. At least Cape Town is going to have a Day Zero; they will feel what the Giyani people have been feeling throughout."

Malema said the EFF had "never been excited" about the Cape Town water crisis because "our people drink water with animals".

Making the point that he'd seen trucks deliver water to Cape Town but never to places like Blouberg or Giyani, Malema told journalists that when he was in Blouberg, he had seen a dead animal in the same dam

that local residents were still using for drinking water.

"There was no coverage of it, no trucks of water and no Jewish promises or solutions. Only now we hear the Jewish board of deputies has got solutions for Cape Town, Israel has got solutions. They are saying that in Israel, where there is generally a lack of water, they created water out of nothing and that they can create water in Cape Town.

"Let's see if it is real... anyone with a solution of water which is permanent must start in Giyani, in Blouberg. Then the EFF will start lobbying. Then we will say: 'These are the people we must listen to.'"

Wendy Kahn, national director of the SAJBD, said the board would host a water symposium next week to address the country's pressing water issues.

"The board is very concerned about shortages of water throughout our country and we are working with many partners to find ways that we

can contribute as a community."

Malema urged that the water problem in Cape Town not become politicised, saying: "Let the problem of Cape Town be solved in the same way as we demand that the problem of water must be solved in the whole of South Africa. Let there be a collective effort."

Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
18:37	19:27	Johannesburg
19:27	20:20	Cape Town
18:31	19:22	Durban
18:49	19:40	Bloemfontein
18:58	19:51	Port Elizabeth
18:47	19:40	East London

Parshat Mishpatim

The difference between seeing and perceiving

What does G-d look like? If you ask most people this, they would be hard-pressed to give you an answer, while kids would probably draw a sunbeam or an old man on a cloud. Our Torah portion describes Moses and Aaron and 70 elders of Israel going up Mount Sinai, "and they saw the G-d of Israel" (Exodus 24). What did they see? The rabbinic commentators were puzzled because we are told later that you cannot see G-d and live (Exodus 33). How was it possible for this group of leaders to see G-d and live?

A commentary by Nachmanides (1194-1270) takes us back to the kids and their drawings. He suggests, as many commentators do, that it wasn't G-d Herself that the elders saw, as G-d does not have a literal body. When the Torah describes G-d's back or outstretched arm, it is figurative language to explain an aspect of G-d that we might understand better through a metaphor.

Nachmanides points out that it was the elders of Israel, not everyone, who "saw" G-d, as mentioned in our portion, implying that it was their age and stature that allowed them to perceive what others could not. As we grow up, our perception of G-d needs to change. We begin to move past our early childhood understanding of G-d and take on a more sophisticated theology – or do we?

In my experience, while our schools work us hard on maths and science, many people retain this idea of the "old man on the cloud" right into adulthood. This is often the reason for many people rejecting a belief in G-d and becoming agnostic or atheist. Once they experience pain or sadness, they ask why this G-d, who is supposed to be a wise, beneficent old man, would allow evil in the world. And their (child-taught but not adult-appropriate) picture is shattered as it is not sophisticated enough to handle the hard questions.

There are libraries filled with books that contain teachings from all the great religions of the world, that wrestle with the ideas of what G-d looks like and, more importantly, how G-d acts in the world. How can a world that contains war, corruption, plague and pain possibly be governed by a G-d that is all powerful and all good? Jewish tradition – from King David through Job to Maimonides and on to the Holocaust and today – is filled with great minds and thrilling discussions around how G-d operates in a complicated world.

But for many, those teachings will never be read, because they gave up on G-d long ago.

May this Shabbat give us the inspiration to review the tough questions and delve into perhaps the biggest challenge of our lives: understanding who we are and why we are in this world, and what G-d wants of us. May we merit the experience of Moses, Aaron and the elders to have a perception of the Divine.



Rabbi Greg Alexander,
Temple Israel
Cape Town



Protesters' stunning end to anti-Israel demonstration

JACK MILNER

When those attending the Davis Cup tie between Israel and South Africa last Friday afternoon heard two loud bangs, they could be forgiven for thinking the worst. They had entered the Irene Country Club in Centurion, where the matches were played, making their way past 200 to 250 angry protesters.

It turned out that the noise was emitted by two stun grenades thrown by protesters, which did no harm other than frighten some people.

Clearly, intimidation was part of the anti-Israel activists' agenda. The stun grenades put paid to their demonstration as the police ordered them to disperse after this incident and go home.

The protesters had arrived in two buses and a minivan a couple of hours before the first match was due to start.

After lining the street at the main entrance to the club, some demonstrators forced a blockage of traffic by driving their vehicles up and down the narrow road.

Others assembled on the opposite side of the street with their flags and anti-Israel posters.

Having arrived so much earlier than the start of the match at 16:00, it appears their aim was to create a traffic jam to prevent people from gaining access to the grounds.

While the stun grenades caused much consternation among the media, the tennis courts and stands were set away from the entrance, so it had minimal impact on most of the players and spectators. Afterwards, the players said the

noise just sounded like a couple of very loud firecrackers.

There were also reports of stones being thrown over the wall, but again, that was far from where the tennis was being played.

"When I arrived, these guys were standing at the gate singing and shouting things like 'You're supporting child killers' at us," said tennis fan Freddie van As, from Centurion.

"I came to cheer for the South African team and they were not going to stop me."

A number of pro-Palestinian organisations – including BDS, the Palestine Solidarity Alliance, the Palestine Solidarity Committee and the National Coalition 4 Peace – called for government to intervene and stop the tennis encounter between South Africa and Israel.

The calls heated up when BDS referred to a press statement by Thulas Nxesi, Minister of Sport and Recreation, in which he supported their actions. "I would actually have loved to attend the Davis Cup, but given the concerns that activists and fellow South Africans are raising regarding the presence of an Israeli team, I believe that it would not be proper for me to attend," he said.

After much badgering by SA Jewish Report, the minister's media officer responded by saying: "Kindly be informed that we are not able to comment any further on the minister's statement. He released the statement in his personal capacity as [a member of] the ANC and member of the SA Communist Party."

Tennis South Africa CEO Richard Glover said they were ready for the demonstrations



Protestors at the Davis Cup

Photo: Ian Ossendwyer

and had prepared another entrance at the other end of the club as back-up. "We told the players and members of the media to use the entrance leading to the cricket fields in case this happened."

According to Tennis SA's communications manager, Phuleng Maake, the only time he got a fright was when the stun grenades were set off. "The media room was much closer to the wall and suddenly we heard these two big bangs. That was scary."

As they left the premises, the demonstrators threatened to return on Saturday. They didn't.

"We were a little concerned on Friday, but all the necessary security was in place and at no stage was anybody in danger," said Glover.

Ben Swartz, national chairperson of the SA Zionist Federation, attended the tie and lauded the organisers. "It was magnificent in every way. It was competitive, exciting and very well run. They gave the demonstrators a chance to protest, and when they pushed the boundaries with the stun grenades, they were told to go.

"As a proudly South African Zionist Jew, I couldn't be more pleased. We could express ourselves without fear or favour.

"Many South African Indians are currently supporting the Indian cricket team and one can understand that. In the same way, we could support the Israeli team. On the day there were no losers, whichever way the matches went," said Swartz.

End of an era for Investec's leaders

>> Continued from page 1

relationship with the founders and leadership of the bank – and he saw Investec as partners."

This ethos has continued right through until today, when Koseff spoke out against the firings of former finance ministers Nhlanelo Nene and Pravin Gordhan last year, and the subsequent economic downgrade. "We were on a good path, starting to come right and gain momentum. There was a positive mood starting... The ANC needs to take corrective action," said Koseff at the time.

And, in an address delivered at the ANC policy conference in July last year, Koseff said: "We must root out the scourge of corruption and inefficiency. In light of this current malaise, there is an urgent need for a new social pact that transcends ideologies and backgrounds. Together, under the banner of a common purpose, there are no limits to what South Africa can achieve."

The company has always been involved in assisting South Africa's most needy citizens. Its programme called Pro Maths, Pro Science, for example, enables 4 000 to 5 000 children to take extra maths and science lessons. "They go from failing dismally to getting As and Bs. They can then go into a career in engineering, they can go into finance, go into actuarial science, and they can go into medicine," Koseff told News24.

Koseff and Kantor remain deeply involved in the Jewish community and have contributed financial support, wise counsel and leadership when needed.

Said Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein: "Stephen Koseff is

a visionary and brilliant business leader, and a proud Jew. I remember chatting to him at a wedding in the early days of starting CAP [Community Active Protection, the anti-crime initiative that was the chief rabbi's brainchild]. There and then he and Brian Joffe pledged the opening money to get it started. Investec is also a great supporter of communal endeavours and one of our valued partners of Sinai Indaba."

SA Jewish Board of Deputies chairperson Shaun Zagnoev added: "The board pays tribute to Stephen Koseff and Bernard Kantor, two visionary businessmen who helped revolutionise the banking industry in South Africa. From our community's point of view, they have been an inspiration to many young Jewish entrepreneurs who both seek counsel and are motivated by Investec."

Indeed, the company remains a passionate supporter of young entrepreneurs, as Dan Brotman describes: "I arrived in South Africa in 2011 as a 24-year-old immigrant with one suitcase, and owe much of the success I have achieved in

this country to Stephen Koseff. He backed the Black-Jewish Entrepreneurs Network, which brought together black and Jewish entrepreneurs to network and do business together; and the taking of South Africa's most promising emerging entrepreneurs to Israel, which resulted in us taking hundreds of South African start-up companies to the Jewish state.

"He even backed a crazy idea of mine to take the #FeesMustFall leaders to Brazil to look at what free tertiary education

actually looks like in a highly unequal developing country. Through the Entrepreneurship Development Trust, he supported my latest venture, En-novate, which encourages South African professionals to adopt best global practice by taking them to specific countries around the world to look at the future of their industry.

"Stephen is one of the few corporate leaders in South Africa who I can confidently say believes in young people, and I believe that this same ethos has become so entrenched within Investec that it will follow into the new era."

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Unterhalter weighs up his new role as judge

JORDAN MOSHE

When top Johannesburg advocate David Unterhalter was informed late last year that he was to become a judge of the Gauteng High Court from the beginning of January 2018, he felt conflicted.

“I was delighted by the opportunity but also full of trepidation over the change it would involve,” he said.

“It is the role of an advocate to present a case and his client, while a judge’s role is to be fair at all times, exercise balanced judgment and reach the best possible decision. This role carries enormous responsibility.”

Unterhalter and 14 other legal practitioners were appointed as judges on November 2 by President Jacob Zuma. He has practised as an advocate for the past 27 years.

During this time, Unterhalter has represented Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa at the Marikana Commission and the SA Jewish Board of Deputies in a hate speech case involving a Muslim radio station’s anti-Zionist broadcast. He also appeared for the Helen Suzman Foundation when businessman Hugh Glenister tried to get the Hawks permanently separated from the South African Police Service to ensure its independence. These are just a few out of hundreds of high-profile cases in which he has appeared, grappling with fundamental issues such as the right to freedom of expression and constitutional challenges.

Unterhalter was inspired by his father, Jack, who represented a number of apartheid-era political prisoners facing the death sentence. “My father devoted himself to representing the victims of apartheid. He set up a model for me that saw the law as an instrument of justice, not merely as a way to earn a wage. There was never any pressure placed on me to become a lawyer, but he certainly served as an inspiration to me.”

“It is the role of an advocate to present a case and his client, while a judge’s role is to be fair at all times, exercise balanced judgment and reach the best possible decision. This role carries enormous responsibility.”

Born and raised in Johannesburg, Unterhalter attained his BA degree from the University of Cambridge, an LLB from the University of the Witwatersrand, a Bachelor of Civil Law from the University of Oxford and an MA from Cambridge. In 1990, he was called to the Bar in South Africa, where he practised as an advocate for 27 years.

Before the court vacancy came up, Unterhalter had been contemplating becoming a judge for a few years. “I’d been an acting judge on a few occasions, and I contemplated putting my name forward for such a position a number of times. The vacancy was announced in June, and a fair number of candidates threw their hats into the ring. I decided to do the same.”

He has taken up his new post with a sense of purpose. “The judiciary plays a vital role in cementing the democracy of South Africa. I now have the unique opportunity to contribute to this role, but I am mindful of the importance of shifting my professional focus from that of an advocate to that of judge. Not all legal practitioners are suited for judicial life. Some make better attorneys or advocates. Self-assessment is always crucial, and time will tell if I am truly suitable for this position.”

His new role will involve changes in terms of his personal time and way of life. “When you’re at the Bar, you have little time for other pursuits. Although judging cases is time-consuming, it is also fairly structured and orderly, making time more manageable. I will now be able to pursue other areas of interest.”

However he adds: “The role of a judge is one of marked solitude, but it gives me a chance to render a public service in a way I could not as an advocate. This new way of life will also give me time for reflection, and I look forward to it.”

Like the mixed emotion he experienced on being appointed, Unterhalter feels eager yet apprehensive about the road ahead. “The position of judge will give me an opportunity to experience satisfaction at resolving disputes and having people go away with a feeling that the legal system has served them. I will be able to contribute to the development of South African law and the ongoing democratic experiment.”

However, he adds: “I’m fearful that I may come to think of my job as routine, with the same processes being followed every day. A role like this needs to be invested with a sense of value and novelty constantly, and an overall absorbing interest must always be present.”

Unterhalter feels no anxieties about being a white and Jewish member of the judiciary in contemporary South Africa. He says the judiciary function is not one in which attributes such as white and Jewish are relevant, and neither has any bearing on his role.

“Being white is not a part of my identity.

Judaism, however, is truly a part of who I am. It offers a rich tradition from which concepts of justice stem and which are exemplified in the field of law. Although it has no direct impact on my legal decisions, Judaism offers tenets which inform the values of justice.”

While he is not the first Jewish practitioner to be appointed to the judiciary, Unterhalter admits that the politics of the judiciary are complex, though not for religious reasons. “Under apartheid, talented Jewish lawyers were not often asked to serve, or they declined offers to do so. There were therefore fewer Jewish judges. Under democracy, there are more Jews involved, but few Jewish lawyers are offering

“Being white is not a part of my identity. Judaism, however, is truly a part of who I am. It offers a rich tradition from which concepts of justice stem and which are exemplified in the field of law.”



themselves for judicial service and most would rather not want to spend their time on the matters it deals with.”

Unterhalter is proud of South Africa’s legal system. “Our legal system is in a robust state of health. The independence of the judiciary is proven by the fact that it upholds the Constitution and democratic order. The legal professions are peopled by talented individuals, and while we haven’t solved a number of problems surrounding access to justice, the legal institutions are doing well overall.”

Youth and the Chief Rabbi lead the drive to help Cape Town

JORDAN MOSHE

The Johannesburg Jewish community – in particular, the youth – are coming together to find ways of helping Capetonians with the water crisis. Their assistance ranges from supplying them with bottles of water to praying for them.

While many initiatives are in place, the Chief Rabbi, Dr Warren Goldstein, has made it his mission to help bring relief to the city’s residents.

“Life often includes difficult times, but if a community pulls together, great things can be achieved,” he said, after meeting with communal leaders and stakeholders in Cape Town on Wednesday.

Goldstein wanted to better understand the reality of the situation and what the Johannesburg Jewish community could do to assist. “As much as we want to prevent Day Zero from becoming a reality, we must be prepared for it as a community,” said Goldstein. “We need to prepare from both a logistical and spiritual point of view. This means that, aside from implementing practical measures to alleviate the problem, we also turn to G-d and pray for His help and guidance for us and our country’s leaders.”

Over the past two weeks, Johannesburg Jewish schools, community organisations and local businesses have all joined in efforts to bring some relief.

The tiny Darchei Noam School in Highlands North launched a campaign on social media, challenging others to assist in collecting water to be donated to Cape Town’s Jewish home for the elderly, Highlands House, as well as other needy establishments, through their partner Jewish schools.

“Every term, our school has an outreach programme. This term, we decided to do a water drive, given the terrible situation that Cape Town is experiencing,” says Shireen Sacks, principal of Darchei Noam. “We felt we could make a difference, and numerous schools and organisations have united with us in this drive.”

Within hours of this school launching its campaign, hundreds of bottles of water were brought in, and other schools and organisations accepted the challenge.

King David Sandton, Torah Academy, Sinai Academy, Shaarei Torah Nursery School and the Union of Jewish Women have all joined forces to make a difference. Individuals were invited to donate bottled water and grey water in any sealed container. If they were unable to donate water, they were invited to make a monetary donation. The money would be used to buy water that will be added to the trucks bound for Cape Town. They are sending two truckloads of water to Cape Town this week.

Kind David Linksfield is running its own water campaign as part of the Gift of the Givers initiative to send water to Cape Town. At the initiative of its student

leaders, a collection ran this week and will culminate in supplies collected being sent to Gift of the Givers on Friday, for delivery to Cape Town. King David has created a competition among pupils to see who can bring in the most water.

“In 70 days Cape Town will become the first major city in the world to run out of water,” say King David student leaders Ben Atie (17) and Hannah Bloch (17). “Our friends, family and fellow South Africans face an uncertain future, ironically in a city with a sea beside them.

“Lives are threatened by the impending water restrictions. Whatever your opinion on Cape Town’s water crisis, this much is true: it is happening and as Jews, as King Davidians, as South Africans, as human beings, it is our responsibility to look out for those who cannot do so themselves.”

Also committing itself to helping Cape Town is local mobile bar service Thirst Bar. Founded by Clyde Ackerman and Rael Laserow, Thirst Bar provides refreshments at functions and corporate events around the country, but its owners have taken up this cause. Through their #ThirstDroughtDrive campaign, their Johannesburg and Durban branches have turned into water collection

points. From there, water will be transported to Cape Town and distributed to orphanages and animal shelters.

“We want to help where we can, and I think everyone should be doing their bit to assist,” says Thirst Bar’s Adam Chaskalson. “Cape Town is in a crisis and all South Africans should be trying to help. Our business in Cape Town has been part of the community in many ways. We have been very fortunate to grow year after year in Cape Town and feel indebted to the city for taking us in and trusting us. We are in a position, with our sister

branches in Durban and Johannesburg, to help Cape Town prevent Day Zero and ensure that animals and children who cannot help themselves are sorted out with water should Day Zero happen.”

The commitment shown by the Johannesburg community is appreciated. Zeesa Deren, the principal of Sinai Academy in Bloubergstrand, has thanked the Johannesburg community “for caring about Cape Town”.

“We’re managing the water crisis with an added spiritual dimension: thank, save and pray,” added Deren.

“We are trying to bring an awareness that Hashem can at any time shift this crisis for the good. It is up to us to daven for what we need from Hashem earnestly.”

The chief rabbi’s campaign includes a half-day fast, declared a few months ago, three separate prayer gatherings held over recent weeks, and will also feature a nationwide daily Tehillim recitation initiative within the coming week.

He is considering the possibility of using the upcoming Sinai Indaba event as an opportunity to assist Cape Town further, by using it as a platform to call on the community to donate water.



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein at Cape Town’s Moltano Road Reservoir

Photo: Guy Lemmer

Harsh realities of Israel-Palestine situation debated

MIRAH LANGER

"The two-state solution... is the only viable solution; it is the only game in town." – Benjamin Pogrund

"We do not have two states in that area... We will not have two states. There is no Palestinian state; there is only a Palestinian Bantustan." – Na'eem Jeenah

"My personal diagnosis is that the two-state [solution] has died, or is on the brink, to the grave... What we should discuss from now on is: What does one state mean?" – Alon Liel

These controversial statements about the way forward for the Israeli-Palestinian situation are rarely made in the same room without the potential for fisticuffs or, at the very least, explosive arguments. However, it was in a spirit of dialogue and constructive debate that these three perspectives were expressed at a SISO [Save Israel, Stop the Occupation] panel discussion, held at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, Johannesburg this week.

