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# south african Jewish Report

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## SA government taking sides, despite factual inaccuracies

NICOLA MILTZ

Many countries condemned Gaza firing rockets and mortars at Israel this week, but not our government, which has consistently demanded that Israel withdraw from Gaza.

Our government has been ridiculed for repeatedly reiterating that the “Israel Defence Forces (IDF) must withdraw from Gaza”, despite the fact that it did so in 2005.

In at least three recent statements, the ruling party and the government have demanded the IDF withdraw from Gaza.

They have been ridiculed on social media and in international reports with labels such as “ignorant” and accusations of “lagging behind the times”, along with other insults. Despite this, officials in government have stuck to this narrative.

“They [government officials] look like idiots of the highest order,” said Zev Krengel, vice-president of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), this week. “It shows a lack of understanding of the complexities of the situation. They are not on the ground and they’re not prepared to understand it, it’s all about making popular remarks.”

He added: “I don’t think the government really cares; it gets roasted all the time.”

The facts are that Israel withdrew its forces from the Gaza Strip and dismantled all settlements there in 2005 as part of the Gaza Disengagement Plan, promoted by then prime minister Ariel Sharon – but it maintains a blockade of the territory with the stated intention of preventing the smuggling of weapons there. Hamas, the Islamist terror group, rules Gaza.

The *SA Jewish Report* has tried exhaustively for several weeks to reach Minister of International Relations and Co-operation Lindiwe Sisulu for comment, without success. Her spokesperson, Ndivhuwo Mabaya, has not returned any of our WhatsApp messages, emails or phone calls.

This week, on the same day that a barrage of rockets from Gaza fell on southern Israel, with one landing in a kindergarten, ANC Secretary-General Ace Magashule tweeted that the national executive committee (NEC) “urges government to implement the 54th national conference decision

on downgrading the SA embassy in Israel to a liaison office”.

He said nothing about that morning’s firing of rockets into Israel from Gaza.

Magashule reiterated the ANC’s “commitment to support all processes towards recognition of the rights of Palestinians, and a peaceful resolution to the conflict, in the context of a two-state solution”.

He added that the NEC supported the decision of the government to withdraw its Ambassador from Israel “under the recent senseless and brutal massacre of Palestinians”.

The fact that the majority of those killed were members of the terrorist organisation, Hamas, was not mentioned.

This week, governments around the world – including representatives from the European Union and United Nations – have condemned the indiscriminate attacks against Israel from Gaza, with the EU and UN calling the move “unacceptable”.

Steven Gruzd, an analyst at the SA Institute of International Affairs, said this week that statements by the South African government about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict show a strong bias towards the Palestinians.

“There is a natural affinity, and the ANC and government both have a particular narrative on the conflict which always condemns Israel and supports the Palestinians,” he said. “Yet South Africa often gets the details wrong and shows little

understanding of the nuances and complexity of the situation.”

Gruzd added that the government’s latest example of calling on Israel to withdraw from Gaza was “an embarrassing schoolboy error”.

“The government has been roasted for this on social media and in some of the international press. As South Africa disengages more and more from Israel, its understanding of what is actually happening on the ground declines. Ideology trumps objectivity.”

Political commentator Brooks Spector said the South African government was not operating independently in this case, but rather, it was operating as a function of the ruling party. “The government

here is not worried about the legal or technical differences of what is or isn’t an occupation; it is looking at it more broad-scale. Life in Gaza is harsh, there’s no getting around it. Whether this is entirely the fault of Israel is a different question.”

He said there was a “natural landscape” for the South African government to feel “it has no choice but to speak out loudly and forthrightly” about the current circumstances in the region.

While Gaza was “not technically under occupation”, Israel maintained a fairly strong blockade, he added. “Even if Israel can argue they are doing what they doing because they must deal with the aggressive,

Continued on page 11>>

## Our man in the race for US Congress

See page 3



Photo supplied by Kevin Abel for Congress



# Abramovich joins more than 30 Russian Jewish tycoons in Israel

ARON HELLER

The sudden immigration to Israel of Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich makes him the latest in a string of Jewish Russian tycoons who have made a home in the country in recent years. Abramovich received his Israeli citizenship on Monday upon arriving in Israel on his private jet, immediately becoming the country’s richest person, with an estimated net worth of more than \$11 billion (R138 billion). Israel grants automatic citizenship to anyone of Jewish descent. The Chelsea football club owner made the move after his British visa was not renewed, apparently as part of British authorities’

efforts to crack down on associates of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Britain has pledged to review the long-term visas of rich Russians in the aftermath of the March poisonings of Russian former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the English city of Salisbury. Britain blames Russia for the pair’s exposure to a nerve agent, an allegation Moscow denies. The poisonings sparked a Cold War-style diplomatic crisis between Russia and the West, including the expulsion of hundreds of diplomats from



Photo: AP/File

Roman Abramovich

The Chelsea football club owner made the move after his British visa was not renewed, apparently as part of British authorities’ efforts to crack down on associates of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

but hardly the first. Alex Kogan, a journalist who has covered the Russian oligarch phenomenon in Israel for the local Russian-language press, said that 30 to 40 tycoons have taken Israeli citizenship or residency, with most staying only part time or temporarily because of scrutiny over their affairs. He said the oligarchs – businessmen who accumulated massive wealth in the privatisation process which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union – were motivated by various interests. Some fled Russia because of financial irregularities or dramatic fallouts with Putin that could put them at risk of incarceration. Others were closer to the government and sought the advantages of an Israeli passport, such as visa-free entry to the European Union. And some were drawn by tax breaks for new immigrants to Israel. They are also more

protected in Israel against the threat of extradition, for real or trumped-up charges. The ancient Jewish State of Israel was revived by UN mandate after World War II, too late to save millions of Jews from the Nazi Holocaust, but guarantees citizenship for anyone with at least one Jewish grandparent – the Nazi criterion – to ensure it serves as a haven for Jews escaping persecution. “Everyone has different reasons,” said Kogan. “There are plenty more out there that could come in a short time.” Some billionaires, like Mikhail Fridman and German Khan, have taken up Israeli citizenship while still maintaining their primary residences in London and Moscow. They maintain a strong presence in Israel owing to their charitable work, such as setting up the private foundation that funds the annual Genesis Prize, known as “the Jewish Nobel Prize”. (*Times of Israel*)

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:06	17:57	Johannesburg
17:27	18:22	Cape Town
16:46	17:39	Durban
17:07	17:59	Bloemfontein
16:59	17:53	Port Elizabeth
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Torah thought of the week

Practise the mitzvah of tochacha

Nobody likes rebuke. There are very few people, if any, who like other people to point out their wrongdoings and expose their shortcomings. Even words like rebuke, admonishment and criticism make one wince in fear and are loaded with negative connotations.

Helping others to recognise and correct their faults and errors is a skill that takes time to learn and needs constant practice. In this week’s Parsha, Hashem Himself gives guidelines as to the correct way that it should be done.

Towards the end of the Parsha, the Torah discusses how Miriam and Aaron were critical of Moses’s actions, and were of the opinion that he made a terrible mistake. Their conversation was considered Lashon Harah.

Hashem appeared to them at the Ohel Moed (the Tent of Meeting) and admonished them with the following words: “Hear now (Shimu na) My words... Why did you not fear to speak against My servant Moses” (Bamidbar, 12 verse 6-8).

Rashi explains that the Hebrew word “na” is always used as a form of request and is usually translated as the word “please”. The Sifsei Chachamim (an in-depth super commentary on Rashi) explains that Hashem spoke to them gently, using the word “please” – because if He’d spoken in a harsh and angry tone, the rebuke would not have been accepted.

Rabbi Alter Hensch Leibowitz, in his

collected insights on the Torah called *Majesty of Man*, poses a startling question.

Miriam and Aaron were two of the most righteous and virtuous people in the history of the Jewish people. Aaron was the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) and Miriam was a prophetess. The Jewish people had a constant supply of water in the desert only in Miriam’s merit. Both Aaron and Miriam dedicated their lives to serve Hashem with absolute devotion and perfection.

Is it really possible, asks Rabbi Leibowitz, that two of the holiest people who had ever lived would not have accepted Hashem’s rebuke if it was not worded in such a soft way?

Rabbi Leibowitz answers that indeed, Hashem – with His infinite knowledge of human behaviour – knew that if He did not address them in such a mild fashion, His rebuke would lose some of its effectiveness and would not have achieved its desired result. It is basic human nature to be defensive.

This incredible insight should make us all pause and contemplate how we should go about performing the mitzvah of tochacha (rebuke).

The Torah teaches us that a rebuke delivered with love is a powerful tool that can transform people’s lives. Hashem has illustrated to us how to achieve this goal in the most practical way: with a soothing voice and language that radiates real care and concern.

If you rebuke with love and communicate your real desire to assist others, then for sure all the people you help will be eternally grateful and will, in turn, love you for it.

south african

Jewish Report

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# Businessman with SA Jewish roots running for US Congress

TALI FEINBERG

It may be difficult to imagine a Jewish boy from Cape Town one day running for Congress in America, but Kevin Abel is one such leader.

Abel was born in South Africa and immigrated with his family to the US when he was a teenager. He is now running for Congress as a Democrat in Georgia’s 6th Congressional District.

He maintains that the experience of being welcomed, settling in a new land and achieving the American Dream has profoundly influenced his political choices today.

Members of Congress represent the people of their district in the US Congress by holding hearings, as well as developing and voting on legislation. All bills must pass both houses of Congress before they can go to the president to be signed into law.

The US Congress is similar to South Africa’s Parliament, but it is separated between the House and the Senate. Seats in the House are distributed according to the population in each state, and if Abel is chosen as the Democrat to represent his congressional district (similar to a ward in South Africa), he will be able to make a real impact in one of the 570 seats in the House.

However, this ex-South African would never be able to be president, as he was not born in the US. Despite this, he has heady ambitions and a campaign that is steeped in Jewish values.

“Like many other South African Jews, my family arrived in South Africa as a result of their fleeing persecution in Europe,” says Abel in an interview with the *SA Jewish Report*. “My paternal great-grandparents fled the pogroms of Eastern Europe and my maternal grandfather fled Nazi Germany. He boarded a ship leaving Europe and was told that the final destination would be South Africa, without knowing a soul in the country.

“Our family lived in Cape Town and that’s where I grew up for the first 14 years of my life. We moved to Dallas, Texas and eventually, most of my family followed and made their way over to the US. My dad and stepmom still live in Cape Town.”

Abel feels that his South African Jewish background has deeply

influenced his life and his outlook on the world.

“One of the ideas that resonated with me most strongly growing up in the Jewish Diaspora was this idea of Tikkun Olam – to repair the world. This has been the guiding principle which my wife and I have used to raise our three children. Who are we as people if we are not doing everything we can to make the world a better place?

“Far too often we bemoan the cruelties and imperfections of the world without taking an active role in making things better.”

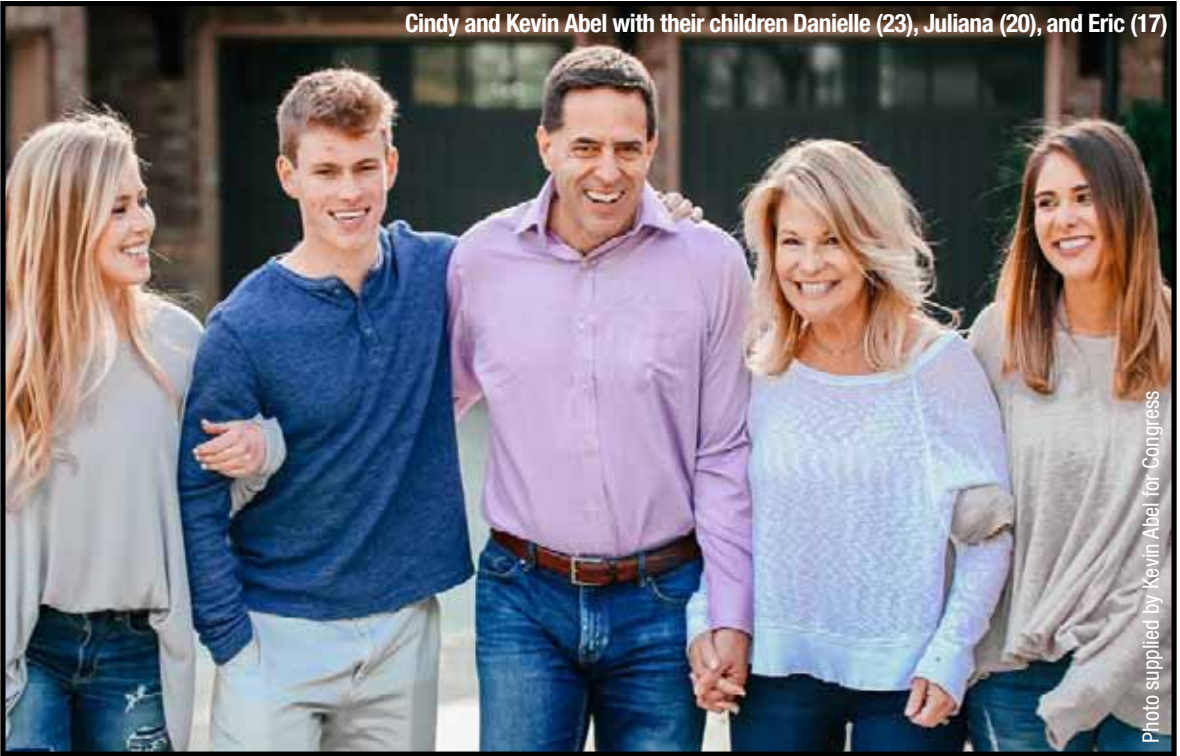
This approach, steeped in Jewish values, can be seen when Abel recently spoke on Facebook about how, over Pesach, he helped his shul become a sponsor of a refugee family coming to America, and he personally welcomed the young parents and their baby daughter, of the persecuted Rohingya minority group in Myanmar, to Atlanta.

The shul will be the family’s first port of call and assist them with everything from doctors’ appointments to becoming accustomed to public transport and learning English. He also explained that refugee immigrants go through a two-year vetting process to ensure that they are not a security threat.

Abel feels that his South African Jewish background has deeply influenced his life and his outlook on the world.

He explains to the *SA Jewish Report*: “I talk about being an immigrant and immigration a lot while campaigning, but I talk about it as a value-based issue more than a policy one. America welcomed me with open arms, as it has millions of people. The US is a nation of immigrants who came here from foreign lands, and I think my politics is driven by an attempt to continue our policy of welcoming and inclusiveness.

“My Judaism has also played a large role in shaping my politics. Specifically, I am a passionate advocate for Israel as the home of the Jewish people, and I am really excited for the opportunity to work on this issue in Congress as it’s one of the few



Cindy and Kevin Abel with their children Danielle (23), Juliana (20), and Eric (17)

Photo supplied by Kevin Abel for Congress

issues where true bipartisan support is possible.”

Abel is not afraid to stand up to what he sees as the current erosion of freedom, human rights and protection of minorities in the US. “I think some of President Donald Trump’s rhetoric is aimed at the darkest parts of the human soul – those parts that desperately fear change and have a tendency to demonise ‘the other’,” he says.

“There are many people espousing anti-Semitic and racist views who have probably held those views for a long time, but only now feel comfortable advertising them in public. By not speaking out against this hatred, I think Trump has implicitly given people permission to freely share this type of hateful rhetoric.

“America has never been perfect, but it has always continuously strived to improve, and here I feel we may be moving backward. Decent people of all political persuasions need to speak out against this type of hate at every possible opportunity.”

He feels that he has been privileged to live the American Dream, and he hopes to give that opportunity to others: “Since I came to the US I’ve had a great public education, started a business, raised a family, and have been deeply involved in my community here in Atlanta. But that American Dream is unavailable to so many, and if we

continue down the path that Trump is taking us, it will be available for even fewer people a couple of decades from now.

“My hope is that we can cut through the partisan rancour that divides Washington, and work together so that we can protect the American Dream for future generations.”

He concludes: “I would not be where I am in life without the South African Jewish community. The community taught me the values that shaped my childhood, welcomed my family when we arrived in Dallas, and now they have been incredibly supportive of my campaign for Congress here in Atlanta.”

## Herzlia alumnus wins Pulitzer Prize

TALI FEINBERG

Peter Hirschberg, who was born in Cape Town and made aliya in the 1980s, accepted the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting at an awards ceremony in New York City on Wednesday.

He is the Reuters Asia Investigative Editor of the team which won the award for their investigative journalism exposing a bloody drug crackdown in the Philippines. The Pulitzer Prize is arguably the most coveted award for journalists.

Hirschberg attended Herzlia School in Cape Town where he was head boy, and he went on to marry the head girl of the same year, Chanine Odes. He completed a degree in political science from the University of Cape Town and a Master’s in political science at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

He was deeply involved in Habonim in South Africa, including being head of the Cape Town branch in 1987. He made aliya as a part of a Habonim kvutzah in 1988, starting out on an ulpan on Kibbutz Sdot Yam in Caesaria.

His career began at the *Jerusalem Post* and *Jerusalem Report*, followed by seven years at the English edition of *Ha’aretz*, where he was a founding editor. He then moved to Hong Kong and business media company Bloomberg.

He is currently based in Australia for Reuters, where he manages the Asia Enterprise team, heading investigative and enterprise coverage across Asia.



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# Public figures taking sides (mostly) against Israel

The recent events in Israel and on the Gaza border have garnered the attention of South African public figures and personalities.

In South Africa, and around the world, the sentiment is largely negative towards Israel, with many commentators hovering precariously on the edge of being anti-Semitic. Some have undoubtedly crossed over into full prejudice.

The use of hyperbole, coupled with blatant untruths, seems to fuel the outrage, resulting in some talk-show hosts being unable to contain their emotion and outrage about what they understand the situation to be.

Broadcast journalist Bongani Bingwa was one such case. His comments about Israel were scathing and his tone matched his words. The reaction from many people was aggressive and expressed outrage. This prompted him to tweet: “My comment this morning about Palestine and Israel. I have never received more vitriol and personal attacks – even or especially from people I considered friends.”

Replies were equally divided between those pointing out that he had no idea of the facts and those who claimed that the Zionists hate to hear the truth. It was, in essence, Twitter at its best. Or worst.

Redi Tlhabi, fellow broadcast journalist, came to his assistance with the following tweet, “I must tell you... I spoke at a shul 9 years ago. Addressing young people. Rabbi’s sermon was on how they were special people. I left my world to speak a message of diversity, hope and less paranoia. My gifts at the end of the talk? Flowers. Nice! & Literature on why they are so special.”

And just like that, it was no longer about Israel or Palestine or the conflict, but rather, about Jews. How the rabbi made them think they are special. And of course, it was about the gifts.

Tlhabi’s response out of context may seem puzzling. On the face of it, it seems strange to have engaged as she did. Surely, if she was speaking to a group of young women, she might tell them they are special and that they have unlimited power to change the world. Same as to a group of young men. Why, then, was she so offended that young Jews were told the same?

