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Beth Din orders recall of Pesach tuna with fake expiry date

NICOLA MILTZ

A major importer of kosher-for-Pesach products was this week forced to withdraw two top-selling products from the shelves after it was discovered that their expiry dates were allegedly fraudulently altered.

Adam International tuna – on the shelves at Kosher World, Pick n Pay, Checkers and other retailers that stock Kosher le Pesach goods – had a sell-by date of March 2019.

The Beth Din discovered, on close inspection, that the real expiry date was March 2018.

These tins of tuna are believed to have been produced in the Philippines in 2015 with a shelf life of three years. It had an original sell-by date of 2 March 2018, which means the product would have expired by Pesach. The Beth Din became aware of the problem last Thursday, according to Rosh Beth Din Rabbi Moshe Kurtstag.

In a product recall alert on Tuesday, the Beth Din said: “We have identified the following products that have been recalled. Please note this is not a kashrut alert but a food safety alert.”

It warned the public to return Adam International Tuna Chunks in Brine, 170g or Kedem Grape Juice, 947ml with an expiry date in 2019, for a full refund.

According to Kurtstag, the expiry date had been tampered with and changed. “This is about business honesty, not kashrut,” he said.

Kurtstag said it was important that the community appreciated the fact that the Beth Din identified the problem and made sure to alert suppliers as soon as possible. He said the Beth Din still had to discuss and deal with the matter appropriately and was considering the

way forward.

“We had to tell people about it and recall it for health safety purposes.”

This new kosher scandal follows fresh on the heels of the Stan & Pete saga, throwing the spotlight once again on the Beth Din and kashrut standards. And all this against the backdrop of the listeriosis food scare that has gripped the country.

Kurtstag said the priority was to alert the community about this problem as soon as the Beth Din knew about it.

Retailers have been forced to return the products with only two weeks to go before Pesach, leaving very little time to find replacement products. The potential loss of profits from the sale of the popular items is also of concern, said some retailers, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Most importantly, the concern was for the consumer as only a few tins had been returned following stock takes. This raised concern that there might be communication gaps in the product recall alert.

Adam International released this statement to the *SA Jewish Report* on Wednesday: “We hereby assure all of our customers that there is no compromise whatsoever with regard to these, or any other, products in our range. These items are perfectly fit for human consumption without any concerns regarding food safety, kashrut or otherwise.”

It further said that the product recall alert was “as a result of confusion that arose regarding batch codes and labelling”.

As a precaution and to avoid any “misunderstandings”, the company decided to withdraw the products from store shelves and offer its customers a full refund or to swap it out with the correct product.

The company’s statement ended with an assurance to its customers of Adam International’s “highest quality in our delicious and trusted brands”.

Adam International was founded in 1976.

The company specialises in the importation and distribution of kosher wines, various kosher products, clothing and other goods. Some of its biggest resellers include Dis-Chem, Pick n Pay, Spar and Checkers.

Former Miss Israel finds a following in SA



Israeli beauty queen Yityish Titi Aynaw, brought to South Africa this week by communal leaders for Israel Apartheid Week, visited a primary school in Soweto. The children fell in love with her after hearing her tough but rewarding journey from Ethiopia to Israel. See pages 4, 8 and 9

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Israel again blamed for 'manufacturing' water crisis

TALI FEINBERG

Israel being blamed for the Cape water crisis is a conspiracy theory that is taking hold in South African mainstream politics. In Parliament last Wednesday, a politician once again claimed that the drought in the Cape was not real and was made up by Israel and the DA in order to benefit them.

Ahmed Munzoor Shaik Emam, a member of the National Freedom Party (NFP), said the water situation in the Cape was "manufactured by the DA so that they could, in turn, engage the Israelis to give them quotes for desalination", according to DA MP Michael Bagraim, who was there at the time.

"He proposed that the DA would then raise kickbacks from the Israelis to run the 2019 elections. He went on also to state that it was the whites who had engineered Aids in order to kill blacks."

Bagraim recounted that "a member of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) then said the 'Zionist DA' had manufactured the water crisis. The term 'Zionist DA' is a refrain that Emam has been using for about three years."

He added: "The debate was so ludicrous and full of conspiracy theories that I don't believe anyone who is even half-witted would take any of the comments seriously."

"After all the negative comments by the individual speakers, the ANC backbenchers applauded loudly in agreement with the comments about the 'Zionist DA' and the fact that the drought was manufactured in order to engage the Israelis. It does appear that there is a strong move afoot within the back benchers of the ANC to try to somehow blame Israel for the drought."

Said DA MP Darren Bergman, who was also at the session "I was not surprised when Emam put the topic on the order

paper. He has an infatuation with Cape Town and Zionism, and uses the platform at any opportunity to attack them for the benefit of the ANC audience.

"If he spent half as much energy focusing on registering for elections on time and on issues affecting his voters in KwaZulu-Natal, his time in Parliament would be better utilised."

"South African politicians have a



Ahmed Munzoor Shaik Emam

tendency to rely on the Middle East debates to detract from our local issues. It is disingenuous to fixate on one issue when a host of issues are taking place on our own continent, let alone our own country.

"Based on much of the rhetoric uttered, you can gather that the basis of their information and education about this complex issue has been through propaganda sold by organisations, causing a rise in anti-Semitism rather than the undisputed history books of our time."

Emam's comments received no rebuke from any political party or the media.

"These conspiracy theories are becoming so commonplace, no one is objecting to

them," said Bagraim. He suggested that these comments seemed to be designed purely to make the Cape Town Jewish community uncomfortable.

"They in no way benefit Israel or the DA. If you tell a lie often enough, it becomes the norm," he warned.

Commenting on the abovementioned parliamentary events, David Sacks, the associate director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, said: "It is a reality, however deplorable, that in times of crisis, some people resort to peddling noxious and wholly irrational conspiracy theories, with Jews often being the targets."

"Usually, such notions do not go much further than social media and other online comment platforms, but occasionally they creep into mainstream discourse. Emam is renowned for being an off-the-wall conspiracy theorist, so his buying-in to the theory that the Western Cape drought was orchestrated in order to benefit Israel is hardly surprising."

"That said, all parliamentarians, regardless of which party they belong to, should emphatically distance themselves from such statements – not only because of their obviously racist overtones (few doubt who is being referred to, even when the term 'Zionist' is substituted) but because such red herrings derail constructive debate on the real issues," concluded Sacks.

Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
18:05	18:54	Johannesburg
18:46	19:36	Cape Town
17:54	18:44	Durban
18:13	19:02	Bloemfontein
18:17	19:07	Port Elizabeth
18:07	18:58	East London

Torah thought of the week

A focus on free will, repentance and forgiveness

In traditional betei midrash, children begin their Torah studies with Sefer Vayikra, the Book of Leviticus. It contains all the laws of the priesthood and the sacrificial offerings.

Given the contents, the Book of Leviticus is also referred to as Torat Kohanim, the Laws of the Priests, in rabbinic literature.

In a collection of midrashim on Sefer Vayikra, the Talmudist known as Rabbi Assi explains the reason for starting formal Torah study with the Book of the Laws of the Priests, and not with the Book of Genesis, by stating that because children are pure and the sacrifices were pure, it made sense that the pure would engage in the study of the pure (Vayikra Rabbah 7:3).

The notion that children are pure stems from the understanding of the statement at the end of the first story of creation, in which G-d proclaims that everything that He had created was "tov me'od" (very good). This, of course meant humankind as well.

While human beings do make errors of judgement and commit acts of immorality, we are born free of sin and inherently good.

This image is reinforced by this morning blessing, which we recite daily: "Elohai neshamah shenata bi tehora hi" (Oh G-d, the soul that you have given me is pure). By reciting this positive statement every morning, we internalise an affirmative attitude about ourselves, our fellow human beings and our role in the world.

The divine gift of freedom of choice enables us to reach moral and spiritual heights, but can also result in our choosing to do evil. Both the Torah (Gen.

8:21) and the rabbis (Yoma 20a and Sanhedrin 105a) recognise that human beings have a tendency to do wrong.

The rabbis believed that it was for this reason that the sacrificial system of worship was mandated by the Torah. By bringing sin offerings, the Israelites were empowered with the ability to repent and make atonement for their sins.

The central Beit Mikdash (Temple) and its korbanot (sacrifices) were ancient tools for attaining forgiveness. It would therefore have been fitting for young students to begin their study of Torah with the laws of the priesthood and sacrificial worship to understand the nature of atonement and forgiveness before they enter the world of adulthood.

It is as adults that we exercise our freedom of choice, and it is as adults that we often make the wrong decisions.

Since the destruction of the second Beit Mikdash study, prayer and the performance of ethical and ritual mitzvot has replaced the offering of animals, flour, oil and wine on the altar.

Yet we still need to understand the concept of the inherent purity of the soul, the notion of free will and the idea of repentance and forgiveness. It is our challenge to find meaning in the text of the Book of Leviticus by uncovering lessons about these complicated and complex issues.



Rabbi Malcolm Matitiani, Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation

South African Jewish Report



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Stan & Pete scandal brings on total upgrade of kashruth supervision

NICOLA MILTZ

The head of the Beth Din this week said the kosher supervision department was going to be revolutionised. He acknowledged the tacit role the organisation had played in the downfall of one of the country's foremost kosher caterers.

"We know that the mashgiach on duty was not trained enough to deal with the situation," said a sorrowful Rabbi Moshe Kurtstag. "Our systems do not take into account the possibility of fraud and deception. We rely on trust. This is a failing on our part."

While a mashgiach is well trained by the Beth Din, their training and supervision "is not adequate", he admitted.

The Beth Din was blindsided by the recent discovery of treif chickens in the kitchen of popular caterers Stan & Pete two weeks ago. It had heard rumours for some time but was unable to find evidence to corroborate them.

"We did not ignore the tip-off," stressed Kurtstag. "How they got the chickens there in the first place is still being investigated. It was tricky and complicated. The mashgiach was not aware."

The mashgiach on duty, Shmully Nudelman, declined to comment this week. His colleagues in the industry have come to his defence, describing him as "gentle", "honourable", "mild-mannered" and "easygoing".

This week, the SA Jewish Report spoke to a number of mashgichim about their work, their training and their working conditions. All wished to remain anonymous to protect their jobs.

One mashgiach said: "The fault lies with the Beth Din. The mashgiach was sidelined and deceived by people who knew he would not discover what they were doing. Those responsible at the company used him as a patsy and the Beth Din should not have placed him in that position in the first place."

Said a senior mashgiach: "I know what to look for because of my experience. But the average mashgiach is at a loss when it comes to knowing the difference between a kosher and non-kosher chicken because they have never been shown what to look for. The same applies for cuts in meat."

He said the Beth Din needed to take some of the blame. "Many inspectors are in such a rush, they don't do a thorough inspection. Some are better than others, but there is no consistency."

Acknowledging the inadequacies in the training of mashgichim, Kurtstag said the entire kosher supervision system was being overhauled.

Mashgichim will, from now on, be subjected to a grading system. This had already been implemented

before the Stan & Pete saga, but will now be rigorously enforced.

"It is vital that mashgichim receive regular refresher training courses," said one mashgiach.

There is a perception that the job of a mashgiach is reserved for those unable to do more mainstream careers. This has negatively affected the industry and the prospective calibre of candidate, and has had a knock-on effect in the way caterers and restaurants pay and treat kosher supervisors.

Rabbi Moshe Kurtstag



One mashgiach with many years' experience said: "This incident only goes to show what vital work kosher supervision is, and the importance of the role of the mashgiach."

Kurtstag said it was necessary to create a different perception and to make it more attractive for new, younger people. He admitted that mashgichim were underpaid.

"We work hard, long hours for peanuts and we get taken for granted," said one mashgiach, who holds down two jobs.

One mashgicha said her full-time salary was roughly R16 500 a month, which worked out to about R10 900 after tax, medical aid and UIF contributions. She works nine hours a day.

Kurtstag said the Beth Din was considering a plan that would see one highly trained mashgiach being responsible for serving several establishments. They would get paid by the Beth Din, which would include this in the licence fees paid by each establishment.

"We must change, we must upgrade and take a lesson from this for the future. You can't just blame the Beth Din or an individual. A crook planned, and we were not expecting a crook. We realise that our system is not prepared for crooks."

Another mashgiach accuses the Beth Din of not being "in touch with the reality as it exists on the ground".

"There needs to be a strict grading system of both mashgichim and establishments, similar to the health departments in America," he says.

"Establishments should be graded on the standard of their compliance with kosher. If they resist kosher standards or give the mashgichim a hard time about enforcing what the Beis Din says, their grades go down."

Lawyer David Swartz called a meeting with the community and Kurtstag on Wednesday night. He said: "Clearly, something went wrong. We can't sit idly by. There is massive speculation and until the community knows exactly what happened and why, we can't move on."

One member of the audience called for the need to have an independent forensic investigation.

The meeting which was well attended left people feeling dissatisfied with many questions left unanswered.



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SAZF concerned for Jewish students' safety at UCT



A stolen and vandalised Israeli flag was illegally hoisted at Jameson Hall, UCT during Israel Apartheid Week

TALI FEINBERG

Rowan Polovin, chairperson of the SA Zionist Federation (SAZF) Cape Council, says he fears for the future of Jewish students at the University of Cape Town (UCT). This, in the midst of an aggressive but fairly uneventful Israel Apartheid Week (IAW) at the university.

Polovin says Jewish students have received little support from UCT's leadership, despite attacks on their religion and identity, and vandalism targeting them during IAW. "They've done little to show how they will protect our students and their rights to freedom of speech and identity. UCT continually appeases the other side and does not align with its own code of conduct.

"The authorities have not protected the SA Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) as a minority group and their right to identify as Jews and Zionists. We are concerned for the future of Jews at UCT."

Despite this, Jewish students on campus are positive and proactive. "We've had a large number of students from all walks of life visit our stand on the plaza," says an upbeat Jesse Soicher of SAUJS.

While Jewish students have seen their installations and an Israeli flag vandalised, they are feeling calm and in control of the situation, adds Soicher.

Last week, ahead of the vicious and intolerant narrative of IAW, SAUJS ran a campus-wide campaign called #RESPECT, to educate people about discrimination against minorities on campus. It included a large installation, which was vandalised

numerous times, including when the letters were changed around to read the word #SPECTRE.

"The word 'spectre' is clearly anti-Semitic, implying that Israel and Jews are inherently sinister or evil," says Soicher. "We also found that our posters had been defaced, removed or hidden by other posters that appeared to belong to another society, the Palestine Solidarity Forum (PSF).

"Vandalism of this nature does not only amount to discrimination on the grounds of religion, but also infringes on the right to expression. This proves that UCT is not a safe space for minority groups."

In addition, as IAW started on Monday, an Israeli flag covered in hate speech was hoisted between two pillars of Jameson Hall. "They had no permission to do this," says Julie Berman, director of the SAZF Cape Council. "It was illegal and was quickly removed. The flag was stolen from last year's Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations at the Baxter Theatre. Since we had proof that it was our flag – as our markings were still on it – we called the police because we had a case number from last year."

On the flag was spray-painted the words 'Blood on your hands – Apartheid State'. This, says Polovin, "is clearly anti-Semitic, desecrating a symbol of the Jewish prayer shawl and the Jewish state. It is clear that the PSF condones this kind of illegal theft and malicious damage to property.

"The PSF has taken over most of Jameson Plaza with a display stating that Israel doesn't have the right to exist and calling for its destruction."

Anti-Israel lobby defaces Wits campus

JORDAN MOSHE

On Tuesday morning, students of the University of the Witwatersrand arrived to find their campus defaced with ugly anti-Israel graffiti. At multiple locations across the campus, slogans such as "Zionism is racism", "Israel is anti-black", "Fuck Israel" and "Fuck Zionism" were slashed across walls, grandstand seats and pavements.

All instances of defacement were reported to the university executive. After holding a meeting on Tuesday afternoon, the executive stated that it does not condone vandalism or prejudicial statements against any student, staff or external stakeholder.

It informed students that investigations into this malicious case of vandalism had begun and disciplinary action would be taken against those found guilty.

While some of the graffiti was removed by university maintenance staff on Tuesday, much of it remains.

Wendy Kahn, national director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, said: "The fact that pro-BDS campaigners have resorted to using graffiti shows how desperate they are. Their frustration at being obliged to adhere to rules of engagement and at being unable to intimidate students has made them behave in this way, and it says more about their campaign than anything else."