Seated side by side were journalist and author Benjamin Pogrund, academic and lecturer Na'eem Jeenah, and former Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Alon Liel. The panelists offered the audience multiple lenses through which to survey the current lay of the land.

For Cape Town-born Pogrund, the two-state solution remains the only possible way forward: "It is the only concept that can meet the basic needs to satisfy self-determination for Palestinians, to give them the freedom they want and must have. It also ensures that Israelis are free from fear of being exterminated and that they can live securely in their own Jewish, ethnocratic state," said Pogrund, who was deputy editor of liberal newspaper the *Rand Daily Mail*, which was known for its anti-apartheid stance.

Pogrund, who has lived in Jerusalem since 1997 and served as the director of the Yakar Centre for Social Concern, envisages that the starting point would be the establishment of "two separate, independent states". However, he hopes that soon after, these states would form a "federation" as an economic entity, which nearby countries might even join.

For Jeenah, who serves as the executive director of research institute the Afro-Middle East Centre, "two sovereign, viable states side

by side with complete power over their territory and everything that goes with it" would be the ideal.

Yet, this university lecturer, who has been appointed as an international adviser on Middle Eastern studies, said he did not believe this was a possibility at the moment, given that currently, there was simply a "pretence of a Palestinian state or a Palestinian state that might be born".

"In reality," he said, "it is all under Israeli control."



Benjamin Pogrund, Na'eem Jeenah and Alon Liel

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

In fact, all the speakers expressed concern that a vision for a successful and peaceful future was remote when compared to the present-day harsh reality.

"We are in a situation of acute mistrust, rejection and hatred. The atmosphere is total poison at the moment and both sides are to blame... Both sides screwed up," said Pogrund.

The mistake that the Israelis made, he said, was the building of settlements, while the Palestinians had erred by turning to violence: "That turned the whole story around."

Former diplomat Liel is so devastated at the "dying" of the proposed two-state solution in government at present that the

reality of a one-state future is all that's left to contemplate. "We are not discussing one state because we – Israelis, both civilians and those

in government – support it. I hate it. I discuss it because this is what is going to happen to my country and I can't stand it," said the man who once served as the director-general of Israel's foreign affairs ministry.

"Yet we sit with a situation whereby there is no mediator, there are no talks; nothing is in the pipeline; no one is putting real pressure on Israel," Liel says. Because of that, Israeli Jews had to face the reality of one state.

This fate, Liel suggested, would force them

into a dilemma they have never faced before:

"The Israelis will have to pick whether we want to be a Jewish state or a democracy... and they will pick a Jewish state and we will lose our democracy."

"Some of us – not the majority – will have real difficulty in accepting the fact that they live in a country that will not be democratic."

However, Liel added, expressing the emotional tussle he has regarding the situation: "I also want a Jewish state. This is the dream of the Jewish people."

A key point of contention among the speakers was the role that violence played in shaping the future of the region.

For Jeenah, checkpoints and the Israeli army have led to a "violence that is perpetrated on Palestinians... that is systematic on a daily basis".

However, Pogrund vehemently disputed that the actions of the two sides could be equated: "There is violence, and there is violence – and the nature of violence in Israel [perpetrated by Palestinians], of kidnapping a bus and killing a load of children, is at a different level and is beyond defence; it's not brave."

Pogrund said that far beyond the debate of exactly how many rockets were launched against Israel, "the idea is to try and wipe us off the face of the earth... Everyone lives under

that in Israel, and that has an effect on people's minds."

Yet, while Liel conceded that violent attacks had made the Israelis "frightened and traumatised", he said this was part of the problem. "When you are traumatised, you lose contact with reality and you can make terrible mistakes. A traumatised nation can act in a very wrong way – and it is doing it at the moment."

Liel said the stark reality which Israelis needed to face was that the millions of "Palestinians between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean are not going to disappear".

"So, you can be frightened and traumatised; they will not go away. We need a good psychiatrist to give the Israeli public the dose it needs to come back to its rational decision-making."

Liel added that change would have to come from holding leaders to account. "My personal hope is that people, like the Jewish community here that support Israel wholeheartedly, will ask the prime minister: 'What is your vision? What is your long-term plan? Where are you leading us?' This, for me, will be enough."

Meanwhile, Jeenah expressed some optimism in a ground-up approach towards building mutual understanding. "The trust is not going to be between Palestinians and Israelis. The trust is going to be between individuals and small groups of people that will then build up."

He said on a societal level, the position of Arabs with Israeli citizenship also indicated some possibilities. "I do think that is the place where there is hope."

For Jeenah, it offers some proof that "it is possible to have relationships that can endure, that we can work towards a future where we can coexist".

Although Pogrund opposed any comparison between apartheid and the Israeli situation, he did offer one analogy. Inspiration for those holding on to the possibility of two states, he proposed, needed to be drawn from the mindset of the minority of South Africans who, even in the darkest days of apartheid, had remained steadfast and determined that a different future was possible. "That is what I am suggesting now is needed at this bleak, bleak time," he said.

"You have to have your belief inside you, what you want, what you are aiming for – and you have to stick to it and keep working for it."

Anyone trying to understand a way forward for the region had to be willing to grapple with the deep complexity of the situation, concluded Pogrund. "I moved to Israel 20 years ago. Every day I am faced with moral dilemmas and issues. There are no easy, slick answers."

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South African Jewish Report

Two tall poppies

I had the privilege this week of spending time with two esteemed men – one an acclaimed veteran South African journalist who lives in Israel and the other, a former Israeli ambassador to South Africa.

Their life stories are so different, as are their backgrounds. But their integrity, their passion for Israel and South Africa, their values-based politics and their keen understanding of the nuances in both countries are quite similar. Both are astute intellectuals and although both are respected by many, they have also made enemies.

Their enemies were made along the way because neither were yes men, choosing to stick to their moral principles – a rare occurrence these days, particularly in the political realm.

I am not going to dig deep into their stories or their views on Israeli and South African politics – that will be done in these pages next week.

And, while some in South Africa still take exception to their views, these men will not be cowed. You can make up your own minds about them once you've read their stories.

What I do want to talk about is being a tall poppy in countries where tall poppies often get their heads chopped off. The tall poppy analogy refers to people who stick their necks out when the majority of those in their society or community don't or won't. They go against the grain and do it without fear or favour, while others choose to take the easy route of following the flock.

These two men have had the courage to stand by their convictions.

In the case of Benjamin Pogrund, he stood up against the government of the day to ensure that he told the truth to his readers. He told the stories of black South Africa, black politics and what was really happening during apartheid. For this, he spent time in prison and certainly made no friends back then within the leadership of the Jewish community. But he had the respect of the likes of the late president Nelson Mandela – who was then the leader of Umkhonto weSizwe and nicknamed “the Black Pimpernel” – and the founder of the Pan Africanist Congress, the late Robert Sobukwe. Pogrund later wrote a book on Sobukwe.

For doing what he believed was right, he literally found himself unemployable in South Africa when the *Rand Daily Mail*, with which his name was synonymous, was forced to close down in 1985. So, he left the country and ultimately moved to Israel.

There, he works with Palestinians and Israelis in bridging the divide. Again, not a hugely popular occupation in Israel.

Pogrund has a deep love for Israel and South Africa, but he unashamedly tells it like he sees it, which never sits comfortably with those who don't want to see Israel's imperfections. He speaks about all the warts, but still has

a deep love for the wart-riddled but phenomenal country.

The former ambassador to South Africa, Alon Liel, is back in South Africa for a brief visit, almost 30 years after he was posted here.

He was sent to South Africa towards the end of apartheid and was around during the initial “rainbow” years of optimism that characterised Mandela's presidency.

He, too, was a good friend of Madiba. Not surprising because, like Pogrund and Liel, Mandela lived according to a strong moral code.

He got to know the leadership of the ANC well, long before it was popular to do so.

Today, back in Israel, Liel is no longer in mainstream politics because, as he says: “My politics haven't changed, but the country's have and it has gone far right, or as we say in Israel, right-right. This makes what I do look much more left than it really is.”

Liel is a fervent believer in a two-state solution and in finding a peaceful solution to the problems with the Palestinians. He doesn't believe in the occupation.

Although he has many concerns about politics in Israel, he is a passionate Zionist and loves his homeland. Because of this, he remains vocal about what he believes is happening, and what he believes must happen. He loves his country so much that he doesn't mind being unpopular in mainstream politics because of his beliefs. Has it made his life more difficult? Yes. Will he keep saying what he believes needs to be said? Yes.

I respect people like Pogrund – he remains one of my role models as a journalist – and Liel, who I had looked forward to meeting again after many years.

In our community, too often we choose not to stick our necks out because, well, nobody really wants to get beheaded. It generally feels better to fit in with what others are doing and saying. It is comfortable and welcoming.

But the people who get things done and those who are true leaders don't follow the crowd. They trailblaze. They do what they believe is 100% morally right – which may not be what fits what you believe is right – and they do it with integrity. Do they always succeed? No, not always. But those who do are remembered – not necessarily with love, but certainly with respect.

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Dateline: Middle East

Can BDS be stopped through the law?



PAULA SLIER

Calls for boycotts against Israel are nothing new, and in recent years the BDS movement has gained traction internationally. But ask the average Israeli what s/he thinks, and they're neither fazed nor worried about it. It's a different type of anti-Semitism, most tell me, adding that it doesn't matter what Israel does or doesn't do, the international community will try to line up against her.

But Israel's leadership doesn't wholly agree, and neither do many in the diaspora. It's a far cry from when the BDS movement was launched in 2005. Then, Israeli officials echoed the sentiment on the street, dismissing it as a poor attempt to imitate the boycott against South Africa during the apartheid years.

But 10 years later, Israel's President Reuven Rivlin went on record describing it as a “strategic threat”.

Jerusalem has been ramping up efforts to fight it. Last month, the government announced that the strategic affairs ministry was setting up a public company, comprising former Israeli ambassadors and high-profile security experts, to raise awareness against this global “delegitimisation campaign”.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has allocated nearly \$40 million (R481 million) towards these efforts, and Israeli courts seem to be supporting him. Since March last year, foreign nationals or organisations supporting boycotts against Israel have been barred from entering the country, among them BDS South Africa.

Already back in February 2011, Israel's Parliament adopted the NGO Funding Transparency Law to try to curtail secret foreign government funding for nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), some of which promote BDS.

In July of the same year, a contentious anti-boycott law was passed, stating that individuals or organisations that publicly call for an economic, cultural or academic boycott against a person or entity merely because of its affiliation with Israel, may be sued civilly by a party claiming it could be damaged by such a boycott.

And now, in what appears to be the first lawsuit filed under this contentious law, two New Zealanders – a Jew and a Muslim – were sued last week by Israeli concertgoers for allegedly convincing New Zealand pop singer Lorde to cancel a performance she was scheduled to give in Israel this June.

The plaintiffs, three teenagers, are demanding payment not from the singer, but from the Jewish and Muslim activists. The two had written an open letter in which they appealed to Lorde to reconsider her Tel Aviv concert. It was reportedly only after the performer acknowledged their letter on Twitter that she had reservations about the show. The two women took credit for her decision to cancel.

Those who support this law ask: Why should someone who speaks badly of them be allowed into their home? Led by Netanyahu, they argue that the law prevents harm against the State of Israel and its citizens.

But critics insist that it is undemocratic and unconstitutional, and stifles freedom of expression.

Despite this, Israel's High Court of Justice ruled it to be a legitimate and balanced measure to protect the country and its citizens from “political terrorism”. Should this latest lawsuit now prove successful, it will have significant implications for the global BDS movement.

Filed by Shurat HaDin, an NGO that sues those it accuses of supporting terrorism or being enemies of Israel, the lawsuit is an “effort to give real consequences to those who selectively target Israel”, according to its president, Israeli attorney Nitsana Darshan-Leitner. She said it aims to “compensate Israeli citizens for the moral and emotional injury and the indignity caused by their discriminatory actions”. She called it “a precedent-setting suit aimed at deterring BDS activists from calling for a boycott of Israel,” adding: “Boycott activists will know there is a price for every action against Israeli citizens.”

Although the anti-boycott law states it can be applied to anyone regardless of their nationality, there are questions as to whether Israeli law can even be used against people in another country.

But the lawsuit is problematic. Firstly, the complainants need to prove a link between an actual boycott and a call for one. In this particular case, they need to successfully argue that being deprived of the pleasure of listening to one's favourite singer constitutes damages. What's more, although the anti-boycott law states it can be applied to anyone regardless of their nationality, there are questions as to whether Israeli law can even be used against people in another country. Should a judgment be made against someone in South Africa, for example, how does one enforce it and prevent it from becoming a diplomatic nightmare?

The New Zealanders highlighted this point by posting on their Twitter feeds that the lawsuit was a stupid stunt and that “Israel was the only democracy in the Middle East where New Zealanders get sued for exercising their freedom of speech... in New Zealand”.

It will be interesting to see what transpires. Over the years Shurat HaDin has had its fair share of successes and failures, including one against former US president Jimmy Carter and his publisher Simon & Schuster, whereby the NGO claimed Carter had defrauded consumers with his book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*. It lost.

When I interviewed Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the BDS movement in its then nondescript Ramallah headquarters, he insisted that despite the millions of dollars being spent to fight BDS, Israel and its supporters would ultimately fail.

It remains to be seen whether he is proven wrong.

• Paula Slier is the Middle East Bureau Chief of *Russia Today (RT)*, the founder and CEO of *Newshound Media* and the inaugural winner of the *Europcar Woman in Leadership Award of the South African Absa Jewish Achievers*.



Will Ramaphosa really make a difference?

OPINION

MICHAEL BAGRAIM

There is a generally accepted belief that Cyril Ramaphosa, in his capacity as ANC leader, will finally bring some sanity to Parliament and the ruling party, in what's been deemed as a case of new brooms promising to sweep clean. However, with the current impasse over who will present SONA, this new broom does not appear to be meeting the public's expectations.

One would have expected that Parliament would finally assume its rightful place as the guardian of the nation. My submission, coming from the official opposition, is a vastly different take on this.

It certainly doesn't take the removal of one rotting head from a dying body to rejuvenate the entire body. What has become clear to me, over the past three years, is that the rot has set in right down to the lowest common denominator. The system is riddled with bad appointments, incapable administrators and people who are just unable to deliver. The entire government structure has been set up for comrades, allies and friends. It is rare to find someone who has been appointed for their ability and honesty.

We see this on a daily basis and I encounter some of the most ludicrous appointments. I do not believe that Parliament is taking on its role as the guardian of anything. I do not believe that one man will be capable of routing out the enormous cancer that has spread throughout the ruling party. ANC spokespeople are telling us that they are not going to be appointing officials on the basis of who they know. The reality is that these officials have already been appointed, and to try to remove them is going to take years.

Parliament itself has strongly supported Zuma even after MPs had insight into the truth about the corruption. This means that 62% of MPs condoned and/or applauded corruption of the highest order.

The only way in which the DA was able to arrest and expose some of this corruption was by going to court, thereby relying on the efficiency and honesty of the judiciary.

The judiciary has done a sterling job over the past three years. If not for the judiciary, we would not have seen some of the changes that we are starting to see.

This is not an accolade for our Parliament, but an accolade for the opposition parties who, out of frustration,

had to spend enormous amounts of money approaching courts across the country on a regular basis.

Already some in the public are saying that the judiciary is taking the place of the legislature. Unfortunately, because of the nature of the democratic system, this has been the only avenue open to the opposition.

Very few ANC members, if any, have chosen to vote according to their convictions. This outcome has not been good for South Africa. And worse, the rot has only been partially exposed and cannot be corrected by the same party that committed the ills. These ills did not start recently; they've been building up over 20 years.

It certainly doesn't take the removal of one rotting head from a dying body to rejuvenate the entire body. What has become clear to me, over the past three years, is that the rot has set in right down to the lowest common denominator.

It is now very convenient to try to blame just one man, even if he has been at the centre of corruption. This man has been aided, abetted and strongly supported throughout his term of office.

It cannot be said that his fellow MPs were unaware of the epidemic of corruption. This was pointed out to them over the past 10 years both in the Houses of Parliament and through the press, radio, television, etc.

Being merely silent onlookers, they have cheered for Zuma throughout each disaster, egging each other on to continue. I have watched in disbelief for the past three years at close quarters. On occasion, I have had to pinch myself to remove the feeling of floating down that well in *Alice in Wonderland*. And, like Alice's world, our society during this time has got "curiouser and curiouser".

• *Michael Bagraim is an MP for the DA and the shadow minister of labour. His views are his own and not that of the newspaper.*

Bishop Shembe pledges his allegiance to Israel



Members of the Nazareth Baptist Church at Bishop Shembe's home on Sunday morning

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Bishop Phakama Shembe, head of the Nazareth Baptist Church, hosted Jewish communal leaders in his home on Sunday to witness his and his community's commitment to Israel and the local Jewish community.

There were about 500 people in and around his Bedfordview home on Sunday morning, comprising mainly members of his community. Also in attendance were Ben Swartz, national chairperson of the SA Zionist Federation, as well as Mark Hyman and Gavi Sacks from the South African Friends of Israel.

The bishop told the crowd that his community and the Jewish community pray to the same G-d. He said G-d had commanded the Shembe people to keep the Sabbath holy and that his community fulfilled this on a weekly basis.

He maintained that the relationship between the Shembe and the Jews had always been one of mutual respect and understanding.

Counting ANC members as being among his congregants, he said these people had strengthened the government's power in South Africa. "The ANC represents our kings, chiefs and priests. They have to listen to us as the children of the nation," he said.

The bishop praised Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini for speaking out against the ANC's decision to downgrade the South African Embassy in Israel, adding his own voice in opposing the downgrade.

"I am here to teach the world the word of G-d," he said, singling out former president Nelson Mandela for having taught people about "a rainbow nation".

"Our white kids and black kids must grow up together," he concluded.

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Save Aaron, the boy who cannot eat

TALI FEINBERG

At first glance, Aaron Lipschitz is like any ordinary three-year-old boy. He attends Herzlia Alon Ashel playschool; loves cars, balloons and animals; and looks as strong and healthy as his peers, with a bright mind to match.

But there is one difference: Aaron has never consumed a morsel of food. His mother, Taryn, had an easy pregnancy and birth, but knew early on in Aaron's life that something was wrong.

What has happened is the stuff of nightmares, and it is only just beginning.

An occupational therapist, Taryn is married to Steven, a copywriter. The young couple were just like any other when they had Aaron, their first child, and Taryn was determined to breastfeed. But their dreamy picture of parenthood was shattered when Aaron was admitted to hospital at just two weeks old, as doctors tried to figure out why he could not tolerate his feeds.

More than 50 hospital visits later, it was discovered that Aaron was not only among the 0.1% of babies who are allergic to breast milk protein, but that any form of food – formula or liquid (except water) – causes a violent reaction and extreme pain. Even touching food or certain materials affects him.

"When it came to starting him on solids, we tried to give him a syringe of water from a pot of boiled vegetables, but even that made him sick for weeks," says Taryn. That was the closest he ever got to eating. All little Aaron can tolerate is the infant version of a very specialised baby formula called Neocate, and he needs to take a pancreatic enzyme pill called Creon before drinking it.

A bottle of Neocate every two to three hours, day and night, at a cost of R500 for a small tin, is what kept Aaron alive. But by October last year, the formula was no longer enough to keep him nourished. He then had numerous operations to insert central lines and catheters so that he could

start Total Parenteral Nutrition, known as TPN.

"It's the nutrition given to a person in a coma to keep them alive," says Taryn. "It means Aaron is fed intravenously, avoiding his digestive system." A port runs through his heart and every evening, his parents don medical scrubs and gloves to administer the TPN. They are often up with him all night, as his pain and nausea make it difficult for him to sleep.