When challenged by author (and self-proclaimed “leftie”) Nechama Brodie, Tlhabi refused to take ownership of her comment and defended it by saying that one of her Jewish friends felt the same. Indeed, she employed the “some of my best friends are Jewish” line to qualify the awfulness of her approach.

Tlhabi is fully entitled to be anti-Israel. It is her right and her decision. But she is not entitled to be anti-Semitic, which is what she appears to have become. It is surprising, on the face of it, that the very person who has spent her life seeking balance and trying to do good in the world would have succumbed to this.

The uncomfortable question is what role Jews

Israel will grant temporary visas to 300 Sudanese

Israel will grant temporary residency status to some 300 Sudanese refugees.

The Israeli government informed the country’s Supreme Court that it would extend the humanitarian visa to the refugees, who hail from Darfur and the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile region, where genocides have occurred.

The A5 humanitarian visa will allow the refugees to work and receive health insurance.

The humanitarian visa is a step below refugee status.

The new status will be granted within 30 days, according to reports.

Some 2 500 asylum seekers from Darfur and Sudan’s Nuba Mountains have been waiting for years for Israel to process their asylum requests. Earlier this year, the government conferred legal status on 500 refugees from Darfur.

There is a backlog of thousands of requests for asylum. (JTA)

or supporters of Israel played in this descent.

Some years ago, when Mmusi Maimane visited Israel, Tlhabi was highly critical of his visit. She was called out on what some believed was an inconsistent stance and when she didn’t change her view, the conversation escalated. Rolene Marks, media personality in Israel, wrote an op-ed for News24, inviting Tlhabi to have a coffee and to discuss why she believed that Tlhabi was mistaken in her outlook. Tlhabi responded in turn in what I believe was a patronising and dismissive piece.

Her response included comments along the line that she didn’t have enough time in the day for all the coffees she was offered, and again made reference to the reading material that Zionists kept sending her.

With that, her position was entrenched. One that she very clearly refuses to engage with, for reasons that only she can understand.

But whether the magnitude of the response from Jews and from supporters of Israel resulted in her feeling bullied and pressured contributed to attitude is something that needs

to be considered.

When a commentator does defend Israel, as in the case of Gareth Cliff, the response that he receives from those who are anti must be equally frustrating. It cannot serve them to lambaste and to attack him just because they don’t agree with him.

And yet we do the same.

There is, unfortunately, no simple answer. I do know that we react the same to fellow Jews who criticise Israel. And by doing so, we not only push them away but “prove” to them what narrow-minded bigots we are, whether true or not.

I had a recent Twitter argument with Jewish South African comedian Deep Fried Man, who is outspokenly anti-Israel. My view was that by refusing to acknowledge the role of Hamas in the Gaza conflict, he was not reflecting the truth or any form of balance. The argument went back and forth until I got bored and left it alone.

It was the next day that he tweeted: “The amount of times I’ve been told that I’ve lost the support of my community because I refuse

INNER VOICE



to accept Israel’s behaviour. I wonder how many South African Jews would speak out if they weren’t afraid of social and economic exclusion?”

I responded: “As you know, I strongly disagree with your view on Israel – but I am equally critical of a community that excludes anyone based on a view. You are always welcome on my show, in my home and I hope the Jewish community supports you based on the merit of your talent and not your view.”

I honestly have no idea if my approach is the right one. All I know is that the current strategy is not working. And it needs to be reconsidered.

• You can hear Howard Feldman every weekday morning from 6-9am on 101.9 ChaiFM.

How safe is your data online?



establish if your email address has been leaked from any one of the sites or online services to which you have signed up.

According to the site’s statistics, 284 websites have experienced data leaks, with 5 044 555 541 email addresses leaked across the internet worldwide. Among those sites affected are Adobe.com, which lost 153 million addresses in 2013 in a breach; and LinkedIn, which had 164 million addresses and passwords exposed in 2016.

South Africa-based databases like Ster-Kinekor and the Master Deeds website have been targeted. The former lost over 1.6 million unique email addresses in 2016, and the latter leaked names, addresses, ethnicities, genders, birth dates, government-issued personal identification numbers and 2.2 million email addresses last year.

Although we may be powerless to ensure the safety of our information on any online platform or database, we can take steps to minimise risks and enhance our digital security.

“From a consumer perspective, the breach highlights the need to be cautious whenever signing up to an online service,” says Goldstuck. “Sometimes one is willing to hand over personal data in return for the utility or service being offered.

“The central rule in any online activity involving a log-on is to use a different password for every site or service one uses. The reason is that cyber criminals will take user names and passwords from the breach of a seemingly innocuous site and try them across banking and social media sites, which can result in massive damage,” says Goldstuck.

“The key is to come up with a system that allows you to create unique passwords, but ones that you will remember, based on your system and attributes of each site.”

JORDAN MOSHE

Less than eight months since almost 60 million South African identity numbers were shared publicly online, another data leak that’s potentially far worse has occurred. Just how safe are our own community’s databases?

The latest leak is from South African traffic fines online payments website, ViewFines. The personal records of 934 000 South African drivers stored on the system have been leaked into the public domain.

The leaked information contains national identity numbers as well as user passwords for the website. Alarmingly, experts found that these passwords were stored in plaintext, meaning that anyone with access to the exposed database could obtain further personal user information, including vehicle and traffic fines information.

According to Troy Hunt, an Australian security consultant who worked with media outlet iAfrikan in looking into the data leak, the incident has highlighted how vital it is to improve security measures and enforce South Africa’s Protection of Personal Information Act properly.

“The breach highlights the poor security practices of both start-ups and established companies, which think a great idea is all you need to start an online business,” technology expert Arthur Goldstuck says. “Any new product or service must be designed with trust as the central component. This, in turn, results in a focus on issues like security, privacy and data protection.”

The incident raises questions about the security of our community’s own databases, and perhaps forces us to consider just how safe our own information really is.

Although it was established that major community organisations do maintain large databases, information about their security has been difficult to glean.

At the time of going to print, no response had been received from the office of the Chief Rabbi, while the SA Zionist Federation confirmed that it does keep a secure database, saying it is isolated on its own server for security purposes.

Wendy Kahn, national director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), says that no official communal database exists at a national level. She did mention, however, that the Cape Town community has a comprehensive database of the community.

“The United Jewish Campaign in Cape Town actually houses a very important database, known as the communal registry,” says the director of SAJBD Cape Town, Joshua Hovsha. “It serves as a voter’s database for community elections, ensures receipt of the *Cape Jewish Chronicle* and is used for emergency contacts. It is also carefully curated and protected.”

The Chevrah Kadisha confirmed that it maintained its own secure database. The developers of the security measures, Glen Chalmers and Allan Samson, said: “Our data is secured behind three separate firewalls. From the top levels of the CEO and CFO, security is a primary concern.

“The IT department here is extremely security conscious and believes that data security is a frame of mind, more than just making sure that a box is kept safe.”

They explained: “We maintain strict control over who has access to the database, which is only accessed in-house. External access is made very difficult, as we ensure that all data is encrypted and secured with multiple passwords.”

In light of this, just how secure is your own personal data? Using search engines on websites such as “have I been pwned.com”, you can



# From the Uber-meister’s mouth

JORDAN MOSHE

Alon Lits insists he takes it personally when Uber riders are at risk. As general manager of Uber Sub-Saharan Africa, Lits says: “Last year was a challenging one where security is concerned, and it weighed heavily on me that people were at risk.”

He told the *SA Jewish Report* that 2017 saw a spike in incidents of intimidation against Uber drivers by taxi drivers. “Certain drop-off and collection points in Johannesburg were being targeted, and individual attacks were carried out against drivers stopping there,” he says.

“We intervened and ensured a physical security presence at these hotspots. Drivers have a right to an income, and passengers have the right to choose a mode of transport. We had to secure those rights.”

He is aware that people depend on Uber to get around if they don’t have transport or if they are planning to have a drink or two. People latched on to Uber as a safe and reasonably priced option. So, just how safe are we in Uber and what has been done to safeguard us?

“Everyone has the right to be safe, whether they’re on a train, in a taxi, walking on a pavement or in an Uber,” says Lits. “Unfortunately, crime is a reality in South Africa. No form of transport is completely safe. Still, safety is very important to Uber. Whether a person is in the back seat or behind the wheel, we want them to feel comfortable and secure.”

As it was impractical to set up security across Johannesburg, Uber partnered with Aura security two and a half years ago, and together they seek to innovate constantly and address security feedback from drivers.

“Our partnership means that we are not reliant on the police or on a single armed response group,” explains Lits. “Aura has numerous contracts with armed response and medical response teams, whose response time on average is a maximum of 10 minutes.”

Lits explained that their primary source of feedback is that of drivers, who relay their

everyday concerns back to the company. One of their major concerns over the last few years was the acceptance of cash payments.

“Africa is very cash-based,” says Lits. “To bar people from paying with cash reduces access to our service. Not all people have bank cards, nor is everyone comfortable transacting online. So, in order to accommodate people and ensure our drivers felt safe, we implemented strategies using the app.”

Through the app’s cash indicator feature, a driver is able to see if a client will be paying with cash, and is allowed to ignore the request if he feels unsafe. Moreover, the social verification feature creates a user cash account which links an ID number or photo of the passenger to the app.

This can also be used with Facebook, and the identity of the passenger can be verified properly. “If the account looks suspicious,” says Lits, “it can be ignored and investigated.”

It is not unusual to hear stories from Uber drivers about passengers who endanger their lives, and the reverse is equally true. After describing to Lits the various reports of passengers who obstruct the vision of their driver, or drivers behaving recklessly, he insists he takes this very seriously.

“We operate according to community guidelines of mutual respect,” he says. “Drivers are able to report users for bad behaviour, which can lead to their being banned, if necessary.”

“The same is true of passengers. If, for any reason, a passenger feels unsafe while in the vehicle, they can use the app to contact our response team, cancel a trip and report drivers.”

Before taking to the road, drivers are subject to rigorous background checks and proficiency tests. Before a driver is allowed to use the app, they first have to undergo a screening, including background and driving history checks, and are required to have a Professional Driving Permit (PrDP).

This means that the driver has undergone police clearance in order to obtain this permit before he can join the company. “We noticed a fair number of applicants coming forward who

actually had criminal backgrounds,” explains Lits. “Using third-party screening, we are able to establish exactly what sort of person an applicant is and whether he is suitable to drive others around.”

“Driver profiles show users exactly who their driver is, and this information is monitored and ensures their safety.”

Lits went on to explain how modern technology innovation has made the monitoring process more effective. “Elements of driving are now more traceable and open to analysis that before,” he says.

“Erratic driving patterns, swerving, excessive braking and other such behaviour is tracked, recorded and can be accessed and reviewed. Automated systems monitor driver ratings and flag those who need close review.”

Beyond these measures, the variety of safety features offered by the service seems comprehensive. These include ‘Share My Trip’, a safety feature which allows riders and drivers to share their whereabouts and trip status with friends and family, as well as GPS tracking of

every trip.

Lits believes these features are very valuable and he encourages people to make use of them. “When my wife takes a trip anywhere by herself, she shares the trip information with me,” he says. “This way, I can monitor her trip and make sure that she arrives at her destination safely.”

Lits says that only people over 18 can order a ride. “If an adult orders a ride for a child, we encourage users to send an adult along to accompany them,” he says. “We are not a scholar service, and if a user does book a ride for a child without adult accompaniment, we urge them to be security conscious. This includes telling the driver in advance that the passenger is a child, and that the trip is being monitored by an adult.”

“This doesn’t mean to say that there are major safety concerns, but it is ideal to make the intentions of the passengers clear and to ensure that the driver knows exactly who his passengers are. Also, ensure that the child passenger is sure of the trip details before he or she gets into the vehicle.”

Lits encourages users to implement their own security precaution practices for using the app. “Always be sure to verify who your driver is,” he says. “Don’t say, ‘Hi are you John?’ to your driver when he pulls up. Instead, introduce yourself and ask him to do the same. Look at his profile and make sure that his photo, the car’s registration number and vehicle model match the profile.”

“If, for any reason, you feel uncomfortable, share the trip with a friend and ask them to keep an eye on the app. Remember that drivers have a right to feel safe as well, so if they know that an area is unsafe and would rather drop you off a little further away from your destination, don’t be difficult. Know that your driver is being security conscious.”



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## Joburg mayor honours the Rebbe

NICOLA MILTZ

So inspired was Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba by the communal work of Chabad and its Miracle Drive that he was moved, like US presidents before him, to sign a proclamation declaring the late Rebbe’s birthday a day of education and sharing.



The signing was done recently in a low-key, intimate setting in the mayoral office in Johannesburg. Mashaba did the signing, with Miracle Drive founder Rabbi David Masinter and SA Jewish Board of Deputies vice-president Zev Krengel in attendance.

“It was a very moving morning. We spent about an hour with the mayor discussing Johannesburg and various ways to uplift the city,” said Masinter.

In March, US President Donald Trump met a

delegation of rabbis from Chabad to issue the annual proclamation in honour of Education and Sharing Day. This day marks the anniversary of the birth of the last Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

Education and Sharing Day was established by the US Congress in honour of the Rebbe. It calls for an increased focus on education and recognises the efforts of the Rebbe. It has been proclaimed annually in the US by the president.

US presidents have designated the date to coincide with the Rebbe’s Hebrew birthday, 11 Nissan.

The proclamation, slightly altered for South Africa, reads in part: “We believe that our futures can be improved through learning and hard work. On Education and Sharing Day, we acknowledge the critical role of families, schools, religious and other civic institutions in nurturing in our children the values that enable them to realise the full scope of their ambitions.”

Masinter said Chabad was inspired by Mashaba’s determination to uplift the city of Johannesburg and follow world leaders in honouring the late Rebbe.

“This has given us at Chabad a renewed confidence in the city and has inspired us to lift our game to a whole new level when it comes to our charitable communal work and non-sectarian work.”

Masinter and Krengel presented Mashaba with a gift of a Carrol Boyes pewter Ark, which stands for “Acts of Random Kindness”. The Ark rests on a wooden board which has 18 small slots in it to hold 18 R1 coins.

“The Rebbe always liked people attending a meeting to receive and give charity, so we thought this was appropriate,” said Masinter, adding that he hoped this would become an annual event.



south african

# Jewish Report

## Israel is not in Gaza!

It was not yet 7am in Israel on Tuesday morning when mortar and rocket fire rained down on the southern part of the country. As many as 120 were said to have been fired from Gaza.

One of the rockets hit a nursery school in Sderot and potentially could have killed many children. Fortunately, the children hadn’t yet arrived at school and the rocket hit a tree instead of a classroom or the playground. These children are innocent civilians.

Around the world there are many – and especially the South African government – who make out that all those living in Gaza are innocent victims being oppressed and downtrodden by this monstrous Israel. So much so, that when missiles en masse are fired from Gaza into Israel, there is much silence. There is certainly not a peep from our own government, who is still condemning Israel and demanding that Israel pulls out of Gaza.

Our government’s knowledge of what is happening in the Middle East – and especially around Gaza and Israel – is so skewed, it beggars belief.

As anyone who’s a little familiar with the politics of the area knows, Israel pulled out of Gaza in August 2005. Just in case someone reading this is close enough to the government to let its officials know, Israel pulled its troops out and dismantled all the Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip at the time. Hamas runs Gaza and the Israeli troops do not enter.

Now, I know people make a big joke of the fact that our government is unaware of this and has, on a number of occasions, recently demanded that Israeli troops pull out of Gaza. But it isn’t funny at all. Our government is making its decisions about recalling our ambassador from Israel and potentially cutting ties with Israel, based on incorrect information.

I have no idea why someone hasn’t given them this vital information. Surely, the ambassador is aware of this well-known piece of information – he was living in Israel!

It is not acceptable that our government is making decisions on incorrect information. I have a sense that they have an image of Israeli troops on Ratels and Buffels going into Gaza – much like our troepies went into townships during apartheid – and brutalising innocent people. But that is definitely not the case.

And while I am not saying the Israel government and military are angelic and are never at fault, I am saying that our government needs to be aware of the facts on the ground before making decisions.

What would our government have said if children had died in that nursery school? Would they have condemned Hamas and Islamic Jihad or any leaders of Gaza? I doubt it. Instead, I bet Israel will be condemned for retaliating. These are such double standards.

I question who is advising government about the Israeli-Palestinian crisis and why the leadership of our country is simply accepting what these mis-advisers are telling them.

Could these same advisers be the ones who this week tweeted a fake quote from Hendrik Verwoerd, former apartheid prime minister between 1958 and 1966, saying: “The Jews took Israel from the Arabs after the Arabs had lived there for a thousand years. Israel, like South Africa, is an apartheid state.”

This was, in fact, from BDS South Africa. Do they honestly believe the nonsense they spew? Why do people indulge them?

I love this country and I am a proud South African. I strongly believe in the leadership of President Cyril Ramaphosa, but I expect so much more from my government than making decisions on fake information. Take a trip to the Middle East, meet with ALL the role players – on both sides – and then make an informed decision.

### Music be the food of life

On another, more musical note, when our roving reporter Jordan Moshe came back from a talk this week by Dr Stephen Muir – who is collecting lost Jewish music – he told me about one particular Jewish child prodigy during the Holocaust. She was seven years old when she started composing and by 12, she was playing with top Jewish musicians in Warsaw.

She was a bright light in music, but her name means nothing to any of us now because she died during the Holocaust. She was never able to give her talent the wings it needed for her to fly and to give the world the pleasure of what she had in her. Just how many talented musicians, writers, scientists, doctors, inventors, painters and people with other talents were deleted from our world, never to be given the chance to contribute?

It is difficult for any of us to conceive of how many six million people are, but the loss is more understandable when you think of it in these terms.

The global Jewish population is still not quite as large as it was before the Holocaust. There were 16.5 million Jews before World War II and there are now 14.2 million (as of 2015, according to the Jerusalem-based Jewish People Policy Institute).

So, when the South African government and South African media start comparing Israel with Hitler and the Holocaust, they really need to consider this. There is no comparison. Israel is a country defending its people. The Holocaust was the annihilation of a people. Shabbat Shalom!

**Peta Krost Maunder**  
**Editor**

# Dateline: Middle East

## David and Goliath reversed in the Middle East

PAULA SLIER

The biblical story of David and Goliath is often used to describe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – except that the main characters have, over the years, irrevocably changed sides.

Prior to the Six-Day War, Israel was described by many in the international community and the media as a David surrounded by a sea of Arab Goliaths. But ever since her smashing defeat of her Arab neighbours in 1967, the analogy has flipped and is now used to describe vulnerable Palestinians facing a well-armed Israeli giant.

And following the Israel Defence Forces’ (IDF) actions on the border with Gaza, there is a sea of anti-Israel sentiment sweeping across much of the international media and corridors of power. But this analogy explains why the sentiment hasn’t raised too many eyebrows in Israel itself.

