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south african Jewish Report

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The stripping of Stan & Pete's kashrut licence

NICOLA MILTZ

The discovery of a batch of unkosher chickens in Stan & Pete's kitchen last Wednesday has resulted in an urgent overhaul of the current kashrut systems and how the Beth Din moves forward.

The Beth Din is conducting a full-scale forensic investigation into how these chickens got into the kitchen of one of the country's pre-eminent kosher caterers. Stan & Pete has been operating since 1975.

Because of this scandal, the Beth Din is to fast-track a new programme to help improve and modernise kashrut supervision systems at kosher establishments.

Also, in future the on-site mashgiach – a kosher supervisor – will be employed by the Beth Din, as opposed to individual caterers.

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein said yesterday: "This has been a difficult time for the community. Our sages teach us that in times of difficulty, we need to introspect and transform a crisis into an opportunity for growth and strengthening." As a community, he added, "we will emerge stronger from this".

The Beth Din, he said, stands at the centre of the South African Jewish community and "we should pull together to unify ourselves and go forward into the future".

According to the chief rabbi, the Beth Din was made aware of alleged kashrut irregularities taking place at Stan & Pete "a few months ago".

"Rumours were brought to our attention," Goldstein told the *SA Jewish Report*. However,

after launching a rigorous investigation into the rumours, the Beth Din "did not uncover evidence to corroborate the rumours".

Nevertheless, he said the Beth Din was cautious and conducted extra inspections and surveillance, which resulted in last week's shock discovery.

"We have been very transparent about the facts," he said, having notified the community as soon as the kashrut scandal came to light.

"There are numerous unexplained issues and we would like to get to the bottom of them."

In a statement issued two days later, the Beth Din explained what had happened when "one of the Beth Din's senior inspectors" discovered "a batch of more than 20 treif chickens".

Stan & Pete owner Jeff Shull issued a statement to the *SA Jewish Report* on Wednesday, saying his company "takes full responsibility for the failure in processes and controls, and a full investigation is being conducted".

"As a result, a decision has been taken to close operations for a period of time."

He said that all suppliers, processes and staff would be investigated and audited to try to get to the bottom of how this came about. "There are numerous unexplained issues and we would like to get to the bottom of them."

He also told the *SA Jewish Report* that Stan & Pete had never purchased chickens from "non-approved suppliers" and had "no knowledge of how these chickens came to be in the kitchen".

"At the time of the inspection, there were hundreds of chickens on the premises, including chickens that had been donated for a large function. It is interesting to note that at this time, only the 22 chickens which were alleged to be treif were defrosting, and were all that was visible in the kitchen."

He added that management found it "strange" that the senior inspector specialising in chicken "who had not visited the premises for about a year, happened to walk into the kitchen to do a spot inspection at the very time when the offending chickens were in plain view".

Shull's statement suggested that its kosher licence had been stripped without the company being "afforded the opportunity" to conduct its own investigation.

After the discovery last Wednesday, four Dayanim were summonsed by the senior inspector and arrived at the caterer's Orange Grove premises.

According to witnesses, Shull was nowhere to be seen and when he was eventually confronted, he shook his head and said: "I don't know. I don't know."

Ami Bolnick of Tenderchick – the only certified producer of kosher chickens in Johannesburg – was called in to inspect the offending birds last Wednesday.

He "immediately" saw a number of obvious "tell-tale

Continued on page 3>>



Israel's Wonder Woman adds glamour to the Academy Awards

One of Israel's most famous exports, *Wonder Woman* star Gal Gadot, and actor Arnie Hammer presented the Oscar for best make-up and hairstyling at the Academy Awards this week. It went to the movie, *Darkest Hour*. Gadot became the buzz of social media for her dazzling Givenchy gown and Art Deco-style necklace from Tiffany & Co. See page 2

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Oscars 2018: For Jewish nominees, a night not to remember

TOM TUGEND

Fifty years ago, Bob Hope's films were wildly popular, but the comedian was never nominated for an Academy Award. So, when Hope served as host of the 1975 Oscar bash, he opened his monologue with "Welcome to the Academy Awards... or, as it's known in my house, Passover."

At Sunday's 90th award ceremony, the notable Jewish nominees could largely repeat his punchline.

The list of Jewish nominees, all with realistic chances to strike gold, included two for lead actors Daniel Day-Lewis in *Phantom Thread* and Timothée Chalamet in *Call Me by Your Name*, both with Jewish mothers. Gary Oldman won for his portrayal of Winston Churchill in *Darkest Hour*.

Also nominated was repeat winner Hans Zimmer, who composed the score for *Dunkirk*, but who lost out to Alexandre Desplat for *The Shape of Water*, the eventual best picture winner.

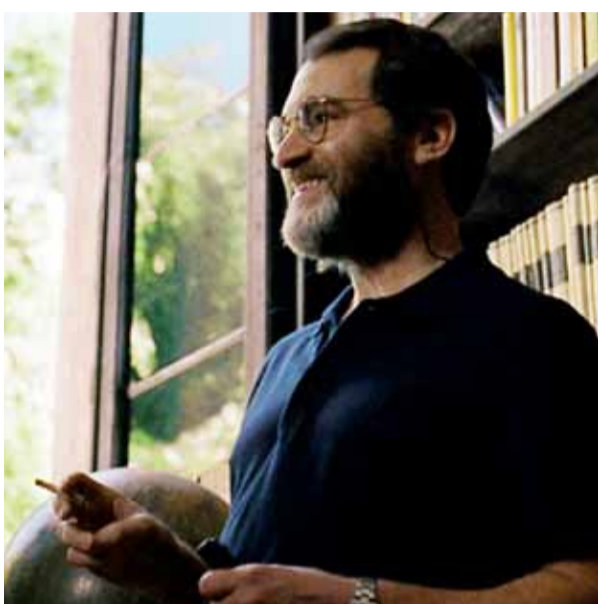
Benj Pasek, who won the Oscar last year for best song for *La La Land*, failed to follow up in the same category for *This Is Me* from *The Greatest Showman*, although his song became the unofficial anthem of the 2018 Winter Olympics. The winner in the song category was *Remember Me* from the animated film, *Coco*.

The consolations for tribal rooters were few and far between. *Call Me by Your Name*, based on a 2007 novel by the Egypt-born Jewish novelist André Aciman, won for best adapted screenplay by James Ivory.

Director Barry Fogel won for best documentary for his feature *Icarus*, which helped expose Russia's widespread athletic doping conspiracy. Fogel, a Denver native, previously developed, co-wrote and co-starred in *Jewtopia*, a successful play and later movie based on his book *Jewtopia: The Chosen Guide for the Chosen People*.

Two Jewish talents were notable for their absence from the proceedings.

Foremost was Steven Spielberg, arguably Hollywood's most respected personality. The director of *The Post*, about journalists facing down the US government in the Vietnam era, was omitted from the list of five director nominees, although the film itself was



Michael Stuhlbarg in *Call Me by Your Name*

nominated for best picture.

James Franco was expected as late as January to be a best actor nominee for his work in *The Disaster Artist*. Franco won the Golden Globe for the role, but between that triumph and the deadline for Oscar nominations, he was accused by five women of inappropriate or sexually exploitative behaviour. Although he denied the accusations, enough Oscar voters apparently decided to ignore his name.

Israel's Gal Gadot, a box office sensation in *Wonder Woman*, presented the award for best make-up and hairstyling to the winner of *Darkest Hour*, and became the buzz of social media for the Art Deco-style necklace from Tiffany's that she wore.

In the best foreign language film category, Israel's entry *Foxtrot* had made the initial long

list of nine nominees, but was eliminated when the list was whittled down to five.

The elimination of *Foxtrot* so annoyed Kenneth Turan, chief film critic for the *Los Angeles Times* that he wrote a column saying the judges "should be ashamed of themselves".

It is somewhat risky to deduce a national trend from an evening of Hollywood awards, but the conclusions from watching them seem fairly clear.

Coming in the wake of the sexual harassment scandals that engulfed mega-producer Harvey Weinstein and other industry names, the presentations put the #MeToo and Time's Up movements front and centre.

Host Jimmy Kimmel noted in his opening monologue that Weinstein, who was accused by more than 50 women of crimes ranging from rape to sexual harassment, was the first person to be kicked out of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences since actor Carmine Caridi who was expelled in 2004.

Throughout the night, the loudest voices – and applause – were for women's job and pay equity, the achievements of immigrants, the box office might of the black superhero film *Black Panther* and the growing presence of Asian-Americans in film.

One Latino actor gave a brief nod to the historically outsize presence of Jews in the film industry. Oscar Isaac, who starred in the Star Wars sequel *The Last Jedi*, was asked on stage why he seemed to understand the bleeps of one of the film's robot characters, BB-8.

"I speak Yiddish," joked Isaac, who was born in Guatemala. (JTA)

Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
18:13	19:01	Johannesburg
18:55	19:46	Cape Town
18:03	18:52	Durban
18:21	19:11	Bloemfontein
18:26	19:17	Port Elizabeth
18:17	19:07	East London

Torah thought of the week

The true test of one's faith lies in day-to-day living

We read in the parsha of Pekudei, with reference to the completion of the Tabernacle, that "Moshe (Moses) saw all the work and behold they had done it; as Hashem had commanded so had they done; and Moshe blessed them" (Shmot 39:43).

Rashi, the famous biblical commentator, says the blessing that Moshe gave to them was: "May the divine presence of G-d rest in the work of your hands."

Surely a more logical place for this blessing would have been at the outset of the building of the Tabernacle, when the instruction for its construction is given in the portion of Teruma? Why then, is the blessing only given now, upon its completion?

The answer can perhaps be found in a familiar verse in Tehillim (Psalms): "Who will go up upon the Mountain of Hashem and who will rise up to His holy place?" The commentaries tell us that this verse alludes to the fact that there are two different challenges in life. Ascending the mountain is certainly a great challenge, but there is an even greater challenge: maintaining that altitude.

At the beginning of the building of the Tabernacle, everyone was enthused. Following the sin of the golden calf, Hashem had threatened to annihilate the Children of Israel. Moses prayed on their behalf and finally, on Yom Kippur, he descended from Mount Sinai with the second set of Tablets. They started building the Tabernacle on the day after Yom Kippur. Everyone participated with passion and commitment. That is the phase of "Who will climb up the

Mountain of G-d?". However, now that the Tabernacle is built, the excitement dissipates. Now, day in, day out, the repetitive routine begins. We bring the same daily sacrifices, day in and day out. Can we maintain our lofty position?

We often get carried away with big events: grand openings, inaugurations, celebrations, beginnings of new eras. These are all heralded with a lavish party, with excitement, glitz and glamour all around.

When a barmitzvah boy starts putting on Tefillin, he is filled with tremendous passion and enthusiasm. Is that same level of enthusiasm present five years, or even five weeks, later? Is the same degree of love and commitment between bride and groom under the chuppah maintained post honeymoon?

Judaism maintains that life is made up not only of the big events but also the small events. It's the day-to-day things that, in some ways, have greater potential for sanctity than the large-scale things.

Judaism is about appreciating the small things, recognising that life happens in the day-to-dayness of things. This represents the essence of what Judaism is all about: sanctifying the day-to-day life.

The big events are merely the kickstart to our personal mission in this world. They are but a springboard for day-to-day things, where real life happens.

May it be His will that His Divine Presence abides in the handicraft of our hands. May our commitment, enthusiasm, love and passion never waiver in our interpersonal relationships and in our relationship with Hashem.

Good Shabbos.



Rabbi Rodney Richard, Emmarentia Shul

Saunders' kidnappers may have advised Thulsies on building bombs

TALI FEINBERG

The pair arrested for kidnapping British-South African couple Rodney and Rachel Saunders had advised other terrorists on making bombs, including possibly the Thulsie twins, arrested in 2016 for targeting Jewish institutions and individuals. This is according to an affidavit that was presented when Sayfydeen Aslam Del Vecchio, 38, and Fatima Patel, 27, appeared in the Verulam Magistrate's Court in KwaZulu-Natal on Tuesday. They were in court for a formal bail application, but eventually abandoned their application.

"The accused allegedly had contact with the terror-accused Thulsie twins and gave advice on encrypted chat sites on how to make bombs," reported *The Citizen*.

The affidavit revealed Del Vecchio advising someone via Telegram (an encrypted chat application used on smartphones) on bomb making. He posted: "But bombs are easy akhi (brother), just use fireworks powder and close it in a metal [c]ontainer and you have a good bomb."

A manual called a "MujGuide" was also recovered on a digital device owned by Del Vecchio. "This manual provides highly relevant detail on how to carry out a terrorist attack, including bomb making," read the affidavit.

Advocate Adele Barnard, the prosecutor in the Thulsie twins' ongoing case, was in court to represent the state. She adamantly turned down bail for the third co-accused, 19-year-old Themba Xulu, who is charged with robbery, after being found with the couple's cellphone in his possession.

Detective Warrant Officer Anuresh Lutchman, who is based in the Crimes Against the State Unit, a division of the Hawks, opposed bail on several grounds, saying it was in "the interests of justice... and international peace and security" to keep the co-accused behind bars. He also cited concerns that they would "interfere with investigations" into the whereabouts of the "missing couple [who] have not yet been found" or alert others being sought by the police.

In the affidavit Lutchman also provided chilling details of how the Saunders couple were "hunted" as a target for terrorism, after being spotted in a forest near the extremists' base.

"On February 9 2018, there [were] discussions [in chat rooms] of preparing to kill the kuffar [non-believer] and abduct their allies, to destroy infrastructure and to put the fear in the heart of the kuffar.

"On February 10 2018, [Del Vecchio] mentioned to [Patel] and Bazooka (the nickname of the man still being sought by the police) that there is an elderly couple in the forest, that it is a "good hunt" and that they had equipment."

There is still no trace of the couple. "After an extensive search and rescue operation... the Toyota Land Cruiser that belonged to the couple was recovered on February 18 – in the Verulam area. A forensic examination conducted on the vehicle indicated that there was human blood inside the cargo area of the vehicle," said the affidavit.

Hopes fade of finding the Saunders alive as the affidavit states that on February 10, [Del Vecchio] said in a discussion: "When the brothers in Kenya go out and do this work, it is very important that the body of the victim is never found and it remains a missing person case."

In addition to kidnap and possible murder, the terrorists had gone on a spending spree using Rachel Saunders' credit card. "Del Vecchio confirmed in a chat on Telegram that



Rodney and Rachel Saunders being filmed in the mountains

he was taking 'a lot of cash from the ATM'", according to the affidavit. The state is alleging that Del Vecchio and Patel drew hundreds of thousands from Saunders' account.

Other items found included a drone, camping equipment, two generators and paintball equipment, amongst others, all purchased with her bank card.

"A GPS device belonging to Rachel and Rodney Saunders was also found during the search of the premises," reported *The Citizen*.

Behind the stripping of Stan & Pete's kashrut licence

>> Continued from page 1

signs" that the defrosting chickens were not his birds.

"Being in the chicken industry since 1989, I can objectively distinguish between a kosher and a non-kosher chicken. This I did," he said.

The most obvious distinguishing sign is the bird's wing tip. In a kosher chicken the wing tip is cut away so that the salt used in the koshering process is better absorbed. "These birds' wing tips were intact," he said. The neck flap is also cut away for the same reason in a kosher chicken, and this too was intact.

He said the colouration of the bird differs due to the salting process, adding that a non-kosher bird had a paler look. Contrary to popular belief, size is not an indicator, he said.

"I took eight of my own birds from the abattoir, broke the kosher seals in front of them and compared: it was like chalk and cheese," he said.

Tenderchick has two shochetim – ritual slaughterers – at the abattoir and a full-time mashgiach who work 11 hours a day each, following rigorous kashrut protocols. They are employed by the Beth Din.

Every chicken is recorded and all bags are sealed with a special Beth Din seal which goes onto a Beth Din register. Only the mashgiach can open and lock the sealed fridges. When the birds are being transported, the trucks are also sealed. Each time the truck stops, a new seal is used and recorded by the mashgiach. A while ago, the Beth Din did away with the silver clip on the wing that was another safeguard mechanism.

Bolnick said for every bird slaughtered, he paid R5,38 to the Beth Din. A 1.2kg bird cost about R60. He said he had noticed that Stan & Pete's purchases had "dropped substantially".

Stan & Pete was started when two hotel school graduates, Stan Smookler and Pete Arnold, decided to open a catering company. It grew from humble beginnings in Jeppe, Johannesburg, spreading its wings to the Jewish Guild and then Beaconsfield, and more recently to Orange Grove.

Soon after opening, Dennis Cohen joined the company, followed by Norman Whiteman, who joined for a while before emigrating to New Zealand. Smookler, Cohen and Whiteman steered the fledgling company in the so-called good old days to its heyday, when they could have up to seven functions a day on a busy weekend.

Ido Sirton and Jeff Shull bought in several years ago. This saw the exit of Smookler, with Cohen staying on as an employee.

Cohen, who left the company over two years ago, said this week: "I mourn for the loyal staff, some of whom have been there for 30 odd years."

Smookler declined to comment this week, saying that he was busy assisting replacement



Jeff Shull

caterer Riva Flax with the Miracle Drive after Stan & Pete were pulled off the job.

Insiders have suggested that the legendary catering company has become a shadow of its former self, having lost market share in recent years. Its staff complement has also dropped, they said. It is understood that a number of caterers have been hard hit by the downward swing in the economy.

The chief rabbi said yesterday that nine months ago, the Beth Din started looking at ways to modernise the current kashrut supervision systems by involving the use of technology, cameras and other structural changes.

These ideas were presented to industry players in September last year with a view to implement the changes sometime this year. In February, the Beth Din installed a pilot model, which it found to be successful. Because of the Stan & Pete scandal, implementation of the new model is now being fast-tracked. It is expected to start being rolled out in the next two weeks over a period of a few months, he said.

"We have been driving efficiencies for 18 months and we've decided to fast track them," said the chief rabbi.

"New steps are being taken to establish a forensic department within the Beth Din to augment the ability and capacity to investigate any areas of concern."

He explained that there are over 100 mashgiachim in Johannesburg who have all received rigorous training under the auspices of the Beth Din. They have to prove that they've mastered the skills and knowledge, he said.

South Africa is not alone. Incidents of this nature have occurred recently in Jerusalem, New York, Frankfurt and California, each time sending ripples through the community. But in South Africa, it is particularly painful that it took some treif chickens to cause the demise of a 40-year-old institution.

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How land expropriation may affect Jewish farmers

TALI FEINBERG

"I'm a third-generation farmer, and the expropriation of land has been an issue for many years," says Steven Trope, a cattle farmer and trader in Grootvlei in the Highveld region. "The uncertainty of it all means that I have discouraged my son from running the farm for a fourth generation, and encouraged him to rather go into business."

