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south african Jewish Report

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Joburg mayor upsets Jews by giving in to EFF demands

NICOLA MILTZ

The Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Herman Mashaba, this week angered the Jewish community when he suspended a top official after she declared Israel a friend.

DA Member of the Mayoral Committee for Health and Social Development, Dr Mpho Phalatse, made a public declaration at a South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) conference on Sunday, calling herself and the City of Johannesburg a “friend” of Israel. The statement led to the ANC and EFF calling for her immediate dismissal.

The EFF and ANC threatened to derail the functioning of the City of Johannesburg and torpedo the budget process should Mashaba not listen to their demands, according to sources within the Johannesburg City Council.

The mayor was apparently caught between a rock and a hard place, and was coerced by members of the EFF, who demanded that she be fired in exchange for its approval of the budget. Phalatse’s comments came on the eve of the city’s crucial budget vote, which gave the EFF and ANC the ammunition to remove her from office.

Mashaba said that he had suspended Phalatse for “publicly” declaring that the city was a friend of Israel. “The issue of the conflict in Israel is complex, and requires a sensitive approach,” he said, pointing out that he was disappointed that Phalatse attributed her personal views to the city.

The furore may not have occurred had pro-Israel social media expert Ido Daniel not tweeted a video clip of Phalatse during the conclusion of her address. At 1:37 on Sunday, Daniel posted a tweet, attaching a video clip. In it, Phalatse proudly says: “I would like to declare that I am a friend of Israel and the City of Johannesburg is a friend of Israel. Shalom.”

This tweet remained dormant in the Twittersphere until it was randomly picked up by DA member Yusuf Cassim, who stumbled across it at 3:09 on Monday, 11 June, when he angrily tweeted in response: “On what mandate? These views do not represent the views of the DA nor that if (sic) the DA led Johannesburg. Charges will be laid accordingly.”

He seemed furious that Phalatse was “trying to pass it off as the view of the city”.

His tweet started the ball rolling, leading to a social media frenzy culminating in the ANC and then the EFF issuing derogatory statements and making demands. The EFF went so far as to call Phalatse “chronically incompetent”.

This is not the first time that the EFF and ANC has been hostile towards Phalatse.

They were not pleased when her department was tasked with awarding non-government organisation, the Field Band Foundation (FBF),

a grant of several million over three years. Mashaba, a known supporter of the FBF, was accused by the ANC and the EFF of issuing payments of more than R11 million to the NGO, which is in charge of the city’s drug abuse-awareness campaigns. It is understood that the EFF expressed its dissatisfaction by means of angry threats directed at Phalatse under whose department the issuing of the grant fell.

Mashaba had no choice but to bend to the will of the EFF in this week’s debacle, according to the sources. Johannesburg has 135 wards. Under the proportional representation system, there are 270 seats on the council. Of these, the DA has 104 seats, the ANC 121, and the EFF 30. With the help of the EFF and smaller parties, the DA’s Mashaba won the mayoral election by 144

votes to 125. The EFF continues to hold sway in the governance of the DA-led coalition.

After weeks of debate, multiple drafts, and the suspension of Phalatse, the EFF finally gave its thumbs up to the City of Johannesburg’s R59 billion budget for the 2018/19 financial year.

Meanwhile Phalatse, a medical doctor with vast experience in the health sector and a devout Christian, has been in touch with numerous members of the Jewish community this week following her suspension.

She has steadfastly stood by her attitude towards Israel, but clarified her remarks this week, saying, “I wish to stress that the remarks were an expression of my personal views, and I recognise that they do not represent the views of the City of

Johannesburg or the DA, which I serve.” She apologised for the “confusion”.

At the SAFI conference on Sunday, Phalatse told the *SA Jewish Report* that Johannesburg is being afforded a unique opportunity to make use of Israeli innovation. “We work so well with the Jewish community here, which is at the very heart of Johannesburg,” she said. “Despite the political sentiments involved, we want to embrace this opportunity to learn from each other and grow as a people.”

“Our approach to Israel must be based on its merit alone, not politics. The average person in South Africa has everyday problems and needs which co-operation with Israel can resolve. We must be above politics, and focus on the solutions it has to offer.”

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A Springbok mascot’s dream comes true



See story on page 5

Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
17:05	17:57	Johannesburg
17:26	18:21	Cape Town
16:45	17:39	Durban
17:06	17:59	Bloemfontein
16:57	17:52	Port Elizabeth
16:50	17:45	East London

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Prince William to visit Jerusalem and Ramallah on historic Israel trip

Prince William will meet Israeli officials and see sites in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv during the first-ever official visit by a member of the British royal family to Israel later this month.

The prince will also visit Ramallah in the West Bank and meet Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, according to the itinerary released on Monday by Kensington Palace.

William, who also bears the title Duke of Cambridge, will arrive in Israel on 25 June from Jordan and visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial the following morning accompanied by British Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis. In Jerusalem, he will meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin separately, then attend a soccer match with Jewish and Arab children sponsored by the Equaliser and Peres Center for Peace

charities, according to the *Jewish Chronicle*.