It’s not that Israelis don’t care; it’s just that they’re resigned to it. Some of those I speak to say that the world is inherently anti-Israel or anti-Semitic. Others say people living outside of Israel just don’t understand the situation and are misled by the media and/or politicians.

Into this torrent fell the news that South Africa had withdrawn its ambassador and, although it was reported about in the Israeli news, it hardly made a splash.

It received nowhere near as much coverage as it did in South Africa. Subsequently Turkey, Belgium and Ireland reprimanded their ambassadors. However, if you ask people in the streets of Israel – which I did – which countries brought their ambassadors home, most didn’t have a clue.

For South Africans, this might be a bitter pill to swallow, but the truth is that Israelis don’t care too much about what the South African government says. On the global stage of influence South Africa plays minimal importance alongside the United States, Europe, China and India.

But this is not to say that Jerusalem is unconcerned about the South African Jewish community. There’s cognisance that the backlash and rhetoric emanating from the South African government has a direct impact on South African Jewry in a way that it doesn’t have on Israelis.

But Jerusalem faces a far bigger dilemma, and it doesn’t just concern the South African Jewish community. That is: How does it protect Israeli citizens while at the same time not lose Israel’s standing in the international community?

To some it might not seem a dilemma at all; and

it certainly isn’t for many of the Israelis I’ve been interviewing. Jerusalem would never sacrifice security for international opinion, I am repeatedly told – especially not when that international opinion is so stacked against Jerusalem to begin with. As one Israeli summed it up: “The world doesn’t like us, so it’s not important for us what they think.”

But there are consequences.

Firstly, the Israeli right benefits from the perception that many in the global community are against Israel. Disproportionate criticism, and singling Israel out by failing to point a finger at countries with far worse human rights records, helps those who argue that the Jewish State is alone.

Consider that the United Nations, European leaders and human rights organisations insist that the IDF is using excessive force against peaceful demonstrators, despite the fact that Hamas admitted that dozens of those killed are among its members. Because of such situations, Israelis conclude that they live in a hostile world, which in turn, leads them to dismiss any, and all, criticisms.

The irony is that this comes on the back of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s efforts in improving relations between Jerusalem and the African continent.

Two years ago, Netanyahu was the first Israeli premier in almost 30 years to visit Africa – and expectations were big.

Politically, African nations are seen as a critical voting bloc. It is believed that – if persuaded to do otherwise – they could prevent anti-Israel resolutions being passed at the UN and other international forums. Africa is also a potentially huge export market, including in the military sector.

But in all this, South Africa will be playing a much smaller role, if any at all.

The Gaza crisis is far from over. A flotilla set sail from Gaza on Tuesday morning, heading for Cyprus, with injured Gazans on board. It will no doubt cause a media frenzy and there’s almost certain to be the same tough criticisms emanating from the South African government against Jerusalem. The problem is that in Israel, they are falling on deaf ears.

It will be the South African Jewish community that will continue to weather the fallout from the deterioration in Israel-South Africa relations.

For Israel, until it finds a different way to respond to the Gaza crisis, there won’t be any relief from those who criticise the country. The problem is that most Israelis believe that relief will only come if the Jewish State ceases to be.

• 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*.





# Can South Africa still play a role in the Middle East peace process?

## OPINION

Zev Kregel



Over the past six months, much of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies’ (SAJBD) time and resources have been devoted to opposing the projected downgrade of the South African embassy in Israel.

In the many meetings we have had with representatives of government and the ruling party, one of the arguments we have consistently put forward is that scaling down diplomatic ties with Israel would put paid to any role South Africa might potentially play in helping to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While its ability to influence the course of events should not be overstated, our belief is that our country is uniquely positioned to make a meaningful contribution to peace efforts in the region.

The reasons for this are two-fold.

The one relates to South Africa’s own experience of having successfully negotiated a transition to a new democratic order. This was achieved despite the long legacy of bitter division and conflict that appeared to make such a resolution impossible. The other concerns the close ties that exist between the ANC and the Palestinian leadership.

When looking back on the ANC’s record as a liberation movement during the

exile years, it is important to remember that its activities were not focused solely on bringing pressure to bear against the apartheid state.

A crucial part of its work was geared towards planning and preparing for implementing a new post-apartheid order once liberation was achieved. This is an important lesson our government could share with its Palestinian counterparts.

Rather than pursuing unachievable political fantasies that lead only to confrontations, unrealistically inflated expectations and hidebound ideological puritanism, the Palestinians should be encouraged to focus on the nitty-gritty details of preparing for statehood. This would, hopefully, generate a momentum towards making that state a reality.

As a movement that has the ear of the Palestinian leadership, the ANC is better placed than most to convey to them one of the fundamental lessons of statecraft – namely, that politics is the art of the possible.

In order to be seen as a credible arbitrator, however, the ANC cannot engage with one side only. It must also gain a sufficient degree of trust from the Israeli side. To do so, it needs to understand and properly acknowledge Israel’s legitimate security concerns.

Contrary to what is often claimed, there are significant differences between the Israeli-Palestinian situation and that of pre-1994 South Africa. Because of this, we should resist simplistic interpretations that make faulty comparisons between the two.

Having said that, both parties in the

Middle East undoubtedly could take many valuable lessons from how South Africans negotiated an end to conflict in their society and found a way to go forward together in peace.

A vital part of the negotiations process was building trust on the ground. The different players needed to meet face to face, sharing their respective narratives relating to the past and their visions for the future. In doing this, they found common ground.

South Africa has involved itself in peace initiatives relating to a number of international disputes, particularly on the African continent but also further afield.

Because of this, at the end of the day, they learnt to deal with one another not as abstract enemies, but rather, as fellow human beings with the same hopes and fears, needs and aspirations, as anyone else.

South Africans, from right-leaning National Party Cabinet ministers through to die-hard Marxist ideologues on the far left, came together to talk about what their shared future should look like and how it could be achieved.

The process did not always go forward

smoothly, with external events sometimes threatening to derail it altogether, but go forward it did. For all concerned, it meant giving up long-cherished dreams and making inevitable compromises.

If all players in the Middle East were to take these lessons to heart, we could all feel confident of a final-status deal being agreed to in the not-too-distant future.

The South African way is to build bridges, not fences.

Not only does this apply to how we were able to resolve conflict and division within our own ranks, but since 1994, we have seen it by and large inform our foreign policy as well. South Africa has involved itself in peace initiatives relating to a number of international disputes, particularly on the African continent but also further afield.

In virtually all these cases, the policy has been to engage with all parties, always maintaining channels of communication.

However, when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian question, powerful forces within the ruling party and government have been pushing for South Africa to pursue a wholly contrary foreign policy, one of boycott and disengagement.

This, as the SAJBD has consistently argued, will achieve nothing beyond confining our country to the sidelines. It would make it all but impossible for it to play any kind of role in Middle East peace efforts, now or in the future.

Scaling down diplomatic relations would thus not only go against South Africa’s own objective interests, but ultimately, those of the Palestinians themselves.

A column of the Beit Halochem

## For them, the battle has just begun...

The SA Friends of the Beit Halochem Zahal Disabled Veterans Organisation was established in Johannesburg in 1982, its primary goal being to help and support Zahal disabled veterans by raising funds to help them return and resume their normal lives as soon as possible.

With the long and difficult rehabilitation that’s required physically, mentally and socially, the veterans’ ongoing needs are continuous.

There are 51 000 disabled members in Israel’s various Beit Halochem centres, and because of the many terror attacks, 3 000 civilians have also joined the disabled veterans in Beit Halochem, learning to cope with their disability.

Beit Halochem is a sport, rehabilitation and recreation centre, serving disabled veterans and their families. It is also the place where the veterans undergo various physiotherapy and hydrotherapy treatments which they’ll need for the rest of their lives.

Sports programmes contribute to their successful rehabilitation as they go a long way towards maintaining physical fitness and preventing the veterans’ health from deteriorating.

In addition, each centre offers arts and crafts workshops, as well as social and recreation activities.

Beit Halochem is the meeting place of a “generation” of the disabled, bringing together old-timers and newcomers, who must learn to adjust to the difficulties associated with disability.

The organisation adheres to the philosophy that the disabled should be cared for in a congenial environment. Hence, the various centres offer a host of activities to occupy the veterans’ families – adults and children alike.

There are currently four Beit Halochem centres in Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem and Beer Sheva, with the fifth one under construction in the coastal city of Ashdod. With state-of-the-art technology and equipment, and highly qualified staff, these centres have become “a light unto the nations”.

Many of the veterans belong to sports teams at the centre. These teams of men and women compete overseas and continue to break records and bring back gold, silver and bronze medals. The “dancing on wheelchairs group” are famous throughout the world for their spectacular performances. The veterans’ art exhibitions are also beautiful.

Here in South Africa, we strive to raise funds to continue to support and assist this worthy cause.

Please become members, join our committee, send donations in lieu of gifts, and remember us in your bequests. Help us to help them!

## For them the war has ended, but the battle has just begun.

This column is paid for by the SA Zionist Federation

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# Why the Mosque came for dinner

OPINION

RABBI GREG ALEXANDER

Jews and Muslims breaking bread together in shul – how did this come about? Three years ago, we reached out to the Open Mosque in Wynberg to build a bridge between Muslims and Jews in Cape Town. We offered to



Dr Taj Hargey and Rabbi Greg Alexander address the congregation

host an Ifthar, a traditional breaking of the fast that happens each night of the month of Ramadan. For Muslims this is a period of introspection and prayer similar to our High Holy Day period over Elul and Tishrei.

We felt that, given the tensions that had grown between our communities – which were largely focused on the violence in Israel and Palestine – we needed to do something to build bridges and show that Jews and Muslims in South Africa can be friends.

Dr Taj Hargey of the Open Mosque was an enthusiastic partner, and what we absolutely agree on is that we do not want those disagreements about Israel to poison the relationships between our communities.

Jews and Muslims have long histories of good relations not only here in South Africa, but all over the world as well. We wanted to make sure that our communities could work together for better understanding.

So, we started to plan our first Ifthar. We suggested that our guests arrive as the sun was setting, so that they did their Adhan (call to prayer) in our shul sanctuary – we laid out rugs for them. We would then provide the traditional tea, dates and samosas for breaking the fast. They would then join us for our Kabbalat Shabbat service and then we would have the Friday night dinner together.

Both our communities were very nervous in the days leading up to the event. Our security was getting calls from community members, who felt that we should move the event to a neutral venue or cancel it outright. The mosque was getting pressure from its members as to why they had to supply names of all guests in advance (this was a requirement from our side so that we could manage who was going to come in the gate).

To keep things calm we decided that Dr Taj and I would greet each person at the gate, which we did. Despite some really nasty emails and phone calls, we went ahead and on Friday night, the group arrived.

It was incredible – our shul was packed out. I joked with many of the congregants that I now know how to fill the shul every Shabbes – invite Muslim guests!

It felt like a yom tov, with everyone

excited and greeting each other, asking about why they do what they do and why we do what we do. And our community watched them pray their evening prayers and then they watched (and joined) ours too. It was a remarkable thing to see how everyone went from fearful to celebratory in one evening.

Dr Taj was clear that he wanted to reciprocate our hospitality, and we eventually came up with Chanukah – he would host one night of Chanukah in his mosque. So, last year in December, a big group

of congregants turned up at the Open Mosque in Wynberg with their



Gathering in the hall before Kiddush and Hamotsi

chanukiot. Dr Taj had laid on a huge kosher meal, including latkes. We sang, we explained the history and symbolism of Chanukah and we lit many chanukiot there that night.

On Shabbat Naso last week, the biggest group of Muslims (over 60) came and joined us for Ifthar and we now knew many of them from previous years.

The weeks leading up were tense, given the protests at the Gaza fence, and Dr Taj and I kept in touch to reassure each other that we were going ahead. In his words: “We must do this all the more now.”

This year was the third year, and as we learn in Kohelet, “A threefold cord is not easily broken”, and so we will, PG,

continue this tradition in years to come. We will continue to reach out to other mosques and Muslim groups, and encourage continued dialogue and friendship between our communities.

• Rabbi Greg Alexander is one of the rabbinic team at Temple Israel in Cape Town

## Apps to make Jewish life easier

JORDAN MOSHE

With our reliance on smartphones and classic Jewish ingenuity, it comes as little wonder that there are a multitude of Jewish apps around. They cover everything from the most useful information to the downright ridiculous. Here are example of the former.

The app, “Is It Kosher?”, can help you find kosher products and drinks in any shop. All its databases are taken from organisations that certify products as kosher, including the Orthodox Union, Kosher USA, the Kashrut Council of Canada, the SA Beth Din, Manchester Beit Din Kashrut Division, and others. Using its handy barcode scanner, the app can assist in finding kosher products in any supermarket anywhere in the world.

Equally useful for travel is the “Shabbos Zmanim” application. The app will show you Shabbat Candle Lighting time, Havdalah times and the Parsha of the week for your current location or any location in the world. It is easy to use and has many useful features.

A similar app is “Shabbat Candle Lighting reminder”, which is a great initiative. The application automatically calculates the Shabbat entrance time based on your device location, and alerts you about it. You can set the alert time from the app menu to determine when you’d like to be alerted before Shabbos comes in, so as not to forget to light candles.

If you ever find yourself in doubt over a Jewish or halachic question and have no access to a rabbi, consider using the app, “InstaRabbi”. This app makes sure that you never again have to act as your own rabbi when you don’t know what to do, and that none of the questions that you have related to Judaism go unanswered. “InstaRabbi” allows Jews across the world to ask Torah or halachic questions and get them answered quickly by the app’s qualified and dedicated staff of rabbis.

Similarly, when you find that you don’t know what brocha to make over your lunch, you can consult “Brochos – Jewish Blessings” and avoid any embarrassment in having to ask someone else and showing you don’t know. Featuring a fully searchable database of brocha information, this app allows you to browse and explore various food items alphabetically, categorically, by popularity, and randomly. The app includes a benchner feature, so you can finish your meal conveniently by using your phone.

Bringing more Jewish texts to your smartphone, the “OnYourWay” app brings you a variety of Jewish literature accessible when you need it. Including a siddur, chumash, Mishna, halachic texts and more, this app allows you to carry a virtual Jewish library in your pocket. Whether you need to daven, read the Parsha or want to do some Jewish reading, the wide array of texts offered by this app will meet your needs.

And if you need help reading some of the texts in Hebrew, consider installing “Free Hebrew by Nemo”. The app allows you to learn from actual native speakers, who teach you the language.



It requires no commitment other than a few minutes of your time when you have even a few minutes available. Designed to start you speaking the most useful words in Hebrew immediately and confidently, Nemo targets the words and phrases most often used in conversation. Its phrasebook offers access to the vocabulary in the app through a Hebrew-English dictionary interface, and it also functions as a translator, which can be found using the search interface and played in audio through the device speaker.

This isn’t the only Jewish app that makes use of the speaker. From Israeli to contemporary Jewish music, “J-Stream” offers users a large variety of station and music streams to listen to. Offering access to multiple stations playing Jewish music around the world, the app can display the name of the current song being played and can even play

in the background while you use your phone for other things. Whether you want to enjoy listening to soothing Jewish tunes while you work or you’re looking to add atmosphere to your Israeli-themed party, you can find music to suit your needs.

If you really want to make a noise, the “Shofar” app is a real blast. Offering three recorded shofar sounds – tekiah, shvarim and teruah – you can experience the High Holidays on any day of the year by recreating the sounding of the shofar with your smartphone. While not a substitute for the real thing, this app prevents lip chafing and breathlessness

though digitising a tradition familiar to all of us.

And if you want to play a game, forget about “Angry Birds” and rather download “Angry Jew”. Developed by “three handsome Jews”, this “running-jumping-punching game” is the only one that has distinct Jewish themes. Set in 19th-century Russia, the game lets you play as Mendel, a streimel-sporting, payot-waving chossid with a time machine and a mission to collect as many “holy books” as possible. You get the opportunity to help this yiddisheh boychik travel through time and collect books – what could be more thrilling?

So, whether you want to learn, read, prepare for Shabbos, find a kosher bite to eat or go on time-travel adventures with a chossid, the array of Jewish apps available for download will meet your every Jewish need.



# Number of South African olim has doubled

NICOLA MILTZ

Israel has become the number one destination of choice for Jewish South Africans who are emigrating. In the past two years, the number of South Africans making aliya has doubled.



This is according to the director of the Israel Centre in South Africa, Aviad Sela, who believes a new trend has emerged in the numbers of people choosing to emigrate to Israel. This was also visible in the increased numbers of people who attended this week’s Aliya Exhibition in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

“Israel is a very attractive destination for South Africans who are looking to move,” he said. “Aliya figures from South Africa used to be about 150 to 180 a year. More recently, the numbers have jumped to well over 300 a year.”

And the statistics show a marked decrease in the average age of olim (immigrants) from about 60 years old to 38 years old. “Younger people are choosing to move to Israel with young families. We have seen a big increase in this trend.”

The reasons for the spike in young people moving to Israel are varied. Said one father, who visited the exhibition and wished to remain anonymous: “I’m looking at options for my son for a gap year in Israel in which he can study and maybe make aliya thereafter. I think he will have more opportunities in the future in

Israel.” The director of Aliya Services for English-speaking countries, Yagen Ben-Chorin, told the *SA Jewish Report* that he was witnessing “a wave” of young adults in their late 30s and early 40s showing interest in exploring Israel as a future

destination of choice. “People say they have a good life in South Africa and they love their community. But some say they do not feel welcome here anymore. They fear for their personal security and they generally believe that there are limited opportunities for them in the future.

“They want to give more to their kids, have them roam the streets and have better career prospects.”

The reality in South Africa regarding crime, government corruption and anti-Israel sentiments are possibly factors contributing to the latest statistics regarding Israel, said Ben-Chonim.

Perceptions regarding future job opportunities in South Africa, and the fact that South African students feel unwelcome on certain university campuses – especially during Israel Apartheid Week – have also been cited.

A number of factors responsible for the attractiveness of Israel over other countries like the UK, the US and Australia include the many benefits offered by the State of Israel for South African olim.

South African olim are entitled to

a Sal Klitah, an “absorption basket” which is a sum of money given to you by the Israeli government to help cushion your arrival in Israel during the first few months.

“The amount will not cover all your expenses, but it helps significantly,” said Sela, who added that there were six monthly payments made.

If you are a certain age, you are entitled to a free academic education and degree from all schools and universities, except private universities, where you are entitled to a sizeable reduction.

The government also offers a number of tax breaks and benefits, he said: “The government waives certain taxes for new immigrants. For instance, there is an income tax reduction for 42 months from the start of your aliya.

“Israel is a unique country. When you travel to Israel, you are not a tourist – it is a country that belongs to you as well.”

Currently, there are 27 000 to 30 000 immigrants headed for Israel annually.