Kahn added that instead of resorting to acts of vandalism, these students would do better to engage in constructive dialogue. "Our response to these acts of vandalism is 'debate, don't deface'."

The board has commended the Wits executive for the way in which it has dealt with the acts of vandalism.

Wits' Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) initially tried to launch its campaign for Israel Apartheid Week (IAW) a week early – a move in violation of an agreement with the university – but was stopped by the university. IAW then went ahead this week, with PSC and the SA Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) setting up their respective installations on the university's West Campus – at separate locations.

This is the first time that East Campus, the centre of student activity, has not been used for this event, and that a physical distance has been imposed between the two sides.

Despite this, a confrontation ensued on Monday afternoon, when members of the PSC attended a talk delivered by Israeli diplomat Ishmael Khaldi at the SAUJS installation, sporting keffiyehs and waving placards. In doing so, they violated the rules of engagement agreed upon by both sides.



Despite the presence of security personnel and efforts to prevent the two sides from clashing, a heated exchange ensued. It was sparked by a representative of the Radical Equality Party, attending in support of SAUJS, who refused to allow proceedings to continue until the PSC left. He kept referring to the PSC as "Boko Haram".

PSC members began heckling Khaldi and drawing SAUJS members into the arguments in the process.

Although Khaldi tried to engage them in constructive dialogue, his adamant stance that Israel cannot be compared with the apartheid regime drew strong criticism from the PSC representatives, many of whom became emotional and interrupted him at every turn in the conversation.

Despite the discovery of the vandalism on campus the following morning, Tuesday's activities unfolded without incident.

The calm could perhaps be understood as a result of the loss of support the BDS has apparently experienced on campus.

Jamie Mighti, a student activist and former Students' Representative Council leader, said: "The BDS has lost the support of black students. The most active members of the BDS on campus are perceived to be hypocritical as a bigger focus on IAW has come with less energy expended on other student issues.

"Although the BDS has organisational support, it has lost people willing to participate actively. There are also student complaints that the BDS is racist on campus because its members are not giving black students any leadership positions.

"Compared to previous years, the BDS's installation is the same, but its interaction with students is significantly reduced. The campaign is weaker this year, and Wits seems a saner environment for a discussion [to be held] now."



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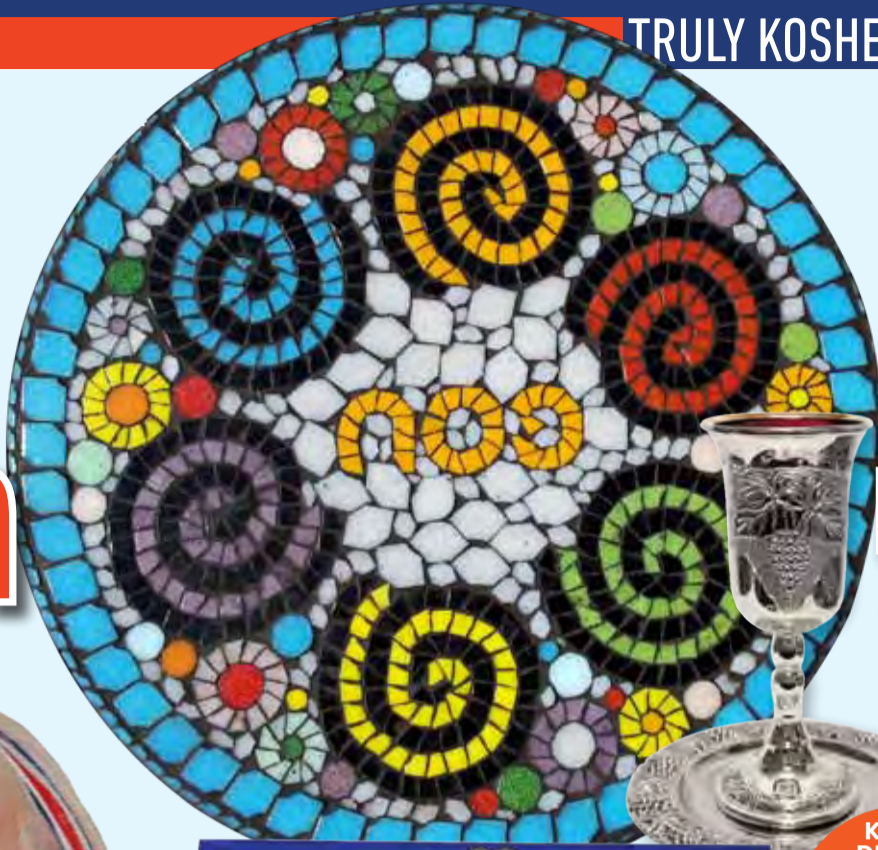
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South African Jewish Report

Fighting the battle within while the external one rages

It is Israel Apartheid Week and there are unpleasant things happening on university campuses in South Africa. From the reports I have been getting, our students have behaved with dignity and respect. As for the anti-Israel lobby, I am not sure how vandalising their universities can be seen as respectful.

However, while this has been happening on campus, a large percentage of the Jewish community are oblivious to it because they are still fuming about the Stan & Pete scandal.

And what started out as one caterer, albeit the largest and oldest, having been caught with treif food, it has now become a much bigger and more painful witch-hunt.

I do understand that this debacle hits the very core of what makes us Jewish, as I said last week. Kashrut is a central law in Judaism. This is not something to be taken lightly – and it certainly isn't being taken lightly.

I believe that the Chief Rabbi and the Beth Din got the fright of their lives and are doing everything they can to rectify the situation. And so they should. It is not acceptable that mashgichim don't know the difference between kosher and non-kosher chicken. It is not okay that many of them would probably not even be able to differentiate between pork and beef ribs in a basting. Why would they? They have never had to come in contact with pork or non-kosher chicken.

But just how easy is it to pull the wool over someone's eyes if they haven't been trained to distinguish between treif and non-treif meat? Surely, they needed to know these differences? Their training cannot be based on trust.

The truth is, in today's world, trust is hard to come by and cannot be the basis of supervising kashrut laws.

As I write this, however, I am sure that the Beth Din is rewriting its training courses and that mashgichim will be learning new things in order to avoid such a scandal happening again. They are sure to become experts in telling the differences, among other things.

I truly believe that the Chief Rabbi, together with the Rosh Beth Din, Rabbi Moshe Kurtstag, and the Beth Din, have the community's interests at heart.

It seems, though, that my opinion is not a popular one.

I am stymied by the ugly sentiments out there over this issue. It seems as if there are people who almost take pleasure in seeing people fall, fail and make mistakes. They seem to revel in the pain and concern of others.

Last week, there were people who had known and worked with Stan & Pete's Jeff Shull, and defended him. They were lambasted on social media – in some cases, to the point of having to back down because the vitriol was so bad.

G-d alone knows how they would react to Shull himself.

In his case, we know there were treif chickens found in his catering company's kitchen. Yes, the buck does stop with him; of that we have no doubt. But do we know exactly how they got there? Do we know 100% that he is guilty? Not that I am aware of...

He hasn't yet been tried and found guilty. So, why have we already tarred and feathered him, ridiculing everything the man has done?

The finger-pointing and derisive comments didn't stop there. What about the mashgiach involved? And other mashgichim? The Chief Rabbi and the Rosh Beth Din have also been lambasted in conversations and on social media.

I agree that a wrong has been done – and it is really serious – but who are we to condemn people? We are not behaving in a way that is befitting of those who are meant to be a "light unto the nations". What this scandal has done is pit community member against community member. It has caused the public shaming and bullying of our own people by us.

I totally agree that this is a wake-up call for our community, and the Beth Din and Chief Rabbi have a lot of work to do to fix the situation. But we can't let this turn us into bullies and people who enjoy the pain of others. We are not those people. We are compassionate and look after our own and others. Let us think for a moment before continuing in this vein. Please can we work together for the good of the community.

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Dateline: Middle East

Israel to amp up its side in the cyber war



PAULA SLIER

During one of my assignments with pro-Russian fighters in eastern Ukraine, I found myself in the direct firing line of the Ukrainian military. Wearing a helmet and bulletproof jacket with the word "Press" emblazoned across both, I assumed I had some level of protection.

But I'll never forget a fighter asking me to remove the signs because, as he explained to me, identifying myself as a journalist put me more at risk. In today's world, no longer is the journalist perceived as a neutral observer, but rather, as an information soldier in the growing number of battles being fought online.

The eight-day Israel-Hamas conflict in 2012 was the turning point. From the moment an Israeli airstrike killed Ahmed Jabari, Hamas' military wing chief, the world's first social media war erupted.

The Israeli Defence Forces and Hamas started sharing clips on YouTube and posting messages on Facebook and Twitter.

At the same time, civilians on both sides uploaded pictures and videos in real time, alongside blogs, stories and links. This became a high-intensity virtual war, aimed at capturing the hearts and minds of viewers.

Fast forward to 2014, when three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped while hitchhiking home. The next day, four friends – motivated by "the international media's deafening silence" – shared a flurry of phone calls and messages that led to an online campaign, #BringBackOurBoys. One of the friends was Ido Daniel, now senior director for digital strategy at Israel's ministry of strategic affairs and public diplomacy.

"Each of us represented a different background, organisation and outlook," said Daniel, "but we all agreed to put aside our differences and work towards helping garner support for Gilad, Naftali and Eyal [the three teenagers] around the world.

"The next two and a half weeks were intense, but they also highlighted the teamwork possible among the pro-Israel networks... The spirit of online activism for Israel was inscribed into history."

With this in mind, this week marked the first time ever that the ministry of strategic affairs and public diplomacy brought together in Jerusalem many leading pro-Israel social media experts from across the world. The aim was to "unite and develop the tools necessary to fight BDS and share the truth about Israel", according to Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan.

Erdan stressed that one of the best ways to fight anti-Israel delegitimisation was to promote co-operation and knowledge-sharing among pro-Israel supporters online. This way, they can help one another and lead co-ordinated initiatives and campaigns in real time.

"The challenges facing Israel in the social media arena are

significant and many," said Erdan. "The anti-Semitic hate campaign known as BDS uses social media to intimidate artists, harass companies and threaten academics who plan to come to Israel. However, the challenges go beyond just BDS. The Palestinian Authority and Hamas use social media to create a culture of hatred and incite terror.

"At the same time, online media uses edited videos and misleading headlines to delegitimise Israel's efforts to defend itself. The result is that social media has become a weapon in the hands of those who legitimise violence against Israel."

The conference comes as the Israeli government amps up efforts to counter international anti-Israel campaigns.

Erdan recently pushed a decision through Cabinet to create a shared civil-governmental entity to provide a speedy, co-ordinated response against attempts to smear Israel's image on the world stage.

The minister has repeatedly said that Israel boycott organisations are well co-ordinated and financed, and that Israel needs to match them with similar such initiatives.

Speaking at the conference, David Keyes, the Israeli prime minister's spokesperson to foreign media, observed that traditional media was slowly dying and that, because "we live in a world where one picture replaces everything, short videos are the future".

Yaron Fishelson of ACT.IL, an online community based on the experiences of university students who rallied together to support Israel during the last two wars with Hamas, stressed consistency in getting the message out. "We need to be working continuously, not only during war times," he remarked.

In trying to bring together the "many Israeli supporters out there who sometimes don't know how to help or support", the app ACT.IL has been launched. It is the first of its kind. It crowdsources pro-Israeli activists around the world to leverage the power of communities to support Israel's image and fight against its demonisation.

A theme echoed by various speakers was to apply the power of harnessing talent that already existed to identify people or organisations already creating content that could be used in the pro-Israel campaign, and bring them on board.

As one delegate remarked: "It might seem as though the whole world is against us, but social media shows us this is not true."

In the coming weeks, the strategic affairs ministry will launch an upgraded 4IL website, focused on thwarting anti-Israel delegitimisation and BDS initiatives. The site will serve as a one-stop-shop digital platform for collecting and distributing materials for the pro-Israel network. Services will include video distribution, articles, caricatures, information, events and op-eds, all of which will be freely available for distribution, including in a number of different languages.

Perhaps this means we will see a very different view of Israel from now on...

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.



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Issam Zeitoun: A Syrian who is against Assad and for Israel

JONATHAN KATZENELLENBOGEN

Issam Zeitoun, a Syrian now living in Germany, has been outspoken against the regime of Syrian's President Bashar al-Assad and about his support for Israel. He is a Sunni Arab who fled his country in 1990 to avoid compulsory military service because he did not support al-Assad's regime.

He is gaining a small but growing audience for his views on Syria and Israel, and his proposal for a safe zone on the Golan Heights. After entering into correspondence with academics at a number of Israeli universities about three years ago, he was invited to speak at conferences.

Because of his Israeli contacts, he has been accused of being a Mossad agent and been threatened in Facebook posts. Two years ago, Zeitoun's car was smashed while he was conducting a live TV interview from Israel. "This is all to be expected," he says, adding that he won't be stopped from speaking out.

The 52-year-old Syrian has lived in Germany since 1990, and today works for the town council in the small town of Bad Oeynhausen, near Hanover. He says he speaks on his own behalf, and insists he is entirely independent.

Over the past three years, Zeitoun has spoken at a number of Israel's universities and also delivered his message at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco.

Zeitoun is in Johannesburg this week at the invitation of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies. His visit will present an alternative to the local version of the annual Israel Apartheid Week movement, albeit not on the same platform.

His meetings in Johannesburg focus on discussing the refugee experience with the African Diaspora Forum. The body was set up after the xenophobic attacks in 2008 to speak on behalf of foreign Africans in South Africa.

Zeitoun will also meet with The African Centre for Migration and Society at the University of the Witwatersrand.

At a conference at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, he drew the ire of Palestinian protesters by saying they



Photo: JC Katzenellenbogen

Issam Zeitoun

his hometown of Beit Jinn until they withdrew under the Separation of Forces Agreement in 1974.

Upon his return to his hometown, the young Zeitoun heard "whispers" from the locals that the Israelis had been "kind" and "did not humiliate civilians". Given the climate of fear, he recalls, nobody could actually talk favourably in public about the Israelis as they might well have been charged with treason.

Although his family were staunch supporters of al-Assad, this early experience made him question what had been ingrained in him.

While his views on Israel and its treatment of Palestinians might be welcomed by many in Israel, his proposal for a safe zone for former residents of the Golan Heights might not be by those on the right.

Zeitoun proposes the creation of a "safe zone", under Israeli authority, on the Golan Heights for Syrians who used to live in the area prior to the 1967 and 1973 wars. This could raise Israeli fears of a concentration of a potentially hostile population in a sensitive area.

Such a zone, he believes, would show the region the reality of a democratic government in Israel, and would hold out the chance of changing the minds of Muslims about Israel.

The prospects for Syria are bleak as war is likely to continue indefinitely, he believes. Over time, Zeitoun suggests, small militia-governed zones will emerge in Syria that will be in need of international protection.

Israel will, through force of circumstances, have to become more deeply involved beyond its air incursions and humanitarian aid.

For Zeitoun, the real danger for the region is posed by the threat from Iran. "Russia is serving Syria to the Iranians on a silver plate," he insists.

And, with its power and influence rising in the region as a result of the conflicts in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, Iran is closer to the old Persian dream of an empire that extends from Black Sea to the Persian Gulf and into the Mediterranean, Zeitoun believes.

were living in a "paradise" compared to Syrians, according to *The Times of Israel*.

"Their treatment by Israel is far better than those of most Arab countries, where they are restricted in the jobs they are allowed take and still retain a restrictive refugee status," he says of the Palestinians.

"The main problem is Arab nationalism and its slogans, which have been engraved in the minds of generations as being absolutely true. How do you accept al-Assad's narrative of what happened to the Palestinians 70 years ago, when he is bombing civilians and using chemical weapons?"

"The narrative we've been told in the Arab world is wrong and exaggerated. We need to accept that Israel is a reality," he says. "In 2018, I am happy that Israel exists. If there had been no Israel, we would have faced much bigger problems with Iran's expansionist project."

He refrains from criticising the settlements on the West Bank and says this is a matter for Palestinians and Jews to sort out.

As a child, he says he was brought up on a narrative of hatred towards Israel. "The Palestinian issue occupied a big space in our lives under al-Assad."

During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israel occupied Syrian territory beyond most of the Golan Heights it had taken in the 1967 Six-Day War. During the 1973 war, Israeli forces occupied

Bedouin Muslim vouches for Israel's democracy

JORDAN MOSHE

Ishmael Khaldi is a Muslim Bedouin who has spent his life promoting Israeli democracy, having worked in Israel's ministry of foreign affairs for 14 years.