Trope is just one of many Jewish farmers in South Africa whose livelihoods and land, owned for generations, may very well be expropriated without compensation. That is according to calls by the ANC and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) to "review and amend Section 25 of the Constitution to make it possible for the state to expropriate land in the public interest without compensation".

Says Trope: "I agree that something must be done as land ownership is unequal, but the current method of giving land to inexperienced farmers without financial backing means these farms have not been successful."

"The only successes I have seen are black businessmen buying farms, which they have made profitable with financial resources and business knowledge."

"I can't invest in my business, buy new machinery, build new stores or hire more people when things are so unsure."

For Trope, the biggest impact of the land expropriation issue is the uncertainty: "I can't invest in my business, buy new machinery, build new stores or hire more people when things are so unsure," he says. He has heard of farmers who are debt-free trying to gain more debt, so that expropriating their land will be more difficult.

Trope thinks that if expropriation without compensation does go ahead, "it will not be a Zimbabwe-style situation. President Ramaphosa is a farmer himself, and I have faith in him. The solution has to be something fair and viable."

But for Isaac Jocum, a cattle farmer near Vryburg, the expropriation of some of his

land more than 10 years ago brings up painful memories that he fears could be worse if there is no compensation. "The land was purchased by my grandfather in 1934 – I'm a third-generation farmer. When some of it was expropriated, it was an extremely unfair process and was not conducted according to prescribed legal process. Although I was compensated, I was forced into it."

"And the government never even notified me that it was happening – I heard about it from another farmer," remembers Jocum.

For more than 10 years, the land lay untouched, and now Jocum rents it from the new landowners. "What people may not



Isaac Jocum

understand is that this is not just land – it is my livelihood, my home and my asset base."

In the Cape, Charles Back, owner of Fairview and the Spice Route wine farms, is confident that land expropriation won't affect him, as the title deeds of his land goes back to 1693. However, he is concerned about the knock-on effects of land claims, which would scare off overseas investors and affect all aspects of the economy.

"I think it is political grandstanding and would be very difficult to implement. If it is put into practice, it will be catastrophic for South Africa – even worse than what we saw in Zimbabwe," he says.

While Back suffered a brutal attack and was left for dead on his farm a few weeks ago, he remains positive about the country and the role agriculture can play in uplifting communities. This can be seen on his farm, which is a central hub for jobs, satellite industries and small businesses. For example, by outsourcing his laundry and factory work to people in the area, he has empowered them to succeed.



Steven Trope's cattle farm on the Highveld

This is one way that land expropriation could be implemented successfully, says Back. Another long-term solution that he suggests is joint ownership on successful farms. "Most farm workers do not want to own a farm," says Back.

"Commercial farming has incredibly high risks, while return on investment is slow – it is not the right industry for an impatient BEE programme."

For Trevor Datnow, a game farmer near Kimberley, land expropriation is "a disaster in the making, and a sham". He has seen 25 000 hectares of land near him claimed by the government still unused 20 years later and yet to be transferred to black farmers.

In 2002, all landowners' mineral rights were nationalised, and he is concerned that expropriation is one step away. One solution he suggests is long-term leases to white farmers, so that black owners feel secure that they own the land, and white farmers feel secure in the future of their business.

Leslie Zetler of Stellenbosch says: "We think it will rather impact farmers who own thousands of hectares and have done nothing with it."

Zetler believes that foreigners should not be able to own land in South Africa, and feels it would be positive if expropriation brings down land prices.

Matthew Karan, a cattle farmer near Heidelberg, is not deeply concerned. For him, this is just "the EFF doing what it always does – creating hysteria. We are used to it." From the farmers' perspective, he believes there is a long road before farms are expropriated – for example, the government owns huge tracts of land, and it can start there.



Charles Back's farm in the Western Cape



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In addition, he points out that if rural land is expropriated, so should tribal and urban land be reclaimed.

This is a point that urban planning and housing activist Gavin Silber emphasises: Land expropriation in rural areas and the 'hornet's nest' of urban spatial integration are deeply linked.

He explains that while expropriation may appear to be something that only affects rural areas, in fact, it affects us all: "For example, property values along the Atlantic Seaboard have created great wealth for many in our community. I too am a beneficiary of this. But it has come at a great social cost. Our cities today are more divided than ever before. Workers in Sea Point who teach, run stores and look after children are being forcibly expelled to the periphery. What is being done to prevent this?"

"Where social housing in the area has been proposed, many have opposed it and even more have stayed silent. Body corporates turn a blind eye to the ill-treatment of domestic workers.

"We cannot ignore spatial injustice, and the longer we don't address it, the more radical people and politicians will get. If we want to have a say on land redistribution, we need to come to the table and state that the status quo is unsustainable," he says.

Joburg valuations – another financial knock

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of northern suburbs property owners, from Kew to Glenhazel to Sandton, have expressed concern over the new property valuations by the City of Johannesburg.

Many building owners and businesses claim they will be forced to close down or abandon their buildings, after receiving rates increases of up to 1 000%.

The DA-run council in Midvaal has also imposed huge rates in that municipality.

The increases will be particularly hard on pensioners as every property valued at over R2 million will now be charged rates, whereas they were previously exempt.

Isidore Spector, an 86-year-old pensioner from Glenhazel, said he has never paid rates on his property, valued at R1.85 million.

“Further to this, the capacity of our walk-in centres is being addressed to deal with the increase in residents seeking assistance with their objections. We have also employed an additional 20 valuers internally to assist with objections,” he said.

However, owners will have to start paying the escalated rates from July 1 until their objections are heard, which could take up to five months. The appeal process, which is conducted by the Gauteng provincial government, could take up to 18 months.

More than 44% of properties in Joburg had value increases of between 60% and 1 000%.

Harry Sewlall of Parkmore said: “Property owners have been dealt a killer blow in the form of exorbitant hikes in property values to entrap homeowners in a higher rates bracket. My modest three-bedroom property, which has had no extensions done to it during my residency, has shot up from the present market value of R1.55 million to R2.81 million. This new evaluation constitutes a 75% increase.”

Greenside resident Gabi Pisanello said her valuation has increased from R1.98 million to R3.48 million.

“On my eastern boundary, I have a parking lot,” she says. “On my northern boundary, I have restaurants. I have been trying to sell my house for 10 years and I cannot get an offer even for the municipal value! The last time my house was on the market was from October 2017 until January 2018. How did they get to this valuation?”

“Most estate agents have valued my property at about R2.5 million to R2.6 million. I am in the process of lodging an objection. This is exploitation,” she added.

Mark Rubenstein, director of the Blue Saddle Ranches estate in Midvaal, said the municipal rates increase issue is “a time bomb waiting to happen”.

“I represent the Blue Saddle Ranches homeowners’ association, but have gathered support from the Midvaal municipal area. In our estate alone, most property valuations have gone up by 34%. We are also losing our 75% agricultural residential rebate – we are losing a 75% discount currently offered by the municipality.

“This means that if I use the current factor, excluding any inflationary increases, my rates are going up 323% from R1 067 to R4 519.”

The Melrose North Ratepayers’ and Residents’ Association has appealed to all property owners to lodge their objections.

Said Elsa Kruger: “Our reasons for objecting include uncontrolled building and the increased densification, which puts pressure on the infrastructure, causing frequent power outages. There is also an increase in crime. Let us let the city know that we are not taking this exploitation lying down,” she said.

Objectors have to get their complaints registered online. If owners do not have access to the Internet, they can visit the walk-in centres and will be assisted. The website address is www.joburg.org.za.

A petition, called #JhbRatesMustFall, already has more than 1 600 signatures.



Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba

The value has now been pegged by the City at R2.7 million.

“I don’t know how I am going to afford this. I have never paid rates before and I do not have access to the Internet to object. I am going to have to get one of my children to assist,” he said.

Many other residents, apartment building owners and businesses, say they are going to be squeezed out of their homes and businesses and may be forced to shut down, resulting in job losses.

Building owners say they will have to pass these increases on to their tenants, adding that the smaller retail shops would not be able to afford the increases and would probably close down.

More than 44% of properties in Joburg had value increases of between 60% and 1 000%.

On Tuesday, Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba responded to the outcry by announcing that about 8 000 properties will be revalued. He said that, following engagements between the City and the independent municipal valuer, these property owners will begin receiving Section 78 notices from the City for properties that appear to be overvalued – some by over 100%. These owners should start receiving the renewed valuations from Friday, March 16 and will have 30 days in which to object.

To date, the City has received 4 000 objections to the valuation roll.

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South African Jewish Report

When things fall apart, will the centre still hold?

When you picked up our newspaper last week and looked for our Purim spiel, you probably stopped at the story about Stan & Pete having lost its kashrut licence with disbelief. Who wouldn't? They are the oldest and biggest, and one of the most trusted, kosher caterers in Johannesburg. Everyone knew them and for more than 40 years, they were at the core of Jewish celebrations.

Even I didn't believe it possible. When the Beth Din notice was brought to me on our newspaper deadline last Wednesday afternoon, I initially dismissed it as a Purim spiel. Only on calling the Beth Din's kosher desk did I realise it was no joke.

For the record, our Purim spiel was the KosherCoin story by Dr Hayman Tasssen PhD. Yes, the one that claims the more you daven, the more this special Jewish bitcoin's value increases.

However, with all the news that was in the SA Jewish Report last week, it was the Stan & Pete story that touched all our lives. Last Friday evening, there were few Shabbos tables that weren't deep in discussion about this caterer. It didn't stop then.



The story literally consumed the community this week. We stopped discussing our new president, and even the possibility of land grabs paled almost into insignificance next to Stan & Pete.

The tall stories about the caterer abound and were then embellished. I kept hearing people make outrageous allegations and say they were from a good source. As a journalist, I have learnt over the years that the truth is generally much stranger than

fiction. So, I am not quick to dismiss apparently unbelievable stories at first hearing. The trick is always to check, check and check again to verify whether something is for real. If you cannot corroborate from a truly reliable source, it is unlikely to be true.

With all the talk in our community, there was also a lot of anger and frustration. There are people fiercely defending Jeff Shull, the owner of Stan & Pete, and others condemning him. People wanted to know why it happened. Was it a set-up? How long had it been going on? Was the Beth Din right or wrong to so publicly revoke its kashrut licence? How far back had this been happening? Did we eat non-kosher food at the last wedding or barmitzvah?

There was no let-up, and we, at the SA Jewish Report, felt it was incumbent on us to find out the truth for the community. Because only with the truth in front of you would you be able to feel safe enough to let it go and move on.

What is it about this story that created this all-pervasive chaos? Even those in the community who don't keep kosher took it to heart.

Kashrut is one of the core tenets of Orthodox Judaism. You can't have a wedding or barmitzvah with a rabbi without kosher catering. We moan and groan about the prices of kosher food, particularly chicken. We grumble about having to pay the Beth Din's surcharge on our simchas. But we do it anyway.

So, when a caterer who has been trusted for so long appears to let us down so royally, it impacts on our very core. As Yeats so poetically put it: "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world..." Kashrut, and being able to trust restaurants and caterers that what they are providing is the real deal, is pivotal to us.

It is about trust and faith. It is about right and wrong. It is about what makes us Jewish and how Jewish people look after one another. And when they don't, what happens to our trust?

If we can no longer trust someone licensed by the Beth Din, our own court of law, what and who can we trust?

It also speaks to the high cost of kosher food, as many have said: "If kosher chickens didn't cost so much, this may never have happened." Well, I am not sure about that, but kosher meat truly is ridiculously expensive. And as our VAT rises and the municipal valuations skyrocket, having to pay that extra to ensure we eat kosher really does hurt. And for some, it has simply become too expensive. What is the alternative?

I know a great deal of thought has gone into making kosher sexier and more appealing. What a great idea! However, as much as the Beth Din, the chief rabbi and the kosher experts may market it, those high prices are always going to affect the appeal. Simply put, creating Shabbos dinner for family and friends is certainly not meant to break the bank.

So, in that short time it took to decide to remove Stan & Pete's kashrut licence, I am not sure that the powers that be had any idea what they were going to set loose in the community.

All I hope is that the facts we provide you with will stem the madness.

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Dateline: Middle East

Israeli women battle for their rights



PAULA SLIER

The once sleepy, largely secular city, Beit Shemesh, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, has become the premier battleground between ultra-Orthodox, secular and modern Orthodox Jews. At the forefront are its women.

In the past two decades, the city's ultra-Orthodox community has more than doubled, spurring turf wars marked by verbal and physical harassment of female citizens. Placards urging modest dress have sprung up mainly along the border with the more lenient modern Orthodox community. Young girls from such families have been harassed, spat at and insulted – called "shiksa" and "whore" – as they walk to school.

According to activist Nili Philipp, a Canadian-born resident of the city, "the signs demarcate territory where democracy ends".

In 2011, ultra-Orthodox men threw rocks at Philipp as she rode her bicycle because they believed she was dressed immodestly. The harrowing incident led her to become more active in the struggle "against those trying to impose their religious mores on the rest of the city's population".

Philipp says women in Beit Shemesh have been categorically eliminated from the public sphere and their images have noticeably disappeared from all advertising. This has resulted in – albeit unofficially – men's-only sidewalks and women even being forced to sit in the back of buses.

"The elimination of women's voices and imagery has less to do with inciting lust, as the ultra-Orthodox men claim the so-called immodest dress does, and everything to do with consolidating male, ultra-Orthodox power," says British-born resident and activist Alisa Coleman. "It isn't about dress and religion. It's about power and territory."

Led by Orly Erez-Livhovski, a lawyer for the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), the women have sued the city numerous times to remove the signs. In January 2015, the case was decided in IRAC's favour. But the signs remained until an administrative order was issued five months later. Still, this resulted in only a partial removal.

The legal battle continued and, although the Jerusalem District Court issued a final order to remove the signs in June 2016, seven months later, they remained.

Despite the setbacks, the women of Beit Shemesh say they won't give up. Doing so, Coleman believes, would lead to laws being increasingly enforced in different areas, leaving the door open to more incursions against women's rights.

"[We have to] go to the courts, to keep fighting," Coleman says, insisting that the way the girls dress is not immodest and that targeting them is simply a way of establishing cultural and territorial hegemony. "We're patient and determined," she adds.

In early 2017, IRAC was granted a contempt order, but the municipality appealed on the grounds that removal of the signs was unsafe. Security cameras were installed and the

signs were taken down, only to be replaced a few days later.

At the end of last year, another Supreme Court order to remove the signs was met with an outbreak of violence. In defiance, other signs calling for modest dress appeared at dozens of other sites. More troublesome, however, was that the plaintiffs' personal details, including telephone numbers, addresses and ID numbers, were published. The women received hordes of harassing calls.

These increasing incidents of intimidation and violence led Philipp and four other women to file another lawsuit. Regardless of the case's development, the emotional damage has been done, Philipp says. The signs' message, combined with verbal and physical abuse, have socialised young girls into thinking they have no voice of their own.

"Girls are raised in an environment where they think it's legitimate... that other people can dictate and have control over their... bodies, the way they dress, who they are," says Philipp. And that is "unforgivable".

But Beit Shemesh is not an isolated example. Ultra-Orthodox influences around Israel have been growing in recent years as the community's population and confidence mushrooms. In Jerusalem, ads featuring women have all but disappeared. A hamburger chain chose to show a family of burgers, rather than an actual family where they would have had to show a mother enjoying the meal with her husband and children.

During Sukkot in Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox Mea Shearim neighbourhood a few years ago, men tried to bar women from entering an entire street.

Beit Shemesh is just the floodgate for the rest of the country, says Philipp. If it can win its battle against the ultra-Orthodox infringements on women's freedom, other Israeli cities can too. But if they are unable to do so, that defeat will spread to other parts of the country.

The ultra-Orthodox maintain that gender segregation and modesty is important to their fundamental values. To resist these values is to be culturally insensitive, a negation of their right to expression.

And while some ultra-Orthodox women may privately support change, they have fewer platforms from where they can speak out. They also fear repercussions. There have been several vocal ultra-Orthodox women fighting for equal rights – some even running for public office – but these instances are few and far between.

"The problem is the silence that allows it to happen," says Coleman.

Sometimes it seems to these modern Orthodox women that they are the only ones stemming the tide of what they call religious fanaticism, with the secular community too "quick and eager" to appease the ultra-Orthodox.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government hinges upon their support. "Misogyny, chauvinism – I don't have to be sensitive to that. Don't try to corner me into that nonsense," insists Philipp.

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.



Secular and religious women in Jaffa

Israel lambasted for deportation, but SA has no room to talk

JORDAN MOSHE

Israel has been severely criticised for its new policy on illegal immigrants and their deportation. In fact, the anti-Israel lobby in South Africa has latched onto this as another way to prove just how bad Israel supposedly is.

However, South Africa does not have a leg to stand on when it comes to its treatment of illegal immigrants and deportation.

“There is widespread police harassment, arrest, detention and deportation,” says Professor Loren Landau, director of the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand.

“The law in South Africa has remained the same since the Refugees Act of 1998. However, almost every year there have been changes to either the amendments or the regulations. Most of these have been designed to limit access to asylum adjudication, including closing offices, and to limit the grounds for application. The White Paper from last year promises an even more exclusive regime.”

Yet it is Israel which has been under the international spotlight since it announced plans to expel migrants who entered the country without permission. Israel has been told off repeatedly for its lack of sympathy and seemingly harsh measures.

Israel began handing out the first deportation orders to Africans, most of them from Sudan or Eritrea, earlier this year. It has offered a \$3 500 (R42 000) grant to those who sign documents declaring they are willing to leave the country.

From next month, the Israeli government is scheduled to relocate the first of 38 000 Sudanese and Eritrean migrants who, it claims – to vociferous opposition from people inside and outside the country – entered Israel illegally, in many cases more than six years ago.

It bears noting that Israel is far from being the only democracy that sends back illegal immigrants. The US expels 400 000 illegal immigrants every year. Germany has been sending back illegal immigrants to Afghanistan – it expelled 80 000 illegal immigrants in 2017.

And South Africa is no different, having deported an average of 62 033 people a year over the past four years.

Prior to 2009, South Africa regularly deported

more than 200 000 people a year, exceeding 250 000 in some years. This figure was reduced to 131 907 in 2014 and 54 169 in 2015.

According to the latest report issued by the department of home affairs (DHA), a total of 23 004 people were deported in 2016.

South Africa deals with illegal immigrants in a variety of ways, explains Landau. “First is the question of who is illegal and who is

information publicly.