Upon landing at Ben Gurion Airport, new immigrants (oleh chadash) are welcomed by a representative of the Ministry of Aliya and Immigrant Absorption (Misrad Haklithah). “They literally walk you through your first few steps in your new adoptive country,” said Sela.

At the airport you are given a temporary ID card, an immigrant card, your first cash payment from the Sal Klitah “absorption basket”, and the address and phone number of the immigration office nearest to where you will be staying. You’re also given forms to fill in for health insurance, a SIM card with 200 minutes of free calls and a free taxi ride to your first destination.

“Where else do you get citizenship on day one of arriving in a new country? Which other country in the world receives new immigrants with open arms like Israel?” he added.

The State of Israel encourages young people between the ages of 18

and 30 to experience a year in Israel during which time they can “live like a local” and decide thereafter whether to return to South Africa. The year’s programme is heavily subsidised by the Israeli government to the tune of \$9 100 (R115 000).

Ofer Gutman, director of marketing and sales at Masa, also attended the exhibition. He said: “The Masa Israel Journey offers a diverse range of programmes. These include volunteer and community service programmes, gap-year programmes, internship and career development programmes, undergraduate and graduate academic programmes at Israeli universities, and Jewish studies programmes.

“South Africans are entitled to a grant, which makes it easier for them to afford the many custom-made programmes on offer.”

The year gives people an opportunity to grow, develop their skills and decide what they want

“emigration is tough. You have to make major adjustments. That’s why I’m in South Africa to do a reality check and show people that it is not a picnic, even though there are numerous benefits. It is absolutely imperative that you learn Hebrew at an ulpan.”

Employment is the number one obstacle at first, he said, adding that it is important to go with savings.

Sela said that some visitors to the Aliya Exhibition were assisted in finding employment during the exhibition.

The exhibition saw delegates from Telfed, Israel’s Interior Ministry, Absorption Ministry, Customs and Social Services. Banking representatives. Officials from municipalities were also on hand to deal with questions. There were several representatives from various academic institutions, including Bar-Ilan University,



to do with the rest of their lives, he added. “Because of the exchange rate complexities, South Africans are entitled to the automatic grant.”

Sela said: “We are not pushing aliya. That is not our mission here. We are offering people options.”

Make no mistake, said Ben-Chorin,

Hebrew University, IDC Herzliya, Masa and Technion.

Chaim Shchupak of Ofek Israeli, the organisation which assists in promoting aliya, said: “Israel is a country of immigrants. You feel part of the family even if you don’t know the people.”

## A new approach to raising funds

Sydenham Shul raised R1 650 000 in 24 hours this week – no big fancy function attached, just a very clever crowd-funding technique called Charidy.

Fund-raising can be difficult and donating money can be burdensome, but that apparently wasn’t the case at Sydenham Shul this past Sunday.

There were 80 volunteers on the phones at their call centre, over 600 donors in 24 hours, colourful balloons and streamers all over the room and periodic outbursts of music and dancing. This made their fundraising campaign an exciting event.

Charidy is a US-based company that focuses on assisting organisations in their fundraising. It uses the new age online crowd-funding concept, with the help of its modern and sophisticated website.

In addition to raising funds from the community, which is the goal of any crowd-funding website, Charidy’s campaigns have two unique aspects that make them fun and exciting. The first is competition. Every rand that is raised through the organisation’s community and supporters is matched by a group of generous donors, who believe in the cause and therefore choose to support it. Using this matching process motivates others to donate.

Secondly, there is a limited time allocated to the fundraiser, usually 24 hours. The designated target needs to be reached within that timeframe, otherwise the matching offers fall away. This ultimatum creates a hype and excitement which motivates people to give, and to give quickly.

Charidy reached South Africa in May last year, when Sydenham Shul adapted the website to the rand currency and the local gateway banking system. Spearheaded by Rabbi Yehuda Stern, associate rabbi and head of the Young Adults division at the shul, the shul embarked on a fundraising drive to raise money for its youth and young adults programmes and activities.

By using the Charidy platform, the volunteers successfully raised a substantial amount of money in their campaign. The shul subsequently went on to build its magnificent Youth Centre, otherwise known as the Bayit, which is now buzzing with activities catering for the younger generation of the community.

This past week was Sydenham Shul’s second Charidy campaign. Its aim was to raise funds to sustain its “Building the Next Generation programme, which incorporates the Sydenham nursery and pre-school as well as the youth and young adults.

Not only did the Charidy volunteers reached their target, which will now be matched by their generous sponsors, but they also raised 10% more than the original goal.

“So often people feel that their smaller donations are irrelevant, and the organisation is mainly funded by its major donors. Charidy shows the value in each and every donation, no matter the amount,” says Stern.

“After being matched, a ‘small’ donation is actually not so small. And since it is all done online, it gives an opportunity for everyone to donate, whether they are geographically close or far.”

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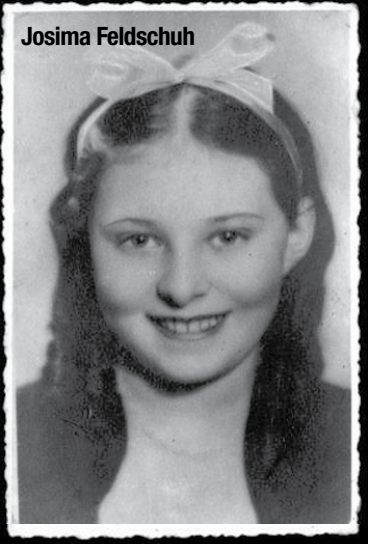


# Finding the Jewish musical genius who was lost to the world

JORDAN MOSHE

Josima Feldschuh was a child prodigy in Warsaw, Poland. She started composing at the age of eight and by 12, she was performing with some of the city’s renowned musicians.

She – like so many other immensely talent children – never grew up for the world to see her realise her potential. She was smuggled out of the ghetto, after which she contracted tuberculosis and died.



The Holocaust not only claimed six million people, it eliminated an entire age of European Jewry’s contribution to world culture.

The names of composers, performers, singers and actors whose achievements could rival those of Brahms and Mozart are lost to us, their talents unacknowledged. However, with the efforts of Dr Stephen Muir, we are slowly reclaiming our rich cultural history.

Last Wednesday, Muir, senior lecturer of the music department of the University of Leeds in the UK, shared his findings at a presentation held at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre. “Our work sees us look for music of Jewish composers and dramas by Jewish authors, regardless of their religiosity, regardless of the type of music,” says Muir.

“The thing that unites all the personalities we look at is that they were persecuted, and in many cases, murdered. There is a whole swathe of European Jewish culture that was totally wiped out. This was Hitler’s intention, but we aren’t going to let him win. We are trying to fill in gaps in humanity’s archive.”

Muir, together with a team of 11 other international researchers, undertook to bring recently rediscovered musical, theatrical and literary works by Jewish artists back to the attention of scholars and the public in 2012. This project, called ‘Performing the Jewish Archive’, was a British Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project led by the University of Leeds.

At the heart of this project is a series of international performance festivals Muir arranges, titled *Out of the*

*Shadows*. Jewish cabaret, choral and chamber music, and an exhibition of visual art and more at venues across the globe are presented. The festivals are drawn from the documents Muir and his team have discovered around the world, archives of information that can be found in the most obscure places.

“To me these hidden archives are so important,” explains Muir. “They give some kind of subjective agency to people who either didn’t make it out of Europe or to those who did, but were then sidelined because they were Jewish. The stories behind these people, not just their music, are extraordinary.”

Perhaps most extraordinary is the fact that Muir is not Jewish. “I have two Jewish colleagues in my department at Leeds,” explains Muir. “They became close friends of mine, and I wanted to find out about their lives. They took me to the shul one week when the choir and chazzan were singing, and it totally blew my mind.

“I felt guilty that this whole culture was something of which I had no knowledge. My interest grew and I learned more about the music and its structure. Intellectual curiosity became a personal responsibility; I can’t dabble and then move on. It’s so important to civilisation that this material is recovered.”

Muir’s discoveries are many and are individually remarkable – Josima Feldschuh being just one. Says Muir: “Her music is in some sense naïve, but it is beautifully constructed, and as the work of a 12-year-old, it is nothing short of remarkable.” Feldschuh’s brother and other members survived and have listened to her music.

“Her niece, who is today a woman in her 70s, said she feels that she knows her aunt a little bit more,” says Muir. “The impact of these discoveries on people is quite profound.”

Adds Muir: “We are all archives. We are full of information, and we categorise it into sections. We sometimes forget things and try to fill in the gaps.

“As we know, this is a fading archive that doesn’t last forever, which is, sadly, a fact of human life. The urgency of capturing these memories is therefore ever in our minds. Together with physical

archives, this information allows us to reconstruct and bring back music



Dr Stephen Muir

of the past and enable people to appreciate it now.”

Cabaret is a genre that featured prominently in Muir’s work. It was very popular among Jewish artists of the early 20th century, even after the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s. Light-hearted, comedic cabaret composition and performance continued, even under the direst of circumstances in ghettos and concentration camps.

“The culture was kept alive even in the Theresienstadt camp,” says Muir. “While not an extermination camp, this was a holding camp for mostly the intellectual Jews of Czechoslovakia where conditions were extremely harsh. Somehow, its prisoners managed to have a rich and intense cultural life of cabaret and theatrical performances. Tragically, while most were deported to Auschwitz, some of their material survived.”

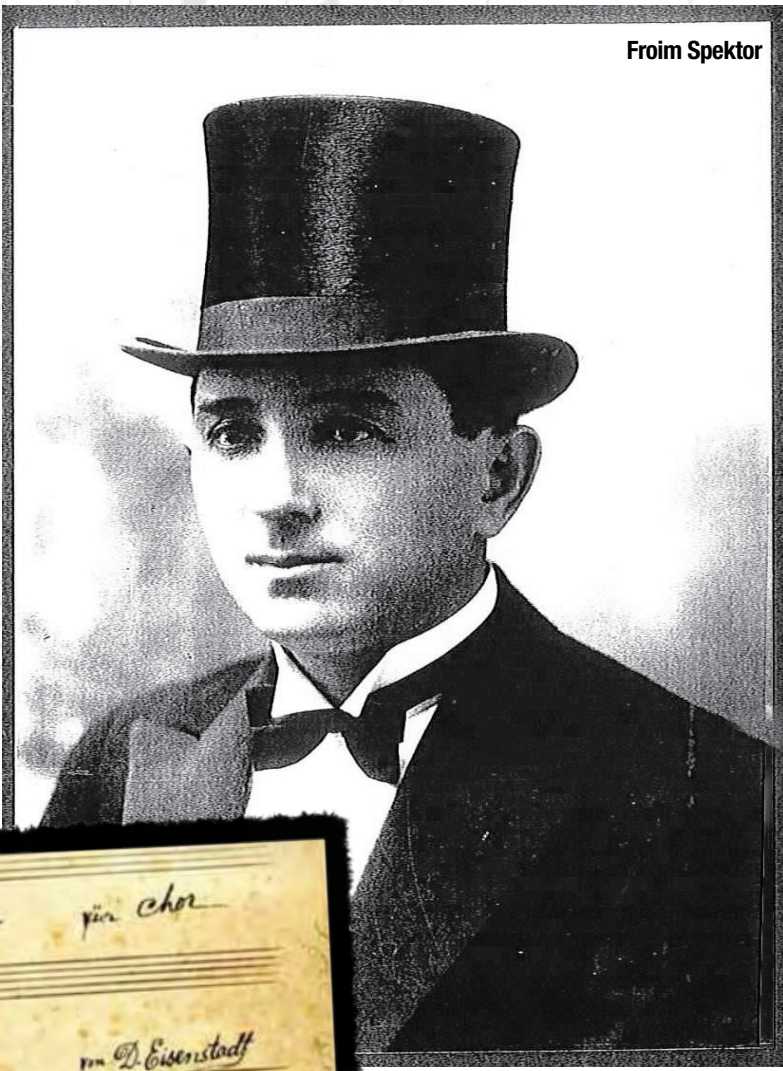
Muir explains that 90% of the material created in the camp was comedy, and until survivors who had watched performances in the camp themselves shared their testimonies, the use of this genre seemed bizarre.

“There may have been a small element of resistance involved,” says Muir, “but only one recorded case of a Nazi interrupting a performance exists. Mostly, survivors have reported that it was a means of escape. These were people who had been performers all their lives, and who wanted to continue doing what they did. Many productions harked back to the lives they knew and looked forward to the lives they wanted. Tragically, it was never to be for most of them.

“For many audiences, watching comedy emerging from this dark period in history is an uncomfortable experience,” explains Muir. “They’re not sure if they’re really allowed to laugh at this. But a survivor who had been involved in the original performance in Theresienstadt said: ‘Please laugh. That’s what it was for. If you don’t laugh, it has no point.’”

Even before the Holocaust, this rich musical culture was not limited to Europe.

Émigré composers – predominantly sidelined and repressed because they



Froim Spektor



One of the manuscripts found by Dr Muir

through these manuscripts with Spektor’s granddaughter, she casually mentioned that “Mrs Greek probably has some of her father’s papers, too”. And indeed, Shirley Greek did have a whole suitcase full of manuscripts and unique printed music taken to Cape Town by her father, Cantor Morris Katzin.

Katzin arrived in South Africa from Riga (modern-day Latvia), settling first in Johannesburg and later becoming chazzan of the Sea Point Synagogue. Katzin’s journey to Africa in 1933 included a singing tour that took place in several European countries, ending up at the private opera company Paris Opéra, where he was engaged to sing alongside the great Russian bass, Fyodor Chaliapin, in a number of operas.

Katzin helped to preserve a great deal of Spektor’s music in his own collection, which resided in a dusty packing trunk in a Cape Town garage. It was untouched for decades before Muir arrived.

“Shirley admitted that she had avoided opening them because she was terrified of spiders,” laughs Muir. “I’m also terrified, so we had to get someone in to open them for us. What we found inside was astonishing, and significantly contributed to the project.”

Reflecting on his work, Muir admits that the undertaking is vast, such that it will probably never be completed. Still, he and his team remain committed to the project, and continue to make astonishing discoveries around the world.

“I honestly think that there’s enough material out there – even just in my own area – for the rest of my career, and I still won’t get through everything I want to,” he says.

“The Jewish Archive, as a broad concept, was so fractured and dispersed during the 20th century that artefacts come up in the most unlikely of places, and I think we’ll be kept busy for a very long time to come yet!”



# THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

## Ministers deny Hamas claims of ceasefire

**MICHAEL BACHNER AND TAMAR PILEGGI**

A senior Israeli minister on Wednesday denied a ceasefire had been reached with Hamas and Islamic Jihad after the worst armed flare-up between Israel and Palestinian terrorist groups in Gaza since the 2014 war.

“There is no ceasefire,” Intelligence Minister Israel Katz told Israel Radio on Wednesday morning. “Israel maintains a clear policy not to allow fire and terror attacks against Israel.”

He spoke amid a respite from rocket and mortar fire from the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian terror groups in the Gaza Strip said earlier on Wednesday that they were committed to a truce with Israel which, they claimed, was reached following extensive mediation efforts by Egypt, after more than 110 rockets and mortars were fired at Israeli communities in under 24 hours by Gaza terrorist groups.

“Israel does not want the situation to deteriorate, but those who started the violence must stop it,” said Katz, a member of the high-level security Cabinet. “Israel will make [Hamas] pay for all fire against Israel.

“We see an Iranian fingerprint on

Hamas and Hezbollah. This is an escalation, and we will not allow the continued firing at us,” he added.

“Everything depends on Hamas now: If they continue, I do not know what their fate will be.”

Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz, however, said on Wednesday that there was an “understanding” in place between Israel and Hamas.

“I believe there is an indirect understanding with Hamas to end the current round of violence,” Steinitz said, but added that there would always be “some degree of fighting along the Gaza border”.

A reported ceasefire was set to start at midnight on Tuesday, but that deadline passed with no signs of a truce as dozens of rockets and mortar shells continued to rain down on Israel.

The Israeli ministers were responding to remarks by deputy Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya, who earlier announced that a “consensus” had been reached in the Strip to “return to the understandings of the ceasefire” during the night.

In a statement cited by Arab media, al-Hayya claimed that “the resistance succeeded in repelling the aggression and prevented the changing of rules”,



adding that there had been many mediation interventions in the previous hours. He said that Hamas and other “resistance factions” were committed to the ceasefire as long as Israel was, too.

Senior Israeli officials were quoted by the public broadcaster, Kan, as saying that while there was no formal ceasefire agreement with Gaza terror groups, there

was a mutual understanding that if the rocket and mortar shelling stops, Israel would stop its bombardment of Hamas and Islamic Jihad targets in the Strip.

Tuesday saw at least 70 projectiles launched into Israel from Gaza, prompting dozens of retaliatory strikes by the IDF against targets in the Strip, after weeks of soaring tensions.

## INTERNATIONAL SYMPATHY FOR ISRAEL

**RAPHAEL AHREN**

Israel’s foreign ministry on Tuesday mobilised its diplomats stationed worldwide to engage decision-makers and leading media outlets, asking them to demand harsh condemnations of the mortar and rocket barrages that hit the south of Israel during the day.

Israeli diplomats were asked to “stress that this is an attack by a terrorist organisation against civilians, in which, regretfully, there are injuries and from whence [we derive] our right to self-defence,” said foreign ministry spokesperson Emmanuel Nahshon on Tuesday, as international condemnation of the attacks began to filter in.

Four Israelis were injured by shrapnel during several salvos of rockets and mortar rounds that targeted southern Israel, including three troops. One soldier suffered moderate wounds and the other three people were lightly injured, authorities said.

Jerusalem asked its envoys to stress “our expectations of unequivocal condemnations of this terror attack”.

“We see Hamas, which co-operates with [Palestinian Islamic] Jihad, as responsible for this escalation,” Nahshon said.

The foreign ministry sent a first cable to its diplomats earlier in the day containing similar instructions, he said.

The cable further drew a connection between Tuesday’s attacks and Hamas’ recent so-called March of Return riots at the Israel-Gaza border, during which Israeli troops killed more than 100 Palestinians, most of them members of Hamas or Islamic Jihad.

The foreign ministry had been criticised

for failing to plan a public advocacy drive in the wake of border violence that reached a peak on May 14, as Israel was harshly condemned around the world.

In contrast, on Tuesday, international condemnation rained down on Hamas and Islamic Jihad, much of it focusing on a mortar shell that landed in a kindergarten playground shortly before children arrived.

Envoys for the European Union, the United Nations, the US administration, and other nations vocally condemned the attacks.

MK Yair Lapid, head of the Yesh Atid party, praised the response from the international community. “Good to see the world condemn today’s terror attacks from #Gaza against Israeli civilians,” he posted. “Now our friends and allies need to translate their condemnations into unwavering support for Israel’s right to defend itself and act against the terrorism of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.”

## GAZA-AREA FARMERS TO FILE ICC SUIT AGAINST ‘KITE TERROR’

**TOI STAFF**

Farmers in the Gaza area will file suit at the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Hamas leaders over the flying of hundreds of flaming “terror kites” from the Palestinian enclave into Israel, which have burned fields and led to millions of shekels in damages.