"Because Aaron cannot calm himself with food, he has learned to regulate his emotions very early on," says Taryn. The couple try to avoid eating in front of him, and the lack of a routine around meals means a very long day for Aaron and his parents.

At the same time, the family have never excluded Aaron from the life of a toddler – he attends parties, has play dates and sits in the trolley during grocery shopping. Herzlia Alon Ashel has been extremely accommodating in allowing him to attend while still working around his needs.

Aaron currently has two lives. He attends school, Clamber Club and Kindermusik with his friends in the mornings, and in the afternoons he is often at hospital, where needles are inserted in his legs administering immune globulin to make his immune system function effectively. He knows the names of all his medications and although he hates the treatments, he accepts the pain and discomfort like a soldier going into battle.

Before this immune-boosting treatment, Aaron picked up infections, including salmonella, easily. He almost died of septicaemia as a one-year-old. "I took him to an emergency room and they told me it was gastro," says Taryn. If she had not rushed to another one, her son would be dead.

In this instance and so many others, she has had to trust her instincts and fight for her son.

She is thankful for Dr Deon Smith at Cape Town MediClinic, "who believed me from day one". She's also grateful for her family – and for Aaron's loyal day and night nurse, Faith.

After hundreds of tests, Aaron's doctors only



Steven, Aaron and Taryn Lipschitz

recently reached a diagnosis: Interleukin-12 Receptor Defect, which means the cells in Aaron's immune system are not communicating effectively and, as a result, he is unable to fight infections. He is the only known child to have it in South Africa. And of the few known cases worldwide, Aaron is the only child who is unable to consume food.

There is no cure, but doctors hope that chemotherapy, followed by a bone marrow transplant, will wipe out Aaron's defective immune system and give him a new, functioning one.

If he does not have this treatment, he will most probably contract an infection and develop fatal septicaemia. "My goal right now is to get him to his fourth birthday," says his mother. The family are currently searching overseas for a donor, as there

are no matches in South Africa.

While the past three years have been a blur of blood tests, drips, ultrasounds, hundreds of hospital visits, MRIs, consultations with immunologists, gastroenterologists, neurologists, paediatricians, allergists, haematologists, oncologists, dieticians and occupational therapists, the family's fight is just beginning.

"Aaron still faces his biggest challenge yet. For the past three years, we have tried our best to manage this difficult situation on our own. The financial toll on our family is becoming overwhelming and we realise that we need to ask for financial help to

keep moving forward and doing everything we can to save our son," say Taryn and Steven.

They have therefore set up a fundraising page, which can be found by searching the *BackABuddy* website for the Save Aaron campaign. "Any donation, big or small, will mean more to us than you ever know."

Despite his struggle, Aaron is an easy child – he loves life and every outing is an adventure. He accepts that food is not for him, but did ask his mother to "put ice cream in my TPN" and longs to make challah on a Friday at school, instead of plaiting play-dough. With your help, those dreams could come true.

To donate, please visit <https://www.backabuddy.co.za/champion/project/save-aaron>

Cyber-bullying and what we can do about it

ANTONY SEEFF

There's a crisis afflicting one in every four South African teenagers, resulting in long-term anxiety, poor self-image and even suicide. Given its growing prevalence, cyber-bullying may soon reach epidemic proportions.

Cyber-bullying occurs when bullying takes place over digital devices, such as a cellphone or computer. This type of bullying often involves embarrassing someone on a public or semi-public platform such as WhatsApp, Instagram or Facebook. Bullying has always been a reality in high schools, but now that all students are connected to social media and the internet, online shaming has become the weapon of choice for bullies. Technology has made it much easier for them to cause maximum harm. That's because people often feel more brazen using social media and are likely to say things they wouldn't say in person. Once one kid makes a comment, it becomes open season for the rest of the pack to dig in.

Examples of cyber-bullying range in severity, from kids intentionally excluding a certain person from a WhatsApp group to their making toxic comments to someone, such as: "If I were you, I would kill myself."

The effects on the victim depend on the person: they may cry and get over it or suffer more severe long-term emotional, psychological and physical effects, such as anxiety, fear, depression, low self-esteem or weight loss/gain.

So, what should parents know about cyber-bullying and what can they do about it?

While cyber-bullying often takes place on known social platforms like WhatsApp or Snapchat, there may be new apps that children are latching on to. Parents need to stay up-to-date regarding these latest apps so



they can identify warning signs of potential cyber-bullying and monitor whether their child is the instigator or the victim of such.

For example, many parents are unaware of the app called Qooh.me. It's popular among the youth and has become a cesspool for cyber-bullying. The idea behind Qooh.me is disturbing: you can ask a question or write a message to one of your 'friends' anonymously.

After creating a profile on this app and connecting it to your Facebook account, you start receiving anonymous messages from people you are connected to on Facebook. Kids often join the app, hoping to receive glorifying messages such as: "You're so pretty in that dress", but land up receiving messages such as: "That dress is the ugliest thing I've ever seen."

Just like physical bullying, cyber-bullying is often difficult to pick up as the victimised child is ashamed or embarrassed about the bullying. However, there are tell-tale signs that parents can look for. For example, if your child shows nervous behaviour when getting an instant message, text or email; if they become secretive about their online activities and cellphone use; or if they avoid school or

extramural activities, it may be because they're being bullied.

A new website has been launched to help parents identify whether their child may be the victim of cyber-bullying. It's available at <http://www.ismychildbeingcyberbullied.co.za>.

As a parent, it is traumatic to find out that your child is a victim of bullying. But you aren't alone: there are websites available to help you, and social workers well versed on the subject to whom you can turn. As a broad guideline, here's a summary of some actions parents can take in this situation:

1. Communicate with your child to understand the cyber-bullying and acknowledge their pain.
2. Reassure your child that the bullying is not reflective of them as a person.
3. Monitor your child's online activity and ensure that they do not retaliate.
4. Support your child by seeking counselling for them if necessary.
5. Report the cyber-bullying to your school (if it took place during school) or to the police, if necessary.
6. Consider getting your child a "safe cellphone", which alerts parents to cyber-bullying (such as a KidTech phone – <http://kidtech.co.za>)

Cyber-bullying may seem like a purely technological problem, but it isn't. And the

answer does not lie only in a technological solution.

While digital tools are involved, the issue of cyber-bullying is a social one. Both the bully and the victim need help. Speak to your children to help them understand what cyber-bullying looks like, what they can do about it and who they can speak to if necessary. And, if your child is one of the initiators, it is important to address the underlying motivation for such behaviour with them and seek professional help.

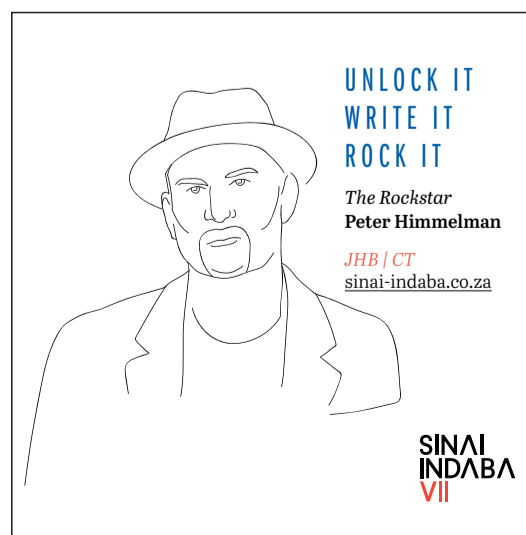
You may be asking yourself "How did we get here?" We've arrived in a dystopian society where the very technology that we thought would brighten our lives has made life all the more difficult.

The digital light of progress is being abused by adolescents to effect horrific cruelty on others. This is an unfortunate consequence of our children growing with ever-changing technology. And parents are left having to take remedial action.

So, it's essential that you equip yourself with digital knowledge to enable you to

help your child navigate the digital world safely and securely. Make it your responsibility to educate them about proper social media etiquette while monitoring their online presence.

Antony Seeff is the co-founder of KidTech (<http://www.kidtech.co.za>), a company that offers cellphones for schoolkids, and peace of mind for parents.



There can be no denying that the Poles were complicit in the Holocaust

JORDAN MOSHE

Poland's Senate passed a controversial bill last Thursday that outlaws blaming Poland for any crimes committed during the Holocaust. Poland's President Andrzej Duda insisted that there was no institutionalised participation by Poland or its people in the Holocaust, but did acknowledge that individual Poles took "wicked" actions against their Jewish neighbours.

Considering that Poland was invaded and occupied by Nazi Germany in 1939, those unfamiliar with what the local Jewish population really experienced at the time may be inclined to agree with Duda, and even sympathise with the Polish people.

If you visit the Polish village of Jedwabne, you will find a section of charred planks set in a concrete block on the outskirts of the village. This is all that remains of a barn which local Polish residents filled with hundreds of Jewish women and children in July 1941, and set on fire – after killing Jewish men and boys, and putting their bodies in the same barn. The story that villagers long told was that the massacre happened, but the Nazis did it.

That belief persisted for a while. A monument to the dead on the outskirts of the village bore an inscription that blamed the Germans for Jedwabne's Jewish dead. Then, in the year 2000, Polish-born American

historian Jan Gross refuted that story in his book *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. In his research, he dug into the history of the incident and found strong evidence that Germans hadn't killed the Jews of Jedwabne; their Polish neighbours had.

This is what I was told when I

Considering that Poland was invaded and occupied by Nazi Germany in 1939, those unfamiliar with what the local Jewish population really experienced at the time may be inclined to agree with Duda, and even sympathise with the Polish people.

visited the site with a group of other Jews in July 2013. Over 10 days, we travelled across Poland, visiting villages, cities and concentration camps. I stood at a bus stop in a village not 50 metres from the forest of Zbylitowska Gora, in which Jewish children had been massacred and buried in a mass grave. I visited the town of Oswiecim, which is right on the doorstep of Auschwitz. Its Polish residents are known for having assisted Jews, but are also known to have pointed Jews out to SS officers

and benefited from the deaths of their Jewish compatriots by acquiring their property after they'd been murdered.

I felt conflicted. Perhaps my judgement is clouded by my bias towards Jews, I thought. Despite occasionally assisting the Nazis, the Poles also suffered under occupation and did help some Jews. Perhaps this notion that the Poles were willing to assist the Nazis in their mission of extermination is nothing but a gross exaggeration of sporadic occurrences.

However, it was after visiting the site of the barn, when we were taken into the village itself, that I reached my own conclusion. Near to a shul that has been restored – and now swarms with tourists – stood a table laden with Judaica.

Standing behind this assortment of bric-a-brac was a local man, whose smile and eager demeanour drew a number of passers-by to his stall, including me. What I saw before me were items familiar to any Jew – candlesticks, menorahs, Kiddush cups and other similar items. These were all dented, tarnished and old. The man selling them didn't appear Jewish.

I realised what I was seeing. Before

me lay the possessions of Jews. The cups on which fathers had made Kiddush. The candlesticks with which mothers had lit Shabbat candles. The menorahs around which children had gathered excitedly to celebrate Chanukah.

These were all being offered for

The only reminder that the people once existed is a section of burnt wood. And their possessions are being sold in the marketplace by a man who doesn't know their names and never will.

OPINION



The Jedwabne barn memorial

sale because their owners were now nothing more than one of the faceless victims murdered by a defeated occupier, which had deprived them of their possessions.

Here were items which were hastily claimed by those who had the power to take them and make them their own. Here were items whose owners couldn't protest against their loss and who were now no longer able to claim them back.

When one person commits a crime against another, that may be considered the perpetration of a "hateful act". But when the local population of a village massacres their Jewish neighbours, plunders their belongings and leaves them to their descendants to hawk on the street in which the original owners may have lived, Duda's definition of "institutionalised participation" falls flat.

Diller Teen Fellows Programme

Developing our future leaders

On Sunday, January 28, the SA Zionist Federation (SAZF), in partnership with the Israel Centre and King David Schools, hosted a ceremony honouring the graduating Diller Teen Fellows of 2017, and welcoming the new cohort of 2018.

This international leadership programme enables a group of 20 Grade 11 pupils to embark on an enriching journey in which they get to meet and interact with a global network of young Jewish leaders. Each year, more than 600 teens from 32 communities worldwide – namely North America, South Africa, Australia, South America, Europe and Israel – spend 12 months engrossed in the Diller Teen Fellows programme.

The programme focuses on global engagement and experiential learning, with the aim of building leaders with the power to change the world. This is done through hosting monthly workshops and Shabbatons (weekend retreats), and arranging a 10-day visit



Diller Coordinator (Gilad Spitalnik) and Junior Counsellors with the new 2018 Diller Cohort

by the Israeli teens to South Africa, culminating in a three-week summer seminar experience that brings them all together in Israel.

At the graduation ceremony, a series of video clips created by the outgoing Diller teens was screened. It showed the teens doing various activities as part of their 12-month journey and highlighted the life-changing experiences that the new group could look forward to. The new cohort then took to the stage to introduce the pillars of the Diller experience: leadership, Jewish identity, Israel and Tikkun Olam (healing the world through good deeds).

The SAZF became the official custodian of the Diller Teen Fellows programme last year, working closely

with King David Schools and the Helen Diller Foundation.

"In line with our vision of engaging and empowering young leaders with

a strong Jewish identity and love for Israel, Diller is the perfect platform to ensure that we are developing young hearts and minds," said Nicci Raz, national director of the SAZF.

Rabbi Kacev, speaking on behalf of King David Schools, reiterated their commitment and support for the programme and congratulated both groups on a fantastic achievement.

We wish the graduating students all the best for the future, and best of luck to the incoming students.



Diller Teens 2018 with Diller 2017 Teens and representatives from the South African Board of Jewish Education, SA Zionist Federation and Israel Centre, as well as Diller Coordinator (Gilad Spitalnik), Junior Counsellors and dignitaries



For more information on the Diller Teen Fellows programme, contact Ronli Dorfman at training@sazf.org

Taking on the plight of waste collectors

NICOLA MILTZ

A Johannesburg woman became so gatvol of hearing her neighbours whinge about the awful state of the park in their upmarket suburb, she made it her business to tackle the issue head-on.

Melrose North resident Lisa Lowenthal is no ordinary suburban mom. A social activist and the founder of Feed SA, a non-profit organisation aimed at eliminating hunger in Africa, she is determined to make a difference in the lives of the less fortunate.

Lowenthal realised that the derelict state of the James and Ethel Gray Park was the result of “waste collectors” having illegally moved into the area. These men, whom Lowenthal refers to as “urban waste miners”, have become as much a part of our urban landscape as minibus taxis and electric fences. It’s thanks to people like Lowenthal and others that they are finally being noticed.

“These are the nameless, faceless men who trawl through our trash in search of waste to sell to recycling plants,” she says. To assist them, she spearheaded SkeemSaam, a community-based pilot project committed to the environment and the men’s social upliftment.

“I see them as micro entrepreneurs,” says Lowenthal. “They get up before dawn and set to work. They own their business and they work very hard, ensuring that they make money to send back to their families.”

After a full day, they lug their heavy, makeshift trolleys through the traffic – at grave risk to both drivers and themselves – before setting up for the night, living like rats in stormwater drains, vacant parks, behind bushes and under bridges. “They are trash collectors during the week and men with lives on the weekend. They are often too ashamed to admit to their loved ones, near and far [many are migrants], how they earn an honest living,” she says. Their earnings can amount to anything between R1 200 to R2 000 a month. “SkeemSaam aims to bridge the gap

between the ratepayers’ associations and the waste miners by bringing them together and by encouraging a mutually beneficial arrangement. It also aims to legitimise the waste miners and improve their standard of living. People must realise that without them, our city would be in a shocking state environmentally,” says Lowenthal.

However, the public tend to regard them as an urban nuisance and a traffic hindrance, a perception borne out of ignorance. Lowenthal says this is slowly changing as the presence of the men becomes a permanent feature in our parks and on our streets, and people become aware of what they do. “In some residential areas, they are getting some credit for the work they do in cleaning the city’s streets and parks and for waste recycling,” says Lowenthal.

SkeemSaam, which means “working together”, was initiated last year and is fast spreading to numerous parks throughout the city. Lowenthal, an active member of the Melrose North Residents and Ratepayers Association, started working with the recyclers at the James and Ethel Gray Park in Melrose after concerns were raised about hygiene and security.

“The recyclers were living in the

became determined to try to come up with a solution that would benefit all the stakeholders, from the residents and ratepayers to officials from the city of Johannesburg and, most importantly, these men, who were just trying to eke out a living.

transport to collect their waste, as opposed to the recyclers having to push their trolleys long distances to the buy-back centres. It also offers workshops on hygiene and money management.

After a few months of SkeemSaam

SkeemSaam has changed his life.

“Before, we were living in fear all the time. The police would raid us and burn our waste and all our documents. Now Lisa has brought everyone together and life is easier. We also walk less because the buy-

Lisa Lowenthal with some of the urban waste miners in Melrose North



She got to know as many recyclers as possible and listened to their struggles. Lowenthal soon became a regular visitor to the park, and slowly began earning their trust.

Together with her friend, businesswoman Bendeta Gordon, they devised a waste management and environmental pilot project in collaboration with the community, private security organisations and City Parks, waste buyers and waste pickers.

“It is designed to have all-round benefits for all concerned,” says Gordon.

With environmental specialist Aubrey Masuku, they established a “quid pro quo” agreement.

Lowenthal told the recyclers: “If you stay, you pay.” By that she meant that the

men clean up the parks and make the neighbourhood safe and clean. This requires that the recyclers work within certain rules to keep the community safe and the public spaces clean. In return, SkeemSaam negotiates better prices for them at the recycling plants and arranges

being established, Melrose residents started noticing a major improvement. “The recyclers were cleaning the parks and helping to be the eyes and ears of the community by watching the comings and goings of all those frequenting the park,” says Lowenthal. “In turn, residents have been encouraged to separate their domestic waste at home to make it easier, healthier and more dignified for the men to collect.”

The initiative has spread to neighbouring parks, including The Field and Study Centre in Parkmore, Hamilton Park in Bryanston and parks in Olivedale, Waverley and open spaces alongside highways.

SkeemSaam now has more than 300 men on its database, at least 100 of whom now have bank accounts and belong to a stokvel-type savings scheme.

“I have requests from so many ratepayers’ associations wanting to come on board,” says Lowenthal, who now needs more partners to help her. Dis-Chem donated R50 000 for uniforms and protective gear, which has given the men a sense of dignity. “Nkhosinathi Masuku is a waste collector who hails from Zimbabwe and lives in Cosmo City. He says

back centre comes to find us.”

Says Gordon: “Developing the SkeemSaam model has reinforced my belief in the strength of community to grow a business. It has also allowed us to facilitate a dialogue between property owners and the urban waste miners. The combination of big business and small, or even micro, businesses equals economic wellness.”

Gordon adds that SkeemSaam is in the process of securing a permanent residence in Orange Grove which would house a number of recyclers at a nominal rate, offering them affordable accommodation and a permanent roof over their heads.

One of SkeemSaam’s ambassadors, Liora Karpelowsky, became involved with the project after being introduced to some of the waste collectors at a local feeding scheme.

“Once you know about these people and how difficult their lives are, and how important their work is for the environment, there’s no looking back; you can’t ignore them,” says Karpelowsky, a grade R teacher at King David Linksfield.

“I tell my pupils: ‘You don’t have to give money, you can give dignity.’ A simple smile or a hello or a ‘thank you’ makes such a difference in their lives.”



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park and sorting their rubbish there. Residents were getting very upset, worried about the influx of vagrants and security. No sooner had police forcibly removed them than they returned the next day.”

Knowing that the men had nowhere else to stay, Lowenthal

The Academy launches degrees in Jewish education



**RABBI RAMON
WIDMONTE**

Since its launch in August 2012, The Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning has become the heartbeat of the traditional South African Jewish community, ensuring that its values are relevant and dynamic for the next generation of Jews.

