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South African Jewish Report

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US issues veiled threat to withdraw aid to SA

NICOLA MILTZ

Dr Ali Bacher, chairman of Right To Care, one of the biggest non-profit organisations in South Africa dealing with HIV/Aids, said that if the US pulls its aid funding to South Africa, “it could be have serious negative consequences for our necessary and excellent health programmes in South Africa and Africa”.
The US has threatened to reconsider funding countries that most vote against it in the United Nations. South Africa is on the top 10 list of those countries.
Clearly, the South African government’s bias against Israel could cost it millions of dollars in crucial funding if it continues to challenge the US in UN resolutions concerning the Jewish State.
South Africa’s position on this list of nations emerged in a recently released report titled *Voting Practices in the United Nations in 2017*.

Opposing the US in its December 2017 vote to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel may prove to have dire consequences for South Africa. This was clear in the response by Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the UN, to the report.
The US provides hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to South Africa through its US Agency for International Development (USAID) programme. It provides vital funding for South African health services, particularly when it comes to HIV/Aids and tuberculosis, as well as critical funding for basic education. USAID also assists small and medium enterprises.
In 2016, USAID’s total foreign assistance to South Africa amounted to \$459.7 million (R5.8 billion).
Bacher, who has been chairman of Right To Care since 2008, says: “Our main focus is on HIV/Aids. We are big players in South Africa and in Africa. Our budget this year is R1.5 billion and most of our funding comes from the US – specifically, from USAID and the Global Fund.”
The US said it would reconsider its funding allocation to favour countries that are more in alignment with its decisions.
When Haley started her term as US ambassador to the UN in January last year, she warned that she would be “taking names” of countries that do not have “our back”. The newly

released annual US State Department report on voting records at the world body has told her exactly who is in America’s corner – and who is not.
The report found that UN member states only voted with America 31% of the time last year on resolutions at the UN General Assembly. This was down 10% from the previous year, said Haley last week, adding that it was not an “acceptable return” on the US’s investment and suggested that this could factor into aid decisions.
Haley emphasised that US taxpayers pay for 22% of the UN budget – more, she said, than the next three highest donor nations combined. Haley noted that the US cares more about “being right than popular, and we are once again standing up for our interests and values”.
However, she said: “When we arrived at the UN last year, we said we would be taking names, and this list of voting records speaks for itself.

President Trump wants to ensure that our foreign assistance dollars – the most generous in the world – always serve American interests, and we look forward to helping him see that the American people are no longer taken for granted.”
Cynthia Harvey, spokesperson for the US Embassy in South Africa, reiterated to the *SA Jewish Report* that “Ambassador Haley reminded UN member states that their voting records would be a factor in US decisions on where it will spend its foreign assistance. Voting records will be an important element – but not the sole element – considered, as future decisions are made about foreign assistance.”
Harvey also affirmed: “As the president said in his State of the Union Address, the US must “ensure that American foreign assistance dollars always serve American interests”.
According to Harvey, the Voting

Practices report is a legislatively required summary of how often other countries’ votes align with the US in the UN General Assembly.
That alignment is referred to as voting coincidence. In 2017, 93 resolutions required a vote in the UN General Assembly, and voting coincidence with the US on those resolutions amounted to 31%.
Voting coincidence varies from year to year, from highs such as 54% in 2016 to lows such as 25% in 2003, she said.
“The US has reported these coincidence rates for more than 40 years due to enduring concern about the lack of support it receives in the General Assembly. This administration has brought fresh attention to it,” she added.
The 10 countries with the highest voting coincidence with the US were Israel, Micronesia, Canada, Marshall Islands, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Palau, Ukraine and

the Czech Republic.
The 10 countries with the lowest voting coincidence with the US were Zimbabwe, Burundi, Iran, Syria, Venezuela, North Korea, Turkmenistan, Cuba, Bolivia and South Africa.
In January, the US held back \$65 million (R820 million) that had been destined for the UN relief agency for Palestinians, two weeks after President Donald Trump threatened to withhold their future payments.
State Department officials insisted that the decision was not taken to pressure Palestinian leaders, but because the US wants other countries to help pay for and reform the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).
The State Department said \$60 million (R757 million) of what had been a planned \$125 million (R1.6 billion) package would go through to keep the agency running, but the rest
Continued on page 5>>

Lighting the night sky on Lag B’Omer



Chana Kushner, Miriam Lits and Esther Kushner enjoying Shmooza Lag B’Omer at Great Park Synagogue

Photo: Ian Ossendryver

Rabbis say Jews shouldn't borrow from Quicken Loans

BEN SALES

If you're an Orthodox Jew with a mortgage from Quicken Loans, you might be in trouble.

Agudath Israel of America, a major Haredi Orthodox organisation, issued a Jewish legal ruling last month prohibiting Jews from taking out loans from the company because it is majority-owned by Jews.

Quicken Loans, which claims to be America's largest mortgage lender, also owns Rocket Mortgage, the online mortgage agency.

Jewish law, known as halacha, forbids Jews from charging interest to other Jews. So, Jews are allowed to own mortgage agencies and lend to non-Jewish customers, but they are not allowed to sell fellow Jews a 30-year fixed rate (or anything else).



Dan Gilbert at a Cleveland Cavaliers game at Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland, Ohio last year

Likewise, if you're a new Jewish homeowner, halacha says you are not allowed to take out a mortgage with a Jewish-owned company. The same also goes for other kinds of loans.

"Prominent leading halachic authorities have issued a ruling that any Jew who obtains a loan with interest from Quicken Loans, or any of its subsidiaries, is in danger of transgressing the prohibition of Ribbis D'oraisa," said the Agudath Israel ruling, using a Hebrew term for the biblical commandment against interest.

So, what do Jews do if they want to lend each other money say, in Israel, where most businesses are owned by Jews? There is a way out.

In the Middle Ages, rabbis devised a contract called a "heter iska", or business permit, that technically transforms the loan into a co-investment. Instead of being a lender and a borrower, the two parties

are now "business partners", where one supplies the capital and the other uses it as they see fit.

Agudath Israel says Jews can keep using Quicken Loans – if they sign a heter iska.

On Monday, Quicken Loans responded to a query, saying it was open to the idea.

"Over the next 30 days, Quicken Loans will assemble a committee to quickly and efficiently dive into the issue of Heter Iska, and once and for all attempt to find a solution that the observant Jewish community, as well as our legal and capital markets team, finds acceptable. I am confident that this can and will be achieved," said a statement attributed to Dan Gilbert, chairman of Rock Holdings, Quicken Loans' parent company. Gilbert also owns several sports franchises, including the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Agudath Israel is resolute on the issue: no heter iska, no Quicken Loans mortgage.

And if you're an Orthodox Jew with an existing Quicken Loans mortgage? Too bad. You need to dissolve it and start over.

"The rabbis of the conference felt an obligation to let the public know... that loans can only be taken out from the company with a valid heter iska," Agudath Israel's spokesman, Rabbi Avi Shafran, wrote in an email to JTA. "Existing loans should be dissolvable and recreated within a heter iska framework to permit them."

Rabbi Mordechai Frankel, director of the Institute of Halacha at Star-K, a kosher certification agency,

said some smaller Jewish-owned banks are familiar with using the heter iska.

"There are small banks that are Jewish-owned that do have the heter iska," he said. "If the person lives in an area with a large concentration of Orthodox people, the bank will become comfortable with the concept and become more open to it."

Frankel doesn't know whether Quicken Loans would agree to the contract. But if not, he said, there are always the big banks – which are all, as far as he knows, kosher to lend money. (JTA)

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:18	18:08	Johannesburg
17:45	18:37	Cape Town
17:01	17:52	Durban
17:21	18:12	Bloemfontein
17:16	18:08	Port Elizabeth
17:09	18:00	East London

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Torah thought of the week

Don't let sorrow derail your spiritual connection to Hashem

Emor begins with the laws of the Kohanim, the special restrictions and obligations that are placed upon them. To paraphrase Spiderman's Uncle Ben: "With great holiness comes great responsibility" – although our Sages point out that it is, in fact, the responsibility that creates the holiness, not simply reflecting it.

Thus, when we perform a mitzvah, we begin with a bracha, a contemplative meditation on the nature of the act that we are about to perform. "Baruch Atta Hashem... Blessed are You, Hashem... who has made us holy through His commandments..."

When a Kohein is preparing to fulfil one of his unique mitzvot, however, such as Birkat Kohanim ("duchaning", in which the Kohein blesses the Jewish people), he acknowledges the greater level of holiness in his blessing: "who had made us holy with the holiness of Aharon..." – referring to a saturation of holiness even more than that with which the

rest of the nation was blessed.

When our Parsha opens the discussion with the Kohanim regarding the stricter observance that they will be expected to follow, it takes off from an unexpected place. Vayikra/Leviticus 21:1 states: "G-d told Moshe to gently say the following to Aharon's descendants, the priests: Let none make himself impure with the dead among his people..."

I would have expected that the Kohanim first be "romanced" into the role, similar to what we find in Hashem's proposal to the Jewish people to receive the Torah in Shemot/Exodus 19:6-7:

"Now if you obey Me and keep My covenant, you shall be My special treasure among all nations, even though all the world is Mine. You will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to Me."

For the Kohanim, in contrast, they are simply instructed not to become impure through contact with the deceased.

The Ishbitzer Rebbe, Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Leiner, offers a deeper level of insight into the communication that takes place. Greater holiness, he says, greater devotion to G-d and a closer relationship with the Almighty presents us not only with spiritual enrichment and integrity, but also with a profound vulnerability.

If a person would have no relationship with G-d, and would see all of life as coincidence, then he may not be so personally affected by tragedy. After all, he says to himself, life is random and sometimes bad things happen. But the profoundly religious person, whose consciousness is focused around his or her relationship with Hashem, may well ask: "Why me? How, Hashem, after all that I have done, all the prayers that I have uttered, can You do this to me?" Life, and all that is within it, becomes more personal, and thus sadness and difficulty can injure our spiritual relationship.

It is to that danger that the Parsha speaks. Gently approach the holy ones of the nation with the following message: When you encounter death and its concomitant tragedy and sorrow, do not let it make you impure. Do not allow yourself to feel betrayed by G-d and derailed from your spiritual path. To those who have made great achievements in faith: Keep the faith.



Rabbi Sam Thurgood, Beit Midrash Morasha @ Arthurs Road

Land grabs – should we be worried?

TALI FEINBERG

When marauding crowds attempted to settle illegally on tracts of unused but privately owned property from Sandton to Midrand in March, it brought home the reality that attempted land grabs are likely to continue. They may escalate to people settling illegally on private property or even claiming homes in residential areas.

In Olievenhoutbosch, near Midrand, people who invaded land identified themselves as “backyard dwellers”. They demarcated areas with tape and began weeding out tall grass with spades and machetes on the vacant, privately owned land along the R55 road. They said they were given permission to occupy the land by Peter Seolela, chairperson of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in the area.

On March 24, large crowds gathered near the KFC on Marlboro Drive to fill out forms that they hoped would give them claim to the land.

Another group, calling itself “The Landless People’s Power”, occupied a piece of land in Midrand, north of Johannesburg, and began erecting structures there in the early hours of the morning.

The EFF’s provincial chairperson in Gauteng, Mandisa Mashego, proudly claimed that these actions were organised by the EFF. “We revere and honour it as our pillar of strength and bedrock of all our other policy statements that, if pursued vigorously and fearlessly, economic freedom in our lifetime will become real,” she said.

President Cyril Ramaphosa responded to the spate of land grabs by saying that no person can illegally occupy private land, as it was a clear violation of the country’s laws. He warned that those who are doing so will face the full might of the law.

However, this does not assuage public fears that land grabs, land claims and illegal occupations will not escalate. “Land expropriation is creating huge expectations among the general ‘disadvantaged’ population that cannot be met,” says Paul Wisenberg, a partner in Maurice Phillips Wisenberg Attorneys, Notaries and Conveyancers, who has extensive experience in property-related disputes. “That is dangerous,

as we see the many land invasions that are now taking place. There is so much confusion surrounding this issue and it is having a definite negative effect on property values at the moment.

“The uncertainty is a cause for concern,” he continues.

However, he believes that “unused land and state land will be the first in line. I don’t believe that owners will be happy to let their land go without compensation, so expect many court cases. However the process pans out, I expect it to take a very long time. I don’t believe that primary residences are in the firing line.”

There is the possibility that someone may come to your door and claim that this is their home or property, or settle on your land. In this case, Wisenberg advises that all owners have strict property rights and if someone illegally settles on your land, you must ensure that they are removed by reporting this to the relevant local authority within 24 hours to ensure the invaders do not enjoy squatter rights, which would then involve the courts to evict them.

“If someone comes to your door as suggested, I would recommend you advise them to go through the legal channels and lodge a claim, and if they persist, then call the police.”

He adds that there is a remote risk of a land claim being submitted, but this will have to be supported by proof that the land was owned by the claimant’s family. “This is a long, laborious process and if successful, will be linked to market-related compensation. I say it is remote as the claim has not yet been submitted; it is unlikely to happen at this time.”

The movement towards affordable housing could also change the dynamic around property ownership, says Wisenberg.

“The phrase ‘affordable housing’ is used quite liberally, but as far as I am aware, it has not yet been defined. However, if low-cost housing is erected side by side to upmarket properties, I would suggest that this will impact on the values of such properties negatively.

“I believe that this movement is a greater risk than land claims,” says Wisenberg.

Meanwhile, in Harfield Village, Cape Town, the community’s website



Residents claiming land, demarcated with sticks, near Nellmapius township, near Pretoria

states that many Cape Town suburbs, including properties in Harfield Village, are the subject matter of land claims. “One cannot predict the future and guess whether or not your current property in Harfield Village will become subject to such a claim; or if standing in the shoes of a purchaser, whether the home you are so interested in buying, may shortly become the subject of such a claim.

“As such, parties who are concerned should obtain legal advice regarding the likelihood and impact of such a claim,” advises the site.

“Accordingly, it is vitally important that you, as a buyer, take the necessary precautions to ensure that sufficient guarantees and warranties are provided by the seller in terms of the purchase agreement.”

Leila Emdon, who lives in Harfield Village, says a family who lived in her home was forcibly removed during apartheid, and she feels distressed and conflicted that she now lives

there. She is even considering putting up a plaque outside her home to honour the family who were forcibly evicted.

“My neighbour once saw a car stop outside her house and a family pointed and smiled from their car. When she asked them about it, they said they used to live there and are just remembering,” she says.

As someone who has taken it upon herself to research the topic, Emdon adds: “Many houses are on stolen land and with a dark history, and it’s something everyone should be aware of and sensitive to. The ANC has largely failed to successfully implement land reform in post-apartheid South Africa. The Constitution makes provision for a successful and ethical process – it doesn’t need to be changed.

“The ANC are getting behind expropriation without compensation because their failure

to adequately address the land issue is coming to a head.”

Meanwhile, the City of Cape Town has also seen land claimants choosing to be compensated and allowing their land to be redeveloped. Last year, the Western Cape High Court approved a multimillion-rand development on land restitution site Tramway Road in Sea Point, sold by its claimants.

The Tramway Road Trust sold the property in 2014 after receiving it for free from the City of Cape Town in 2001. It’s a site where coloured families were forcibly removed during apartheid, but the elderly claimants sold the land after they were unable to develop the properties themselves.

In April last year, property developer Mike Flax told Eyewitness News: “What saved the original complainants was the rise and uptick in the land values in the area. Not only did they get out of debt, but they also left with about R2 million per family.”

JAWITZ

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ON SHOW THIS SUNDAY

Morningside - R8.499 Million

Cluster. Truly decadent. Through the private entrance, the high ceilings and expansive spaces allow the social areas to be bathed in light. The interiors play with layers and textures, comfortable and chic and the whimsical chandeliers allow an interplay with the modern and fabulous feel. Web Ref: 130652

Directions: Rivonia into Centre, follow pointers.

Norma 082 554 7260 | Romaine 082 685 5177

ON SHOW THIS SUNDAY

Oaklands - R5.750 Million

20 Currie Street. A grand olde dame of a house on a large stand of approx 3300sqm that is attractively sub-divisible. Keep the house as it is, renovate a little, renovate a lot. Offering 3 big receptions, study, sunroom, kitchen/scullery & 2 guest cloaks, downstairs with 4 bedrooms (mes) & 2nd bath, upstairs, Tennis court, pool, lapa, covered patio, staff, double garage. Web Ref: 130136

Directions: East down African St, right into Currie Street.

Chrissie Hammer 082 568 0440 | 011 880 3550

ON SHOW THIS SUNDAY

St Andrews - Inviting buyers from R2.990 Million

Farrargate. Safe, secure and sought after lifestyle. 24/7 security. 3 Open plan receptions and modern kitchen with separate pantry and scullery. Patio area with small maintained garden. Upstairs boasts 3/4 large beds/Pyjama lounge. BIC's throughout. 2 baths (mes). Guest loo. Double electric garage with BIC. A quick walk to Saheti and St Andrews Schools. Easy access to main highways. A hop skip and jump to the shops. Web Ref: 127331

Directions: Follow Jawitz pointers from Civin Dr, into St Francis Rd.

Laureen Shalpid 083 789 0229 | 011 622 1820

ON SHOW THIS SUNDAY

Glenhazel - Inviting buyers from R2.599 Million

Long Ave. Calling all big families looking for space. This spacious home will be a haven for a growing family. Inviting entrance, spacious dining room, lounge and fitted playroom, lots of storage space for childrens toys, sports and pool equipment. 4 Beds, study, 2 baths (mes) with dressing room, guest loo, well fitted kitchen, scullery and pantry. Secure off street parking, 2 outside rooms. Position, security, pool and garden. Asking more. Web Ref: 130871

Directions: Northfield into Long Ave.

Joel Harris 082 926 0287 | Marco 082 048 2644

When a journalist becomes the news

ILANIT CHERNICK
ISRAEL

For years I’ve covered conflict situations. It’s never something I’ve feared. At *The Star*, I was known as “Bang Bang Betty” or “Burnick”. People called me brave. Some thought my bravery was mildly stupid; others respected it.

I’ve been caught up in the middle of riots, shootouts, taxi violence and any crazy South African situation you can think of – all for the sake of news.

I’ve been hit with tear gas and rubber bullets, had Molotov cocktails and glass thrown at me. I was even hit in the head with a rock during last year’s housing protests just prior to making aliya from South Africa.

I even went chasing the storm during last year’s Tropical Storm Dineo, which hit Mozambique in February 2017.

But my editor, Kevin Ritchie, always said: “A story is never worth your life.”

My life as a reporter has always been about finding the action, being in the middle of it, and getting the best and most accurate story possible, even if it meant risking my life – to my parents’ horror.

But nothing prepared me for the moment when the action found me – and I wasn’t expecting it. It was the moment when I, the journalist, became the news.

Nothing prepared me for the screaming or the sound of a gunshot that pierced the air as I ran for my life. Nothing prepared me for the moment I realised my entire body was shaking and I was crying uncontrollably on the bus, trying to tell my Israeli family what had happened before making the dreaded call to my mom.

When you know what you’re in for, your mind prepares itself. You’re aware that you might get hurt or that you’ll be directly in harm’s way. So, when it happens, it’s a big deal but you’re able to handle it in a calm and logical fashion. I’ve always been able to get up, stay calm and keep moving forward in the face of danger.

But on Sunday morning, that all changed. I got ready for my 13:00 shift at work as normal. By 12:30, I realised I’d lost my bus card, or rav kav. I searched frantically, turning over the entire house to find it, to no avail.

My roommate and a friend suggested I go to Hadar Mall, which is diagonally across the road from my apartment block in Jerusalem, and get a new one. This would save me the trouble of getting to work too late, so I did.

Afterwards, I got an iced coffee and walked out into the brilliant sunshine.

It was almost like a chorus line. Someone screamed “Pigua!” which means “terrorist attack”. This was followed by others shouting it too – and the pandemonium began. People started running in every direction, screaming and ducking behind any kind of cover they could find. We didn’t know if the “terrorist” (who turned out to be a criminal) had a gun or a knife or a bomb.

No one knew anything.

My adrenaline kicked in and I joined the crowd, tumultuously escaping from the direction of where the attack was taking place. I ran for



Molotov cocktails explode behind Ilanit Chernick while covering a protest in Davidsonville, Roodepoort, last year

my life, my iced coffee slipping from my hand and crashing to the floor as the panic and realisation hit.

When you cover such scenes or you watch the videos of terrorist attacks, you divorce yourself from the situation emotionally in a bid to cover

the story logically.

But here, I didn’t go into journalist mode because at that moment, I was a civilian and like all those around me, I went straight into survival mode.