The farmers, who announced the planned lawsuit on Sunday, said they would submit the complaint in response to the Palestinian Authority’s stated intention to file suit against Israel over its handling of clashes on the border with the Gaza Strip.

The complaint will be lodged against Yahya Sinwar, Hamas’ leader in Gaza, and Ismail Haniyeh, the overall head of the terror group, as well as other senior Hamas members.

The Shurat HaDin non-governmental



organisation, which is helping file the suit, called on more farmers to join the complaint.

“Israel will not remain silent. The current security situation, in which fields and forests in Israel are burned every day by activists of a terrorist organisation, is inconceivable,” Nitzana Darshan-Leitner, the president of Shurat HaDin, said.

The flying of kites carrying burning material has become a widely adopted tactic during the weekly March of Return clashes on the Gaza border.

## ISRAEL DESTROYS HAMAS TUNNEL EXTENDING INTO ISRAEL VIA EGYPT

**TOI STAFF**

On Tuesday afternoon, the Israeli army struck what it said was a Hamas tunnel in the Gaza Strip that extended hundreds of metres into Egyptian and Israeli territory.

The IDF said the U-shaped attack tunnel, destroyed near Rafah and the Kerem Shalom border crossing, was still under construction and was not yet usable.

The military said the tunnel crossed from Gaza into Egypt and from there into southern Israel, and was intended both for smuggling weapons and for attacks against Israel. Its full length was about 2km, the army said, and the segment inside Israeli

territory was 900 metres long.

The military discovered the tunnel in the past two weeks, an army spokesperson said, and called the tunnel’s design “unique”.

“This is a very long tunnel,” a source told the Ynet news site. “It also had exit shafts on the Egyptian side. The tunnel was dealt with using airstrikes [in Gaza], and in the coming hours will also be taken care of on our side to neutralise it entirely.”

Israeli officials reportedly informed Egyptian counterparts of the planned strike on the tunnel, according to Hebrew-language media. It was not clear if Israeli strikes on the tunnel included action over

the border in Egypt.

The destruction of the tunnels came as Israeli planes pounded Gaza in response to a morning barrage of mortar fire, including one shell that landed in a kindergarten playground shortly before children were due to arrive.

The IDF said it struck over 35 terror targets in Gaza throughout the day, belonging to Hamas and Islamic Jihad. These included weapons caches, naval targets and terror headquarters. Some 28 mortar shells and rockets were fired into Israel by Palestinian terror groups on Tuesday morning, and media reported dozens more in the afternoon.



# Haredim show compassion for African asylum seekers

MELANIE LIDMAN

The African asylum seeker issue may have faded from the headlines since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cancelled forced deportations last month, but hundreds are still waiting for hours each day under the hot sun. They're waiting in a trash-filled compound in Bnei Brak, near Tel Aviv, in order to renew their temporary visas.

Disgusted by the conditions, a small group of religious activists in the neighbourhood have organised shade, bathrooms and chairs for the waiting crowd. "There were huge piles of garbage here; it stunk of urine, with old mattresses everywhere," said Faigy Lifshitz, the central organiser of Haredim Against the Deportations, who is using a fake name due to threats she has

received for her involvement. In February, the Population and Immigration Authority abruptly moved the office for filing asylum requests from south Tel Aviv, where the majority of asylum seekers live, to Bnei Brak. The Bnei Brak facility is where all foreign workers, including asylum seekers, must go to renew their visas.

Asylum seekers receive temporary visas from three to six months and must renew them before they expire in order to avoid deportation or imprisonment. Because of low approval rates, asylum seekers have been reluctant to submit requests for asylum. The Population and Immigration Authority has only approved 10 Eritreans and one Sudanese person – an acceptance

rate of only 0.056%, according to the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants. But Netanyahu's plan to deport thousands of Africans have encouraged many to rush to submit requests. The combination of visa renewals with asylum seeker requests, however, has created an untenable situation at the Bnei Brak facility.



Lifshitz said the fenced compound outside – where people must wait in line to go into the government office – sometimes holds over 3 000 people without shade or protection from the rain. Some people spend days waiting in line. "This is the first time I have really felt shame as an Israeli citizen," said Lifshitz. "Even

someone who is in favour of the deportations, at least treat them like human beings." Other activists and volunteers have also come forward to help. The volunteers help to ensure that asylum seekers can understand the documents they receive from the office and that there is an Israeli activist presence at all times. Others have made donations, including one for NIS 18 500 (R64 000) for shade tents, and another by Phillipa Friedland, the deputy director of the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development, who helped raise more than NIS 10 000 (R35 000) to ensure that there are portable toilets. "The message is about Jewish compassion; that as Jews, we must accept the refugee," Lifshitz said. "But it's also about standing up and taking action."

## Brussels chief rabbi won't wear kippa publicly Photographer's lost Marilyn Monroe pics restored

JTA AND TOI STAFF

Amid reports of widespread fear among Belgian Jews of being attacked by anti-Semites, the Chief Rabbi of Brussels and other Jews declined a public broadcaster's request to film them walking on the street while wearing a kippa, citing security concerns. Belgium's RTBF broadcaster reported last Thursday that it wanted to film Chief Rabbi Albert Guigui, among other rabbis, wearing a kippa for a programme about anti-Semitism. But Guigui declined, telling the channel he has stopped visibly wearing a kippa since 2001, following an anti-Semitic assault. In December of that year, Guigui

when there are problems in Israel." Joel Rubinfeld, the president of the Belgian League Against Anti-Semitism, or LBCA, agreed to wear his kippa on the street – but only if RTBF provided a security detail, the Brussels-based radio station, Bruzz, reported. In April in Berlin, a non-Jewish man wearing a kippa, or yarmulke, was assaulted by an attacker shouting "Jew!" in Arabic. The victim was an Israeli Arab who said he donned the kippa to test whether it had actually become dangerous to wear a yarmulke in Germany. In 2016, a community leader in France, Tzvi Amar, warned Jews in Marseille to avoid wearing kippas. And in 2014, a Danish Jewish school in Copenhagen urged its students to come to school wearing baseball caps over their yarmulkes. At least a quarter of Europe's Jews had resolved not to wear their kippas or any other Jewish symbol publicly before any of the debates even took place, according to a 2013 survey in nine countries. In that European Union poll of 5 100 Jews – the most comprehensive study of its kind – 49% of 800 Swedish respondents said they refrained from wearing clothing that identified them as Jewish. In Belgium, whose capital city is the seat of the EU, the figure was 36%. In a separate incident last Thursday, two pro-Palestinian protesters disrupted a concert in Brussels involving an American orchestra bound for a performance in Israel and a Jewish pianist. Hélène Grimaud, a well-known French pianist of Jewish ancestry, had to stop playing as security escorted out of the hall two women who were chanting about "creating Palestine", the daily newspaper, La Libre Belgique, reported. Grimaud was accompanied at the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles by the Philadelphia Orchestra, whose members are on a tour that includes several European countries and Israel. The protesters did not say whether they were there over the orchestra's plans to visit Israel or because of Grimaud, who headlined promotional material about the concert in Belgium.

'The Rock Sitting', 1954. This portrait depicts Marilyn Monroe nestled in the rocky crevasses of Laurel Canyon, Los Angeles



JENNI FRAZER

Joshua Greene, an American photographer and digital film restorer, has restored thousands of pictures of the iconic actress taken by his late father, Milton Greene.

According to Joshua, his father had an extraordinary relationship with the woman who was arguably the 20th century's greatest pin-up model.

And while Joshua admits that Milton was not religiously observant, he says that the Brooklyn-born Jewish photographer had a long and lasting influence on Monroe nevertheless. Milton even saw Monroe through her conversion to Judaism, which she underwent to marry the playwright, Arthur Miller.

Milton's ravishing portraits of Monroe, many rare or previously unseen, are now part of a London exhibition called "Up Close With Marilyn". On display are pictures from 50 different sittings Greene shot of Monroe, resulting in an archive of more than 3 000 images.

Monroe was on the threshold of stardom in 1953 when she met Milton – he was 31, she was 27. She had a telling cameo role in *Niagara* and a bigger part in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. But she was restless and

had not had a pay raise since 1950. "My dad told Marilyn to come out to New York, and so she did – and he changed her career. He introduced her to artists, musicians – and she stayed at my parents' homes in New York and in Connecticut," says Joshua. Together, the duo formed Marilyn Monroe Productions, or MMP, and Monroe appeared in new films such as *Bus Stop* and *The Prince and the Showgirl*, which Greene produced. "By the time my father died, in 1985, he believed that most of his photographs of Marilyn were unusable and could not be reproduced. They had faded, he thought, beyond rescue," says Joshua. "She married Miller in 1956 and he made it plain that he felt he could manage her career better than Milton," says Joshua. So in 1957, recounts Joshua with some distaste, "Milton was asked to name his price to be bought out of MMP." The two continued to be in touch right up until a month before Monroe was found dead, in 1962. Milton and Marilyn may be gone, but Joshua Greene has revived their legacy through new digital techniques that allow him to restore the iconic Milton Greene archive.



Brussels' Grand Rabbi Albert Guigui

was attacked by a group of Arabic-speaking youths. The Jewish community in Belgium, numbering about 40 000 and split mainly between Brussels and Antwerp, has suffered a rising number of anti-Semitic attacks in recent years, especially in reaction to Israel's conflict with Gaza last summer. Four people died after a radical Muslim carried out a shooting attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014. "The government is doing all it can to give us a sense of security. Security personnel and soldiers are guarding our schools and synagogues," Guigui told *The Times of Israel* in 2015. "It's quiet now, but anti-Semitism wakes up here



# ‘Our kindergarten is the safest place,’ teacher says after attack

MICHAEL BACHNER

An Israeli kindergarten in an Eshkol region community near the Gaza Strip opened on Tuesday, despite a mortar shell landing right outside it shortly before the children came in at the start of the day.

“I told the kids our kindergarten is the safest place in existence,” kindergarten teacher Tova Ludmer Gigi told reporters after the shell struck a tree in the nearby yard. “They know that in case of danger at home, they run to the safe room, and here the entire place is reinforced.”

“It is adorable to hear the kids,” she added. “They ask, ‘Tova, what is a rocket? What is it made of?’ They say they saw what happened outside when they were on the way here, but on the other hand, we are sticking to our routine.”

“The children are dancing, talking... expressing themselves. Some are a bit more afraid, blocking their ears and saying: ‘There was a rocket alarm,’” Ludmer Gigi added.

IDF spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus visited the site, and the military published a video showing the damage caused by shrapnel to the kindergarten’s reinforced structure – including to its front door.

Meanwhile, residents of communities in the area published videos with their thoughts about the first rocket alarm they’ve heard in almost four years, with Adele Raemer saying it was “a really scary morning”.

The attack, which triggered three rounds of sirens in as many hours in the Sha’ar Hanegev and Eshkol regions, was claimed by the Iranian-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group, apparently as revenge for the IDF killing three of its members in a cross-border exchange earlier in the week.

The army said 28 mortar shells were fired at Israeli territory in at least three separate barrages, starting before 7am. Most of the projectiles were intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defence system.

One person was injured by shrapnel when a shell landed a few metres from him, and was taken to the Soroka hospital in

Beersheba. “I lay down on the ground, according to the rules, when the first shells exploded, and the third shell fell a few metres from me,” said the man, Eyal Iraqi, a gardener in his 40s. “I have some injuries, but thank G-d it only ended like this, and everything is good.”

It appeared to be the largest attack from the Gaza Strip, in terms of the number of projectiles fired, since the 2014 war.

President Reuven Rivlin phoned the kindergarten next to which the shell landed and told children that he and his wife, Nechama,

were waiting to meet them at the President’s Residence.

The kindergarten teacher said that Rivlin’s call came during the kids’ breakfast.

“What a precious, magical person,” she told Ynet. “They asked if he could speak with the children, and he wished us calm and invited us to Jerusalem. I said we would be glad and honoured. Right now, we are looking after ourselves as much as we can.”

• *Judah Ari Gross and Times of Israel staff contributed to this report.*



## Iron Dome shows it can now down mortar fire

JUDAH ARI GROSS

The Iron Dome missile defence system succeeded on Tuesday where it had been ineffective during the 2014 Gaza war: in shooting down incoming mortar shells that are in the air for just 15 seconds.

“The Iron Dome has been quite effective,” Israel Defence Forces (IDF) spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus told reporters. “It’s probably something [Gazan terrorist groups] didn’t take into account.”

This was not the first time that the Iron Dome has intercepted mortar fire, but Tuesday represented a significant test for the system, which the military believes it passed.

Over the course of Tuesday, scores of mortar shells, and some rockets, were fired at southern Israel by the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip.

Conricus said the shells, fired by the Iran-backed Islamic Jihad, appeared to be an Iranian-made variety that had been smuggled into the coastal enclave.

According to the IDF, Iron Dome batteries succeeded in shooting down at least 25 incoming projectiles over the course of the day, most of them mortar rounds, though the army said it had yet to calculate a final tally.

Mortar fire by terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip killed several Israelis during the 2014 Gaza war, including four-year-old Daniel Tragerman from Kibbutz Nahal Oz.

In the four years that have passed, Israel has worked continuously to improve the system to counter this threat. This included technological improvements and efforts to streamline the work of the soldiers operating the system.

The Walla news site reported that the army also changed

the way in which the batteries were deployed along the Gaza border on Wednesday in order to give them a better chance of intercepting the dozens of mortar shells fired at southern Israel.

The Iron Dome system was initially designed to shoot down incoming rockets and missiles, which it did effectively during the 2014 conflict, known in Israel as Operation Protective Edge.

Over the years, the system has been upgraded to also be able to intercept drones and mortar rounds.

The Iron Dome’s first reported interception of mortar fire occurred in September 2016, when a battery in northern Israel shot down two incoming errant shells fired from Syria that were heading toward the Golan Heights, in an apparent case of spill-over fire from the civil war there.

Mortar shells present a far greater challenge for the Iron Dome than rockets, owing to the shells’ shorter range – normally no more than 4km.

In order for the Iron Dome to intercept an incoming projectile, the system must first spot it, determine – based on its trajectory – if it is heading towards a populated area and, if so, launch an interceptor missile to shoot it down.

Rockets and missiles remain in the air for far longer as they travel toward their target, which gives the Iron Dome’s automated systems and the soldiers that operate it more time to carry out these steps.

Mortar shells, on the other hand, are in the air for far less time. Residents of the Israeli communities closest to the Gaza border have 15 seconds to reach a bomb shelter once a mortar shell is fired.

Tuesday showed that the Iron Dome is capable of shooting down mortar shells in this amount of time, though military officials repeatedly stressed that the system was not perfect.

## In Britain, poll shows 23% ‘unwilling’ to have a Jew in the family

JTA

Nearly a quarter of British respondents to a poll on attitudes to minorities in Western Europe said they would be unwilling to accept Jews as family members.

The Pew Research Center’s report, titled “Being Christian in Western Europe”, was published on Wednesday. It contains results from interviews with more than 24 000 randomly selected adults in 15 countries.

In the United Kingdom, 23% of 1 841 respondents interviewed said “no” when asked: “Would you be willing to accept Jews as members of your family?” It was the second-highest highest proportion of

naysayers, directly after Italy’s 25%. The poll has a margin of error of up to 3%.

The highest level of acceptance of Jews as family members was in the Netherlands, where 96% of 1 497 respondents said they would have no problem with a Jew joining their family.

In Germany, 19% of 2 211 respondents said they would not accept a Jewish relative. In Austria, non-acceptance was at 21%. The mostly Catholic nations of Spain, Portugal and Ireland also had high non-acceptance levels at 13%, 18% and 18%, respectively.

The same question was asked about Muslims, and their acceptance was lower than that of Jews in all 15 countries surveyed, with a median difference of 10 percentage points.

In Italy, 12% of 1 804 respondents said they would unwilling to accept even a Jewish neighbour. That figure was 10% in Ireland and Portugal, 9% in the UK and 8% in Spain, Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

The statement that “Jews always pursue their own interests and not the interest of the country they live in” received the highest levels of agreement in Portugal and Spain, with 36% and 31% of 1 501 and 1 499 respondents in those two countries, respectively. Next were Italy, Belgium and Norway, with 31%, 28% and 25%, respectively.

## Roseanne’s other problematic tweet was about George Soros

RON KAMPEAS

US network ABC cancelled Roseanne Barr’s TV series on Tuesday, after she compared Valerie Jarrett, who was a top adviser to former president Barack Obama, to an ape.

Barr apologised for the racist tweet, in which she wrote that the African-American Jarrett was the product of a coupling of the Muslim Brotherhood and Planet of the Apes. But the damage was done.

“Roseanne’s Twitter statement is abhorrent, repugnant and inconsistent with our values, and we have decided to cancel her show,” the network said in a statement.

Before her apology, Barr was also duelling with Chelsea Clinton, whom she said in a series of tweets was married to a nephew of George Soros. (She isn’t – it is a false rumour.)

That devolved into Barr repeating a falsehood, popular in some conservative circles, that the liberal Hungarian-Jewish billionaire was a Nazi collaborator – a narrative that has problematic echoes in Holocaust denial.



Barr’s initial tweet read “Chelsea Soros Clinton”. She expanded on this in a subsequent tweet, referencing the internet myth about Clinton and a Soros nephew. Barr is Jewish and a staunch defender of Israel’s government, but both replies to Clinton have echoes in anti-Semitic rhetoric.

As for her reference to the Muslim Brotherhood in her tweet about Jarrett, . Jarrett is not a Muslim, but Barr has a history of hostility to Muslims. Barr initially tried to deflect on Twitter, saying: “Muslims are not a race” – which ignored the anti-black racism in her original tweet.



Members of the Jewish community protest outside the British Houses of Parliament



# From superhero to producer

TRACY FRYDBERG

Gal Gadot is trading in her sword for a pen. The Israeli actress is set to produce, and perhaps star in, the Cuba-centred journalism drama, *My Dearest Fidel*.

According to weekly US magazine *Variety*, Gadot partnered with former Warner Brothers executive Sue Kroll and her husband, Jaron Varsano, to produce the film based on Peter Kornbluh’s April 21 article for political journalism company Politico, titled “My Dearest Fidel: A journalist’s secret liaison with Fidel Castro.”

Kroll and Gadot first worked together in last year’s superhero blockbuster, *Wonder Woman*.

News of the collaboration came along with the announcement that Warner Brothers acquired the exclusive movie rights to the story under Kroll’s production company,

Kroll & Kroll Co. Entertainment. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the co-creator of the Netflix crime drama *Narcos*, Chris Brancato, will write the screen adaptation of the article.

The article’s made-for-screen narrative follows the true story of how ABC journalist Lisa Howard – born Dorothy Jean Guggenheim to a Jewish family in Ohio – formed an “intimate” diplomatic relationship with Cuba’s leader, Fidel Castro, which “changed the course of the Cold War”, according to Kornbluh’s article.