He will also visit the Mount of Olives, where his great-grandmother, Princess Alice of Battenberg, is buried, and meet representatives from Israeli startup companies. His itinerary reportedly includes time for "allowing His Royal Highness to understand and pay respect to the religions and history of the region".

William, who will be staying at the historic King David Hotel, will not be accompanied by his wife, Kate, who recently gave birth to the couple's third child.

"The Duke considers it a great privilege to be undertaking the first ever official royal tour of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and to be able to help further strengthen the friendship between Jordan and the United Kingdom," Kensington Palace said.



Prince William

Some members of the royal family have made private visits to Israel in the past. Prince Philip visited in 1994 for a ceremony at Yad Vashem to honour his mother and Prince Charles attended the state funeral of the late President Shimon Peres.

Joburg mayor upsets Jews by giving in to EFF demands

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The suspension was met with a wave of anger by the community. The SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) denounced the decision, saying that Phalatshe was the target

of "hysterical condemnation" as well as a "totalitarian strategy" to silence those with dissenting views.

It said Israel was being "demonised to a degree that bears no relationship to reality". The Board further said that anyone who expressed an

alternate opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict opened themselves up to vilification.

Ben Swartz, the Co-Chairman of the South African Friends of Israel, said the organisation was "appalled" and "devasted" by her suspension, saying that it was a "clear attack" on the Christian and Jewish communities of South Africa. "Anti-Israel bigotry does not merely threaten the rights of the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of South Africans who are passionate supporters of Israel. It also poses a serious threat to democracy in our country," he said.

On Wednesday, Marc Pozniak, the Chairman of the Board's Gauteng Council, said that the Board had engaged with Mayor Mashaba's office. "We note that Dr Phalatshe has been suspended pending an investigation into her recent statements. We feel reassured that this process will be conducted with due sensitivity and fairness. As South Africans,

however, we remain deeply concerned that certain parties seemingly chose to put their feelings of antipathy towards Israel before the best interests of their own city."

Jewish communal leader Reeva Forman, said that she had been in contact with the mayor this week. In her capacity as a longstanding friend and colleague of Mashaba, both in business and social activism going back many years, she spoke to him "out of concern over the reactions of the Jewish community".

"After speaking to him, I am convinced that Mayor Mashaba has the best interests of the city at heart. As head of the city, he has to deal with a very diverse community made up of Jews, Christians and Muslims, and I know that he has every respect for the Jewish community as well as all other communities. He does not wish to bring an international conflict into the Johannesburg arena."

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Torah thought of the week

Inside/Outside

Some arguments are petty affairs between insecure individuals, while others are classic differences of opinion between people of stature, where each opinion is worthy of consideration.

This week's Parsha tells the story of the mutiny of Korach, a cousin of Moses who challenged his authority. In the end, Korach and his henchmen were swallowed by the earth in a divine display of rather unearthly justice.

The Midrash reveals the behind-the-scenes dialogue between these men. Remember, Korach was no pushover. Besides being of noble lineage, he was clever, wealthy, and charismatic. Korach asked Moshe: Does a house full of holy books still require a Mezuzah? Moshe answered that it did. Korach scoffed at the idea, ridiculing Moshe. The little Mezuzah contains but two chapters of Torah, the *Shema Yisrael*. A whole houseful of books with the entire Torah won't do the trick, and a little Mezuzah will? It doesn't make sense, he argued.

Why was Moshe's answer correct? What, indeed, is the significance of a small parchment on the doorpost in relation to a library inside? The Lubavitcher Rebbe, whose Yahrtzeit is observed this Shabbos, explained that it all depends on location. The books are inside. The Mezuzah is outside. When there are Jewish texts inside our study and living rooms, it indicates that the home is Jewish. This is as it should be. But what happens when we leave the comfortable confines of our home? Do we then cease to be Jewish?

The Mezuzah is placed at the threshold of our homes, at the juncture and crossover between our inner and outer lives. As we make the transition from private person to public citizen we need to be reminded who we are, and that we take our identity with us wherever we go. There is only One G-d, says the little scroll, whether in our private domain or in the big, wide world.

One of the many works by Pulitzer Prize winning author Herman Wouk is an autobiographical novel titled *Inside, Outside*, in which he portrays his inner struggle in straddling these two worlds. His pious, Talmudist *zayde* had a profound influence on him, but so did Hollywood and Broadway. It took him a long time to find his way and settle into an observant Jewish lifestyle while still writing bestsellers.

Being Jewish "inside" is relatively easy. It's when we hit the "outside" that we encounter temptation and turmoil. The challenge every Jew faces is to remain proudly Jewish in the face of conflicting cultures, curious looks, and often hostile attitudes.