Khaldi is in South Africa to help stem the anti-Israel sentiment on university campuses during Israel Apartheid Week. "I am often asked why, as a Muslim Bedouin, I choose to represent Israel. The answer is simply, because I can. The democracy in Israel allows me to assume this role, through which I can represent not only the country, but my own Bedouin community as well."

When he lost two close friends who were serving in the border police in the first Intifada, Khaldi chose to join the foreign ministry in order to make a difference.

"The world is full of conflict," he explains. "However, all eyes are fixed on Israel, the narrative of which has become more about bashing than dialogue. We need to create a new base of understanding, encouraging those who criticise Israel most loudly to sit down and engage properly."

To this end, Khaldi visited South Africa this week, for the third time, to engage with students and give a face to both Israel and its Bedouin community.

"My father joined me on one of my visits, and we went to the Apartheid Museum and Soweto together. The experience remains with me until today. "The Palestinian conflict has absolutely nothing to do with the history of South Africa. Comparing the two is wrong. "Israel is by no means a perfect country, but it does want to see Palestinians in their own state. Unlike the way in which the black people were treated under the apartheid regime who were South African, the Palestinians are not Israelis, and thus any attempts to compare their positions are inaccurate and shameful."

Khaldi said BDS supporters often speak from a place of emotion instead of understanding, and are therefore unable to engage meaningfully when the opportunity for dialogue arises.

Moreover, he says, it is clear that their basis of hatred is mostly anti-Semitic, and that unless they realise this, they will not be able to discuss the subject in the right way. "Aggression towards Israel on campuses in South Africa has definitely increased. The truth is that when these BDS supporters try to argue a point, one response from a person who is familiar with the facts can derail them and show them just how flawed their argument really is.

"Unfortunately, those who argue the loudest are often part of a minority that has their minds completely poisoned, and any attempts to engage with them are therefore almost useless."

He suggests that instead of approaching this minority, students would do well to engage with the majority, who are not privy to the facts on the ground and are more willing to be educated than we may think.

"Throughout the year, it is essential that students who advocate for Israel engage constantly with this majority and improve relations with them.

"They can be invited to visit Israel to meet with the Palestinians for themselves and better understand who these people really are."

Khaldi stressed the importance of initiating a practical training programme for students who are forced to defend Israel as she really is, and how community leaders and even Israel itself need to be more involved in preparing students for confrontations.



Ishmael Khaldi

An Ethiopian Israeli's take on Israel Apartheid Week in SA



Danny Adeno Abebe

Israel Apartheid Week (IAW) marks a week of hatred against the Jewish people in South Africa. It is not necessarily against Israel's policy, nor even the occupation.

This so-called liberation campaign is not in favour of a logical and appropriate solution for the Palestinians. It doesn't support the existence of the State of Israel within its legitimate borders. It is simply a campaign against the Jewish people – against our background, origin and religion.

I have to admit I don't believe that the State of Israel and its leaders are making brave efforts to find a suitable solution that will separate us from the Palestinians forever.

And, yes, I do think we should build a river full of

carnivorous crocodiles along the border between the Israelis and Palestinians, and they will live their lives there and we will live our lives here. We all clearly understand that the solution of establishing two entities side by side will benefit the two peoples.

That said, what is happening on South Africa's university campuses this week is far from reality. The State of Israel makes a lot of mistakes, but it does not have an apartheid regime.

In Israel, a variety of different people from different backgrounds earn their living with dignity. There are no separate buses, no separate pavements on racial grounds, and no one is accepted to work solely because of the colour of their skin or origin.

An apartheid week in South Africa is an event painted with hypocrisy, and its organisers are people with a distorted perception of the Jewish people, not just of Israel as a state.

The organisers of IAW are not looking for a solution for two nations, but are drawing for a one-sided solution that will remove one nation at the expense of another. In other words, they want the

dispersal of the Jewish people to the diaspora and the immediate extinction of the State of Israel.

It is time to say this loud and clear. The State of Israel could do much more to support the South African Jewish community, and Jews elsewhere against those who set up this IAW. I believe anti-Semitic phenomena such as IAW should be seen as a terror attack against the Jewish people.

I am always told that there are Jews who support BDS and partners in an apartheid week. I believe that throughout history, there have always been Jews who supported anti-Semitism. Even during the Holocaust, there were Jews who co-operated with the Nazis.

It's high time – and, in fact, a moral duty – that we held a debate about Israel's policies and criticise the government for its crooked path. But this is not what the organisers of IAW are doing.

They are simply delegitimising the Jewish people and the State of Israel, while some of them wrap themselves with flags of Hezbollah and all enemies of the Jewish people.

Just last week in Israel, retired Supreme Court

Justice Salim Joubran won the 2017 Knight of Quality Government award in the field of judicial authority. He is a Christian Arab who is proud of his origins and became one of the justices who tackled some of the country's most challenging issues. He also headed the Central Election Committee during two elections.

In fact, there are 14 Arab members of Knesset, who make their voices heard in the Israeli government. So much for an apartheid state.

I owe a massive debt to an Israeli Arab doctor who saved my daughter at Hadassah hospital. For almost a decade, an Arab doctor has treated my parents with care. Is this your apartheid?

What bothers me most about this nefarious apartheid week is how the protagonists of the real apartheid struggle in South Africa have allowed a fictional organisation to use their narrative for a false campaign and anti-Semitic activity against other people.

• Danny Adeno Abebe is the Habonim Dror and the World Zionist Organisation shaliach to South Africa.

Ethiopian-born beauty queen advocates for Israel

MIRAH LANGER

“There is no apartheid in Israel.” This was the resolute affirmation of the Ethiopian-born and the first ever black Miss Israel, crowned in 2013, Yityish Titi Aynaw. She is currently visiting South Africa to offer support against Israel Apartheid Week.

“We are not perfect. We have all kinds of problems, but... as a black person in Israel who made aliya... and is really involved with my community, I can say: There is no apartheid.”

She repeated this while speaking at an event hosted by the SA Zionist Federation in Johannesburg this week. “I feel really offended as a black person because there was apartheid here in South Africa and it was a different story.”

Aynaw said certain Palestinian organisations latched on to the contrived comparison “because it’s really easy to take this and say lies about Israel”.

Added Aynaw: “Israel is the only country in the world to come inside Africa to save black people, and not take them as slaves.”

Referring to initiatives such as Operation Moses and Operation Solomon, Israel came to the continent “to save people, to take them to a better place, give them an education and help them”.

Aynaw has intimate knowledge of the point she makes: her own life story reflects this. She went from being an orphan in Ethiopia to moving to Israel at 12 years old, going on to flourish as an icon of Israel.



Yityish Titi Aynaw and Nicci Raz, SAZF national executive director

In conversation with the event’s host, psychologist Dorianne Weil, Aynaw detailed her path towards finding her place in the Promised Land. She spoke of her “happy and simple early childhood” in the village of Chahawit in Ethiopia’s Gondar Province, where she grew up. There was no electricity and she walked barefoot and owned two dresses.

Aynaw said Judaism and Zionism were fundamental to her identity. “I’ve known, since I was born, that I am Jewish and needed to be in Israel. Every child dreams to play with dolls or to be a doctor – my dream was to make aliya and live in Jerusalem.”

But tragedy hit Aynaw at a young age. Her father died when she was two years old, and her mother died when she was nine, leaving her and her older brother orphaned.

In 2004, the siblings made aliya, joining their grandparents who had already settled in Israel.

“We had learned about Israel from the Bible... that Israel is the land of honey and milk. So, I thought to myself: ‘I’m going to come to Israel and it’s going to look like the chocolate factory from Willy Wonka [in reference to Roald Dahl’s novel, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*] – everywhere will be chocolate and gold!’”

Of course, when she stepped off the plane, she was

shocked to see an unfamiliar cityscape with huge buildings and a fast-paced life. “Everything was new to me, but at the same time it was refreshing: a new beginning for me.”

She and her brother were sent to boarding school. When she arrived she could not speak a word of Hebrew, but she was warmly welcomed by her teachers and classmates, who set up “Project Titi” to teach her a new word every day.

She also read children’s books, using the pictures to discern the vocabulary. Within three months, she was a fluent speaker. Within a year, she’d perfected her Hebrew reading and writing.

Aynaw says her determination was shaped by her life experience. “When you lose your parents at a young age, you become really mature.”

She set an agenda for herself: “First learn the language fast, get the best grades and then go to university.”

What wasn’t part of her plan was being crowned Miss Israel – this was hatched by her best friend. “The first thing she told me on my first day of school was: ‘You are so pretty. We need to sign you up one day for the Miss Israel audition, and you will win, and I will take the prize – the car.’”

After finishing school, Aynaw went on to serve in the army as a commanding officer. In the interim, her friend remained steadfast in her pageant plan, signing Aynaw up shortly after she finished her military service.

Her winning edge in the contest, suggested Aynaw, was that she “represented Israel as an immigrant and as an officer” who, just months before, was “running with my soldiers... shooting with them in the field” – and then could switch and radiate glitz and glamour.

After being announced the winner, her first thoughts were of her mother. “It wasn’t about the beauty. It’s the fact that I made history, that I was the first black Miss Israel. I wanted her to see me and be proud of that fact because it was a historical moment for me, for Israel and for the Ethiopian community.”

Aynaw is proud of the stereotypes she broke as she became the face on magazine covers and billboards and was at the helm of advertising campaigns.

Incidentally, there was a minor impediment to her and her friend’s plan to utilise her prize car – neither of them had driver’s licences, so her brother became the lucky recipient.

At times, Aynaw is still disbelieving of her fame. She told the audience that she’d put down the phone on a White House official, who’d called to invite her to dinner with then president Barack Obama, because she thought it was a prank call.

She did get to attend the White House function, and said a highlight there was enjoying a Lechaim drink with Benny Gantz, who headed the Israeli Defence Forces at the time. Aynaw recalled panicking when she first saw him as she wasn’t sure how to salute while wearing an evening gown. But her fears were averted when he came up to her and said: “I’m so proud of you; let’s drink wine!”

Naming Shimon Peres as the leader she most admires, Aynaw said there were various Israeli politicians she held in high regard, and others not. Part of her dream for the future was to enter Israeli politics herself.

She suggested discrimination came about because Israel is a small country, yet constantly receives new waves of immigrants. However, she still would not label this racism.

She recounted how, in her apartment building, people from diverse cultural backgrounds managed to communicate, despite all of them speaking different languages. Ultimately, people learned to deal with these situations, Aynaw said.

She recalled how her grandmother used to chat to their Iraqi Jewish neighbours, saying: “They don’t understand anything, but they are speaking.

“This is Israel. We are everything: We are Israeli; we are Jewish; we build a country together; we love this country and we love each other at the end of the day,” she concluded.

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Israeli artists paint Cape Town



JORDAN MOSHE

When the Israeli artists Elna and Gab, who are brothers, were in Cape Town recently, they left their indelible mark on a wall at the corner of Pope and Kingsley Streets in Salt River.

While their street art is all over Israel, this Jerusalem duo, known as Brothers of Light, were invited to participate in the 2018 International Public Arts Festival in Cape Town last month. They joined street artists from around the world in raising awareness of the drought in Cape Town.

The aim of the festival is to harness the power and creativity of art to improve people’s lives. To this end, it goes beyond showcasing work that makes neighbourhoods appear more beautiful as it works to uplift street artists and transform their communities by teaching children how to be creative, stimulating new businesses and creating jobs.

Elna and Gab are known for using unique characters and symbols that appear to be derived from ancient civilisations, be they Egyptian or Oriental. They introduced novel designs and images to their Cape Town mural that they felt would best communicate how they felt about the difficulties faced by residents living with a limited water supply.

“It was our first time in South Africa and also our first time hearing about the water crisis there,” they told the SA Jewish Report via email. “Through our art, we tried to raise awareness about the people’s plight, while using ornamental elements that combine different cultures. We wanted to communicate these ideas in the most organic way possible.”

Beyond their artistic endeavours, the brothers took the opportunity to engage with our local culture. “We met incredible people and talented artists from all around the globe. It took us four days to paint the wall, and although we worked hard, we never missed the beautiful sunsets.

“While we were busy painting the wall, many people were curious about what we were up to. They were friendly and many asked us where we come from. They were enthusiastic to find out that we are from Israel – and Jerusalem in particular – even the Uber drivers!”

“The underdogs, the street culture and people on the fringe are what we are interested in representing. As artists, however, we believe that art should be free from location and stigmas. We’re about art for the sake of art,” they explained.

Elna and Gab were brought to South Africa by Tararam, the South Africa Israel culture fund. This fund promotes Israeli culture around South Africa by sending South African artists to Israel and bringing Israeli artists to South Africa.

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Murder accused uses anti-Semitism in his legal battle

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Guatemalan Diego Novella, charged with murdering his American Jewish girlfriend, Gabriela Kabrins Alban, at an upmarket Camps Bay boutique hotel in July 2015, turned to anti-Semitism in order to sway the trial.

In the Western Cape High Court last Wednesday, the accused was being cross-examined about whether he was fit to stand trial and could appreciate the wrongfulness of his actions. The state was asking about a report, completed by three psychiatrists and a psychologist at Valkenberg Hospital, prior to the trial starting.

Novella started to claim that the report was not accurate, said Judith Cohen.

Cohen, a human rights lawyer, has taken up the family's cause. She attends most of the court hearings and is helping to co-ordinate a support group, Justice4Gaby, to ensure a presence at court.

According to Cohen, the accused said the contents of the report were not objective. "When he was asked why forensic psychiatrist Professor Sean Kaliski [who was called by the state to testify on his observations of the accused when he was at Valkenberg] was not objective, the accused reportedly said: 'Professor Kaliski's religion is Jewish and Gabriela's family is also Jewish, so at a certain point when he was giving his declaration, he gave you a thumbs-up, Public Prosecutor.'

"He then said, according to the court transcript: 'Because of that, because he is Jewish, as Gabriela's family, he didn't give a 100% objective declaration... Even during meals, lunch recess, they went out together to have lunch.'

"There is absolutely no truth in that statement," Cohen says.

"The court then asked the accused how he knew Professor Kaliski was Jewish and he said: 'Because of his name.'

"It then came out that his lawyer, William Booth, had mentioned to him that Professor Kaliski was speaking with the parents outside court," says Cohen.

In his exchange on the matter with Judge Vincent Saldanha, Novella later said: "I am not against the Jewish religion in any way. I also have Jewish ancestors."

Says Cohen: "It's interesting that this has come up once again because it's one of the oldest forms of anti-Semitism. If you need a scapegoat, when you run out of everything else, bring up the Jewish issue.

"For the parents to sit there and be insulted based on the fact that they are Jewish and that there is this conspiracy amongst Jews against him... He keeps referring to a conspiracy against him that he is found guilty.

"He must be aware from media reports that those of us who sit in the gallery come from the Jewish community and that the parents are receiving support from the Jewish community," she adds.

"The accused is now in another way insulting the family after having caused them so much harm,

particularly in relation to the brutal manner in which he killed her."

When state prosecutor Mornay Julius asked him on Wednesday who had killed Gabriela, an only child, the accused had reportedly said: "It was my hands but not my mind."

Howdy Kabrins, Gabriela's father, said: "There never was such a lunch; that's misinformation," in response to the accused's apparent reference to Kaliski having lunch with the parents. "The accused made the assumption that the tribe of Jews was talking... It had anti-Semitic overtones and undertones. I've never experienced that in this kind of setting – it was shocking."

On this score, Kabrins recalls going through the accused's home in Guatemala when he went to collect his late daughter's possessions. "We found anti-Semitic literature, pamphlets. I don't know if we kept those or not, but the FBI was with us when we found them," he recalls.

On Novella's alleged assertions, Kabrins says he "has been trying to discredit all the information these past several days because he has no defence".

That same day in court, Novella had addressed Gabriela's mother, Doris Weitz, telling her that he understands how she must feel.

"He then turned to me and mentioned my mother, Rose Kabrins, and my father, Reuben



Howdy Kabrins and Gabriela Kabrins Alban

Kabrins," said Kabrins.

"When he started talking to the two of us, Doris and I walked out of the courtroom – we're not interested in his coming to Jesus or whatever else he's trying to do. There's nothing he can possibly say."