According to online magazine *Deadline.com*, “Howard was ABC’s first full-time female reporter and the first woman to anchor her own TV news show”.

Howard was responsible for establishing a top-secret channel between Washington and Havana during her three trips to Cuba to help mend relations between the two countries after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Howard died shortly afterwards, from a

painkiller overdose in 1965.

While various news outlets mentioned the possibility that Gadot would play Howard, the actress noticeably omitted any direct reference to the role in her statement. “When I first read Peter’s article, I was entranced by his thrilling account of a complicated, fascinating woman in the midst of a high-stakes, real-life drama,” she said.

“I knew immediately that I had to be involved creatively with telling Lisa Howard’s story, and am thrilled to be producing this film with Sue,” Gadot said.

*My Dearest Fidel* will be Kroll’s first major feature project since leaving Warner Brothers. in January and opening up a production company under her own name in April. The Jewish filmmaker is also busy producing upcoming drama *A Star is Born* with Bradley Cooper, and developing *The Six Billion Dollar Man*, starring Mark Wahlberg.



Gal Gadot

Photo: Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP

## Gal Gadot turns down Eurovision gig

DAVID SEDLEY

Israeli actress Gal Gadot has turned down an official invitation to host the 2019 Eurovision Song Contest, set to be held in Israel, Hebrew media reported on Monday.

The star of the hit movie, *Wonder Woman*, apparently left Israelis little time to wonder whether she would pick up the gauntlet, with the Hollywood A-lister swiftly turning down an opportunity to host the campy international song contest.

Sources close to Gadot confirmed that she had been invited by Israel’s Kan public broadcaster to host the event.

According to Hadashot news, Gadot’s agent said: “She would have been happy to host and to take part in the Eurovision contest, but unfortunately, due to scheduling and prior commitments it will not be possible.”

Gadot, who shot to stardom on the success of 2017’s *Wonder Woman*, is on board to play Diana Prince in the sequel to the superhero movie, tentatively set to be

released in December 2019.

Yigal Ravid, who hosted the Eurovision Song Contest in 1999, the last time it was held in Jerusalem, called on Gadot to reconsider.

“I don’t think anyone in Israel can get into your professional consideration for or against, but it would be wonderful for you and for us,” Hadashot quoted him as saying.

“Eurovision in Jerusalem will present many difficult challenges, both technical and political, in Israel and abroad, in the next year. But it will be the biggest Eurovision Song Contest ever,” he said. “So go on, come!”

Gadot’s name was raised as a possible host as soon as Israel won the 2018 contest on May 19 with the song, *Toy*, by Netta Barzilai. The lyrics of the song reference *Wonder Woman*.

In an Instagram post during the final of the contest, Gadot encouraged her nearly 20 million Instagram followers to “Vote for Netta!”

And in a post after Barzilai’s victory, Gadot wrote: “You

represent the real wonder in women. So much truth, confidence and talent. You stand for diversity and you bring fresh beautiful light to the world. And thank you all for voting!!!”

Gadot can be heard on video saying: “What a sweetie, how cute, what a champion.”

According to the annual competition’s rules, the winning country hosts the following year’s contest. It is likely that the event will be held in Jerusalem in May, but Eurovision organisers tweeted last week that people should not book their tickets just yet, fuelling speculation that it may be held elsewhere.

On Friday, it was reported that the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) held secret meetings with Kan and said its main concern about holding the event in the capital was that several countries may not participate.

Israel has hosted the Eurovision contest twice before in Jerusalem, a city that most countries do not recognise as Israel’s capital. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said the Eurovision will be hosted in Jerusalem.

- JTA contributed to this report.

## UK blogger and Holocaust denier convicted



Alison Chabloz

Photo: AFP/Tolga Akmen

JTA

A British blogger who posted songs on YouTube denying the Holocaust was convicted in London of sending “offensive, indecent or menacing messages”.

On Friday, a Westminster Magistrates’ Court judge in London found Alison Chabloz, 54, guilty of writing, performing and disseminating three songs about Nazi persecution. One was about the young diarist, Anne Frank.

Chabloz, who claimed in one of her songs that the Holocaust was “just a bunch of lies”, will be

sentenced next month.

During one session of her trial in January, Chabloz sang along in the courtroom as the judge reviewed the videos of her singing.

The Campaign Against Anti-Semitism watchdog initially brought a private prosecution against Chabloz before the Crown Prosecution Service took over.

“This verdict sends a strong message that in Britain, Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories will not be tolerated,” said Gideon Falter, the group’s chairman.

## About René Goscinny, Jewish inventor of Asterix

JENNI FRAZER

Children and adults all over the world are familiar with Asterix the Gaul and his sidekick, Obelix.

The comic-strip series has been translated into 150 languages, including Hebrew and Arabic.

Now in London for the first time, an exhibition at the Jewish Museum explores the life and work of René Goscinny, the man behind Asterix, and his Jewish story of heritage and exile.

Curator Jo Rosenthal has no doubt that Goscinny’s “outsider” status contributed to the wry eye he and his co-creator, Albert Uderzo, cast on their characters.



Self-portrait at drawing table, René Goscinny, 1948

Photo: Anne Goscinny

Goscinny was born in Paris in August 1926 to Jewish parents from Ukraine, on his mother’s side, and Poland on his father’s. His mother Anna’s family ran a printing company. It published in French, several Eastern European languages, and Hebrew and Yiddish.

The family left Paris when Goscinny was just two, setting up home in Argentina.

In 1943, Goscinny’s father died, leaving Anna to support her two sons by herself. Then members of her family were deported to Auschwitz, where they were killed.

Anna moved to New York with her two sons in 1945 and René began to scrape by as a cartoonist. In 1951, he met Albert Uderzo. The pair launched a new magazine, *Pilote*, in 1959. Asterix featured in the first issue and was an instant hit.

Goscinny focused on the storylines of Asterix’s adventures, leaving the drawing to Uderzo. Uderzo, now 91, went on drawing Asterix after Goscinny’s early death in 1977 at the age of just 51. The cartoon strip is still published, but is written by two other collaborators.

The year he died, Goscinny visited Jerusalem. Uderzo was well aware of Goscinny’s admiration for Israel and his identity as a Jew. In Asterix and the Black Gold, he immortalised his friend by drawing a character called Saul Ben Epishul.

Goscinny is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Nice, France.







# Instead of the Promised Land, Jews landed on an island prison

MIRAH LANGER

For most people, Mauritius is a tropical paradise. But 70-odd years ago, it was a prison for 1 580 Jewish detainees, thwarted in their attempt to flee Nazi Europe. The experience of these European Jews, who were deported to Mauritius, represents the closest the Holocaust ever came to the southern tip of Africa. Vanessa Levaillant, a guide at the Jewish Detainees Memorial Museum and Information Centre in Mauritius, recently detailed the sorrows and strengths of this group when she spoke at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre in Forest Town. The refugees who landed up in Mauritius were, in fact, part of a larger group of 3 500 Jews from various parts of Europe who, in 1940, fled the Nazi regime to settle in Palestine.



The women's camp in Mauritius

Travelling on four ships, the refugees endured months of shocking conditions on their journey, including overcrowding and the spread of diseases like typhoid, dysentery and diarrhoea. There were over 1 800 people travelling on one of the ships, the Atlantic, which had capacity for only 800 people. “It was so overcrowded... that the captain had to give orders to move to the left or right to stabilise the ship,” explained Levaillant. At one point, the ship ran out of coal, so all the wood on the ship was burned except for one mast. “It was like a ghost ship. Just imagine: they need the ship to move, to carry on the trip, but actually they are destroying the ship.” As such, when the refugees arrived at the Haifa harbour, their relief was palpable: “The passengers were rejoicing and singing *Hatikvah*.”

Haifa harbour. They planned to send the Jews to Mauritius, considered a safe harbour. However, the Jewish paramilitary Haganah movement had different plans: “As they were transferring the passengers onto the Patria, there was a big blast. The Patria exploded.” The Haganah had put explosives on board, intending only to delay the deportation so they could negotiate the right for the refugees to stay. They miscalculated the amount of explosives needed. A total of 202 people, including British officers and refugees, died. The British kept the survivors for two weeks before sending these refugees to Mauritius. The refugees tried many desperate ploys to avoid leaving, including stripping naked, thinking that as the British were considered gentlemen, they wouldn’t force naked people onto a ship, said Levaillant.

The 1 580 refugees, including 96 children, were nevertheless deported on December 12 1940 to Mauritius and were “transferred to [the prison in] Beau Bassin and incarcerated”. “They were shocked,” Levaillant explained. “They had been through so many hardships, and they ended up behind prison walls.” As families were separated into a men’s and women’s section, the refugees were also exposed to malaria. Dozens of people died in the first year on the island.

Nevertheless, there was also a great spirit of resilience. The detention camp housed two schools, two synagogues and bakeries. After some time, marriages were allowed and 60 children were born during the period of incarceration. Said Levaillant: “The main reason the British detained all the people was a fear that there could be a Nazi spy among them.” Once it was clear that this was not the case, some teachers, doctors and musicians were allowed to work outside the camp. In fact, a dancing band called Papa’s was established by refugee musicians and it became well known on the island. Despite the fact that the detainees were from various parts of Europe, “they acted as one community”, explained Levaillant, noting that religious rituals such as Shabbat were observed.

She said the South African Jewish community assisted by liaising with the one Jew who lived in Mauritius at the time in order to send various supplies. Medication, prayer books and musical instruments were sent from South Africa to “ease their daily lives”. Finally, on August 12 1945, the detainees were given the choice of returning to Europe or going to Palestine: “The majority chose Palestine,” says Levaillant. “Nothing was left after their departure.” The camp buildings were flattened. “There was only one proof in Mauritius [of their existence]: the cemetery.”



The 128 graves of Jewish refugees who had died during their stay, including that of six children, remained. In 2014, a memorial, housed in an old chapel in the cemetery garden to commemorate the Jewish detainees, was finally established. This was the start of a life-changing journey for Levaillant, who had previously worked as a guide at a military museum. “Two days after the opening of the memorial, I witnessed the first tears... A lady came to visit. She saw her husband’s family name and started crying,” said Levaillant.

“I was not used to seeing people crying. I was used to the British Military Museum, of which I was very proud – but now I am seeing the other side of the... British colony. “After this visit there was something different in me... After the tears, I could no longer assign numbers: there was a name on the graves and I wanted to find out more.” Levaillant, who is not Jewish and describes herself as previously being “one of those who didn’t know anything about the Holocaust”, said she’d learnt a key lesson working at the memorial: that associating heritage with ethnicity

is a “misconception”. “I have learned as a guide that heritage belongs to all of us. This is part of my country’s history and I want to contribute.” Levaillant told of how her friend originally persuaded her to take the job by telling her that “the opening of this memorial will be just like a light that shines onto the Jewish cemetery – because it has remained in the dark part of Mauritian history”. “But,” added Levaillant’s friend, “this cemetery won’t be able to relate its story on its own. We have to give it a voice to make it alive.” With her profound sensitivity, Levaillant has become that voice.

## Connecting the *chesed* organisations



JORDAN MOSHE

Jewish *chesed* organisations do phenomenal work – but until now, they have all worked independently and are not aware of what others are doing. This is now changing. Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein convened a meeting two weeks ago and invited community organisations involved in *chesed* work. His only goal was to co-ordinate their efforts and make sure that they serve our community as effectively as possible. “The idea was to get everyone to share their activities with the others so that they could all be aware of what the others are doing,” explains Goldstein. “*Chesed* is such an important value, and kindness and compassion make the world a better place. Helping people in need is a crucial activity that continues to be vital in our community.” The meeting was held a few days before Generation Sinai, where the theme of charity and the mitzvah of supporting organisations involved in *chesed* work were emphasised. Although the meeting was aimed primarily at raising awareness among organisations, Goldstein explains that this is only the first step. “The vision is to engender unity and closeness among them,” he says. “Moreover, we want to explore areas of potential co-operation between organisations where there is overlap in the services they offer.”

He gave an example that came up in the meeting: “The Bikkur Cholim organisation offers a service of giving people lifts to medical care centres. Hatzolah knew nothing about this, but they are regularly approached by people who are not in emergency situations for transport to medical care. From now on, when people ask Hatzolah for this, they can refer them to Bikkur Cholim and not disappoint anyone. “This is only one example that shows that once we are aware of what others are doing, we can serve the community better.” The meeting is set to become a regular platform for discussion about potential lanes of co-ordination and co-operation among affiliated organisations. The organisations agreed to meet twice a year. This will ensure that they continue their exploration of potential co-operation and give each other support across all working *chesed* endeavours. Goldstein explains: “We are not looking to establish a new organisation, nor to appoint a co-ordinating officer. It is more a forum for discussion and dialogue for all potential partnerships.” Goldstein has committed to chairing the meetings and ensuring that they happen, and to facilitating partnerships where he can. “I aim to promote the work that these organisations do,” he says.

“The main reason the British detained all the people was a fear that there could be a Nazi spy among them.”



# Stumbling on an antique printing press that spewed anti-Semitism

TALI FEINBERG

Durban philanthropist John Moshal found an old printing press in an antique store in the Natal Midlands. He was shocked to discover that it had belonged to infamous anti-Semite Raymond K. Rudman – with his hateful rhetoric still displayed on it, like a warning from the past.

Even though the printing press was not for sale, Moshal decided he was going to buy it, and he ensured that it was installed at the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre (DHGC), which has an exhibit addressing the virulent anti-Semitism that emerged in



John Moshal

South Africa in the 1930s and '40s. “It felt great to find it. During my tenure in community service, Rudman’s name often came up along with the names of other anti-Semites,” recalled Moshal, who is a trustee of the DHGC.

Speaking to the SA Jewish Report from his office in Durban – which is the house where he was born and which he bought back after 50 years – he explained that it is where the idea for a Durban Jewish Club came about. “Jews were not welcome in other clubs because of anti-Semites like Rudman – and so we made a club of our own.”

The story came full circle as the

DHGC, housed on the grounds of the Durban Jewish Club, celebrated its 10th anniversary and re-opened its updated permanent exhibition at the end of May, which now includes the printing press.

Amazingly, “the panel explaining South African anti-Semitism and the difficulties facing Jewish refugees was already in place, and the printing press fits perfectly into that narrative”, says the centre’s director, Mary Kluk.

“It will help learners and visitors understand that just up the road from here, there was Rudman and his fellow anti-Semites spewing hatred from this printing press. It wasn’t just something that happened in Europe – it happened here too. It will help young people understand what anti-Semitism is and how it manifests.”

Kluk adds that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum actually has a section on Rudman, and gave permission for the centre to include its information.

Anti-Semitism expert Professor Milton Shain was also consulted, as Rudman is featured in the third volume in his trilogy on anti-Semitism in South Africa.

The text explaining the printing press at the DHGC reads as follows: “Raymond Kirch Rudman (1898-1978) was a prominent right wing radical in the 1930s. As Natal leader of the South African National Party, better known as the Greyshirts, Rudman’s rhetoric and propaganda focused on the ‘Jewish Question’. Subsequently, he headed the fiercely anti-Semitic Boerenasie movement and, after the Second World War, ran the Aryan Book Store in Pietermaritzburg. Rudman brought



Printing press that belonged to Raymond K Rudman

The text that was found on the old printing press

Photos: Linda Bester

out an edition of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as well as re-publishing other anti-Semitic works, including a 1921 reprint pamphlet, *England: Under the Heel of the Jew*.”

Adds Shain: “He continued in the post-war decades with distribution of anti-Semitic material, while maintaining links with a great number of fascists and neo-Nazis abroad. He also denied the Holocaust.”

When the DHGC received the artefact, it printed out the last pamphlet on the press. Adorned with Nazi insignia, it is a fake ‘declaration’ by ‘James Rothchild – The King of the Jews’ stating that Jews will take over the world. On it is written: “The net which Jewry is throwing out over the earth is widening and spreading daily.”

One wonders how Rudman would react today, knowing that his propaganda is being used to teach young South Africans about the dangers of anti-Semitism, and that his old printing press is now housed on the grounds of the Durban Jewish Club in the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre, which educates against his brand of hatred.

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6D  
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1931 = R500 Up to R3000  
1939 = R10 000 Up to R30 000

3D  
1923 to 1964 = R4  
1931 = R10 000 Up to R50 000



# The Academy launches SA’s first National Symposium

## OWN CORRESPONDENT

The Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning hosted South Africa’s first National Symposium for Jewish Education last week. This is part of The Academy’s National Education Development Project. Its aim is to develop Jewish educators by making training and enrichment available to them, to the level of a Master’s degree in Jewish Education. It offers this for school teachers,

rabbis, rebbetzins, informal educators, adult educators and lay and professional leadership in the educational space. The two-day symposium, held last week, was organised according to the theme of “Community and Sustainability” and featured local and international speakers. It was dedicated to exploring trends regarding the South African community’s Jewish identity and what educators can do to ensure that this identity is sustainable. Professor Howard Apsan of

Columbia University in New York and Rabbi Professor Adam Ferziger of Bar-Ilan University in Ramat-Gan were the keynote speakers. Additionally, Esther Orenstein-Lapian, a Jewish Studies master educator from Yeshiva University, and Moshe Aziz, an expert in educational technology for schools and classroom use, joined the symposium via video conferencing. The conference created a space for educators to meet, share ideas and create partnerships.



Discussions at the National Symposium

## Ensuring environmental sustainability

JORDAN MOSHE

“If we don’t make a conscious effort to ensure the sustainability of our environment, no one else will do it for us. We need to understand that if we fail to act, our future is in jeopardy.” So says Professor Howard Apsan. Since 2003, he has served as the University Director of environmental, health, safety and risk management (EHSRM) for the City University of New York, the largest urban university system in the US.

Apsan is visiting South Africa for the first time and this week, addressed the audience about environmental sustainability at an education symposium hosted by the local Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning.

He is adamant that if we don’t plan appropriately now, our future is far bleaker than we could possibly imagine.

Apsan is also Adjunct Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University.

While in South Africa, Apsan has helped local stakeholders in the environmental sustainability sector to assess areas in which the country should focus to ensure a better future.

He met with the director of environmental health and safety at the Johannesburg municipality to discuss potential plans and different approaches to the problems it currently faces.

“I am here to share what I’ve learned from New York’s experiences with people in Johannesburg, and to take their contributions with me back to the USA.”

Prior to his visit, Apsan conducted extensive research on South Africa’s environmental infrastructure.

“Historical issues of economic fluctuations and disparity unquestionably have impacted on the environment here,” he says.

“The current reality is the perfect illustration of how deeply issues really run, and the water problems of the Western Cape remind us how fragile our urban water systems really are,” he says.

“The infrastructure in South Africa and the problems it faces are related to all areas of economic development particular to the country, but they are not unique. New York, too, has its challenges. It has to consider how to move from a fossil fuel economy to

one based on a renewable source. It needs to upgrade centuries-old infrastructure to accommodate modern demands on water circuits and electricity grids.