Moshe rejected Korach's argument with good reason. The Mezuzah does not replace the need for Jewish libraries, but it serves as a perennial reminder on our doorways.

As we step out of our home to enter the outside world, it beckons us to take our G-d and our Torah, our values and our traditions, with us.



Rabbi Yossy
Goldman,
Sydenham Shul

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Zimbabwe's MDC pledges to form strong ties with Israel

TALI FEINBERG

As Zimbabwe prepares to go to the polls on 30 July in its first elections since the fall of Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance Leader Nelson Chamisa announced last Thursday that his party would establish formal ties with Israel – a major foreign policy shift – if it came to power.

“We must re-establish relations with Israel. It must have an embassy here, and we must have an embassy there. Israel is a crucial player in international relations,” said the opposition leader at the launch of his party’s manifesto last Thursday.

The manifesto does not mention Israel specifically, but says: “The MDC Alliance government will pursue a conservative foreign policy in respect of which it will remain non-aligned and will seek to make friends with every decent state in the world that shares its values of democracy, constitutionalism, socially just transparency, openness, and inclusivity.”

It aims to “Ensure that Zimbabwe plays a role in conflict prevention, and peacekeeping missions across the world.”

Following Chamisa’s announcement, political commentator Darlington Musarurwa wrote in *The Sunday Mail* that, “The Alliance talks of supporting Israel and putting up an embassy in that country seemingly in the same manner the US government put up an embassy in Jerusalem on 14 May.”

The announcement is in stark contrast to Harare’s historic close relations with the Palestinians, who have maintained a diplomatic mission in Zimbabwe since 1980.

“Israel and Zimbabwe have had partial diplomatic ties since 1993, but have never exchanged ambassadors. Zimbabwe staunchly supported the Palestinians during the 1980s, comparing Zionism to the apartheid regime in South Africa, with state-run publication *The Herald* questioning Israel’s right to exist,” reported *The Times of Israel*.

At the same time, Zimbabwe has never supported boycotts of Israel, and in 2001, it expressed support for the two-state solution. The countries have maintained trade relations, with Israeli exports totalling more than \$7 million (R92 million) in 2015, and Zimbabwean exports – almost exclusively diamonds – totalling \$13.8 million. (R182.3 million).

“I was overjoyed to hear Mr Chamisa’s support for Israel,” said Arnold Joffe, the Chairman of the Harare Hebrew Congregation. “I believe that the country needs change, and it is good to see the younger generation like Chamisa having more realistic policies. If the MDC does come to power, Israel could definitely play a role in improving the country in the future, in agriculture, technology and water.”

Said, the MDC’s Director of Public Affairs, Dennis Murira, “Ninety percent of Zimbabweans are Christians, and they believe in Israel’s right to exist. The origins of Christianity are in Israel,” thus it would benefit the people to build stronger relationships with the Jewish State. “Our President is a staunch supporter of Israel’s right to existence, and spiritually believes in Israel’s exceptionalism,” he said. “We are breaking with tradition and reshaping foreign policy.

Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies Rabbi to South African Country Communities and Chief Executive of the African Jewish Congress, does not believe the MDC will win the 30 July elections. Despite this, he is upbeat, saying that he has established a good relationship with President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who has even asked him to be an observer in the elections.

He confirms that there is already co-operation between Harare and Jerusalem, be it in trade, agriculture and irrigation, and that Gershon Kedar, Israel’s non-resident Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia and Botswana, was warmly welcomed when he presented his credentials to the President in April.

“After the July elections, hopefully



Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft meeting Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa in April

Zimbabwean government ministers will start to visit Israel,” said Silberhaft. “In addition, Mnangagwa has indicated that the history of Jews in Zimbabwe will be included in the high school history syllabus.”

He describes the country as “already back on

its feet”, with many farmers and businessmen returning to work the land they fled 18 years ago. “Imagine *Shmita* for 18 years – the ground is incredibly fertile, and it is going to yield incredible crops. Everyone is feeling positive, including the Jewish community.”

On Twitter, the MDC’s declared support for Israel was met with anger: “This is a mistake. When most countries are actively seeking to move toward BDS, Zimbabwe must resist the urge of neo-colonialism. Instead, a full recognition of the Palestinian state would burnish the MDC’s commitment to global justice. Close ties with Israel will tarnish Zim’s FP [foreign policy],” tweeted Robert Compton, a professor of Political Science.

A Zimbabwean based in Pretoria and Harare wrote: “Due to [the] Israel issue, I won’t vote MDC,” but another Zimbabwean said: “You hear Zanoids lambasting MDC, yet they use a lot of Israel firms and applications in the country.”

An MDC activist, Matete Young, said, “The MDC is committed to global justice, it fully recognises the Palestinian state and doesn’t condone violence of any nature, but [it] has to follow a FP [foreign policy] that benefits us. Re-establishing a close relationship with Israel will improve US-Zim relations.”