Over the past five years, the Academy – a modern orthodox programme for Jewish thought, scholarship and education – has expanded its role to also offer training for teachers in the largest Jewish day schools in South Africa. We have developed a curriculum for use in those schools.

The Academy then realised that South Africa has one of the few significant Jewish communities worldwide who do not enjoy the benefits of a Jewish university.

Unlike the US, which has institutions such as

Yeshiva University, South Africa has not yet been able to afford adult educators, school teachers, informal educators and rabbis and rebbetzins the opportunity to gain a BA, MA or PhD in fields such as Jewish Education.

Besides degree programmes, countries with Jewish universities have centres for research and continuing professional development for educators. So, for example, a teacher or rabbi graduating from Yeshiva University has done courses in psychology, counselling, educational psychology, curriculum development, public speaking, classroom management, mentoring and more.

As a result of all this, very few Jewish Studies curricula are developed in South Africa. Instead, we import. Additionally, many of our teachers, informal educators, principals, rabbis and rebbetzins do not have the substantial benefit of the knowledge, professionalism and networking that a university experience in Jewish education would afford them.

One of our seminal experiences entailed meeting with Jews from Mexico, a country with a

population smaller than our own, but which boasts a Jewish university. It crystallised our decision to create something similar for South Africa.

And so, after four years of hard work, this month, the Academy is launching NED (the National Educators’ Development project). The NED Programme aims to enable excellence in Jewish education within the Jewish day school, as well as in adult and rabbinic spaces, and to catapult South Africa’s Jewish educational environment to the forefront worldwide.

The key to success in education lies in the hands of the people, our educators – and, with the right training and management, we could fly.

The NED Programme includes continuing professional development courses on a variety of levels and in a range of subjects. These include training courses on Israel, Zionism, Jewish history, Jewish philosophy, Jewish ethics, art, Holocaust education, and South African legal, pedagogic and historical perspectives on Jewish and general education.

Additionally, the Academy is working with the

London School of Jewish Studies (LSJS) to enable South African students to access bachelors and master’s degrees in Jewish Education provided by LSJS. These are internationally recognised degrees in Jewish education. They are all part time and are designed to be undertaken by working men and women. The MA programme offers sub-specialisations such as leadership of Jewish educational organisations, school teaching, informal education and community education.

The NED Programme will be the first of its kind in South Africa, combining the best of the Academy experience and faculty on the ground in South Africa, with international recognition.

An important part of the NED Programme lies in our ability to give credit for courses for educators, rabbis and rebbetzins who have tremendous teaching experience, but lack undergraduate degrees.

• For more information, contact the Academy on 010 140 2099 or email info@theacademy.org.za

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

We never said 'no' to resuming peace talks – Abbas

KHALED ABU TOAMEH

The Palestinians have never rejected any invitation to resume peace talks with Israel, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said on Tuesday.

"Our hands are extended for peace through negotiations," Abbas said. "We support the war on terrorism in every place in the world."

Abbas, who was speaking at the Jerusalem Capital of Muslim Youth 2018 festival in Ramallah, reiterated that the US administration was no longer qualified to act as an honest broker in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

He said the Ramallah event was aimed at sending a message to the world that Jerusalem is exclusively the capital of the Palestinian state, but later said Jerusalem belonged to the Muslim and Christian faiths.

Representatives of 27 Arab, Islamic and EU countries attended the opening ceremony, including 14 sports and youth ministers.

Khaled Al-Roudhan, Kuwait's minister of commerce and industry, and minister of state for youth affairs, said on arriving in Ramallah: "Our participation, along with a number of sisterly states, is also an affirmation that Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine. Kuwait's bonds with the Palestinian cause is solid and old, and its

continuous support for the Palestinian cause has not changed for decades and years."

In his address, Abbas renewed his criticism of the US administration's plan for peace in the Middle East, the details of which have yet to be made public.

"No one is authorised to sign [any deal] on our behalf," Abbas said, referring to reports that the US administration was seeking to achieve peace between Israel and some Arab countries.

Abbas criticised US President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, as well as his threats to cut funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees.

"What is there left to talk about now that Jerusalem and the refugees are off the [negotiating] table?" Abbas asked.

"We won't talk to anyone who excludes the refugees from the final status issues. There are issues that we have already agreed to – the vision of two states on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as our capital. After that, we will sit at the table to discuss all the issues," he said.

Abbas dismissed as "lies" allegations that the Palestinians were refusing to return to the negotiating table with Israel. "I challenge any person who says that he invited us, even once, to the negotiations and we said 'no'."

The Palestinians, Abbas said, won't allow anyone to say that Jerusalem is the united capital of Israel or to move their embassy to the city.

"We won't accept or permit such talk," he added.

"This land is an Islamic and Christian land, by all standards. Jerusalem is the eternal Palestinian capital of Muslim youths; it is also the capital of Christian youths."

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United in sorrow

SEE STORY ON PAGE iii



Yael Shevach, left, the wife of Raziel Shevach, who was gunned down in a January 9 terror attack near the Havat Gilad outpost, consoles Miriam Ben-Gal, the wife of Itamar Ben-Gal, who was fatally stabbed in a February 5 terror attack. In the middle is Miriam's grandmother, Esther.

FRANCE HITS OUT AT POLAND'S HOLOCAUST LAW

AFP TODAY

On Wednesday, France criticised Poland's new law that makes it illegal to attribute Nazi crimes to the Polish state, describing it as "ill-advised".

"This law is ill advised. You should not rewrite history, it's never a very good idea," Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told France's BFM television news channel.

Asked if the EU would take measures in response to the controversial Holocaust law, signed into law by Poland's President Andrzej Duda on Tuesday, Le Drian said he hoped "moral pressure will be sufficient".

"I also hope that the Polish people will reconsider, and in the next elections act in a way that removes the unfortunate political straitjacket imposed by nationalist factions," he said.

"Anything that could pervert this memory is negative," he said, adding that the vote to bring in the law "should be condemned".

The bill has drawn a chorus of criticism from countries, including Israel and the US.

It sets fines or a maximum three-year jail term for anyone ascribing "responsibility or co-responsibility to the Polish nation or state for crimes committed by the German Third Reich – or other crimes against humanity and war crimes".

As currently written, the legislation calls for prison terms of up to three years for attributing the crimes of Nazi Germany to the Polish state or nation. The bill would also set fines or a maximum three-year jail term for anyone who refers to Nazi German death camps as Polish.

One key paragraph of the bill states: "Whoever claims, publicly and contrary to the facts, that the Polish nation or the Republic of Poland is responsible or co-responsible for Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich... or for other felonies that constitute crimes against peace, crimes against humanity or war crimes; or whoever otherwise grossly diminishes the responsibility of the true perpetrators of said crimes, shall be liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to three years."

Israel has expressed deep concern that the legislation could open the door to prosecuting Holocaust survivors for their testimony should it include the involvement of individual Poles for allegedly killing or giving up Jews to the Germans.

But Duda and other Polish leaders say the law does not limit freedom of speech on Holocaust issues that are based on historical fact.

Duda also said he would send the legislation to that country's Constitutional Tribunal to rule on whether it conforms with guarantees for freedom of speech.

ISRAEL SAID TO BE PART OF A SECRET COALITION MONITORING IS FIGHTERS RETURNING FROM SYRIA

TOI STAFF

Israel is a member of a secret intelligence collection and sharing operation, made up of 21 nations targeting European jihadis returning home from fighting in Syria with the Islamic State (IS) group, German daily *Der Spiegel* reported on Sunday.

Naming Germany as another of the members, the newspaper said the anti-terror operation was known as "Gallant Phoenix" and was being led from a US Joint Special Operations Command centre in Jordan.

The operation is focused on collecting documents, data, DNA traces and fingerprints that have been retrieved from former IS strongholds and comparing them with intelligence already acquired by other countries in the pact, the report said. It named only Germany and Israel as members.

An estimated 40 000 people travelled from around the world to take up arms for the IS group as it occupied territory in Syria and Iraq and declared a caliphate in 2014.

In late 2017, the group suffered an overwhelming defeat in Syria and

Iraq, being driven out from more than 96% of the territory it once held and failing to reach its goal of establishing a caliphate in the region. Since then, many of the remaining foreign fighters who had travelled to the region have sought a way back to Europe.

Last month, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu indicated that Israeli intelligence had helped stem the return of IS fighters and had even prevented hijacked airplanes from crashing into European cities.

Netanyahu added that Israel was also preventing the group from creating a second stronghold in Egypt.

"The IS is being destroyed in Iraq and Syria, but it is trying to establish an alternative territorial base in the Sinai. Israel is contributing to preventing that in myriad ways," he said. "In general, I would say that Israel is the most powerful indigenous force in the Middle East that fights radical Islam."

While thousands of European citizens are reported to have travelled to Syria and Iraq, Israel has seen comparatively few citizens join the IS group, though it remains a significant concern to security forces.

Israel said to be considering sending direct aid to deteriorating Gaza

TOI STAFF

Israeli security officials are weighing up sending food and medicine to the Gaza Strip for the first time, in a bid to halt deteriorating conditions there and prevent the outbreak of violence, *Hadashot news* reported on Saturday.

In a security assessment handed recently to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the defence establishment reiterated its belief that the Hamas terror group currently ruling Gaza is not interested in another conflict with Israel. However, an economic collapse would make such a scenario inevitable.

Until now, Israel has not directly sent humanitarian aid to Gaza but has helped facilitate

the transfer of goods provided by the United Nations and others into the strip.

At the beginning of January, Israel's Cabinet tasked the national security adviser with drawing up a plan to deal with the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and asked him to report back within three weeks. However, no plan has yet been filed, *Hadashot* said.

Responding to the Saturday report, a diplomatic official told *Hadashot news* that "the situation in the Gaza Strip is a result of the tension between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, which does not transfer money".

"Israel has taken steps to ensure that this tension will have as little impact as possible on the humanitarian



Photo: AFP Photo/Mahmud Hams

Palestinian children do their homework by candlelight during a power outage situation," the official added.

A similar warning was made earlier this week by UN Middle East peace envoy Nickolay Mladenov, who said the Gaza Strip was on the verge of "full collapse".

He argued that key to saving Gaza from disaster was

restoring the government of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to power there, a decade after it was forced out by Hamas.

Repeated reconciliation efforts between Hamas and Fatah, the party that dominates the Palestinian Authority, have

failed to reach an agreement that would return control of Gaza to the latter – most recently because Hamas refused to surrender its considerable arsenal of weapons and military infrastructure.

Earlier this month, the White House froze about \$100 million (R1.2 billion) in contributions to UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, after the Palestinians announced they would no longer accept the US as a mediator in peace talks with Israel.

Mladenov said he would raise those concerns with the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting, which met last Wednesday in Brussels to coordinate international donor support for the Palestinians.

Erekat slates US

KHALED ABU TOAMEH

On Saturday, senior Palestinian official Saeb Erekat accused the Trump administration of trying to depose the Palestinian leadership in a "coup" and told Nikki Haley, US envoy to the United Nations, to "shut up" after she criticised Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

Erekat, who has led the Palestinian peace negotiations and is secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), singled out Haley, who slammed Abbas for a recent speech that was full of anti-Semitic tropes.

Erekat said Haley's "impudence" had gone as far as calling for removing Abbas from power. He told the Palestinian *Al-Watan Voice* news website: "This is the president who led the peace process and promoted the principle of the two-state solution. Now this [US] ambassador is accusing him of lacking courage, and is calling for replacing him."

Only the Palestinian people have that right, he said. Erekat was reacting to a speech given by Haley to the UN on January 25.

"President Abbas declared the landmark Oslo Peace Accords dead. He rejected any American role in peace talks. He insulted the American president. He called for suspending recognition of Israel. He invoked an ugly and fictional past, reaching back to the 17th century to paint Israel as a colonialist project engineered by European powers," Haley said.

"A speech that indulges in outrageous and discredited conspiracy theories is not the speech of a person with the courage and the will to seek peace.

Erekat insisted that the recognition by US President Donald Trump of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, together with Haley's remarks, amounted to an attempt to stage a "coup" against the "Palestinian political system".

He said the goal of Israel and the US was to "undermine the Palestinian national project".

Nevertheless, he insisted that the Palestinians were not looking for a fight with the US.

No peace without US – Jordan

AFP AND TOI STAFF

On Sunday, King Abdullah II of Jordan said the US remains essential to any hope of a peaceful solution between Israel and the Palestinians, despite criticism of the new US stance on Jerusalem by Arab states and the Palestinians.

"We cannot have a peace process or a peace solution without the role of the US," the monarch told CNN.

This was true, he said, even after US President Donald Trump decided to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv, where nearly every other country has its embassy, to Jerusalem.

In December, Jordan had called Trump's move "a violation of decisions of international law and the United Nations charter", and Abdullah reiterated his concerns to Vice President Mike Pence when he visited the Middle East last month.

Abdullah noted on Sunday that Trump's decision had "created a backlash" by leaving Palestinians feeling "that there isn't an honest broker".

However, he added, "I'd like to reserve judgement because we're still waiting for the Americans to come out with their peace plan."

Trump's decision was warmly embraced by Israel, but widely decried around the world, sparking outrage and protests from Arabs and Muslims.

Relations between the US administration and the Palestinian Authority (PA) have been strained since Trump's December 6 announcement recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

PA President Mahmoud Abbas and senior PA officials have since stated that the US was no longer qualified to play any role in a Middle East peace process because of its "bias" in favour of Israel.



News and views from the Fed

Israel, the hub of hi-tech innovation

Rowan Polovin, chairperson: SAZF Cape Council

I recently returned from the future, having attended three extraordinary hi-tech conferences in Israel in less than a week. Thousands of investors, venture capital firms, multinational companies, entrepreneurs and startup companies from around the world flocked to these events.

At CyberTech Israel in Tel Aviv, people gathered to learn about Israel's global dominance in cybersecurity. Dr Eviatar Matania, director-general of the Israel National Cyber Directorate, discussed how countries, companies and investors are increasingly collaborating with Israel in order to fight and protect themselves from cyber threats.

Education Minister and anti-fraud software pioneer Naftali Bennett spoke of Israel's unique ability to provide young people with real-life challenges from an early age, including problem-solving, perseverance and responsibility. This, he said, was a strong factor in Israel's global success.

Eli Groner, director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, discussed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's travel schedule. As a result of Israel's growing stature in the world, it now includes most of the countries that objected to, or abstained from, the UN vote that led to the establishment of modern Israel 70 years ago.

I then attended Chatbot Summit in Tel Aviv, along with startup companies and entrepreneurs from around the world, to learn about the artificial intelligence revolution in human-computer interaction. Chatbots are natural language-speaking and understanding

computers. Humans will soon be interacting almost exclusively with chatbots to buy insurance, book plane tickets, learn languages, deal with customer service, trade currencies, respond to emails and do a plethora of as yet unknown tasks. Many Israeli companies lead the world in this field, hence the hosting of a global summit on the topic.

Finally, I travelled to Jerusalem to attend the OurCrowd Global Investment Summit. Almost 10 000 people from more than 90 countries, along with 600 venture capital firms, 300 multinationals and numerous delegations, joined me in Israel's capital to witness Israeli technology that is changing the world. Its technological prowess extends to areas as diverse as FinTech, CyberTech, AgriTech, MedTech, artificial intelligence, big data, analytics, robotics, augmented reality and space.

We learned how Boston police used surveillance technology called Briefcam to find the Boston Marathon bomber, and how police departments are using this technology to solve crimes within minutes or hours instead of months.

We watched autonomous drones flying around building sites to build 3-D models of the construction and compare deviations against the architectural plans.

We witnessed doctors using technology from Zebra Medical Vision to perform revolutionary medical diagnostics from afar, without ever having to physically examine a patient in person.

We were shown artificial intelligence software, called BrainQ, that develops personalised treatments for individuals with neurological disorders that can lead to almost total recovery.

We saw autonomous driving car technology map out the landscape around it in real time and reduce accidents on the road.

We experienced an augmented reality device, called Edgybees, that adds immediate information to live video footage used for life-saving acts such as firefighting and hurricane relief.

We watched a small 3-D printer build a complex multidimensional shape in less than five minutes that could be used as a tool in outer space.

In short, we were taken into the future.

It is blatantly obvious to those with eyes wide open that Israel is filling the earth with her fruits. It seems that South Africa's ruling party and the confederacy of dunces stacked up against the so-called startup nation are destined to be left in the doldrums. The boycott movement and its allies are utterly irrelevant, fighting an evil but unwinnable battle from a different age. Our country had better wake up to this reality before it is too late.

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West Bank widows lament their common bond

JACOB MAGID

Less than a month after her husband, Raziel, was gunned down in a terror attack outside the Havat Gilad outpost, Yael Shevach arrived in the neighbouring Har Bracha settlement on Tuesday to console Miriam Ben-Gal. Her husband, Itamar, was fatally stabbed in a terror attack on Monday.

Talking about their meeting outside the Ben-Gal home, Yael said the two widows traced eerie similarities in their respective tragedies.

"We are both educators, and Raziel and Itamar were Torah scholars. Both of us feel that we were chosen for this role," said Yael, defining "this role" as the widows being responsible for strengthening the settlement movement in their husbands' honour.

"Raziel and Itamar loved life, they both loved to dress and eat well. Raziel was killed on his way home from a circumcision and Itamar was on his way to a circumcision. Raziel's sister will be getting married in less than a month; so will Miriam's sister," added Yael.

Hours after 29-year-old Itamar was stabbed to death while hitchhiking at the Ariel Junction in the central West Bank on Monday,

Yael posted on Facebook that she felt "as if she gained a new sister".

"We will get through this together. Alone," she wrote.

On Tuesday morning, ahead of Ben-Gal's funeral, Yael published a poem in which she lamented her newly formed bond with Miriam.

Raziel Shevach was shot dead by a Palestinian terrorist on January 9. The father of six had known Ben-Gal, a father of four, through mutual friends.

Similar to Shevach's murder, which was used by his family to demand the legalisation of their northern West Bank outpost, the Ben-Gal family – like many other bereaved families in the West Bank – vowed on Tuesday at Itamar's grave to continue settlement building in response to the attack.

Also at the condolence visit was a neighbour, still reeling from her own tragedy less than seven months ago: Rachel Menzali was among the first to console the family immediately following the funeral. Menzali's father, Yosef Salomon, sister Tova and brother Elad were stabbed to death by a Palestinian terrorist in the Halamish settlement last July.

"Just when you think things are getting better, something like this happens, taking us back," Menzali's husband Ron told The Times of Israel.

African migrants in Israel opt for jail over deportation

JONAH MANDEL

At a detention centre in Israel's Negev desert, African migrants facing deportation say they would rather be imprisoned than sent to a country they know nothing about.

"I won't go there," Abda Ishmael, a 28-year-old Eritrean, said in excellent Hebrew outside Holot, an open facility housing 1 200 migrants and set to be shut down on April 1 as part of the government's expulsion policy.

"Guys who were here and went to Rwanda and Uganda – we saw what happened to them."

Israel is working to expel thousands of Eritreans and Sudanese who entered illegally over the years, giving them an ultimatum: leave by April 1 or risk being imprisoned indefinitely.

He vowed that he would not voluntarily step back into the unknown.

"We know of people who were killed by the Islamic State group, who were killed on their way to Libya, who starved and died of thirst in the desert," he said.

"These people were just seeking asylum."

To Shishay Tewelde Medihin, 24, Rwanda and Uganda are "death countries" and Israel is "risking my life".

He slammed an aid package Israel is reportedly planning to offer African countries in return for absorbing the migrants.

Tewelde Medihin said he planned to stay "indefinitely" in Saharonim prison, where migrants are expected to be sent if they refuse to leave.

According to interior ministry figures, there are 42 000 African migrants in

Christian Africans as a threat to Israel's Jewish character.

Calling them "infiltrators" and "labour migrants", Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly called for their expulsion.