“These issues are endemic worldwide, but the trick is to address each one based on a country’s own constraints and resources. South Africa will address its problems using what it has available.”

Where water is concerned, Apsan mentions a meeting he had with a colleague at the University of Johannesburg, Elana Venter, to discuss strategies for managing water quality on the campus.

“Water poses one of the most significant sustainability challenges on the planet,” he says.

“Sustainability is all about what you do today that impacts the future your grandchildren will have.”

Apsan stresses that when we consider approaches to ensuring the sustainability of our environment, our approach needs to be two-fold: changing and leading by example.

“We need to consider what we can do as individuals to bring about change,” he says. “There are multiple things we can do in our own private lives. For example, 50% to 75% of all residential water usage in New York occurs in the bathroom. Installing water-saving toilets and showerheads can make a difference and taking short showers can save 19 to 26 litres a minute.

“Most of us become recyclers without noticing it. Our children come home from school after learning about recycling and ask if they can put certain items in one bin. This is the type of behaviour we need to implement and encourage others to imitate.

“By taking one step at a time in our private lives, we can bring about a change not only for the world, but for the people immediately around us. If we don’t do anything, no one else is going to,” concludes Apsan.



Professor Howard Apsan

## Strengthen communal bonds, says Rav Ferziger

JORDAN MOSHE

Now, more than ever, we need to strengthen our communal bonds and pursue constant engagement, according to Professor Rabbi Adam Ferziger, who is American born and lives in Israel. “Just because one is not enthusiastic about their religious Judaism, does not mean that one doesn’t cherish Jewish values, values which are often expressed though secular means such as morality, Zionism and politics,” says Ferziger.

He is here at the invitation of the Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning to participate in its education symposium this week.

“The standard litmus test of refusal to buy into the faith as a whole as being a true indication of one’s faith is not desirable, but is a barrier to true engagement. We need to build the spaces in which people choose to involve themselves not as a tool to getting them to shul, but in order to invest in them as people and cherish their worth as Jews.”

A social historian and academic, Ferziger focuses on Jewish religious movements, religious leadership and religious responses to secularisation and assimilation in contemporary North America, Europe and Israel.

Ferziger holds the Samson Raphael Hirsch Chair for Research of the Torah with Derekh Eretz Movement in the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar-Ilan University.

Born in Riverdale, New York, he received his BA, MA and rabbinical ordination from Yeshiva University and his PhD summa cum laude from Bar-Ilan University. He and his wife moved to Israel in 1987.

Ferziger arrived in South Africa two weeks ago and is impressed.

“South Africa’s Jewish community boasts a spectrum of people, and many seem eager and willing to engage in matters important to their Judaism. The spaces afforded by academics for non-sectoral involvement are healthy and encourage people to engage.

“I’ve found increasingly that Jews here appreciate the complexities of today’s religious life, and they don’t want to simplify or water down any important subjects or religious conversations. It certainly is refreshing to encounter a polyvocal space such as the Academy in



Professor Rabbi Adam Ferziger

which different approaches can be discussed.”

An informed thinker in matters of Jewish assimilation and religious sectarianism, Ferziger strongly believes that every Jew finds their own way to

connect with their faith.

“Development in terms of religiosity is different for every individual, and therefore each one has to find a way to approach their religion.

“We learn from the various religious obstacles which confront us on a daily basis, finding ways to overcome them through our different approaches.”

Ferziger says he want to offer people different perspectives on Torah and Jewish life, refreshing their own views and helping them navigate the complexities of building families and communities in 2018.

“Israel may be the central location for Jews, but the role played by the Diaspora community is one that cannot be overlooked, and the value of the life of a Jew in South Africa is important and needs to be understood,” he says.

“We need to think out of the box where Judaism is concerned,” he says. We need to address the new constituencies in our midst and find ways to move forward with them.

“Post-apartheid South Africa is complex. Twenty-four years is a very short time, and few people realise this. In the last 20 years, the number of Jews in the country has gone from 120 000 to 60 000. While the number is still fluid, it seems to have stabilised.

“People need to balance their visceral sense that something can change at any moment with an appreciation for the growing stability and plan for the future based on the current reality.

“Community life is always dynamic, but some people see this as dangerous and will consider strategising only when matters are on a complete even keel.

“These times are ones in which great things can happen. These are moments when people step up and bring forward ideas that would not ordinarily take root. The Lubavitcher Rebbe and Shlomo Carlebach chose the height of the hippie movement to initiate novel approaches, and flourished.”

At the same time, he warns, one needs to be realistic and cautious, especially here.

“Assimilation is a real threat and it happens everywhere. When stigmas about Jews fell out of favour in the USA, Jews became accepted in what had been a more closed society. They saw this as a triumph, and rightly so.

“However, what followed was a push-pull interaction between their desire to maintain a Jewish identity and to be accepted by society. In contemporary South Africa, diversity is celebrated constantly.

“This needs to be taken into account when addressing Jewish identity, and it needs to be recognised and addressed appropriately.”

Ferziger maintains that whether one likes it or not, the shul does not appeal to all Jews, especially many young ones.

“Alternative corridors of engagement need to be developed that do not force people into structures which they find alienating. The value of a true connection is incalculable, and it needs to be made appropriately.

“A space for engagement which appeals to people and neither intimidates nor alienates them is what is needed. This is not a simple task, but is crucial to cultivating Jewish involvement among key sectors pf contemporary South African Jewry.”



# Taxi drivers in Israel giving more than a ride



## Aliya – the good, the bad and the meshuga

Benita Levin

There are many people the world over who offer unsolicited advice on a range of issues. In the life-coaching world, I often hear people complain about the interfering mother-in-law, the controlling relative or even the millennial colleague who freely offers his/her opinion without it being requested.

Here in Israel, there have been numerous entertaining and sometimes hilarious times when unwanted advice has been offered to me by outspoken, confident and exuberant taxi drivers.

One of the reasons I enjoy taking taxis here is that it's a great opportunity for any new olah (immigrant) to practise one's Hebrew. I always know that the person I am talking to will usually correct my grammar and pronunciation as we keep chatting.

Notwithstanding that much can be lost in translation, the conversations can be very telling and enlightening. Coming from a far more conservative, polite and socially non-confrontational culture (South Africa), it never ceases to amaze me how natural it is for a stranger to engage, challenge and advise the client sitting in his car.

### There is nothing more important than health

During a recent taxi ride, the driver started asking about my family and our aliya experience. It doesn't take more than a few seconds for anyone here to pick up my

"foreign" South African accent. They may not know straight away where I am from, but they certainly know I am not a local.

While chatting about the past year as new olim, I said that the most important focus for me is that our son and daughter are happy. I explained my thinking: "If your children are happy, it's easy for the parents to be happy too." The driver came back with a quick and assertive "that's not true" reply. Surprised at the response, I looked quizzically at him. "There is nothing more important than health," he explained.

Interesting point – I can't argue with that, I thought. I had been corrected, or "schooled", by a man I'd met 10 minutes before.

### Just like a hunter, a man needs to provide for his family

During a taxi trip to the airport, my husband explained to the driver that he was

#### New phrase of the week

"Ein Milim" – no words. When you're so stunned, you have no words to respond!

#### Smile of the week

This was the warm feeling of doing a new first. We walked to a friend's birthday party, about 15 minutes from our flat, in the evening. First, I walked to pick up a friend nearby – another ex-South African. We both marvelled at the fact that this was the first time we'd ever walked to and from a party in the evening. A lovely new normal...

travelling back to South Africa on a work trip. The driver then started explaining certain parts of the "Eshet Chayil (A woman of valour)" prayer, traditionally recited on Friday night, before the Shabbat meal. He went on to elaborate about the (arguably antiquated) concept that a man is still a hunter and needs to provide for his family, even if it involves travelling to make that happen. He clearly gave his stamp of approval.

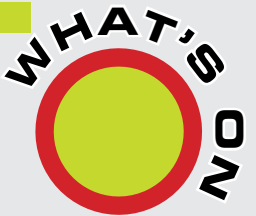
### Why aren't you wearing a jacket?

As a child, I remember my grandmother used to always ask us if we had a jersey or cardigan with us when we left the house. This question was even asked during the hot, humid month of February in Durban. But we laughed out loud recently when a taxi driver in Tel Aviv asked a 45-year-old friend why he was outside without a jacket. The driver noted that our friend's child was warmly dressed and berated the dad for not doing the same. He insisted that he go inside and fetch a jacket.

### Dating tips

A friend was in a taxi on his way to a date. He shared his romance plans with his taxi driver, who then offered his own dating tips. These apparently included the fact that he needed to pick up the bill, be polite and make sure his date gets home safely. So, really... who needs Doctor Phil?

• As Benita Levin is now into her second year living in Israel, this will be the last of her Aliya columns, but look out for her in other sections of the newspaper.



#### Sunday (June 3)

- Second Innings hosts Dr Karon (Kiki) Marx on "The Dead Sea Swim". Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting starts at 10:30. Venue: Arcadia. Entrance is opposite Glenwood Lodge in Long Avenue. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors includes tea and light refreshments. Contact: Linda Fleishman on 011 532 9701.
- Jaffa Morning Market. Time: From 09:00. Venue: 42 Mackie Street, Baileys Muckleneuk, Pretoria. Buy from different stalls, including food, bric-a-brac, games, etc. Contact: 012 346 2006.

#### Monday (June 4)

- Chabad Seniors Club trip to Holocaust & Genocide Centre. Time: 12:30. To join, contact Chabad House on 011 440 6600 or email rak@chabad.org.za.
- UJW hosts Bridget Impey, publisher at Jacana Media, on "Behind the Scenes at a Publishing House". Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office on 011 648 1053.

#### Tuesday (June 5)

- Chabad Seniors Club offers a session on "Learning How to use Technology for Seniors". Time: 12:30. Venue: Chabad House, 27 Aintree Ave, Savoy. To book your place, phone 011 440 6600 or email rak@chabad.org.za

#### Wednesday (June 6)

- Jewish Learning Institute (JLI) presents "Kabbalah of Evil: Why do bad things happen to good people?" with Rabbi Ari Kievman. Two time options: 09:45 at Chabad Savoy or 19:15 at Sandton Central Shul. More info at www.jli.org.za

#### Thursday (June 7)

- The next Hebrew Speakers meeting is at 10:45 in the Beyachad building.

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# SA Jews relate their experiences of coming out

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Thirty years ago, Fiona de Kock married a Catholic who converted to Judaism. She was happily involved in the Jewish community over the years, but, she recalled, “As time went by, I realised something was missing.”

Ten years ago, she came out as a lesbian. “It was not an easy transition. I loved my ex-husband and I still do – there was drama, a huge amount of pain and guilt,” she said.

De Kock was speaking at a panel discussion titled ‘Coming out: the Jewish experience’, held under the auspices of the Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies.

“I couldn’t align being a lesbian with being Jewish,” she explained, labelling her relationship with the religion as being one of love-hate. Nevertheless, she found herself working for a Chabad rabbi. She described her time there as “two years of non-judgment, meeting the most amazing people. Today I can say that I am a proud Jewish, gay mother. My children have accepted my sexuality and endured my partners.”

Despite having been “terrified” of being excommunicated from the community, she said she was never judged by any of her Jewish brethren.

Ross Levin confirms the sentiment. “When facing ‘coming out’, one of my greatest fears was being shunned by the Jewish community and denied the opportunity of enjoying my two young children’s bar and batmitzvah.”

For the first 33 years of his life, Levin had lived with a “highly repressed sexuality” and was married to “an amazing woman” for 10 years. “But I realised I was not living my truth,” he related.

“Towards the end of our marriage, my ex-wife could see that something was bothering me. ‘I am conflicted in my sexuality,’ I told her.”

She made him promise that he would not leave her before she was ready for him to do so. In the event, they stayed together for a further 18 months.

“My ex-wife supported me in ‘coming out’ to my parents, which had been my biggest fear,” said Levin. As it turned out, his fears were groundless, with his mom encouraging him to come out to the community.

“But guilt, shame and fear held me back from telling my kids.” His son asked why they were getting divorced and whether Levin had “done something wrong”. So I told him: ‘I’ve realised that I like boys more than I like girls.’

“My son said: ‘Thank you – I thought it was something we’d done.’”

But, added Levin: “It’s one thing to know your truth, another struggling to live it.”

Today Levin and his marriage partner await the birth of their daughter by surrogate. “I look forward to bringing her up in a Jewish home and the Jewish community. The community has been tremendously supportive, but I’ve realised that not everybody can accept it.”

In contrast, Dr Anastacia Tomson’s experience was a harrowing one. “When I was outed against my will, people said things like, ‘You are an affront to G-d’ and ‘You are an abomination.’ It took me a while to



realise I wasn’t,” she said.

“If you’ve got something against someone because of who they are, the problem is with you. Don’t couch it in religion.

“I had run-ins with my community. It was a bitter pill for me to swallow when I was told there was no place for me in the community. I felt the void. I suffered at the hands of ignorance, hatred and prejudice.

“I’m one of the survivors,” she continued, adding that 40% of LGBT individuals attempt suicide at least once in their lives. “This doesn’t include those who have been beaten, raped and murdered, or who’ve engaged in substance abuse. It doesn’t include being disowned by your family.

“It’s no one’s job to judge me – I’ve made my peace with my Creator.”

A gay student in the audience

commented on “how Orthodox spaces alienate homosexual people. I feel so unwelcome at shul.

“I had no help at [a Jewish] school, I felt so alone and abandoned,” he said. This event marked the first time he felt welcome in a Jewish space. “Is there more we can do?” he asked.

Rabbi Nissen Goldman, co-director of Chabad on Campus at the University of Cape Town, addressed the event. Speaking to *SA Jewish Report* days later, he agreed that more needed to be done.

“The practical ramifications of a gay kid feeling unwelcome is that he leaves the community. While we don’t have the power to change what the Torah says, we do have the power to change how we treat individuals.

“If someone is choosing to mistreat another Jew based on their struggle with one of the 613 mitzvot – we

have community members who struggle with far more than just one. What about the mitzvah of keeping Shabbos, keeping kosher, against adultery or any of the mitzvohs that every single one of us struggles with?

“We cannot honestly say there’s a basis for mistreating a fellow gay Jew, while we accept every other Jew who struggles with other mitzvohs. It’s a personal prejudice not based on Halacha.

“We as rabbis and Orthodox leaders need to be committed to the Halachas that place a premium on life and the value of life,” he said. “It’s not fair for gay Jews to be paying the price in terms of their emotional, mental, physical and even their religious lives for our theological comfort.”

Stressing that he was not condoning anything, Rabbi Goldman said: “If you can’t be celibate without

seriously harming your health – we break Shabbos for health – and you keep 612 mitzvohs to the best of your ability, you’ll have a damned good argument to make if you go up to Heaven after 120 years.”

Focusing attention on the school environment, facilitator Marlene Silbert introduced the Charter for a Compassionate School, which she has constructed to make schools safe places for LGBT students. It was recently endorsed by the Western Cape department of education and will be distributed to all high schools throughout the province.

Chairman of the Board Rael Kaimowitz said it represented all the Jews of Cape Town. “The board embraces difference, and with forums like these, we try to create real inclusive spaces.”

## Cremation – the ultimate taboo in Judaism?

TALI FEINBERG

Before the 19th century, most people – both Jewish and non-Jewish – were buried after death. But with the rise of urbanisation, the discovery of germs and an increase in secularism, Western Europe largely adopted cremation by the start of the 20th century. This put pressure on Jews to decide how to deal with what remained of the ultimate taboo in their faith.

So explained Professor Adam S. Ferziger in a lecture hosted by the SA Jewish Museum and the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town.

Ferziger is an award-winning scholar of modern and contemporary Judaism. He holds the Samson Raphael. Hirsch Chair for Research of the Torah with Derekh Erez Movement in the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar-Ilan University, in Ramat-Gan, Israel.

“There is no question that cremation has personal, spiritual and Jewish legal ramifications. Along with this core debate, it is a way of defining Jewish identity – who is in and who is out,” he explains.

Ultimately, he sees cremation as the “litmus test” and fulcrum of defining Jewish identity at different times. “It is hard to say who we are – it is easier to say who we are not,” explains the professor.

Delving into historic texts, Professor Ferziger showed as part of his lecture how rabbis debated the issue as it arose at the beginning of the 20th century. Rabbi Amram Mordekai [Markus] Hirsch wrote in Hamburg in 1901 that cremation is forbidden, but if it does take place, the ashes may be buried in a separate area of the cemetery from those who are buried. “Hirsch made a compromise so as to not completely exclude those who were cremated.”

However, four years later, Rabbi Meir Lerner completely disagreed with this. He described those who chose cremation as forfeiting their Jewish identity and said they must be excluded from the cemetery and the community. “He was creating a boundary of who is Jewish and who is not,” explained Ferziger.

Even Rav Abraham Isaac Kook, who was known for his tolerance of all Jews, didn’t accept cremation. As the Chief Rabbi of Palestine in 1931, he ruled that no cremated ashes of Jews could be buried in the land of Israel.



The debate even came to Cape Town, where Rabbi Moshe Hayyim Mirvish of the Beth Din wrote to Rav Kook, asking for his advice on the matter in 1934. He wrote: “A crematorium had been built in the city and individual members of the Jewish community had put in writing their desire to be cremated after death.” Rav Kook responded that “no kosher Israelite should participate in the burial of these cremated ones”.

However, the discussion was turned on its head after the tragic events of the Holocaust, when millions of Jews were cremated after being murdered by the Nazis. Their surviving families began to request that any ashes found in the death camps should be buried in Israel. And so, a special temporary decree was made to bury the ashes in Israel. Chief Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel commanded that they be given a proper Jewish burial.

“Some saw the cremation of Holocaust victims as a form of atonement for those who had chosen to be cremated,” added Professor Ferziger.

Then Jews immigrating to Israel from the former Soviet Union arrived with urns of family members’ ashes, and wanted to bury these in Israel. Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu wrote in 1990 that these Jews may have not had the option to bury their dead, nor were educated about the Jewish requirement of Earth burial, in the oppressive former Soviet Union. So, he said: “This constitutes coercion, and it is therefore a mitzvah to inter their ashes in the cemetery.”

However, Ferziger said, while these instances showed the laws becoming more relaxed, the younger generations began to turn away from cremation. For example, parents had requested that their children cremate them, and the children had gone to rabbonim to ask if they could disobey their parents’ request. This also happened in the Reform community, which had allowed cremation since 1904.

In a response to such a query, Reform rabbis wrote that they “actively discourage the practice... because burial is the normative traditional Jewish practice and that, after the Holocaust, cremation has become associated with the darkest period of human history”. They even allowed the children to disobey their parents’ wishes.

“The Holocaust changes the conversation,” explains Professor Ferziger. “We see how Jews now define their behaviour, identity and choices in relation to the Holocaust, and how this debate around cremation is the prism through which we define ourselves, and the lens through which to view the evolution of Jewish identity.”