"I think [Novella] said that because Professor Kaliski is Jewish and the deceased's family, or some of them, are Jewish, he felt that his evidence might support their contention that he murdered Gabriela," Booth says of his client's outburst.

"He did say that he's not anti-Semitic," he adds. "He's not saying that he feels because somebody's Jewish, they can't be objective. I certainly would be the last person to support any argument along those lines."

Moreover, he states, the defence has engaged psychiatrist Professor Tuviah Zabow, who is Jewish, as an expert witness.

"Whether or not Kaliski is objective is something I will have to argue after considering all the evidence. Certainly, it's not going to be argued that because he's

Jewish, he's not objective – I will never argue that.

"I will argue on his evidence and cross-examination, on contradictions and probabilities and all the facts that I must look at as a lawyer... I would not argue that because somebody is of a particular religious group, that that per se equals bias or prejudice."

Says Cohen: "The case has been going extremely slowly, with numerous delays... and this has been stressful for the parents of the deceased. For them it feels like torture going to court every day."

Rabbi Mendel Lipskar celebrates his 70th surrounded by family

SUZANNE BELLING

The nine Lipskar children and their families flew in from nine cities and four countries to celebrate the 70th birthday of their father, Rabbi Mendel Lipskar. The event took place last Thursday in Hyde Park.

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein called Rabbi Lipskar "one of the most important and influential leaders of the South African Jewish community" and a catalyst in the baal teshuva movement.

Rabbi Lipskar was the first emissary sent by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, to Africa. He came to this country 45 years ago and is now head of the Lubavitch Foundation, rav of the Shul at Hyde Park, one of the founders of Torah Academy and chairman of the school's education committee.

Even before his birthday party, his children were

(as emissaries). I teach kids Torah and we follow the Rebbe's example of bringing Jews closer together."

Her husband, Rabbi Shloimy Raitport, runs an evening kollel every day.

Dini Freundlich and her husband, Rabbi Shimon Freundlich, have been living in Beijing, China, for the past 17 years. They run the only shul, Jewish school and kosher restaurant in Beijing.

They are frequented by the 2 000 Jews living in the city and 20 000 visitors annually.

Leah Shemtov and her husband, Moshe, work as Chabad emissaries in Stamford, Connecticut. They run a large pre-school. "It is a wonderful community, with many ex-South Africans," she said.

Rabbi Aaron Lipskar and his wife, Leah, live in Surfside, Florida. He is another Chabad emissary and is the founder and national organiser of the Aleph Institute. "We work with incarcerated Jews," he said.



Rabbi Mendel and Mashi Lipskar standing in front of their children at the Shul at Hyde Park. From left: Rabbi Levi Lipskar, Zalman Lipskar, Rabbi Aaron Lipskar, Goldie Raitport, Dini Freundlich, Leah Shemtov, Grunie Uminer, Mushkie Barber and Sarah Dworcan

posting Facebook pictures of their reunion in the bush with their parents.

All the children show obvious pleasure at having the opportunity to spend time with family, former school friends, members of Chabad and the Johannesburg Jewish community.

Goldie Raitport, the eldest sibling, is one of two who remained in Johannesburg. "We are here on shlichut

There about 5 000 Jewish prisoners in the US. "This is a big division of the institute as it works with the families of the prisoners as well."

A separate division works with Jews in the US armed forces. Rabbi Aaron does chaplaincy among them.

Grunie Uminer and her husband, Rabbi Mendy Uminer, work in the big Chabad House in Chestnut

Hill, Massachusetts. They are also on the long list of Lipskar children and their spouses who are the Rebbe's emissaries.

Rabbi Mendy is the rabbi of the shul and the Chabad House. Grunie works in the Chabad House and the Talmud Torah (similar to Sunday school) and is also the director of large summer camps.

Zalman Lipskar is not a rabbi, but a commodities trader. He lives in Surfside, Florida. He and his wife, Rivkie, were in China for several years, choosing Beijing to be near his sister and her family, while he was engaged in his business.

Rabbi Levi Lipskar, director of growth and development at Torah Academy, is the second Lipskar child to remain in Johannesburg. He was the master of ceremonies at the event. His wife, Leah, teaches at the school.

They run the Friendship Circle, a programme for children with special needs who require remedial education. Rabbi Levi also runs a project for adults.

"He studied in yeshivot in the US," Leah said, "but it was always his dream to come back to South Africa."

Mushkie Barber lives in "the paradise of Mauritius" with her husband, Rabbi Laima Barber, who is rabbi for the 150 local Jews on the island.

"Recently, for Purim, we had 200 Jews. The community is growing and is a very special one." When the Barbers first arrived, there were 90 Jews on the island. "It is a real paradise and now, with more and more Yiddishkeit, it is a real Gan Eden," Mushkie said.

Sarah Dworcan, the youngest Lipskar child, works in the Palm Beach Synagogue in Florida, where she is the programme director. Her husband, Yossi, is in business.

Speaking on behalf of the family, Rabbi Aaron said Jewish sources indicated that the number 70 could be a sign of unity, concern, kindness, growth and positive development.

Rabbi Mendel Lipskar said his life was "full of excitement, kindness and goodness", and paid tribute to his wife, Mashi, saying they were equal partners.

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Party mutiny threat ends coalition crisis

RAOUL WOOLLIFF

Coalition sources said on Tuesday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had been ready to collapse his government and call early elections, but backed down when his own party members told him they wouldn't support the move.

On Tuesday, Netanyahu and other coalition party heads reached an agreement to end a crisis over an Israeli Defence Forces enlistment bill, ending rampant speculation that a snap election would be called as early as that evening. The prime minister was widely seen as supporting early elections, as a way of cementing his rule ahead of a possible bribery indictment.

Speaking to *The Times of Israel*, a coalition source with direct knowledge of the negotiations said that Netanyahu only agreed to a deal with the other coalition parties once he understood that he would not gain the support of Likud MKs to dissolve the Knesset and call elections.

"It was made clear to him that he would not be able to reach a majority. The other parties didn't want elections, but it was the Likud that would have stopped them," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "Once Netanyahu realised that he may face a rebellion, he decided to look into the compromise deal."

On Tuesday evening, coalition chiefs hailed the last-minute deal, with

Netanyahu taking credit for it.

According to the source, a number of Likud MKs told coalition chairman David Amsalem on Tuesday afternoon about their intention to vote against a bill to dissolve the Knesset, which was expected to be brought to a vote if an agreement was not reached between the coalition parties.

At that point, it appeared that Yisrael Beytenu might leave the coalition due to the then-likely dismissal of Immigration Minister Sofa Landver, the only member of his party who is both a legislator and a minister, after voting against the conscription bill.

The threat by Likud MKs, the source said, was conveyed by Amsalem to Netanyahu, who then crafted an agreement that allowed Landver to stay in government and vote against the bill.

The legislation was, in the end, presented as a private members' bill and not a government proposal, annulling the practice to fire a minister who votes against it.

According to the agreed deal, the conscription bill will now be frozen until the Knesset returns from its recess in mid-April, when a government bill drafted by the defence ministry will be proposed and merged with the private bill, taking the army's personnel needs into account as the Knesset takes up, once again, the question of ultra-Orthodox draft exemptions.

On Monday, Likud MK Yehudah Glick said he would not support a dissolution of the Knesset. He is said to have been joined by a number of other lawmakers.

The prime minister is under investigation in multiple corruption investigations.

He denies any wrongdoing.

The potential rebellion by Likud MKs may be the first signal of disquiet emanating from the corruption allegations and their possible consequences for the government.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a Likud party meeting at the Knesset

AMERICANS' SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL HIGHEST EVER

TOI STAFF

In a February study headlined "Americans remain staunchly in Israel's corner", research company Gallup published the findings of a major national poll that found backing for Israel among Americans remains very high, with some measures of support matching the highest previously recorded figures.

"Americans' stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is as strongly pro-Israel as at any time in Gallup's three-decade trend," the company said in the report, published on Tuesday.

It found 74% of American adults had a favourable view of Israel, while 23% had an unfavourable view. That's the best showing for Israel in 27 years, since 1991's 79% as Israel was battered by Iraqi missiles during the Gulf War.

However, the figures varied dramatically, depending on political affiliation. Support for Israel is at 83% among Republicans, 72% among independents and 64% among Democrats.

The good news for Israel is a "reverse image" of Americans' opinion of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Gallup said, with 21% saying they have a favourable view of the Palestinian government and 71% reporting the opposite.

The PA does better among Democrats, at 27%, than among independents (21%) or Republicans (12%).

It's not all bad news for the PA, however: "This is the second consecutive

year its favourable rating has been above 20%, after six years of readings below that level," Gallup said.

As with other polls, the Gallup study found age was also a factor, with younger adults favouring Israel less than older ones, but still by a two-to-one margin. Adults aged 55 and older favoured Israel over the PA by 80% to 18%. At ages 35 to 54, that shrank to 72% to 15%. At ages 18 to 34, support for Israel was at 65%, while support for the PA jumped to 31%.

Photo: Scott Olson/Getty Images



The study measured not just support for Israel or the PA generally, but asked where Americans' sympathies lay in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Nearly two-thirds of Americans, or 64%, say they are more sympathetic towards the Israelis than the Palestinians – "tying the highs previously recorded in 2013 and 1991," Gallup noted.

KNESSET ADVANCES ULTRA-ORTHODOX ENLISTMENT BILL AS COALITION DEAL IS CLINCHED

MICHAEL BACHNER

A bill pushed by religious parties but fiercely opposed by Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman was given an initial okay by the Knesset late on Tuesday, following a last-minute compromise deal that ended the worst coalition crisis since the current government was formed in mid-2015.

The Knesset plenum voted 59-38 in favour of the bill, which would exempt ultra-Orthodox seminary students from the military draft. It was the preliminary vote of a version of the bill, proposed by MK Yoav Ben Tzur of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party. Its successful advance in the plenum officially secured the 11th-hour agreement.

Lieberman's Yisrael Beytenu party members voted against the bill, staving off the coalition's collapse.

According to the agreed deal, the conscription bill will now be frozen until the Knesset returns from its recess in mid-April, when a government bill drafted by the defence ministry will be proposed and merged with the Ben Tzur bill, taking the army's personnel needs into account as the Knesset takes up, once again, the question of ultra-Orthodox draft exemptions.

Infighting over the enlistment bill during the past week had pushed the government to the brink of elections, with parties issuing competing

ultimatums.

The ultra-Orthodox threatened to torpedo the 2019 state budget if the conscription bill did not pass on preliminary reading this week, and Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon had threatened to quit if the budget was not passed.

In accordance with the deal, the budget is also now set to be approved by the Knesset plenum.

The compromise stipulates that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will refrain from firing Yisrael Beytenu minister Sofa Landver, who on Monday appealed the approval of the conscription law by a ministerial committee.

According to precedent, a sitting minister can't vote against a government ministerial decision. However, according to Tuesday's deal, ministers will request that the prime minister not fire her and guarantee it was a one-time incident.

Earlier, senior sources in the coalition were quoted as saying Netanyahu had decided not to dismantle the government, having gotten "cold feet".

Some had accused Netanyahu of seeking early elections as a way of clinching another mandate before a possible bribery indictment.

On Monday, Lieberman had threatened to quit the coalition and thus usher in new elections.

But he softened his tone on Tuesday.

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Nearly finished US peace plan won't call for two-state solution – report

TOI STAFF

US President Donald Trump's peace plan is nearly finished and the White House intends to present the proposal soon, *The New York Times* reported on Sunday.

Likening the plan to the Israeli-developed GPS app Waze, which allows users to bypass traffic jams, a senior US official told the paper that the "ultimate deal" would prevent both sides from falling into the traps that have sunk most other peace proposals.

Officials said the administration was putting finishing touches to the plan.

While the three senior officials interviewed for the article declined to provide the details of the proposal, they told *The New York Times* that it would not have a set of broad guiding principles, as previous plans have been known

to contain.

Instead, the document is said to provide specific solutions to the main issues of borders, security, refugees and the status of Jerusalem.

The officials anticipated that Israelis and Palestinians would accept some parts of the plan while rejecting others.

They said the plan will not call for a two-state solution, but will provide pathways that would lead to the creation of two states. In addition, while the plan will not call for a "fair and just solution" to the issue of Palestinian refugees, as previous proposals have done, it will provide ways to handle the issue.

The senior officials told *The New York Times* that the traditional use of broad suggestions, made to avoid alienating the sides, had proved insufficient.

Palestinians have already



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, left, and US President Donald Trump in the White House Oval Office on March 5

Photo: Haim Tzachi/GPO

expressed scepticism over the plan, accusing the US of bias towards Israeli positions, following Trump's December decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and his aides have refused to meet with Trump

administration officials since the president's declaration.

In February, the White House announced that it would open its Jerusalem embassy in May 2018 to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Israel's independence.

The plan has been in the works for several months, but administration officials have

been mum on the timing for its release. On Sunday, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly told members of his Cabinet that there is still no "concrete" US peace plan, according to Channel 10 news.

"At the moment, there is no concrete American peace plan on the table. I'm not saying there won't be, but at the moment there isn't," Netanyahu, who met with Trump and other US officials last week, was quoted as saying.

He told reporters in Washington that Palestinian peace efforts had taken only a sliver of his bilateral meeting with Trump last Monday, with most of it focused on Iran.

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Jeremy Corbyn was part of an anti-Semitic Facebook group

ROBERT PHILPOT

Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of Britain's Labour Party, was an active member of a Facebook group which contained Holocaust deniers and anti-Semites, it has been revealed.

Corbyn appears to have been a member of the Palestine Live group for at least a year, and left it shortly after he became head of the opposition in September 2015.

In a 280-page report, released last Wednesday, David Collier, a researcher and blogger, details a slew of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel material shared by members of the group.

One member said they were reading *Mein Kampf* and suggested: "Everybody should be forced to read it, especially Jews who have their own agenda as to why they were not liked."

Others discussed the use of the terms "ZioNazi" and "JewNazi", debated whether the BBC was controlled by Zionists and shared conspiracy theories about the Rothschild family and Israel's supposed involvement in the 9/11 and 2015 Paris attacks.

Members of the 3 000-strong secret group – who include Holocaust denier Paul Eisen – are also said to have shared articles by David Duke, a former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, and links to neo-Nazi material.

In one post, Jackie Walker, a former vice-chairperson of the pro-Corbyn Momentum group who is suspended from the Labour Party over allegations of anti-Semitism, is shown asking: "How safe is this group?"

One of the group's three administrators responds: "Very... no one is allowed in who is not trusted... I am very very careful... and it is a secret group."

The Labour Party has launched an investigation and promised disciplinary action against any of its members found to have posted anti-Semitic material. A number of party members have reportedly been suspended.

Other members of the Palestine Live group are said to have included the Labour leader's son, Seb, who is a senior aide to the shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, as well as a number of prominent pro-Corbyn

MPs and activists. Two former Liberal Democratic parliamentarians are likewise alleged to have been members.

There is no suggestion that any of them, or the Labour leader, were aware of the nature of the material shared by some members of the site.

Corbyn is, though, shown by Collier to have posted on the site on a number of occasions. In one comment, he praised Dr Mads Gilbert, a Norwegian physician and political activist who has claimed the 9/11 terror attacks could be blamed on "the politics the West has followed" and who has previously been barred from entering Israel.

Corbyn wrote of his "huge respect" for "my friend" Gilbert and said he would be "delighted to invite him to Westminster". The Labour leader later suggested the Palestine Solidarity Campaign should issue the invitation.

Corbyn also commented in a thread attacking Israel's Hatnua party leader and former foreign minister, MK Tzipi Livni, where the abusive term "Zio" was used. On another occasion, he celebrated the UK Parliament's 2014 vote to unilaterally recognise the state of Palestine in a thread in which another member referred to "wayward Jews who don't deserve a homeland".

A spokesperson for Corbyn said: "Jeremy condemns anti-Semitism in all its forms in the strongest possible terms. He does not want the support of anti-Semites, who have no place whatsoever in the Labour movement."

However, Jennifer Gerber, the director of Labour Friends of Israel, strongly condemned Corbyn's former membership in the group. "That Jeremy Corbyn was a member of a Facebook group frequented by anti-Semites, Holocaust deniers and Israel-hating conspiracy theorists is both appalling and utterly unsurprising. We have long known about the kind of company that he keeps, and this is simply further confirmation of a deeply disturbing pattern of behaviour," said Gerber.