Floyd Shivambu’s latest ‘Messi’ faux pas

NICOLA MILTZ

South African anti-Israel lobbyists and high ranking politicians latched onto a fake Lionel Messi tweet last week as if it was the gospel truth, not bothering to correct it when the truth came out.

The so-called comment by the much-adored Argentina football star followed his teams’ shock withdrawal from last weekend’s pre-World Cup friendly against Israel. In the tweet, Lionel Messi is falsely quoted as refusing to play against “people who kill innocent Palestinian children”.

Social media accounts shared the fake report, according to which Messi told the TyC Sports channel in an interview: “As a Unicef ambassador, I cannot play against people who kill innocent Palestinian children, we had to cancel the match because we are human beings before being football players.”

The comments, however, were soon debunked as fake, but the damage was done after it spread like wildfire through international BDS tentacles, including those in South Africa. There is no evidence that

Messi made the statement.

Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) Deputy President Floyd Shivambu, an outspoken anti-Israel lobbyist, was quick to re-tweet a post by Football Tweets which quoted the fake Messi comment. Football Tweets received 9 832 re-tweets and more than 15 000 likes for it. Football Tweets, which explicitly states on its banner that it doesn’t “claim to own any content” that it posts, has more than 350 000 followers and tweets things like soccer jokes and videos.

At around 03:00 on 6 July, Shivambu re-tweeted the Football Tweet and got 1 753 re-tweets and 4 095 likes. His colleague at the EFF, Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, put out a matching tweet on RegisterToVoteEFF@MbuyiseniNdlozi, which was picked up by BDS South Africa on 7 July at 09:46. It received 1 411 retweets and 4 216 likes.

Neither BDS nor the EFF has bothered to remove the fake tweets.

Shivambu’s Messi faux pas coincides with other prejudiced behaviour displayed in recent days.

The EFF Chief Whip landed himself in hot water last week following a racist tirade in Parliament against Treasury Deputy Director General Ismail Momoniat. He questioned Momoniat’s constant presence in finance committee meetings, accusing him of undermining “African” officials at Treasury.

Shivambu was named by the *Sunday Times* as the “Mampara of the Week” last week, which was met with some tweets referring to him rather as the “Mampara of the Millennium”. He is accused of being a serial offender, who has yet to answer for assaulting a journalist in the parliamentary precinct.

Shivambu’s race-baiting of Momoniat because he is “not African” has drawn sharp criticism. A furious Finance Committee Chairperson, Yunus Carrim, lashed out saying that Momoniat was a veteran in the struggle against apartheid.

However, nobody has tackled him on his fake Messi tweet.



Floyd Shivambu

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SAFI calls on South Africans to speak out in support for Israel

JORDAN MOSHE

The South African Jewish community and Israel has massive support from the broader, particularly Christian, people of this country. This point was made clear at The South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) “Bringing Israel to Africa” conference on Sunday.

The conference brought together religious and political leaders and other representatives from across the spectrum.

Amid cries of “G-d bless Israel!” and “Viva Israel!”, the National Chairman of SAFI, Ben Swartz, mounted the stage of the Johannesburg City Hall with a clear message. “It’s time for us to stop being a silent majority in this country. We are here to show our support and make sure that we are heard.”

Among those present were Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan; the President of the Council of Churches of South Africa, Archbishop Mbulelo Mvubu; Reverend Kenneth Meshoe, the founder and Chief Executive of Innovation Africa Sivan Ya’ari; Municipal Council Minister Dr Mpho Phalatse; and several others.

When Chief Rabbi Dr Warren



Pule Daniel Lebudi and Apostle Tshidiso Montisi

There were continued outbreaks of vocalised sentiment as the morning progressed. With a Tanach in hand, the Deputy Director General of Maccabi World Union, Rabbi Carlos Tapiero, swept across the stage making it clear that the right of the

in which they are involved not far worse and more devastating? Israel is trying to make peace, and its efforts are described as the ‘Middle East conflict’? This is ridiculous.”

Tapiero said that the real work lay ahead, and that this conference was not enough. “If after this conference you leave feeling some inspiration, you need to go further! We need and want peace. We need and want to create a bridge between South Africa and Israel. This is what we must tell the government.”

Offering words of a different kind, Sivan Ya’ari spoke about her involvement on the African continent sharing Israeli innovation with those in need. The Chief Executive and founder of Innovation Africa, Ya’ari was born in Israel to uneducated parents, and knows something about struggling to make ends meet.

At the age of twenty, she went looking for a job, and because she spoke French, was offered a position



with Jordache Jeans at its Madagascar plant. It was her experience there that made her realise the extent of poverty in the Southern hemisphere.

“I discovered that people there aren’t able to send their children to school,” she says, “The children are too ill and malnourished to learn. Moreover, they have no electricity. Nurses could not administer vaccinations because they had no facilities to store them.”

“As many as 620 million people live without electricity in sub-Saharan Africa. I wanted to help them, but I myself was uneducated and needed to learn how. I attended Columbia

University, got a Master’s degree in energy, and discovered that a simple solution consisting of two solar panels can bring much needed energy to an entire village.