Also unreleased is the total amount of money that is spent on looking after those awaiting deportation. A 2014 study by the Institute for Security Studies and the ACMS found that R199.9 million was spent by the DHA in 2013 on deportation. Researchers of the paper confirmed that the numbers were very hard to obtain, but that the amount covered physical

accounts for more than 50% of arrests leading to deportation, spent more than R362.5 million on detecting and detaining undocumented foreigners, and transferring them to Lindela.

In the past few years, Lindela has been featured in the news over allegations of ill-treatment of detainees and human rights violations. According to the ACMS investigation, various concerns have surfaced about the detention centre, including its failure to verify detainees’ immigration status, people not being notified of their rights, the correct warrants not being obtained, and people being detained beyond the legal 120 days.

Landau says: “Most people are detained for extended periods of time before being deported. Some of this is legitimate as the government must verify their identity and citizenship, and arrange with the destination country for their removal. However, many times people are detained well beyond the legally designated period because the government doesn’t have the information needed to deport and doesn’t want to release them.”

Moreover, whereas Israel has offered a financial incentive to those who are willing to leave the country, South African legislation makes provision for the DHA to ensure that those detained contribute towards the cost of their own deportation. This, in addition to the other severe laws which govern deportation in South Africa, make for a process which is costly, harsh and in need of review.

“The question for me is not whether the government is doing enough, but whether the resources required to keep a limited number of people out of the country could not be better spent on providing services and security for everyone,” says Landau.



Police clash with demonstrators at a xenophobic protest in Pretoria

undocumented. There are many people in South Africa who should have documents but don’t because the administration system doesn’t work. There are, of course, others here who are in violation of immigration laws. To some extent, the country does little about this – and many people live peacefully with their South African neighbours.”

According to South Africa’s Legal Resource Centre, when a police officer or immigration officer encounters someone they suspect to be an illegal immigrant, that person should be asked for papers proving their status. If they have no papers, they may be held at a place of detention for 48 hours while their status is determined. Most often, this is the Lindela Repatriation Centre.

Based in Krugersdorp West, 40km outside of Johannesburg, the centre can accommodate 4 000 people. Definitive figures regarding the numbers of people detained at Lindela are difficult to find as the DHA doesn’t release this

costs of deportation, and was separate from the R90.7 million that was spent on Lindela itself.

Moreover, the cost per resident at Lindela was found to be R99.41 per person per day, with an average stay of 30 days – or R2.97 million per thousand residents.

The same report found that in 2014, the DHA spent almost R13 million on joint deportation operations with the South African Police Service (SAPS). In 2009, SAPS Gauteng, which

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The grave truth behind the proposed Sizwe housing scheme

JORDAN MOSHE

What happens when a developer wants to create a major new establishment close to the heart of Jewish Johannesburg, but it may mean building on top of many unknown Jewish and other graves?

Such is the case regarding the Sizwe Tropical Disease Hospital, which sits in a 17 000-hectare plot of land between Club Street, the N3 highway and Modderfontein Road in Johannesburg. This land, which today lies opposite the Linksfield Golf Course and Sandringham High School, has housed the hospital since its construction in 1895.

When it first opened its doors as the Rietfontein Lazaretto, it stood in a remote location, far from the town centre. It treated patients suffering from tuberculosis, leprosy and the dreaded smallpox.

“There is 100% proof of a Jewish graveyard in these books, which list the names of Jewish patients who died at the hospital until 1919.”

Plans to develop residential buildings, schools and other facilities on the plot surrounding the hospital have been delayed for years because of the controversy over what’s believed are thousands of graves buried in those grounds. Many of these graves are unmarked and include those of Jewish people.

“The developers are pressing to go ahead and say that they know exactly where all the graves are,” says Naomi Dinur, an activist standing in the way of the development because she insists they have not located all the graves on the land. “What they are showing in their plan is only a small fraction of the graves, and they will be building on a graveyard site. This is illegal according to law.”

According to Dinur, many of the hospital’s patients who perished were interred there – including Jews. “About 7 000 people of diverse backgrounds – including Indians, Malawians, Irish, English, Germans, Poles and, of course, South Africans – are buried there. Three of the original five cemeteries have been found, but to date there is no sign of the Jewish cemeteries and the cemeteries of lepers who perished.”

Supporting the belief that Jewish graves are located at the site, Dinur cites inscriptions found in certain Chevrah Kadisha documents. “There is 100% proof of a Jewish graveyard in these books, which list the names of Jewish patients who died at the hospital until 1919. The records specify that these people were buried at the Rietfontein Lazaretto, so a Jewish graveyard must exist. There could be less than 20 graves, or more than 100. We just don’t know.”

She could not find Chevrah Kadisha records of how many Jews were buried, or even if Jews were interred there between 1919 and 1958, the year in which the hospital stopped burying its dead on the grounds. This, together with the fact that many graves have been desecrated or had



Naomi Dinur at one of the Sizwe gravesites

their markers removed, makes the process of identifying or locating Jewish graves virtually impossible. “Unfortunately, we’re not sure where the Jewish gravesite is,” says Dinur. “Metal markers rather than tombstones identified most of these burial sites, and they disappeared. Mr Eben De-Villiers, manager of the nursery in the grounds of the Sizwe hospital, remembers some years back seeing huge heaps of metal markers with numbers on them. All this metal,

he said, was collected from the graves and sold as scrap metal. There must be documents to prove the existence of more Jews who were buried there, but they have not yet come to light.”

Urban Dynamics Gauteng won the tender to develop the site, but before building can go ahead, the company has to submit all the relevant assessments and building plans to the Gauteng department of human settlements.

In order to determine the number

of gravesites on the land, an Environmental Impact Assessment was conducted along with the town planning application. “A team of qualified specialists was appointed to independently research the matter of graves on the site,” said Jon Busser, director of Urban Dynamics.

“They were appointed to consider historical records and photographic archives, consult with local residents and conduct on-site physical surveys to determine the exact location and extent of historic graveyards on the property. They concluded that there were three graveyards on this property.”

Busser said that these areas will be excluded from any development and will be maintained to preserve the rich heritage of the site.

Regarding the possibility of other gravesites featuring in the grounds, as Dinur claims there are, Busser seems

sceptical. To say that there are 7 000 bodies buried there is impossible and ridiculous. The hospital has a capacity of 260 beds, so we put the number closer to 2 000. Although we might have incomplete records knowing exactly who was buried where, we know exactly where the bodies are. We have these sites on record.”

Moreover, Busser says that a notice was published to invite the public and organisations to provide information

or evidence of human or possible animal graves. “To date, there is no evidence of graves or graveyards outside of the three identified areas indicated on the layout plan.”

Busser addressed the question of a Jewish cemetery by saying an environmental consultant was involved in the site investigation. “Despite extensive research, very little information on the so-called Jewish cemetery could be obtained. Only one reference to a Jewish cemetery was found in a register obtained from the Chevrah Kadisha archives.”

Busser explained that during the public participation process, a possible graveyard site was identified. However, on further investigation, the graveyard was found to be underlaid with greenstone with a soil layer of less than a metre. This meant that historically, the area could not have been used for burials. “The heritage assessment concluded that such a Jewish cemetery would probably have been a section in the identified European [historical term for white] cemetery,” Busser said.

Rabbi Gidon Fox, chairperson of the SA Rabbinical Association, said it was not totally forbidden to build on the site of graves. “If we could identify the Jewish graves, they should be moved to a Jewish cemetery.”

“If no such determination can be made, efforts should be made to prevent building on that site. To protect the integrity of the site, trees may be planted in the area.”

Hundreds of SA farmers find out how Israel’s agri-tech can help them

YOLANDI GROENEWALD

In the Western Cape, strict water restrictions are in place, with water for agriculture severely tempered down. In the Eastern Cape, farmers are facing ruin because of dried-up dams.

But Israel has managed to develop into an agricultural powerhouse in a region where water is one of the most precious commodities. Its unrivalled array of desalination and wastewater treatment plants and irrigations techniques have helped its farmers not only to adapt, but to flourish as well.

A seminar in Kempton Park on Tuesday exposed about 300 South African farmers to Israeli agricultural innovation. Hosted by the Israeli Trade Office and *Farmer’s Weekly* magazine, farmers were informed about the latest trends and innovations in agri-technology.

Israel’s trade commissioner in South Africa, Amit Lev, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the development and adoption of Israel’s water and agriculture technologies sprung out of necessity.

He believed that the larger-scale farming so prevalent in South Africa would give it more of an advantage than Israel if the government could get its water management right.

Lev said that 15 years ago, with Israel struggling to provide water to its citizens, it became a commodity that had to be managed strictly, including how to price it. “It took time to get the management right and to build the infrastructure needed. How to price water came with experience.”

He said the new tariff increases in the Mother City had brought its water tariffs more or less on par with those of Israel.

Just a few years ago Israel, a country which is two-thirds arid, was able to declare an end to water shortages that had been dogging the country for years. Its agriculture moved away from water-intensive crops and became a world leader through drip irrigation.

Lior Keinan, Israel’s ambassador to South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mauritius, said that agriculture made up 2.5% of Israel’s gross domestic product, but that Israel was able to feed its citizens on its own.

“We are able to meet 95% of our food needs, while exporting our products all over the world,” he said.

“This, despite an area that is only 20% of the size of the Kruger National Park being used for agriculture.”

Keinan said Israel had far fewer resources than South Africa when it came to farming, but that an investment in technology has served it well.

First adopters of the technology have reported a 30% saving in water and a 5% increase in yield. Peach farmers were able to use 48% less water.

“We used technology to bridge those miserable starting figures. Today we are the leading country in managing water,” he said, adding that 70% of Israel’s drinking water is “artificial”. About 90% of the country’s wastewater is cleaned and used in agriculture, with Spain next in line out of the 35 member states belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, with 17% to 18%.

Israel’s water loss is also the lowest in the world by far, with just 8% at most of water lost in municipality infrastructure.

Israel’s agricultural success has continued despite a five-year crippling drought in the region, although its farms have not escaped the drought’s repercussions scot-free. The country is facing its fifth consecutive winter of depleted rainfall.

Zohar Ben Ner, the founder and chairperson of Subplant – an online platform designed to collect real-time sensor data from farms and provide actionable feedback to farmers – said farmers have had no option but to use even less water.

Up to now Israel has been able to produce all the drinking water it needed from five desalination plants it has on the Mediterranean coast, but the drought has forced farmers to cut down on water usage.

While an additional plant is under discussion by government, its likely price tag of \$400 million

(R4.7 billion) makes using even less water a cheaper alternative.

Ben Ner advocated a data-driven solution where datasets are used to predict how much water each plant needs during the different cycles of the crop.

“Without the data, farmers are not only wasting water, but also wasting production,” he said. “We designed a system that could deliver precise irrigation, that spoke to the needs of the plants.”

Data has already indicated that farmers who employ the new techniques have bigger yields while using much less water, he explained.

Ben Ner’s system, called Growth-Based Irrigation, uses electronic probes to monitor plant growth, soil moisture and climatic conditions. Using algorithms, the programme then calculates when exactly to water the crops and how much water to give. When crops are in distress, a notification is sent to farmers.

First adopters of the technology have reported a 30% saving in water and a 5% increase in yield. Peach farmers were able to use 48% less water.

Ben Ner expressed the belief that so-called big data irrigation had the potential to decrease 10% to 20% of irrigation water usage globally.

The system has already been put to the test in the drought-stricken Western Cape – at Marlenique Estate near Franschoek, which farms peaches and lemon trees.

Ben Ner said although the concept could not be fully tested given the fact that water had dried up completely during the test phase, data had shown that the farm would be able to reduce its water usage significantly while still delivering bumper crops.

But it is not only on water saving and farming techniques that Israeli technology is pioneering. Shalom Ben Or of Tel Aviv-based software company Avenews-GT said the new technology, Blockchain, is also paving the way for farmers to access markets in a safe way.

By providing a digital trading platform based on blockchain technology, Avenews-GT enables verified agribusinesses, farmers, co-operatives and commercial agri buyers to transact directly with each other locally and worldwide. This reduces distribution costs, creates financial security and increases supply chain transparency, Ben Or said.

Women are charting the way forward in Orthodox Judaism

PETA KROST MAUNDER

As the first Women's Megillah Reading at Greenside Shul got under way last Thursday afternoon, there was a real sense of accomplishment among the participants. It was the very first time South African women openly read the Megillah in an Orthodox shul – and it was 100% halachic.

When the flyers and emails went out announcing this special reading, Nina Cohen – who is on the Greenside Shul's board of directors – said she expected a maximum of 20 women to join. More than 50 arrived from all over Johannesburg. They were young and old, observant and secular. All were Orthodox and keen to be a part of this event.

"What made it so historic was that firstly, it was in an Orthodox shul, and secondly, it proudly advertised itself as a women's Megillah reading by and for women," said Adina Roth, an Orthodox Torah educator who led the reading.

"Over the years, there have been a handful of Orthodox rabbis in the South African Jewish community who have affirmed in private that it is fine, and even admirable, that women read the Megillah for themselves on Purim. But because of the conservative nature

readings for women and that they had been happening overseas for years, as well as in small groups in South Africa – albeit on the quiet.

"She asked if I would do some research into whether there are halachic precedents that allowed for it, and so I did," said Rabinowitz. "There is a growing number of Orthodox women who want to participate more actively in rituals, where possible. However, the rabbinate spends a lot of time trying to keep them doing what they always do, rather than being brave and encouraging them to participate in areas that are actually open to them."

Rabinowitz explained that women are exempt from certain positive commandments that are governed by time, like sitting in the sukkah on Sukkot. However, although Purim falls under such a commandment, women are obligated to hear the Megillah because of Queen Esther's role in it. "Because women have this obligation, they can read it for other women. There are instances of women reading the Megillah in rabbinic literature going back hundreds of years.

"We may be travelling a new path, but we are not going against Orthodox Judaism. To the contrary, we are taking it to a new level."

Roth maintains that most women

That is, until this Purim in Greenside.

Says Cohen: "Six women leined the Megillah clearly, slowly and meticulously, with such expression.

"The story of Esther, who with courage, wisdom and sensitivity helped to save the Jews from annihilation, was so poignant. The story came alive. It was personal – we were involved... and drew inspiration from it."

Cohen participated as a leiner for the first time last week. "I felt embraced by the community, by the women around me," she says. "I felt connected to our past, our history and our traditions. I savoured the taste of this small success, the fruit of endless work and creativity at Greenside Shul. I felt such pride to be the initiator."

Cohen pays tribute to Rabbi Rabinowitz for being open to new ideas and masterfully balancing past tradition with halacha.

"He comfortably straddles two worlds: the modern secular and the Orthodox Jewish. He understands his constituency and is aware of the need to innovate. He understands the imperative of making Jewish spirituality relevant and accessible to more people who do not necessarily come from a very observant background."

For many of the women attending,



Ruby Kapeluschnik and Adina Roth

have been tentative in pushing for this in the open because they've feared a reprisal. "In 1995, a group of women attempted a halachic, women-only Torah reading on Simchat Torah. On the very day it was to take place, it was aborted by men in the community.

"The following year, a group of women decided to get together to lein the Megillah for Purim. We thought this would be less controversial than reading from the Torah. Also, we needed to do something to heal the trauma of the year before.

"We divided the Megillah among us and learned it. There were daughters of rabbis among us. We did it at a private home. It attracted more than 50 women and was hugely successful, festive and healing. Since then, we've done it in private almost every year."

Because of the 1995 backlash, the activity of women reading the Megillah has become somewhat of "an underground movement", says Roth.

of the community, they have never had the courage to say this in public," Roth said.

"This was a watershed moment for our community because Rabbi [Mendel] Rabinowitz and his community had the courage to say something halachically true and empowering to women, in the open.

"What resulted from this was an opening of the floodgates. Many of them said they had never heard the Megillah read so clearly before. Some of them were moved to tears. It was a very empowering experience for everyone present, not just the readers."

Greenside Shul's Rabbi Rabinowitz explained that Cohen had approached him, saying she had heard of Megillah

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On the other side of sorrow

TALI FEINBERG

When Lynette Langman shared her 40-year-old secret in 2008 – being forced to hide her teenage pregnancy and give her child up for adoption 40 years ago – she believed the pain in her life was over. But it wasn't...

Lynette's story was documented in the book *On the Other Side of Shame* by Joanne Jowell, and it sent shockwaves through the South African Jewish community.

It told the extraordinary story of Langman (nee Zinn), who was forced to give up her child and keep her secret because it would have brought shame to her traditional Jewish family.

She went on to marry the father, Max Langman, raise three more children and keep her secret for 40 years – until one day her long-lost son, Antony, contacted her. The rest is revealed in this highly recommended read.

"I think the book gave many Jewish women a voice," says Langman on the phone from Los Angeles, where she now lives. "Many women came up to me and said: 'That happened to me too', or that they were forced into having abortions. To hear that it wasn't only me was a relief." Others in the Jewish community, both in South Africa and overseas, told her it inspired them to find their birth mothers or to speak more openly about adoption.

"He has always been my son, but I haven't always been his mother".

And so, there are many more stories to tell, especially for Langman. Ten years later, she may have found a son, but she lost one too. "Soon after our reunion with Antony in Seattle, Colin (her eldest son after Antony) was diagnosed with leukaemia. He went into remission but soon relapsed," she explains.

His brother, Jonathan, was a perfect match for a bone marrow transplant, "but Colin had to have strong chemotherapy to prepare him for the transplant, and the chemo, together with the fact that

centre of the tragedy, Langman and her husband ultimately decided to move to Los Angeles, where their daughter, Lara, and granddaughter, Micaela, reside, and to be closer to Antony and

brothers and father.

She's deeply grateful to Antony's adoptive parents, Joe and Selma Egnal, for all they did for him, and she knows Antony was their greatest gift. She is relieved that the

bride's cousin chose to take Lara as his date. I feel like someone was watching out for us."

In the book *On the Other Side of Shame*, the city of Cape Town is like a character. We read about Muizenberg, where Langman and Max met; about Camps Bay, where she was sent to hide before having the baby; about the Gardens Shul, where she was the director; and about the University of Cape Town, where Antony studied medicine.

"It's been hard – we aren't youngsters and we didn't know anyone," says Langman about the move to LA. She now works as a receptionist at the school where her daughter Lara works, and she loves it.

But she misses being part of a community – "knowing everyone at shul, bumping into friends at the Waterfront or on the promenade, hearing someone call your name at the shop... a sense of belonging".

Langman has no regrets about publishing her story, even though it "felt like walking naked down Adderley Street", and she has never received one critical comment about her past. "The response was beyond my wildest dreams – the whole community just embraced me." She holds no resentment towards her parents. "They did what they felt was best for me – they were trying to protect me."