Rights groups have rallied to the migrants' cause, saying they should be recognised in Israel as refugees and arguing that they will face grave danger if deported.

Others argue that conditions in Rwanda and Uganda are acceptable and it is not Israel's duty to care for them.

The migrants located at Holot are allowed to leave during the day.

Waiting for a bus outside the facility, a defiant Ahmad Jamal, 25, said the government's plan was a ploy by Netanyahu to divert attention from corruption probes.

"We're wise to his tricks," he

Anger over rabbi calling women 'weak-minded'

TOI STAFF

On Wednesday, Education Minister Naftali Bennett, head of the nationalist-Orthodox Jewish Home party, rejected a rabbi's disparaging comments about women, delivered to future Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) recruits at a religious academy.

In footage broadcast on Tuesday by Hadashot TV news, Rabbi Yosef Kelner was seen deriding women as "weak-minded" and calling careerwomen "gorillas" in an address to yeshiva students at the West Bank settlement of Eli.

Kelner's comments were "intolerable and inappropriate", Bennett said.

"The academy distanced itself [from Kelner's comments] and the rabbi himself, from what I understand, has apologised." This is not what religious Zionism believes, and not what Judaism believes. All my life experience tells me exactly the opposite."

Kelner, during a class on marriage and family that was filmed last summer, also told his students that "women have a limited capacity for spirituality. They can reach a medium level of spirituality. There's no such thing as spiritual women."

"They are weak-minded. They just babble, that's it. Women's babble," Kelner told the students.

Women, he said, were naturally intuitive, but modern culture had "turned them into nothing. They are destroying women until there won't be any women left. They are all so confused."

He went on to assert that women were less intelligent than men, saying there were more male Nobel laureates than female ones.



Naftali Bennett

"Just because they send them en masse to universities they're suddenly all great geniuses? No!"

He added: "Yes, there are some CEOs here and there, 'girlillas'."

Shortly after the footage was broadcast, Kelner issued a brief statement apologising for the comments.

Two years ago, Kelner came under fire for making homophobic remarks to his students. In the 2016 lecture, Kelner referred to gay people as "miserable" and "sick and perverted".



African asylum seekers and rights activists protest against deportation in front of the Rwandan Embassy in Herzliya, on February 7, 2018.

Given that the migrants could face danger or imprisonment if returned to their homelands, Israel is offering to relocate them to an unnamed third country, which aid workers say is Rwanda or Uganda.

Those who choose to leave by the end of March are being offered a cash incentive of \$3 500 (R42 000).

The plan has drawn criticism from the United Nations Refugee Agency as well as Israeli citizens, including Holocaust survivors, who say the country has a special duty to protect migrants.

Eritreans at Holot say Rwanda and Uganda hold no prospects for them, and they'd rather be imprisoned in Israel than embark on another journey into the unknown.

Ishmael, who reached Israel in 2011 after a terrifying journey from Eritrea, has heard about the fates of others sent to Rwanda or Uganda.

He said they have faced hardships in their new homes and gone on to take dangerous routes to Europe in the hope of winning refugee status.

Israel, half of them children, women or men with families, who are not facing the April deportation deadline.

Israeli officials say no one they classify as a refugee or asylum seeker will be deported. But out of 15 400 asylum requests filed, 6 600 have been processed and just 11 have received positive answers.

Another 1 000 Sudanese from Darfur have received special status preventing their deportation.

Other men whose requests have been denied could face deportation.

Migrants began entering Israel through what was then a porous Egyptian border in 2007. The border has since been strengthened, all but ending illegal crossings.

Many migrants ended up in southern Tel Aviv, where they found work as dishwashers and cooks. Some residents have blamed them for rising crime rates there, and are lobbying the government for their deportation.

Religious and conservative politicians have portrayed the presence of Muslim and

said bitterly.

Ishmael asked how he could be considered an economic migrant if he cannot be deported to his own country because of the dangers there.

Both Ishmael and Tewelde Medihin miss their home country, but say they had no choice but to flee what they describe as a dictatorship.

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Tel Aviv apartment owned by Putin

TOI STAFF

Looking to rent an apartment in Tel Aviv? Your landlord could be Russia's President Vladimir Putin.

A 1.5 bedroom apartment on the city's Pinsker Street, owned by the Russian leader, is available for rent, the *Yedioth Ahronoth* daily reported on Monday.

The apartment had belonged to Mina Yuditskaya Berliner, a former schoolteacher of Putin. The Russian president gave her the apartment as a gift and when she died in December, she bequeathed it back to him, care of the Russian embassy.

Yuditskaya Berliner, who taught German to Putin at a Saint Petersburg high school, immigrated to Israel in 1973.

After not seeing each other for years, the two were reunited in 2005, when Putin met his former teacher during a visit to Israel.

Berliner described her meeting with Putin in a 2014 interview with the Ynet news site.

"As we were walking to have tea, he told me: 'You see, I'm bald



Russia's President Vladimir Putin

Photo: AFP Photo/Grigory Dukor

now," she said. "I replied: 'I can see that.'" At the reception, Putin introduced her to then Israeli president Moshe Katzav.

After the meeting, Berliner, who is a widow, began receiving gifts: a watch and Putin's autographed 2 000 biography. Shortly after that, an employee of the Russian government showed up at her doorstep and took her to see some apartments in the centre of Tel Aviv, she told Ynet.

"I told him all I needed was a flat that would be near the

bus station, the market and *kuppat holim*," she said, using the Hebrew term for a health maintenance organisation. "It all happened fast from there. A few months later, the movers came to my rented apartment in Florentine, in southern Tel Aviv, packed everything up and moved me," she said.

She described Putin as a diligent student who, despite skipping classes to attend wrestling matches and practice, had a good command of the material taught to him.

Everybody Loves Raymond creator discovers love of Israeli food in new series

TRACY FRYDBERG

There was plenty of jarred gefilte fish and bland brisket in Phil Rosenthal's childhood home, but what the creator of the long-running US sitcom, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, really craved was food with flavour: pizza and burgers, oil and fat and salt.

To compensate for lost time, the Jewish writer-turned-food critic has found a way to eat his way around the world in his new show, *Somebody Feed Phil*. In the six-part series, Rosenthal brings a healthy dash of humour to the food documentary genre.

Rosenthal tries all that Israel has to offer in the series' third episode, which focuses on Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Caesarea and Acre.

To guide Rosenthal along his culinary journey in Israel is Michael Solomonov, the award-winning Philadelphia chef and creator of his own Netflix food documentary, *In Search of Israeli Cuisine*.

What makes Rosenthal's series different is that his background is more comedic than culinary: He was the writer, creator and executive producer of the hit sitcom, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, which aired from 1996 to 2005.

While working on the sitcom, Rosenthal had an epiphany that inspired his Netflix series. He was



Dr Shakshuka feeds Phil Rosenthal

writing the script for an episode in which the Romano family travels to Italy. Ray Romano's character, lacking any interest in culture, travels to Italy under protest. But the character has a transformative experience in his family's country of origin.

"I decided that I would love to do this for other people, and that my enthusiasm for travel and food was worth showing because I think there is no more mind-expanding thing we can do in life than travel, and I think the world would be better if we could all experience a little bit of someone else's experience," Rosenthal said.

His idea originally emerged as Rosenthal's award-winning PBS show, *I'll Have What Phil's Having*, before moving to Netflix.

In Rosenthal's journey to the Jewish state, his initial connection with Israel seems superficial. He likens his previous trip with going to Hebrew school or being among family. But as the story develops, so does his connection to the land and its people.

"Food is the great connector and laughs are the cement," Rosenthal told The Times of Israel. "We have to eat. But it's also a very social thing. If the food is good then maybe we have a good time, but if we laugh, now we are truly friends."

Rosenthal does have an easy time laughing with everyone he meets in Israel, from old women in the mall to hip Tel Avivians on the street.

And while humour might be on the menu, controversy is not. Unfortunately, it found him.

"Jerusalem is the spiritual centre, obviously, of the world, and it's where all of the politics that we've read about in the news happen," he says in the opening scene's voice-over.

"What I want to focus on is the part that maybe the news doesn't cover, how beautiful the rest of the country is, including Israel's capital... Tel Aviv."

You could hear a pita drop.

Israel has called Jerusalem its capital since the founding of the state in 1948, though many within the international community will not recognise Jerusalem as such, pending a final peace deal with the Palestinians. In December, US President Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital and committed to moving the US embassy to Jerusalem.

Rosenthal regrets the error. "I did not mean to be controversial in any way." When I read that line, I honestly thought Tel Aviv was the capital of Israel... I'm sorry we mentioned it at all."

Saying he wished he could fix the line, Rosenthal said: "All I can do is apologise to anyone I've offended with that statement... Whatever people consider the capital of Israel is fine with me."

Despite the fact-checking mishap, the eating must go on. The tall and lanky Jewish dad does indeed look like he could use the protein as he hops from sampling falafel to Iraqi soup to a herring sandwich in Tel Aviv's open-air market, taking in everyone's story along the way.

Cancer from cellphones? New studies say no need to hang up

SETH BORENSTEIN AND LAURAN NEERGAARD

Two government studies that bombarded rats and mice with cellphone radiation found a weak link to some heart tumours, but federal regulators and some scientists say there's no need to worry – it's safe to use your device.

Previous studies of cellphone users found little reason for concern, but the newest research took a closer look at the effects of super-high doses of cellphone radiation in animals to address some lingering questions that could not be tested on humans.

The rat study, released on Friday, found a small increase in an unusual type of heart tumour in male rats, but there were no significant problems in female rats or in a separate study of mice. Scientists could not find hard evidence supporting concerns about brain tumours.

John Bucher of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, who is the lead author of the research, said he wouldn't change his cellphone use.

While Dr Otis Brawley, the American Cancer Society's chief medical officer, agreed, he cautioned that the rodent studies do not reflect real-life cellphone use.

"These draft reports are bound to create a lot of concern, but they won't change what I tell people. The evidence for an association between cellphones and cancer is weak. And so far, we have not seen a higher cancer risk in people. But if you're concerned about this animal data, wear an earpiece."

The findings about the rare nerve-tissue tumour discovered in the hearts of male rats do not translate directly into a concern for humans, Bucher stressed.

Bucher's agency conducted the \$25 million (R301 million) study at the behest of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"The current safety limits for cellphones are acceptable for protecting the public health," said FDA radiation health chief Dr Jeffrey Shuren.

Bucher said typical cellphone use was "very, very, very much lower than what we studied".

Rats and mice were bombarded for nine hours a day, for up to two years, with a radiation level so high that humans would only experience it briefly, such as when a phone with a weak signal expends more energy searching for a stronger one, Bucher said.

"At best it might be a weak carcinogen... if, in fact, it is a carcinogen," he said.

Confusingly, the radiated rats somehow lived longer than comparison rats that were not exposed to cellphone radiation. Bucher said that

could be just chance, or it could be that the radiation reduced inflammation in the rats, which in turn decreased the risk of a rat disease.

The toxicology programme released preliminary results two years ago and finalised them on Friday. The earlier report showed a hint of increased brain tumours in male rats, but the final results did not bear that out.

The new rat study found what it called "equivocal evidence" for increases in DNA damage, brain tumours and a few other cancers, but it was not clear that it was related to the cellphones.

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The findings failed to reassure long-time critics of cellphone radiation, such as David Carpenter, head of environmental health at the State University of New York in Albany. Carpenter said the studies were not large enough to uncover some rare problems and that the claim of "equivocal" findings about brain tumours "cannot be dismissed".

"It's not anywhere near as dangerous as cigarettes, but is there a real hazard from excessive use? Yes," he said.

In 2011, a working group of the International Agency for Research on Cancer said cellphones are possibly carcinogenic. But numerous studies over the years, have found little evidence of a problem.

Among the largest studies, a 2010 analysis in 13 countries found little or no risk of brain tumours, with a possible link in the heaviest users that the study's authors found inconclusive.

In December, the state of California published a guide on how people could reduce exposure to radio frequency from cellphones if they're worried, such as using earphones or texting instead.

Fitbit: friend or foe?

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

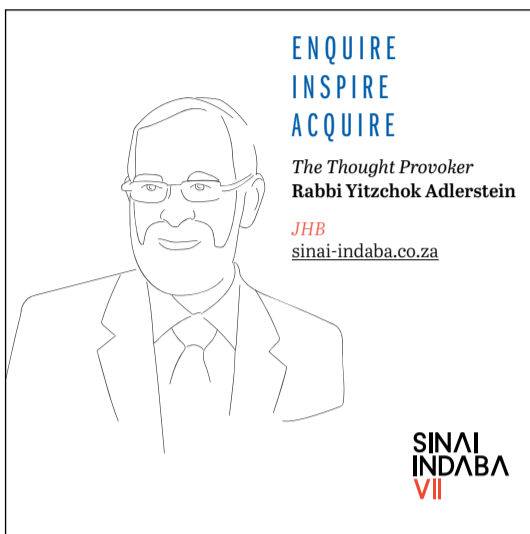
Every year, New Year's resolutions are made. When it comes to our health, many of us determine that this will be the year that we'll shed the kilos, boost our energy levels and get fit.

If 2017 trends are anything to go by, the Fitbit is the chosen tool to help make good on these fitness intentions.

But what if you don't quite meet the mark? Do fitness trackers increase our exercise levels or simply add to our Jewish guilt?

"We live in an age of ever-changing advice about what's healthy and what isn't," says clinical psychologist Liane Lurie. "These days, instant gratification is often prioritised over the process of getting somewhere. We want mechanisms that simultaneously provide feedback and allow us to push ourselves out of our comfort zones.

"These days, the fitness tracker – a 'motivational speaker' that fits on your arm – is all the rage. While the technology of biofeedback is nothing new, wearable devices that allow us to track our sleep quality, as well as our every calorie, breath and movement, seem to have revolutionised the way some people conduct their lives."



you become entirely accountable to yourself."

Many Fitbit fanatics we spoke to confirmed this.

"It's brilliant," said Barbi Louise Gillman, who's been using the Fitbit Alta HR for 19 months. "You fight against yourself. If you're below your target of 10 000 steps, it's up to you to make sure that you reach it – that's where it's so good because it tells you there's only so much to go, so in that way, it motivates you. I'm 70 years old and have been trying to keep fit for the past few years, and for me the Fitbit works."

Dr Herbie Schneider, a gastroenterologist, also approves. "I like the technology behind fitness trackers. I find it motivating to keep moving and to accumulate Vitality points. It's also helpful in tracking heart rate and sleep patterns. It has benefited my health overall." Schneider says that while not meeting goals does lead to some guilt, "that would apply even without a Fitbit".

HR manager Kerri Schneider-Rogerson loves the streamlined nature of her Fitbit watch. "I can tell the time, get my heart rate and monitor my steps. It's an all-in-one watch. It also makes me aware of when I'm not as active as I should be. If I sit behind my desk for too long, my watch will vibrate and tell me to go for a walk. When I come back to my desk, I feel like I've cleared my mind a bit and I feel better that I've done some exercise."

Blake Esrechowitz, who's been a health and fitness fanatic for more than a decade, says his main motivation for buying the Fitbit was the benefits offered by his medical aid. He also likes the app. "It's insightful and easy to use. It's made me a bit more goal focused, but Fitbit or not, I try to stay active."

The strength of the devices also lies in group challenges, says Nikki Friedman, former national brand manager for Fitbit. "People often increase their activity through the challenges on the app, such as the 'daily showdowns' or the 'work week hustle'. Fitbit users connect with friends and challenge one another for a day or even a week to see who does the most number of steps. Since many people are competitive by nature, they tend to do more steps in order to overtake their Fitbit friends and win a challenge."

For self-proclaimed Fitbit fanatic Charlene Meltz, who shares her passion for Fitbit with her husband and daughter, competition is a massive motivator. "We're all into it and compare how many steps we've done each day. We also set family challenges. I love the social aspect of it and being able to compete with friends and family all over the world."

For some users, it's simply about tracking themselves. Megan Milner, who runs a dog-walking service, uses the Fitbit to track her steps and

monitor calorie intake. "I've recently had a baby and wanted to make sure I was still being active enough. I love that it shows my caloric intake, as well as how many I've burned off for the day. It makes me more aware of what I'm eating."

Yet, adds Milner, she's mindful of the potential pitfalls of the device. "I feel guilty if I don't get enough steps in. I can see how you can get fixated on it."

Therein lies the potential danger, says Lurie. "If the information on the screen isn't where you think it should be, or the goals you have set yourself are initially less than realistic, the potential to become obsessive and berate yourself exists. Some people



may then push their bodies to dangerous levels all in the name of the calorie burn, often ignoring the tell-tale signs that a physical collapse is imminent. Others may suffer from a phenomenon called 'device fatigue' and shelve the concept altogether, feeling like a constant failure who will never reach their goals.

"It isn't a 'one size fits all'. Setting realistic goals together with a qualified professional and limiting how many times a day you check and recheck your device will encourage healthy habits rather than sabotaging yourself before you're even off the starting block."

"For a motivated person it's a useful tool, but if you cheat the system to get Discovery points, it's generally a waste of money."

Indeed, as technology and fitness have become increasingly aligned, activity trackers have gained unprecedented traction. Examples include a Fitbit device, an Apple or Polar watch, and a host of other products, many of which are aligned with medical scheme rewards programmes, such as Discovery Vitality and Momentum Multiply, which award members with points for fitness achievements. The devices also serve as fashion accessories.



While people wear them, hoping to be empowered to lead healthier, more active lives – because they'll have data, inspiration and guidance to reach their goals – the question remains: Do activity trackers really make a difference to our fitness levels? It depends on the person, says personal trainer Natalie Rosen, who runs a private ladies' gym, NRG 4 Life, in Glenhazel. "It can be demotivating or motivating, depending on how you use your device," she says.

"For a motivated person it's a useful tool, but if you cheat the system to get Discovery points, it's generally a waste of money. We're not going to get fitter, stronger or lose weight by cheating ourselves."

Lurie agrees. "With a simple tap, you can live-track yourself and be reminded to get up and move. The benefit is that

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Filling the post-matric gap

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

After the ever-increasing stresses that come with matric, many teens choose to take a gap year. But what are they really looking for? And does taking time off help or hamper their future prospects?

“It was one of the scariest decisions I’ve ever made,” says Skye Burgess, who, at the last minute, decided to turn her holiday travels through Southeast Asia into a gap year. “What I’ve learned is that the scariest decision can turn out to be amazing.”

After matriculating from King David Linksfield in 2016 with five distinctions, Skye left for a three-week trip around Southeast Asia with her older brother. The two made an unscheduled stop in Cambodia the day before they were due to fly home.