I ran. I ducked as I heard the gunshot. A collective gasp emerged

from the crowd as the bang reached our ears. The ringing that comes after – that still hasn’t left.

I saw a bus coming and just dove on to it. Commuters had no clue what had just happened. It was normal. People were talking and laughing,

And then it went quiet as the news spread on the bus and the driver hurriedly pulled off.

The last view I had of the scene was police cars rushing to the area. I heard an ambulance as well.

Minutes later, I realised I was shaking. I phoned my family in Modi’in, my voice quivering, hardly able to get the words out. I realised my face was wet as tears started streaming down.

I didn’t want to call my mom. I knew she’d want to get on the next plane here to hug me, to comfort me. My family called her first and when she called me, I could hear the fear in her voice.

I arrived at work and cried. A colleague ran to get me water. My tough-girl act shattered as I realised the fragility of my life – the reality that many Israelis face daily.

The punchline to this sick joke: An hour after the incident, my old rav kav was found – someone posted a picture of it on the Secret Jerusalem Facebook page.

The fact that this turned out to be a criminal incident instead of a terrorist attack doesn’t make the situation any less traumatic. A man was running around brandishing a knife, an off-duty officer pulled out his gun and pulled that trigger – anyone who got caught in the way could’ve been hurt, or worse, killed. People still got injured, no matter which way you look at it.

For us, the “victims”, this may not have been a terrorist attack. But in those few minutes of chaos, it sure felt like one.

South Africans have rights so many other African countries don’t

DAVID SAKS

South Africans take it for granted that they have an inalienable right to freedom of religious belief and practice, which – if necessary – can be legally enforced. This was one of the take home wake up calls Chaya Singer, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies’ lobbyist in Parliament, got when she attended an international programme to promote inter-religious dialogue in Nigeria recently.

It was “a culture shock and a never-to-be-forgotten learning experience,” said Singer.

Singer was one of 21 delegates from nine African countries who participated in the workshop, which was held in Nigeria’s capital, Abuja, from April 12 to 22. The participating countries were South Africa, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, Zimbabwe, Chad, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana and Uganda.

The programme took place under the auspices of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID). A joint learning initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as of Spain and Austria, KAICIID was launched in 2012 as an inter-governmental organisation to promote inter-religious dialogue and to prevent and resolve conflict.

Singer said that it had been fascinating to learn, from what she saw in Nigeria and through interactions with her fellow delegates, how strikingly South Africa differed from many other African countries when it came to issues such as religious freedom and gender equality.

South Africans, she realised, also live in a society whose laws not only recognise, but actively promote, gender equality – allowing women as a

matter of course to aspire to senior positions of leadership. In contrast, the position of different faith communities in other African countries is considerably more precarious, and women find few opportunities for advancement.

Another notable difference singled out by Singer is that the racially charged nature of politics in South Africa is absent in the political life of the other countries represented, given how few whites live there.

Singer was the only white participant on the programme, and for many of her fellow delegates, it was the first time they had met anyone of the Jewish faith.

The KAICIID initiative was not unaffected by the prevailing religious and political tensions in Abuja. A scheduled visit to the various important religious sites around the city, which

had been regarded as a critical component of the programme, had to be cancelled because of clashes between local Shi’ite groups and police.

This, together with two other separate incidents – an invasion of Parliament by protesting youths and the kidnapping of a German national in the northern part of the country – further heightened security concerns, resulting in delegates being advised not to leave their hotel.

One of the proposed initiatives discussed during the programme was that a loose network of legislators with an interest in inter-faith dialogue be established within the African Union Parliament. The aim of such a body would be to educate legislators on the value of inter-religious dialogue and encourage and assist them in conducting such events in their constituencies.



Chaya Singer with delegates at KAICIID

Die Antwoord to play in Israel despite calls for boycott

TALI FEINBERG

South African music duo Die Antwoord announced last Monday that they will perform a concert in Rishon LeZion in August, at the same venue where they performed in 2016.

The announcement comes soon after the ANC called for a cultural boycott of Israel, after expressing disappointment at the recent performance in Israel by DJ Nkosiinathi Maphumulo, popularly known as Black Coffee.

“We call on all artists to have an appreciation of the role played by the international anti-apartheid solidarity movement in the successful international isolation of apartheid South Africa,” said Lindiwe Zulu, the chairperson of the ANC’s international relations committee, after Black Coffee’s performance.

“The people of Palestine are in a just cause for self-determination and we urge our artists not to form part of the normalisation of Israel’s suppression of the Palestinian people in their quest for self-determination and statehood that

mirrors our very own struggle. “The South African artistic

continue to pledge solidarity with others who are oppressed,” added Zulu.

In response, Black Coffee tweeted: “Like everyone else I have rights and free will and no, Black Coffee is not a political party... I work as an entertainer to feed my family. To sum it up... I’ll take a bullet for my family.”

The media in general and people on Twitter expressed anger at Die Antwoord’s upcoming performance. Sabelo Mkhabela of the website OkayAfrica wrote: “For Die Antwoord to go ahead and perform in Israel is insensitive. Not that it’s unexpected from a crew that has thrived off of appropriation of Cape Coloured culture and has been defensive when called out.”

And on Twitter, one user wrote: “I hope the ANC govt will have balls of steel to confront this White Coffees like they did with

Black Coffee.” Another wrote: “@DieAntwoord will go perform in Apartheid Israel for the second time in two years. Both of them are old enough to know what apartheid was like in South Africa.”

Yet the performers seem unperturbed. During their 2016 concert, band member Ninja said in colourful language that he did not care what the rest of the world thought – he was there to perform music for Israelis and is an “African brother” to Israelis.

“We call on all artists to have an appreciation of the role played by the international anti-apartheid solidarity movement in the successful international isolation of apartheid South Africa,”

Jason Borland, who made aliyah from Cape Town two years ago, says: “Let’s be honest here, no Israeli actually understands what Die Antwoord are saying in their songs.” However, he thinks Israelis like their music because “they are curious about the ‘gangsta’ image they put out and the tone and key of band members Ninja and Yolandi’s voices”.

He is a huge fan. “I have been a

fan of Ninja’s work from when he was still rocking as ‘Maxnormal.tv’ with The Real Estate Agents, which to this day is some of the greatest underground hip hop to come out of South Africa,” says Borland.

“I was extremely lucky enough to meet and hang with Ninja a few years back. He explained what his vision is and where he sees his group going in the future. He is extremely hard-working and it’s great that they are focusing on touring the world instead of trying to fill Orlando Stadium.”

He adds that Black Coffee has a huge following in Israel and is also headlining festivals there every year. “In my opinion, he is bigger here than Die Antwoord!”

Borland concludes: “As a fellow South African musician, I am very proud of how Die Antwoord has put our music scene on the world map and I will continue to support them and will definitely be at their upcoming concert waving my SA flag high!”

Israeli Omri Liav adds that while he is a fan, a lot of his friends have not heard of Die Antwoord. “For the Israelis who do know and like them, I can assume it’s because of their ‘Zef’ culture, their passion to create and behaving the way their values dictate. For example, when Ninja told the crowd at their 2016 concert ‘F**k the boycott’, it wasn’t because of their Zionism, it was because of Die Antwoord’s non-conformism.”



Photo: Jason Borland

A poster advertising Die Antwoord's upcoming concert in Israel

community, having themselves experienced discrimination and oppression, must therefore

Denmark is split over banning circumcision

CNAAN LIPSHIZ

An impending vote in the Danish Parliament on the non-medical circumcision of boys risks splitting the country’s ruling party.

The internal conflict is over an online petition, posted in February, calling for a ban on the practice. The petition has reached 92% of its authors’ goal: to collect 50 000 co-signatories by August. In the likely event of reaching that number in time, the petition will become a draft resolution for Parliamentary vote.

Last month, Defence Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen of the ruling Venstre centrist party said his party would vote against the draft resolution, the *Berlingske* newspaper reported. But several members say they would break party discipline and vote in favour of the resolution, the report said. If they leave the party over the issue, it could jeopardise the coalition.

Across Europe, the Jewish and Muslim customs of non-medical circumcision of boys are under attack by liberals, who say it is a violation of children’s rights, and by nationalists, who argue that it is foreign to European culture.

In addition to Venstre, the Liberal Party and the Conservative People’s Party have also said they would oppose the draft resolution based on the

petition, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, told JTA on Tuesday. But the two additional parties have said they would allow their lawmakers to vote freely on the issue, *Berlingske* reported.

Still, this is “an encouraging sign”, said Goldschmidt, who is in the Latvian capital of Riga this week with his organisation’s standing committee for discussions, including about the protection of circumcision and other religious practices in Europe.

The debate in Denmark coincides with deliberations in Iceland on a bill that was introduced this year to ban circumcision. Amid intensive lobbying by Jewish groups, a parliamentary committee last week said it is advising Parliament to scrap the bill, thus dramatically diminishing its chances of being put to a vote.

“The developments in Denmark and Iceland, as well as the lifting of temporary bans in Germany in 2012, show that education and intervention can have an impact on the debate, and I’m sure it will also if the motion is brought to a vote” in Denmark, Goldschmidt said.

The issue is “of critical importance because a ban on brit milah means the end of a Jewish community where it occurs”, added Goldschmidt, using the Hebrew word for circumcision. (JTA)

US issues veiled threat to withdraw aid to SA

>>>Continued from page 1

would be withheld for the time being. “This is not aimed at punishing anyone,” US government spokeswoman Heather Nauert told reporters in January. “The US government, and the Trump administration, believe that there should be more so-called burden-sharing to go around,” she said.

“We would like other countries – in fact, other countries that criticise the US for what they believe to be our position vis-a-vis the Palestinians – to step forward.”

The decision to withhold funds to the Palestinians followed a tweet sent by Trump on January 2, at the time when the

\$125 million (R1,6 billion) contribution was due to be paid.

“We pay the Palestinians HUNDRED OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS [sic] a year and get no appreciation or respect,” Trump wrote.

“They don’t even want to negotiate a long-overdue peace treaty with Israel,” he protested, adding: “Why should we make any of these massive future payments to them?”

Whether or not the US government withdraws aid to South Africa, this may be a wake-up call for the government to reconsider its Middle East position in encouraging peace initiatives.

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From May Day to Lag B’Omer via the Israeli-Palestinian situation

The only time I celebrated May Day, or Workers’ Day, was in Israel. This was way back in 1988 and I was with a Habonim kvutzat aliya on Kibbutz Sdot Yam. Our group had been in Israel for only a few months. We all dressed up in white and red and joined the kibbutzniks piling into buses they had hired, and sang all the way to Tel Aviv. There we joined thousands and thousands of people to march peacefully through the streets with our placards. It was an amazing event, so festive, so inclusive, uniting us all around recognising workers’ rights.

At the time, the Histadrut was hugely powerful under a Labour government. While today there are still festive May Day rallies around Israel, times have changed.

Thinking back to this wonderful memory, I am drawn to write about another far more sinister march that is going to be taking place in Cape Town in two weeks’ time.

This is a totally different kind of march, one that is destined to divide people and further drive a wedge between South Africa and Israel. It is a



protest march to Parliament in support of the Palestinians’ #GreatReturnMarch and against so-called Israel apartheid.

It is under the auspices of the ANC, among others, but the ANC is the governing party and it has thrown its might behind this protest – further pinning its anti-Israel colours to the mast.

The organisers are expecting thousands of people and have secured Metrorail seats for anyone wanting to join the march. This is part of their enticement on the social media flyers that abound.

According to Metrorail, there is nothing sinister about this as it offers a reduced-rate service to any large organisations who are transporting extensive numbers of people to events. The parastatal assured us that it is non-partisan and is being paid for the service. I guess that means that the ANC and the other organisations have lots of cash to burn to make their point against Israel.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the world, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, is making it clear that those countries who go up against them at the United Nations may find themselves without US financial aid for development.

I can’t say I blame Haley as I am not sure I would continue sending gifts of money to someone who goes against everything for which I am arguing.

South Africa gets close to \$460 million (R5.8 billion) in US aid money and uses this where vitally necessary. This money is used for good and it would hurt a lot of innocent people if the money dried up.

Some would say that the US is bribing people to side with it. Perhaps that is so. But does it have to send aid money to people who are constantly challenging its decisions? No.

In the main, the decisions that South Africa is challenging are about Israel and the Palestinians. The US makes no bones about siding with Israel, and our governing party, the ANC, has made no bones about being partisan to the Palestinians no matter what.

This makes for a very interesting situation – and I can’t quite see how it will end. And while I make no bones about not being a Donald Trump fan, I am glad that there is a certain levelling of playing fields in South Africa around this issue.

If it helps to get the South African government and ANC to have another look at the Middle East situation, it would be worth it. Perhaps it might encourage the governing party to hear what Israel has to say. Perhaps it will get those in the ANC to take off their blinkers and open their minds to the true situation – both sides – in Israel.

They are likely to always side with the Palestinians, but perhaps they will see that there are two sides to the situation and not only one right and one wrong side. Perhaps they will see that Israel is not a demon, but a nuanced country with problems, like most other countries.

They may see that Israel is not in an easy situation and that it is a country full of people who simply want peace and have many differing views about what its leaders are doing.

If only they would take a moment to see that Israel is not all bad, as they are led to believe.

As Lag B’Omer comes and goes this week, we are all reminded of the importance of respecting each other and trying to find the good in each other; the humanity.

As Rabbi Akiva’s many students were decimated by a plague because they weren’t able to respect each other, so we all need to look at each other and learn this lesson.

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Dateline: Middle East

Understanding Netanyahu and his Iran revelation



PAULA SLIER

Fear is a powerful motivator, especially in politics. When an electorate is afraid, it isn’t difficult for a leader to convince them of almost anything.

I first realised this when I started reporting from Israel in the early 2000s. The Second Intifada was under way and Benjamin Netanyahu had returned to politics after a brief spell in the private sector. Although he was finance minister at the time, he was the rising Likud party star and Israelis and Palestinians alike told me that his “obsessive fearmongering” would result in peace between the sides being more remote than ever.

The irony is that it was Likud’s founder and Israel’s sixth prime minister, Menachem Begin, who signed the landmark Camp David Accords that called for the establishment of a Palestinian state. But for Netanyahu, whose political career has been built on portraying Palestinians, and later Iranians, as existential threats to the Jewish people, fear of “the other” has been an integral part of his leadership.

When Likud lost the 1992 elections, it was Netanyahu who insisted that existential threats overruled all domestic concerns. He was already warning back then that Iran was three to five years away from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

This past Monday, the world was treated to another of Netanyahu’s political theatrics. To be fair, what the prime minister revealed was indeed an intelligence coup. Israeli operatives managed to penetrate a secret Iranian military facility in Tehran and steal tens of thousands of detailed files on the Iranian nuclear programme.

But the prime minister’s almost child-like presentation, which included lots of visual aids, block letters and simplistic messages, dished up a message to an audience of one – US President Donald Trump.

Social media had a field day, poking fun at Netanyahu for acting like the host of a shopping channel and using outdated technology, but his presentation hit the mark. It spoke to Trump in a language he understood and with a clear point, which was: Iran has all along been actively pursuing a bomb and cannot be trusted.

That was Netanyahu’s message and Trump heard it. The American president said the speech was “good” and showed he’d been “a hundred percent correct about Iran”.

At the time of writing this, Trump hasn’t said as much but he is widely expected to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that was brokered by seven parties and signed in 2015.

Netanyahu is well aware of the growing divide between Trump and his other co-signatories. Paris responded on Tuesday that some of the information revealed by Netanyahu had already been disclosed in 2002 and stressed the importance of continuing with the nuclear deal. And, together with France, Britain also said that Tehran had been abiding by the pact and it should be kept.

No doubt Netanyahu was also addressing the Iranians in his presentation. In an attempt to intimidate them, he made sure it was understood that Israeli intelligence can infiltrate even Iran’s most sensitive facilities. Tehran has shot back, saying Netanyahu is “an infamous liar”.

In all of this, it’s important to remember that in 2002 Netanyahu proclaimed before the American Congress that “there is no question” that Iraq’s then leader, Saddam Hussein, was building nuclear weapons. He went as far as to “guarantee” American lawmakers that Hussein’s removal would have “positive reverberations” throughout the Middle East, a prediction that did not pan out quite as expected.

But the difference now is that, unlike when Netanyahu made the Iraqi assertions and was a private citizen, during Monday night’s showmanship, he was the elected leader of Israel.

And for this reason, he was also talking to his electorate. Cold calculations of domestic politics were certainly at play. The prime minister was warning the police and those considering indicting him for criminal actions that they might be removing the one and only Israeli leader able to stave off Iran’s intention to wipe Israel off the map. This is always Netanyahu’s message. In times of crises and fear – a lot of which are of his making – Netanyahu is intent on reminding Israelis that he is the only politician strong enough to lead the country.

But should he be proven wrong, as he was with Iraq, it won’t only be him paying the price, but Israel as a whole.

The problem is that while Netanyahu’s speech might earn him brownie points among Israelis and many Americans, it also places Jerusalem in a very precarious position should the deal be cancelled and then things go bad. Netanyahu and Israel will become the international community’s convenient scapegoat.

I’m not saying Netanyahu is wrong about Iran; I’m just wondering what it means if he could be. What if he turns out to have scuppered a chance at peace (or at least non-confrontation) between the sides and, instead, brings the region to the brink of war?

What’s more, Netanyahu’s presentation came a day after a presumed Israeli attack on Iranian missile sites in Syria. Such attacks are becoming more frequent and as tensions climb, so does the probability of an Iranian retaliation on Jerusalem. It is surprising to some that Iran hasn’t already responded, but it seems Tehran is waiting and watching to see what Trump decides before mapping its next steps.

Iran wants to keep the deal as it brings significant sanctions relief, but should Trump decide to withdraw from it, an Iranian retaliatory response on Israel could be just around the corner. And, as much as Netanyahu talks fear and warns of an Iran building nuclear weapons under the cover of the deal, should that deal disappear and Tehran decide to take action against Israel, the scenario is just as fearful as the one Netanyahu purports to be fighting against.

• 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.



Benjamin Netanyahu

Taking the decision to make Aliyah

W

as Jews have a mandate to uplift our surroundings, wherever we may find ourselves, scattered as we are in all parts of the globe. However, the ultimate intent is that we return to the Holy Land – Israel.

It is the land that Hashem asked Abraham to go to, that the nation of Israel eventually settled. It is the land where two Temples stood. It is also the place where history reaches its apex with the final restitution of the Third Temple and the fulfilment that is the ingathering of the exiles.

In fact, when the finale of the Great Narrative reaches its coda, so the insanity and violence of a world often bent on destruction will revert to the true purpose. That purpose is the Messianic era, where peace, wisdom and knowledge of things now hidden will be revealed both in a material and spiritual sense.

The Jewish people will truly be the People of the Book and the nations, too, will glorify the One that gives life.

In the context of such a vision and in terms of my own personal life trajectory, it became clear that my place, then, is to be there. I am pulled to the Land we have striven so hard to finally have once again after aeons of struggle.

While I am aware that we are still in exile, there is hope and promise of



DANNY SHORKEND

OPINION

redemption, as many latter-day Sages remind us. So, in the context of this preamble, my wife and I and our two young daughters are making aliyah.

There is an aliyah in being called up to the bimah in shul. There is an aliyah in the soul's journey even after passing. There is also an aliyah when a Jew moves to the land of Israel, provided – as with all things – the intent is both material and spiritual.

It is an exciting venture, made easy by the wonderful aliyah department here in Cape Town and the unbelievable help the Israeli government provides to new olim.

Moving is always riveting. It allows one to throw out the old and dream of the future. It is a dream that many have pioneered. As they say, we stand on the footsteps of giants. And the greatest victory we can have over own enemies down the ages, and over the Pharaoh within, is to settle the land both physically and spiritually and follow in the ways of Truth.

I concede that each person needs to work such matters out for themselves.

However, in terms of the decision my wife and I have made, it is certainly Hashem's Torah that is the mainstay of our very existence. We have much work to do to realise that. But hey, there are more kosher restaurants in Israel then here in the south!

I began a love affair with Israel and Torah in about 1997, when I went to Yeshivah Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem for seven months. While I argued a somewhat atheist position, the experience did change my mindset to a large degree. And so my spiritual journey into the faith of my forebears began. Later, I went to Cfar Chabad in Israel in early 2000, but that lasted just a few months.

Subsequently, it's been a battle in South Africa to maintain some sense of spiritual connectivity. Frequenting mainly the Chabad Centre in Sea Point, continuing with my art and academic interests, and, of course, meeting my wife in Johannesburg has fuelled my perennial search for Truth. Miraculously, we are now at the point where we are on route to a small patch of land that holds the secrets of universal redemption.