A family photo taken at Thanksgiving two years ago. Back row: Antony Egnal, Gail Zucker, Max Langman, Lynette Langman, Lara Martin, Micaela Martin holding Victoria Langman, and Barry Rabinowitz. Front row: Yael Egnal, Karen Langman, Rene Egnal, Marc Egnal holding Caleb Langman, and Jonathan Langman.

he had a stomach ulcer, caused him to bleed out. He was in and out of hospital for three years, and as sick as he was, he never complained," says Lynette.

"It was so quick, and so devastating. It's unnatural to lose a child. At first I felt like I was being punished – like G-d was saying: 'I've helped you find one son, but I'm taking one back.'" Working through her life history in therapy has helped her find some peace. To other parents grieving the loss of their children, she says: "There is no closure, but there is acceptance."

Colin was 42 when he passed away nine years ago. He left behind his wife, Judy, and two sons, Michael and Daniel. As much as she tried to be the rock at the

Jonathan and their children.

Both men live in Seattle, and knowing Antony was there was a major reason that Jonathan decided to settle there. "He stayed with Antony and René for six months when he first moved, and their children are all very close cousins."

The relationship between Langman and Antony has developed into a warm and loving family one – "which was way more than I could have ever wished for". While it may not be on the same level as with her other children, she knows that "he has always been my son, but I haven't always been his mother".

Langman derives great joy from seeing how similar Antony's likes and mannerisms are to those of his

one thing she requested when she gave up Antony was that he go to a Jewish family, as this led to him having a similar upbringing, and in many ways, kept him in her orbit.

We see this many times in the book – when both the Langmans and the Egnals lived in Camps Bay, when Antony worked with Dr Solly Lison (the Langman family doctor), and most incredibly, when Lara saw Antony's wedding video and realised she had been at his wedding. "Lara called to tell me from Seattle, where she was visiting Antony. She said: 'Mom, are you sitting down?' and proceeded to inform me that she had been at her brother's wedding without knowing it was him. It's unbelievable that in a small wedding of a hundred guests, the

She is relieved that the one thing she requested when she gave up Antony was that he go to a Jewish family, as this led to him having a similar upbringing, and in many ways, kept him in her orbit.

Yet she has not shared her background with many people in LA, and hardly anyone there knows her extraordinary story. And so, ironically, it remains a South African Jewish community story – one that should never have been hidden, but remains safe with us.

Hysterical About Listeriosis



INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman

I am convinced that I have caught Listeriosis. I have suffered from flu-like symptoms for days now and I can almost detect a very uncomfortable and queasy feeling in my stomach. If I concentrate.

I have, to date, experienced no sudden and dramatic weight loss, but I believe that this could happen at any time and I am keeping a very close eye on this. As soon as I stop eating the choc-chip cookies that my wife is experimenting on, I suspect this symptom might present itself.

Loss of appetite also only seems to occur at so-called kosher functions. And I am a bit off chicken right now. But isn't everyone?

The fact that every serious illness that I might be incubating begins with flu-like symptoms really bothers me. Surely in this age of glorious medical knowledge (i.e. Google), we should be able to narrow this down and become a little more specific.

We are able to determine which shipment imported the bacteria from which country in South America, for goodness sake, but the best we can do on the medical side is to watch out for "flu-like symptoms"! If I had a dollar for every time I self-diagnosed with Bilharzia or Ebola, well, I would be writing this column from deep within a Malaria area, wouldn't I?

I come from a long line of hypochondriacs. My late grandmother only really felt at peace with the world when she was in hospital having a toe removed. No idea why. On reflection, I shudder to think what would have happened had she lived past the 90-something years allocated to her. It could have become quite messy.

"Tanya, you are looking so well!" someone

would suggest on seeing her after an absence. "Oy!" she would respond, "you should only know how I feel!" No one could convince her that she was stronger and tougher than most men half her age. Get between her and a piece of cheesecake she had her eye on, and you would find out. She eventually did pass away. Four toes remaining.

I will never forget one Friday night, my mother proudly telling me how much weight she'd lost and then following it up with a "you don't think I am sick, do you?" As sons tend to do, I rolled my eyes and told her to pull herself together. Turns out she did have stage 4 pancreatic cancer, so that might not be the most successful example to use. Because that proves to any respectable neurotic that sometimes our fears are founded. And when that happens, the results could be deadly.

I think it's a Jewish thing. Generations of persecution and interbreeding have turned us into walking time bombs. The dangers are

everywhere. And if the anti-Semites aren't out to get us, our genes certainly are.

I was told that each decade, the average Jewish male adds at least one prescription medication to his arsenal. Starting in one's 30s it's Crestor for cholesterol, Nexium for reflux and Tareg for high blood pressure. Then there is a fork in the road, and lifestyle will determine if you go the Glucophage or Viagra route. The choice is apparently yours. Little wonder we are neurotic. (On this note, it is well worth checking your vitamin D levels and thyroid because undiagnosed, this could become a significant factor). We have reason to be.

And if this isn't bad enough, we are constantly on the defence against the most exotic and cunning of illnesses. Crafty and wicked. And they can be anywhere. Even embedded in polonies. Like a non-vegetarian Trojan horse, waiting for the opportunity to kill us.

Like anti-Semites.

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Netanyahu seeks to prove he's indispensable

DAVID HOROVITZ

In a little more than half an hour at the annual policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demonstrated his formidable public speaking skills on Tuesday. Underlining his stellar display was his desire to assert his indispensability in steering Israel to ever-greater economic growth, global diplomatic acceptance and long-term security.

Needless to say, he made no mention of the legal troubles awaiting him back home. Neither, in a crowd of 18 000 passionately pro-Israel activists, was there any expectation of such references.

The applause echoed those for US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley the previous evening. Haley is particularly beloved by an AIPAC overjoyed by the robust response she has been leading against years of anti-Israel bias at the United Nations. She was the star of this policy conference last year, and she garnered ecstatic reviews on Monday evening too. But Netanyahu's presentation was of an entirely more spectacular order.

Nobody would have been too surprised that he began by referencing his meeting on Monday with US President Donald Trump. But few would have expected to find Netanyahu then referencing Clint Eastwood's spaghetti western, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, and building his speech around an amended title: "The Good, The Bad and the Beautiful." The Good, of course, being the wonders of Israel; The Bad, its enemies – specifically Iran; and The Beautiful, the "eternal" alliance between Israel and the US.

Delivered at the vast Washington Convention Center on Tuesday morning, on giant screens, the effect was powerful.

If the presentation was skilled, the content was more impressive. He hailed Israel's "precision agriculture", its soldiers, and the era of Israeli innovation. He said the world was "turning blue" in forging diplomatic ties with the tiny state. For the Americans, it was surely inspiring.

Moving from "The Good" to "The Bad",



Netanyahu reminded the audience of his having opposed the Iran nuclear deal from the get-go and pledged to stop Iran.

Similarly, Netanyahu asserted that Israel seeks peace with all its neighbours, including the Palestinians. If only

Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas would stop spending what the prime minister claimed is about 10% of the PA budget on salaries for terrorists and their families, there would be money for schools, hospitals, factories.

and are today "writing a new chapter in our common story".

But it's not AIPAC that will determine his fate. As things stand, it's not Israeli voters either. It's Israel's law enforcement authorities.

Chief Rabbinate should not control Western Wall's mixed prayer section, says AG

AMANDA BORSCHEL-DAN AND TOI STAFF

In a written response to the High Court, the attorney general ruled that the southern section of the Western Wall should be designated as a "holy site" for pluralistic prayer, and the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate should not have any control over the area.

Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit's statement on Monday was in response to several ongoing High Court petitions, coming from both sides of the issue of egalitarian prayer at the Western Wall.

Among the petitioners are the major non-Orthodox Jewish movements, the Women of the Wall (and its splinter group, which calls itself the Original Women of the Wall), and the Women for the Wall, who are against women's Torah reading at the Western Wall.

In Monday's response, lawyers for the government acknowledged that the southern section of the wall was a holy site, and therefore law enforcement agencies had a duty to ensure that there are no disruptions to prayer there and no unruly behaviour by protesters.

The attorney general's legal response followed an episode in November, when Reform movement head Rabbi Rick Jacobs was buffeted by ultra-Orthodox protesters and

area guards when as he attempted to bring a Torah scroll through the Western Wall plaza's main entrance.

Mandelblit also wrote that the government must create a body that would be responsible for the area, but which would not include representatives of the Orthodox rabbinate or the rabbi of the Western Wall.

According to the statement, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu supported Robinson's Arch being categorised as a "holy site". The statement records that Netanyahu has informed the attorney general that he intends to request that the ministry of religious affairs give up jurisdiction of the site to a high-level government official to be named by the Prime Minister's Office.

Mandelblit's letter confirmed that the form of worship customarily engaged in at the southern section of the wall included pluralistic prayer and women's prayer services, and that this rite had to be safeguarded. Any attempt to disrupt such prayer at the site would be punishable according to the law regulating other holy sites.

The pluralistic pavilion is located in the Davidson Archaeological Park in an area called Robinson's Arch. It is out of sight of the "mainstream" Orthodox prayer plaza.

Work began last month on improving and enlarging the permanent prayer area at the southern wall.

MARKING WOMEN'S DAY, MINISTER TELLS FEMALE MKs TO 'QUIT WHINING'

TAMAR PILEGGI

Two days ahead of International Women's Day, Science and Technology Minister Ofir Akunis sparked a backlash for telling women that if they "continue to whine, you will never become leaders".

"You want to mark [Women's Day], and that's fine," Akunis said during a special plenary session to mark the day. "I'll go with the flow."

But, he went on, "feminism does not mean constantly whining. It means doing."

Akunis named former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, former Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, former Turkish prime minister Tansu Ciller, and current US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley as positive role models for aspiring female leaders.

Israel's only female prime minister, Golda Meir, did not make Akunis' list.

"What happened? Stop it, change your old-

fashioned perceptions and learn from them," Akunis said. "If you continue to whine, you won't ever be leaders.

"In my opinion, Nikki Haley is a real leader. Learn from her about leadership," he told the female MKs in the room.

Akunis' remarks drew audible groans and cries of protest from lawmakers, with several storming out in protest.

"Here's a short lesson: For years, the women that you describe as 'whiners' have changed the course of history," Zionist Union MK Revital Swid tweeted. "Your comments are exactly why we need a Women's Day in 2018."

Fellow Zionist Union MK Hilik Bar also slammed Akunis' remarks as a "disgrace".

Joint List MK and women's rights activist Aida Touma-Sliman also slammed Akunis' "shameful" remarks, and said marking Women's Day "symbolises

the hope in the struggle for a more just society".

Akunis later apologised to MKs for any offence caused.



Ofir Akunis

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AIPAC chief calls for Palestinian statehood

TOI STAFF

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu no longer endorses full statehood for the Palestinians, and the Trump administration has grudgingly said it will support a two-state solution if the two sides agree to it. However, the head of pro-Israel lobby group the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) launched an impassioned plea this week for Palestinian statehood and for holding on to belief in the possibility of peace.

In remarks that are liable to anger hawkish Israeli politicians and their US supporters, including portions of the AIPAC membership, the lobby's executive director, Howard Kohr, called for "two states for two peoples" and said it was "tragic" that this scenario currently seems so distant.

He blamed the Palestinian leadership for avoiding direct talks, and also said Israel needed peace with all of its neighbours.

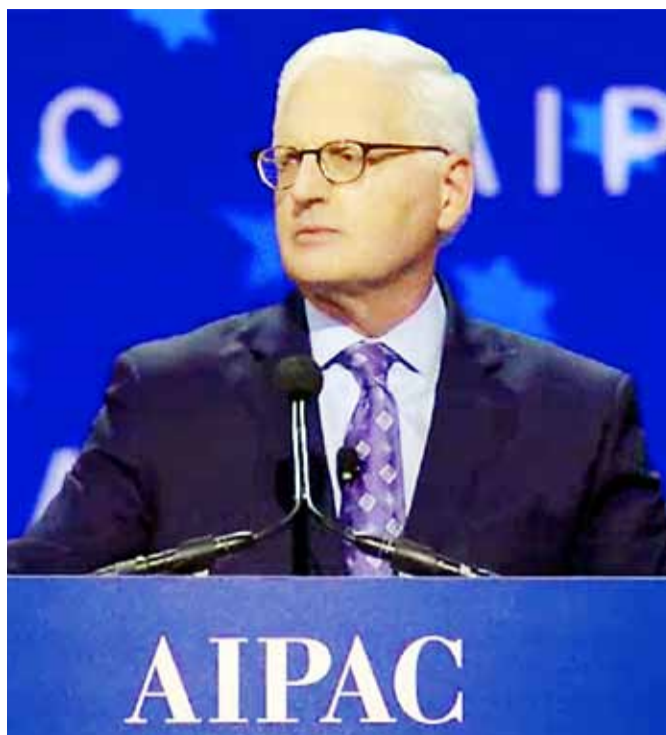
Addressing 18 000 attendees at AIPAC's annual policy conference, which took place in Washington this week, the lobby's veteran leader highlighted what he said were warming relations between Israel and various Arab countries.

He said those emerging relationships were "a force for moderation" and constituted "a message to the Palestinian leadership that a bright future is possible when you finally put aside generations of hatred and choose to live side by side in peace with the Jewish state of Israel".

Speaking on the eve of scheduled talks on Monday between Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump, and ahead of Netanyahu's own address to AIPAC on Tuesday, Kohr then stressed the peace-making imperative for Israel and its supporters: "We must all work towards that future: two states for two peoples. One Jewish with secure and defensible borders, and one Palestinian with its own flag and its own future."

"Today that dream seems remote," Kohr acknowledged. "This is tragic. The absence of a constructive peace process is nothing to celebrate. Israel's security cannot be fully assured and her promise cannot be fully realised until she is at peace with all her neighbours."

Kohr went on to declare that "peace begins by talking" and lamented that "it has been nearly eight years since Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has had direct talks



with an Israeli prime minister." Plainly, he said, there was "no Palestinian willingness to talk face to face".

Directing his remarks to Abbas, Kohr declared that "there is no substitute for direct negotiations" and "there are no short cuts to peace. You can't do it through the United Nations, not through the European Union, and not through Moscow."

He promised that AIPAC "will stand with the administration, our friends in Congress and anyone in the international community who supports peace through direct negotiations".

"Preparing for conflict may require forever vigilance," Kohr then said, "but working for peace demands forever faith, a faith that there is a future beyond bloodshed and war. We share that faith and we are ready for that day."

Almost all Knesset members from Netanyahu's governing Likud party say they oppose Palestinian statehood. The prime minister indicated ahead of the last elections in 2015 that there was no foreseeable prospect of Palestinian statehood, and last year told his ministers he was prepared to give the Palestinians a "state minus".

Will Israel's clash with Poland affect Holocaust commemoration trips?

CNAAN LIPSHIZ

Three years ago, Shaul de Malach had no problem joining fellow educators from his country on a trip to former Nazi death camps in Poland.

Like thousands of Israelis and Jews in the diaspora who go on commemorative missions each year, De Malach "didn't exactly relish the thought of visiting Auschwitz", he told JTA last week. He was recounting his trip in 2015 as part of the Council of Youth Movements in Israel's biennial seminar in Poland. "But," he said, "I thought it was important for me to see as a Jew and a teacher."

Photo: Omar Marques/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images



Participants during the March of the Living at Oswiecim in Krakow, Poland

But De Malach has since changed his mind.

Following Poland's passing this year of a controversial law that makes it illegal to blame the country for Nazi crimes, De Malach now promotes a boycott of Poland trips by the thousands of members of the 99-year-old group he leads, Ezra.

In a January letter to Poland's ambassador in Israel, he cited fear for visitors' safety and what he called Poland's "complicity" in the Holocaust, including by "Polish guards".

De Malach's letter may be selective and factually inaccurate. In addition to many informers in Nazi-occupied Poland, thousands of Poles risked their lives to save Jews. None of them served as guards in Nazi camps.

But it nonetheless illustrates how the row over the new law, which critics say whitewashes the role of Polish collaborators and hampers discussion about it, is causing some delegation organisers and participants to re-evaluate going on a pilgrimage with significant financial components that has connected Jews and Poles for some 30 years.

Other trip organisers are considering changes. They include Rabbi Boruch Gorin, a senior aide to one of Russia's chief rabbis, Berel Lazar. Lazar's Chabad-affiliated Federation

of Jewish Communities of Russia sends hundreds of young Jews annually to visit the former Auschwitz camp as part of its Eurostars programme.

Gorin won't consider a boycott of Poland, saying: "We shouldn't change how we commemorate our relatives to punish any political entity. These should be kept as two separate things."

But he spoke about other sites in Poland that could explore the complicated role of non-Jewish Poles during the Holocaust, where the Nazis killed three million non-Jewish Poles in addition to three million Jewish ones. They include Jedwabne, where Polish villagers in 1941 butchered hundreds of Jews with little or no intervention by the Germans; and Kielce, a village where dozens of Jews who had returned from the camps were lynched and killed by locals in 1946.

"Maybe considering the assault on [the] historical record, it's time to consider adding sites that are relevant to this cruelty by Poles to the list of destinations in Poland," Gorin said.

Separately, Moshe Azman, a chief rabbi of Ukraine, is lobbying to have commemorative trips from Israel moved to Ukraine.



News and views from the Fed Consistent media monitoring results in public apology for incorrect reporting

BEN SWARTZ

On February 11, Lesedi FM announced a factually incorrect news broadcast about Israel's management of the proposed deportation of illegal migrants in Israel.

The SA Zionist Federation (SAZF) submitted a formal complaint to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of SA (BCCSA). We would like to share the content of this submission.

"The report by Mr Thuso Motaung is palpably incorrect. It is a flagrant non-truth that Israel wishes to deport "every black person", and saying so amounts to an unwarranted slur against the State of Israel and its people.

"In addition to being deeply offensive to members both of the Jewish community and the many Christian supporters of Israel in our society, this inaccurate and inflammatory report has also sown unnecessary anxiety amongst black people wishing to visit Israel...

"What Mr Motaung has done is to misrepresent Israel's current programme of relocation to a third country for those who have entered Israel illegally. This policy has nothing to do with racial or anti-African bias. Illegal immigration is a worldwide problem, including in South Africa, and like every country in the world, Israel has the right and obligation to protect its borders and determine its economic migration policy...

"Migrants who entered Israel illegally and choose to leave the country voluntarily by the end of March 2018 will receive a monetary grant of \$3 500 (R41 000), in addition to airfare, allowing them to begin a new, respectable life in another country...

"In addition, only single asylum-seeker males are included in this deportation order. Men who are married and have families, women from any of the countries of origin, whether single or married, and children will not be required to leave. Israel's approach to dealing with the difficult problem of illegal immigration compares favourably with that of most other countries facing similar challenges, including South Africa."