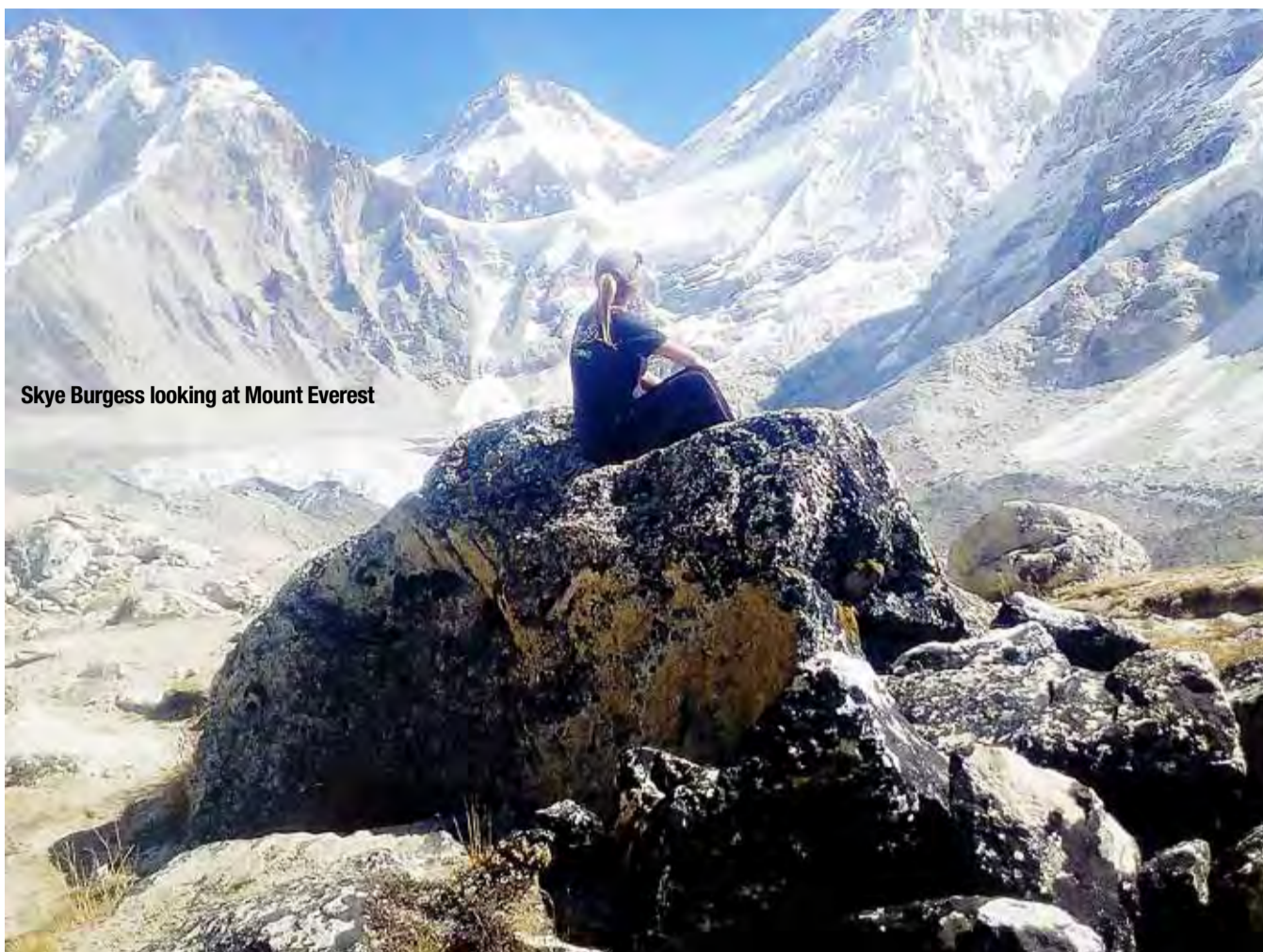
Sitting at a backpackers lodge having drinks, Skye reflected on how much she loved Cambodia. “The owner heard me and offered me a bartender job, complete with food and accommodation,” she recalls. “I’d wanted to take a gap year, but it was always a fantasy. Initially there wasn’t the slightest thought that I’d stay. I was 100% planning to go to university to study business.”

I’d recommend it to anybody who’s willing to work hard, make sacrifices and step out of their comfort zone.

Yet, as she and her brother prepared to leave from the bus station the next morning, Skye stayed put. “I just didn’t get on the bus. It was an opportunity I couldn’t say no to – it was potentially life-changing.”

After explaining her feelings to her parents, who had initially wanted her to return home and study, Skye stepped into the unknown with their blessing. What followed was a 13-month adventure of a lifetime, where she worked her way through Cambodia, Thailand, Australia and Nepal. Among the highlights of her trip were making lifelong friendships, teaching English to monks in Cambodia, rebuilding schools for earthquake victims in Nepal and staying at Mount Everest base camp.

Having recently returned to South Africa, Skye now plans to sustain her love of people and exploration by studying psychology and anthropology



Skye Burgess looking at Mount Everest

at Wits University. She hopes to complete part of her degree in Rome. “If I were to leave here to work somewhere else, it wouldn’t be because I dislike South Africa. I’m simply not the type of person to be in one place,” she says. “I feel like a different person now. I always knew I needed to learn about the world, but I had no idea that I actually knew nothing.”

“It was the first time I’d been by myself. I saw good and bad sides of life and I encountered interesting people who opened up my mind. I learnt about construction, I picked up languages easily and I realised that I can do a lot more than I thought. My greatest gain was falling in love with life.”

Dinah Poyurs – a class of 2017 matriculant from Yeshiva College, with four distinctions to her name – is about to take a more structured journey. She flies to Israel this weekend to take part in Bnei Akiva’s MTA programme. “It’s

touring Poland. Dinah sees this as an opportunity to take time off from secular studies and daily pressures, and to think clearly about the future. “I’m mostly looking forward to becoming more independent – it’s a great opportunity to grow up; you’re living by yourself and have to follow a schedule and take more responsibility. The fact that it’s a tried and tested programme and that I’m going with friends removes any worries I might have had.”

Bradley Mervis, who matriculated from King David Victory Park in 2016 and is about to start his BCom studies, recently returned from a year in Israel on Habonim’s Schnat programme. “School prepares you academically but not when it comes to independence, cooking, cleaning, living alone, budgeting, planning, using public transport. I’m better equipped now – I feel a lot more like an adult than I did before I left.”

For Joshua Pincus, a gap year spent in Israel and the US in 2015 provided career clarity. Now in his second year of studying strategic marketing communications at the University of Johannesburg, Joshua knew he couldn’t go to university straight after matric. “I went on a programme called Aardvark, which offers work experiences, learning and touring in Israel and the US,” he says. “I decided to go to Tel Aviv because I like big cities that are always on the move. You choose whichever internship you

want. Initially, I worked at a business incubator which aimed to bring foreign business and companies into Israel. I learned a lot but also realised that I couldn’t be emailing all day. So, I quit after four months and went to work with autistic children in an Israeli

great opportunity to see Israel and to learn,” she says. Seeking more than just an inspiring year away, Dinah is also contemplating pursuing a degree in Israel.

The year includes intensive Torah study at a midrasha, army volunteering, kibbutz work and

kindergarden.

“I then worked at an American Jewish summer camp in Pennsylvania and spent a few months travelling there with my new friends. My gap year taught me responsibility, budgeting and how to wash my own clothes. Most importantly, it helped me discover what I wanted to do, which was marketing, because I love interacting with people.”

After matriculating from King David Victory Park in 2014, Taiman Milner followed his long-held dream to work on yachts in the US. Three years on, he’s still sailing the seas. He’s based in Fort Lauderdale and works on general yacht maintenance and managing watersport equipment. “Working on yachts was a great way to see the world while making money. I heard about yachting when I was younger and the idea stuck, so after matric, I followed my instincts.

“I’ve gained a lot. I’ve been to amazing places like Panama, Cuba and the Bahamas. I’ve also explored other places in South and Central America when I’ve had time off. I’d recommend it to anybody who’s willing to work hard, make sacrifices and step out of their comfort zone. I’ve made countless friends along my travels. It’s been the best decision I’ve made so far.”

Taiman plans to eventually return to SA to pursue a qualification in property development, but for now he’s still charting his own course. “I’ll be back within the next few months for a holiday and then I’ll continue working, this time in Europe,” he says.

A parent of three children who’ve pursued gap years, the youngest of whom is leaving in April, Mickie Spitalnik Mayer is a self-taught expert on the topic. “We put gap years together for each of my kids based on their

interests. It was a lot cheaper than having them go on the programmes on offer,” she says. “Gap years can be very expensive, but we’ve been strict about instilling a budget and allowing our kids to work and support themselves for part of the year.”

Her oldest son, now 22, did Marva, a two-month Israeli army experience, and then worked as a soccer coach at a US summer camp. He travelled to London with the money he made and then returned to Israel and did Magen David Adom, an ambulance volunteer and training programme. A year later, he was accepted into the Israeli army. Now he’s about to start studying in Israel.

“He didn’t know what he wanted to do after matric and he wasn’t ready to study, so taking the gap year and going to the army was brilliant for him,” says Mayer. “Many of his friends are now finishing


their degrees and my son is just starting, but I don’t think he’s missed anything – he’s gained so much.

“My daughter did one semester of Aardvark in Tel Aviv, cooked at a camp in America and later au paired in London for three months. She always wanted to do occupational therapy, so after her gap year, she came back to study at university – she’d already received a deferred acceptance. My younger son just matriculated and he’s doing a pre-army programme, a US camp work experience and Magen David Adom.”

“Gap years can be very expensive, but we’ve been strict about instilling a budget and allowing our kids to work and support themselves for part of the year.”

Mayer believes in gap years. “Kids are quite mollycoddled here, so this gives them a real sense of their independence. They discover their strengths. A lot of kids are very itchy after school. Matric is stressful and many kids go straight to university afterwards, but a lot of them drop out. Some just get there later in terms of discovering what they really want to do.”

Considering the mounting pressures of today’s world, it’s natural that kids want to explore, adds Mayer. “They should experiment in positive ways, learning about their capabilities. In a world that’s largely about buying and consuming things, giving kids experiences is invaluable. Taking a year off while still supported by their families, but having to work within a budget, gives them a different sense of who they are. They find their wings.”



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VII**

Germany recognises Algerian Jews as Holocaust survivors

DEBRA NUSSBAUM COHEN

Nearly 80 years after being persecuted by the Nazi-allied Vichy French government, 25 000 elderly Algerian Jews are being recognised for the first time as Holocaust survivors by the German government.

Algerian Jews had their French citizenship stripped in 1940 by the Vichy government, which then ruled the area. Nuremberg-like laws banned Jews from working as doctors, lawyers and teachers, as well as in government. Children were kicked out of French schools.

On Tuesday, 78 years after they endured suffering that left families penniless and starving, and pariahs in their own country, the Conference on Material Claims Against Germany – founded in 1951 as a body to engage the German government in negotiations for material compensation for Jewish victims of Nazi persecution – began taking their applications for recognition as survivors, making each eligible for a one-time “hardship grant” and additional services like food vouchers and in-home care.

“For the first time they’re being recognised as Nazi victims by the German government,” said Greg Schneider, executive vice-president of the Claims Conference. It is the last settlement Germany will make with a large group of Holocaust survivors, he added, since Algerian Jews are the only major population remaining without that recognition.

Each survivor approved will receive a hardship grant of €2 556 euros (R38 200). The money will be distributed from July.

The youngest Algerian survivors, born in 1942, would today be 76 years old. Most, however, are in their 80s and 90s, Schneider said. As important as the money is, even more valuable is acknowledgment of their suffering, he told JTA.

“They weren’t murdered,” Schneider said, “but there were lots of deprivations” under the anti-Semitic Vichy laws.

“There weren’t extermination camps in Algeria, but a person’s childhood was turned upside down because of this persecution targeting Jews. All these decades it’s never been acknowledged.”

Israel had earlier recognised Algerian Jews as Holocaust survivors. But the German government did not. Said Schneider: “It’s a psychological trauma. The validation and acknowledgement for so many people that’s what this will stand for.”

The Claims Conference has negotiated

“There weren’t extermination camps in Algeria, but a person’s childhood was turned upside down because of this persecution targeting Jews. All these decades it’s never been acknowledged.”

with the German government for about five years to get this done, Schneider told JTA. Being recognised as victims of the Holocaust now entitles survivors to social services like home care, food and transportation to doctor appointments in local communities funded through the Claims Conference.

The vast majority of the 20 000 people affected now live in France. On Monday, the Claims Conference will have a website where survivors can make an appointment to go to a Help Centre. The first Claim Help Centre opens in Paris on Tuesday morning.

Located across the street from the US Embassy, just a block from the Seine in the 8th arrondissement, the centre in the French capital will have a staff of 24 to assist the Paris area’s 12 000 Algerian survivors in assembling the



Jews were part of all the political life, the artistic life, in music, they were very involved in French and in Muslim society.

documentation they need in order to establish that they lived there between 1940 and 1942.

Satellite centres serving another 8 000 Jews will soon open in Marseille, Lyon and other French cities in the next few weeks. The Paris centre will be open throughout April. After that, people will be able to apply by downloading a form from the website and mailing it in.

Some 4 000 surviving Algerian Jews live in Israel. Since the Israeli government keeps a registry of survivors, their addresses were available to the Claims Conference. Letters to them were mailed out on Sunday.

The rest of the survivors live in Francophone Canada, mostly around Montreal, according to the Claims Conference. Eventually they, too, will get assistance in applying for the new German recognition.

The German government has spent nearly €75 billion (R1.1 trillion) on compensation and restitution to Holocaust survivors between 1953 and 2016, the most recent year for which there is a record, according to figures provided by Martin Chaudhuri, a spokesperson for Germany’s finance ministry.

Chaudhuri confirmed the compensation settlement for Algerian Jews.

“There is now the possibility of compensation in the framework of the so-called Hardship Funds. The JCC [Jewish Claims Conference] and the German federal ministry of finance estimate that 30 000 people might be concerned,” he wrote to JTA. “The JCC will decide about the individual cases, considering the guidelines which were decided upon together between the JCC and the German federal ministry of finance.”

Today almost no Jews remain in Algeria – fewer than 50, according to the Jewish Virtual Library.

But in 1940 it was a different story. A Vichy government census showed about 118 000 Jews there, according to Wesley Fisher, the Claims Conference’s director of research. They had been citizens of France since 1870. It was a community full of professionals and artists and writers.

The Algerian Jewish community was the most assimilated of any Muslim country, said Haim Saadoun, a professor at Israel’s Open University and director of The Documentation Center of North African Jewry During WWII.

Although they were generally less religious than Jews in neighbouring Morocco and Tunisia, there were still hundreds of synagogues in hundreds of cities, towns and villages.

Anti-Semitism had been a strong force in Algeria since the late 19th century, said Saadoun.

Despite that, Jewish life was vibrant. Jews, he said, “were part of all the political life, the artistic life, in music, they were very involved in French and in Muslim society. The first local novels written in French were by Jews.”

Saadoun said more than one-third of doctors in Algeria were Jewish, as were nearly a quarter of the lawyers.

Vichy anti-Jewish laws, issued first in

early October 1940, stripped Jews of French citizenship and forbade them from working in army, press, civil service, industrial and commercial jobs. They were then prohibited from working in education, law and medicine.

It was deeply traumatic, said Saadoun. The community did not know then that it would last just two years. Jews opened their own schools in Algiers, Oran and Constantine: 70 elementary schools and five secondary schools, he said, which were run by Jewish administrators but regulated by the Vichy government, which did not permit the Jewish community to open its own university.

The Claims Conference has tried to keep this story under wraps until now, in part to make sure a system was in place to pay claimants directly without them having to pay attorney’s fees.

“On a communal level, we are unfortunately reaching the time when the stories of the Shoah pass from memory to history,” Schneider told JTA. “Germany recognising the persecution is very important for the historical record. It helps combat Holocaust denial. Fifty years from now, 100 years from now, it will be much harder to refute.”

“In the 1930s and ’40s, Jews were abandoned by their towns, their friends, society and even the Jewish communities” in other places, he said. “We will never do that again. Even though it’s 70 years later, we’re still fighting. I wish it had been sooner.” (JTA)

Veteran tennis ace ‘kleibs naches’ at Davis Cup

NICOLA MILTZ

When the Israeli side emerged triumphant at last weekend's Davis Cup clash against team South Africa in Pretoria, the taste of victory was that much sweeter for Dr Ian Froman, the man known in Israel as “the father of tennis”.

Like a proud dad, Froman, now aged 80 – the South African-born, Israeli former tennis player and founder of the internationally lauded Israel Tennis Centres (ITC) – “kleibed huge nachas” as he watched the blue-and-whites narrowly clinch victory, securing Israel a spot in the Euro/Africa Group 1 event in 2019.

“It was like watching my children,” he told SA Jewish Report. We chatted to Froman at River Meadow Manor in Irene, where he and the team were staying, just a short walk from the Irene Country Club in Centurion where the matches were played.

“These players, my protégés, all came through the ITC. What a joy to see them in action in South Africa, my country of birth. It was an unbelievable treat,” he said, bleary eyed.



Dr Ian Froman and the British Ambassador to Israel, Sir Simon McDonald immediately after the British team beat Israel in the final match of the 2005 Davis Cup

Every top Israeli tennis player has come through the ranks of the ITC.

Froman, a former tennis ace himself, played at the Wimbledon Championships in 1955 in the men's singles and represented Israel in a number of Davis Cups in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

A living tennis legend in Israel, he was once credited by former president Chaim Herzog as having “created a virtual social revolution throughout Israel” for his pioneering work in initiating Israel's tennis programme countrywide. Herzog said this on presenting Froman with the Israel Prize, the country's most prestigious civilian award, in 1989.

Today tennis is big in Israel. But when the young Froman made aliya in 1964, fresh out of dentistry school with his wife, Ruth, and their five-month-old baby, tennis in Israel was “a joke”, he said.

Describing it as a “mockery” when he first took part in the Davis Cup in 1968 playing for Israel, Froman knew he had to do something to revolutionise the sport there and turn it into something the country could be proud of.

He recalls with mirth the time Israel hosted Iran. The teams had to share two clay courts with club members, who forced the players to wait for them to finish their weekend club matches before they could start.

“Matches started late, and the players had to sweep, roll and water the courts to prepare them. There weren't enough change rooms; it was a farce. We made complete idiots of ourselves. Luckily, we lost!” he said, “otherwise Iran would've complained bitterly.”

It was against this backdrop that the first seeds of his vision to improve tennis were sown. His dream was to create a place for children from all walks of life to come and play tennis – to grow the sport and create future stars in a centre of

excellence “where no child would be turned away”.

Money to start up the ITC first came from South Africa, said Froman. He initially brought the idea back home in the early '70s, hoping to raise much-needed funds.

Froman, who had little if any experience in fundraising, soon joined forces with five other “passionate, tennis-loving people” – Rubin Josephs, Harold Landesberg, Joe Shane, William Lippy and Freddy Krivine – all tennis contacts of his from around the world. They were a motley crew who shared a common vision to “bring tennis to the masses, regardless of ethnic or financial background or religion”.

“We wanted to build the foundations to create champions in tennis and in life,” said Froman.

With the first monies raised through sheer chutzpah and gumption, they managed to convince Pesach Balkin, the then mayor of the area they'd targeted in Israel, to build a tennis centre on the only land earmarked for sport there. It was a strawberry field and, according to Froman, the mayor liked the idea so much, he rubberstamped the paperwork and pushed it through council, despite facing a lot of opposition at the time.

The US investors wanted a world-class facility. Froman agreed, and no cent was spared. “Goedkoop is duurkoop,” he explains.

The ITC opened in the upmarket area of Ramat Hasharon on April 25 1976, with 14 tennis courts. There was much excitement.

Ruth recalls how dozens of children flocked to the centre during the early years. “It was all by word of mouth. Ian used a foghorn when he opened the gates, and the children kept rolling in.”

“All we had were 10 rackets and 10 tennis balls; that was it,” recalls Froman, who describes those early days as “the ITC's golden years”.