“If you look at the sun, you see a source of energy right above you,” she says. “If we harness this, we can achieve so much. One hundred and fifty villages in Africa have now got electricity, and with it, the ability to pump water. In 1957, Golda Meir visited Ghana. When she saw the challenges the country faced, she offered Israel’s help despite the country being only seven years old.

Israel always wants to help where it can, and this is what I do.”

Thanks to her energy, innovation, and determination, one million impoverished people across Africa now have access to water and energy. Ya’ari stressed that this was not enough. She plans to reach six million people in the coming years. “Our work has been recognised by the United Nations, and so the contribution that Israel makes and continues to make to humanity cannot be denied. I am proud of this.”



Clemance Tsomondo

Goldstein stood up to speak, many in the audience were visibly moved, rising from their seats and declaring him “our own Moses”.

“When Joshua assumed leadership of the Jewish people,” said Goldstein, “G-d delivered these words to him: ‘Be strong and courageous’. These words apply not only to Joshua, but to us here as well. We are blessed with strength and courage to stand up and make our voices heard in support of Israel.”

The need for courage was further emphasised by Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan. After outlining the innumerable successes Israel had achieved in the space of only seventy years, Keinan said that the challenges faced by supporters of the state still lay ahead.

“The BDS threatens us regularly,” he said. “They threaten to demonstrate at any event we host, looking to disrupt it, and prevent it from going ahead. They even threatened to protest outside this conference here today, but we went ahead, and made sure our voices were not silent!”

Expressing contempt for the BDS, church pastors in attendance rose in indignation and yelled, “Laat hulle kom! Devils! Sinners! Who do they think they are? Let them come here and challenge us!”

Jewish people to the land of Israel could not be contested.

“Those who don’t understand this understand nothing!” he declared. “The Bible is recognised internationally as a credible text, and it says time and again that the connection of the Jewish people to Israel is one no one can challenge.”

Referring to countless textual examples, Tapiero proved the point again and again, stressing the significance of this connection to the Christian faith. “If you are a Christian, you understand this connection, and need to do something to protect it,” he said. “Because if the connection is contested, if the Temple Mount is conserved as not Jewish, the connection of Jesus to the land himself is being denied, and your religion is being kidnapped.

“History cannot be refuted with lies. Your government needs to understand that if they continue to do so, they are going to lose you and their Jewish constituents because they are meddling with something they don’t actually understand.”

“The term used to describe the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the ‘Middle East conflict,’” he said. “Are we nuts? What about Iran, Syria, Sudan, and others? Are the conflicts

Israeli journalist battles ‘industry of lies’

JORDAN MOSHE

“It’s so fashionable to be anti-Israel,” says Israeli journalist and researcher Ben-Dror Yemini, who was brought out to South Africa last week by the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) for its conference.

“They (anti-Israel activists) don’t know anything about what is actually happening. Even the [Minister of International Relations and Co-operation] in South Africa has no idea what she is talking about, saying Israel ‘must pull out of Gaza’.

“What do you want from ordinary people on the street? People are totally misinformed, disinforming and ill-informed, and the BDS is prospering because of people’s ignorance. Francis Bacon said that knowledge is power. For BDS, ignorance is power.”

Born in Tel-Aviv, Yemini studied Humanities and History at Tel Aviv University. Later on, he studied law. Soon after, he chose to become a peace activist, and though not aligned to any organisation or movement, he strove for peace in



Ben-Dror Yemini

the Middle East.

“Before and after Oslo, I met Yasser Arafat and other high ranking officials to understand what it would take to make peace,” says Yemini, who spoke at the SAFI conference last Sunday. “I wanted reconciliation, and I strove to find out what would make it happen.”

Shortly thereafter, in 1994, Yemini experienced a turning point, one which originated in South Africa. He was referring to a speech Arafat made in South Africa after signing the Oslo Accord in which he said he didn’t actually want peace when agreeing to it. “For me, it was

a moment of, ‘What? What?!’ We are fighting for peace, not for manipulation! The way he manipulated and lied to his people after so many years of struggle really struck me – he was fooling them and the world.”

Yemini maintains that no matter what was offered, even President Bill Clinton’s offer of peace and a state were rejected by Arafat.

“What Arafat demanded was the right of return – and that means the destruction of Israel.”

Still, Yemini was not put off his ambition for peace. After a short term in the public service (as the advisor of the Minister of Immigration and the spokesman of the ministry), Yemini began his career as a journalist at the *Maariv* newspaper, and in 2014, he moved to *Yedioth Aharonot*.

“I moved from law to a full-time job in journalism, and began to explore a phenomena I call ‘the industry of lies.’ This is what is behind the world’s anti-Israel campaign. “It showed people were not striving for peace, but the destruction of Israel.”