On March 5, the SAZF received a formal response by the BCCSA. Below are key excerpts:

"The SABC would like to sincerely apologise to the SAZF for the comments made by the presenter pertaining to Israel's treatment of African illegal immigrants ... The presenter misread an online newspaper report about African migrants and misunderstood it to mean Africans in general ...

"We are... aware of the influence that radio has in society and have no doubt that this matter may have brought unnecessary panic to certain members of our society, which we regret. It is for this reason that the management of Lesedi FM is implementing corrective measures with the presenter concerned... The presenter has owned up to his mistake and apologised."

The SAZF monitors the media on a daily basis and responds accordingly when the media shows anti-Israel bias. We also strive to build and maintain our media relationships and provide fact-based information where required.

We are satisfied with this outcome and compliment the BCCSA for its handling of this issue.

• Ben Swartz is chairperson of the SA Zionist Federation

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Support for coexistence plunging among Jewish and Arab Israelis

MICHAEL BACHNER

Tensions between Jews and Arabs are intensifying, with both populations becoming more sceptical about prospects for living in coexistence, according to a survey published on Wednesday.

Arab Israelis' recognition of the state and of its Jewish character has significantly declined between 2015 and 2017, alongside a parallel decrease in Jews' acceptance of Arabs as equal citizens, the poll, conducted by Haifa University sociologist Sammy Smootha, found.

However, the survey also found most Israeli Arabs think Israel is a good place to live and wouldn't want to relocate to a future Palestinian state. In his conclusions, Smootha said that despite the widening rift, there is a "continued strong basis for Jewish-Arab coexistence in Israel".

The extensive survey, is called the 2017 *Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel*. It found that last year, 58.7% of Israeli Arabs recognised Israel's right to exist, significantly down from 65.8% in 2015. The percentage of Arabs recognising the state as Jewish and democratic decreased during that time from 53.6% to 49.1%, while the share of those recognising it as a Zionist state went down from 42.7% in 2015 to 36.2% in 2017.

Israeli Arabs make up roughly 21% of the country's population, with Jews making up some 75% and the rest defined as "other".

Among the Jewish population, the survey found that in 2017 only 61.1% viewed the country's Arabs as full members of Israeli society, down from 69.5% two years earlier. The percentage of Israeli Jews agreeing that Arabs have the right to live as a minority enjoying full civil rights was sharply down from 79.7% in 2015 to 73.8% in 2017.

The survey, conducted for the first time by Smootha in 1976, found that while Israeli Arabs increasingly question the state's legitimacy, they still wouldn't leave the country. In 2017, 77.4% said they weren't willing to live in a future Palestinian state, up from 72.2% in 2015. Some 60% said they preferred living in Israel over any other country in the world, up from 58.8% two years earlier.

"There has been a sharp deterioration in the past few years in relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel," said Smootha in the survey's conclusions. "But this deterioration doesn't spell a revolutionary change.

"Most Jews and most Arabs in Israel believe in a shared society."

To gather data, Smootha and his team spoke with 700 Arabs and 700 Jews across the country between May and August 2017.

Right wing rabbi complains Israel is flooded with gay culture

TOI STAFF

A prominent national religious Israeli rabbi sparked an outcry on Tuesday when he said that the country has become an "LGBT-stan" inundated with gay culture. He urged his followers to "wage war" for traditional family values.

Speaking at a right wing religious conference, Rabbi Yehoshua Shapira, who heads the Ramat Gan Yeshiva, said that so-called homosexual culture was "an illness".

The conference called for opposition to same-sex marriages. Stressing that neither he nor his followers were homophobic, Shapira said: "Anyone who says something about a healthy and faith-based family is considered to have phobias, to be someone who is an extremist," he said. "Why? Because he expressed an opinion that has been the basis of all humanity and the entire Torah!"

Shapira, who also teaches at Bar-Ilan University, said there was nothing homophobic or extremist in wanting traditional Jewish values in family life.

"I have invested many hours in helping those who have difficulty in this area [of homosexuality]," he said. "But there is an illness that is spreading and taking over. We're becoming a country that looks more and more like an LGBT-stan."

Rejecting calls from within the national religious camp for a more moderate approach to the issue,

Shapira said: "We are now attacked for this platform [of opposing homosexuality] as if we had left [the national religious camp] and become ultra-Orthodox. They hate us for our sanity."

Shapira's yeshiva is part of the Heder system, which combines Torah study with army service. It is recognised by the government and receives public funding.



Rabbi Yehoshua Shapira

His words sparked an outcry. Activists organised a protest via Facebook to be held outside the Ramat Gan Yeshiva next week.

Shapira was one of dozens of rabbis who signed a letter, sent in July to Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, opposing adoption by gay couples. "These days, voices are being raised seeking to change the custom of the state, in a way that is contrary to the human morality that emanates from our holy Torah," the rabbis wrote.

Who is Mahmoud al-Aloul, touted as Abbas' possible heir?

KHALED ABU TOAMEH

If reports in various Arab media outlets are true, veteran Fatah leader Mahmoud al-Aloul appears, for now, to be the leading candidate to succeed Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas.

Ramallah is awash with rumours about the 82-year-old Abbas' health condition.

The rumours surfaced after Abbas underwent what some of his aides described as "routine medical check-ups" in a US hospital last month.

Despite the rumours, Abbas continues to stick to his busy schedule, holding meetings with Palestinians and foreigners on a daily basis.

Meanwhile, focus has intensified on the 68-year-old al-Aloul, who was elected a year ago as deputy chairman of Abbas' Fatah party, which dominates the PA and its security forces.

Last week, Abbas reportedly told members of the Fatah Revolutionary Council that al-Aloul was his preferred candidate to succeed him as chairman of Fatah. The council is the second key decision-making body after the Fatah Central Committee.

If Abbas is incapacitated, Palestinian sources say al-Aloul is expected to serve as acting chairman of Fatah until its representatives elect a new leader.



Photo: Issam Rimawi/Flash90

Mahmoud al-Aloul, member of the Central Committee of Fatah

If elected, al-Aloul, who belongs to the old guard of the Palestinian leadership, is expected to pursue the same policies of his predecessor.

One reason Abbas prefers al-Aloul to other candidates, the sources said, was that he shares the PA chief's strategy according to which the Palestinians should stick to "popular resistance" and not an "armed struggle" against Israel.

Born in Nablus in 1950, al-Aloul, who is better known as Abu Jihad, holds a BA degree in Geography from the Beirut Arab University in Lebanon.

He was first arrested by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in 1967 because of his membership in Fatah and involvement in terrorism. After spending three years in an Israeli prison, he was

deported to Jordan, where he joined Fatah forces that were operating in the kingdom.

Israel initially opposed his return to the West Bank together with the PLO leadership, after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, because of his role in terrorism. However, Israel later changed its mind and allowed him to reunite with his PLO cohorts in the West Bank.

In 1995, Arafat appointed al-Aloul as PA governor of Nablus, the largest West Bank Palestinian city. In 2009, he was elected as member of the Fatah Central Committee thanks to his close and friendly relations with Abbas.

al-Aloul has often expressed views similar to those of Abbas.

He is a leading advocate of boycotting Israeli goods.

Women's March in anti-Semitism controversy

TOI STAFF

The Women's March organisation said on Tuesday that anti-Semitism and homophobia were "indefensible" and intolerable. However, it did not censure co-organiser Tamika Mallory for her recent public display of support for anti-Semitic and homophobic Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

Women's March, which has organised annual marches for women's rights and progressive causes, said it was "very conscious of the conversations that must be had across the intersections of race, religion and gender".

"We love and value our sister and co-president Tamika Mallory, who has played a key role in shaping these conversations. Neither we nor

she shy away from the fact that intersectional movement building is difficult and often painful."

Mallory, who has praised Farrakhan repeatedly, attended an address by Farrakhan last month, during which he lauded her activities. In that same speech he also said he had "pulled the cover off the eyes of that Satanic Jew and I'm here to say your time is up, your world is through".

He added that "the Jews were responsible" for "filth and degenerate behaviour that Hollywood is putting out, turning men into women and women into men".

The Women's March group has faced widespread criticism for Mallory's support of Farrakhan.

In a statement on Tuesday,



Activist Tamika Mallory

the organisation said: "Anti-Semitism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, racism and white supremacy are, and always will be, indefensible.

"Minister Farrakhan's statements about Jewish, queer and trans people are not aligned with the Women's March Unity Principles."

Another co-organiser, Linda Sarsour, has been a harsh critic of Israel and a vocal supporter of BDS.

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Sweet drams of whisky flow in the land of milk and honey

JESSICA STEINBERG

It has taken a few decades for Israelis to get around to distilling single malt whisky. But now a handful of local distilleries are creating their own sabra spirits, suffused with local flavour and aged slightly more quickly in this warmer clime than in Scotland.

There are currently three boutique distilleries around Israel: Tel Aviv's Milk & Honey, the Golan Heights Distillery in Katzrin in the Golan Heights, and Pelter, also in the Golan Heights. And, there are crowdfunding plans to open The Jerusalem Distilling Company, an offshoot of the Golan Heights Distillery.

Another, a "brewstiller" in Pardes Hanna, recently announced plans to combine a brewery and distillery in the northern community.

That's a lot of amber spirits for a country that didn't have plans for distilleries five years ago. But it was the obvious success of the boutique wine industry, and then the microbreweries here, that led whisky lovers to take the risk.

Said Gal Granov, a local whisky enthusiast who writes Whisky Israel, a local blog: "People want

to buy local and they want whisky with local influences."

These Israeli spirits are full of native flavours.

Milk & Honey's experimental series has notes of orange, oak and marzipan, said Eitan Atir, the distillery's CEO. It was created by Tomer Goren, the head distiller, with Dr Jim Swan, a master distiller and consultant who died last year. Swan had brought his experience from India, another warm country with whisky distilleries, to Tel Aviv.

Milk & Honey also distils New Make, an unaged single malt; Levantine Gin with notes of juniper berries, lemon and hyssop; and four editions in its Cask Series of young single malts.

For the new Jerusalem Distillery, co-owner David Zibell (who also owns the Golan Heights Distillery) distilled gin with angelica root, sumac, olive leaves, citron and almonds, as well as boukha, a Tunisian spirit made from dried figs.

At Pelter, brother winemakers Tal and Nir Pelter partnered with alcohol experts Yossi Boznah and Tal Chotiner, distilling fresh dates in their brandy (and Pink Lady apples in their gin). They have

been using the mash from Israeli brewery Alexander to distil their single malt, which just turned three years old.

Pelter is a small distillery with a capacity of 20 000 litres and, for now, only minimal whisky production, most of

who say they earned their money in technology startups, invested \$1 million (R12 million) in the endeavour.

The distillery includes fermentation tanks with the capacity to produce 700 000 litres a year, or about a million bottles.

moved with his wife and children to Katzrin. Zibell put all his retirement money into the distillery and currently has an inventory worth about NIS 4 million (R14 million).

"You have to be a little bit crazy to do this," he said.

The Golan Heights Distillery currently produces two whiskies: the two-grain Golani for beginner drinkers, and for the initiated, a single malt that is heavier, with more grain, sweetness and wood.

Zibell is currently selling about 5 000 bottles each month with a capacity of about 54 000 litres in the Golan.

Said Atir: "Israeli whisky needs to be well known for its quality, it doesn't matter which brand. But there's enough room in the market for everyone."

Photo: Luke Tress/Times of Israel



The Milk & Honey distillery in Tel Aviv

which was pre-sold as part of a crowdfunding project. It's an adventure for whisky distillers to make (and drink) these Israeli spirits, and their main drive seems to be simple love of the quaff.

Milk & Honey, the Tel Aviv distillery and so far the largest of the bunch, was established by six friends in 2013 and began to distil two years later. The six,

But for now, they'll be filling about 200 000 litres a year and will be ready with their single malt in 2019, said Atir.

They also have a visitor's centre, where they offer tours and tastes.

Milk & Honey is the biggest of all the boutique distilleries, followed by the Golan Heights Distillery, set up in 2014 by Zibell, a Montreal native who

Martial arts masters hit the mat for amity

URVASHI VERMA

What do an instructor from Iran who chooses the path of peace; a Jordanian who trained in martial arts with the royal family in Dubai; an Egyptian who serves in the karate federation in Iraq; and a Turkish man who promoted karate for women in his country have in common?

They were all participants in the Budo for Peace International Martial Arts Seminar that took place in Ra'anana last month, marking the fourth anniversary of a gathering of leading athletes who are using the martial arts to promote coexistence, respect and peace. They hailed from the Middle East, Japan, Australia and Greece.

Students practise martial arts techniques during the Budo for Peace Seminar



The visiting sensei, or masters, conveyed a strong and united message that the trek was not politically motivated.

"Our purpose is to teach younger generations to know peace better, not by violent means but by doing martial arts and showing the values of respect to one another – and, most importantly, not to hurt one another," said Mikdat Kahraman, a master martial arts teacher from Turkey.

Most traditional martial arts follow a code of conduct that demands and gives respect, arouses humility and develops a sense of equality among its followers. Such behaviours as wearing simple uniforms,

practising barefoot and competing on mats, which are seen as a sacred space, help connect with the values of humility, respect and peace, they say.

"As you can see, no one here is different. We are not separating people by politics or religion. Our white dress reminds us that we are all equal," said Ghazi Keyvan as he prepared to lead the training exercises.

While competitors in other sports do not want to shake hands with Israeli competitors because of political and ideological differences, the entire philosophy of martial arts is to demonstrate respect toward one another, said Keyvan.

The two-day seminar opened with an advanced training course in which master-level practitioners from Turkey, Iran, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority taught Israeli instructors and students martial arts techniques and facilitated the exchange of new ideas.

The idea that one should control aggression without inflicting injury upon one's opponents is a fundamental teaching in the sport, said Mohamed Saied, a master teacher.

On the second day, more than 300 children, young adults and their teachers from Arab, Jewish Orthodox, secular, Ethiopian and Bedouin backgrounds, who are part of the Budo for Peace network of martial arts schools, participated.

For Danny Hakim, founder and chairman of Budo for Peace, forums like the seminar help to break down ignorance and fear.

"It takes a great amount of courage for these masters to come here today to Israel," he said.

'Sugar Man' plays to a packed shul

DAVID HOROVITZ

Over the past six years, thanks to the amazing sequence of events documented in the Oscar-winning *Searching for Sugar Man*, Sixto Rodriguez has belatedly received his due fame.

On Saturday night, the now 75-year-old Rodriguez played a solo concert at Washington DC's Sixth & I Historic Synagogue – a place, its website proclaims, that celebrates "the unexpected places where Jewish and secular culture meet".

And, indeed, it was more than a little unexpected to see Rodriguez, seated in front of the Holy Ark, bustling through his repertoire of anti-establishment songs, and a handful of covers. Fans and the overflow crowd clapped and danced.

Rodriguez was comfortable in the sacred surroundings. An Israeli once booked him on a tour of Australia, he remarked early on, glancing at the two giant menorahs with which he shared the stage, "so I'm familiar with some of these symbols around me".

Clearly no longer in the best of health, his singing and guitar-playing were anything but effortless. Yet Rodriguez paced himself, musing at length between songs and playfully

switching hats four or five times. "You're an easy crowd," he said.

An intermittent would-be politician – he's run in vain for office numerous times in Detroit – he weighed in gently on gun control: "We have to raise the age for owning an assault weapon a lot higher. To about 40. Forty-five, even..."

He took a stance against drugs: Sugar Man, his best-known tune, "is a descriptive song not a prescriptive song", he said. "Be smart. Don't start." He urged more women to run for office. He implored that we protect the land and the kids.

Rodriguez wanted us



Rodriguez in concert at the Sixth & I Historic Synagogue

to know that he's not unpatriotic. Five members of his family have served in the military. "But if anyone wants a political stance today, start with the Ten Commandments," he advised, from his perfect vantage point beneath the two tablets

themselves.

"Thou shalt not kill," Rodriguez intoned.

Receiving his recognition 40 years after it would truly have changed his life, Rodriguez is never going to be a wealthy man now. "I have not received any royalties," he said, referring to his first two albums that, unbeknown to him at the time, made other people a fair

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Miracle Drive proves the power of positivity

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Despite the challenges it faced in the run-up to Miracle Drive 28, which took place on Tuesday, Chabad House delivered a night of entertainment with an overriding message of hope. A total of R18.6 million was raised through the dinner as well as annual donations. As a result, Chabad's Miracle Drive is now poised to shine even more light on the people it uplifts and supports.

However, there was much drama in the days leading up to the event, held at the Sandton Convention Centre and attended by about 1 750 people. First, caterers Stan and Pete lost their kashrut licence just six days before the annual premier charity gala dinner. Then headline act Johnny Clegg cancelled.

What does one do in such a situation? "You can either fall apart or you can put your

trust in the Almighty, as the Torah says you should," said Miracle Drive founder and director Rabbi David Masinter during his address to the audience.

"There are always bigger issues. You just keep focused, you do what you have to do and things work out miraculously. After that, you call up Catering By Riva, Stan Smookler and Brent Varcoe from Bidfood, and you make it their problem! Then you call Choni G and mystery musical guest Vusi Mahlasela and you say: "The entertainment is your problem! And things work out for the better. I'm also so grateful to all the kosher butcheries that rallied behind me."

Indeed, all those called upon took potential problems and turned them into solutions.

It turned out to be an evening underpinned by positivity. Culinary concerns were laid to rest as everyone dined on delicious smoked salmon, chicken and vegetables, and decadent chocolate desserts.

Choni G and his band opened the Miracle Drive's proceedings with a rousing rendition of *Salaam* and then performed numbers that set the tone for an inspiring evening. Comedian Mark Banks was MC and kept guests laughing, specially about the constant development in the surrounding Sandton area, calling it "the only construction site in the world with its own shopping centre!"

And when the mystery guest artist, who turned out to be South African music legend Vusi Mahlasela, performed his song *Say Africa*, the spirit of ubuntu which underpins the Miracle Drive was undeniable.

The Miracle Drive spurs Chabad's charity work through programmes that help to make a positive difference in the country and projects designed to uplift our community's vulnerable children, as well as the elderly.

In addition to their donations, Miracle Drive dinner attendees were given the gift of doing their own acts of kindness. Robby Stoller of Dangee Carken footwear brand conceived the idea of sponsoring a pair of children's shoes for each couple who attended to donate to someone less fortunate and help give them direction in life.