"Mr Corbyn has repeatedly failed to apologise to the Jewish community and to recognise the hurt caused by his past actions and associations. Now would be a good time for him to do so."

Palestinian PM survives assassination attempt during Gaza visit

KHALED ABU TOAMEH AND AGENCIES

Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah survived an apparent assassination attempt on Tuesday, when a bomb went off next to his convoy as he visited the Gaza Strip. Several people were wounded.

The PA said Hamdallah and the PA's general intelligence chief, Majid Faraj, who was accompanying him, were unhurt.

However, media reports said several bystanders were injured.

PA Civil Affairs Minister Hussein al-Sheikh said the Hamas group, which rules Gaza, would be held responsible. He warned that this was an unprecedented dangerous development that would have grave consequences for Hamas.

Three of the vehicles in Hamdallah's convoy were damaged.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Radical Islamists opposed to Hamas also operate within the Gaza Strip and have regularly been behind unrest there.



A vehicle damaged in the explosion that went off near PA Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah's convoy

Syria war has killed more than 350 000 in seven years, monitor says

AFP

Seven years of conflict in Syria have left more than 350 000 people dead, according to updated overall death toll figures, released on Monday by UK-based monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The group, which relies on an extensive network of sources on the ground across Syria, said 353 935 people had been killed since 2011.

The conflict, which will enter its eighth year on Thursday, is taking a devastating toll on civilians, including in the ongoing regime assault on the rebel enclave of Eastern Ghouta, near Damascus. This

is where more than 1 000 civilians have been reported killed in the past three weeks.

According to the head of the Syrian Observatory, 106 390 civilians have been killed in seven years. The deaths include:

- 106 390 civilians, including 19 811 children and 12 513 women;

- 63 820 regime soldiers;
- 58 130 regime-allied and militia fighters;
- 63 360 hard-line Islamists and jihadists;
- 62 039 fighters from other forces, including non-jihadist rebels, Kurdish forces and defected government soldiers; and
- 196 unidentified people.



Sacks at 70: 'I feel younger than I did five years ago'

JUSTIN COHEN

His belief in a Judaism engaged with the world was at the centre of his message on leaving the chief rabbinate four years ago. Since then, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks has taken that message to the wider public, including when he became the first religious figure to take the main stage at TED's headquarters.

That talk has been viewed more than 1.5 million times online. "We couldn't have foreseen the impact of social media and the development of the internet. You can function globally in a way nobody could before, immediately and at low cost."

But he suggests that ever-developing technology – alongside weakening families and communities beyond religious groups – is one reason for increasing numbers of people turning to political extremes. "Humans can't get used to change. So, they search for certainty. When you're trying to live by simple truths in a complicated world, you do become extreme."

He sees this trend continuing. We are living in a very uncertain world and it's going to become more uncertain. So, it's important to safeguard support networks – and there's nothing more powerful than strong communities and families."

Lord Sacks is convinced that the religious voice is more crucial than ever. "When politics is divisive, religion has a duty to unite."

He praises Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis for "creative" initiatives, including Shabbat UK and education programmes for women.

He also "salutes" the Chief Rabbi's decision to go to Limmud, despite his own decision not to. "For all my 22 years in

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks



office, I said every rabbi who wanted to go should do so with my blessing. The Chief Rabbi going has not ended the controversy, and I knew that my going would not end it either."

He says restrictions are a natural by-product of leadership. "I felt privileged for the whole of my chief rabbinate. But when you're captain of the team, you have to

play by the rules of the team. That means you can't always say and do what you would do as a private individual. So, for the past four and a half years, being able to speak in my own voice and make my own decisions, without necessarily worrying about others, has been exhilarating. People have noticed. I feel a lot younger than I did five years ago."

Having overseen an explosion in Jewish school places under his chief rabbinate, education remains a key focus today – whether through the launch last week of a curriculum bringing together his teachings with classical sources, or in America, where leaders have asked for his help. "American Jewry will never be like Anglo Jewry because it's bigger and has a different political culture. But the bigger respect in which we're different is that we've built day schools.

"In many ways, British Jewry remains strong in a way that American Jewry has historically been strong, but today is beginning to weaken at the edges."

Lord Sacks says he "understood" the criticism over his key role in helping US Vice President Mike Pence draft his much-lauded Knesset speech. But Sacks said that while "they were looking at a person", he was focused on issues. "It was the vice-president of America delivering a message on behalf of the American government about recognising Jerusalem. Whoever had

been the person, I would, if asked to help, have done so."

As he hits the big 7-0, just ahead of the Jewish state, he praises the country as "young for a 70-year-old nation" that thrives "because it empowers the young".

The country's greatest challenge, he insists, remains to find a way to embrace and bring together Israelis of all religious levels. "Israel's president, a man I hugely admire, has been speaking in recent years about an Israel of four minorities: the secular, the religious, the ultra-religious and the Palestinians who do not share a common narrative. We are the world's experts in creating narratives.

"Where is the vision in Israel of a society that embraces both some very holy people, plus a religious and secular public who are open to Judaism, if it is not forced on them?"

There's little sign of the "semi-retirement" for Lord Sacks that Prince Charles referred to back in 2013. Just last month, he was honoured with a lifetime achievement award at Jewish News' Night of Heroes.

He insisted his "young team" keeps him fresh, as he does continually moving outside his comfort zone.

He is currently working on his chumash, "the biggest project I've ever undertaken", and a five-part series on BBC radio on the big moral issues facing humanity. "I'm looking after my health," he says. "I'm exercising as hard as I can because this work needs to be done."

Anti-Semitic vandalism in Holland rises by 40% to highest level since 2007



The number of incidents involving anti-Semitic vandalism recorded in the Netherlands last year increased by 40% to a 10-year high of 28 cases.

The increase in vandalism was part of a small overall rise in anti-Semitic incidents in 2017 over 2016, wrote the Dutch Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel, or CIDI, in its annual incidents report, published on Saturday. CIDI, situated in The Hague, recorded 113 incidents in 2017 compared to 109 in 2016.

The data was published amid unprecedented developments in public debate on anti-Semitism in the Netherlands. This month, almost all of the political parties contending in the municipal elections in Amsterdam signed a document vowing tougher action against anti-Semitism.

The move followed the action by a Palestinian man in December: he smashed the windows of a kosher restaurant in Amsterdam. Holding a Palestinian flag, he then broke in and stole an Israeli one before being arrested.

Last week, the rightist leader of the Party for Freedom, Geert Wilders, visited the restaurant. For the first time in the history of Dutch politics, the

Forum for Democracy party produced an ad campaign focused exclusively on anti-Semitism, ahead of the March 21 municipal elections.

Four incidents recorded by CIDI in 2017 involved physical violence against people.

In one case, two Israelis were stabbed on July 18 in Amsterdam. A witness testified that the assault was anti-Semitic. Two 18-year-old men were sentenced to prison for the assault. The victims were not in the Netherlands during the trial and therefore the witness's testimony was not substantiated.

Another incident, which occurred on June 26, involved a Jew of Syrian descent who was assaulted on Amsterdam's Dam Square for wearing a Star of David pendant. He had been assaulted earlier this year at a fast-food eatery, where several men broke his arm, he said.

In its recommendations, CIDI urged the judiciary to impose heavier sentences on offenders to increase deterrence. It also recommended that the Dutch government and judiciary adopt the European Parliament's definition of anti-Semitism. It features examples of the demonisation of Israel. In recent years, it was adopted by the UK and Romania, among other countries. (JTA)

Sweden's Jews complain of Google searches returning anti-Semitic results

Google is facing criticism in Sweden for its failure to prevent anti-Semitic material from topping searches featuring the term "Jews in Sweden".

One such search, as of last Wednesday, delivers as the second result a list of prominent Jews compiled by anti-Semites.

Additionally, a video that appeared on a far-right channel on YouTube contains racial slurs and the names and pictures of prominent Swedish Jews. YouTube has taken down the Sweden Review channel following an outcry earlier this week over the availability of anti-Semitic content in local media. Its content has since been uploaded by affiliated channels and is again available.

"As a person featured on this list, I am appalled that it took this long for anyone to react to the fact that names and details of Jews are being collected and catalogued for all the world to see," Annika Hernroth-

Rothstein wrote on Facebook last Thursday. The list describes her as "a liberty killer" who "demonstrates for the terrorist state of Israel".

Svante Weyler, a publisher and chair of the Swedish Committee Against Anti-Semitism, said the list was reminiscent of Nazi practices.

"This list is part of an old classical tradition by Nazis and anti-Semites in anticipation of a time when the political climate changes, so they know who to pick, who to send away, who to kill. That's what they did previously, so why would they not do it again?"

Google's communications director, Farshad Shadloo said the company has explicit policies. "Generally speaking, content clearly breaching copyright laws, harassment or that encourages violence against individuals or groups is unacceptable to us." (JTA)

Ben-Gurion sought more women in government, archived letter shows

TOI STAFF

A letter written by Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, emphasising the need to integrate women in the nascent Israeli government, was released by the Israeli Defence Forces archives last week to mark International Women's Day.

"I think appointing women to the government is a great privilege (and also a duty) for society, and I was greatly sorry that my party did not accept my proposal to appoint a female party member to the government," Ben-Gurion wrote to a number of women's organisations in March 1948, two months before he declared Jewish statehood.

"It seems to me a duty of honour, not only towards our mothers, sisters, wives and daughters – who bear an equal burden with us for building the community and shaping its image – but also towards our neighbours and the wider world," he told WIZO Women's Union, the Women's Federation of Hadassah and the Women's Council.

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DR. TALIA GOLAN LEADS THE BATTLE TO FIND A CURE FOR PANCREATIC CANCER

BY STEVE WALZ

Juggling three different jobs at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan, Israel where she engages cancer in its various phases from basic research to patient care and Phase I clinical trials, Dr. Talia Golan, finds herself on the front-lines of modern medicine, working day and night to find the “magic bullet” that could possibly cure pancreatic cancer.

The South African-born doctor made Aliyah to Israel with her parents (prominent physicians in their own right) when she was 13 years old. She started her career at Sheba Medical Center in 2009 as a resident in the hospital’s Oncology Institute.

Today, Dr. Golan is a Medical Oncologist in Sheba’s Gastrointestinal Unit, heads the Sheba Pancreatic Cancer Center and the Pancreatic Cancer Translational Research Laboratory, and serves as the Medical Director of the Early Phase Clinical Trial Unit.

The Sheba Pancreatic Cancer Center is the largest pancreatic cancer care center in Israel, offering the most recent and innovative treatments for pancreatic cancer tailored for each patient’s clinical background and needs as well as a robust approach to coordination of care and patient/family navigation.

The Early Phase Clinical Trial Unit which Dr. Golan created in 2009 is dedicated to testing the newest cancer drugs and treatments in partnership with the most innovative pharmacologic developers. The unit has its own specialized staff and is fully dedicated to the complex requirements of Phase I clinical trials.

“This was the first dedicated Phase I oncology program in Israel. It was created to test new drugs that could benefit patients with advanced cancer including pancreatic cancer. These treatments are initially offered through the Unit to those whose 5-year survival rate is very low (less than 10%),” revealed Dr. Golan. “There are different aspects to this program, from early

Dr. Talia Golan



drug development and preclinical laboratory research to Phase I clinical trials for patients. We are working very hard to improve the survival rates and prolong the lives of all patients with pancreatic cancer.”

Through her research, Dr. Golan seeks to understand the biology of pancreatic cancer. She has discovered a relationship between pancreatic cancer and BRCA, noting that up to 15% of Ashkenazi Jewish patients with pancreatic cancer are also carriers of the BRCA 1 / 2 mutations. BRCA gene mutations in women had previously been found to cause breast and ovarian cancer, as well as well gastric and prostate cancer in men.

“We are constantly working on new and innovative medicines in collaboration with other hospitals and cancer research units like MD Anderson (at the University of Texas in Houston), PMH (Canada) and NYU in the USA,” added Dr. Golan. “I believe the changes in the way we treat pancreatic cancer, using new technologies, will result in the emergence of game-changing drugs in the near future.”

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Thoughts on Sinai Indaba

"What was really impressive was Peter Himmelman's creativity workshop, where he demonstrated that tools such as smartphones can be used to reach out to loved ones in a sincere, meaningful way."

– Moshe Lichtenstein

"The colour and diversity of the speakers always impress me. This year was no different. Coupled with major improvements to the food, it made for a soul-satisfying Sinai VII."

"Having studied meditation, one of the fundamental lessons I learned from Rabbi Laibl Wolf is that changing one's mindset is like learning to play an instrument; it doesn't happen through studying the theory without the daily practice."

– Loren Heppel

An extravaganza of fresh thinking

SIMON APFEL

An international fashion designer; a renowned sex therapist; a punk rocker; a rabbinical hedge fund manager; an educational psychologist moonlighting as a meditation guru; and a Scottish stand-up comedian moonlighting as a rabbi – this is a taste of the eclectic line-up of speakers at Sinai Indaba. The seventh edition of this event was held in Johannesburg last weekend and in Cape Town this weekend.

About 3 500 people gathered at the Sandton Convention Centre last weekend to hear some of the Jewish world's celebrated thinkers and speakers share multifaceted insights on relationships, personal development, spirituality, creativity, Jewish philosophy, Jewish mysticism and Israel diplomacy.

More than 200 teenagers from Johannesburg's Jewish schools attended the Sinai Next youth track.



"Sinai Indaba is the summit of our magnificent South African Jewish community, where we come together to affirm our values and our vision, where we learn and experience what it takes to create a great society," said Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, who founded Sinai Indaba in 2012.

He started off the event on a positive note for the Saturday night opening, telling the audience: "We make a choice every day about how we tell the story of our lives. Whether it's about the country we live in, the people around us, the community we are a part of, the State of Israel or our own personal lives, we can either construct a narrative that is pessimistic or we can choose to be optimistic in how we see the world."

At its heart, said Goldstein, Sinai Indaba is about storytelling. "The route to positive and optimistic storytelling is through finding meaning, and over the course of tonight and tomorrow, we will be exploring and sharing in that meaning with our line-up of wonderful guest speakers."

In search of the 21st century Jewish woman

TAMAR TABACK

I sat down with Rivka Malka Perlman – spiritual entrepreneur, video blogger and creator of the Redemption Retreats – in a quiet room during Sinai Indaba this past Sunday.

We got talking about pre-Messianic woman and what Perlman thought were her most salient characteristics. She said: "She loves herself."

"Today, there is a growing propensity among women for comparison," explained Perlman. "Women look at each other and wonder if they measure up, if they pass the standard of the acceptable, the lovable, the beautiful. It is time for women to wake up to their own beauty and love what they see, from the inside out, who they are, and what they can achieve."

"If a woman recognises the powerful light that is inside of her, she will be able to see it in her sister. That is the telltale sign of a pre-Messianic woman: one who has a clear self-love and whose enthusiasm for her femininity and the gifts that brings the world is applied to all womankind."

"In this way, we rise above our pettiness and harness this powerful energy that has come to the world in extra measure in these times – feminine energy."

For Perlman, self-love is the human expression of the belief in G-d's love – a

should be – or over-intellectual, perhaps in response to the insults she has endured from the male empire decades ago.

"Rather, she claims her full beauty – her pragmatic side as well as her spiritual side, her brilliance together with her appreciation of beauty, intuition and emotional attunement."

We reflect on the awe-inspiring image we've been dwelling on of modern woman opening up like a butterfly getting ready for flight. "I think it is important not to get confused in this transitional time," cautions Perlman.

"How do I claim my full potential and still make dinner? I have no doubt that through watching us go through this charged time of transition, our daughters will do it more gracefully."

"The pull between family and personal growth were never meant to be two separate things. It is only in our minds that we create a tension between them. In reality, it is all our essence and it is all one."

Equally important is knowing and understanding one's particular mission in life. I ask Perlman how she found her own personal calling.

"Kerplunk – I stumbled on it. I needed coaching, mentoring and healing – and that became my passion."

She has been doing it for a number of years. What continues to drive her?

"I literally get to witness miracles – women going from darkness to light as they connect with G-d, and how they find their true selves in the very circumstances that were previously so overwhelming for them."

She tells the story of how one woman – who was adopted and converted to Judaism, and had been living a story that she was "no one from nowhere" – found a profound sense of belonging. She tells of how another woman, clinically infertile, cleared her emotional blockages and fell pregnant.