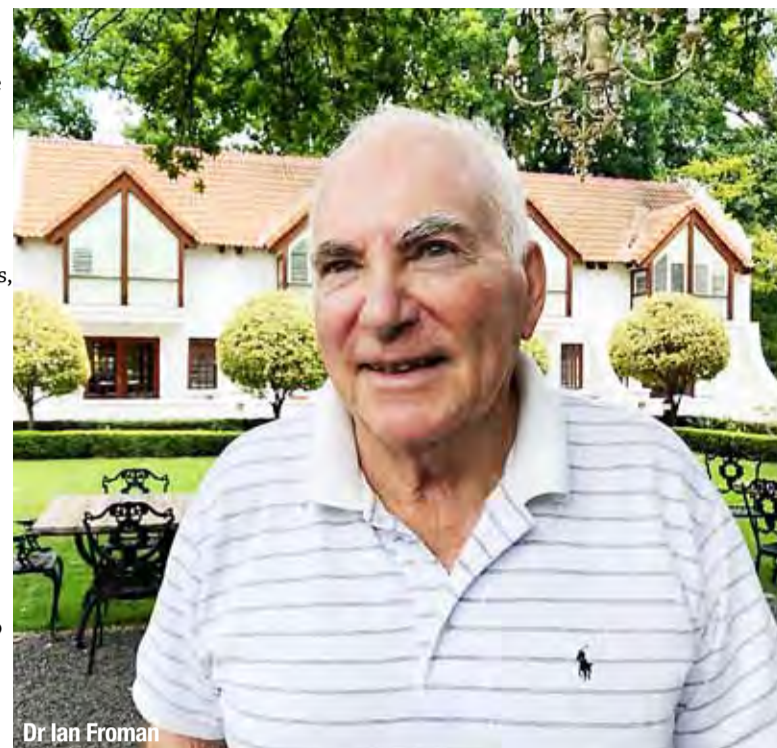
“There were so many volunteers. People brought delicious cakes and we made dozens of sandwiches,” adds Ruth, who worked in the tuckshop with her children. “People paid a stipend and no kid was turned away for lack of funds.”

The ITC has always been a not-for-profit organisation, funded by donors from around the world.

“We have never had a cent from the government. The ITC is not a place for politics,” said Froman. “It is a social service organisation for all children in Israel and serves more than 20 000 Israeli children every year.”

Today there are 15 internationally acclaimed centres which, says Froman, “stretch from Kiryat Shmona in the north to Ofakim in the south”.

“Many of our centres are in underprivileged



Dr Ian Froman

neighbourhoods. They are strategically situated to work with children at risk and with immigrant populations.”

Sunday was a special day for the Fromans as the victorious team bid them farewell with warm handshakes and backslapping embraces before catching their flight home.

Team captain Harel Levi, himself a product of the ITC, said: “The tennis centre is a holy place for tennis in Israel.”

Levi started playing tennis when he was eight years old on the kibbutz where he lived. Soon his parents realised he needed to attend the ITC if he wanted to make it in the game.

“We moved closer to Ramat Hasharon and soon the centre became my second home,” he recalled. “It was a place to make friends, learn life lessons and have fun.”

Yoni Yarom, chairperson of the Israeli Tennis Association, chipped in, calling Froman “Mr Tennis”.

“He not only is the father of tennis, he invented it!” he added.

The ITC website is full of alumni, who express their gratitude for the role the ITC played in their early lives as they spent much of their youth honing their skills there.

“It gives me a sense of *sipuk* – personal fulfilment and satisfaction – knowing that a whole generation of people have used tennis as a medium to develop themselves in sport and in life,” said Froman.

He nurtured his passion for Israel from afar

TRIBUTE

DIANE WOLFSON

Mervyn Horwitz – who passed away on January 31 – dreamed of making aliya, but his family commitments kept him in South Africa. So, he dedicated his life to helping to build and sustain the Jewish state through the Israel United Appeal and United Communal Fund (IUA-UCF) from his home in Pretoria.

Horwitz's efforts and passion were recognised when he received the prestigious Keren Hayesod “Yakir” Award in 1998, its inaugural year. This award is given to leaders of Keren Hayesod (Israel United Appeal) in recognition of their commitment and volunteerism, as well as to those who have distinguished themselves by their contribution towards promoting the goals of Keren Hayesod, both in Israel and throughout the Jewish world.

This was the first of many awards Horwitz received for his service to Israel and numerous other communal organisations. In October last year, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies' Pretoria Council gave him a community service award for his many years of dedicated service to Israel and the Pretoria Jewish community over the years.

He first joined the IUA-UCF in 1980 and chaired the Pretoria campaign for many years, and was a member of the national executive. “The Pretoria community is an ageing and diminishing one... nevertheless, the IUA-UCF campaign in Pretoria continues and we can be satisfied with the results over the years,” he wrote in the 1998 IUA-UCF annual booklet.

Horwitz was also involved in the establishment and growth of the Jaffa retirement home in Pretoria.

Horwitz was born in 1935 in Sunnyside, Pretoria, the elder of two sons, in a home steeped in Yiddishkeit. He was educated at Clapham High School and was very involved with Habonim.

That the State of Israel was declared around the formative and impressionable time of Horwitz's barmitzvah instilled in him an

overwhelming love for Israel. It became the main focus in his life, together with a desire for helping others and trying to make everyone around him happy.

In 1956, he volunteered to serve in Nachal for 20 months as Israel's security was volatile. Nachal, meaning fighting pioneer youth, refers to the paramilitary section of the Israel Defence Forces' programme. Formed in 1949, this Israeli army unit provided a support structure for young soldiers to develop, work on and protect new border kibbutzim in Israel.

His group – the second from South Africa – was sent to a southern outpost on the Gaza Strip border before going to a basic training camp in the Negev desert for five months. Thereafter, these South Africans became fully fledged soldiers. After completing this training, Horwitz spent five months on Kibbutz Tzorah, a frontline kibbutz near the Jordanian border, where he was in great demand in the workshops as a qualified tradesman.

After 15 months, Horwitz, together with fellow volunteers, were released by the Israeli authorities and returned to Pretoria.

Horwitz met Shirley Brint through Habonim and married her upon returning home after Nachal. He then committed himself to nurturing his Zionist dreams and aspirations from afar.

They had four children – Neil, Stephen, Shana and Mark – who all went to Carmel School. Having accomplished much in his life, Horwitz was more proud of his family than his numerous other achievements.

In this world, there is only so much good, but those who knew Horwitz know that his good deeds changed lives for the better.



Mervyn Horwitz

Finding Jewish communities in Africa

STEVEN GRUZD

When one thinks of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, one doesn't immediately imagine the presence of Jews or a Jewish community. Since my day job takes me around the continent, I wanted to use these stopovers to seek out Jews living around Africa. So, this will be the first in a series I will be writing on the subject.

Part 1: Eggplant in Ethiopia

Before embarking on the five-hour flight to Addis Ababa, I called for assistance to find a shul there. Within five minutes, I got a Shabbos invite from Rabbi Eliyahu Chabib of Chabad Ethiopia.

"I'm not frum!" I texted.

Pause. "We're all frum." Then he texted:

"Can you bring kosher meat?"

"Chutzpah!" I thought.

I was about to catch an Uber to the airport when that request was made, so all I could do was buy a dozen ritzy Ooh La La! chocolates (Milchik, Beth Din Hechsher – I checked) at duty free instead.

Five or so hours later, at 17:00 on a Friday, here I was, waiting for Abi, my Ethiopian driver, outside the gleaming Chinese-built African Union headquarters. Did I have enough chocolates? Chassidim take the commandment, "Pru U' Rev'u" (Be fruitful and multiply), seriously.

Later, I found myself hopelessly lost in Addis's dusty side-roads when an Israeli-accented voicenote on my smartphone directed me to "find the yellow flag". Soon I spied Chabad's channukiah poking over a wall. I donned a blue-and-white beanie-sized yarmulke, bought a decade ago from "the last Jew in Cairo". It covers my bald spot perfectly.

There were big mezuzot. Inside was an aron kodesh. Shelves heaving with Jewish books were lined along a wall.

A giant poster of the Lubvitcher Rebbe dominated another. There was a Shabbos table bedecked with salads, humus and techina.

"Shalom! Ani Steve mi Drom Afrika (I am Steve from South Africa)!" I said to a seated senior citizen wearing a baseball cap. Shalom Tziyon was playing with two of the rabbi's three young daughters.

Shalom's family hails from Aden (now part of Yemen, sandwiched between Saudi Arabia and the Red Sea). Born in Ethiopia, Shalom splits his time between Addis Ababa and Hendon in London.

Once several hundred Adeni Jews lived in Addis Ababa. They built a diabetic treatment hospital there. Most made aliya. He showed me pictures of the Asmara shul (in Eritrea today) and its cemetery, recently vandalised, as well as the Adeni community. Was the vandalism connected to US President Donald Trump's recent pronouncements on his country's Jerusalem policy, or to the treatment of Eritrean migrants in Israel, I wondered. Shalom shrugged.

Enter Rabbi Eliyahu Chabib a tall man dressed in black, with a scraggly beard and twinkling, bespectacled eyes. He set up Chabad Ethiopia five years ago from scratch. His father was born in Algeria and his mother was French – hence the miniature Eiffel Tower statue atop the bookshelf. Rebbetzin Devorah's mom came from Chicago and her dad is Australian. I asked her what she does.

She pointed her one hand to the table, her other to Mushkie (5). "We give all Jews in Addis Ababa a kosher meal every night if they want it."

"Why only three children?" I asked.

"Yesh zman – dere is de time," said the 30-year-old rabbi, who is one of 14 children. Good thing his mishpocha (family) wasn't in Addis to scoff the chocolates, I thought.

After studying in New York for five years and being ordained as a rabbi, Chabad sent Rav Eliyahu on short shlichut stints to Peru, Bolivia and India. "Dere is Chabad 'Ouse in about 12 cities in India," he proudly proclaims. "Many Israelis and Jews love to trelv dere."

Then Daniel Barhenu and Avraham (whose surname I didn't catch), both Beta Yisrael (black Ethiopian Jews), arrived. In my pidgin Hebrew, rustier than a used car in Durban, we somehow communicated.

Daniel went to Israel before Operation Solomon airlifted 14 000 Beta Yisrael from this 3 000-year-old community to Israel in May 1991 as the Mengistu regime crumbled in Ethiopia. His Hebrew is mellifluous. Mine is the worst by far, bar Shtum Avraham. I think he said he'd walked to Israel through Sudan.

Shabbos arrived. Rav Eliyahu explained that the service mixes Ashkenazi, Adeni and Sephardi traditions. I kept swopping siddurs and losing my place. Shalom chanted *Shir-ha-Shirim*.

It was long.

Then in rushed a young blond man in a tatty T-shirt, tzitzit and sandals. It was Ro'i Friedman (23); his parents hail from Poland, I think. He was at the tail-end of a mammoth trek through Africa.

Chabad Addis was his last stop.

We all belted out *Lecha Dodi*,

winking, smiling and dancing for about six extra choruses.

I cried a bit.

Yigdal. Ro'i and I joined in, but we suddenly heard unfamiliar lines. Shalom explained that Sephardim have an extra line. That's news to us.

Rav made Kiddush, we vassed and ate delicious challot that Devorah had baked. The meal was sumptuous and heimlich, dominated by salads, soup, chicken schnitzel and chatzilim (eggplant). We spoke – in Hebrew, English, Adeni, Amharic, Yiddish and French – about Trump, Bibi, Mugabe and Zuma, about the parsha and Jews around the world.

I taught them to sing *Kol Haolam Kulo* in English. Daniel did it in Amharic. We benched, and ended appropriately: "Hinei Matov u Manayim – shevet achim gam yachad" – How good and pleasant it is for



Shalom Tziyon, Daniel Barhenu, Rabbi Eliyahu Chabib and his youngest daughter, Chana

brothers [and sisters] to sit together."

"So nu, you going to help us mit minyan tomorrow?"

"Is there a minyan if I don't come?"

"Maybe ken, maybe lo. Come."

I'm not the greatest shul goer, but when I lost my mom in 2015, I made a real effort to say Kaddish most mornings and evenings. Only then did I understand the meaning of Jewish community. If a mourner lacks nine other men, the departed soul ascends more slowly.

It's 10:30 on Saturday. Was I the minyan man? Nope. Just Rav, Shalom, Avraham, Daniel, Ro'i and me.

I learned something else. We Jews can

pray and learn and read a lot without a minyan. You can't take out the Torah, granted, but you can still read the Chumash then, as persecuted Jews have done for millennia.

'n Jood maak a plan, nê?

I promised to make sure that Chabad Addis has kosher meat for Pesach. So please, if you're passing through, perhaps on the way to Israel, do a mitzvah for this Rav and his tiny community. He's even opened a Jewish prayer room at Addis airport.

And if you have the time and the inclination, make a point of meeting Jews on your journeys.



Shalom Tziyon and Daniel Barhenu



Chabad Addis



Steven Gruzd and Rabbi Eliyahu Chabib in the shul

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Refugees – home is not where the heart is



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

When acrimonious debates arise in the Jewish world, such as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's controversial intention to deport 38 000 African refugees from Israel back to Africa, voices from tiny Jewish communities such as South Africa seem very muted.

South African Jewry has long been in distress because of political chaos in the country, its attempts to find its place here as a minority group, and its rapidly shrinking size. It is less than half the size it was in the 1970s, and many of its best and brightest have left for safer shores. Given these internal problems, it appears there is little appetite for involvement in wider matters such as the migrants.

Jews are justifiably proud of Israel, without having to trumpet its achievements to the world. However, there are moments in a nation's history when it must do something extremely public to affirm its core. This is such a moment. The status of "refugee" is central to the Jewish historical experience, and Jews are being put in the position one generation later of making such a decision for others.

Some 72% of the migrants are Eritrean and 20% Sudanese. They arrived between 2006 and 2012 to escape war and repression. Many live in south Tel Aviv.

The Knesset gave Netanyahu the power to deport them or imprison those refusing to leave "voluntarily". There have been accusations from Israelis that they have contributed to rising crime in the area and committed other misdemeanours. Many Israelis want them out.

Does this little South African Jewish community have anything useful to say? The mandate of its representative organisations is to "protect the Jewish way of life". Could this way of life include something about treating migrants?

We have witnessed myriad times in South African history the effects on helpless people of governments shunting them off to inhospitable places.

Menachem Begin gave us the opposite example in 1977 when, in one of his first acts after becoming Israeli prime minister, he welcomed 66 Vietnamese "boat people" who had been rescued at sea. He compared them to Jewish refugees seeking refuge during the Holocaust. He granted them citizenship. Israel was praised for its humanity.

Refugees from war and disaster zones globally are more numerous today than at any time since World War II, and are estimated at 66 million by the UN Refugee Agency. Some Western countries have taken a number of them in; others have refused. The 38 000 in Israel constitute one-half of 1% of Israel's population – currently no threat to its demography, although obviously the future is uncertain.

Netanyahu's intention to eject them has evoked protest in the Jewish world. Nearly 800 American Jewish clergymen signed an open letter urging him to cancel the deportations; two former heads of the foreign ministry, Nissim Ben Sheerit and Alon Liel, have protested; and 147 Israeli academics, 35 former diplomats and Israeli Holocaust survivors have voiced their opposition.

El Al pilots have said they will refuse to fly deportees to Africa. The US-based New Israel Fund, refugee support group HIAS and rights group T'ruah have joined. Jonathan Greenblatt, national director and CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, has protested, as has the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. Irwin Cotler, former justice minister in Canada who chairs the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights in Montreal, and has dealt with African migrant matters for more than a decade, has lobbied against deportation. And Netanyahu has accused George Soros, international humanitarian and philanthropist, of backing protests.

Are there any voices from rabbis, leaders or others here which might add a South African angle to the debate?

It would be interesting to hear the views of South African Jews – whether they agree with Netanyahu's plan or not – on something that is not about running Israel, but about a moral issue.

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

Apps for Olim Chadashim and tourists in Israel



Aliya – the good, the bad and the meshuga

Benita Levin

It's a sign of the times. You can fight it, avoid it or convince yourself you don't need it, but a year into our move to Israel, there is no doubt that technology has helped to soften our landing. These are some of the apps we've been using as we acclimatise to a new country.

Waze

Waze is your friend. Being an Israeli product, it's probably more like a best friend here. This app has helped direct me – and then redirect me – to places near and far.

In fairness, I was an avid Waze user while driving in South Africa too, but when you're adapting to travel on the "wrong" side of the road, having an app to guide you in the right direction is almost a necessity. It also calculates your expected arrival time – a win for all meticulous time-keepers!

Google Maps

I love this app when walking. The maps are clear and the estimated arrival times are also spot-on.

Google Translate

No matter how well you do in your Ulpan language class, this app is going to help you almost daily.

WhatsApp groups for school parents and committees promise a steady flow of messages in Hebrew, French or Russian. This app will help you with all language translations. A cautionary: much of the humour or innuendo is obviously often lost in translation, but you'll get the general gist of what is being said.

Life 360

This app is genius. It allows you to track down the whereabouts of any activated cellphone – and by extension, its owner – at any time. Each cellphone owner obviously has to grant permission to be included. (I've heard of cases in which some people are not so keen to allow their nearest and dearest to track their movements!)

But for those of us who have given the green light to our immediate family members, it helps you to check that your children have arrived at school. It's useful for your spouse to see that you've made it to a meeting in a new location. And it's priceless if you lose your phone!

Gett

This is a taxi service app.

It's a similar process to Uber in that you order your lift on your phone in advance, you receive notifications when the driver is nearby and you are sent the driver's name and number. But all vehicles are clearly marked as Gett taxis. The service isn't cheap, but it's reliable and prompt.

Moovit

As the name suggests, this is a transportation app for people on the move. It helps you locate the quickest bus route. If you set the time you are planning to catch a certain bus, it sends you a notification when you should make your way to the bus stop.

Pango

This parking app is like an electronic parking meter. You don't need cash on you. You can use your phone to pay for your parking bay.

i24News

Disclaimer: Before unashamedly punting this app, I need to say I have been working at this organisation for a few months. Now that that's out the way, I've been struck by how people here are passionate about politics. Most people have an opinion about what is happening in the world and what should be happening. They like to stay in the loop. i24News is a 24-hour television news channel, broadcasting from Tel Aviv to the US. Like many news apps the world over, users receive constant updates in the event of breaking news. They can also watch any updates they've missed. It's worth checking out.

New word of the week

Shtu-yot – nonsense

Smile of the week

My sister from Cape Town came to visit this month. As we walked out of a centre in Tel Aviv, the security guard shouted out: "South Africa." We turned to look at him, surprised at his outburst. "I know that accent very well here," he smiled.

World News in Brief

The Palestinian Authority is wiretapping people with the CIA's help, leaked document charges

A leaked document alleges that the Palestinian Authority (PA) has been wiretapping its residents with the backing of the CIA.

The document was shared on WhatsApp by an anonymous employee of the Palestinian wiretapping agency last month, according to the *Associated Press* (AP). It says the agency was set up jointly by three Palestinian security services and contains transcripts of recorded phone conversations.

The wiretapping allegedly targeted thousands of Palestinians, from the heads of militant groups to judges, lawyers and allies of PA President Mahmoud Abbas, according to AP.

Now two of the people allegedly wiretapped are suing the PA: Tawfiq Tirawi, the Palestinian West Bank

intelligence chief from 1994 to 2008, and Jawad Obeidat, head of the Palestinian Bar Association.

"I made these phone calls and this is evidence that the leaked report is true," said Obeidat, who has led anti-government protests in the past, according to AP. "This is a blatant violation of human rights."

The wiretapping reportedly began in 2013 with help from the CIA. In exchange, the PA allegedly shared the intelligence with the US spy agency.

The report comes as Abbas feuds with US President Donald Trump over Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

The head of Palestinian security services called the report "nonsense", according to AP.

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• JWBS is showing the movie *All the Money in the World* at 14:00, at Killarney Mall. This movie is about a race against time that reveals the true value of love over money. Tickets are R120 each. Contact Gloria on 011 485 5232.

Monday (February 12)

• UJW hosts Neil Jardine, sportsman, playwright, musician and former headmaster of Michaelhouse, on the music of Frank Loesser, the composer of *Gypsy* and *Dolls*. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office on 011 648 1053.



• JWBS hosts Wits trained scientist, medical doctor and psychiatrist Dr Jonathan Moch, whose passion is maximising one's brain health. Time: 19:30. Venue: Chabad Strathavon. R150 includes a light tea. Contact: 011 485 5232 or Leigh on 083 441 7287.

All proceeds from this function will go towards stocking the JWBS clothing depot with new socks, shoes and underwear for our clients, who depend on us for these basic necessities. A total of R150 000 was spent on these items in 2017.