"Every morning we make a brocha on



Photos: Ilan Ossendryver



South Africa musician Vusi Mahlasela is thanked by Rabbi Masinter after his performance

our shoes – because it's the direction of our shoes today that determines the rest of our lives. If we get our direction right today, we'll achieve what we have to," said Rabbi Masinter. "Let's change our world for good!"

Echoing this message of hope and kindness at the dinner were the two guest speakers: community leader Rabbi Avraham Tanzer, the founding rabbi of Glenhazel shul, and Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba.

Echoing the Lubavitcher Rebbe's message that the Jewish people have a home in South Africa until Mashiach comes, Rabbi Tanzer delivered an address of hope centred on two words: "Don't despair."

He said: "This country of ours went through a decade of hell. Today it's over, we have a new president. We have no guarantees, but we have one thing – hope. Don't despair. Optimists don't say there are no problems, they say: 'Do something about it.'"

Providing food for thought, Tanzer echoed a question asked by his friend Michael Kaufman in his memoir, *In One Era, Out the Other*: "Does life need to be perfect to be wonderful?"

Added Tanzer: "It's up to you to make the most of life."

He concluded with a quote from Albert Einstein: "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."

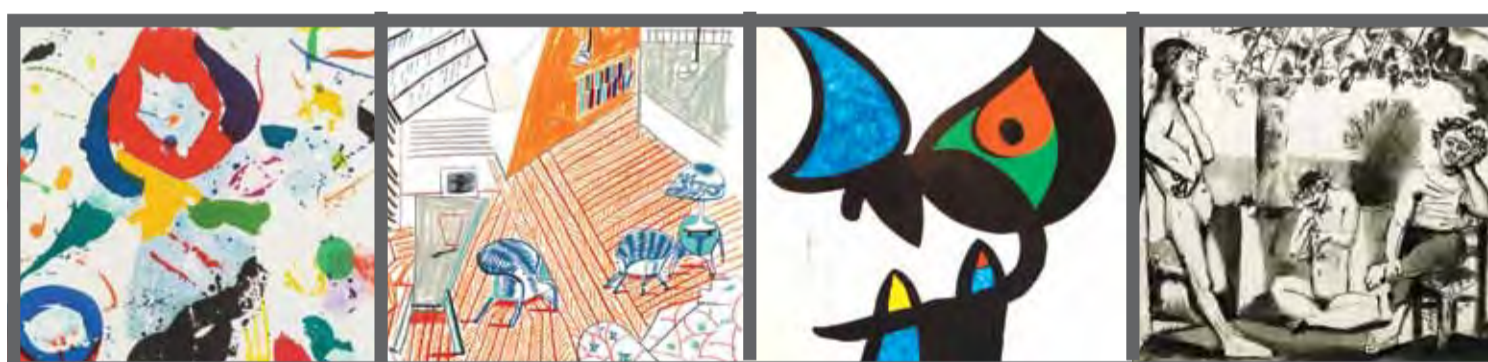
"Choose to live your life by the latter view," urged the rabbi.

Mayor Mashaba echoed this positivity. He acknowledged and spoke in detail about the seemingly insurmountable obstacles he encounters in his work as Johannesburg mayor – but he stressed the importance of hope.

The mayor also explained the important role of the private sector in driving business and initiatives such as the Miracle Drive. "Government doesn't have the capacity to meet the needs of everyone in the city," he said, "which is why we need more private and public collaboration, especially for our most vulnerable people."

He concluded by saying: "I never thought I'd be the mayor. I did it to save my country. It's almost impossible, but it's the most rewarding job."

Among the top prizes on the night were the Nissan X-Trail, valued at R480 000, and a R200 000 Yamaha grand piano.



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Facing gender issues, dress first

NICOLA MILTZ

David Joffe-Hunter is challenging gender stereotypes because he can't see why boys have to do and wear certain things, while there's another set of rules for girls. In the past, even if he had thought of dressing up in clothes associated with the female gender, he knew it was a no-no.

But now, at 17, he is shaking things up by challenging these stereotypes. Last month, the Grade 11 pupil was banned from wearing a woman's dress to his school's fashion show fundraiser.

He saw this as an opportunity to spark a conversation about gender stereotyping, but his school, Reddam House in Bedfordview, was having none of it. The school's management told him that while they were prepared to hold future discussions about gender equality, the fashion show was not the right platform.

Instead of a dress, Joffe-Hunter wore a suit – despite a petition by 83 classmates in support of his wearing a dress.

"I wanted to wear a dress for two reasons," he told the SA Jewish Report recently. "Firstly, I wanted to spark progressive discussion about gendered clothing and expression. And secondly, I thought I might enjoy wearing a dress, regardless of any activism."

Joffe-Hunter insists that sexuality and gender are not automatically connected. "I could be straight and dress in traditional female clothing, or I could be gay and dress in a traditional masculine fashion. There is no necessary link between gender, sexuality and how someone dresses."

He adds that some kids are gender non-conforming, wanting something other than what society offers.

"While I'm happy to wear jeans and a shirt, it would be nice to wear a dress without having to justify it," says Joffe-Hunter, who sometimes wears scarves and a kikai around his waist but "only at home with my closest friends".

The gender revolution has taken the US by storm in recent years. It is only just starting to take shape across South African schools, where the lines between male and female have become increasingly blurred.

With celebrity role models such as singer Miley Cyrus, who no longer identifies with a gender and calls herself pansexual, and actor Will Smith's son Jaden, who wore a dress to his senior prom, it's becoming increasingly evident that gender doesn't simply mean male and female. This is the terrain that the youth of today are navigating. Says Johannesburg psychologist Lisa Kallmeyer: "Our youth are exposed to various forms of self-expression."

It is a world in which celebrities such as Academy Award-winning actress Charlize Theron have entered the gender conversation. Theron has received criticism and praise in equal measure for allowing her six-year-old son Jackson to wear clothes traditionally made for girls, including tutus, dresses and frilly tops with patterned leggings and ballerina pumps.

Theron has been criticised on social media for "allowing him to be the boy he wants to be", but has so far been unrelenting in her acceptance of her little boy's clothing choices. And it's people like Caitlyn Jenner who have brought the gender conversation to the forefront of pop culture.

Jon Brooks, a US reporter says some

people are redefining gender identity. He says they identify as both male and female; others as neither male nor female; and still others as sometimes male and sometimes female. These individuals may use any number of terms to describe their gender identity: genderqueer, gender-fluid, gender-creative, gender-expansive.

While definitions fluctuate, he says "nonbinary gender" has emerged as an umbrella description.

Popular TV host Ellen DeGeneres has transformed the fashion industry with her clothing line, ED. The line offers "non gender-specific" clothes, highlighting the notion that being a girl is not analogous with dressing in a traditionally girly way. DeGeneres' collaboration with GapKids in 2015 homed in on giving girls the option to "be who they want to be, not what clothing stores dictate they should be".

At the time, the comedienne and



David Joffe-Hunter

business mogul said: "I want to make sure that everyone knows that what makes you different right now, makes you stand out later in life."

As more youths redefine their gender identity in nonbinary terms, the question

is raised about whether schools, workplaces and parents in South Africa will begin to adapt to the change.

Just last month, a pupil from a top Johannesburg private boys' college stood up in front of the whole school and came out. He was applauded for his bravery.

Says Kallmeyer: "How much better his life will be moving forward, as opposed to generations past when a boy would've had to keep his true identity hidden."

But Johannesburg psychologist Hazel Kurian said that while South Africa has one of the world's most progressive Constitutions, "change does not happen overnight".

"The idea that gender is fluid and not binary is something that, sadly, most South Africans are not even aware of, let alone understand and accept."

On the matter of Joffe-Hunter being told by the school that it was supportive and inclusive but that there were

alternative avenues to discuss the subject, Kurian said: "One should query when a good time is and how the school will engage in useful, inclusive and progressive conversation on the matter. I think what happened shows just how unprepared many schools are for this."

"Children, adolescents and adults who identify as trans, or even just question gender binary perceptions, face discrimination and challenges. This is why it is important for conversations about safe spaces to enter more prominently into the mainstream."

Kurian said it was vital for schools to provide places where pupils could express, debate and question their gender identities in an emotionally secure space.

"It is not meant to further segregate or isolate them," she said.

Meanwhile, Joffe-Hunter is positive that things are shifting, albeit slowly. "There are guys on the same page as me and some who would never consider wearing a dress themselves but who are supportive. Even if everyone doesn't start the conversation, there is definitely the potential for people to join in."

Asserting common humanity amid Israeli-Palestinian conflict

MIRAH LANGER

Knesset member and Palestinian activist Ayman Odeh's opening words were an acknowledgment of the presence of three men with yarmulkahs in the audience.

Addressing those attending a seminar about Palestinian citizens of Israel and their struggle, Odeh declared the following in Arabic, which was then translated into English for the audience: "I notice that there are three Israeli students who are joining; you are welcome."

Odeh's opening remark was a gesture of goodwill that would be reiterated during a heated moment later, as part of a question-and-answer session. The event took place last week at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Odeh, who is secretary-general of the Hadash party, used the term "nakbah [catastrophe]" extensively to describe the establishment of Israel, but did not dispute its right to exist.

Instead, one of the key focuses of his vociferous criticism was on how Israel positioned its Arab citizens.

There was a pain associated with his identity within Israel, Odeh explained. "They created the personality of the Israeli Arab. It is a very complex state for the Israeli Arab because he is lost in translation; he lost his Arabic identity and he doesn't belong to the Israeli collective."

"We are still struggling to keep our dignity, our belonging to the land and our place."

Odeh described the Israeli Arab position as contradictory to its core. "It's very difficult because we are citizens of a state that fights our people."

During the time of the Oslo Accord, Odeh said, "Arab citizens were hopeful, positive and open to the peace process."

However, now their situation was increasingly untenable under the current rule of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The laws passed under his regime were "racist", Odeh declared.

"It's the most right wing government in the history of Israel. The end of the government will be welcome."

Odeh said he hoped that the Joint List – an alliance between various Arab-Israeli supported parties, of which he is the head – would gain strength in the Knesset. He said that while the process of forging unity amongst the different factions was "difficult" and that there was outside interference, it was the responsibility of the alliance to forge ahead.

Their current aim was to get 15 members into the Knesset, he said.

Odeh was at pains to emphasise that his strong criticism was directed to the current political regime.

"There is a saying that people who enslave other people will never be free themselves – I have reservations on this statement," declared Odeh, saying that it was not "the whole" who were involved in oppression.

Instead, he said, "I see an institution in a situation where they plant hatred for their own gain..."

Calling for the establishment of a separate Palestinian state, he added: "Ending the occupation and the discrimination will benefit the Palestinians as well as the Jewish people. Our aim is for equality and to live in dignity in our land."

Meanwhile, during a separate address, fellow speaker Mustafa Abu Raiya – a water specialist, pharmacist and former mayor of the town Sakhnin – asserted that the Israeli Arab community should be considered an "asset".

"We are not a problem. All the time they spoke about the Arabic people inside Israel, that you should be a bridge of peace with the Arabic nations, but this bridge, I'm sorry, no one wants to step on this bridge."

He said "brave people" were needed to resolve the conflict.

Abu Raiya expressed hopes that hostilities could be transcended.

"There should be two neighbour states with good relations between them that later they can unify... to be in peace and respect for each other," suggested Abu Raiya.

During the question-and-answer section, the thread of common humanity woven into the tenuous tightrope upon which Odeh traverses, allowed him to restore some sense of balance to a situation that threatened to lurch into tumult.

At one point, a member of the audience stood up and berated Odeh for engaging with the three

Jewish students present: "You don't have to waste your time negotiating with Zionists," she declared, warning him that he would not get her "solidarity" if he was "not genuine about [his] own cause".

Describing the Jewish connection to Israel as arising from fears of "historical insignificance... at the hands of Adolf Hitler", she condemned Odeh for "allowing Zionists in the room..." and said a previous question by a Jewish member of the audience about Hamas should not have been allowed.

"It's disingenuous," she declared.

Her statements were immediately and enthusiastically applauded by most of the audience at the session.

And yet, when it came to Odeh's time to respond, he denounced her attitude and its limitations outright.

"You are in South Africa here: white people, they came here 300, 400 years ago. Do you suggest to kick all the white people out of South Africa or live in coexistence?" he mused.

"Kick them out!" interjected the same audience member.

Ignoring this, Odeh continued with a response that illustrated the absolute and uncompromising viewpoint he takes on Palestinian rights, combined with an unyielding

belief in a shared fate with fellow Israelis.

"We don't beg for our rights; we struggle and we demand," he said, talking about his own arrests during protests.

Nevertheless, he added: "I resent, I reject... the national thought that is far from humanity. How do you see these three people sitting here?" he said, gesturing to the audience members with yarmulkahs.

"I will live with them," he asserted.

"I want myself and them to live together in coexistence – but against the occupation and discrimination. It's mutual interest," continued Odeh.

"When I think of the South African situation, I think to myself: Who wins – Mandela or De Klerk? I think both won," he concluded.



A rabbi walks into a bar...

BY NIA MAGOULIANITI-MCGREGOR

“When you laugh at yourself, who can laugh at you?” says Professor Arie Sover, founder of the Israeli Society for Humor.

An authority on communication, Sover tells *Yediot Achronot* journalist Ayelett Shani: “Humour is an amazing means of survival.”

US comedian Mel Brooks described it this way: “If they’re laughing, how can they bludgeon you to death?”

That’s the accepted nature of Jewish humour: it’s a coping mechanism, a survival tactic that developed at a time of uncertainty, oppression and persecution. It’s acknowledged that today’s brand of Jewish joke evolved from Ashkenazi humour, which is derived from the culture of the shtetls in 19th century Eastern Europe until mass immigration to the US East Coast in the late 19th-century.

But even as oppression dissipates globally, the type of Jewish humour made famous by Brooks, along with Roseanne Barr, Woody Allen, Bette Midler, Jerry Seinfeld and Larry David, continues to hold its own.

Cape Town-based comedienne Tracy Klass agrees. “We are born with it. Humour is in our psyche. It’s borne out of millennia of hardship. And our caution shows – we’ve perfected the art of answering a question with a question.

“Ask a Jewish person, ‘How are you?’ Who else would answer: ‘So who wants to know?’” says Klass.

“Jews are deeply cognisant of the world around us. We laugh at ourselves, but primarily with each other. This is the difference between an anti-Semitic joke and Jewish humour.”

As the father of modern psychology, Sigmund Freud, put it: “I do not know whether there are many other instances of a people making fun to such a degree of their own character.”

Klass is a prime example. On becoming a single parent with three children to support, she maintained her day job in marketing and communications for Cape Town’s Herzlia school but picked up the pieces of her emotional life by, well, being funny. (In one of her routines, Klass says: “My kids would say to me, ‘I’m going to tell dad.’ I’d reply: ‘Well, I hope you can find him ‘cause the maintenance court can’t.’”)



Tracy Klass

She became part of the comedy club circuit and hasn’t looked back. “I inherited Moses’ gene. I have his sense of direction, but I found my way to the Cape Town Comedy Collective after reading an article in a local paper with the headline, ‘Are you funny?’ It turned out I was.”

She says she doesn’t make a point of doing the Jewish mother shtick, “but I am a mother and I am Jewish, so I deal with ordinary day-to-day issues I encounter”. Like her weight: “Let me move the microphone stand because it makes me look fat”; or on having a vegan son: “How do you make vegan chicken soup? I wept for



Nik Rabinowitz

a month!”

Comedian Daniel Friedman, also known as Deep Fried Man, has a favourite Jewish joke which he shares: Two beggars are sitting outside the Vatican. One holds a large cross, the other a Magen David. The beggar with the cross has a cup overflowing with money, while the Jewish beggar only has a few coins. A priest walking by notices the disparity and says to the Jewish beggar: “Excuse me, but this is the centre of the Catholic world. You’ll never raise money with that Star of David on your cup.” The beggar with the star turns to the one with the cross and says: “Moishe, look who’s teaching us about marketing...”

That’s the thing about Jewish humour. No one and nothing, says Friedman, is above being mocked. “It’s dry, cynical and self-deprecating. As with all humour, it’s the unexpected that makes you laugh, and with Jewish humour it’s also the bluntness of it, or the dark streak that runs through it. It’s the sense that the truth reveals how absurd life is or how unjust the world is. The humour comes from how true it is.

“My late grandparents on my dad’s side had a particular dry sense of humour, and that had a lot to do with the Yiddish language – they were from Lithuania. They would often say that things were funnier in Yiddish than English. I sometimes wonder if some of that style of humour has disappeared along with the language.”

Laughing about anxiety is characteristic of Jewish humour. Ruth Wisse, professor of Yiddish Literature at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has written a book called *No*

Daniel Friedman

Joke: *Making Jewish Humor*, in which she tells this joke: “Four men go hiking together, get

lost, then run out of water. ‘I’m so thirsty!’ says the Englishman. ‘I must have tea.’

‘I’m so thirsty!’ says the Frenchman. ‘I must have wine.’

‘I’m so thirsty!’ says the German. ‘I must have beer.’
‘I’m so thirsty!’ says the Jew. ‘I must have diabetes.’
“Jokes work by breaking expectation,” says Wisse. “Jews laugh at their anxiety, and humour alleviates anxiety. Joking turns us into a unit because we laugh at the same things. There’s the release of laughter, but also the idea of the pleasure of the bond it creates.”

Local comedian Nik Rabinowitz agrees that anxiety is integral to Jewish humour. “As in, ‘Eat quickly before there’s a pogrom,’” he says.

Rabinowitz says his Jewish comedy exposes his discovery of his own Jewishness. “I went to a Waldorf school, which was a Christian environment, but I experienced no anti-Semitism because no one knew I was Jewish – including me.”

And when it was time for his barmitzvah, Rabinowitz says the family went from religious “Coke Zero to Coke Light. Still, I absorbed Jewish humour via osmosis – mainly from my uncle, actor and radio host Percy Sieff. I think it’s about being an outsider, whether you’re Jewish or black or a woman. It’s a good way of bringing people together. It’s a healing of sorts.”

Rabinowitz believes that because Jews are now part of elites around the world, the humour is less funny. “It becomes harder to be funny in that way when you’re part of the privileged minority.”

Still, it wasn’t that long ago that Jews weren’t privileged; that’s why everyone gets this joke: What’s the difference between a tailor and a psychiatrist? A generation.



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Are you addicted to Candy Crush?

TALI FEINBERG

When former finance minister Malusi Gigaba was recently caught playing Candy Crush in Parliament and quipped that he needed to attend “Candy Crush rehab”, he may not have been joking. This game is highly addictive.

The respected US weekly, *Time* magazine, describes the problem this way: “Players say they have left their children stranded at school, abandoned housework and even injured themselves as they try to reach new levels of the game.”