"Part of the healing process is often clearing out toxic and negative energy that has built up and clogs our systems."

Often, she says, the pivotal factor in these deep, internal healing journeys is the conscious decision to move from the "victim" stance to "transcendence".

"By processing our traumas and bringing

G-d into the picture we see that He was there all along, and that we were never the 'bad girl' we thought we were. It all comes back to our Creator's love and presence in our lives."

Very often, this is an "aha" moment, she says, "where the knowledge that Hashem was building our souls through the experiences in our lifetime becomes part of our energetic knowing. This knowing also marks our healing as complete."

Whether it is womankind emerging as butterflies or our personal healing stories

from victimhood to transcendence, the way to spread our wings is to fight the good fight that is necessary to break free of our old cocoons – outdated ways of perceiving life and thinking about ourselves.

Ultimately, the butterfly flies freely in the light and brings love and wonder to everyone around her, as she brings the light home.

• Rebbetzin Tamar Taback teaches in Johannesburg and runs workshops on Torah-based healing.



Rivka Malka Perlman

"It is time for women to wake up to their own beauty and love what they see, from the inside out, who they are, and what they can achieve."

love that permeates our minds, hearts and bodies.

"I think one of the important aspects of a pre-Messianic woman," Perlman continues, "is that she lives inside her body, while still having access to her soul."

"She does not feel confined to being just 'practical' – as some stereotypes suggest she



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Healing through meditation

REPHAEL PERKEL

Rabbi Laibl Wolf, one of the international speakers at Sinai Indaba, uses meditation to draw the youth back to yiddishkeit.

Wolf was born in 1947 in Krakow, Poland, the son of Holocaust survivors. His father was part of the Radomsko Chassidic community in Poland, which was

Heard at Sinai Indaba

"Don't be afraid to be different. Don't be afraid that people will point and say things about you. When you own what you do and are not ashamed of what you are, people find you fascinating and LOVE your difference."

– Alexandre Elicha, Founder and creative director of The Kooples

"We have never been, nor will we ever be, allowed to be defined by others. Our destiny is ours alone to shape."

– Michael Dickson, Executive director of StandWithUs

"Most school-based programmes on sexuality tell us what not to do. We need programmes that tell us about the beauty of sexual relationships, the pleasure of a mutual relationship, the notion of connecting in a way that's not just physical, but is spiritual, psychological, emotional."

– Dr David Ribner, Sex therapist

"In the big, formative moments of life, people don't change in essence – part of their essence is revealed. What exists is made present."

– Peter Himmelman, Folk rock icon, creativity expert

"For the first time in 2 000 years, those who used to hate us and persecute us and murder us now look to us for guidance, direction and help in their own struggles. This is an incredible opportunity."

– Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein, Director of Interfaith Affairs for the Simon Wiesenthal Center

"The body and soul are soul mates. Living in peace with our neshama, making this match work out, is our mission in life."

– Esther Wein, Innovative educator

"G-d has deliberately created inequality so that there can be chesed – an opportunity for those who are more fortunate to help those who are less fortunate. Wealth redistribution as a Divine mandate."

– Rabbi Saul Djanogly, Wealth manager

"Judaism is the only monotheistic religion in the world that doesn't claim to have the exclusive keys to the kingdom of heaven."

– Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

virtually annihilated by the Nazis.

Two years later, when the family arrived to settle in Australia, they found within the emerging community of Chabad Chassidim something of the culture they were familiar with in Eastern Europe. Laibl and his brother were educated in the Chabad school system.

During the 1970s, the hippie generation was creating a major spiritual revolution in the Western world. Various enterprising gurus introduced meditation practices from the East, and these became especially popular.

In 1979, the Lubavitcher Rebbe gave a public discourse on meditation. Wolf explains that this was at a point in history where most rabbis had forbidden the use of meditation because of the adverse spiritual effects of Eastern influences foreign to Judaism.

Yet the Rebbe had instructed people to seek out the positive elements within meditation, to be used for their therapeutic value in dealing with issues such as depression and stress management. Creating such a mechanism devoid of foreign spiritual influences, he felt, would also provide seekers with an alternative to the Eastern formats that was compatible with their own spiritual heritage.

"I thought that this would be a great bridge towards younger Jewish people, who were genuinely on a quest for some more meaning in their lives and were turning to Eastern formats," says Rabbi Wolf. "I wanted to be able to develop an alternative that would draw them back towards yiddishkeit."

For Wolf, the application of certain Eastern techniques was well suited to the fulfilment of the mitzvah (divine injunction) to



Rabbi Laibl Wolf

maintain a healthy body and mind.

He defines consciousness as the human experience of the neshamah (soul) operating through the body.

"At the same time, there's a breadth we can accomplish in terms of consciousness," he explains. "We can live the moment more deeply or more superficially."

An analogy he is fond of using is the idea of swimming on the surface of the ocean versus scuba diving. "We can live on the 'surface' of life, having some level of consciousness and enjoyment; but that's cheating oneself out of living much more profoundly. That's what I call living 'vertically', which provides us with a much greater vista of the beauty and innate wondrousness of the moment."

When I asked Rabbi Wolf for his perspective on my own understanding of enlightenment as an awareness of context, he suggested that this aspect of wisdom – seeing something as

part of the all, as opposed to simply seeing the thing itself – is to have a broader vista of the meaning of each encounter.

This can manifest, for example, in effective parenting, where attention is paid to a child's personality, abilities, stage of development and how he/she relates to the world. That context provides a far greater opportunity to be wise in the way that you guide the child through life. In general, awareness of context provides an amplified basis of meaning.

For Rabbi Wolf, in accordance with Jewish mystical teachings, who we are in essence is not our body, but our soul. The body is the "clothing" that G-d has given us for the soul to express itself in this world.

Identifying with the body, he says, is a distortion in our sense of the nature of the self. In the context of health and well-being, Rabbi Wolf shares the contemporary, scientifically demonstrated view that our state

"I thought that this would be a great bridge towards younger Jewish people, who were genuinely on a quest for some more meaning in their lives and were turning to Eastern formats," says Rabbi Wolf. "I wanted to be able to develop an alternative that would draw them back towards yiddishkeit."

of mind and our responses to life directly affect our body processes.

Therefore, if, through the mechanism of meditation, we can generate a more positive outlook on life, this significantly accelerates, and perhaps even enables, the healing process. If a healing practitioner and patient/client were to meditate together, says Rabbi Wolf, he believes there would be greater healing.

All of this connects with a profound teaching of the Tzemach Tzedek (1789-1866), an early generation Chabad Chassidic Rebbe, who asserted that positive thinking is a choice we all have available to us, and that this choice produces a positive outcome.

• *Rephael Mendel (Ray) Perkel has been devoted to the study of Chassidic wisdom, Kabbalah and personal development for over 40 years. This has evolved into a passion for integrating spirituality with psychological healing and transformation.*

Kosher can be daringly delicious!

JORDAN MOSHE

Despite the number of kosher restaurants in South Africa, kosher food gets a bad rap. Words like oily, bland, second-rate, unappealing, unoriginal and expensive are used to describe it. Is this really the case?

Having kept kosher for the better part of my life, I admit to having stared wistfully at advertisements for non-kosher eateries on occasion, imagining what it must be like to tuck into those creative gourmet dishes without having to travel to Israel.

However, when I beheld the culinary spectacle that made up the It's Kosher Fest at Sinai Indaba last weekend, I felt that there may be hope for South Africa's kosher kids yet.

I was given a tasting tour of the various dishes on offer by Rabbi Dovi Goldstein, head of Kosher Partnerships at the Beth Din. "When people think kosher, they automatically think about eating something that's boring and unimaginative," said Goldstein.

"People in our community are now able to introduce gourmet food to their tables. Our vision at the It's Kosher Fest is to show people that kosher food can be exciting, tasty and, most of all, fun. The more kosher food there is, the more reasonable the price, the easier it is to keep kosher."

From sweet to savoury, the spectrum of colour and creativity was evident. Goldstein explained that a call had been put out to kosher restaurants to take up an opportunity to reinvent themselves for the occasion and serve up cuisine which was new to the community. They certainly exceeded all expectations.

I started off by sampling a traditional favourite with an imaginative twist: the latke pops served by Feigels. These, alongside their sushi burritos, made for a neat and light first dish.

Shabbos meal, and now, with the brand's variety of ice cream flavours on offer, there's even more of this confectionery to enjoy, especially when accompanied by the superb crepes offered by Sandringham Spar.

Inverting the traditional order of savoury before sweet, I then tucked into my main course: a salmon taco and black bun salmon slider from Next Door. Delicious, especially when accompanied by freshly pressed juice from the Pressed Juice Co.

Looking to round it all off with a final treat, I opted for Paul's Homemade Ice Cream, with a host of toppings on offer (a kosher selection arranged especially for the event). My ice-cream stick dipped in melted chocolate was the perfect happy ending to my taste tour.

Before I began to sample the fare, Tamar Dakes of Feigels described to me what good food can achieve. "Food is like a ray of delicate light, one that can pierce a dark cloud hanging over you and change your reality. When you introduce light into a situation, you can change emotions, lift moods and improve circumstances. Where good food exists, happiness can always be found."

After basking in the light of the food served at the It's Kosher Fest, I found her description to be spot-on.

I hope this fare is what we'll be enjoying in kosher eateries, from take-outs and at functions from now on.



Lunch hour at Sinai Indaba

The flavourful ride gained momentum from there, as every dish that followed enhanced my taste experience. Sally Williams nougat is a staple for any

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Muslim-Jewish friendships: Reaching across the great divide

TALI FEINBERG

As Israel Apartheid Week threatens to divide and poison the relationships between Muslims and Jews on campuses and beyond, individuals from the two faiths share how they have got on with building bridges instead of barriers.

“I have a number of outstanding friendships with members of the Muslim community, and I believe that Jews and Muslims in South Africa can show how these two communities can live peacefully together,” says Cape Union Mart CEO Philip Krawitz. “Bringing the battles of the Middle East to our shores only deepens the chasm.”

He says he always aims to get to know someone on a one-to-one basis. “Typecasting people is the absolute worst thing. To say: ‘All Muslims are bad; all Muslims are ISIS’ is disgusting and not what we as Jews should be promoting,” says Krawitz.

One strong connection is his friendship with former Western Cape premier Ebrahim Rasool which has endured despite the ups and downs of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “If we have an issue, we meet up and talk about it. I have also been his guest at Eid al-Fitr, the holiest day of the Muslim calendar.”

Another friend of Krawitz is Sharief Jaffer. Their friendship began when Jaffer worked for Krawitz, and even though that was 25 years ago, “he always calls me every Yom Tov”.

A third friend, Allie Gierdien, who recently passed away, used to joke with Krawitz that if it was up to them, they would have solved the Middle East crisis long ago.

“We live in a diverse society and it behoves us to build relationships beyond our comfort zones,” explains Krawitz. “Hatred gets us nowhere – we need to reach out as human beings and find commonalities.”

From business relationships to the everyday exchanges between neighbours, this message is demonstrated by ordinary South Africans. “My neighbour is a staunch Muslim. She and I are trusty neighbours and friends,” explains a Jewish woman in Johannesburg who prefers to speak anonymously, as she has not asked her neighbour for permission.

“Her kids come to play at my flat and she trusts me, as I trust her. If she is away and she wants to get a treat for her husband, she knows that I’ll get something Halaal for him if she asks. She sends me food and cake all the time, and sometimes I fetch her kids from religious school. Once I was going to go to Saudi Arabia for business and she loaned me her best abayas (robes). Another neighbour is a Christian Eritrean; we are all friends,” she says.

The two do not discuss religion or Israel. “At one time her WhatsApp picture was a pro-Palestinian one, but then she changed it. She admitted that when she moved in, she had some concerns about me being Jewish,” she says, but their friendship has proven otherwise.

Nazeem Mohammed, a textile retailer, attended Herzlia for most of his school career and matriculated there. “I wasn’t happy

at my other school and Herzlia offered an excellent education,” says Mohammed, adding that most of his siblings attended as well.

For him, being a Muslim at a Jewish school was never a problem – he was happy to learn Hebrew and Jewish studies, and he never faced a backlash from his Jewish peers or his own community.

us, including me,” says Berman.

When the housekeeper first started working for Berman, she faced anger in her Muslim community, but Shariefa explained to them that Jews aren’t bad and that boycotts and hatred only do harm. Her community now accepts her explanation.

“We are very similar – we have the same outlook on bringing up children

to see it go to a family that has helped me so much,” she says.

Abdul Joudi from Syria settled in Cape Town 10 years ago, and his upmarket hair salon in Cape Town draws Jewish clients from across the Peninsula. “I was never taught that Jews are bad, so it’s never been an issue,” says Joudi.

“In fact, we have such a similar

about Judaism before. We sat on the steps of Jameson Hall for an hour, just realising how much we do that is so similar.

“From mikvah in the morning to praying, from washing hands before using the bathroom and saying a blessing thereafter to putting our right shoe on first, it was quite a beautiful bonding experience. I think he was a bit thrown off by the fact that we don’t seek to make everyone Jewish and that it’s okay – and, in fact, the divine plan – for there to be many ways of worship, as long as you worship the One G-d. We hugged as we said goodbye.”

Darren Rozman, a plumber from Cape Town, employs three Muslim workers. “We all get along brilliantly as both colleagues and friends,” says Rozman.

His journey to this point started when he made aliyah and joined the Israeli Defence Forces. He was shocked to find that his commander was an Arab Israeli Muslim. It was this experience that broke down his preconceived ideas that “all Muslims are bad”. So, when he returned to Cape Town and started his business, he was happy to employ Muslim workers.

“We laugh together, work together and even see each other on weekends,” says Rozman. “They just want to live their lives and provide for their families; they don’t worry about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

Rozman has met their families, and just like in the Jewish community, “everyone knows everyone”. The similarities in background make their friendship an effortless one, and if religion comes up, they chat or laugh about it. Ultimately, he concludes, “we see each other as human beings”.



Photo: Lara Berman

Shariefa Fredericks and Lara Berman

He has remained in contact with school friends and works with many of their parents in the textile trade. “Jews and Muslims in Cape Town have always got on well, all the way back to our days in District Six. We have our own problems in South Africa and need to focus on those, instead of the Middle East conflict,” he says.

When Lara Berman separated from her husband and was taking care of her two young children on her own, her parents wanted her to employ a housekeeper. Enter Shariefa Fredericks. “She is from a devout Muslim family. She came to live with us and landed up taking care of all of

and the same family values,” says Berman. “The community also helps each other.”

Indeed, when Berman’s son was involved in an accident in 2013, it was Shariefa who took charge; and when the housekeeper’s family faced hardships, Berman stepped in to help. The two families are so close that they now see each other as family.

When Berman’s mother moved into the Jewish retirement home, Highlands House, Shariefa’s son, Waleed Salie, built shelves for the room and Berman even bequeathed a Persian carpet that belonged to her grandfather to him. “I know my grandfather would have been happy

culture that we get along really well.”

He enjoys seeing clients’ photos from holidays in Israel, and hearing about their experiences there. His parents came to Cape Town as refugees some years ago. The whole family helps in the business.

Even small moments can create strong connections and remove preconceived stereotypes. “During Orientation Week at the University of Cape Town, a ‘frum’ Muslim guy came over to me because people told him I was a rabbi and he had so many questions about Judaism,” shares Rabbi Nissen Goldman, who runs Chabad on Campus.

“He said he’d never spoken to a Jew

An exhibition of unspeakable chaos – and a possible silver lining

DR DANNY SHORKEND

Speechless is both apocalyptic and beautiful. This joint exhibition by Claire Gavronsky and Rose Shakinovsky – together known as RosenClaire – is seductively attractive, and yet a menacing indictment of the ills of society and the onslaught of nature.

The artists explore the impact of history, political corruption, economic disparity and the power inherent in nature – in terms of its weightiness and, often, its violence. What’s most effective is the technical variety of the works on exhibition. Although the artists explore similar themes, they use different modalities to do so.

Gavronsky’s series with pastel on TNT spun fibre looks deceptively simple. On closer examination, one senses the burden of colonialism and the madness and monstrosity of social upheaval as the artist deftly combines the animal with the human world. Her drawings allude both to the weightiness of existence and to the possibility of a state of post-history, wherein the ills of the past are surmounted.

Shakinovsky’s ink jet prints on Hahnemühle paper are well executed. They speak of the dislocation wrought by war and by the terrifying power of nature. There’s beauty in the way she depicts things being torn asunder, as if an explosion may yet rebirth a new world.