Like all big life-changing decisions, one cannot easily predict the future. But we know that Israel is highly developed and strong. We know that there is a much higher spiritual level in general. We know that it is a big family.

The soil still needs to be tilled. There

is always work to do. But Shabbat is beckoning. As we celebrate the young state, why not meditate on the possibility of moving to a land which G-d has given to the Jewish People?

• Dr Danny Shorkend is an artist, art critic and art teacher, and has a doctorate in art. He, his wife and two daughters make aliyah on Monday, May 7.

Why Israel is investing in Diaspora Jewish education



NAFTALI BENNETT

OPINION

F

or decades, world Jewry helped Israel. Organisations gathered and sent funds to the feeble, small state; our air force and navy were formed and trained by Jewish volunteers from around the globe.

As we celebrate our 70th Independence Day, we should thank the previous generations while shifting to a new era, one in which we reverse the roles and Israel spends more time and resources helping the Jews of the world.

Since its inception, Israel has played two roles. First, it is the country of all of its citizens, Jews and non-Jews alike. Second, it is the nation state for all Jews, citizens or not. The Law of Return, which offers immediate citizenship to any Jew interested in living in Israel, is the best example of this idea. As the Jewish homeland, Israel has always felt a sense of responsibility towards the Jews of the world and has acted, often quietly, to safeguard those in need – simply because they are Jews.

Sadly, recent events in France and Poland highlight the rise of anti-Semitism and the need to maintain such actions. However, the greatest danger facing the Jewish world in the 21st century is disengagement. Millions of Jews, mainly in North America, are drifting away from Judaism and, as a result, from Israel. Israel cannot ignore this reality. Acting as the home of the Jews, Israel helped Jews in physical danger. Now it is time to help those at risk of losing their connection to Judaism and Israel.

Not long ago, I told our government that Israel ought to increase its investment in promoting Jewish education and identity, multiplying the resources allocated to projects like Birthright or Masa by at least tenfold. This caused people to ask why. “Why should our tax monies go to a child in Dallas or Budapest?”

I have two answers to this question. The first is a one-word answer coming from my kishkes: *Because*. Jews are family, and we need to help our family, whether in Brazil, England or the US. We help them because we are all Jewish.

The other answer is a far second, but it, too, has its place: Maintaining strong Jewish communities is not only the moral thing to do, it is also a strategic investment by Israel – because when you disengage from Judaism, you tend to disengage from Israel. The toughest challenge facing us is the masses of Jews distancing themselves from Judaism and Israel. This distancing has little to do with

the disputes between the Diaspora and Israel. The often harsh criticism directed by Diaspora Jews at the Israeli government is being voiced by Jews who love Israel and feel they have a stake in the Jewish state.

In the US, however, they are a minority. My main concern is the 75% of US Jews, or more, who don't care enough to be mad at Israel. To be clear, I wish we could resolve all the disagreements between US Jews and the Israeli government, but we have to be realistic. There are serious differences between American and Israeli Jews, including the size and significance of non-Orthodox denominations. This, in turn, influences political representation and the resulting public policy.

So, while it is unlikely we will solve all the issues, we must work hard for an open dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding.

Despite the massive gaps, I refuse to give up. Seeing a Jew drift away from our heritage and traditions, away from our people, hurts me. We are losing millions of Jews, and history will judge our efforts to reverse this dangerous trend. Giving up simply is not an option.

Over the past five years, we have invested unprecedented resources into creating an infrastructure capable of working with Jewish leaders to save a generation of Jews. Through Project Momentum, Campus Engagement and other projects, we will do everything we can to keep our family intact.

As we celebrate Israel's 70th Independence Day, we find ourselves at a crossroads: One path leads to a utopian situation, the other to an almost dystopian reality. If we make the wrong choice, in 50 years we will find ourselves with a small US Jewish community feeling anything from apathy to disdain towards Israel. They won't feel connected to us, and we won't feel connected to them. The right choice, however, will help ensure that 50, 100 and 500 years from today, the world Jewry community will be large, with a strong Jewish identity and an open embrace of Zionism.

Such a path, in my vision, also leads to the communities in Israel and the world working together to fulfil the Jewish destiny – doing good and repairing a broken world. This isn't a simple task; it will take effort and time. But it must be done.

In 2018, unlike 1948, Israel is a strong country, and while we greatly appreciate and welcome the support of Diaspora communities, we no longer depend on it. After 70 years of the Diaspora Jews helping Israel, it is time for Israel to help Diaspora Jews. (JTA)

** Naftali Bennett is Israel's minister of education and Diaspora affairs.*

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What does it take to future-proof our children?

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

In a rapidly changing world, traditional careers are under threat. So, how can we future-proof our kids when they face such an uncertain time ahead?

“Sixty-five percent of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that do not yet exist,” says Michelle Lissos, managing director of Think Ahead Education Solutions. Her company works with schools across South Africa, assisting them with implementing 21st-century education technology solutions to prepare learners for today’s world.

“Rapid advances in technology are transforming the world of work, and by 2020 an estimated 83 million jobs around the globe will go unfilled due to lack of skills,” she says.

“Young people everywhere therefore need to develop skills to evaluate and apply knowledge in ways that meet the demands of our fast-paced, changing world.”

Even if they develop the necessary skills, our children live in a world with no guarantees, cautions Nikki Bush, co-author of *Future-Proof Your Child* (Penguin), written with Dr Graeme Codrington. “Even the best education in the world today cannot guarantee you access to a degree,” she says.

“Even a degree does not guarantee you a job. Even a job no longer provides security because change is happening. It is happening so dramatically that companies will follow suit if they’re not remaining relevant and meeting the needs of the new economy.

“Our children are likely to have portfolios of jobs. They’ll also have guaranteed periods of unemployment within those portfolios of jobs. So, we need to upskill them so that they can create an optional working life. They may choose to not work for a period where they’ll be upskilling, reskilling or learning. Or, they’ll be taking proper sabbaticals because there’s research to prove that more time off is better for your work performance.”

Rather than stressing about the lack of job security our kids may face, we can encourage them to embrace the opportunities this offers. “They might have various interests – and because of the internet, which is creating an on-demand economy – they could sell their skills in different fields,” says Bush.

“There is no job security anymore. You need to build your own career security, and that career security will probably consist of a number of different income streams. At least 60% of our kids will have to be entrepreneurs and create their own jobs as an on-demand economy feeds into an entrepreneurial economy.

“Geographic borders won’t limit our children’s ability to find work, and they won’t limit companies when it comes to employing the right people to do the job.”

To meet the demands of this ever-changing, competitive working world, we need to bring up children who have five X-factors for success, says Bush. These are:

1.Creativity and innovation

Companies will pay for innovative

thinking. This might happen in a full- or part-time position, or even as part of crowdsourcing, where people are invited to give solutions online. We need to teach kids to really think by playing creative games and brainstorming. Critical thinking skills and problem-solving will be important. We need kids with observation skills – they need to see where the gaps are in the market and grab opportunities.

2. Loving learning

Our kids will likely work for 80 years because they’re going to live until 120, so they’re going to have to keep learning and relearning throughout their lives to remain relevant.

3. Resilience

Kids need resilience because who you are will be far more important than what you do, or what you sell, as these factors will keep changing rapidly. If your child starts off with a job description that becomes obsolete within a year, how adaptable are they?

4. Self-knowledge

Kids will need to know themselves well, so they can plug in in a way that is relevant to them and to the world.

5. Being a team player

Whether online or offline, being able to build relationships and maintain them is going to still be vital in the future world of work.

When our children go for interviews, they’ll need to showcase these five X-factors over and above their matric and degree, continues Bush. “Top presentation skills and an ability



to sell yourself and your ideas is paramount. Ultimately, we need a child who has a good balance between high tech and high touch.

Another key area in which kids need to be proficient is coding. Says Lissos: “In today’s world, understanding the basics of code is as essential as maths and writing. The Fourth Industrial Revolution will be known for disrupting nearly every industry and skill associated with coding (creative problem-solving, perseverance, collaboration) and will enable students and future employees to face this uncertain future.”

The changing face of careers

According to Bush, industries like retail, call centres, manufacturing, mining and construction are all declining because of automation. Intermediaries like financial advisers and travel agents may also no longer be necessary as we can do these

things ourselves, although we may still need advice.

“Professions in danger for the first time are doctors, lawyers, accountants and engineers,” adds Bush. “Parts of these jobs will be digitised, but they’ll keep the high-touch elements like relationships and counselling.

“For example, in the area of medicine, a scanner, smart toilets or smart pills will be able tell you everything that’s going on in your body. We’ll have smart medicine – medicines personalised and made to order specifically for you, according to your genetic make-up, which will be available through DNA analysis.”

But you’ll still need the human element, and the doctor will analyse medical results or design and operate the necessary machines. What’s more, healthcare and social services are growing industries, especially within an ageing population as people live increasingly longer.

Medicine is ultimately just shifting focus. The huge areas of growth are genetics, biotechnology, and research and development.

“Teachers also need to reinvent themselves,” Bush says. They need to be more facilitators than directors – facilitating educational experiences that have meaning.”

Other industries your kids may explore include sport and entertainment, given that people want experiences – or nanotechnology or micro-engineering.

The information technology industry, especially regarding internet security and privacy, is increasingly important – and the logistics industry is burgeoning as we go online.

And, in response to global warming, working in renewable energy will also be a big growth area.

The go-to Facebook group for Joburg moms

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

If you are looking for a babysitter, extra lessons for your kids or even a caregiver for your elderly mother, ask a Jewish mom. We are known for being cautious and expecting good references.

So, if you have something you want to enquire or vent about, where do you go? For all things that relate to women’s lives, they know exactly where to go – to their own Facebook group.

The group, aptly named Joburg Jewish Mommies, has become the go-to place for most Jewish moms, as well as Jewish women who are not mommies. This popular site has a membership currently numbering almost 6 000.

Joburg Jewish Mommies is a success story both in terms of its numbers and of extending its reach way beyond its original goal, while maintaining its core function.

The site was founded five years ago by Chana Leah Shishler to serve as a support group for mothers within the religious community. When Shishler went to the US the following year, Philippa Bergman assumed the role of administrator for the group. She was later joined by Nicky Friedman Winik and Wendy Furman Miller.

Over the years, the membership has grown by leaps and bounds from the original 100, and its good work reaches well beyond the confines of the community.

The administrators keep tight control, making sure that nothing “untoward” occurs, Bergman says. “It’s hard. The women like to have their say, regardless of the rules, and often we are shutting down posts, deleting posts or blocking comment on posts.

“We’ve got to keep reiterating that it’s not just a free for all – you need to have rules in place in order for something to run smoothly,” says Bergman.

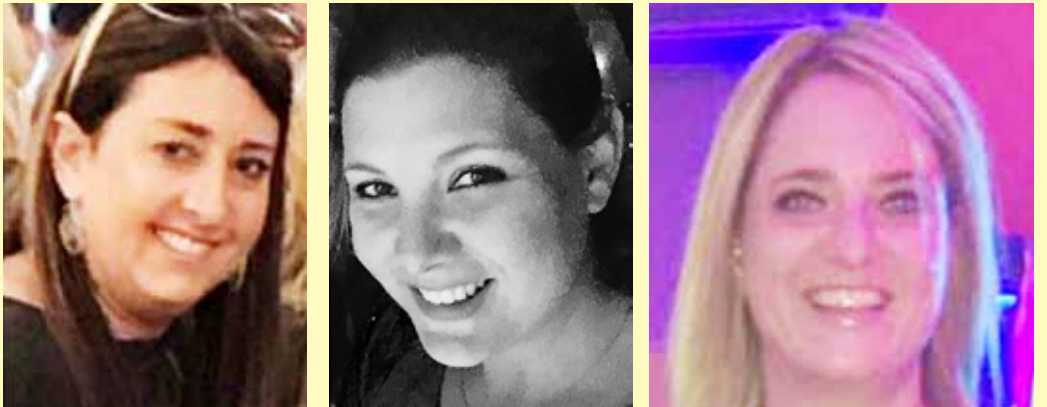
“Hate speech, racism or bad-mouthing of any business, person or entity will not be tolerated. No naming and shaming, no personal attacks and no

offensive comments to any members will be tolerated.”

Adds Miller: “Because it is a Jewish group, we need to adhere to certain Jewish ethics and morals. As soon as lashon hara or naming and shaming comes up, it gets deleted immediately.”

Offenders may be removed from the group for a two-week period, after which they can rejoin.

Says Bergman: “Unfortunately, being a Jewish community, we obviously have to be aware of any infiltration from outside the community (to garner information). We often get fake profiles that pop up –



The Joburg Jewish Mommies administrators: Nicky Friedman Winik, Philippa Bergman and Wendy Furman Miller

they are not really there to do harm, but I think they are there more for the kicks, to see if they can get responses out of people.”

Nevertheless, possible fake profiles are reported to the Jewish Community Security Organisation for verification.

Miller says: “It is not only a platform to give support to fellow Jewish moms or women, but it’s extended beyond that to, for instance, helping in squatter camps or helping underprivileged schools in Alexandra.

“Even though it’s a Jewish group, it doesn’t mean that the support stays within the Jewish environment. It’s a platform to help other people – and people want to help,” she stresses.

A member recently posted a message about her housekeeper’s son, who was looking for holiday work to help pay his varsity fees. She was contacted by someone on the group who offered to assist financially.

Perhaps the most striking example is a current fundraiser for a young Jewish mom, Vanessa Abro, who requires life-saving cancer treatment in India. “Within three days, R35 000 was raised on the group and it is going up every day,” says Miller.

So far, monies raised total about R300 000 towards the target of R400 000. Miller estimates that over half was raised by Joburg Jewish Mommies and the balance by Joburg Jewish Singles 35+.

“People ask for donations of toys and blankets for the public hospitals. It’s an amazing community,” she adds.

Last year Miller, through the group, ran a blanket drive for the paediatric oncology ward at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in memory of her late mom. “The response was amazing. I was able to hand out a blanket, a beanie and a scarf to every child in the ward.”

Membership of the group extends worldwide, with South African expats as well as their friends joining up.

Bergman labels the group “an information highway”.

It is also a safe haven for sound advice.

Honouring the longest-serving rabbi in South Africa

JORDAN MOSHE

The average tenure of a rabbi in the US is five years. In the UK, it's 10 years. When a rabbi serves a community for 46 years, it's something unique. And, when that same rabbi has shared a special relationship with the South African community for 63 years, it's an achievement worth celebrating.

Such is the case with Rabbi Zigmund Samuel Suchard, who was honoured at a dinner last Tuesday evening at the Sandton Shul hall on the eve of his retirement and becoming a Rabbi Emeritus of that shul.

Ivor Blumenthal, honorary life president of Sandton's Beth Midrash Hagadol, told the audience: "Leadership is not about being in charge. It's about caring for those who are in your charge. Regarding his community an extension of his family, Rabbi Suchard is a leader whose compassion is boundless and benevolence, all-encompassing."

Those in the packed shul hall paid tribute to the rabbi and Rebbetzin Rochel, who together established a community in an area which, at the time, was nothing but a dusty expanse. "This area was a farmland, struggling for a minyan," said Rabbi David Shaw, incoming senior rabbi of the shul. "Since then, under the guidance of our leader and educator [Rabbi Suchard], the area has flourished into something great. It is today the centre of Jewish life in Sandton, thanks to the pioneering spirit, creativity and innovation of one man. We all need to ride on the coattails of the righteous, and Rabbi Suchard has brought us to where we are."

Born and educated in South Africa, Suchard was one of the first Yeshiva College scholars,

enrolling with nine other boys in the school's first class at age 15. He spent 11 years in Lithuania's famous Telshe Yeshiva, as a student and then as an educator in Talmud.

After being ordained by Rabbi CM Katz, he returned to South Africa as a senior lecturer at Yeshiva College and was also the founding dean of Menorah Girls High.

After serving as a dayan on the Beth Din and as a community rabbi to Sandton's Beth Midrash Hagadol for almost 50 years, Suchard is retiring from his position and will be making aliyah to Israel this month. He will, however, still be connected to Sandton Shul in his capacity as its official Rabbi Emeritus.

Rabbi Suchard's father taught him a poem by Rudyard Kipling, called *If*, which has had a lasting influence on his life. Blumenthal recited some of the poem's verses last Tuesday night: "If you can wait and not be tired by waiting... If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue... If you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run – Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it. And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!"

"These words," said Blumenthal, "are of unique significance to Rabbi Suchard. To this day he has remained a patient rabbi, husband and father.

"If I asked you to close your eyes and envisage the shul, you would see the image



Mel Kur handing Rabbi Emeritus Tzadok Shmuel Suchard a Yad dedicated to his 46 years at Sandton Shul

of the Rav. If I asked you to envisage a talmid chacham, you would still see him. The image will always be that of Rabbi Suchard."

Rabbi Avraham Tanzer, head of Glenhazel Shul and Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshiva College said: "We all know about the great things he has achieved in our community. But how many rabbis can skip rope at a simcha? I hope many of them know how? He feels simcha in a way we don't understand... Wherever someone is in pain, he's there. Wherever someone wants to learn, he's there. His heart, his soul, his everything is there."

Addressing Suchard directly, Tanzer said: "You are the Rabbi Akiva of our time. The great sage started again with four students after losing 24 000 brilliant minds to a calamity. You played the same role in South Africa after the destruction of Jewish life in Europe. Rebuilding something after destruction and hopelessness, you breathed

life back into the Torah world and built something beyond comprehension. You have followed the lead of Rabbi Akiva before you."

Rabbi Suchard and his wife then addressed the gathering. "Together we have achieved something great here in Sandton," said Suchard. "I am fortunate to have served this community for 46 years and I consider it an honour from Hashem.

"I look forward to building this community even further. Even from Israel, I'll be a part of this community. What does it mean to be Rabbi

Emeritus? It means I'll be a rabbi of Sandton forever. I'm there to serve you as much as I can. Even when I'm in Israel, I'll be with you and will be present at all your life events. I will always be a part of this."

His wife, Rochel said: "Today, members from our community are spread out across the world. From the beginning, we envisioned Sandton Shul becoming what it is today. We have never looked back. I've gained something from all of you. I've learned from all of my students and I thank them for everything.

"Rabbi Suchard is a doer," she concluded. "To him, the community is a priority, and he is devoted to the quality of our shul... My husband is a leader, visionary and father to his community and family. A special man in a special place, with wisdom in his eyes and a smile on his face. That is my husband."



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South Africa has talent

Three phenomenal South African Jewish women have just brought out books. SA Jewish Report caught up with Rahla Xenopoulos, Nechama Brodie and Mandy Wiener and asked them these questions:

■ RAHLA XENOPOULOS

1. In a nutshell, describe yourself.

Wife, mother, writer, teacher of writing, Jew, person who refuses to cook. Lover of books, people, movies, flowers, friends, long lunches, family vacations, Luddite. Also, I would describe myself as happy.

2. What drew you to writing a book?

My first book, *A Memoir of Love and Madness*, was about living with bipolar disorder. I wasn't a writer then – mind you, who is to say I'm a writer now? But I didn't imagine myself as a person who might ever publish. What I knew for certain, though, was that there was a story I had to tell. There was so little available on bipolar disorder and I felt a desperate need to talk openly about it – not to in any way dispute how awful having a mental illness is, but to show that there is survival; you can have a sickness and still lead a full life.

3. What is your background and how has that influenced your writing in general and your writing in your latest book, *The Season of Glass*?

I grew up in an intellectually rich and challenging home. There were always books and theatre and music and interesting people around. My family's approach to religion was much like their approach to life: not conventional but also not without devotion. My parents had a constant and profound sense of enquiry, which affected me. Because I had severe dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), I was late in starting to read, but being surrounded by literature 'fed' me. My mother was a speech and drama teacher and some of my earliest memories are of *The Tempest* being rehearsed and performed in our garden, and of my mother reading *A Tale Of Two Cities* to us all when we were on a vacation.

When my brother was about 13, his best friend died. In response to that loss, he became religious. Being the baby sister, I looked up to him hugely, so while I never ate off paper plates, I did spend many a Shabbos visiting him at Yeshiva, walking with him to shul and, on some level, I must have picked something up, even if it was the joy that Judaism brought him. My mother is also deeply Jewish, which must also have touched me. I've always loved the stories and searching of Judaism. Perhaps this new book is about those two things: stories and searching.