“I can’t understand how it became an addiction,” says a Joburg Jewish mom, who asked to remain anonymous because she is embarrassed about her obsession with this game. “It is a silly game of crushing candies – you get rewards and bonus candies to add to the excitement of the level. Some levels are simple and you pass them in no time, while others are way more challenging. The frustrating part is that you get stuck with one candy left over. And then you say: ‘Okay, I’ll buy an extra life, it’s only R16.’”

“It first started at R10, if I remember correctly, and then they offer you a bundle with special hammers, and the ability to move a candy to the next spot for just over R100. Those are bottom-of-the-range prices. The prices go higher. I have been playing since the game’s inception and am still playing.

“I am on level 3 043, which is high in the game. When the levels get really hard I often just give up and feel that, finally, I’m going to delete the game and that will be it – but then I

win the level and continue. It sounds crazy, but it’s real.

“Strangely, I wrote to a friend yesterday who is ahead of me and told her that while I find her Facebook profile picture beautiful, I find that her picture on Candy Crush torments me. It feels almost condescending that she is two levels ahead of me! Clearly, I have serious Candy Crush issues.”

Stacey Stein says Candy Crush has taken over her life. For example, she goes to bed later than she used to because she wants to play “just one more round”, and finds it to be a relaxing way to wind down from the day. Usually an avid reader, she has found that she reads much less than she did before she played Candy Crush.

“It’s addictive because it occupies your mind in a relaxed way, and it’s a good way to pass the time when waiting in a queue or whatever. I would think addiction counselling for gaming in general is useful.

“I can see how easy it is for kids to become addicted and prioritise digital games over school work, sports and sleep,” she adds.

“I think it’s human nature to want to win, and if you’re not winning on a Candy Crush level, you’ll carry on playing until you do!” says Cara Kagan, a copywriter from Cape Town who plays the game intermittently. “It has a competitive aspect because you can see how other people are doing, so sometimes I’ll play just to catch up to a friend.”

However, she says that the game can be enjoyed without spending money and it is possible to contain it – it is not always addictive.

While addiction rehabilitation centre Houghton House is yet to check in a patient

with a Candy Crush addiction, it may very well be on the horizon, says the centre’s Dy Williams. “Online gambling and gaming is becoming a huge problem. But medical aid won’t cover gambling, gaming or sex addiction because they’re not classified as a disease, like drug addiction.”

Yet she warns that playing Candy Crush affects the same area in the brain as drugs, and will give you the same rush of endorphins and dopamine that drugs do, just to a lesser extent. Her advice to addicts? “Just stop!”

eating disorders, gaming and gambling.

While she has not specifically treated anyone for Candy Crush addiction, she has treated gaming addicts, and a friend of hers was fired from a job for playing too much Candy Crush. “We would look into what the patient is trying to avoid or escape, because playing the game physically relaxes you and creates a sense of familiarity and predictability.

“While some people can keep it contained, for others it can start to negatively



Dana Tadmor, a senior addictions counsellor practising in Cape Town, agrees that Candy Crush addiction falls into the “process addiction” category, similar to sex addiction,

affect their life – yet they continue to play despite the consequences. If it is making your life unmanageable, I recommend going into an outpatient treatment programme,” she advises.

Peter Fine: The man behind the memes

JORDAN MOSHE

Jews have an uncanny knack of laughing at themselves. Peter Fine takes this to another level with his memes. He may be a labour dispute consultant by trade, but his creation of memes could prove a far more effective tool for dealing with strife than a visit to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration.

“Jews deal with difficulty and tragedy either by talking about it or finding humour in it,” explains Fine. “I find that creating memes allows me to blow off steam and have a good laugh about a situation.”

The world of South African politics, the exploits of the Gupta family and any other topical subject can serve as a source of inspiration for this meme creator. It was only a few months ago that Fine created his first meme and decided to share it with others who might appreciate it.

“I had a funny thought one day and I wanted to share it. Instead of expressing it in words only, I felt it needed a photo. I shared it on a WhatsApp joke group with a few people, and it was well received.”

He created a few more memes as time passed, and it wasn’t long before he realised that his amusing creations were receiving considerable exposure. Fine continued to share his memes via

WhatsApp and then Facebook, and often found that they came full circle.

“I once received my own meme from a friend whose sister-in-law in Australia had sent it to him. He thought I’d appreciate the humour,

HOW DID THE BETH DIN KNOW THAT THE CHICKENS WEREN'T KOSHER?



BECAUSE THEIR NAILS WEREN'T PAINTED!

and I realised that I was looking at my own picture. It was very surprising.”

He continued to generate memes from sporadic thoughts that crossed his mind. Sometimes he would mull them over, considering how best to share them; at other times he would create them in a matter of minutes.

He sometimes has to refine the thought, or even censor it in certain instances, but he never overthinks or dwells on it for too long.

“I’m a cartoonist who doesn’t know how to draw,” he jokes. “All I really do is give expression to an idea that comes into my head and share it with people.

“It’s something along the same lines as a quip I might make to a friend next to me in shul, but with a picture that captures it.”

In his humour, Fine has also been known to grapple with more sensitive and controversial issues, including the Stan and Pete saga that’s played out over the past week. “Like the land expropriation issue, the Stan and Pete story

was being discussed by everyone, and so many rumours were doing the rounds.

“Some people don’t like to see a particular issue being made light of, and so my memes about the situation were not well received by a few people. Some of them left the WhatsApp group.

“I also received an admonishing email from a member of the community, expressing displeasure in what I had done. The memes were borne out of the rumours and speculation, and if there was communication, we wouldn’t need speculation.”

Still, Fine explains that his intention is never to offend or hurt anyone who sees his memes.

“I make these things to express my feelings about a subject or what people are saying about it,” he says.

“I don’t look to make people upset or anything like that. I have received some negative responses to my memes from time

to time, when people say I’ve gone too far or dealt with something too sensitive. I am always willing to offer an apology and step away from a ‘holy cow’ when necessary.”

However, he creates these memes when seized by inspiration, and says he intends to continue until his brain stops having new ideas. “I tried to stop once,” he says, chuckling. “I really did. But my brain wouldn’t let me. The ideas just kept coming. So, I keep on creating the memes and sharing them with others.”

And his efforts continue to be appreciated. “I’ve received a lot of positive feedback,”

THE NATION WANTED BOTH OF THESE MEN TO GO - BUT THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT...



says Fine. “People respond via WhatsApp with emojis and encouragement, and some like and share the memes via Facebook. Not everyone responds to them when I send them, but it doesn’t matter.

“This is a way for me to express how I feel about a particular issue, add a comedic angle to it and share it with a wider audience. I have no exclusive rights to any subject but try to find a laugh where it may exist.”

ENTERPRISE POLONY LEADS TO LISTERIA



STAN AND PETE ENTERPRISE LEADS TO HYSTERIA



Peter Fine

Celebrating SA's musical talent

PETER FELDMAN

A solitary drummer, clad in traditional Zulu regalia, set the tone for the Sounds of Celebration V concert last week.

His frenetic drumming heralded the arrival on stage of an energetic group of young Zulu warriors. They proceeded to captivate the audience with their physical agility as the soaring theme of the *Shaka Zulu* TV series enveloped the packed auditorium.

This was the start of this annual music concert, staged jointly by nongovernmental organisation Education Africa and Sydenham Shul to celebrate unity and diversity and help disadvantaged communities. The event took place at the Theatre of Marcellus at Emperors Palace. More than 200 artists performed on the night to an

The show tapped into the rich vein of school talent in South Africa as the theme, A Night at the Movies, was explored in its many facets.

enthusiastic audience.

The programme notes described the production as “a joyous and uplifting tribute to social cohesion, as talented young artists come together from different communities and cultures across our beautiful rainbow nation to perform on one stage”.

The show tapped into the rich vein of school talent in South Africa as the theme, A Night at the Movies, was explored in its many

facets. Tunes from classic movies such as *Star Wars*, performed by the Jeppe/CBC Pipe Band from Kensington, lifted the spirit. Individual artists also brought their magic. The acclaimed Choni G sang tracks such as *Jerusalem* and *Spirit of the Great Heart*, while our engaging MC, David Bloch, sang *Eretz Tzvi* and *Over the Rainbow*, among other numbers.

However, as MC, Bloch could have avoided recounting his many personal anecdotes as these impeded the flow of the presentation.

There were a host of instrumental performances from pipe and pop bands, marimba and steel bands. These were interspersed with performances by choirs and soloists, Zulu and Indian dancers and a full orchestra. The audience was mesmerised. A highlight



Photo: Kevin Loader



Choni G

was a wonderful performance by a deaf marimba band from the Dominican School for the Deaf in Hammanskraal, Gauteng. The audience showed their appreciation not by clapping (for those who can hear) but by waving hands in the air.

The boy band, Ready for Tomorrow, from Reddam College in Bedfordview, gave their rendition of the Monkees' hit, *I'm A Believer*, while Yachad, an cappella boys' group from Yeshiva College, did brisk extracts from *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Another highlight was hearing singer Neville Smith provide a unique interpretation of the number, *Feeling Good*, from the James Bond movie, *Casino Royale*.

King David Linksfield Primary School Choir, Sydenham Junior Choir and Carter Primary Marimba Band from Alexandra all did themselves proud.

Hearing the spectrum of a complete orchestral performance, provided by St Mary's DSG School Orchestra from Pretoria, was uplifting.

There were moments of delightful interplay between the musicians, and their dedication to their craft was evident. Their enthusiasm spread from the stage to the audience.

The closing number, *Circle of Life*, incorporated the entire cast and brought the audience to their feet.

The show's musical director was Education Africa's Joan Lithgow, assisted by Thami Ngwenya. They did an admirable job in coordinating the event.

Rabbi Yehuda Stern of Sydenham Shul, and James Urdang, CEO of Education Africa, expressed gratitude to their many sponsors and the audience for coming out in droves.

Letters

RABBIS, SUSPEND YOUR BLESSINGS

In your February 16 issue, you reported that Rabbi Asher Deren blessed then president-elect Cyril Ramaphosa. And, in last week's issue, you published an opinion piece by Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein which ends with a blessing for our newly elected president.

With these double blessings, one can only hope for a government that is divinely inspired to lead South Africa in a just manner.

However, all blessings bestowed on a leader will depend not only on how that person treats their compatriots, but also on how they treat the State of Israel.

The Torah states that G-d said to Abraham, after declaring that He would make him into a great nation in the land of Israel: “I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you I will curse.” (Genesis 12: 2-3).

So, for anyone subject to G-d's blessings, these will depend on how they treat the State of Israel. The last “blessing” given by South Africa to Israel was 70 years ago, when the government recognised the independence of Israel at the United Nations. Since then, especially since the ANC came to power, there has been a barrage of anti-Israel rhetoric and consistent votes against that country at the UN. Yes, many other countries have also voted against Israel, but South Africa has welcomed those who

openly despise the Jewish state. It started with former president Nelson Mandela's warm embrace of then PLO president Yasser Arafat in 1994 and has continued with visits to South Africa by Hamas leaders.

These actions are a curse on the State of Israel. Do our Torah leaders really expect Hashem's blessings? Rabbi Goldstein stated that we can pray for the welfare of our new president. And in last week's *SA Jewish Report*, Rabbi Deren mentioned his mentor, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I would remind the rabbi of former US president Jimmy Carter, who, during his term of office, received many blessings from the very same Lubavitcher Rebbe. Despite these blessings, Carter was, and is, anti-Israel.

I would suggest that all those rabbis who bless this government suspend their prayers until there is a change in attitude towards Israel. Looking at this week's newspaper, this seems unlikely. If Ramaphosa cuts diplomatic ties with Israel, it will negate the blessings South Africa has had, and I fear for the future of our community.

Choni Davidowitz
Johannesburg

THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES TO TARGETING ISRAEL AND THE JEWS

I refer to your front-page article on 23 February, in which you report that Minister Naledi Pandor has announced that the government wants to downgrade our embassy in Israel to a “liaison office”. The *New Century Dictionary* describes Pandora's box as having “contained all the blessings of the gods, which would have been preserved for the human race had Pandora not opened it”. Only hope remains. The ANC and the disinvestment crowd are completely misguided in looking for the mote in someone else's eye when they have a beam in theirs.

The Poles are also trying to wriggle out of any crimes committed during the Holocaust. Historian and author Jan Gross's research has revealed that it was the Poles, not the Germans, who had killed the Jews of Jedwabne. The Poles are not sympathetic to the Jews in the country, as we know from Thomas Keneally's book, *Schindler's Ark*. However, there is no doubt that a special place is reserved in Dante's *Inferno* for the Nazi commandant.

Peter Onesta
Johannesburg

Friday (March 9)

- UZLC hosts Julius Krenkel on “The Jews of the Southern Suburbs”. Time: 12:45 to 14:00. Venue: Our Parents Home. Contact Gloria on 072 127 9421.

Sunday (March 11)

- Second Innings hosts Dean Murinik, motivational speaker and tsunami survivor, on “Life Lessons after Surviving the Tsunami”. Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting starts promptly 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.

- The Big Band Music Appreciation Society hosts a programme compiled by Tjerk Damstra, based on the theme: “Love – a presentation with various artists and bands”. After interval a DVD will be screened called “Private Bukaroo – a musical story of trumpeter and band leader Harry James”. Time: Meeting at 14:15 sharp. Venue: Beit Emanuel, Slome Auditorium, 38 Oxford Road, Parktown (entrance in Third Avenue). Contact: Marilyn on 072 243 7436 or Jack on 082 450 7622.

Monday (March 12)

- UJW hosts Susan Levy, a psychoanalyst and trauma specialist, on “Trans-generational

inheritances – the past playing into the future.”

Time:

10:00.

Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office at 011 648 1053.

Tuesday (March 13)

- Chabad of Sandton hosts a spectacular ladies' night. It features music from the West End and Broadway, performed by Sharon Spiegel-Wagner, as well as musical maestro Bryan Schimmel telling his inspirational life story. Time 19:15. Venue: Chabad of Sandton Hall, Hampton Road, Gallo Manor. Contact: 011 803 5787.

Wednesday (March 14)

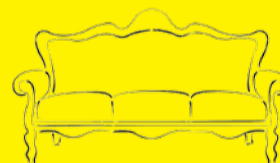
- JHGC hosts the director of the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow, Poland, for a talk on Polish-Jewish relations in contemporary Poland. Time: 19:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. Free admission, donations welcome. RSVP to Shirley on 011 640 3100.

Thursday (March 15)

- Hebrew speakers meet at 11:00 on the second floor of the Beyachad building.



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The leadership quandary: Trust me, I'll make your nightmares real



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

What makes a leader? Morality, humility, wisdom? The question becomes increasingly relevant as the planet seems to be hurtling towards potential self-destruction. Ordinary people watch fearfully as international leaders threaten stability in ways not seen since the Cold War. For us in South Africa, the country seems rudderless, lacking any true national leader.

Authentic leadership goes deeper than having a clean record. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long been under police investigation for corruption, yet most Israelis still regard him as best choice for prime minister and vote for him, because no one else in the political landscape seems able to ensure Israel's security.

Israelis are anyway cynical about political leaders' morality: President Moshe Katsav was jailed for rape in 2011; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was jailed for corruption a few years later; and Shas leader and Cabinet minister Aryeh Deri was jailed in 1999 for bribery and breach of trust.

Ironically, one of Israel's most outstanding leaders was an ardent right-winger. Former prime minister Menachem Begin led the Likud Party to electoral victory in 1977 after three decades of Labour Party dominance. He was initially reviled by the left, but today is admired as a role model by people across the spectrum for common sense and propriety.

He is the leader who made peace between Israel and Egypt with Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, with whom he received the 1978 Nobel Prize for Peace.

In America, President Donald Trump's chaotic tenure in the White House, and his irrational tendency to blunderingly change positions on major local and international issues, continues to erode confidence among Americans who believe he is unfit for the job, and creates disdain elsewhere. But he sits in the power seat and could lead the world into a hell from which it would take forever to recover.

In Russia, President Vladimir Putin brags belligerently about the ability of his country's nuclear weaponry to reach targets anywhere, particularly the US, terrifying people who fear another nuclear arms race.

What about South African leaders? Obviously, the historical giant among them was struggle icon and former president Nelson Mandela. He is history now, although the memory of his vision lives on, disappointed as the citizens may be at his country's decline.

And the others? President Cyril Ramaphosa has yet to prove himself; many people believe the task of reconstructing South Africa is too big for him. He succeeded in removing his poisonous predecessor, Jacob Zuma, from office, but not yet the rot that Zuma created.

On a much smaller, charismatic scale, we have the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters, Julius Malema. It may seem ludicrous to include him in a descriptive list containing the likes of Putin and Trump, but we are talking qualities, not scale. One may not like his politics, but he makes enough noise on the national and even international stage to be noticed by people interested in South Africa.

Whether his leadership brand will produce

anything positive is unlikely because of his toxic anti-white racism, epitomised by his latest statement: "We are cutting the throat of whiteness" – in reference to his party's plans to remove Nelson Mandela Bay mayor Athol Trollip because he is white.

Sound familiar? It is little different from apartheid leaders HF Verwoerd and PW Botha, whose target was blacks, not whites.

Does a leader have to want the best for his people? Not necessarily. Hitler, as repulsive as he was, inspired Germans to move mountains, even

if they were in the most depraved direction, and eventually brought catastrophe down on them.

South Africa's record on leaders is not a good one. Are there any potential Mandelas or Hitlers waiting in the wings? This country has a tendency towards great drama and must beware of the likes of Malema, whose anti-white slogans could easily morph into anti-Indian, anti-Muslim or anti-Jew ones.

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

A column of WIZO South Africa

Supporting humanitarian causes in Israel and SA

Shalom Chaverot,

February was an exciting month for all South Africans with the election of President Cyril Ramaphosa. We wish him and his Cabinet successful and positive deliberations.

It was also an exciting month for the Women's International Zionist Organisation as our World WIZO president, Esther Mor, visited the various WIZO societies in South Africa, accompanied by Moonyeen Castle, who heads up WIZO SA.

Mor was on a whirlwind tour and made a positive impression wherever she went. Those attending events at which she spoke were captivated by her dignity, her sincerity and her commitment to helping disadvantaged Israeli women and children.

In Johannesburg, Mor enjoyed a warm Shabbat dinner and delivered addresses to guests at an elegant cocktail party as well as to members of WIZO who attended the organisation's annual Ladies Day event, where journalist Jacques Pauw was also a guest speaker.

Mor experienced WIZO Pretoria's hospitality when she met with its executives and members, before being whisked off to her next stop – WIZO Durban, followed by WIZO Cape Town. She spoke at these societies' respective AGMs, proving herself as a dedicated leader and an inspiring example of selfless giving and caring. A big thank you to all those who so generously gave of their time and hospitality to make Mor's visit a memorable one.