The idea of a destructive force preceding a new order is expressed by the artist’s use of muted colours, geometric shapes and linear precision, which result in artworks that draw the eye in like a spider’s web. Other prints conjure up images of the aftermath of an atomic bomb – or could they be images of cellular life?

The title of the exhibition suggests that these apparently abstract forms and studies of colour have rendered the artists mute and dumbfounded by the insanity of crime, anarchy and aggression that characterise their respective worlds.



Claire Gavronsky, *Anthropocene* from 1950 – *The Great Acceleration*, 2017 (oil on linen)

I particularly enjoyed Gavronsky’s “Miscalibrated – the sixth extinction”, where a mathematician stands, resigned, against a blackboard with all his equations. He seems to be confronted by monsters in an inexplicable reality. This is akin to the revolutions that arose from the Enlightenment, or even to the Western notion of the so-called free world, where values may be enshrined in codes of conduct and policies, in laws and intellectual systems of thought, yet the primal inhumanity of humankind and the unpredictable potency of nature may still result in monstrous consequences.

As one enters the gallery, Shakinovsky’s assemblage, inspired by the Suprematism art movement based on abstract geometric forms, portends of things to come: a disjointed, unrepresentational and unspeakable reality, one that recoils into aesthetic reductionism.

Is there no hope? Nietzsche once remarked that chaos within gives birth to a dancing star. While the philosopher may not be fully believed – poor Nietzsche suffered from insanity – it does at least suggest that the terror of the night will give way. The artists highlight the plight of humanity after the industrial revolution, yet their works seem to offer a smidgeon of hope that a paradigm shift may be imminent – and that, for those who oppose basic decency, their days be numbered.

• *RosenClaire’s Speechless* is on at the Goodman Gallery in Cape Town until April 7.

Running in celebration of life

TALI FEINBERG

When Brenda Stern crossed the finish line of the Jerusalem Marathon last week, she fell to her knees and sobbed. It was the final step in a brutal battle against cancer, and a goal she had vowed to achieve – if she survived.

Exactly a year before, she had been enduring a chemotherapy treatment, known as “the red devil”, dripping into a port in her chest, as her veins had collapsed. “It is red in colour and it burns as it goes into your body,” says Stern, a lawyer from Johannesburg and a passionate member of the South African Jewish community.

Stern recounts discovering a lump in her breast. “I immediately knew it wasn’t right,” she remembers.

After urgently booking a mammogram, she was told the lump looked cancerous, “and from that point I knew I had cancer”. A biopsy would confirm the result a few days later. Stern had an aggressive form of breast cancer and needed equally aggressive treatment.

“The worst part was telling my family. You don’t know your prognosis; you don’t know if you’re going to die.”

Guided by an all-female team headed by oncology surgeon Dr Sarah Rayne, Stern decided from the get-go to be positive. “Ninety percent of this fight is in the head. Dr Rayne told me that this didn’t happen because

of something I did or didn’t do. It’s just bad luck. And that’s the attitude I took. I never asked: ‘Why me?’ I just dealt with it.”

First off was a painful lymph node biopsy, followed by a lumpectomy to remove the tumour. Another one was discovered and removed. This was followed by reconstructive surgery and two aggressive forms of chemotherapy – one to kill the cancer and one to prevent it from coming back.

A third operation, with Stern under anaesthetic, was performed two and a half months later to insert a port for the chemotherapy treatment. This after Stern’s veins collapsed and “went black”.

In addition to telling her family, the lowest point of Stern’s battle was when her hair fell out. While on a business trip to Cape Town (she was still working at the time), Stern’s hair fell out on the plane, in the shower and onto her pillow.

“It’s incredibly painful as the chemo attacks your hair follicles. It’s way more traumatic than I anticipated. It’s part of your identity, and now you look like an alien.”

Although she wore a glamorous blonde wig and even got a wig made out of her own lost hair, Stern eventually embraced her

bald head or wrapped it in colourful, patterned scarves.

Rituals and mantras were a key part of Stern’s strategy. She focused on being grateful – grateful that she found the lump early, that she didn’t need a full mastectomy, that she could tolerate the chemo, that she was being healed. “I decided I’m not going to do depression and anger.”

Every chemo session, she dressed in a theme or colour – from Lady in

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Red to Orange is the New Black. “You lose so much autonomy as a cancer patient, and choosing what I wore was one thing I could control,” says Stern.

With all her positivity, Stern still faced very low moments, and so a very special organisation stepped in. “I needed kosher meals while I recovered, and a friend suggested I call the DL Link. Although I was hesitant to ask for help, I’m so glad I did. Volunteers arrived with three-course meals, and from then on, they never stopped supporting me.”

The DL Link was founded in memory of Devorah Leah Levy, who lost her battle with cancer but had hoped to start a foundation to support Jewish families dealing with this disease. “After she died, her family took up this campaign. The

DL Link now supports more than 700 families in Johannesburg dealing with cancer,” says Stern. It provides a host of comprehensive, professional and expert support services to cancer patients, their families and friends.

“The journey through cancer can be long, demanding and draining,” explains the organisation’s website. “The DL Link is here to share this very lonely burden and help families withstand this crisis. We involve and educate communities in caring for ill people and their families, embodying the ideals of compassion, kindness and caring for others inherent in Jewish life.”

And this is how Stern came to run the Jerusalem Marathon. In 2017, Dr Ivan Schewitz ran it as part of the DL Link team with Stern’s name on his back, taking every step in honour of her healing as a cancer warrior. “When I saw the photo, I called my best friend and told her: ‘I’m going to beat this and I’m going to run 10km in Jerusalem next year. Will you do it with me?’” She immediately committed to doing so, and two other friends also joined Stern in completing her goal.

After her last chemotherapy treatment on Erev Rosh Hashanah, Stern went on to have six weeks of radiation. Then she was free to go and rebuild her life. By now, her firm had forced her to take medical leave to focus on a full recovery, and Stern faced the strangely traumatic state of leaving her “cancer family” and returning to the “real world”.

Training for the marathon allowed her to make this transition. Although she had never run in her life, she joined running groups and worked with a personal trainer. “On my first run, I did 3.2km, and I just laughed! I couldn’t believe I did it.”

A few weeks later, she and the DL Link team landed in Israel, supported by hugely generous sponsorships and each other. Praying at the Kotel, she thanked G-d for her survival in the city of miracles.

Dressed in DL Link’s trademark red shirt, Stern ran the Jerusalem Marathon with Tanya Appelbaum’s name on her back – a brave fighter against Stage 1 ovarian cancer, who had her last chemotherapy treatment this week. “I also ran in memory of my cousin Chana, who lost her battle against cancer, and whose family cheered me from the sidelines.”

And so, she ran for her life, over the hills and valleys of Jerusalem, through the city itself, passing South African and Israeli flags. Although exhausted, Stern resolved to run, not walk, across the finish line. “That is what we Jews do. We live, we survive. Last year I had chemo needles in my veins. This year, I am running across that line. I survived from the ashes, I stayed the course and Baruch Hashem, I won.”

• To support DL Link, visit www.dlink.co.za



Brenda Stern

Photo: Elad Goldberg

White-collar crime thrives when ethics aren’t enforced

STEVEN GRUZD

Some 77% of South African companies have experienced economic fraud over the past 24 months, against the global average of 49%. This is according to auditing firm PwC’s 2018 *Global Economic Fraud and Crime Survey*.

The lack of an ethical corporate culture is a major factor explaining why people commit white-collar crimes such as insider trading, fraud and embezzlement – and how to combat these offences.

This message emerged from a panel discussion at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) campus in Illovo last Thursday. The discussion was moderated by Professor Michael Katz, chairperson of ENSAfrica, which specialises in corporate and commercial law. It was presented under the auspices of Rabbi Gideon Pogrand, director of the Ethics and Governance Think Tank at GIBS.

Professor Eugene Soltes of Harvard Business School is the author of *Why They Do It: Inside the mind of the white-collar criminal*. He joined the panel discussion via videolink.

Soltes said he had conducted interviews with white-collar criminals, including Bernie Madoff, Enron executives and some fugitives. He had expected that a cost-benefit calculation would dominate their decisions; instead, he found that a failure of intuition mattered – most saw no harm to others from their actions.

“Their victims were psychologically and physically far away,” Soltes explained, adding that the perpetrators rationalised workplace behaviours that they knew were wrong. And, crucially: “They simply don’t believe they are the sort of people who can be imprisoned.”

Bonang Mohale, CEO of Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA), attributed white-collar crime to greed plus opportunity. He said a dearth of “leadership, vision, courage and integrity” had legitimised bad corporate actions. The years

of Jacob Zuma’s presidency had normalised corruption and a lack of accountability.

Mohale said state capture in South Africa was a systematic plan to fleece the country by the Guptas, Zuma and their cronies. This created a culture of declining tax morality in South Africa.

He urged society to remain vigilant.

Mark Lamberti, CEO of Imperial Holdings, chalked up white-collar crime to “poor process, short-termism and poor custodianship”. As part of his personal management credo, written in 1978, he’d said: “Impressive results can never be used to justify a management process that is conspiratorial, manipulative or otherwise disrespectful of the rights of stakeholders.”

Leaders exerting too much performance pressure can drive corporate crime, said Lamberti. He advocates for more disclosure and transparency, especially when performance is sub-optimal – increasing the temptation to cover up failures.

“A toxic mixture is created with a strong CEO; non-executive directors who don’t know the business and are captured by management; and the absence of a culture of healthy dissent. It’s an accident waiting to happen.”

Kgomotso Moroka, senior counsel at law firm Thulamela Chambers, felt the media focused on government corruption and not on corporate crime. She asked why people are so ready to flout the rules, despite detection and deterrence mechanisms.

Financial Mail editor Rob Rose said: “Twenty years of covering corporate crooks shows that many of them have cognitive dissonance” where they separate themselves from their crimes.

Rose mentioned four types of crook: the grifter, who deliberately sets out to commit crime; the borrower, who believes he will in future replace money “borrowed”; opportunists who seek to make a quick buck and bend rules; and crowd followers who say: “Everyone’s doing it, so why not me?”

Katz said: “A toxic mixture is created with a strong CEO; non-executive directors who don’t know the business and are captured by management; and the absence of a culture of healthy dissent. It’s an accident waiting to happen.”

He also supported Mohale’s view that BLSA’s integrity pledge should be cascaded throughout firms.

Katz told the *SA Jewish Report*: “I don’t think that the Jewish community’s response to an alleged violation by a Jew should be different to that by another perpetrator. Should punishment be exacted by the Beth Din or the Board of Deputies? I think not. The media should report on them because it’s interesting to a Jewish audience, but their standards should be the same as for non-Jews”.

Pogrand told the *SA Jewish Report*: “There is a view which over-simplifies human nature – that good people will invariably carry out good actions. However, in the face of pressures and temptations, good people can also carry out bad actions, including fraud and corruption.”

“This is why our sages teach: ‘Don’t trust yourself until the day of your death.’ The implication is that the potential for ethical failure always exists.”

“But understanding why it happens doesn’t make it acceptable, especially for the Jewish community, given the concept of Kiddush Hashem (sanctifying G-d’s name through living Jewish values). And so, we are obliged to be at the forefront of the opposition to state capture and corruption.”

Messy business of Jews, their roots and land



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

Johannesburg northern suburbs Jews generally fear going to Hillbrow, believing they'll be mugged. But anyone attending the Hillbrow Theatre – previously the

historic Andre Huguenot Theatre – last weekend to see the dance work *Hillbrowfication* (part of the Dance Umbrella Festival), would have a different view.

They might have been impressed by a neighbourhood abuzz with pulsating street life amid Art Deco buildings, and the cosmopolitan mix of black immigrants and local black people. Undoubtedly, problems of poverty and crime exist, but the energy is infectious.

Adult Jews remember a largely white Hillbrow in the 1960s and '70s which hummed elegantly with shops and cafés like the popular Fontana, and buildings such as Highpoint, in which the first Exclusive Books was born. For residents, Hillbrow was a first step up for poor Jewish immigrants from Lithuania, who had started off in humble Doornfontein to the south.

Few, if any, Jews remain in Hillbrow today. They sold up and moved north to Orange Grove, Sydenham and Highlands North.

That move was organic, driven by personal decisions and aspirations to own better properties. But this may change with the radical possibility threatening white property owners today, as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party wants government to seize white-owned property without payment, claiming it was stolen from South Africa's original black inhabitants by white colonialists.

Last month, a motion in Parliament led by the EFF to review the Constitution to allow for land expropriation without compensation (EWC) was supported by the ANC.

Rural land in Jewish hands today is small, compared to the 1960s, when there were a multitude of Jewish farms. For example, the 48km strip between Ogies and Leslie in Mpumalanga was almost entirely Jewish farmland. Today, the effects of Jews losing properties would be felt mainly in cities.

The argument is often made that Jewish South Africans' success in this country – whether in property ownership, business or elsewhere – is not because they lived in a country that legally discriminated against blacks in favour of whites. Rather, they worked extremely hard throughout their lives and deserve what they achieved – including property they own – and they shouldn't have to pay for what colonialists did centuries ago.

Many will say Jews are inherently industrious and creative, and succeeded in whichever country they emigrated to from Eastern Europe, whatever the circumstances.

There may be some truth in that, but land is an emotive issue and it won't satisfy black people, who believe it was stolen from them. What's to be done?

President Cyril Ramaphosa says it needs careful consideration and there will be no "smash and grabs" such as in the Zimbabwean catastrophe, with rampant seizure of white farms.

The issue is complex, whether you support EWC or reject it. From whom should land be taken, and to whom should it be given?

For example, there are whites whose forebears arrived here in the 19th century and who are fifth-generation South Africans. Must they still pay for what the colonialists did, as if they are not South African?

Furthermore, to whom should land be given? Which people qualify as "original" South Africans, from whom the colonialists stole land? South African history is riddled with events where one group took land from another. Perhaps the only genuinely original inhabitants were the San – the so-called Bushmen, who are virtually extinct today?

What no one can dispute is the need for major land reform. In a country with a majority black population, ownership of most land by whites is both immoral and a recipe for disaster.

What does this have to do with Hillbrow?

The area is still a metaphor for the country, a reservoir of pulsating energy bordered by land largely owned or controlled by the privileged. Imagine if the pent-up energy crammed into those few blocks was released into bringing life to new places.

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

Why is this marathon different from all others?



Aliya – the good, the bad and the meshuga

Benita Levin

I've had the pleasure of watching many marathons in different parts of the world. To be clear, in most cases I've attended as a spectator or "cheerleader", egging on runners along the route, especially my husband and twin sister.

Their respective "fun" races over the years have taken us from South Africa's premier long-distance race, the gruelling 89km Comrades marathon in KwaZulu-Natal, to the scenic Two Oceans marathon in Cape Town and the more recent Tiberius marathon along the beautiful Lake Kineret in the north of Israel.

Many years ago, as a young radio news reporter, I even covered the Comrades race from a hot air "blimp". I get goosebumps just thinking of the sight of thousands of runners from above – people of all ages tackling the famous KwaZulu-Natal Midlands hills within the 12-hour deadline.

Why, then, is the Jerusalem Marathon so special? Was it because our son took on the 10km race for the first time, with his dad? Of course, that's a moving sight for any proud mom, but it wasn't just that. Was it the sight of 35 000 athletes from all over the world taking on the hilly course through parts of the Old City of Jerusalem, passing a range of historic landmarks on a route through 3 000 years of history? True, that is an incredible sight, but we've had the pleasure of coming to the marathon before. So, why does this year feel different?

A running warrior's survivor goal

The first reason that this year's Jerusalem Marathon – which took place on March 9 – was so special, was being able to witness the strength and determination shown by the inspiring South African cancer warrior, Brenda Stern. A year ago, while undergoing chemotherapy, Brenda made a deal with a friend that she was going to "kick cancer's butt" and compete in the 10km race at the Jerusalem Marathon. She called her first ever 10km race her "survivor goal".

Brenda joined a large contingent of runners from South Africa, who took on the race on behalf of the DL Link to raise money for cancer patients. DL Link is a Johannesburg-based organisation offering support to cancer patients and their families through effective programmes, activities and services.

Brenda finished her treatment on December 1 and started training for the race in January. She had never run a race before!