4. What inspired this particular book?

I felt drawn to life after this one, to the idea that we return and return, the idea that there is something so much bigger than us. Many years ago, I read Andre Schwarz-Bart's book, "The Last of the Just. I became fascinated with stories of the Lamed-Vav Tsaddikim (the 36 Just Men of Jewish mystical tradition). I think we write what we yearn to understand. There is so much research, time and devotion that goes into the producing of a book that as a writer, one has to be fiercely invested in the characters and content to see it through. I guess I wrote this book as a way of learning about Jewish mysticism, the Messiah and reincarnation in Judaism. Of course, it's two and a half years later [since beginning this book], and all I've learnt is how little I understand. But also, let's not kid, the idea of making the Messiah a young girl was just too much fun to resist writing.

5. How long did it take you to write and what was your process?

Initially, I had some bizarre notion that I'd finish this book in one year, ha ha! It took a long time, nearly three years of devotion. I teach writing workshops, so I used the exercises I developed for my students to write my own work. I'd try them out the week before the workshop. Also, I attended workshops given by friends. I'm a serious believer in the power of writing workshops – wait, not the power, the miracle of writing workshops. I was truly blessed on this book to work closely with my publisher. He



Rahla Xenopoulos

read as I wrote and we talked it all through, so I wasn't isolated. With a book like this, you don't want to feel alone.

6. What kind of research was involved and how did you go about it?

More than anything else that I've written, this book was intensely researched. At first, I planned to get a research intern, but then my publisher wisely said: "Do your own research. You've got the internet and Google Earth. The story will come to you as you research." And that certainly was the case. My opening section is the Ethiopian Jews and the first person I found was Gudit. She was a black, Jewish warrior queen who raged through Ethiopia in the 10th century. I was like, 'Yes – this woman's story I can write.' I try to absorb everything available on the subject I'm writing. During the writing of that first section, the Ethiopian one, my family became very regular guests at the Ethiopian restaurant in town.

It wasn't like I could pop into a Yeshiva for a couple of years, so I read and read and read the history and teachings of great rabbis. It delighted me to find that there are such powerful contemporary thinkers in Judaism. I also listened to podcasts and watched YouTube links. Maybe it's because it was the first time I actively focused on learning about my religion, but it feels like Judaism is going through a renaissance.

7. What was your biggest challenge in writing this book and how did you overcome it?

I think the biggest challenge with the writing of any book is myself. I just struggled to get it done. It's such a big, intense book and most of the time I'd rather eat cake and arrange flowers than write.

8. Describe your relationship with the characters in your book and what they mean/t to you?

I really love the people who populate this book. I loved how hopeful and dignified they were. Even the villains, I kind of, got them. I loved the devotion between the brother and sister, so much of it was taken from my own children. Multiples (the book features twins) are different, it's kind of like, the act of constantly caring for one another is akin to the act of breathing. That love becomes a character of its own. I felt a huge need to protect the main character, and, even though I wrote them, the hardships she was forced to keep enduring saddened me. Writing a book that's about the cycle of life makes you aware of the mistakes humanity keeps making, and of the power of goodness and cruelty on us all. It made me more conscious of trying to live more with goodness in my life.

9. What type of book do you love reading and why?

Reading is one of the greatest adventures life has offered me. Books have been one of my most consistent and loyal friends. I've got a rule: If you read trash, you'll write trash. As I said, I was raised on good literature, so thankfully, I'm drawn to good literature. I read and re-read the classics. When I'm working on a book I read literature that in some way relates or ties in to what I'm writing. The reading for this last book was, obviously, vast, from stories about the inquisition to the work of people like Yuval Noah Harari. Also, South African writing is experiencing a major boost. I love reading local fiction.

10. What message or lesson did you want your readers to take home after reading your book?

I was constantly delighted by the exquisite, ancient beauty of Judaism as I wrote, so that's an obvious one. Also, that life is a continuum. If we stop in a spot, that spot is a culmination of both our ancestors and our descendants, and a culmination of who we have been and who we are yet become. And of course, the power of stories. In the end, it's through stories that we negotiate life, that we understand one another.

11. Does being Jewish ever come into or influence your writing work?

Yes. Being Jewish informs pretty much everything that I do, including my writing. But obviously, this book more than any other. The funny thing is that I thought, after this book I'd be over exploring Judaism in my writing. But of course, I'm just more fascinated. I could keep writing stories of Jews forever and still not understand us.

12. Some writers feel a real sense of loss at completing a book – what did it feel like to you?

Oh my G-d no! I felt an immediate and huge sense of relief.

■ NECHAMA BRODIE

1. In a nutshell, describe yourself.

Mad professor-in-training.

2. What drew you to writing a book?

I've earned my living from writing words for the last 21 years. Over the last decade or so, my writing work has shifted from journalism (where, sadly, the texts are getting shorter and shorter) to books and research. I like writing longer pieces.

3. What is your background and how has that influenced your writing in general and your writing in your latest book, *Knucklebone*?

I've been a journalist for 20-something years, in print, radio, online, television. I've also written two urban histories: one of Joburg, one of Cape Town. As part of that, I got to see and tell so many different stories, meet so many people I wouldn't have ordinarily met. And I don't mean famous people. I mean interesting people. I think that helps, because it gives you a vast repertory of characters to draw from when you write fiction.

4. What inspired this particular book?

I've always liked and read crime novels and detective stories. Add to that a lifelong interest in stories of the strange and the supernatural. These mixed together in my head and one day, while I was driving, listening to music, the story for *Knucklebone* popped into my head.

5. How long did it take you to write and what was your process?

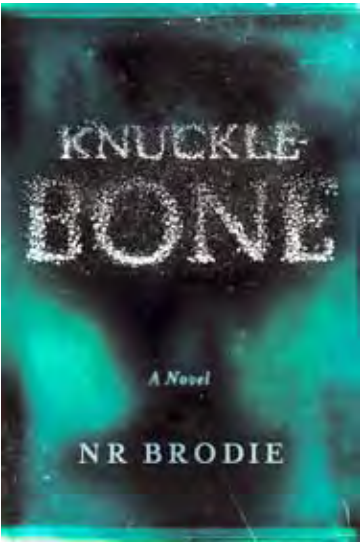
The book took a year or two to write. The early drafts went to a group of readers for feedback, then rewrites, etc. And then another three years of more rewrites, getting it sold, getting it edited, getting it onto the shelf.

6. What kind of research was involved and how did you go about it?

There was a mix of research – into security, into traditional and religious beliefs, into poaching. Some areas I researched more intensively than others because they were unfamiliar and I didn't want to mess them up. So, I tried to work with several izangoma, who helped to improve and check on those aspects of my story, at all stages of my work – while I was writing and while I was editing. I also spent a lot of time looking up examples of European witchcraft and magical beliefs, as they exist today. Other aspects (including police-related stuff) I didn't want to over-research because it was more important they existed as I imagined them, rather than being technically correct.



Nechama Brodie



THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Germany slams Abbas for ‘anti-Semitic’ remarks; EU calls his speech unacceptable

TOI STAFF AND AFP

On Wednesday, Germany’s foreign minister condemned a speech by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas in which he claimed that the Holocaust was the result of Jews’ own “social behaviour” rather than anti-Semitism.

Heiko Maas tweeted that Germany was responsible for “one of the worst crimes in history” and “therefore, we must respond resolutely to any anti-Semitic expression”, he said, linking to an article about Abbas’ speech, delivered on Monday night.



Abbas, who has faced accusations of anti-Semitism in the past, suggested in an address to a meeting of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) on Monday night that Jews’ relations with banking had led to hostility against them. The speech has sparked outrage in Israel.

During his long speech, given in Ramallah in front

of hundreds at a rare session of the PNC, the 82-year-old PA leader alleged that the Holocaust was not caused by anti-Semitism, but rather by Jews’ “social behaviour, [charging] interest, and financial matters.”

The incendiary content of the speech was not included in the official Palestinian news agency’s English press release or in most initial international coverage of his address.

In an unusual move, the European Union condemned Abbas, saying his speech “contained unacceptable remarks concerning the origins of the Holocaust and Israel’s legitimacy”.

“Such rhetoric will only play into the hands of those who do not want a two-state solution, which President Abbas has repeatedly advocated.”

The EU stressed the importance of Holocaust education in minimising hatred, and rejected any forms of anti-Semitism.

“The Holocaust and World War II have defined Europe’s modern history like no other event. Holocaust education remains central to building up resilience against all forms of hatred in our societies,” the statement read. “Anti-Semitism is not only a threat for Jews but a fundamental menace to our open and liberal societies. The EU remains committed to combat... any form of anti-Semitism and any

attempt to condone, justify or grossly trivialise the Holocaust.”

The condemnation was unusual as a few months ago, the same body refused to comment on a controversial speech by Abbas.

In a speech in January, Abbas had said that European Jews during the Holocaust chose to undergo “murder and slaughter” rather than emigrate to British-held Palestine.

“Our policy is not to comment on comments,” an EU spokesperson said at the time.

The EU routinely condemns Israeli plans to build housing units beyond the 1967 lines, arguing that such moves are illegal under international law and diminish the prospects of peace. The union also condemned the US administration’s December 6 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

MOSSAD STOLE IRAN’S NUKE ARCHIVE AND SMUGGLED IT BACK TO ISRAEL THE SAME NIGHT

TOI STAFF

Spies from Israel’s Mossad agency discovered the top-secret location of a warehouse used to store Iran’s nuclear weapons files, broke into the building, took half a ton of documents and managed to smuggle them back to Israel that same night, *The New York Times* reported late on Monday.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu revealed the daring operation as he displayed the trove of documents in a presentation aimed at proving that Iran has lied about its covert atomic weapons programme.

However, he gave few details on how or when the agents managed what he called one of the “greatest achievements” of Israeli intelligence.

A senior Israeli official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the secret mission, told *The Times* that Mossad had discovered the warehouse in February 2016, and had the building under surveillance since then.

The operatives broke into the building one night last January, removed the original documents and smuggled them back to Israel the same night, the official said, according to the paper.

US President Donald Trump was informed of the operation by Mossad chief

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Wednesday’s EU statement came shortly after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on the international community to condemn Abbas’ speech.

Abbas, in his Monday address, made no mention of the Jews’ historic presence and periods of sovereignty in the Holy Land.

• *Raphael Ahren contributed to this report.*

White House: Iran nuclear capabilities ‘far more advanced’ than implied in 2015

ERIC CORTELLESSA and TOI STAFF

The Trump administration asserted on Tuesday that Iran’s nuclear capabilities were substantially more advanced than Tehran indicated when it entered into the landmark nuclear agreement with world powers in 2015.

“The problem is that the deal was made on a completely false pretence: Iran lied on the front end,” White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters. “They were dishonest actors. The deal that was made was made on things that weren’t accurate.

“We have a big problem with that, particularly the fact that Iran’s nuclear capabilities were far more advanced and more further along than they ever indicated.”

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered a speech detailing Iran’s covert past nuclear weapons development, based on the capture of a large cache of secret Iranian documents.

US President Donald Trump immediately sought to seize upon the revelations, casting them as vindication of his long-time opposition to the nuclear deal. “What we’ve learned has really shown that I’ve been 100% right,” he said.

Meanwhile, the White House, in an official statement, said the trove of documents provided “new and compelling details about Iran’s efforts to develop missile-deliverable nuclear weapons”. The Israeli premier has also been criticised, with voices on the American right and left accusing him of adding no new insights about the Islamic Republic’s nuclear ambitions.

The outgoing chair of the Senate foreign relations committee, Bob Corker, a Republican from Tennessee, said on Monday that Netanyahu’s presentation provided “nothing new” and was “not ground-breaking”.

The prime minister has also been derided for treating as

a revelation the fact that Iran lied about its previous nuclear work. Supporters of the deal argue that it was predicated on the knowledge that Iran had lied – and that it was built on the verification of an intrusive inspections regime, not trust in Iranian integrity.

Iran dismissed Netanyahu’s revelations as lies and propaganda. The state-run IRNA news agency said the prime minister was “famous for ridiculous shows”. The semi-official Fars news agency, believed to be close to the Iran’s armed forces, the Revolutionary Guards, dismissed his speech as a “propaganda show”. Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Netanyahu was “crying wolf”.

Debate about the Israeli intelligence scoop – and what it says about the efficacy of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the deal is formally known – comes less than two weeks before Trump’s self-imposed deadline to amend the nuclear deal or walk away from it.

In January, the US president kept the pact alive by waiving sanctions against Iran, but said he would not waive them again on May 12, the next deadline under the deal, unless European allies and Congress addressed what he sees as its cardinal flaws.

One of his biggest objections to the JCPOA is its sunset provisions, which allow certain restrictions on Tehran’s nuclear programme to expire over time.

Sanders reiterated those concerns on Tuesday while not answering whether Trump has made a decision yet.

“If this nuclear deal maintains as it is now, when the sunset provision hits in seven years, they will be much further along in the process and able to make a nuclear weapon much quicker than they’ve ever indicated before,” she said. “And that’s a big problem.”

Yossi Cohen during a visit to Washington in January, the official said.

The official said the delay in making the material public was due to the time it took to analyse the documents, the vast majority of which were in Persian.

Netanyahu described the archive as looking like a “dilapidated warehouse” in the Shorabad District in southern Tehran.

“This is where they kept the atomic archives. Right here. Few Iranians knew where it was, very few, and also a few Israelis,” Netanyahu said.

“Now, from the outside, this was an innocent-looking compound. It looks like a dilapidated warehouse. But from the inside, it contained Iran’s secret atomic archives locked in massive files,” he said.

He showed a picture of long rows of safes and said that the agents managed to bring back “half a ton of the material” consisting of 55 000 pages and another 55 000 files on 183 CDs.

The cache, he said, contained “incriminating documents, incriminating charts, incriminating presentations, incriminating blueprints, incriminating photos, incriminating videos and more.

“We’ve shared this material with the United States, and the United States can vouch for its authenticity,” he said.

Palestinians must make peace or shut up, Saudi crown prince said to tell US Jews

TOI STAFF

At a meeting with Jewish leaders in New York in March, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman castigated the Palestinian leadership for rejecting opportunities for peace with Israel for decades, saying they should either start accepting peace proposals or “shut up”.

On Sunday night, citing what it said were multiple sources, Israel’s Channel 10 News quoted what it said were remarks made by the crown prince at the meeting. Those present were “staggered” by the ferocity of his criticism of the Palestinians.

“For the past 40 years, the Palestinian leadership has missed opportunities again and again, and rejected all the offers it was given,” the Saudi leader reportedly said.

“It’s about time that the Palestinians accept the offers and agree to come to the negotiating table, or they should shut up and stop complaining.”

According to the TV report, Prince Salman also told the US Jewish leaders that “the Palestinian issue is not at the top of the Saudi government’s agenda”. He elaborated: “There are much more urgent and more important issues to deal with, such as Iran.”

Nonetheless, the crown prince reportedly stressed, “There needs to be significant progress toward an agreement with the Palestinians before it will be possible to advance negotiations between Saudi Arabia and the Arab world and Israel.”

The TV report dated the meeting as happening on March 27, during the prince’s extensive visit to the US. It did not name those present.

The Saudi Embassy said that the crown prince was to have met that week with Jewish leaders. Another meeting, which included Christian leaders, took place on March 28.

The TV report was based on a cable to Israel’s foreign ministry from an Israeli diplomat in the New York consulate, who was briefed on the meeting by those present – and three other sources. One of those present told the TV channel that the group was



Photo: Bryan R. Smith/AFP

Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud attends a meeting at the United Nations in New York

staggered by what the prince had to say.

A number of news reports, including by *The New York Times* and *Reuters*, have claimed in recent months that the Saudi crown prince has pressured Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to accept a much-anticipated Trump administration peace proposal.

After he met with Jewish and Christian leaders on March 28, the Saudi Embassy in Washington said the meeting “emphasised the common bond among all people, particularly people of faith, which stresses the importance of tolerance, coexistence and working together for a better future for all of humanity.”

The embassy added that “the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia... will continue to champion, building a better understanding among the faiths and focusing on the shared humanity of all peoples”.

No specific details of what the faith leaders and crown prince spoke about were released.

In an interview published a few days later, the crown prince recognised Israel’s right to exist and extolled the prospect of future diplomatic relations between his kingdom and the Jewish state.

Hamas claims PA bombed its own prime minister to ‘kill reconciliation’

TOI STAFF

Hamas blamed the Palestinian Authority (PA) last weekend for the attempt to assassinate the PA’s own prime minister, Rami Hamdallah, in the Gaza Strip last month.

Eyad al-Bozom, a spokesman for the terror group’s interior ministry in the coastal enclave, told a news conference that the March 13 attack on a convoy in which Hamdallah and the PA’s intelligence chief, Majed Faraj, were travelling was masterminded by three senior officers in the PA, Reuters reported.

The PA and its leader, Mahmoud Abbas, have maintained that Hamas was behind the bombing of the convoy.

According to eyewitnesses, the device was detonated seconds before the armoured vehicle bearing Hamdallah passed. Neither Hamdallah nor Faraj were hurt in the blast, although 10 security guards and staff accompanying the two, who were in non-armoured vehicles, were lightly wounded.



Hamas personnel inspect the site of an explosion that occurred as the convoy of Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah entered Gaza

Sources close to Hamas have claimed in the past that the bombing may have been orchestrated by Faraj’s security force as part of a scheme to implicate Hamas and justify further PA

sanctions against the Gaza Strip.

On Saturday, Hamas’ interior minister presented videotaped confessions by four suspects captured in the Strip. It said the four had received direction from PA officers in the West Bank.

Al-Bozom, the ministry spokesman, said that the PA officers who ostensibly masterminded the attack on Hamdallah’s convoy were also behind an attempt on the life of Hamas’ security chief, Tawfik Abu Naim, in October.

Hamas maintains that it killed the main suspect in the attempt to assassinate Hamdallah, Anas Abu Khoussa, a week after the attack, along with one of Abu Khoussa’s aides. Two Hamas police officers were killed in a shootout, the group says.

The PA has dismissed Hamas’ claims to have killed the main suspect, saying its story is “flimsy”.

Hamas’ deputy head in Gaza, Khalil al-Hayya, alleged during a separate press conference on Saturday that the PA had orchestrated the attack in order “to kill reconciliation”.

In October 2017, after a decade of strife stemming from Hamas’ violent 2007 takeover of the Gaza Strip, the group and Abbas’ Fatah party signed a reconciliation agreement in Cairo, in which they pledged to set aside their differences and pave the way for Palestinian unity.

However, the two rival parties have since failed to reach understandings on the implementation of the deal, and continue to hold each other responsible for its failure.

Abbas has accused Hamas of failing to hand full control of the Gaza Strip over to his Ramallah-based government. He has also threatened to impose new sanctions on Hamas unless it complies with his demands.

Hamas, for its part, has accused Abbas of failing to lift sanctions he imposed on the Gaza Strip last year, including suspending payments to thousands of civil servants. Hamas has also rejected Abbas’ demand to allow his security forces to deploy in the Gaza Strip.

Responding to Hamas’ press conferences on Saturday, a spokesperson for the PA security service told Reuters: “The more Hamas tries to evade responsibility, the deeper it sinks.”



News and views from the Fed An epicurean taste of Israel comes to Joburg

To celebrate Israel’s 70th birthday, the Israeli embassy in South Africa, along with the SA Zionist Federation, hosted “A Taste of Israel” evening with world-renowned chef Yossi “Pappy” Elad and Gary Friedman Caterers. The event took place at the HOD Hall in Orchards on Monday.

With restaurants like Machneyuda in Jerusalem and The Palomar in London, Elad has emerged as a key figure in Israel’s recent gastronomic revolution, letting the seasonal ingredients inspire his culinary prowess and creativity – expressed in each plated masterpiece.

The elusive Elad grew up in Kfar Warburg, a large moshav in south-central Israel, but no one knows when. And rumour has it that he studied at the Tadmor School of Culinary Arts and Hotelkeeping. He is a world champion in breads and Italian food, and is undoubtedly full of soul and love for his profession.

It was when he ran Sardo in Tel Aviv that he caught the Italian bug. Then he opened Sack Kemach in Mevasseret and got the Jerusalem bug. With his indeflatable passion for Jerusalem, food and a lot of soul, the opening of Machneyuda was just a matter of time.

Tantalising the audience of 150 captivated foodies, the three-course menu wowed those lucky enough to enjoy this gourmet experience.

The meal started off with delectable aubergine and fish moussaka served with a hot tahini, laid on spicy greens and a lafa. It was accompanied by an assortment of breads with zaatar and olive oil.

This was followed by a sumptuous main meal, including chicken and meat maklouba (a traditional Arab dish from the Levant), a chickpea salad with pickled lemons and green leaves, an onion salad with fried bulgur and parsley, spicy tomato salad with coriander and onion, harissa (hot chilli pepper paste) and topped off with a fresh green salad with radishes and green onions.