Continued on page 9>>

A Springbok mascot's dream comes true

PETA KROST MAUNDER

Seven-year-old Daniel Monastursky was ecstatic when he stepped onto the Ellis Park rugby field holding Springbok Captain Siya Kolisi's hand on Saturday, at the start of the historic match against England.

Daniel, who goes to King David Sandton, was the team's mascot and clearly brought luck to the Springboks, who beat the visitors 42-39.

Daniel, who suffers from an extremely rare and progressive neuromuscular disease, was "excited, happy and in awe" as he and the team walked onto the field. "I think he just couldn't believe it was really happening," says his mom, Lucy-Anne Monastursky. "It was a dream come true."

In fact, on the morning of the game, this fun-loving bubbly boy was up, dressed and ready before anyone else in the house. "It is very difficult for Daniel to dress himself. This is something I usually help him with," says his mom. "On this occasion, he did everything by himself, including his socks and shoes. It was a long day waiting for the game to start. Daniel kept asking, 'how much longer', literally right up until it was time to go to the tunnel."

Daniel – who his mother says "is a ray of light with a beautiful



Lucy-Anne and Daniel Monastursky

neshoma" – was diagnosed on 10 October last year with the life-limiting disease with no known cure or treatment.

He is the fifth patient ever diagnosed at the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in London, and is one of only 21 reported cases worldwide of this new spontaneous mutation, which as yet has no scientific explanation.

Daniel was born with this rare genetic condition, but it became symptomatic only at five years old. He has been battling with the disease for two and a half years. While it affects his entire body, his spine in particular is

completely rigid and he can't bend his neck forward. It also affects his heart, lungs and his muscles, and eventually, it will have an impact on his nerves, according to his mother. "Daniel loves sport, and would love nothing more than to run fast and be a sportsman," she says.

His devastated parents, Lucy-Anne and Alon, are heartbroken, and pray every day for a miracle, but are determined to stay strong for Daniel and his sister, Talia, who is two years older than him and also at King David Sandton.

"As there is nothing we can do for him medically, I decided to do everything in my power to make

Daniel's dreams come true, and to create happy experiences for him and us as a family," says Lucy-Anne.

As Daniel is a massive rugby fan, the first thing on his list was meeting the Springboks. Less than a month after his diagnosis, Daniel met the Springboks. "I emailed Tsogo Sun as I know that it hosts the Springboks when touring. Daniel and I were invited to meet the team at a private braai at Montecasino on 2 November," says Lucy-Anne.

"After this initial meeting, I asked if there would be an opportunity for Daniel to run out with the team. Six months later, I got an email from Tsogo Sun and SA Rugby inviting Daniel to be the mascot."

SA Rugby was concerned about Daniel, and asked if the team should do a slow jog or walk onto the field, according to Lucy-Anne. "Daniel said he was nervous about tripping, and asked if they could walk out. Siya was very obliging and happy to walk out."

As they were walking out, Daniel said to Kolisi "Congratulations on being the captain," and he said, "Thank you."

Daniel told his mom he thinks Kolisi is "very good" and the Springboks are "the best team". His first words to his mom when he they arrived to join the Springboks were, "Mommy, they are SO big". And after his experience at the game on

Saturday, he was a little concerned about whether he had done a "good job" or not.

"When Daniel went out there on the field, I felt immense pride," says his mom. "I think it must have been pretty scary for Daniel, but he didn't hesitate and embraced every second. I wish I was as brave as him."

"With 55 000 people in the stadium looking at my boy, and people from all over the world messaging me afterwards to say that they had seen Daniel on TV, it really was a dream... a dream come true."

Daniel is also a soccer and cricket fan. And, he enjoys watching wrestling, playing chess, his computer coding lessons, and being with his friends, says his mom.

His school has been kind and compassionate, and accommodates Daniel where necessary, says Lucy-Anne. "The teachers have been amazing, especially the sports coaches who try to keep Daniel as involved as possible."

However, while this means so much to Lucy-Anne, she says: "As a mom, I am heartbroken. He is my baby boy who I just want to protect. I love him so much. Talia and Daniel are my motivation to never, ever give up, whether I am trying to fulfil a dream or tackling the medical world for treatment and a cure. I will never ever give up on Daniel."

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South African Jewish Report

Time to stand up and be counted

Hearing a woman tell me that she and her family “feel so at home and comfortable with Jewish people” was quite astonishing for me, especially as she is Christian, and has no obvious ties to the community. I had known her from a distance, but she came to chat to me at a function. She went on to tell me that she really wants her son to go to King David School.

She listed why she was so fond of us as a community. For a moment, I wondered whether she was trying to impress me for some reason. It turns out she wasn't. She was 100% genuine.

I am not used to people liking us that much. Instead, I have become quite used to people being wary of us because we support the State of Israel.

So, it is incredibly heart-warming when about 1 500 people from all walks of life take time out of their weekend to celebrate Israel and their support for the South African Jewish community. This was at the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) conference last Sunday.