Each athlete ran in a shirt with the name of a member of the organisation, in the same way that one of the South African runners at last year's race ran with the name 'Brenda' on his shirt. With the motto, "When your legs can't run anymore, run with your heart", these runners in red could be spotted all along the route.

Brenda's achievement was particularly close to home for all who know her. She exudes positive energy and "koach" (strength). She is a real-life Wonder Woman.

Through the eyes of Olim Chadashim

The second reason that this year's marathon was so different from all others, is the fact that we were experiencing it for the first time as Olim Chadashim (new immigrants). In previous years, we'd taken part as tourists, keen to get a shwarma at a popular spot nearby as soon as the race was over!

This time, we felt like hosts of sorts, able to welcome and cheer along all the athletes, feel proud of the winners from Kenya and cheer on the scores of runners seen pushing friends in wheelchairs up the hills of the Old City.

We got to share stories with a South African family who are in the country for a one-year experience or adventure, and watch scores of runners from all over the globe take on a tough race in the name of a charity or cause that means the world to them.

And that feels like something new, unique and memorable.

Smile of the week

Driving into Jerusalem ahead of the marathon and seeing flags from all over the world lining the streets. Watching our children cheer when they spotted the South African colours.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

The senseless tactic of defacing rather than debating

On Tuesday, accompanied by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies' national vice-president, Zev Krengel, and national director Wendy Kahn, I had the opportunity of meeting newly appointed ANC secretary-general Ace Magashule for the first time.

The primary focus of the discussion was the recent spate of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories emanating from certain members of the ANC in the Western Cape. Mr Magashule reiterated his party's unequivocal repudiation of any form of racism, including anti-Semitism, and undertook to take appropriate steps to address this issue.

The discussion was an encouraging step forward in placing our relationship with the ruling party on the kind of cordial, constructive basis that existed in the past. With the South African political situation now beginning to settle after a long period of instability, we will hopefully be able to build on this going forward.

At the time of writing, the campaign by the SA Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) in response to Israel Apartheid Week (IAW) is well under way at the universities of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and Cape Town (UCT). Organised under the slogan "Dialogue not Division", the campaign emphasises the values of engagement and education, in contrast with the boycott and demonisation approach used by the other side.

At Wits University, there is an excellent spirit amongst SAUJS students and the many Christian supporters of Israel who have joined them.

Once again, Israeli students from the international advocacy organisation StandWithUs are bringing an additional dimension of passion and energy. Backing all this up is a well thought-out and punchy social media campaign.

This year, the university has made the sensible decision to move IAW and the SAUJS counter-campaign to the West Campus. It has also allocated distinct spaces for the two parties to operate. This, along with the excellent campus security that is in place, has reduced the potential for confrontation.

Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) members attempted to shout down the SAUJS guest speaker Ishmael Khaldi, but signally failed to do so. They had, of course, no answer to Mr

Khaldi's observation that as a Bedouin of the Muslim faith, he would be unable to be a professional Israeli diplomat if Israel really was an apartheid state.

A similar message will have been sent by the fact that a second visiting speaker, former Miss Israel Yityish Titi Aynaw, hails from Israel's large Ethiopian community.



Above Board
Shaun Zagnoev

SAUJS's third guest is Syrian political activist Issam Zeitoun, who has spoken about the sobering realities of the ongoing tragedy in his own country, while drawing attention to the little-known and virtually unpublicised humanitarian aid that Israel is providing to those caught up in it.

All three of the visiting speakers have been interviewed in the media, while Mr Zeitoun has also met with local refugee groups and spoken to students at Wits University's African Centre for Migration and Society.

At UCT, IAW proponents resorted to their usual dirty tricks by prominently displaying an Israeli flag defaced with inflammatory slogans. It transpired that the flag was the one stolen from the SA Zionist Federation at last year's Yom Ha'atzmaut event.

Likewise at Wits, the PSC, perhaps frustrated by how things are failing to follow its prepared script, resorted to daubing obscene graffiti on various parts of the campus. By choosing to "deface instead of debate", its members have neither convinced any reasonable student about the validity of their cause nor endeared themselves to the Wits administration.

We are proud that our own students, despite being subjected to acts of real provocation, have never engaged in similar such crude acts of hooliganism. The board is in constant consultation with SAUJS, providing logistical assistance and advice whenever required.

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

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KDVP debater joins Team SA in world challenge

Gabriel Brouard-Ancer, a Grade 11 pupil at King David Victory Park High School, has been selected as part of Team South Africa to represent the country at the World Schools Debating Championships in Croatia in July. This is the highest honour that a secondary school debater can achieve in South Africa, and places Gabriel within the top four or five debaters in the country.

Gabriel was selected for the World Trials Squad after his fine performance at the South African National Debating Championships in December, when he represented Gauteng.

Since January, he has participated in a rigorous and sustained programme of squad practices, which has also required of him to go through large files of research on the most obscure of possible debate topics. To get to this level, debaters have to be extraordinarily committed and willing to sacrifice other aspects of their lives.

We have been told that Gabriel “performed superbly at the trials and that the selectors were all extremely impressed with him”.

Since Grade 8, Gabriel has consistently represented King David Victory Park with dignity and skill. The school is enormously proud of him and wishes him much happiness and fulfilment as he and his fellow team members prepare for the championships.



Gabriel Brouard-Ancer

Friday (March 16)

- UZLC hosts Isaac Reznik on “Exodus”. Time: 12:45 to 14:00. Venue: Our Parents Home. Contact: Gloria on 072 127 9421.
- Lodge Golan of the Hebrew Order of David International will be collecting Pesach food items for needy community members at Checkers in Sea Point. Contact: Con Travers on 084 831 9509.

Sunday (March 18)

- Second Innings hosts Lawrence and Debbi Joffe and Tony Bentel, who will perform “A Potpourri of Delightful Songs and Music”. Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting at 10:30. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres, 85 George Avenue, Sandringham. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors includes tea and light refreshments. Contact: Linda Fleishman on 011 532 9701.
- JHGC hosts an afternoon of Yiddish music and song with Russel Lurie, Evelyn Green, Leigh Nudelman and Helen Heldenmuth. Time: 15:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. RSVP to Shirley on 011 640 3100. Free admission, donations welcome.

Monday (March 19)

- UJW hosts Janet Cade, a former teacher involved with the new blockchain technology, on “Bitcoin and its potential role in our daily lives”. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office on 011 648 1053.

Thursday (March 22)

- Second Innings outings and special events is organising a vehicle drive and guided tour of the Lion and Safari Park. Time: Bus departs at 09:00. Where: Meet the bus at Golden Acres. Cost: R240 includes the bus, entrance to the park and a fully guided tour in a game-viewing vehicle. Contact: Betty Kowal on 072 316 4394 or Fanny Baumann 083 470 2644.
- JWBS hosts Mashi Rose, an internationally qualified graphologist (handwriting expert) with many years of experience, on what your handwriting says about you. Time: 19:30 at Franjelicas. Price: R180. Contact: 011 485 5232 or 083 441 7287 or email gloria@jwbs.co.za.



Torah Academy celebrates its new admin block

Mark and Andy Stein unveiled a plaque dedicated to their parents in the new administration block at Torah Academy Nursery School last week. They sponsored the new building, named for the late Lazar and Lakie Stein, and Norman Kramer. Anita Kramer was there with them. So were the Steins' granddaughters Saralle Bronstein and Clara Stein, who are pupils at Torah Academy.

Rabbi Levi Lipskar, director of growth and development at Torah Academy, said it was an important milestone for the entire school. His father, Rabbi Mendel Lipskar, head of the Lubavitch Foundation of SA and chairperson of the education committee said because of the Steins' generosity, the newly built administration block served as the springboard for more children to enter its system.

Comparing this event to commemorating the building of the mishkan in the desert, Lipskar said: “What can be more important than building a house for G-d? However, a precedent to building a mishkan is a place for educators and study.”

Rabbi Dovid Hazdan, the dean of Torah Academy; Rabbi Alex Carlebach and Rabbi Michael Katz all paid tribute to the Steins' benevolence.

Mark Stein affixes a mezuzah to the new administration block of Torah Academy Nursery School. Looking on are their granddaughters Saralle Bronstein and Clara Stein.



King David Linksfield dancers shine on stage

TALYA DAVIS GRADE 11

Wednesday, February 21 marked the night of King David Linksfield High School's annual dance awards, held at the school.

The talented troupe of dancers couldn't wait to wow the audience with their graceful, practised moves.

What followed was a superb evening of solos, duets, trios and groups of pupils performing a variety of dance styles. From ballet both traditional and contemporary to hip hop, jazz and tap, dance in all its thrilling variation was showcased.

The passion, energy and skill required to execute one number after the next was evident for all to see. The audience was generous in its applause and appreciation of the outstanding ability displayed by the dancers. As one of the judges said: “It isn't often that a school has an evening dedicated to its determined and unique dancers. For them, it was indeed a dream come true.”

On the panel of judges were Alice Kok, Bailey Snyman, Jacqui Kumin and Isabelle de

Kayla Cohen dances a contemporary piece

Fouw, all of whom are active in the South African performing arts industry.

The winners received trophies, medals and fabulous prizes, which included a dancer's photo shoot with well-known photographer and filmmaker Lauge Sorensen; a Mooyee wireless and app-controlled massage machine; and a voucher for a pair of sunglasses valued at R1 000.



Letters

IT'S A STORMY SEASON FOR SA JEWRY

I refer to your March 2 issue, in particular the features dealing with anti-Semitism and the demise of Stan & Pete Caterers.

Over the years, the South African Jewish community has weathered many storms and faced various instances of criticism. It has reacted with outrage when the cause has demanded this.

Some of the criticism currently being directed at the community has been laced with anti-Semitic vitriol. Some politicians seem to apply this from time to time as part of their efforts to score “brownie points” for their constituents. A case in point is the recent outburst from MPL in the Western Cape by Sharon Davids, as well as comments by Cabinet members such as Naledi Pandor. Hate speech in all its guises is still hate speech and is not to be tolerated. And then there are the storms that rage within

our community. These are worsened by distrust and disappointment. Take the revoking of Stan & Pete's kosher licence, which shocked us all. But when we read so-called confessions on social media by mashgichim in the Beth Din about their treatment and what really goes on behind the scenes, this opens the proverbial can of worms.

Can we, as a community, trust the kosher rulings made by the Beth Din now? All this coming to the fore on the eve of Pesach is worrying. It's all well and good to introduce forensic audits and standard operating procedures now – why weren't these implemented years ago?

The onus lies on the Beth Din to earn back the trust of the community.

**Albert Glass
Cape Town**

DRINKING AT THE KIDDUSH/BROCHA

In reference to your article about overspending on bar and bat mitzvahs (February 16 issue), there is a related issue that needs to be addressed – the drinking that takes place after shul.

For a good few weeks, we went to a shul in Sandton. What disturbed us was seeing a group of adults who sit drinking after the kiddush/brocha until they are practically drunk. This all takes place while there is a shiur happening in the shul.

We heard that prominent members of the shul had raised this issue on a regular basis many years ago, but no action was taken. This is an issue in a few other shuls, too.

It is surely inappropriate and unhealthy for a community to be advocating such behaviour. We would hope that the rabbis of these communities make the changes that are required.

**Jon and Jodi Kaplan
Johannesburg**

Launching Sunday 18 March at Sinai Indaba Cape Town



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Jerusalem marks its largest-ever marathon

JESSICA STEINBERG AND TOI STAFF

More than 35 000 runners, including 4 000 from 72 different countries, partook in the Jerusalem Marathon on Friday morning. It marked the largest-ever number of runners signing up for the annual event.

The winner was announced shortly after 09:30: Kipkoge Shadrack, 27, from Kenya. Shadrack, the reigning champion, finished the race in 2:21.26. The second and third slots also went to African runners: Wendwesen Tilahun Damte from Ethiopia and Ronald Kimeli Kurgat from Kenya.

Emily Chepkemoi Samoei took her second straight win among the women. Samoei led a sweep of the top three spots by Kenyan women with a time of 2:52:33, followed by Mercy Jelimo and Naomi Jepngetich.

The half-marathon race kicked off at 06:45, followed by the full marathon at 07:00. The 10km race began at 09:30.

The guest of honour at the marathon was Olympic medallist and long-distance running world champion Haile Gebrselassie from Ethiopia. Gebrselassie

holds two Olympic gold medals in the 10 000 metres and four world titles for the same distance, and he was the first in the world to break the 2:04 time for the marathon run.

International runners came from

72 countries, including China, the US, Germany, Poland, Portugal and Lithuania. Hong Kong sent the greatest number of runners from outside Israel, followed by Los Angeles, Beijing and London.

The route started next to the Knesset and

took the runners past the Mahane Yehuda market, Mount Scopus, the Old City, David's Tower and the Haas Promenade.

This year, the municipality connected marathon participants from abroad and throughout Israel by launching the "guest runner" project, wherein Jerusalemites host tourist runners in their homes.

But, perhaps befitting an event that marks 50 years since the reunification of the city, the vast majority of runners in the full, 42.2km marathon are Jerusalemites, the Jerusalem municipality said.

They were followed by runners from Haifa and then by runners from Modiin, Tel Aviv and Kfar Saba.

Many Jerusalem streets were closed from 05:30 and scheduled to reopen at 14:30, as runners participated in one of six courses: the full or half marathons; a 10km race; a 5km race; a family race (1.7km); and a community race (800m) for people with special needs.

The average age of runners running the full course was 43, while the average age of those running the 10km was 32. There were slightly more male runners than women, at 57% to 43%, the city said.

Thousands of runners take part in the international Jerusalem Marathon on March 9



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2018

Each year, the SA Jewish Report hosts the annual Absa Jewish Achiever Awards gala banquet (please see our website www.sajr.co.za, Facebook and YouTube for details).

Proposals are requested from experienced event management companies to manage the entire process for this event as a turnkey supplier. This will include – but not be limited to – project management, budget compilation and management, liaison and management of all suppliers, liaison and management of nominations, communications, document collation, judging and managing the gala awards dinner itself, including caterers, venue, AV, technical support, stage management, entertainment, MC, décor, seating, etc.

This is a highly skilled, technical and administratively intense process. Great attention to detail is required.

The committee that oversees the event is open to all forms of innovation and uniqueness within a fairly tight budget.

All proceeds from the event go to fund the SA Jewish Report

Completed proposals must be e-mailed to howard@saicomvoice.co.za and must be received by no later than 12:00 on March 26 2018.

Proposals may be no longer than 10 pages and must include event management pricing.



Shortlisted companies must be available to pitch in person from 17:00 on Wednesday, March 28

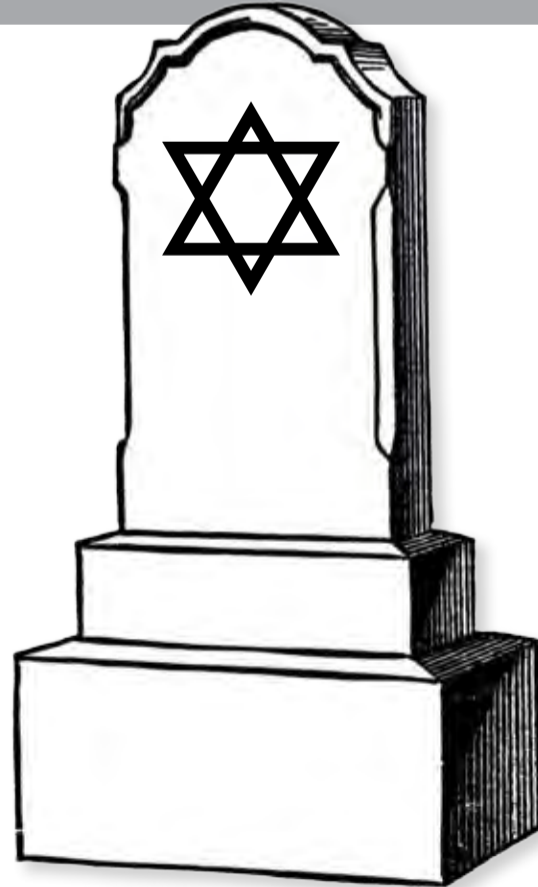
HEBREW MONUMENTS TOMBSTONES

Cantor Ian Camissar / Managing Director

We are a leading Jewish stonemason company in Cape Town – now also in Johannesburg

Due to many requests, we are delighted to announce the opening of our new branch office in Johannesburg

Gold leaf on Magen David and English name at no extra cost



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