The meal was rounded off with a mouth-watering dessert of coconut-milk malabe (Middle Eastern panacotta) topped with grenadine, rosewater and pistachio. Black coffee and mint tea brought the epicurean taste adventure to a close.

It was a spectacular evening, with everyone there enjoying a night out with friends and delicious food. Thanks go to Elad and Gary Friedman catering staff for producing such a fabulous eating extravaganza.

State says use of live fire in Gaza protests within Israeli and international law

STUART WINER AND TOI STAFF

State attorneys defended the army’s use of live ammunition during clashes with Palestinian demonstrators on the border with the Gaza Strip, saying the rules of engagement are within Israeli and international law, and that the riots cannot be considered simple civilian demonstrations.

Attorneys were responding to two petitions filed by rights organisations concerning the open fire regulations employed by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) when confronting the protests, which have been encouraged by the Hamas terror group.

Four people were killed and over 300 hurt in violent protests on Friday, the Gaza Strip’s Hamas-run health ministry said, as thousands of Palestinians converged on the border with Israel for a fifth round of weekly protests.

“The security forces’ rules of engagement in the area of the security barrier are in line with Israeli law and international law,” the state’s response read.

The petitions were filed by groups including Adalah, which offers legal advice for Arab minorities in Israel.

State attorneys said that it was wrong to classify the protests as civilian events, as they are “part of the armed conflict between the Hamas terror group and Israel”. The state asked that the petitions be rejected, claiming that their premise was “faulty and inadequate, both in how it relates to the content of the open fire order, and relating to the character and essence of the events”.

It also said that it would provide the court, ex parte, with the IDF rules of engagement and other relevant intelligence about the border incidents, the Ynet news site reported.

After the deadly clashes on Friday, the IDF said “hundreds of rioters” tried to burn the fence and enter Israel. It said the crowd threw explosives, firebombs and rocks, and that troops opened fire “in accordance with the rules of engagement” and halted the crowd. The military also says Hamas is using the protests as cover to damage the border fence and prepare to infiltrate and carry out attacks.

Flood victim said to have refused to climb to safety, pulled up friends one by one

TOI STAFF

In new details uncovered on Saturday regarding the Judean Desert flash flood that took the lives of 10 Israelis teens, Channel 10 reported that one of the youths chose to forego climbing to safety in order to save the lives of his friends.

One by one, Tzur Alfi grabbed the hands of friends who were drifting away in the waves of the Tzafit River, allowing each to climb on top of him before hoisting themselves to safety, the TV channel said.



Tzur Alfi of Mazkeret Batya, who was killed in a flash flood in the south during a school trip

“Tzur managed to grab a stone and could have lifted himself up (to safety) very easily, but he saw all his friends from the pre-military programme coming towards him, so he grabbed everyone he could by the hand and let each one climb on top of him until the flood overpowered him,” Alfi’s girlfriend Liri Uriel, who had evidently spoken with some of the survivors from the tragic hike, told Channel 10.

Alfi was swept away along with nine other victims, all of whom were on a pre-programme bonding hike ahead of the commencement of their studies at the Bnei Zion pre-military academy later this year.

Uriel told the Ynet news site that Alfi had dreamed of serving in the Israel Defence Forces’ elite 669 search and rescue unit, and said it was clear from Alfi’s heroism on Thursday that he didn’t even need the military training.

“If Tzur knew that we were sitting in a circle on Friday at school and interviewing

on TV, he would probably laugh at us and wonder why we did not go to the beach,” Uriel told Channel 10.

Notwithstanding the tragic consequences of the hike, which academy staff had decided to undertake despite days of warnings of possible flash floods in the area, one teen survivor who spoke anonymously to Ynet warned against rushing to appoint blame.

He explained that academy staff said they had checked with the relevant authorities. “There was an expectation of rain only at 3pm and [we] were hiking at 1pm. The academy people said that if there was rain, we’d go somewhere else and definitely not to a flood.” There had been

no plan to see floods, he noted.

On Friday, police arrested the head of the academy, Yuval Kahan, and the group’s tour guide, Aviv Bardichev, on suspicion of negligent homicide.

Citing “contradictions in the versions of events”, a Beersheba Magistrate’s Court extended the remands of Kahan and Bardichev by five days on Friday afternoon.

In a WhatsApp message sent to participants on Wednesday ahead of the trip, organisers had assured participants that there was nothing to worry about.

Nine young women and one young man, Alfi, were killed by the flood at

Tzafit River, a popular hiking trail along a riverbed in the southern Dead Sea area.

The 10 fatalities were Shani Shamir from the central city of Shoham; Ella Or from Ma’ale Adumim; Maayan Barhum and Yael Sadan from Jerusalem; Tzur Alfi, the only male who was killed, from the central town of Mazkeret Batya; Agam Levy from the central Israeli town of Herut; Romi Cohen of Maor, near Hadera; Gali Balali from the Tel Aviv suburb of Givatayim; Adi Raanan of the northern Israel moshav of Mikhmoret; and Ilan Bar Shalom of Rishon Lezion.

Seven of the victims were laid to rest on Friday, and the other three buried on Sunday.

Academy head resigns under cloud of suspicion

TOI STAFF

The head of a pre-army academy that planned a desert hike last week, in which 10 teenagers were swept to their deaths in a flash flood, announced on Wednesday that he is resigning from his position.

“Last Thursday, a terrible and inconceivable disaster occurred in the pre-military academy of Bnei Zion, which I head,” said Yuval Kahan of the Bnei Zion academy in a statement.

“During an excursion to teach the values of friendship and love of the country, the young women – Yael Sadan, Adi Raanan, Agam Levy, Ilan Bar Shalom, Ella Or, Gali Balali, Maayan Barhum, Romi Cohen, Shani Shamir – and the young man, Tzur Alfi, were killed.”

Kahan said he has been “torn and broken” since the nine girls and one boy were killed on Thursday when the group was hit by flash floods in the Tzafit riverbed, in the southern Dead Sea area.

“I will never be able to find words that can express the sorrow I feel. The role of the head of the preparatory programme is first and foremost an educational one that requires the full trust of the trainees, their families and all those who are involved in the programme,” wrote Kahan.

“I know that in the shadow of this terrible tragedy, this trust, which is the basis for the ability to lead and educate, cannot exist. So, I decided to submit my resignation.”

Kahan concluded by offering his condolences to the bereaved families.

“I am unable to comfort the families that lost the most precious thing of all, and I share their sorrow.”

On Monday, Kahan and academy instructor Aviv Bardichev were released to house arrest for five days, following their

arrest on Friday on suspicion of causing death by negligence for ignoring flash flood warnings.

The release came a day after the Bnei Zion academy’s Tel Aviv offices were raided by police, who seized documents and confiscated computers after suspicions arose that the heads of the institution were trying to obstruct the investigation into the deadly hike.

Police are investigating whether the trip’s organisers lied to participants about the safety of the desert trail they planned to take, as well as about their co-ordination, or lack thereof, with relevant authorities.

The 10 students were part of a group of 25 on a hike organised by the academy, and were set to attend its programme in the coming year.



Friends and family mourn near the grave of Ella Or during her funeral

Sex offender rabbi to be honoured at Lag B’Omer festival

MARISSA NEWMAN AND TOI STAFF

A rabbi convicted of sex offences, including against a minor, is set to be honoured at the annual Lag B’Omer festival at a pilgrimage site in northern Israel on Wednesday night, sparking an outcry.

Eliezer Berland, 80, who served five months of an 18-month prison sentence after eluding arrest for three years, will be among the 20 rabbis who will light a bonfire at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai in Meron, where thousands of worshippers were expected to gather on Wednesday evening and Thursday.

The religious affairs ministry, which contributes NIS 15 million (R52 million) to the Meron ceremonies, condemned Berland’s participation,



Rabbi Eliezer Berland at the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court during his trial in November 2016

but insisted it was powerless to stop him.

One of Berland’s victims, identified only as Adele, told the Walla news website that the decision to include the rabbi in the religious ceremony was a “disgrace”, and demanded the ministry and police block him from participating.

“It’s a disgrace that a convicted sex offender and an obsessive womaniser dares appear on the stage of honour at the grave of the man who, above all, symbolises in the Jewish tradition the sanctity of modesty. Is there no limit to the absurdity?” she was quoted as saying.

The Beit Hillel rabbinical group called on Israel’s chief rabbis, as well as all Israeli rabbis, to join together “in a call to prevent the great desecration of G-d’s name of a public lighting at Rashbi’s [Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai’s] grave by convict Eliezer Berland.”

Berland was sentenced to 18 months in prison in November 2016 after being convicted of two counts of indecent acts and one case of assault, as part of a plea deal. He was freed after five months, in part due to ill health.

Long considered a cult-like leader to his thousands of followers, Berland fled Israel in 2013.

He was on the run from authorities until 2016 when Berland was apprehended by South African authorities, extradited to Israel, and detained upon his arrival at Ben Gurion Airport in July 2016.

German anti-Semitism envoy says it’s ‘understandable’ that Jews may want to leave

TOI STAFF

Germany’s new anti-Semitism czar has said it is “understandable” that a wave of anti-Semitic incidents in the country might lead Jews to want to leave.

“It is quite understandable that those who are scared for the safety of their children would consider leaving Germany,” said Felix Klein, the government’s first-ever special envoy on Jewish life and combating anti-Semitism, according to *The Guardian* newspaper.

“I hear this from my own Jewish friends,” he added. “But we must do everything to avoid that.”

The Jewish community in Germany has complained of a rising tide of anti-Semitic attacks and harassment.

At his first meeting with journalists over the weekend, the newly appointed Klein, who is not Jewish, announced plans for a registry of attacks on the Jewish community, *The Guardian* reported on Saturday.

Anti-Semitism, Klein said, was both a mainstay in German society

and an import that came with the influx of Muslim immigrants fleeing conflict in the Middle East.

- *Raphael Ahren contributed to this report.*

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Granddaughter of Holocaust survivors makes jewellery featuring Nazi tattoo numbers

RENEE GHERT-ZAND

Robert Tanen bought his wife, Meredith, a necklace for her last birthday. He hoped she would like it, but when she opened the box, her emotional response surpassed anything Tanen had imagined.

“My wife broke down in tears and hugged me tighter than ever before. She had a very visceral and powerful reaction when she saw what was inside,” Tanen said.

What she saw was a platinum chain with a disc pendant engraved with a series of digits: 94980. It was her late grandfather Abraham Stein’s Holocaust number, the one assigned to him by the Nazis.

“Meredith wears the necklace every day. She was very close with her grandfather,” said Tanen, who lives in Boynton Beach, Florida and is Southeast regional director for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The necklace is part of a collection of Holocaust remembrance jewellery by Jakob Ella Jewelry, a company founded in 2017 by Dana Rogozinski, the Jacksonville, Florida-based granddaughter of Holocaust survivors. A portion of the proceeds of every purchase from the company is donated towards Holocaust education and scholarships for Poland trips for students.

The idea for necklaces, bracelets and cuff links featuring numbers that were tattooed into the forearms of Nazi concentration camp inmates came to Rogozinski while working at a start-up company in Beersheva, Israel, for a year and missing her grandmother, Ella Lucak

Rogozinski. The nonagenarian was back in Florida and suffering from dementia.

“I couldn’t see my Nana Ella every day when I was in Israel and I really missed her. I wanted a way to feel like she was with me all the time,” Rogozinski said.

Rogozinski, 28, thought about how, after a long post-war silence, her grandmother had more recently begun sharing her Holocaust testimony. She always showed the tattoo on her arm, using it as a conversation starter as she spoke with individuals or groups.

“I was aware of the phenomenon of people getting tattooed with their Holocaust survivor parent or grandparent’s number as a way of honouring them and perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust, but that wasn’t for me,” Rogozinski said.

It’s also not something many other Jews are keen on, given that the Nazis sought to dehumanise Jews by tattooing them, and due to prohibitions against tattooing in the Jewish tradition.

She decided that a more fitting way to honour her grandmother and her legacy was to fashion



jewellery with her number: Her grandmother had worked in a Jacksonville jewellery store for 50 years after arriving in the US in 1959.

Completely self-taught, Ella Rogozinski talked her way into a career of designing, making and repairing jewellery. Initially a cleaner at the store, she convinced the owner to allow her to try to fix a broken strand of pearls that no one else had been able to.

“She made a deal with them that if she did a good job on the pearls, they would give her a job dealing with the jewellery. She fixed the pearls,” Rogozinski said.

The first numbers Rogizinski used in designing her jewellery were those of her grandmother (A5674) and her grandfather, Jakob Rogozinski (56512), who died in 1994 when the designer was very young. She named the company for the two of them.

“I wanted the jewellery to spark conversations to ensure that the Holocaust will be remembered and not denied. It’s a way of teaching to ensure it never happens again,” said Rogozinski.

‘The Band’s Visit’, based on an Israeli film, gets 11 Tony nominations



The Band’s Visit, a play about a troupe of Egyptian musicians that winds up in a tiny Israeli village, has garnered 11 Tony nominations, including for Best Musical.

The musical, based on a popular 2007 film of the same name directed by Israel’s Eran Kolirin, also scooped up nominations for Best Original Score, Best Book of a Musical, Best Performance by a Lead Actor (Tony Shalhoub) and Lead Actress (Katrina

Lenk) in a Musical, Best Performance by an Actor in a Featured Role (Ari’el Stachel),

and several other technical categories when the full slate was announced on Tuesday.

The show has received glowing reviews since its Broadway debut in November. Like the film it is based on, it is the story of the small human encounters that occur between Arabs and Jews when an Egyptian police brass band is forced to spend the night in a fictional backwater in the Negev desert.

Composer and lyricist David Yazbek, whose mother is Jewish and father is Lebanese, said he wrote the musical to fuse his cultural backgrounds.

A revival of Tony Kushner’s seminal play, *Angels in America*, also received 11 nominations (both Susan Brown and Denise Gough). Jewish actor Andrew Garfield is nominated for Best Actor in a Leading Role in a Play for his performance. (JTA)

Israeli judoka Sagi Muki wins gold at European Championships

TOI STAFF

Israeli judoka Sagi Muki won a gold medal on Friday in the under-81kg class at the 2018 European Championships, held in Tel Aviv.

Muki had previously won the gold in the 2015 championships and was considered a favourite for a medal at the 2016 Olympic games in Rio. However, just ahead of those games, he suffered two slipped discs in his back. Despite the injury, he managed to compete and reach the semifinals.

The judoka, who defeated Belgium’s Sami Chouchi in the final, thanked the hundreds of Israelis who came to support him during the match.

“It’s a dream come true to win in Israel. Since finishing Rio, I’ve dreamed of this moment, with the entire rehabilitation process I’ve undergone,” Muki said.

Muki’s coach, Oren Smadja, sent his condolences to the victims of Thursday’s flash flood in the Judean desert.

“This is a sad day, accompanied

by great joy,” he said. Muki “went through a tough time. We supported him during this period. He’s an elite sportsman.”

An emotional Muki later sang the Israeli national anthem as the audience joined in.

Israel’s last major win at an international tournament was in October, at the Abu Dhabi Grand Slam in the United Arab Emirates. However, the event was mired by controversy when the host country refused to play the Israeli anthem. Tournament organisers played the anthem of the International Judo Federation (IJF) instead.

Israeli judoka Tal Flicker, who won a gold medal at the competition in the under-66kg class, said he defied the state’s boycott on displaying Israeli symbols and playing the anthem by shutting out the “background noise” and singing *Hatikvah* himself at the medal ceremony.

The ban on Israeli symbols came despite the IJF’s demand before the tournament that the United Arab Emirates treat Israeli athletes equally.

Becoming first Israeli in NBA playoffs

MICHAEL BACHNER

On Sunday, Tel Aviv-born TJ Leaf became the first Israeli national to play in the National Basketball Association (NBA) playoffs, after the Indiana Pacers put him on court for the final three minutes of a win against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

For the Israeli-American, who turned 21 on Monday, the early birthday gift was largely symbolic, as he did not score or record any statistics in his brief time on court. His squad thrashed LeBron James’ team 121-87 to tie the overall series at 3-3.

Leaf scored a career high of 17 points on October 20, but as the season progressed, his time on court has been greatly reduced.

The power forward rookie was picked by the Indiana Pacers in the first round of the NBA draft last June. He was selected No. 18 in the first round of the draft, leaving UCLA college after one year.

Leaf was born in Tel Aviv and lived there for the first two years of his life while his father, Brad Leaf played in the Israeli premier league.

Brad Leaf spent 17 years in Israel, playing for Maccabi and Galil Elyon and winning the league Most Valuable Player award once.

In 2015, TJ Leaf played for the Israel national Under-19 team, an experience he said helped mature him.

“Not having any family there, being in a different culture, not knowing anybody going in – and a lot of [the other players] speak a different language – it grew me up a lot culture-wise and maturity-wise. But it was awesome being there, where I’m from, and just having a good time,” he said. “And I met a lot of good people there. It was just a fun trip, and I’d love to do it again.”

In making it to the NBA, Leaf had joined Omri Casspi, who was the first Israeli to join the NBA. Gal Mekel, who became the second Israeli in the league in 2013, lasted only a few months with the Dallas Mavericks and New Orleans Pelicans before going back to Israel.



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>>Continued from page 10

7. What was your biggest challenge in writing this book and how did you overcome it?

The hardest part of any book is just finishing it. Also, getting the ending right and getting the action bits right. In the earlier drafts of this book, the magical elements were a lot stronger and wilder. The original ending was a grand magical finale, completely over the top. It was great fun, but it was also too much. In the various rewrites, I worked to strengthen the detective story and rely less on magic to create the tension and resolution.

8. Describe your relationship with the characters in your book and what they mean/t to you?

To be honest, I wrote this book so long ago – publishing can be a long thing! I had three non-fiction books published in between finishing *Knucklebone* and having it on sale! Ian and Reshma and Ma Rejoice are familiar but not top of mind for me right now. When I was writing, I had different relationships with them. If I write the planned sequel, I'll have to meet and greet them all over again.

9. What type of book do you love reading and why?

It depends on the work I'm doing. If I'm writing fiction, I generally don't read too much fiction at the same time, because it creates a competing voice. But I love fiction and I save it up for when I can read. My favourites are science fiction and fantasy, detective thrillers and a mix of other literature. And I read a lot of non-fiction, for work (journalism work sometimes, and I am also doing my PhD) and for pleasure. I judge books by their covers and by their opening pages. If the first sentence, first paragraph interests me, I'll carry on. I'm currently reading a children's/teenager's history of Shostakovich's writing of the Leningrad Symphony (Symphony for the City of the Dead). It's really brilliant.

10. What message or lesson did you want your readers to take home after reading your book?

I don't know if I overtly thought of a message while writing this book. It was more about exploring ways of understanding why people are so capable of such horrible things.

11. Does being Jewish ever come into or influence your writing work?

Absolutely. My first published fiction was a short story about a group of teenage Jewish boys in Joburg who created a Golem. I'm more interested in that aspect of Judaism than, say, the more traditional memoir or kvetch.

12. Some writers feel a real sense of loss at completing a book – what did it feel like to you?

Relief. So I can get on to the next one(s). I feel that sense of loss when I finish reading a great book – because the story has ended. But I don't feel that when I write.

■ MANDY WIENER
1. In a nutshell, describe yourself.

I'm generally quite laid-back and easy-going (I hope), but once I've put my mind to something, I can be quite stubborn and persistent. Perhaps that explains my vocation as an investigative journalist. I am naturally quite curious and am fascinated by current affairs and unravelling complex characters.

2. What drew you to writing a book?

I've always loved books and have been passionate about reading since I was a young child. I think it's an inherent thing. I grew up in a house surrounded by books and my mother always took me to the library. I think the natural progression was to want to write a book. And once the bug bites, you keep going back for more.

3. What is your background and how has that influenced your writing in general and your writing in your latest book, *Ministry of Crime: An Underworld Explored*?

My background is as a hard news reporter, having spent over a decade at Eyewitness News and on radio. Radio reports are generally quite short, so I found that I had so much more information that I wanted to include but it didn't fit into a 40-second report. I am all about the detail, and that needed to find a place to live – and I felt this would best be in a book. In my latest book, there is a considerable amount of detail and a multitude of interviews and voices – and there is no way that could have translated on radio, hence the decision to write a book.

4. What inspired this particular book?

I have reported on the events of *Ministry of Crime* for the last decade or so. I lived and breathed it all. So much of it was already in my head and I had the access necessary to put together a book. It's such a complex story, and while people may follow the individual stories, they don't grasp the holistic picture, and that is what I tried to do in *Ministry of Crime*. I attempted to weave together different strands of the narrative and tell the parallel stories of the criminal underworld and the criminal justice system.