Thursday (February 15)

• JHGC hosts a screening of the film *Saving Auschwitz* by Jonathan Hayoun. Time: 19:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. Free admission, donations welcome. RSVP to Shirley on 011 640 3100.

Friday (February 9)

• UZLC hosts Jack Bloom on "What impact will Cyril Ramaphosa have in moving South Africa forward?" Time: 12:45-14:00. Venue: Our Parents Home. Contact Gloria on 072 127 9421. Please note: Our chairperson is now Isaac Reznik as Lionel Slier is not available at this time.

Sunday (February 11)

• Second Innings hosts Dr Frans Cronje, CEO of the Institute of Race Relations on "Reasons For Hope". Time: Tea at 10:00; meeting at 10:30. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres, 85 George Avenue, Sandringham. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors includes tea and light refreshments. Contact: Linda Fleishman on 011 532 9701.

• Big Band Music Appreciation Society meets at 14:15 sharp at the Beit Emanuel Slome Auditorium, 38 Oxford Road, Parktown (entrance in Third Avenue). Programme is compiled

Transforming children's lives with the gift of mobility

It is estimated that as many as 600 000 of South Africa's children with disabilities aren't getting an education. Stigma is a significant contributing factor, as are the lack of resources and accessibility.

WIZO South Africa has joined forces with an Israeli nongovernmental organisation, Wheelchairs of Hope, to bring 50 child-size wheelchairs into the country.

Tamar Lazarus of WIZO South Africa says: "We often take for granted the ability to move around in our homes and community – and with that the ability to learn, interact with others and participate in family life. We are so pleased that we are able to assist, for now, 50 children with mobility impairments, and give them these wheelchairs from Wheelchairs of Hope to enable them to lead active and fulfilling lives."



to lead active and fulfilling lives."

Aimed at children aged five to nine, who are able to push themselves, these colourful wheelchairs are lightweight, yet robust enough to handle urban and country terrains. They were developed by specialist Israeli doctors and engineers from ALYN Hospital, Israel's leading paediatric and adolescent rehabilitation centre,

"to empower education through mobility".

Recipients of the 50 wheelchairs comprise individual children and organisations countrywide identified by WIZO.

"The wheelchairs will have a lifelong impact on these kids. WIZO believes in this project and considers this donation of 50 wheelchairs to be the first, hopefully with many more to come," adds Lazarus.

WIZO SA is seeking additional donors to become part of this excellent initiative.

To donate or recommend a suitable recipient, contact 021 464 6700 ext 131;

or email wizosa@ctjc.co.za.

Sonia Goldin celebrates her 100th birthday!

She came to South Africa when she was just 10 years old. Sonia is a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother AND a great-great-grandmother!

She was fortunate to have celebrated a 60th wedding anniversary with her late husband some years ago.

Sonia always did what a true Jewish Bobba does: she cooked and entertained to perfection.

L'chaim and Kol Hakavod!



Sonia Goldin

Ubuntu Africa – making a difference

Young people selected to participate in the Diller Teen Leadership Programme are required to initiate a project which will benefit the broader community.

And so, three years ago, a group of committed teens in Johannesburg established a summer day camp, Ubuntu Africa. The aim? To save lives by running a drowning prevention course for underprivileged kids aged four to 12, using the King David Linksfield school facilities and professional coaches.

The week-long experience has become so much more than a focus on safety and fun in the water – it is a proper summer camp, too. Kids are nurtured and entertained through various activities, such as arts and crafts, aimed at building their self-esteem.

The 2017 camp ran from November 30 to December 4. Volunteers from the King David schools spent each day ensuring that the kids were cared for and kept busy and happy.

Motivational speaker Kiki Marks told them her story and encouraged them to follow their dreams and reach their potential. They were taught anti-drowning skills and enjoyed fitness training sessions with Dean Passmore. And on gratitude day, they made snowglobes and thank

you cards for their teachers and caregivers. All this, while swimming daily under the careful instruction of the King David Linksfield swimming team.

On Sunday, December 3, they were treated to a fun Christmas party, complete with presents, hugs and a visit from Father Christmas.

We thank all the volunteers and organisations that have helped make Ubuntu Africa a success, in particular Mary Mudau, who looks after the kids every day with limited resources but unlimited kindness.

Chessed, acts of love and kindness, is a powerful tool we can all use to change the world.



Volunteers from the Diller Teen Leadership programme at the Ubuntu Africa day camp

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1939 = R10 000 Up to R30 000



30
1923 to 1964 = R4
1931 = R10 000 Up to R50 000

Celebrating Tu B'Shvat



King David Ariel
Rabbi Rabinowitz (campus rabbi), with Jonathan Segal and Levi Alexander



King David High School Linksfield
Grade 8s Jonathan Katz, Samuel Rubin, Daniel Appleton, Aiden Sack, Jayden Herson and Liron Taurog with the pecan tree that they planted



King David Victory Park Pre Primary
Chloe Cohen (Grade R) is eager to plant her sapling in the new vegetable garden



Yeshiva College
Tu B'Shvat at Yeshiva College was a fantastic day of growth and learning



King David Linksfield Junior Primary
Grade 3 pupils Ethan Galgut, Brett Wiskin and Jessie Cohen, learning all about the seven species in celebration of Tu B'Shvat



King David Victory Park Playschool
Playschool teacher Sha-Sha and Rebecca Jaches



King David Victory Park High School
Bradley Mervis (head boy 2016), Jason Mervis (head boy 2018) and Rowan Mervis (Grade 9)



King David Victory Park Primary
Amy Botha (Grade 2) makes her own palm tree for Tu B'Shvat



Sydenham Pre Primary
Planting seeds for Tu B'Shvat are Ayla Toker, Tyla Civin, Aviv Akrish, Baige Dedeu and Levi Riback



Torah Academy
Chaya Uzvolk, Mushka Wineberg and Adina Cohen



Minnie Behrson Nursery School
Gabriella Bean, Gia Winer, Liat Lutrin, Indyana Treger, Liam Meyers, Noa Defries, Lia Neu-Ner and Aaron Lipshitz with Morah Joan

Letters

BY SINGLING OUT ISRAEL FOR BLAME, THE ANC SHOWS ITS HYPOCRISY

THE ABAYUDAYA SHOULD FOLLOW ACCEPTED CONVERSION NORMS

Most letters sent to this and other publications are full of complaints.

Regarding letters that were printed in last week's SA Jewish Report, please consider the following:

Firstly, I was impressed by Zev Krengel's openness and transparency about what transpired at the ANC's December elective conference. Things don't always go as we would like and it was good to hear him admit this, instead of trying to sweep things under the carpet, as so many leaders do.

Secondly, I refer to Jack Miller's criticism of Israel for not accepting the Abayudaya (*How Jewish do the Abayudaya have to be?*, published in the February 2 edition). If someone who does not represent the French government grants someone else French citizenship, doing so won't make him a citizen of that country. Even if he is devoted to France, celebrates all her holidays and customs, and speaks only French, it won't qualify the person as a French native.

Going back thousands of years, the traditionally accepted way of getting a Jewish soul is either by having a Jewish mother or undergoing a traditional conversion. The Orthodox firmly believe that this is Hashem's will.

While the Abayudaya are obviously sincere in their commitment to

Judaism, they do not meet either of these requirements. Unfortunately, anyone who may have led them to believe that they were becoming traditionally Jewish was setting them up for disappointment.

Blaming the ultra-Orthodox for Israel not accepting their citizenship is incorrect.

Conversion is considered a big responsibility as the convert then becomes liable to follow the 613 mitzvot and is punished for those that he transgresses.

Given the Abayudaya's clear devotion to Judaism, it would be worth exploring whether they would be willing to follow these mitzvot.

If that is the case, they should be encouraged to convert in a way that's universally recognised. Israel needs more citizens and has welcomed in the Indian and Ethiopian Jews. Of course, it should do the same with Uganda's Abayudaya – that would be the humanitarian thing to do, as Jack Miller suggests.

Judaism holds converts in high regard and there is a specific mitzva to treat them well.

Requested to remain anonymous
Johannesburg

Why is the ANC so anti Israel? To try to find the answer, I've had to ask why the ANC is in bed with the Palestinian/BDS movement. The main reason I found is this: the ruling party cannot forgive Israel for having supplied the apartheid-era government with arms and ammunition. I decided to dig further, and discovered that it was not only Israel that did so.

France trained the apartheid-era armed forces, or the so-called special forces, to fight the ANC in Angola. These soldiers were trained on Elba, an island in Italy, with France hoping nobody would notice. I have a book on my shelf titled *In God We Trust*, written by an officer of the special forces. He relates how and where the training took place.

France also supplied the apartheid-era air force with Mirage jet fighters and helicopters, plus the spare parts. So, why do the ANC and the BDS movement have such a cozy relationship with France today?

The plot thickens. The apartheid government received all of its oil from Saudi Arabia and Iran. Gold talks. And today the ANC and the BDS movement are

in bed with both countries.

As for China, which has partnered with the ANC/BDS movement together with Brazil, Russia and India to form BRICS, it supplied arms to the apartheid government through Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), making that country's former dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, very wealthy indeed. China also collaborated with the apartheid government on nuclear energy, detonating a nuclear device somewhere in the stratosphere.

And, a German truck manufacturer – with the knowledge of the German government – built a special vehicle to operate in desert conditions for the apartheid government forces fighting the ANC in Angola. Think Field Marshal Rommel in the Western desert.

So, I ask myself: Why blame only Israel? The answer, I believe, is anti-Semitism.

Sonny Myerson
Cape Town

CRITICISE SA'S LEADERS, NOT TRUMP

On Friday, February 2, I was dismayed to hear Chai FM presenter Kathy Kaler, together with a guest whose name escapes me, ridicule and denigrate US President Donald Trump on her morning show.

I was saddened because Trump is a true friend of Israel and the Jewish people. He took a courageous step, one that no other US president has ever done, by declaring the US's intention to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to move its embassy there.

It is true that Trump is assertive and flamboyant, but his actions should be venerated and not lampooned. He is candid and calls a spade a spade.

May I suggest that Chai FM presenters pillory people such as Julius Malema, President Jacob Zuma and his band of outlaws, who have crippled South Africa and led it to the brink of bankruptcy, and Thulas Nxesi and Jessie Duarte, who are patently against South Africa accepting assistance from Israel. In fact, many members of the ANC would rather South Africans die of thirst than allow Israel to assist with desalination and water technology so necessary for survival in a drought.

Nathan Cheiman
Johannesburg

Discrimination is rife in SA

NICOLA MILTZ

This week, the Hate Crimes Working Group (HCWG) released its five-year report into hate crimes and discrimination in South Africa, concluding that discrimination is a daily reality here.

The research, called *The Hate & Bias Crimes Monitoring Form Project*, covered incidents of hate crimes in five provinces in South Africa, in an attempt to gauge the types, nature and impact of hate crimes perpetrated against individuals and communities.

According to the key findings, after documenting 945 cases of hate crimes, prejudice was reported to be “rife” across all socio-economic groups – and the impact of hate crime “exceeds” what we think we know and understand. “What is clear... is that hate crimes are often devastating to surviving victims,” said the report.

“Prejudice undeniably exists among our people despite all our best efforts to eradicate it, and it has tragic consequences far exceeding our everyday knowledge and awareness.”

Alana Baranov of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) said on Wednesday that, following the tragic outbreak of xenophobic violence against foreign migrants in 2008, the board spearheaded the Jewish community’s relief efforts on behalf of the victims.

It interacted and collaborated with other human rights bodies involved in such relief work at the time and was a founding member of the HCWG – a network of civil society organisations – which was formed as a direct consequence of the xenophobia crisis.

“Members of the network work in diverse sectors, such as LGBTI rights; migrants, refugees and asylum seekers rights; in gender-based entities; and in broader human rights organisations,” she said.

She added that the board involved itself in all aspects of hate crimes awareness, education and lobbying, “from grassroots initiatives with refugee, migrant and asylum-seeker groups to high-level government meetings”.

Baranov said the study is the most comprehensive review of hate crimes in South Africa to date, and that its insights come at a crucial time in the development of hate crime legislation.

The SAJBD, she said, contributed data on anti-Semitism in South Africa, and had facilitated interviews for the research team with members of the faith-based sector and with refugee and asylum-seeker communities across the country.

“I have been centrally involved in drafting submissions to the relevant parliamentary subcommittees on upcoming hate crimes-related legislation, such as the National Action Plan and the Hate Crimes Bill. Since the HCWG’s findings, the SAJBD has been the sole voice of the religious/faith-based sector, ensuring that the needs of religious communities are addressed in terms of preventing and combating hate crimes and hate speech.”

The report suggests that now, more than ever, the country’s leaders “must realise how crucial their voices are in taking a firm stance against all forms of intolerance, bigotry and discrimination if hate crime is to be stemmed”.

Community Column

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Anti-Semitism in South Africa is low, but vigilance is crucial

Since the collapse of the Oslo peace process in September 2000, there has been an alarming rise in anti-Semitism globally, and the upward trend continues. Last year, our counterparts in the UK recorded more than 1 700 anti-Semitic incidents (145 involving violent assault) – the highest annual total on record.

In countries such as Canada, Australia, France, Germany and Ukraine, annual incidents now average from the low hundreds to well over 1 000. Combating this escalating menace has become one of the foremost concerns of global Jewry.

Compared with all of this, South Africa’s Jewry has been remarkably fortunate. In 2017, for the second year running, fewer than 50 incidents were recorded, none of which involved violent assault. In fact, on only two occasions over the past three decades has the annual incident tally exceeded the 100 mark. That our situation differs so markedly from that of even Western democratic countries is extraordinary.

A survey, conducted by the World Zionist Organization ahead of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, revealed that more than half of respondents said they were afraid to wear Jewish symbols in public. Here, we do so without thinking twice. Amid all the negativity regarding the current situation in which South Africa finds itself, these are positives that we should always bear in mind.

Having said this, we should never become complacent and relax our guard. While actual acts of hostility against our community remain infrequent, there exists within our society a disturbing undercurrent of virulent anti-Semitic sentiment. One sees this primarily on social media as well as in comments posted on online news sites. If not effectively confronted from the outset, hateful words can

all too easily lead to hateful actions.

That is why we do not see the comparatively low rates of active anti-Semitism in South Africa as being a reason to relax our vigilance. Rather, we adopt a zero-tolerance approach to all acts of anti-Jewish prejudice so as to ensure that these low rates are maintained or, preferably, lowered still further. Those seeking to harm Jews precisely because they are Jews need to know that such acts have consequences and that the SA Jewish Board of Deputies will do whatever it can to ensure that those who perpetrate them are called to account.



Above Board
Shaun Zagnoev

SA-Israel sporting ties celebrated

Over the weekend, South Africa and Israel’s national tennis teams took each other on in an enthralling Davis Cup tie in Irene, Pretoria. The board and the SA Zionist Federation (SAZF) encouraged members of our community to attend, not least as a gesture of support for ongoing sporting ties between the two countries, and many (board and SAZF members included) eventually did.

In view of the general positivity and goodwill generated by the event, the final result hardly mattered, but for the record, the Israeli team won 3-2.

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



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Tears as Israel clinch Davis Cup tie

JACK MILNER

It was the experience and resilience of Dudi Sela that separated the Israeli team from the South Africans in their Euro/Africa Zone Group 1 Davis Cup tie, played at the Irene Country Club last weekend.

The Israeli team, comprising Sela, Jonathan Erlich, Edan Leshem, Igor Smilansky and Daniel Cukierman, looked in trouble when they lost the pivotal doubles match to go 1-2 down in the best-of-five-match series.

However, a tough win from Sela in the reverse singles was followed by another gallant victory from Leshem in the final match. This saw Israel win through to a playoff match against the Czech Republic in April, which will decide which country goes through to the World Group of the competition.

It was a tough loss for the South African team, comprising Lloyd Harris, Nik Scholtz, Raven Klaasen, Ruan Roelofse and Tucker Vorster, as they also had some bad luck along the way. "Things were running very well when we went 2-1 up," said team captain Marcos Ondruska, but experience told me the tie was far from over."

The format used at this event was an experiment by the International Tennis Federation (ITF). In the past, the tie was played over three days and each match was the best of five sets. The first two singles are played on the Friday, the doubles match on the



Photo: Reg Caldecott

Edan Leshem raises his arms to the Israeli team, after his victory over Nik Scholtz, clinching their Davis Cup tie, while a disappointed SA team looks on

Saturday and the two other singles matches on the Sunday.

This time, the event was played over two days and each encounter was the best of three sets. The first two singles matches were played from 16:00 on Friday, while the doubles and the other two singles matches were played from 11:00 on Saturday.

You'd expect the winning team to have enjoyed the format and the losing team to be negative, but on this occasion it was exactly the opposite. "While I feel the real test of tennis should be over five sets, I thought this format was fun for the crowd," said Ondruska. "It moved a lot quicker and it was more fan-friendly."

However, Israeli captain Harel Levy had a full go at the format. "Dudi had to play the second match on Friday night. It was interrupted by rain,

went to three sets and finished late. Then he played the doubles, so he was first on the court at 11:00.

"He then was only given a half-hour break, which gave him just enough time for a shower and to get something light to eat. In the end, he had to play eight sets of tennis in about 18 hours.

"I take my hat off to Dudi, especially after they lost the doubles."

It was clear Sela was battling a bit at the start of his singles match against Harris; he was 1-3 down in no time at all. "I started slowly and I was very worried," said Sela. "But when you see your team cheering for you, it gets you going."

He managed to fight back and level the set, but once in the tie-breaker, the whole

match took a different turn. Harris suddenly looked in trouble and appeared to be carrying some sort of injury. Sela took the tie-breaker 7-2 and then raced away to win the second set 6-1.

"I noticed he wasn't feeling well, but you can't let that get into your mind," said Sela. "I told myself to play solid and I would be fine."

Harris admitted Sela was a very tough opponent. "He absorbs the pressure well and he rises to the occasion when he needs to. He makes you play on the big points."

So, it all came down to the final singles match between Scholtz, the son of former Western Province rugby player Calla Scholtz, and 20-year-old Leshem. The match started poorly for the Israeli, but once the nerves settled, Leshem was magnificent. He broke the Scholtz

serve twice to take the set 6-3 and, although the second set was a lot tighter, he never had a break point against him. However, he was constantly pushing the South African and finally, at 5-5, he broke serve and wrapped up the tie in the next game with a winning backhand pass down the line.

The emotion from the Israeli team was astonishing. Levy hugged Sela as tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Edan came out of nowhere today," said Levy. "I've got to give him credit. He was fantastic!"

Levy was questioned as to why he chose to play Sela in the doubles. He defended the decision, saying because they were at one match all after Friday's two singles matches, he wanted to play his strongest team in the doubles. "I was hoping after the doubles we would only need one more

point, but it didn't work out that way for us."

Israel will face the Czech Republic in that country from April 6 to 8. It's bound to be a challenging playoff, especially as the latter team will include Tomas Berdych. South Africa will have to wait until April to find out which team it will face later in the year.

"To lose like this was tough," said Ondruska. "This is our first loss in a while and it's a good lesson for the guys."

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LEMCKE
ORGANIC VIRGIN COCONUT OIL
76⁹⁹ 500ml

Cadbury
DAIRY MILK Whispers
3249 200g

HINDS
MEAT TENDERISER
83g

OR-LI
MEMORIAL CANDLE 24 HOUR
6⁹⁹

TASTIC
NATURE'S Brown Rice with Sundried Tomatoes
28⁹⁹ 1kg

Actual offers may differ from visuals shown. We reserve the right to limit quantities. While stocks last. E&OE

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Hours: Mon-Thurs 7am-10pm | Fri: 7am-4pm Sat: 1/2 Hour After Shabbos -10pm | Sun: 8am - 10pm