It is especially welcome when we are being lambasted for being on the wrong side of the anti-Israel trend that has pervaded the ruling party, EFF, and various other groupings.



We are certainly at an unpleasant impasse in this country, where being anti-Israel is among the top trends. And boy, even if you aren't looking, many people want to share negative accounts about Israel with you. Few bother to gather both sides of the story. It is all or nothing, and it seems that if you are anti-Israel, you are part of the IN crowd. If you believe in the state of Israel, you are seriously uncool, and anything you say will result in you being lambasted by the trendoids. Hence, many people are nervous about giving their views on social media.

Because of this, the SAFI conference, and the warmth that flows from the vast Christian and other organisations who support us and Israel is extraordinary. I find it all the more amazing that those who were there were, in many cases, were representing likeminded people who couldn't make it.

My question is: If we have so many friends who vehemently support Israel, why don't they have any impact politically? Many of these supporters support political parties and may be fairly influential. So, why then have they not used their influence to sway the extremely one-sided political views in the ruling party or the EFF?

I don't understand that. And while I have been told that most of our friends prefer to keep their religion and politics separate, it doesn't make sense. I am sorry, but if you really support the state of Israel – and our SAFI friends definitely do – then surely it doesn't go away when your political allies are condemning Israel?

I don't have the answers to that. However, I ask – no, I plead with them – to please help us in the very lopsided battle we appear to be fighting on the political front.

On Sunday, the fervour in support of Israel was huge, and among those who pledged their allegiance was Johannesburg Health and Social Development MMC Mpho Phalatse. She not only reiterated her support, but that of the City of Johannesburg.

It didn't take long before the EFF and ANC pounced, calling for her to be fired from the city council. Mayor Herman Mashaba suspended her (Read page 1).

This made it clear – if it wasn't already – that the knives are out for anyone who publically supports Israel. I don't believe I have ever seen the climate as heated and divisive as it is right now.

So, all those people who support the existence of the State of Israel must speak up now. It is time to stand up.

In the light of all this hatred towards Israel, I went back to Mandela's view of the Israeli-Palestinian situation, not least of all because the anti-Israel lobby always use him in their battle. Mandela said in December 1997: “We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians, without the resolution of conflicts in East Timor, the Sudan, and other parts of the world.” The anti-Israel lobby uses this all the time, leaving out any reference to anyone other than the Palestinians. Also, it ignores the context of his speech, which is about negotiations and finding a peaceful solution between Israelis and Palestinians. He was calling on the South African government not to condemn Israel, but to take its place at the negotiating table to broker peace.

How far are we from that! Today, any mention of supporting Israel as a state – not what its army does or how it deals with situations – leads to a witchhunt and people being punished.

This has got to stop. Once again, I call on those who support the state of Israel and others who are rational and understand that Israel is a multi-faceted country with many different political and social views. Come forward, and help end this impasse so that we can move towards helping to achieve peace.

Shabbat Shalom, Happy Father's Day, and enjoy Youth Day!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

The battle over trying to contain Iran

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier



When American President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, his political base was delighted; as were the leaders of Israel and Saudi Arabia.

But for his European allies, it was the ultimate betrayal. They were left even more stupefied when he fully reinstated all previous US nuclear-related sanctions against Tehran.

European companies were caught off guard. Several major corporations had signed business deals in Iran worth billions of dollars on the basis that the nuclear agreement was accepted international policy.

But now, threatened with penalties, and the prospect of losing access to the much larger and more lucrative American market, many of these companies are looking to bail.

European leaders are desperately trying to find ways to keep the deals afloat. Their motivation is partly economic. In the past three years since the agreement was signed, EU imports from Iran increased 345%, while exports from Europe to the Islamic Republic increased 28%.

They also want to salvage a deal that they admit is far from perfect, but which they believe is the best guarantee against Iran building a nuclear bomb.

Tehran has pumped up its rhetoric, warning that time is running out, and that it will remain in the agreement only if its other signatories (Britain, France, Germany, the European Union, Russia and China) offset the economic benefits that were lost after the American withdrawal.

Last week, the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei threatened to increase uranium enrichment capacity if the agreement fell apart.

Against this backdrop, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently visited Europe. His agenda had one item on it – Iran. Netanyahu seems to have successfully persuaded, or at least cautioned, the Europeans that they need to do more to contain Iranian ambitions in the Middle East and in particular in Syria. However, his now much rehearsed warnings about the dangers of the nuclear deal fell mostly on deaf ears.

If there was any consensus from his meetings it was a “difference of opinion”. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that while she supported Israel's right to security, she disagreed that tearing up the non-proliferation deal was the best way to achieve it.

French President Emmanuel Macron insisted the agreement was “an important milestone” and British Prime Minister Theresa May told Netanyahu that it remained “the best route” to stopping Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons”.