5. How long did it take you to write and what was your process?

It took about two years to research and to write. I started off by doing dozens and dozens of interviews, and this was very time-consuming. I then had to craft the various interviews into a narrative that flowed and made sense. There was a very intensive editing process because the book felt too long initially and very complex. For me, editing is a real art and moulding the narrative takes a lot of care and finesse. I was also doing interviews right up until the very last minute to ensure that I jammed everything in and kept it as up to date as possible.

6. What kind of research was involved and how did you go about it?

The primary research that I did was sitting face to face with people and getting their versions on record. I wanted a multitude of voices on the pages. There are various truths, so I wanted the reader to be able to be informed and

determine what they believe the truth is. I also did a great deal of reading and going back into the archives and studying news reports, affidavits and court records.



Mandy Wiener

7. What was your biggest challenge in writing this book and how did you overcome it?

The biggest challenge was probably distilling all of the detail into a palatable narrative. There is so much complexity and I wanted to be sure that people actually understood what was going on. The other challenge was access, but fortunately, many of the people I asked for interviews were co-operative.

8. Describe your relationship with the characters in your book and what they mean/t to you?

Some of the characters I have known for many years because I've been reporting on these stories for so long. You get to know people and know about their lives. Other characters I had never met before, but fortunately, they had read my work and were amenable to being

interviewed. I made a point of ensuring they knew what was coming and what the book entailed, and I tried to be as fair as possible.

9. What type of book do you love reading and why?

I generally only read local non-fiction. There is so much great stuff out there from my colleagues at the moment. But I do occasionally need to switch off and I love a good novel.

10. What message or lesson did you want your readers to take home after reading your book?

I don't want people to be entirely disillusioned by this book. I can understand that people might read it and feel like the criminal justice system is so broken that they have no hope and just despair. I want people to read it and become aware so that it doesn't happen again. It's crucial that we are active citizens and that we make a noise when we see the cycle repeating itself.

11. Does being Jewish ever come into or influence your writing work?


I honestly don't think so.

12. Some writers feel a real sense of loss at completing a book – what did it feel like to you?

Utter relief. This was a long and very intensive process, so there was no feeling of loss, just relief that it was finally out there.

Daphne Kuhn presents
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What makes a kosher restaurant work?

JORDAN MOSHE

Some kosher restaurants in Johannesburg are around only briefly and others last so long, they become institutions. Why?

The longevity of a kosher establishment seems to depend on certain non-negotiable conditions. Chief among these is customer service.

“The first impression at an eatery is made by its service,” says Judy Mindel, full-time mashgicha and function manager at Gary Friedman Caterers. “It determines so much of the success of a meal.”

Although they commend certain restaurants on the quality of their food and their popularity, Friedman and Mindel – who both understand food and are consumers of kosher restaurant food – believe that service standards can improve at kosher restaurants.

“Interpersonal connections with customers are sorely lacking,” says Mindel. “Getting the attention of waiters at some places is almost impossible, and often going to the counter to settle the bill is preferable to waiting for the waiter to bring it.”

Situated in the heart of Glenhazel, Frangelicas restaurant has been in existence for 10 years and is one of the longest-running brands in our community. Owners Simon and Elana Godley believe that the key to a restaurant’s survival is its goodwill and its efforts to support its customers. “We feel that Frangelicas



is a hub in the community, a place where people know your name and where you feel you belong,” says Elana.

“We follow up on all our complaints,” says Simon. “When we have done something wrong, we address it. Even when we’ve done nothing. Sometimes people don’t like a change in a recipe and don’t welcome innovation. Even then we apologise and maintain consistency with what people want and expect. That is key.”

Customers can be difficult to deal with, adds Elana. “We know that it can be difficult to serve Jewish customers. Our customers want immediate gratification where food is concerned, and you can never expect

a hungry person to be rational. As unreasonable as their behaviour might be, we try to meet their demands.”

When a kosher community is limited in its choice of restaurants, it is likely that competition would be a key driver in an eatery’s performance. Not so, says Elana. “A restaurant needs to up its game every single day and compete with the standards it set the day before. The desire to grow is a motivational issue from within and is not dependent on competition. When you base your performance on your competition, you take your customers for granted and business is bound to fail.”

Instead of competing, she maintains that restaurants would

do better to coordinate with one another. “Outside the kosher industry, restaurants survive through collaboration,” Elana says. “Inside, it’s all driven by competition. The truth is that if restaurants focus on their key areas of expertise, stop trying to do everything and co-operate with one another constantly, they can all succeed.”

Other restaurateurs disagree. Based in Glenhazel for 15 years, Michelos Pizzeria caters for the kosher community. “Simply being kosher used to be enough,” says manager Justin Baskin. “However, every year is tougher than the next. While kosher establishments should avoid being enemies, it’s not necessary to co-ordinate and strategise jointly. It’s

enough to be on good terms and to know one another, as we all face the same issues.

“People keep kosher by choice, and with a limited budget for eating out, they want to get value for their money and experience no dissatisfaction. As a family restaurant, we aim to cater for the needs of every family member and we listen to our customers, even when they’re wrong. Jewish customers are challenging to deal with at times – they won’t remember the 80 good meals they had, but will never forget the one when the waiter forgot to add something to the dish. Every time, we apologise and give them what they want.

“Although these people account for less than 5% of our clients overall, if we don’t treat them like this, business would die. If we approach everything with consistency, from customer relations to the food, we stand a better chance.

“A restaurant fails or succeeds based on its own merit. We can never rest on our laurels. Restaurants today are difficult to open and run. Rather than expand into different areas, focusing on one strength can make a restaurant great.”

Elana and Friedman agree, saying: “Everyone is trying to do everything these days to survive. But you cannot be a jack of all trades. Choose one area and invest all your efforts in it.”

Adds Friedman: “You need to know your product, your people and your place.”

He mentions that while the Beth Din’s change of policy regarding the awarding of kashrut licences is a welcome change, it opens the floodgates for restaurants to step into areas about which they know nothing.

“An open market makes for healthy competition,” he says. “It keeps us on our toes. But when anyone can do anything and there’s no control, standards can drop and quality will suffer.”

Restaurants seem cognisant of the limited budgets people have. Says Baskin: “Sadly, we do operate for profit as a business, and people need to understand this. We are forced to put our prices up every year because of our supply cost increases. I won’t deny that R107 for a salad is not cheap, but if you consider its components and the effort is requires, it makes sense. Still, we are always looking for cost-effective routes, but will not compromise on quality.”

“We don’t only transact with our customers,” says Elana. “The truth is that we lose money in trying to offer the best we can to the Jewish community and try to meet their needs as individuals.”

The restaurant business is tough, but it is clear that knowing one’s market is vital.

“Many people try very hard to get things right in a business, but don’t always get the reward,” say the Godleys. “We have been blessed with success. The restaurant trade is a work in progress. It’s all about continual innovation and establishing a sound philosophy on which to do business. The basics matter.”

Showing Israel as a culinary destination

JORDAN MOSHE

We are all used to enjoying a falafel or shwarma, but for many of us, that is the extent of our exposure to Israeli cuisine. While we may be familiar with signature Italian or French dishes, how many of us know the names of gourmet Israeli foods, let alone how to prepare them?

“When people are exposed to Israel, they usually see one of two things: negative news coverage about something bad Israel has been accused of doing, or the typical features of Israeli culture,” explains Yossi Elad, a gourmet chef and proud Sabra.

“I have a chance to show people a little of the true Israel, what we do besides fighting and falafel. I can let them experience Middle Eastern cuisine in a way they never have before.”

Here at the invitation of his close friend, Israeli ambassador Lior Keinan, Elad – together with Chemdat Goldberg and Ori Eliat – was part of a trio of Israeli chefs who served up an Israeli feast at the HOD Hall in Orchards this past Monday.

The Israeli embassy hosted ‘A Taste of Israel’ event in celebration of Israel’s 70th birthday. Keinan contacted Elad and arranged the dinner months ago.

“People ask me how I define Israeli cuisine,” says Elad. “I always say that we take the diverse culinary tapestry that the Middle East has to offer, and we give it our unique interpretation. Mostly, this means giving the dishes one essential ingredient: chutzpah.”

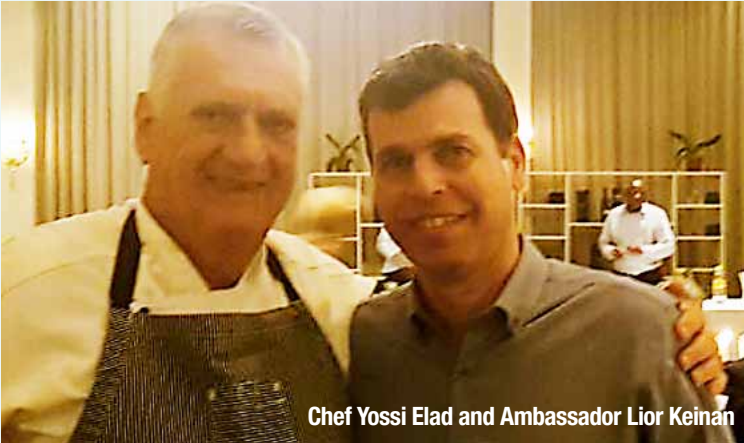
With restaurants in Jerusalem and London, and soon in Frankfurt, Yossi Elad has emerged as a key figure in Israel’s recent gastronomic revolution.

Israel is the ideal place from which culinary innovation can emerge, Elad explains. “We are a

Kibbutz Galuyot, an ingathering of exiles from different places all around the world,” he says. “We inherit different food traditions from our parents and give them new life by mixing them with other traditions and creating something different.”

Elad believes that the food can illustrate what Israeli values really are. “For an Israeli, a meal is not only about the food, but about the company. When we sit around a table together, strangers can feel like a family. We share something special together.”

What Elad aims to achieve by hosting events such as this one is to show the world that Israeli cooking can be taken just as seriously as French or Italian. “I want people to know that Israelis can cook,” he laughs. “Jews in South Africa are very proud of Israel, and this event can give them another reason to feel proud of it. The reality is



that people around the world are eager to embrace Israeli food. There are Israeli restaurants in Paris that are always full, and one must book two months in advance for a table.”

Together with the staff of Gary Friedman Caterers, the Israeli trio served up a three-course meal consisting of signature Middle Eastern dishes. Starting with moussaka – a cooked salad dish of aubergine and fish, served with spicy tahini and green salad on lafa – most diners’ palates were

initially uncertain of the foreign piquant flavour.

More recognisable were the salads that followed, which included a fried bulgur and onion salad, chickpea and pomegranate salad and Israeli arisa.

These were accompanied by a mamlouba. A traditional Arab dish, it includes meat, rice and fried vegetables placed in a pot, which is then flipped upside down when served, hence the name, which translates as “upside down”.

As the dinner progressed, Elad ambled through the dining room assessing the reaction to his creations.

“I’m never insulted if people tell me they don’t enjoy a dish,” he admits. “I do what I can in preparing a dish, but the rest is up to those who eat it.”

Reactions to his dishes varied. For many, some of the tastes were too harsh or acerbic. Others welcomed the flavours and returned to Elad for seconds.

The evening concluded with malabi for dessert, a coconut milk-based pudding topped with grenadine, rosewater and pistachio.

Having been on his feet for over 16 hours preparing the meal, Elad seemed pleased with the overall success of the evening. Despite the fact that he turns 70 on his next birthday, he remains enthusiastic about what he does, and looks forward to his upcoming stops in Frankfurt, France, London and

Singapore.

Expressing his hope that South Africans’ interest in Israeli food proves to be no mere passing trend, Elad looks forward to seeing signature Israeli dishes be a part of what he calls the “culinary universe”, alongside Italian, Greek and others. “Everyone can take something out of the kitchen,” he explains. “Cooking is about art, not just making food. It’s part of us and our identities, and that’s something we should always cherish.”

Rosie Motene is kept grounded by her conversations with Hashem

MIRAH LANGER

She is a household name in South Africa, but few know that Judaism has been the thread linking the many disparate, yet distinct, life experiences for actress and businesswoman Rosie Motene. She describes herself as “born to the Bafokeng nation, but raised in a Jewish household”. She went on to convert to Progressive Judaism in her 30s.

“Judaism is conversations with Hashem; it is a form of grounding and a form of spirituality that when I’m alone, I’m not alone,” muses Motene. She has spent decades in the public spotlight as a television and theatre actress, and has also branched out into working as a producer, radio host, talent agent and human rights activist.

“For me, it is about that comfort and that refuge,” Motene told the *SA Jewish Report* during an interview in the run-up to the release of her memoir, *Reclaiming the Soil: A black girl’s struggle to find her African self*.

In the book, Motene traces her search for a sense of belonging and identity during the time when South Africa was shifting from the constraints of apartheid to the promise of a new, post-apartheid era.

It was against this backdrop that Motene began delving into her upbringing. Her mother worked as a domestic worker for a Jewish family in Johannesburg who offered to raise Rosie as one of their own.

Growing up, Motene struggled to reconcile the repercussions of this decision. “People I tried to get advice from would say: ‘Well, just be grateful for what they [the Jewish foster family] did for you.’ For so many years I heard that.

“It’s not that I’m not grateful, but I also have a right to feel this [need to find my identity] and to ask questions and say: ‘Let’s talk about it.’ I’m a grown woman. And for a person who is so vocal on so many issues, I felt voiceless.”

It was from this position that Motene came to write her book, recounting a journey of over 10 years which she describes as a process of healing.

With her book being launched this week, Motene acknowledges that the way it is interpreted or received by others may not be plainsailing.

Motene says she has had to learn to forgive herself. She used to feel guilty about how she had treated her biological mother. She describes their relationship in the book as being, at times in her childhood, like that of a “mistress and servant”.

“[There were] things I did that were not right, but a lot of those actions were when I was a baby and I didn’t know any better.”

Motene is grateful that in adulthood she has had the opportunity to rectify the situation with her biological parents, with whom she lived until a few years ago. Her father died recently and she continues to strengthen her relationship with her mother.

Reclaiming the Soil is dedicated to her biological parents. In a passage in the introduction, she pays tribute to them. “I’m fortunate for my loving parents, who sacrificed their daughter and their parenthood over me and watched as another family of a different race, culture and religion raised me. I’m most fortunate for the love, resilience and humility that they, my biological family, taught me,” she writes with bittersweet poignancy.

Motene says she has never been given a clear explanation of why the agreement for her to be fostered by her mother’s employers was



made. Her book details the push and pull of inclusion and exclusion she felt between these two worlds.

Perhaps the naming in the book of both her foster and biological mother best illustrates this entanglement and complexity. While mainly pseudonyms are used in the book, Motene calls her biological mother “Mama”. Yet she notes that until she was in her 20s, she used to call her mother “Boomba”, a nickname coined by one of her foster sisters as a reference to “Fatty Boom Boom”.

And in the book, Motene calls her foster mother “the mother figure”.

“She was still my mother for a very long time... You can’t take that away... She held that figure,” Motene says, explaining her choice of name.

Part of the battle for belonging is also seen in Motene’s relationship to Judaism.

In the book, she describes feeling deep pain when, as a child, she was told that she could not follow all the Shiva practices after her foster father died. She also reflects on always feeling a “stronger pull towards understanding what Judaism was. Growing up in a Jewish home was more than just a religious thing for me, it was how we lived. I loved Judaism for its celebration of life and that every year we are made to repent for our sins,” she writes.

During her interview with the *SA Jewish Report*, Motene describes how a stranger on an airplane once came up to her and told her she must be her foster mother’s daughter because “your mannerisms are the same and you sound exactly like her: The only thing is that you are a black woman”.

As such, she feels it was inevitable that she would find her way into Judaism as an adult. “In terms of my following a Jewish way of life, it’s how I was brought up. It makes sense.”

When Motene was in her 30s, she was invited to give a talk at the Beit Emanuel Progressive Synagogue in Parktown. Immediately, the warm environment and the equality practised at the shul impressed her. “I was also yearning for some form of guidance and anchoring. In my eyes, in my conversations with Hashem, I wanted to do this; it was essential for me.”

In 2011, Motene completed her conversion to Judaism through the Progressive Jewish community. What feels so precious about her spiritual connection, she says, is that it is “one thing that no one can ever take away from me”.

Describing herself as “content where I am, but still searching”, Motene adds that she hopes to further explore how African spirituality fits into her identity alongside Judaism. “Where I’m sitting as Rosie, the African woman, there is still much more I need to discover about myself – but being in my 40s, I have also discovered that there is no rush.”

One of Motene’s most treasured memories

of Judaism was the time she spent in Uganda with the Abayudaya people, one of Africa’s oldest Jewish communities, during a recent Rosh Hashanah celebration.

“It’s these beautiful green rolling hills and these huts and the rabbi comes out and screams, ‘Shana Tova’, and you see people coming out of the huts... Going into the synagogues, there are only black people. Everything is in Hebrew and their reading is impeccable,” says Motene, with a wry admission that her own Hebrew was not up to scratch with theirs.

Spending the Yom Tovim with the community was inspiring: “It just takes you back to humility.” On the subject of South Africa’s Jewish community, Motene notes the split between right and left wing viewpoints about Israel as well as in addressing issues of race. She finds racism among some members of the community jarring, especially considering the history Jews have endured: “That’s why I get so confused when Jews are blatantly racist: It happened to you, so come on...”

A positive trend she notes in the community is that more secular Jews – many of whom she’s known from the entertainment industry – are returning to their religious roots. “I don’t know if it is [the pull of] Israel or if we are reaching a point where we need solidarity.”

With her book being launched this week, Motene acknowledges that the way it is interpreted or received by others may not be plainsailing. “Of course there will be repercussions. The truth is, when you write about yourself and you expose yourself, you’re going into areas in which people don’t want to go.” Yet, she says, she has come to believe that “my points are as valid as anyone else’s”.

Motene kept making adjustments to the book until close to its final print date. For example, she decided that the original cover, which showed hands clutching soil, needed to be changed. It now shows the silhouette of an African woman against a bright, striped orange background. When requesting the change, she’d said: “No, the cover is too dark – this is about my stepping into the light.”

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Digital dating: the trendy form of shidduch-making

MIRAH LANGER

“I love her sense of humour, how she laughs. When she laughs, it makes me want to laugh. I love her kind heart. I love that she is pretty. I love that she is generous. She is sensitive; she always takes other people into consideration; she’s warm...”

At that point, Michael Alhadeff’s soliloquy in tribute to his wife of nearly a year, Michal Lipschitz Alhadeff, has to be cut short as he could go on forever.

The comfortable ease with which Michael and Michal sit together in a coffee shop against the dusky Johannesburg skyline is an everyday moment that belies the incredible digital dating journey that saw them going from strangers to soulmates and got them here in the first place.

“They say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Well, yes, you do have to be a little insane to keep going on these dates,” says Michal, chuckling about her Internet experience.

“But in this case, there was a different result. That’s the proof that there has to be something to it. If technology is the way to find love, so be it,” she says.

Michael, 45, and Michal, 39, are just one of many Jewish couples turning technology into a new match-making tradition. There are many dating sites, including quite a few for Jewish singles.

While dating site JDate is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, an app like JSwipe is just four years old. The app works in a similar way to Tinder: the user sorts through profile pictures and information, linked to Facebook, before deciding whether to swipe left to dismiss the match, or right to show interest.

When both users select each other on JSwipe, an animation appears depicting

“Have the courage to show up vulnerably, with an open heart and an open mind. People today are so guarded, it’s hard to tell who they really are behind that. Show up fully, authentically and unapologetically as yourself.”

either a Hora dance, complete with chair being lifted as in a wedding ceremony; or a dreidel landing on the lucky gimmel spin.

There are about 5 000 users from South Africa across the JDate and JSwipe dating platforms, with a 60/40 split of men to

women. The largest proportion of users are aged 20 to 40.

It was on this platform that in March 2016, Michal, originally from Cape Town, and Michael, who is based in Pretoria, met.

“We are both outliers; we weren’t raised in Johannesburg amid a massive network, with mothers and aunts and sisters looking [for

a match]. So, our meeting the way we did makes sense in terms of who we are.”

Michael is grateful that it allowed him to find a Jewish partner, despite being somewhere beyond the boerewors curtain. “Although I’ve been stranded in Pretoria for the past 30 years, I went to a Jewish school; I come from a Jewish family. Deep inside, I never lost my Jewish identity. And when I eventually found my Jewish partner, that sense of identity was reignited.

“I remembered why and how much I want to be Jewish and have a Jewish home.”

From their first date at a pub, which Michal wryly says was “very romantic, overlooking Oxford Road in Rosebank”, the connection was sparked: “It felt like I was picking up a conversation with a person I’d known my whole life.”