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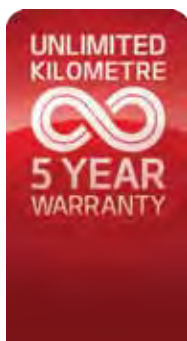


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# Homelessness: It’s never what you think

## TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

What is the personal story of the black beggar in dirty rags who approaches your car window at a traffic light, pointing to his mouth, asking for food? You often hear complaints from residents of Johannesburg’s middle-class neighbourhoods about being bothered by homeless beggars, making them scared to open their windows.

At the recent Kingsmead Book Fair, hosted at Kingsmead College – an elite girls-only school in upmarket Melrose, Johannesburg – one of the most moving panel discussions focused on a film called *Vaya*, about homelessness. The panel included the director, Akin Amotoso, and Anthony Mafela, a once-homeless man.

*Vaya* tells the true stories of rural people from KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) coming to the city, who land up in desperate situations.

After the speakers’ presentations, a sincere question came from an obviously privileged white woman in the audience: “What is it like to be homeless?” The panellists skirted the question. How to describe having nothing to someone with everything?

Historically, Jews’ cultural legacy contains memories of poverty – moving from rural villages to cities, and country to country, surviving as poor, uneducated people among strangers. Jews have largely “made it” in this country, but an instinctive understanding of homelessness lingers.

*Vaya* portrays real-life stories of three homeless people – the kind drivers might glimpse from car windows. A taste of the underbelly of Johannesburg, one of the world’s most unequal cities, exists alongside mainly white, middle-class suburbs like Glenhazel, Sandton or elsewhere.

The script is crafted from an initiative, the

Homeless Writers’ Project, started in 2009. It opens with three hopeful people on a train from rural KZN to Johannesburg. Each one expects help from family, but finds themselves alone and in danger. The first, Nhlanhla, has no money for lobola to marry Sihle in KZN, so he is going to Joburg to make money after a cousin offers him a job. He is quickly trapped into the world of gangsters, becoming a killer dependent on gang bosses.

The second, the beautiful Zanele, comes to the city with her friend’s child, wanting to be a dancer. She finds herself – and the child – on the point of being sold into the illegal trade in women. The third, Nkulu, has come to fetch his migrant-worker father’s dead body from the mines, to take home to his KZN family for the ancestors’ sake. He discovers that his father had built a second family in the city. This leaves Nkulu in limbo in Johannesburg.

In streets leading up to Kingsmead College on the day of the fair, there were parked rows of gleaming 4x4s and barefooted beggars in dirty rags hung around the school entrance.

The exploration into “underground” Johannesburg includes an intriguing book series by Tanya Zack and photographer Mark Lewis called *Wake Up, This is Joburg*, published by Fourthwall Books. It tells stories of 10 inhabitants in the city’s so-called alternative economy. One depicts “survivors” carving out a precarious living chopping up S’kop – cows’ heads rejected by traditional butcheries – under the highways and in abandoned buildings, invisible to ordinary Johannesburg residents. They fly by the seat of their pants, among xenophobia and a changing city.

What do the visitors to the Kingsmead Fair – and the readers of this column – with roofs over their heads and cars in their garages, make of this other, invisible world? At least the sense that the ragged people at their car windows have stories as relevant to this city as theirs.

• Read Geoff Sifrin’s regular columns on his blog [sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com](http://sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com)

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# The xenophobia crisis 10 years on

A number of events have been organised to mark the 10th anniversary of the 2008 xenophobia attacks, in which scores of foreign nationals were killed, hundreds injured and tens of thousands left homeless and destitute.

In addition to commemorating the victims of the violence, these events are aimed at bringing to wider notice the ongoing problem of xenophobia in our society.

This Thursday, Afrika Awake will host the screening of a documentary and the opening of an exhibition on the attacks. The SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has assisted in organising and publicising the event, details of which can be found on our Facebook page.

All acts of mob violence are abhorrent, but when people are targeted solely on account of their nationality – or, for that matter, their race, religion or ethnicity – it adds an especially harrowing dimension to those attacks.

What foreign nationals experienced back then were out-and-out pogroms, essentially no different to the deadly anti-Jewish riots that our forebears were subjected to over so many centuries.

During the 2008 xenophobia crisis, the SAJBD took the lead in co-ordinating the Jewish community’s relief efforts, ultimately heading up a multifaceted assistance programme on behalf of the victims.

We were very proud of how our communities in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban came forward to assist with the unfolding humanitarian disaster, including donating foodstuffs and clothing, volunteering at refugee centres and, at a later stage, enabling many of those affected to start rebuilding their lives by providing for them such income-generating projects as carpentry, knitting and weaving.

Throughout this period, the Board worked closely with its affiliate organisations, including the Union of Jewish Women, Habonim Dror, Bnei Akiva, the SA Union of Jewish Students, the Jewish schools and the SA Union of Progressive Judaism.

Further afield, we participated on civil society and religious bodies, which were set up to assist xenophobia victims. Later, we were among those organisations that came together to establish the Hate Crimes Working Group to monitor and campaign against various forms of racism.

While xenophobic attacks have never reached the same levels experienced in 2008, there have been further periodic outbreaks, most notably in the Durban area in 2015. On that occasion, the Board’s KwaZulu-Natal Council, with the support of the national office, was again very involved in assisting victims of the attacks.

Nearly a quarter of a century has passed since South Africans committed themselves to creating a free and just society which guarantees the fundamental right to dignity and equality of all its members.

While we have in place the necessary laws and institutions to uphold these rights, we all have a duty in our own private and professional lives to distance ourselves from hatred and bigotry, and oppose it in whatever ways that we can.

The primary mandate of the SAJBD is to ensure the safety and civil liberties of SA Jewry, but we are also, in the words of our mission statement, “committed to a South Africa where everyone will enjoy freedom from the evils of prejudice, intolerance and discrimination”.

We will continue to find ways to lead our community in contributing towards that goal.

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



  
**Above Board**  
**Shaun Zagnoev**

Letters

DITCH THE TERM ‘ANTI-SEMITIC’ AND REPLACE IT WITH ‘JEW HATER’

Hitler was not an anti-Semite. He and his Nazi party, and Germany and its allies, were Jew haters.

Most people don’t even know what a Semite is, so we’d do well to stop using the term, ‘anti-Semitism’. It is a meaningless yet dangerous term.

A Semite could be a Jew or Arab from the Middle East. As for the prefix ‘anti’, this suggests that the alternative is ‘pro’ – for example, anti-smoking versus pro smoking.

Pro versus anti suggests two different approaches to something that’s debatable. And the people supporting either stance are entitled to their opinion.

So, anti-Semitism suggests that there is an acceptable justification for anti-Semites, who hold an opposing view to those who are pro Semites.

The hatred shown to Jews and Israel is on the rise again and has become socially acceptable and more visible and blatant. I believe it is largely due to the use of the term, anti-Semite.

This, at a time where the world is so sensitive to other minority groups. If you are anti any other minority group, you’re labelled as homophobic or racist or sexist, etc. The problem lies with you.

But if you are anti-Jews or anti-Israel, it is acceptable.

Compare this with people who are

anti-Muslim: they are Islamophobic.

There is no acceptable opposing point of view as a phobia is an anxiety disorder with an extreme or irrational fear of something. It implies that the problem is with you, not the subject of your phobia.

Germans have used a similar approach to conveniently disassociate themselves from the Holocaust. Muslims are using the same strategy to deny responsibility for the acts of the Islamists.

It is time to ban the word anti-Semite and start calling it what it really is. Jew hating; Jew haters. And this term must be applied to anyone or any group that is anti-Israel. Why anti-Israel? Because Israel hating is just a veiled attempt by some to disguise their Jew hating.

Challenge these Jew haters. Name and shame them. Prosecute them. Silence them. And for those Jews who believe that this might create more anti-Semitism, who cares? People don’t need reasons to hate Jews, and never have. Don’t think that this is merely semantics. Jew hating and Israel hating affects us all and we should be concerned.

Be proud of our wonderful religion, food, customs, traditions and people, and of our miracle country, Israel.

Am Yisroel Chai. – **Mark Furman, Johannesburg**

THIS IS TEL AVIV ENTERTAINMENT?!

On a recent trip to Israel, I perused the ‘Holiday Special’ edition of *Time Out*, the entertainment magazine found in the hotel lobby. Some of the tourist gems offered in its pages include:

• *The need for weed*. It is claimed in the magazine that: “Telegrass has become Israel’s worst-kept secret. Whether you’re a tourist in need or just love your weed, whisper the magic word anywhere within a 10km radius, and you’ll be rewarded with a cannabis hook-up faster than you can say ‘wacky tabacky’.”

Isn’t this just the most edifying public service for the benefit of all

visitors, including your children?

What an advanced society of which we can all be so proud! How did we ever get by without a marijuana app? *Time Out* really knows how to showcase the best that Tel Aviv can offer. But if you think that’s a real wow, try the next one.

• *One night, zero regrets*. The blurb below this headline gleefully proclaims: “The best Tel Aviv nightlife spots to score a one-night stand.” This article surveys the best clubs to find quick sex. It goes on to name one of them, saying it is “very difficult to leave this pub without a partner (or several) because it has the magnetic energy of a mass orgy

waiting to happen”.

How wonderful is that? I am sure the readers of this newspaper will be delighted by such fine entertainment on offer.

I cannot imagine what the founders of Israel would say if they were aware what the Jewish State has become. How sleazy is this publication in purporting to promote legitimate entertainment and culture. These amenities may well exist and be brazenly promoted in other major world cities, but is this what the spirit and soul of Israel aspires to? Are there any Jewish values left even in a secular Jewish environment? – **Lawrence Nowosenetz, Pretoria**

I CALL ON ALL SA JEWS TO DEFEND ISRAEL BY CHANGING THE NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

There is a way to do it.

Ask yourself every day: “What have I done for Israel today?” Each of us has to say something positive or write something positive about Israel. Every day. If you cannot do it, don’t blame Israel’s perceived lack of defence in the media.

Many of us have housekeepers; talk to them. Tell them to talk to their families. Talk to anyone who will listen. We have to spread the word.

I have started a Facebook page: Sonny Myerson – Good News Israel. If you want good news, there will be plenty of it. There are other ideas that I have and I will be rolling them out over the next few months.


Let’s join together for the fight of our lives. Anything less will not be good enough. If we don’t fight back, the end of the Jews in South Africa is just around the corner. – **Sonny Myerson, Cape Town**



## Link volunteers undeterred by bad weather

The freezing weather in Joburg last week didn't stop the Link volunteers from arriving at Orange Grove Primary School to teach the Grade 2 pupils. The Link is a non-profit organisation that supports the development of literacy and numeracy in children for whom English is a second language, and who attend low-income schools in Johannesburg.

Caring volunteers Daryl Fleischer and Debbie Firer brought blankets and hot water bottles to warm their pupils. And the literacy project continued with enthusiasm.

A photograph of Daryl Fleisher, a woman with short reddish-brown hair, smiling and hugging a young boy. The boy is wearing a bright yellow jacket with a black and white graphic on the front. They are in an indoor setting, possibly a classroom or community center, with tables and chairs visible in the background.

Daryl Fleisher

## KDVP pupils delight in learning about a Sofer's work

raffle for the internet age, where the results are maximised through the smart use of technology, he says.

The Raffle-Thon was held at the school to raise funds for this much-needed upgrade, which will provide a safe place for pupils. They will be able to do homework there, relax before and after extramural activities, catch up with friends and charge devices.

“The PTA not only supports small infrastructure improvements such as this, but also provides financial assistance to our students and the community at large,” says Jammy. “We are proud of our students for helping to create a better work and play environment at the school.”

The Raffle-Thon was the first of its kind held at the school and ensured that the pupils got involved by calling on their friends and families to buy raffle tickets.

"We are excited at how well this initiative worked. We had exceptional buy-in from the students, who did really well," said Jammy. "There was great excitement on the floor – one that mimicked the original stock market. And our target was reached."

The Baffle-Thon reached the goal of 500 tickets pledged

smudges or has faded, the Torah is no longer kosher and has to be buried.

Uzvolk – who is also the rabbi of Victory Park shul – demonstrated to the children exactly how a Sofer writes. He explained that the Torah is not made from paper, but from animal skin called parchment. He delighted the children when he informed them that he did not use a pen to write with, but rather, a feather from a kosher bird or bamboo dipped in special ink. The ink is made from burnt leaves.

The Torah can take up to a year to write as every letter has to be perfect. If one letter



Photo: Lynda Romain

Photo: Lynda Romain

**Daniela Hollander, Rabbi Uzvolk, Zoe Fine and Jordanna Valkin**

## Letters

I reply to the editor's note in the May 18 issue of *SA Jewish Report* about the ANC's response to the recent events on Israel's border with Gaza.

Even knowing the ANC government's bias against Israel, I could hardly believe its "official" version of these events. Of course, this version will be believed by many because it is widely disseminated in the media. But it is not factual.

The recent border demonstrations in Gaza were not intended to be “peaceful”. They were organised by Hamas with several aims. The first was to divert the Palestinians’ anger against the Hamas government’s gross mismanagement of the economy and its policy of diverting funds for terrorist campaigns against Israel, instead of concerning itself with the welfare of its own people.

Secondly, the aim was, as always, to focus world opinion to support the Palestinians' plight.

The demonstrations were not spontaneous; Hamas hired the buses to bring Palestinians to the border and paid them for participating. The avowed intent of Hamas was to overrun the border and inflict damage on Israel – specifically, kill and/or kidnap Israelis. Sending fire-kites over the border to burn fields and planting explosives are hardly examples of a peaceful demonstration.

Of the Palestinians killed, Hamas confirmed that more than 50 were its members and Islamic Jihad said three others were its members. The injury of

Palestinians callously being used by Hamas to garner world sympathy is tragic, but it's a familiar strategy by Hamas.

What country, when faced with a mass incursion at its border, would stand idly by without live ammunition? The violence was not initiated by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). And how could the IDF defend its borders without live ammunition?

The real tragedy of recent events is the death of people who've been manipulated and made into victims by their own corrupt government.

The sympathy that the ANC feels for the Palestinians is comprehensible in light of past events in South Africa. But the ANC also has a moral obligation to get its facts right and not to uncritically adopt the anti-Semitic slander propagated by the BDS

The false information in local newspapers make it essential for the Jewish community, whatever its members' views, to obtain other news sources. *Times of Israel*, *The Jerusalem Post* and *Algemeiner Journal* are all available free online and provide another perspective on events.

— Miriam Maltz, Durban

I am looking for Denise Berman of Johannesburg.  
I believe we could be related.

My name is Jonathan. I was born on October 18 1955 at the Frangwen Maternity Home. If anyone knows her whereabouts, please contact Dawn on 073 731 3936

**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](mailto:editorial@sajewishreport.co.za)

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# Pekerman could be the lone Jew at World Cup

JACK MILNER

The FIFA World Cup kicks off on June 14 in Russia, and finding a Jewish player on the field might be difficult. The country most likely to have a Jewish player is the US, but its football team did not qualify for this year’s tournament.

However, Jose Pekerman will be on the sidelines as the coach of Colombia’s national team.

Pekerman, who was born on September 3 1949 in Villa Dominguez in Argentina, is the grandson of a family who emigrated from Ukraine to Argentina, and then settled in the Jewish agricultural colonies of Entre Rios province.

His rise to fame in the world of football was quite remarkable, going as he did from an unremarkable midfielder to one of the highest-paid coaches in world soccer. His current salary of \$1.678 million (R21.26 million) a year is six times more than the average person in Colombia earns.

Pekerman’s career as a footballer was uneventful. He was a midfielder and played from 1970 to 1974 for Argentinos Juniors, scoring 12 goals in 134 matches. He was transferred to Independiente Medellin, in Colombia, where he scored 15 goals in 101 matches.

His playing career ended with a serious knee injury when he was 28 years old.

He battled to find secure

employment and in order to support himself and his family, he took up a variety of jobs, including a stint as a taxi driver.

He returned to Argentina, where one of his jobs was as a youth coach for Chacarita Juniors. He then took up a similar position with Argentinos Juniors. He proved to be a successful coach and chose to move to Chile after being offered the opportunity to coach Colo-Colo’s youth divisions.

His breakthrough came in 1994, when he was asked to coach the Argentina national Under-20 and Under-17 sides by the Argentine Football Association (AFA). This caused some surprise as his track record did not include any major achievements.

However, his success in that position silenced the critics. His Under-20 team won the FIFA World Youth Championship three times – 1995 in Qatar, 1997 in Malaysia and 2001 in Argentina. Pekerman even named his three dogs accordingly – Qatar, Malaysia and Argentina. The team also won two South American Youth Championships – in 1997 and 1999.

When the national coach, Daniel Passarella, resigned after the 1998 World Cup, Pekerman was offered his position. He declined, assuming instead the position of general manager of all national teams. Marcelo Bielsa was hired as coach on Pekerman’s recommendation, and remained in charge until after

Argentina’s gold medal performance in the 2004 Summer Olympics.

In 2003, Pekerman moved to Spain at the request of Argentine businessman Daniel Grinbank, who had acquired Spanish Second Division side CD Leganes. After a few months serving as director of football, the project crumbled and Pekerman left Spain.

When Bielsa resigned in 2004, Pekerman was named coach of the Argentine national team. At the 2006 World Cup, Argentina played well until the quarterfinals, where they lost to hosts Germany on penalties.

After the loss, Pekerman resigned, despite attempts from AFA president Julio Grondona to dissuade him from leaving.

In January 2012, Pekerman became coach of the Colombian national team. His goal was to qualify the team for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. The path to qualification had its ups and downs. It was realised, but only after a lengthy period which saw Pekerman come in for loads of criticism for his tactics and team selection.

Colombia qualified for the 2014 World Cup after a 3–3 home draw against Chile, and Pekerman expressed his joy for helping Colombia return to the World Cup for

the first time in 16 years, considering it to be “one of the greatest joys in my life”.

Following the team’s qualification, Pekerman stated his desire to be a naturalised Colombian, which was granted by President Juan Manuel Santos the following day.

Colombia won all three of their

Pekerman is known for his tactical management style, often selecting players who fit his style of coaching. His focus is on talent, but more so, on who can do the right job. Despite his mindset, however, Pekerman is known to make controversial selections with line-ups against certain teams. This



Jose Pekerman

group matches, scoring nine goals and conceding only two, and went on to defeat Uruguay in the round of 16 before losing to the host nation, Brazil, in the quarterfinals.

In August 2014, Pekerman extended his contract with Colombia until 2018 – and has succeeded in qualifying the country once again.

is strongly supported by the fact he experimented heavily with the Argentinean youth squads when he was coaching them, and has continued to do so.

When not coaching in Colombia, Pekerman lives in the Buenos Aires Jewish neighbourhood of Villa Crespo.

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