To coincide with her visit, 50 colourful,

This column paid for by WIZO SA



WIZO South Africa
Moonyeen Castle
President

lightweight, child-sized wheelchairs from Israeli non-profit organisation Wheelchairs of Hope were distributed by WIZO SA to disabled children in South Africa.

The inexpensive, low-maintenance wheelchairs were developed as part of a humanitarian mission to help children with disabilities in developing countries. The wheelchairs bore stickers with the message, "To the children of South Africa with love from Israel", and were donated to hospitals, schools and churches around the country in the presence of the Israel ambassador

to South Africa, Lior Keinan, and his deputy Ayellet Black, as well as Mor, WIZO members and senior staff of the recipient organisations. We offer our thanks to the donors of the wheelchairs.

Like Queen Esther, whose heroic story changed the lives of Jews forever by uplifting us all, so too did Mor's human stories of upliftment and caring inspire us to do more as Jewish women.

Another parallel can be drawn between Purim and International Women's Day, which falls on March 8. Queen Esther's courage and leadership resonate with the many courageous women worldwide who continue to be denied basic human rights and who suffer abuse in their societies.

WIZO continuously strives to protect the rights and freedoms of women and children in Israel. We also support South Africa's Human Rights Day, commemorating the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, on March 21.

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Celebrating Purim with UJW Brain Boost group

Last Tuesday morning, the Grade 10 girls at Hirsch Lyons High School got all dressed up in Purim hats and, donning big smiles, arrived at the Brain Boost Stimulation Club for a celebratory get-together. Brain Boost is a therapeutic project, initiated by the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) in 2016, for community members with mild to moderate memory loss. In the true spirit of Purim, pupils sang and danced with everyone, filling the room



with joy. And there were happy faces all round as participants and caregivers alike spent time decorating gorgeous bags with masks, glitter and stickers. The bags were later filled with delicious homemade mishloach manot. It was a Purim simcha to remember, thanks to all participants.

Pupils, teachers, Union of Jewish Women volunteers and caregivers with their gorgeous bags of goodies for Purim

'We need to honour our anti-apartheid activists'

DAVID SAKS

White activists who sacrificed their privileged position under apartheid to fight for a democratic, non-racial South Africa need to be remembered and honoured, said Zev Krengel, national vice-president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD).

Krengel was speaking at last Friday's memorial ceremony for the late AnnMarie Wolpe, who died in Cape Town last month at the age of 86. The event took place at Liliesleaf Farm, once the secret headquarters of the banned ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto weSizwe (MK).

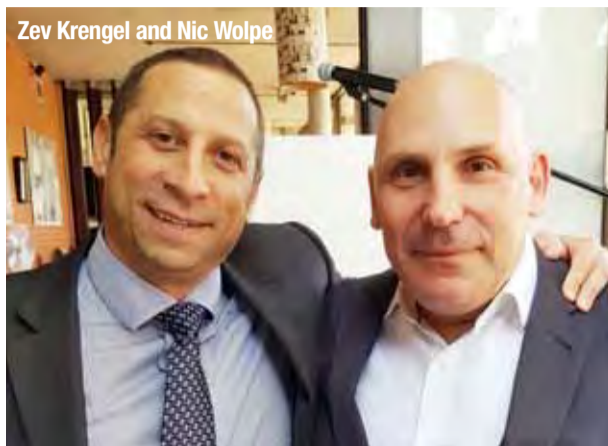
Wolpe's husband, Harold, was a member of MK and was among those arrested in the infamous raid by security police on the premises in July 1963. With his wife's help, he and several others were able to escape from gaol and flee the country.

Ronnie Kasrils, a former senior member of the MK high command who went on to hold various ministerial positions under the Mandela and Mbeki administrations, was the keynote speaker at the gathering. Other speakers included Robbie van Niekerk, Adrienne van den Heever and Nicholas Wolpe, son of the late AnnMarie and Harold and chief executive of the Liliesleaf Trust.

Krengel recalled how he and AnnMarie had been part of a panel discussing the Jewish community's responses under apartheid, held at the same venue in mid-2013. On that occasion, he recounted, he had identified the main fault of the Jewish leadership during those times as having failed to look after members of the Jewish community who were being targeted by

the apartheid regime for their political activities.

He stressed that whites who joined the Struggle were regarded as criminals by the apartheid state, which hunted them down relentlessly. Whereas non-whites were the victims of the country's unjust race laws and therefore had no real choice but to resist them, whites had various options available to



them. They could support the system, limit their opposition to it by supporting the liberal opposition at election times, emigrate or commit themselves wholeheartedly to opposing the system, even if it meant doing so outside the confines of the law.

Only a handful of whites had chosen the fourth option, for which not only they – but their families as well – paid a high price, said Krengel. In the face of huge pressure, AnnMarie stood loyally and courageously by her husband while also raising her three children.

Krengel urged that every effort be made to properly record the personal testimonies of anti-apartheid veterans before it was too late. He referred to the project by US filmmaker Steven Spielberg through which the stories of

thousands of Holocaust survivors had been recorded, and how, as SAJBD chairman, he had proposed to then president Mbeki that a similar project be implemented in South Africa, but to date nothing had been done.

Krengel noted that many children of political activists felt that they had lost their parents to the Struggle, and hence showed little

inclination to identify with the anti-apartheid legacy.

Nicholas Wolpe was an outstanding exception, however, having returned to his South African roots after living most of his life abroad and gone on to further the work of his parents by turning Liliesleaf into one of the country's premier national heritage sites.

Putting a face and a name to Israeli and SA youth

JORDAN MOSHE

"When you establish a connection with someone else, you automatically establish a connection with yourself – meeting with others helps you understand yourself and who you really are."

So says Merav Shany, a member of the Jewish Agency's Partnership2Gether Peoplehood Platform (P2G) steering committee, which was in South Africa recently. P2G connects about 450 global Jewish communities with Israeli communities in 46 international partnerships. There are more than 350 000 participants involved in this initiative each year. The organisation ensures ongoing connections between the Jews of Israel and Jews around the world through unique programmes.

Shany and the committee met with members of the local

branch of the Jewish Agency and representatives of various Jewish organisations to review projects and their budget.

"We want to give people a different understanding of Israel and inspire them to strengthen their bond with the people who live in Israel," said Shany.

"At the same time, we want the people who live in Israel to understand what it means to be a minority overseas, and what it is really like to be a Jew or a supporter of Israel from outside."

P2G is involved in a number of projects offered to South Africans that foster leadership skills. Through coexistence programmes, leadership seminars and journeys to Poland, the organisation seeks to bring together Jews of all walks of life in a meaningful educational experience.

And, through partnering with youth movements and

Jewish schools, P2G facilitates opportunities such as Israel Encounter, the Diller Teen Fellowship and the Shnat leadership programme.

It also offers a programme that enables Israeli schools to partner with local Jewish schools, helping teachers to become agents of change.

The organisation's involvement is not limited to the Jewish community. Torah Academy and P2G arranged Cycalive, a cycling tour from Johannesburg to Durban. The tour includes cyclists from P2G (from the Beit Shemesh and Mateh Yehuda region), Torah Academy and two Soweto-based schools: Moletsane High and Pace Commercial Secondary School.

P2G also plans to bring a youth group from Arab villages in Israel to South Africa in a unique opportunity which it believes will show another side to Israel.

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King David Linksfield Primary School



Minnie Bersohn Nursery School



King David Linksfield High School



Emmarentia Shul



Chefs and dancers at Great Park Shul



Rabbi Yossy Goldman and his wife Rochol at Sydenham Shul



Senior citizen's Purim party at Chabad of Sandton



Torah Academy School



Jacob and his dad Bernard Goodwin reading from the Megillah at Sandton Shul

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Telfed awards anniversary scholarships

In a spectacular kick-off to its 70th anniversary celebrations, 531 scholarships were awarded by Telfed, the SA Zionist Federation (Israel), on Sunday.

An annual event on Telfed's calendar, this year's extraordinary Annual Scholarship Gathering was hosted at the Knesset by MK Dr Avraham Neguise, chairperson of the Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs. Among those attending were the head of the Lone Soldiers Department of the Israeli Defence Forces, the head of the

outstanding service". He spoke of the equal opportunity awarded to all Israelis, encouraging the students to maximise these opportunities.

Batya Shmukler, the chair of Telfed, touched on some of Telfed's inspirational work and how it has evolved from an organisation that was created to assist Southern African Machal soldiers in 1948.

Four scholarship recipients recounted their experiences, acknowledging the importance of Telfed's Scholarship Programme.

Telfed aims to promote the quality of life



Student Authority of Misrad Haklita, and the Head of Communications of the Jewish Agency.

Scholarships are awarded under the stewardship of Telfed's Endowments, Scholarships and PRAS Committee (aka the ESP Committee).

Two thirds of this year's recipients are Olim, or the children or grandchildren of Southern African Olim. In addition, 166 Israeli students, whose origins range from Ethiopia to Australia, were scholarship recipients.

In his opening, Neguise expressed his gratitude to Telfed for its successful contribution in the absorption of more than 25 000 Olim over "seven decades of

of Southern Africans in Israel, as well as to support their participation in, and contribution to, Israeli society. Scholarships are awarded based on financial need and on recipients' commitment to work as volunteers with Olim families, including rendering their support for the elderly and for children with special needs. Additional scholarships are awarded to South African citizens who wish to study in Israel, in English (often a catalyst for Aliya).

• If you would like more information or to schedule an interview with Shely Cohen, chair of the ESP Committee, please call Shely on +972 52 275 2762 or email shelyco@hotmail.com

Students' peace activism deserves our support

In the early weeks of each academic year, Jewish university students are confronted with the annual travesty known as Israel Apartheid Week (IAW). The event, which is replicated at universities the world over, seeks to demonise and delegitimise the State of Israel in the most extravagant possible terms, with the aim of convincing the wider public that it should be shunned, boycotted and eventually driven out of existence altogether.

Preparing appropriate responses to this pernicious campaign has become a focus of the SA Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS). We will always support our students.

This year's IAW events officially commence on Monday and will continue all week. For the second year running, the Palestinian Solidarity Committee at Wits University deceitfully launched its campaign a week early, in defiance of the university's regulations.

Fortunately, the Wits administration acted decisively to stop this underhand behaviour, for which we commend them. We also appreciate the effort that has been made by the university to make adequate security arrangements for the duration of the week.

In an ideal world, universities should provide an environment that allows for a free and fair exchange of information and ideas. In practice, unfortunately, threats and intimidation, disruptions and blacklisting all too often result in a de facto censoring of unfashionable opinions. This is particularly true when it comes to challenging the radical anti-Israel narrative.

The strategy of the boycott lobby is to smear,

sideline and, wherever possible, actively silence anyone who presents a contrary point of view.

We saw this disgraceful scenario play out yet again at Wits and at the University of Cape Town last year, and should prepare ourselves for more of the same this time around.

As in past years, it is also very likely that anti-Israel demonstrations will spill over into overt acts of anti-Semitism. All this will be carefully monitored on the ground, and the Board of Deputies will be there for our students whenever the line is crossed.

We can be proud of our students for the courage and resolve they are showing in taking a stand against these bigoted attacks. Nor has their response been to resort to simple counter-invective. Rather, they have developed campaigns that emphasise the importance of dialogue, education and peace activism aimed at finding solutions.

"Dialogue, not Division" is the theme of this year's SAUJS campaign. We feel confident that, as in the past, it is this rational, nuanced approach that will best resonate with the average student.

While the Israel question is always close to our hearts, we should bear in mind that for most South Africans it is, at best, a marginal issue. What the average citizen cares about is what's being done to address real and immediate challenges affecting their livelihood, safety and future prospects.

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



Above Board
Shaun Zagnoev



Celebrating the Grand Opening of Sandton Sinai's new building

The school that's often referred to as Sandton's best-kept secret is no longer under wraps. This weekend, Sandton Sinai held the official opening of its new purpose-built, triple-storey primary school building.

Visitors were impressed by the state-of-the-art hall, the light and airy north-facing classrooms, and the latest equipment featured throughout the school.

"It's a dream come true," remarked Rabbi Justin Treger, as he addressed a packed hall. Treger is the managing director and spiritual leader of the playschool, as well as the nursery and primary schools. He went on to thank the many roleplayers who had made the vision for the school's establishment a reality, including all the Sandton rabbonim who'd shared this vision; Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, who had lent his support throughout; the generous donors; and the parents, who make the dream happen every day by sending their children to Sandton Sinai.

Goldstein highlighted the value of children's education and emphasised how Sandton Sinai plays a critical role in securing the future of Sandton Jewry. Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines and Rabbi Zadok Suchard closed the official service by cutting the ceremonial ribbon.

Guests were treated to a heart-warming concert as children sang Jewish songs, the South African and Israeli anthems, and the new school song with gusto and pride.

Everyone joined in a mini-walk on the soccer fields. Children sought sponsorship for each lap they completed. A portion of the proceeds will be allocated to the Chevrah Kadisha, enabling the children to show gratitude for this new facility through the act of giving.

The balance will go towards acquiring equipment for the school, so the children can feel proud that they too, have contributed to their stunning new school through their own fundraising efforts.

An action-packed morning full of fun, food and good spirits was surely a fitting way to celebrate the grand opening of a spectacular school.



Those wishing to take a tour of the school can contact Melinda Chazen at 074 082 6712

Joffe satisfied with early findings of the Zulman Commission

JACK MILNER

Self-exiled sports journalist Graeme Joffe insists he will be vindicated as the Zulman Commission of Inquiry into the SA Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (Sascoc) digs up the truth behind the “corruption” in the organisation.

Joffe has been investigating maladministration in South African sport, and at Sascoc in particular, since 2011. For most of that time he was called a liar and a troublemaker. In 2015, he finally fled South Africa after he believed his life was under threat.

He is pleased that the commission, headed by retired judge Ralph Zulman, includes former managing director of the United Cricket Board Dr Ali Bacher and labour law expert Shamima Gaibie. The commission was announced by former sports minister Thulas Nxesi in April last year and got under way on February 11.

A bleak picture is being painted with regard to governance and administration at the highest levels of South African sport, according to Zulman. “I get the impression, and I hope I’m wrong, that there is complete chaos in the affairs of Sascoc,” Zulman told *The Citizen* last month.

He said the evidence that the commission had heard did not bode well for senior Sascoc employees or board members, many of whom were due to appear at a later stage in the inquiry. In just the first three days of the six-week process, there were 18 individuals giving testimony under oath.

“That’s not my final conclusion, obviously, which is why we will be sitting here for more days to see what’s going on. But every witness who has spoken to us has testified to the lack of organisation in the organisation, starting at the top,” Zulman said.

“It troubles me very much that senior administration seems to play a very inactive role.”

Joffe, a relentless critic of Sascoc who is now in the US, told the *SA Jewish Report* on

Tuesday: “Having exposed Sascoc corruption, lies, nepotism, greed, complicit federations and the poor treatment of athletes, I am not surprised to see what’s coming out at the ministerial inquiry.

“But South African sport was denied justice with Hollard taking a business decision to settle my defamation lawsuit.”

Last year, Hollard – which had insured Joffe against court action – chose to settle his case against Sascoc for R1.3 million, an action the journalist says he vehemently opposed. “I did not settle with Sascoc. I did not pay them one cent and there was no apology or retraction. I wanted Sascoc in court as soon as possible.”

Then last month, SA Rugby (SARU) president Mark Alexander laid a criminal defamation charge with the police against Joffe, following the latter’s allegations that Alexander was involved in corruption.

Alexander said he wanted to stop Joffe from continuing with his “illegal and unlawful” conduct.

This followed a report that Joffe wrote on the website BizNews, in which he fingered Alexander – who was then vice-president of SARU – for illegally obtaining money in 2010.

Graeme Joffe



He accused Alexander of ensuring that the lucrative contract SARU had with its commercial agent Megapro was renewed, without going to tender. Joffe claims that Alexander was promised R500 000 each year for the five-year contract.

Alexander responded in a sworn statement: “I expect him to visit

South Africa sometime in future, and I want him to be arrested on criminal defamation charges.”

Joffe’s response to that was: “Alexander must be getting desperate. More than three years after I first exposed him in one of the Megapro kickback scandals, he now wants me arrested for criminal defamation according to

his lawyer, Frikkie Erasmus!”

Now Joffe has added to the rugby controversy by questioning the selection of new rugby coach Rassic Erasmus. “He got a six-year contract, which is totally unprecedented if you compare it to more recent Bok coaches such as Allister Coetzee, Heyneke Meyer and Jake White. All got four years and Peter de Villiers initially only got two years. There are 10 questions I would like Erasmus to answer,” said Joffe on social media.

The questions include the following: Did Erasmus apply for the job or was it offered to him by SARU? Was he able to select his own coaching staff?

Joffe has also questioned the role of lawyer Frikkie Erasmus, who is the new coach’s personal lawyer and business partner along with SARU CEO Jurie Roux. Frikkie is also the lawyer for SARU and draws up all the staff contracts. “Did he draw up and negotiate your deal?” asks Joffe of the new rugby coach. “You have an IT company contract with SARU, you own a share of BokPulse (the only supplement supplier to SARU) with Jurie Roux and Frikkie Erasmus. Is this not a conflict of interests?”

British soccer head apologises for Star of David blunder

The head of England’s governing body of soccer has apologised for conflating the Star of David and the Nazi swastika.

Martin Glenn apologised on Monday for the statement he made a day earlier, after Manchester City team manager Pep Guardiola wore a yellow ribbon in support of Catalan independence – violating a Football Association rule that forbids the display of political symbols.

Glenn reacted to this by saying: “Things like a poppy are okay, but things that are going to be highly divisive are not. And that could be strong religious symbols. It could be the Star of David, it could be the hammer and sickle, it could be a swastika, anything like Robert Mugabe on your shirt. These are the things we don’t want.”

Simon Johnson, the chief executive of Britain’s Jewish Leadership Council, said following Glenn’s statement on Sunday: “The Star of David is a Jewish religious symbol of immense importance to Jews worldwide. To put it in the same bracket as the swastika and [former Zimbabwe leader] Robert Mugabe is offensive and inappropriate.”

Glenn said he was sorry for having included the Star of David among a list of offensive symbols.

“I would like to apologise for any offence caused by the examples I gave when referring to political and religious symbols in football, specifically in reference to the Star of David, which is a hugely important symbol to Jewish people all over the world,” he said.

Glenn said he would personally apologise to the Jewish Leadership Council. (JTA)



Martin Glenn

Photo: Julian Finney/Getty Images

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