And the most recent development in their relationship? “There’s a baby on the way!” says a delighted Michal.

Corresponding from New York, founder of JSwipe David Yarus affirms that stories like Michael and Michal’s are the intended outcome of his digital platform.

Yarus, aged 31, founded the app after his own experience of trying to meet a “nice Jewish girl”. He found that most Jewish singles events were “awkward and uncomfortable – everyone was looking around the room and checking out everyone else while you were in conversation with them! No one was fully present.

It was just weird.”

Around the same time, the first “swiping-style” dating app, Tinder, came on the market. Yarus saw the opportunity to use this “innovative new form of technology” to connect the Jewish community.

“We have a purpose and a passion: to create the space for people to connect with other Jewish singles from across the world or their local community by leveraging the latest technology to make this fun, effective and easy,” he explains.

Yarus has this to say to people who use dating apps or sites: Once you meet someone you’re interested in, get offline. “That is where the magic happens. No one wants a penpal.”

“Have the courage to show up vulnerably, with an open heart and an open mind. People today are so guarded, it’s hard to tell who they really are behind that. Show up fully, authentically and unapologetically as yourself.”

If you are even a bit curious about someone and you have a great date, he adds, “lean in to the unknown. See what happens.”

Not everyone has had a happy experience. Megan, in her early 50s, said that when she first joined JSwipe, out of the 85 “likes” she got, she soon realised most of them were fraudulent.

The first sign of a con was that while many said they were in America or Italy, the GPS location recorded by the app showed that they were about 2 800 miles away. “The only city 2 800 miles away is Lagos, Nigeria.”

A reverse



DEBBIE & ROB

Nevertheless, a chat on the site ensued. “About a week later, we had our first Skype date, which was cool,” she says.

“He made me an origami flower and we each had a glass of wine over our computer screens. That is how we met.

“Two months later, I moved to Israel. We lived together and we got married. Now we’ve just bought our first apartment together. We have three cats and it’s great!”

Lori and Ilan

Lori and Ilan met on Jewishmingle.com, but their first contact in the real world was not promising.

“The first time he called me, he was driving home and as he arrived home, there was a domestic disturbance involving someone else living on the property. He said: ‘Hi, I can’t talk right now because the police are at my house. I’ll call you back.’

“I was at a friend’s house. She asked: ‘Who was that on the phone?’ I replied: ‘Some nutcase. I doubt I’ll talk to him again.’

“Now, 13 years and two children later, things turned around rather wonderfully.”

Debbie and Rob

Debbie and Rob were one of the first online couples, having met on the Internet 21 years ago when Debbie lived in Cape Town and Rob, in Canada.

“I bought a computer and hooked up to the

Internet, not knowing exactly what the Internet was or how email worked,” says Debbie.

“On my first day with the computer I searched under ‘Jewish’ to see what this Internet could find. The first thing that popped up in search results was Jewish singles. The website was basically a list of names and dates of birth – no pictures.

“I picked one name from the list (Rob from Canada) and wrote: ‘We will probably never meet. I just wanted to see how email works.’ He wrote back, and we found we had a lot in common.”

Emails and chats ensued. “After a few months, he sent me a picture by regular post and I sent him a picture of a topless African woman. A few months later, we met in Israel for our first date, and a year and a bit after that, we got married in Israel.”



MICHAL & MICHAEL

search of their profile photographs showed that they were taken off other sites or from advertisements. The dead giveaway was the grammar used by these men. For example, when asked what religion they were, their response would be: “I’m a Jewish.”

Asked about this, Yarus says: “User security is a top priority and there is a process to report, review and block those showing ‘non-kosher’ behaviour.”

But singletons, take heart: Here are a few more love bytes across cyberspace:

Leigh and Netser

After being matched together on the OkCupid dating website in 2015, Leigh, now 29, thought 31-year-old Netser’s profile was appealing, but the possibility of a long-distance relationship was not.



LORI & ILAN AND THEIR CHILDREN

Simchas: so similar, yet so different



Aliya – the good, the bad and the meshuga

Benita Levin

“There’s nothing like a wedding in Israel,” I was told by several friends living here.

“How different can a traditional Jewish wedding be?” I’d asked, curious to find out why they were adamant that the chuppah experience in this country would be unique. “You’ll see,” I was told. “It’s just different.”

To be fair, I’ve never been to a wedding I didn’t love. It makes no difference whether the ceremony is Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu or non-denominational. Two people have chosen to spend the rest of their lives together – that alone is reason to share in their joy.

It’s always fascinating seeing different cultures and traditions, hearing different songs or hymns and joining in different types of dances. It’s a celebration of love, hope and the future, and being a part of that is always special.

We’ve been very blessed to share in three weddings since becoming olim chadashim: one in Jerusalem, one in Modi’in and one in Tel Aviv. Each was moving and memorable in its own way, with certain obvious differences from the traditional weddings we’ve shared in South Africa, including our own.

Bedekking

One of the most special memories of our wedding in Durban, many years ago, was the bedekking in a small room adjacent to the shul hall. My husband took the veil off

my head in front of our immediate family, as tradition has it, to “check” that he was marrying the correct sister. We then went inside the synagogue for a formal marriage ceremony.

In all three traditional Orthodox wedding simchas we’ve been to in Israel, this bedekking, or “checking” of the bride, takes place in front of all the guests in a packed room before the actual wedding ceremony. There is much singing – and crying – as we all watch the groom approach the bride and slowly remove the veil. It is a public, emotional and festive moment.

The chuppah ceremony

Our chuppah ceremony was in a synagogue in Durban – the same one I’d had my batmitzvah in years before, and the same one my husband had his brit milah in, decades before our wedding day. The choir sang from the bimah and the service was formal and, obviously, very moving for us.

The ceremonies we’ve attended in Israel have all been held at the reception venues, including one on a deck overlooking the ocean. The ceremonies were far more informal and jovial, in some cases with the groom’s friends “heckling” affectionately

Smile of the week

Walking out of a hotel bathroom cubicle to see an elderly man washing his hands at the basin. He looked surprised and asked me in Hebrew if this was the ladies’ bathroom. I replied: “Yes, I think so.” At that point another woman walked into the room. He shrugged and replied: “Perhaps you are right.”

during the ceremony.

Seven men were called up under the chuppah to each recite one of the Sheva Brachot (seven blessings). In each case, friends and family cheered, with light exchanges taking place between the bridal couple and the seven men. It was so refreshingly different and, simply put, a lot of fun!

What, no formal speeches?

Formal speeches can form a rather lengthy part of many weddings. Usually the groom and the best man – and sometimes the bride – deliver speeches. And often there is a representative from each side of the family who offers a toast or shares anecdotes about the bridal couple.

Here, this is not the case. So much so, one father of the bride told me he had prepared a speech but was told it wasn’t necessary. One groom took the microphone late into the evening and took just two minutes to informally thank everyone. No master of ceremonies, no lectern, no awkward silences after inappropriate jokes have been shared – just a non-stop dancing celebration.

Let’s get this party started

At the end of the last wedding we went to in Tel Aviv, the “older” guests – over the age of 35 – started to leave at about midnight. Turns out that at 1am, hamburgers and chips were served for all the young couple’s friends, who carried on dancing into the early hours of the morning. And that late-night snack comes after delicious food has been served throughout the evening.

Can’t wait for the next wedding here!



- Sunday (May 6)
- Second Innings hosts Fiona Capstick, linguist and sworn translator in the High Court, on “Jewish Life in Arab Lands: The Jewish ‘Naqba’”. Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting starts promptly at 10:30. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres, 85 George Avenue, Sandringham. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors includes tea and light refreshments. Contact: Linda Fleishman on 011 532 9701.
 - JHGC hosts a screening of the film *Intent to Destroy*, in commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. Time: 17:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. Seats are limited. RSVP to dovi@jhbholocaust.co.za or phone 011 640 3100. Free admission, donations welcome.
- Monday (May 7)
- UJW hosts Joni Brenner, artist and lecturer at the Wits School of Fine Arts on “Making Marigold: Beaders of Bulawayo – Perspectives on African Artwork”. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office on 011 648 1053.
- Wednesday (May 9)
- Chabad House hosts the new Jewish Learning Institute series of courses, What Is?, with Rabbi Ari Kievman. The courses take place in the morning and in the evening, at two different venues. Drawing on the wisdom of Kabbalah, the most basic building blocks of existence are re-examined from the bottom up, revolutionising our understanding of life, reality and our place in the world. Lesson 1: Is the world real? Time: 09:45. Morning venue: Chabad House, 27 Aintree Ave, Savoy. Time: 19:15. Evening venue: Sandton Central Shul, 8 Stella Street, opposite the Gautrain. For more details, log on to www.jli.org.za, phone 011 440 6600 or email jli@chabad.org.za.
- Thursday (10 May)
- Temple Israel Heritage Centre is proud to host the public opening of the Biennial Conference of the South African Union For Progressive Judaism at corner Claim and Paul Nel Streets, Hillbrow at 18:30. Keynote address by Chief Justice Magoeng Magoeng. Followed by refreshments. R130 - Bookings before 7 May 2018 to rabbi.schell@betdavid.org.za or for enquiries: Reeva on 083-228-7777. Bus departs from Beit Emanuel at 17:15 sharp! Secure parking at Beit Emanuel.

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Balancing his two passions, sculpture and surgery, oh so deftly

JORDAN MOSHE

Some say that plastic surgeons are talented sculptors, but in Dr Laurence Anthony Chait’s case, this is literally true. He is an acclaimed sculptor and plastic surgeon.

His dual career journey is charted in his newly published book, *The Sculpture of Dr Laurence Anthony Chait: An Autobiographical Journey*.

“I was nine years old when I showed my mother a model of an elephant that I had made out of plasticine. She admired it and said that I was going to be a plastic surgeon or sculptor like Jack Penn – and that was that,” Chait tells the *SA Jewish Report*.

In 1973, Chait qualified as a plastic surgeon, specialising in cleft and palate surgery. His medical expertise has changed the lives of hundreds of people for the better.

Left untreated, a cleft lip or palate is a severe deformity which can affect everyday function, particularly speech. More than 350 of the procedures he has performed in the last 14 years have been on a pro bono basis.

It was during Chait’s medical internship in 1969 that he began experimenting with sculpture and creating various forms.

Chait believes that his artistic influence came from his father, a GP who enjoyed painting. Describing his father as a “tortured artist”, Chait says he would stay up until 4am, devoting his patience and time to his art. “It took him four years to complete one painting because of the attention he paid to its detail. It drove me nuts; I just wanted to see him finish it.”

Chait admits that he was a terrible painter, and found his artistic expression lay in sculpting because it could be self-taught and learned by experience. “No one told me that I had to do this or must not do that. When I sculpted, it didn’t matter to me if people liked what I created or not. I started with abstract forms and moved on to realistic ones as I started receiving commissions for different people, but to me the sculpture was always art.”

It was in 1975 that Chait first exhibited his work. The few pieces on display were small, concrete ones, and they were all sold by the time the exhibition was over.

As time passed, Chait received commissions which would see him bring iconic figures into artistic existence. Two of these are at the Johannesburg Zoo: Max the gorilla and Jock of the Bushveld. His bust of famed English architect Herbert Baker is in the beautiful grounds of Northwards House in Parktown. It was commissioned by the then Transvaal Institute of Architects, which used to have its offices here and was erected in 1992 to commemorate the centenary of Baker’s arrival in South Africa. Other creations are on display at Wits University, at various company headquarters and at Jewish installations. Chait’s pieces have earned him considerable renown, and have been auctioned off on several occasions, ending up in esteemed locations both here and overseas.

Art consultant Suzie Copperthwaite said Chait’s sculptures are popular

at auctions. “A number of works by Chait have been offered and sold at auction in South Africa, as well as in African-themed sales at Bonhams in London. In April 2009, a bronze edition mounted on a marble base, titled *Sunday in the Park Series IV*, sold for R40 949 on Bonhams’ Africa Now Auction.”

She explains that it is not just the price a work fetches that shows its value, but also if art dealers buy it to sell on. “A secondary market is important to the career of any artist as it speaks of desirability and ultimately, longevity. Values aside, only a fraction of professional artists develop and realise collectors’ resale markets for their work, and Chait is one of them.”

Chait humbly talks of his work being eclectic. “The range is so very diverse. But every single piece was fun to make and drew on both abstract and realistic concepts. Art was a release for me, and I was never concerned that it would detract from my professional life as a surgeon.”

In fact, Chait found that certain aspects of his profession were mirrored in his artistic pursuit. “I like to say that sculpting is my career and surgery is my hobby, but there are many ways in which the two overlap. Both require a vision, one that has a particular goal at its end. Art and medicine are inextricably interlinked.

“They differ in that a sculpture will stay the way it is carved, while changes made to living tissue may not unfold as planned. However, they share form similarities. It is unfortunate that you can throw out

a sculpture that doesn’t turn out the way you want, but can’t do the same with plastic surgery!”

The diversity of sculpting is well documented in the many photographs of Chait’s works that appear in his book. From more realistic forms to abstract figures, Chait’s works are drawn from different sources of inspiration and made of various materials.

“Realistic art is more constrained, while abstract gives one creative licence,” explains Chait. “But they are all forms of creation and each piece is unique. I find abstract art with no form whatsoever, such as pieces of random pipes and metal parts boring. As soon as discernible shapes are present, there is meaning in the piece.”

While he does sometimes have to think hard about a form that will work, Chait says he can draw inspiration from any interior or exterior source and pieces all elements together in his mind.

“The oxen figures which I’ve made were inspired by Johanna, our family maid who would sculpt such figures

for us when I was a child. I believe that there is no such thing as a new shape, but while the ones I use may not be new, the art I create blends all of them into something which has not existed before.”

Turning to his medical practice, he says: “Medicine is an art and involves

how you look at people. It is an art as much as it is a science. Pythagoras developed complex formulae while mixing medicines and contemplating the art of science.

“Unlike sculpting, plastic surgery is predictable up to a point, as scarring and such is beyond our control. A work of surgery must be pleasing to the individual – she or he needs to appreciate it.

“Art, however, has a larger audience and the end product can be liked or

disliked by many people – and it’s of no greater consequence. You never finish a sculpture and say: ‘Sorry, we had a complication!’”

Although he is now 75 years old, Chait continues to work as a plastic surgeon and an artist. Paging through his book, Chait is

astonished: “I look at the pictures and wonder when I did all of this,” he says. “Although I’ve created over 400 pieces, I have no clue where they all are today. What matters is that people are enjoying them somewhere. People still want art as much as they did in the past, and while the market may fluctuate, our South African art remains popular everywhere. South Africa has great artists, and we all need to keep the flag flying.”



Dr Laurence Chait with his granddaughters, Olivia and Sienna

Photographs question art’s true value

MATTHEW KROUSE

Two world-renowned artists with links to South Africa swung through Johannesburg on April 24 to launch a joint exhibition at the Goodman Gallery in Parkwood. Titled *Bandage the Knife not the Wound*, the exhibition of photographic collages by Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin is hailed as a very personal show, created by two constant collaborators who have spent over two decades making art about how the masses have responded to the spectacles of politics, religion and war.

Broomberg and Chanarin’s exhibition marks a decade of their representation by Goodman Gallery. As a pair, they were some of the first artists to be represented by the gallery when owner Liza Essers took over the space in 2008. This is their fifth exhibition for Goodman Gallery.

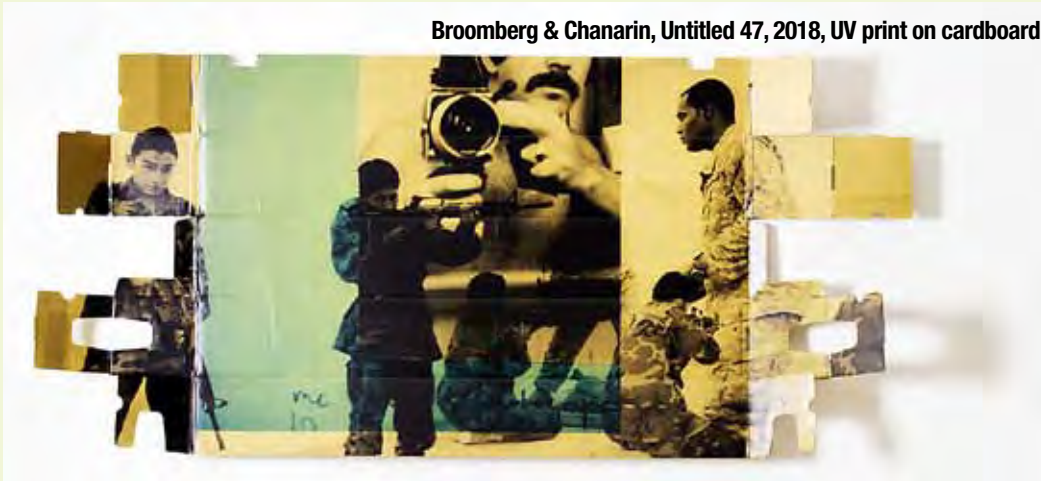
Their artistic practice involves placing already existent photographs in new contexts. These have often been found in world-famous archives, and by showing them in new ways, the artists highlight the alternative meanings pictures acquire in a 21st-century setting.

In the gallery statement we are told that Broomberg and Chanarin “engage in a forensic and paranoid interrogation of the medium of photography in search of its source code: the cultural, emotional and financial currency of photographs”.

The opening provided a rare opportunity for local art lovers to hear directly from Broomberg and Chanarin, who live in Berlin and London respectively. Given the conceptual basis upon which their artwork has evolved, an enlightening aspect of the discussion

was to witness how their work is a deeply personal response to the sense of alienation many feel in a world where surveillance, bullying and online trolling are fuelled by the mass dissemination of images.

It is this that has led to a wide appreciation of the pair’s complex oeuvre. Their work has graced the walls of London’s Tate Modern, the Centre Pompidou in Paris and elsewhere. The two men are professors of artistic photography at Hamburg’s University of Fine



Arts.

Chanarin, who spent the first seven years of his life in South Africa, said of the move from printed to digital mass-produced images: “We feel that the landscape is just changing under our feet. What’s disturbing is the way pictures are just fronts for a whole shadow that exists. Imagine that everyone has this aura of data hovering over their heads. Every photograph has that behind it. And it’s very frightening to think about how that is monetised and used, and distributed and exploited. So we are coming into making this work very uncertain as photographers.”

The exhibition itself is divided into two broad techniques of production. Some of the collages are printed onto unfolded, humble cardboard boxes; others are large wall panels printed with a UV printer that

“bakes” coloured ink onto flat surfaces.

But the point of the exhibition has been for the two artists, working in different European cities, to select images from their own enormous personal archives of photographs and to play an artistic game known as the Exquisite Corpse, a favourite of the bygone Surrealists.

In the old game each participant drew an image on a piece of paper, which was then folded. Then the next artist began a new drawing that was an extension of something unseen. This technique has served the artists perfectly long distance, using advanced techniques of photographic manipulation, and through modern-day computer connectivity.

Broomberg, who lived in South Africa into adulthood, lamented the loss of traditional values due to mass digital dissemination. “Usually an artwork would be defined by its absolute uniqueness...”

“Now we are in an age in which photography as a medium is about mass replication. Normally, some piece of artwork would be defined by how many museums it’s housed in, how many shows it has had, and its whole biography. Now the value is increased by the amount of low-res images that are distributed on social media.”

By playing G-d with their own set of images, the two are questioning the value of data in a formal gallery setting.

• *Bandage the Knife not the Wound is on at the Goodman Gallery, 163 Jan Smuts Avenue, Parkwood until May 26.*

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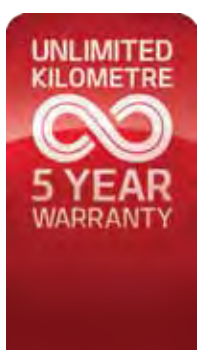


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Young and old celebrate Lag B'Omer

Torah Academy Primary School recently hosted 11 residents of Our Parents Home. The school's principal, Rabbi Motti Hadar, spoke to the guests about kindness and explained the festival of Lag B'Omer. This holiday, which is celebrated on the 33rd day of the Counting of the Omer, began on Wednesday evening and ended on Thursday evening. Old and young alike sang songs related to the festival and made cupcakes iced as Lag B'Omer bonfires.



Rae Goldberg, Connie Meyerowitz and Joyce Miller with Torah Academy Primary School pupils Shaya Unterslak, Tzvi Bronstein, Offir Elmaleh, Levi Von Zwiklitz and Dovid Medalie at a special morning in which the school hosted residents of Our Parents Home.

My Family Story winners are headed for Israel soon

Two pupils have been selected the winners of the My Family Story competition in South Africa. As a result, Cayla Dembo from King David Victory Park, and Avigail Rogoff from Yeshiva College will be flying to Israel at the beginning of June. Winning the trip is part of their prize.

The other exciting part? They will join a



special group of 50 school pupils worldwide to take part in a two-day celebration at Beit Hatfutsot (The Museum of the Jewish People) in Tel Aviv. The event takes place on Thursday, June 7 and Friday, June 8.

The museum's website describes the My Family Story competition as "a far-reaching

educational initiative" in which young participants in Israel and worldwide... embark on a fun and meaningful... international and multi-generational Jewish heritage project.

"Through rigorous research and inspiring creativity, the students produce a final art display, illustrating their personal exploration into their family roots and connection to the

greater story of the Jewish people.

"My Family Story goes beyond the typical family tree. It connects the younger generation, between 11 and 15 years old, to their personal stories, their family stories and the broader story of the Jewish people."

The winners' artistic displays will be unveiled for public viewing

at an exhibition housed at Beit Hatfutsot. This year's event is specially exciting for the scholars because of the 70th birthday of the State of Israel.

Cayla's winning presentation is called "Authors in the Family" and Avigail's is called "Fingerprints of the Soul".

Sydenham kids learn about Shavuot



Learning at the Shavuot Interest table are Piper Cohen, Josh Brest, Shayna Resnick and Jordan Lever

The upcoming chag of Shavuot, which begins on the eve of May 19, inspired a perfect learning opportunity for children at Sydenham Preschool's playschool. They learned about the Ten Commandments, the Seven Species, Har Sinai, Moshe, Bikkurim, dairy products, the concept of Tzedakah and more.

Sydenham Shul's weekly programme for young Jews

Sydenham Shul relaunched SpiritShul 'n Social last Tuesday night. It's a weekly learning and social programme catering for students and young professionals in the Johannesburg community. It offers an opportunity for young Jews to connect, discuss issues and socialise in a welcoming and relaxed environment.

"Our YoungJewishJoburg programmes cater for young adults in their 20s and 30s," explained Rabbi Yehuda Stern, rabbi of the Sydenham SpiritShul and director of the shul's Young Adults division. "This generation is the future of our community and it is our goal to find ways of including them in community life and engaging with them on topics and issues that are relevant to

their age and stage of life. This is the purpose of our Tuesday night programme."

The event was relaunched at Sydenham Shul's newly renovated Youth Centre (Bayit).

The guest speaker was Rabbi Shmuel Moffson, who delivered a motivating speech on the power of each individual to make a difference.

Afterwards, he challenged guests to a game of table tennis, while Rabbi Stern joined a doubles pool game.

- The SpiritShul programme continues this Tuesday night at 19:45. For more details contact Rabbi Stern at the Sydenham Shul office or at www.youngjewishjoburg.co.za.



Letters

THE SAJBD'S NATIONAL TREASURER MUST HAVE A CLEAN RECORD

Your article "The quandary of the Board of Deputies' treasurer" (April 27 issue) refers. I'm gobsmacked at the flaws in communal governance at the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) which have led to the candidacy of former national treasurer and Cape chairman Eric Marx to fill that same treasurer role which he vacated in disgrace six months ago.

At the time, Marx admitted to electoral misconduct in the Cape Board's election. His resignation was demanded by a group of five affiliates in Cape Town, and was confirmed by the Seligson Report.

This followed a year of scandals and controversies which dogged the Cape Board and were primarily centred on Marx's conduct. At that time, Marx also accepted a two-year ban from serving on the Cape Board. That ban will last until the end of 2019.

Now it emerges that the SAJBD is

considering re-appointing Marx. Can the reason be that there are no other Jewish chartered accountants in South Africa who haven't admitted to their own misconduct and dishonesty? I know the accounting profession in South Africa is in some disarray, following the KPMG and Nkonki debacles.

Has the accounting contagion affected the Jewish community so badly that there are no unblemished CAs who could be national treasurer of the SAJBD?

Jews in South Africa, who entrust their financial contributions to office bearers, should be able to expect more than the re-appointment of a tarnished figure, especially in a financial role which calls for supreme integrity.

Gilad Stern
Cape Town

Disclaimer: The letters page is intended to provide an opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed. Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not reflect the views of the *SA Jewish Report*. The editor is not obliged to use every letter and will not publish vitriolic statements or any letters with inappropriate content. Letters will be edited and - if need be - shortened.
Guidelines: Letters are limited to 400 words. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime phone number. Letters should be e-mailed to editorial@sajewishreport.co.za

LET'S RELAX ABOUT BEING JEWISH

We sometimes proclaim how proud we are to be Jewish, almost as if we are trying to convince ourselves of this fact. If we really felt such pride, there would be no need to say so.

We have much to be proud of. A letter this size cannot begin to describe the massive contributions our people have made. Never before has a nation so small contributed so much, and in so many areas. Ours is a history of biblical proportions. The world would be a different place without the Hebrew race.

We are the ultimate survivors. The Jewish people are amongst the oldest remaining nations who have survived from antiquity. All this, in spite of being exiled minorities in foreign lands during various eras.

People usually boast to compensate for feelings of insecurity, which offends others instead of impressing them. This is not our intention. Ideally, we would feel secure enough not to want to brag.

One of the negative effects of anti-Semitism has been on our morale. The fact that so many have wanted to destroy us is devastating. Yet has that really been the case and has it all been bad?

While we tend to focus on the worst, there have also been good times – even golden eras.

According to our great tradition, only one of the 70 original nations – the Amaleik – wanted to destroy us, not the majority of nations, as we often assume.

Only Haman (who was from the Amaleik) and Hitler wanted to destroy the Jewish race. All the others wanted us to join them (by conversion) and stopped most of the hatred when we did so.

It would be a victory for Hitler if we started to fear that the Holocaust is almost commonplace, even though it was unique and was by far the biggest tragedy to befall us.

Much anti-Semitism was inspired by the church, which has now changed its ways.

Commenting on a biblical interaction between the brothers Eisav and Yaakov, the rabbis said that Eisav hated Yaakov. This has been incorrectly understood to mean that all non-Jews hate us. Eisav does not represent all the Gentile nations. Such toxic beliefs are part of why depression and anxiety are so common amongst our people.

Let's lighten up!

Martin Zagnoev
Johannesburg

Is this the moment when everything changes?



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

In every nation, certain events are identified by historians, looking back, as tipping points that defined its character and soul. Israel’s wars – the War of Independence, the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War – are markers that gave Israelis and Jews the feeling that they weren’t doomed to forever be “strangers” in other peoples’ countries. Crucial moments in the Jewish soul. It doesn’t have to be war in the conventional sense. It could reside under the surface of everyday reality, as it does on this 70th anniversary of the founding of the state of

Israel. Anyone visiting Neve Tzedek – the artsy area in South Tel Aviv – last Friday night would have seen the incredible buzz of people, young and old, of all cultures and languages confidently enjoying themselves at cafes and strolling the streets. They might have been inspired by how far Israel has come and by the confidence of its citizens. Israeli flags hung on almost every street pole, from every window and on cars’ aerials. At the crowded shuk’s entrance, a man sang popular 1960s songs amidst the flags. But if you went into a café and listened to conversations, you might hear talk of the “war” going on just across the border, in the West Bank and Gaza, beyond the privileged Tel Aviv “bubble”. There is also talk of a new force in politics, not just to do with the shaky coalition Prime

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Maintaining the Jewish connection to Africa

Last week, Chaya Singer, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies’ (SAJBD’s) lobbyist in Parliament, returned from an 11-day programme to promote inter-religious dialogue in Nigeria. It was a rare opportunity to contribute a Jewish perspective on how to resolve what is emerging as one of post-colonial Africa’s most pressing challenges: the rise of religiously motivated violence and extremism.

Coming as she did from a country where freedom of religious belief and practice is scrupulously upheld, it was a sobering eye-opener to learn first-hand about the daily threats facing faith communities in other African countries.

We all tend to take this somewhat for granted; indeed, the extent to which Jews in South Africa are able to practise their religion without being disadvantaged compares favourably with the situation even in Western democratic nations.

For many of Chaya’s fellow delegates, it was the first time they had interacted with someone of the Jewish faith. In a small but meaningful way, therefore, her presence demonstrated how Jews remain a part, albeit rather a small part, of the greater African community.

For many centuries, there was a large and thriving Jewish presence in the North African region, but few Jews outside South Africa live on the continent today. While much reduced compared with previous years, there nevertheless remains a Jewish presence in various southern African countries.

In the early 1990s, the SAJBD took the lead in establishing the African Jewish Congress (AJC) to represent these communities. Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, the board’s long-serving Rabbi to the SA Country Communities, also acts as the CEO and spiritual leader of the AJC, whose head offices are based in Johannesburg within the administrative structure of the SAJBD.

The AJC, an affiliate to the World Jewish

Congress, helps keep Africa connected with the greater Jewish world. This week, Rabbi Silberhaft attended the 94th birthday of Zambia’s former president, Kenneth Kaunda, a warm friend of the Zambian Jewish community who always acknowledged the enormous pioneering contribution that Jews had made to the young Zambian state.



Above Board Shaun Zagnoev

Restorative justice preferable to punitive sanctions
As reported in last week’s issue of this paper, the board facilitated a guided tour of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre for someone who had been found guilty of tweeting grossly anti-Semitic comments against members of our community. The individual concerned had apologised unequivocally for his actions, and the visit formed part of an educational and rehabilitative process that he was required to undergo.

From the board’s point of view, it is always preferable to resolve anti-Semitic incidents in this manner, as long as there is a genuine willingness on the part of the offender to acknowledge wrongdoing, apologise for it and resolve not to repeat such behaviour.

That said, in the event of the offender refusing to apologise but instead standing by his or her offending comments, we will not hesitate to pursue the matter through official channels, including the courts.

This process inevitably takes a good deal longer, but as was shown in such long-running hate speech cases as those against Radio 786 and Congress of SA Trade Unions spokesperson Bongani Masuku, the board is more than prepared to dig in for the long haul until a satisfactory outcome has been achieved.

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

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is holding together amidst scandals. No, this is about a potent recent incident: the morality of Israeli soldiers shooting and killing unarmed protesters on March 30 at the Gaza border during protests there. This started a train of events Israel seems unable to stop.

That event may be what historians will identify as the point when even ardent believers in the justice of the Jews’ statehood could not excuse its actions. This could, in some respects, be when Israel lost something in its soul.

Such markers in a nation’s character don’t have to be bloody. In the United States, the Rosa Parks incident triggered a wave of protests that reverberated throughout that country. Parks was a black woman who refused to surrender her seat to a white male passenger on a Montgomery, Alabama bus in 1955.

The flurry that the incident generated became a symbol of the indignities black people were constantly subjected to, affecting the soul of the nation and its sense of morality. Parks is internationally recognised as the “mother of the modern-day civil rights movement” in America. Everyone knows the name Rosa Parks.

Other tipping points affecting inner, personal feelings in the US include the terrorist attacks of September 11 in 2001, which future historians

might one day interpret as the beginning of the third world war.

For the new South Africa, the 2012 killings at Marikana will probably qualify as the tipping point for negative perceptions about the ANC, as the 1960 Sharpeville massacre was for the apartheid government.

Sometimes tipping points are contradictory. South Africa’s difficult situation today regarding rising racial tensions, inequality and poverty may suggest that the much-heralded 1994 democratic elections may not have been the dawn of a new, bright era. In fact, future historians may see it as the beginning of a new decline of South Africa into a corrupt, bankrupt country. What a tragedy, after the bitter struggle that was waged here.

Another glance at the buzz in Neve Tzedek reveals that behind the façade of joy and laughter lies the uncomfortable knowledge that something much more difficult and complex is playing out. How to recapture the moral high ground after incidents such as the shooting of unarmed civilians is no less of a struggle for Israel than winning a war.

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

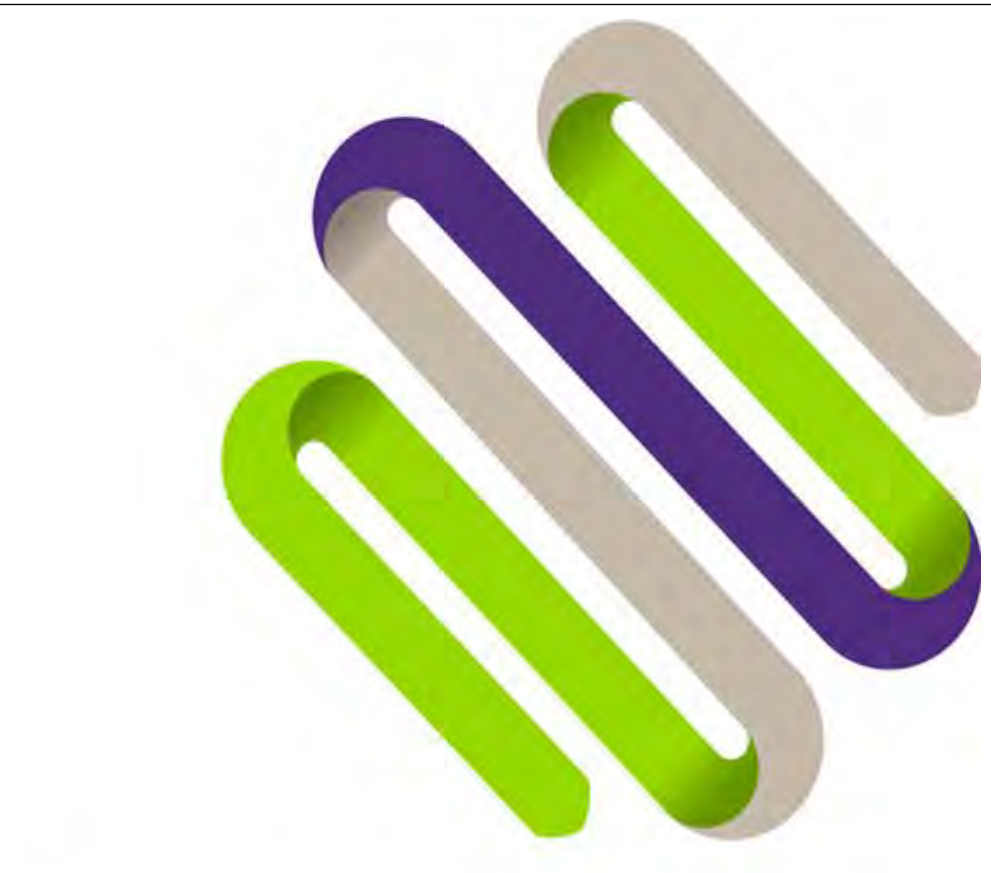
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Letters

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO REVEREND MESHOE FOR SUPPORTING ISRAEL

What a joy to read Reverend Kenneth Meshoe’s Israeli birthday greetings in the April 27 issue of your newspaper.

He and his whole family’s love for the Jewish people and Israel should fortify us as we worry about anti-Semitism.

To read his magnificent recognition of Israel’s amazing achievements is wonderful, but to hear him address an audience is profoundly moving. As a proud and grateful member of the Jewish community, I’m sure I speak for many of our brethren when I say a heartfelt “thank you” to him and his lovingly

supportive family for their unwavering dedication to Israel.

Prior to the last election, Reverend Meshoe’s African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) was the only party to defend Israel in Parliament. Accordingly, my family and I voted ACDP. We certainly will again as they continue to grow their remarkable organisation, DEISI – an acronym for “Defend, Embrace, Invest in and Support/Stand by Israel”.

**Edna Freinkel
Johannesburg**

Organisers hope Giro d’Italia gets more Israelis pedalling

MELANIE LIDMAN

Israel will be coming full circle after 2 000 years at the start of the Giro d’Italia cycling race, from May 4 to 6, said Ze’ev Elkin, the minister of Jerusalem and heritage, on Wednesday at a press conference kicking off the Giro race.

From the Roman crusaders sacking Jerusalem in 70 CE to 176 professionals streaking down the streets of the capital in an Italian race on Friday in 2018, “we are completing a circle we never could have dreamed about 2 000 years ago”, he said.

The Giro d’Italia is the second-most prestigious road cycling race after the Tour de France, and many people involved in the race are hoping that the excitement over it gets more Israelis onto their bikes.

The first three days of the 21-day race will take place in Israel, the first time the race’s start will take place outside of Europe.

The first three race stages consist of a 10km time trial in Jerusalem, a 167km race from Haifa to Tel Aviv, and a 226km race from Beersheba to Eilat. Afterwards, the 176 riders from 22 teams will fly to Italy to ride the remaining 18 stages of the race, finishing in Rome.

The event is the single most expensive sporting event in the country’s history, said Culture and Sport Minister Miri Regev. “Israel is showing that it is not just about cyber and high-tech but also joining the

international arena in sport,” she said on Wednesday.

The three-day cycling race costs an estimated NIS 120 million (R420 million). Various ministries, including the Tourism Ministry and Transportation Ministry, provided about NIS 30 million (R105 million) for the race, the most that the state has ever invested in a single sporting event, said Regev.

Billionaire Canadian real estate mogul Sylvan Adams, who moved to Israel two years ago and is the event’s driving force, financed most of the rest of the cost on his own.

“Sylvan visited Pope Francis and gave him a letter from Prime Minister Netanyahu, and got his blessing for the route to go from Jerusalem to Rome,” said Regev. “We are asking everyone, from the grandparents to the kids, to come cheer the riders on. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

The logistics surrounding the programme for the race are immense, from the media’s 600 international journalists and 70 TV crews – with 25 cameras broadcasting live feeds during the races – to the 1 200 technical staff assisting the teams and 4 000 police officers providing security and logistics along the routes.

Major highways and roads will be closed during the race. Residents are encouraged to check the Giro d’Italia official site for road closure updates or call the police information line.



Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat, left, Tourism Minister Yariv Levin, on bicycle in the middle, and Culture and Sport Minister Miri Regev, with Giro d’Italia organisers and winners celebrating the announcement of the 2018 Giro d’Italia bike race

Adam said it is his “proudest moment in Israel” to see the Giro get off the ground. The purpose of bringing the Giro’s start to Israel was twofold, he said: to introduce Israel’s culture and geography to the world, and to encourage the growth of a local cycling culture.

Last year, 840 million people watched some portion of the Giro d’Italia on TV, and this year the number is expected to reach a billion, according to Danny Benaim, CEO of Comtec Group, which is the production company in charge of the Big Start Israel event and has overseen other major sporting events in Israel. In contrast, the Super Bowl – the annual championship game of the National Football League – had 114 million viewers.

On Tuesday, Tel Aviv dedicated the

Sylvan Adams National Velodrome, a NIS 70 million (R245 million) indoor cycling track financed mostly by Adams. Adams said that while he loves the sport of cycling, he also hopes to encourage non-professional cycling in Israel.

“In the 1950s, Amsterdam had no cycling infrastructure, but they made a decision that they wanted to encourage people to use bikes for commuting,” said Adams. “Tel Aviv has tried to create a cycling path infrastructure that is safe, and I have helped with that.”

Adams said he is trying to push a plan of bike paths connecting municipalities outside of Tel Aviv such as Bat Yam, Petah Tikvah and Holon. “Commuters can leave their car at home, get to their destination faster and be healthier, and

decongest our roads,” he said.

“We hope Israel makes a decision to invest in the sport of cycling both professionally and for regular riders.”

Regev said the culture and sport ministry plans to invest NIS 16 million (R56 million) in bike paths and improving bike infrastructure across the country in the coming years, though she acknowledged Israel still has a way to go towards making cyclists feel safe. Individual municipalities, in both the centre and the periphery, can also apply for grants from the ministry to build bike paths.

“We put a lot of money on this to encourage more and more people to use bikes, not just to avoid traffic but also to ride for fun and health,” she said. (Times of Israel)

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10⁹⁹_{410g}

OK SPAGHETTI & MACARONI

9⁹⁹_{500g each}

OK TANGY MAYONNAISE

18⁴⁹_{750g}

OK WHITE SUGAR

28⁹⁹_{2kg}

OK SPAGHETTI

9⁹⁹_{500g each}

OK

TRULY KOSHER

This week's great OK savings

Offers valid until 9 MAY or while stocks last

Actual offers may differ from visuals shown. We reserve the right to limit quantities. While stocks last. E&OE

1 Long Avenue, Glenhazel 011 440 9517 | info@kosherworld.co.za | www.kosherworld.co.za
Hours: Mon-Thurs 7am-10pm | Fri: 7am-4pm Sat:1/2 Hour After Shabbos -10pm | Sun: 8am - 10pm