Of the three, May was the least resistant to Netanyahu's message. She cannot afford to anger Trump in light of Brexit and the fact that Britain needs a trade deal with the United States. Still, she did not say anything that would suggest she was willing to follow the Americans and pull out.

The Europeans are worried that ripping up the deal will benefit the Iranian hardliners who were against it from the start. They fear that the current leadership (which is relatively moderate compared to the hardliners) will be unable to keep it viable, and the result will be a

resumption of large-scale uranium enrichment.

Should this happen, Iranian threats to strike Israel could become an all too real possibility, and the Americans and Israelis are likely then to launch a pre-emptive attack against Tehran. In return, Iran would mobilise her allies in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, raising the stakes for a full-scale regional war.

What's more, should Iran go full steam ahead towards building a bomb, it would plunge the Middle East into a nuclear arms race as Riyadh, Ankara, and even Cairo would then seek to develop their own arsenals.

Europe's also worried about her own borders. An unstable Middle East triggered by the breakdown of the deal would lead to even more refugees chancing the hazardous journey to the continent, which in turn would give rise to new recruits for terrorist groups on European soil.

But, point out some observers, despite the angry noises coming from Tehran – and there are many, including the leadership saying it is “ready for all options” and that “the interests of the people of Iran must be assured” – the Iranians don't really want to withdraw from what, for them, is a pretty good deal. As the agreement stands, and this was Netanyahu's repeated message to the Europeans, it legitimises Tehran's enrichment programme, lets it work on advanced centrifuges and missiles, and calls for inspections that arguably do not cover military facilities in any significant manner. At the same time, the country receives substantial sanctions relief for its struggling economy in which unemployment officially stands at about 12.5% – in reality it is much higher – and inflation runs at nearly 10%.

The Iranians are playing the Europeans. The more they threaten them, the more Europe's leaders panic and try to sweeten Trump's withdrawal, hence the more incentive the Iranians have to try and push the limits of what they can get away with. In the process, they drive a wedge between Europe and the United States.

It's a very different scenario to the one Trump and Netanyahu seem to be betting on. They're hoping the leadership will buckle and agree to their terms, but there's debate about whether a new, better agreement is even possible. The unanswered question is whether Iran's economic woes and the re-application of sanctions will force Tehran back to the negotiating table, even whether the international community itself can come together again to sign a deal like they did three years ago.

There's another thing Trump and Netanyahu are not clear on: how to contain Iran. Many European analysts believe that Washington has no plan for the day after, and argue that while it's all very well to create the circumstances for a popular uprising that leads to regime change, it's a dangerous scenario to bet on, as the Arab Spring illustrated. Regime change doesn't always benefit the local population or its foreign sponsors.

Iran has long said it wants nuclear energy for civilian and defensive purposes only. Experts are divided over just how much the country has been complying with the non-proliferation deal until now. But one thing is clear – the agreement is not yet dead. Ultimately, though, no one is really optimistic that it can survive in the long run. If it collapses, Netanyahu will have won this battle. But if Iran makes true her threats and it leads to conflict, he will have lost the war.

• 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 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

THE ABSA JEWISH ACHIEVER AWARDS 2018
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

THE
RE-GENERATION

Absa
Jewish achiever awards
2018



The Absa Business Icon Award - awarded to a Jewish person who has achieved iconic status within the business community

The Absa Business Award - awarded to a Jewish business person who has played a critical leadership role in building a thriving business

The Absa Professional Excellence Award - awarded to a Jewish professional, who has achieved national recognition and acclaim in their profession

The Creative Counsel Entrepreneur Award - awarded to a Jewish person who has a proven track record in entrepreneurial ventures

The Europcar Jewish Women in Leadership Award - honouring the leadership, impact, achievements, success and the overall contribution made by Jewish women in business or the broader South African community

The Lifetime Achievement Award - in honour of Helen Suzman - awarded to a Jewish person who has contributed in an extraordinary manner over a long period of time

The KIA Community Service Award - awarded to a Jewish person who has served the Jewish community with remarkable distinction

The Arts, Science, Sports & Culture Award - awarded to a Jewish person who has excelled in any of these spheres

The Humanitarian Award - in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris - awarded to a Jewish or non-Jewish person who has contributed substantially to the betterment of the lives of the people of South Africa

**Nominations
close at 17:00
on 13 July 2018**

Nominations are open to the public and all nominations should be sent via email to nominations@sajewishreport.co.za or visit www.sajr.co.za

Nominations must include:

- The nominee's name, telephone number and email address
- The award for which the nominee is nominated
- A short motivation for the nomination

A little pride goes a long way

June is Pride month and every year LGBT+ communities across the world celebrate with massive Pride Marches. Last Friday's march in Tel Aviv attracted a truly historic 250 000 people. This is especially significant when you consider that Israel is the only country in the Middle East that can be said to be LGBT+ tolerant and hosts such Pride marches.

It seems appropriate then, to reflect on the state of Pride closer to home and LGBT+ inclusivity in South Africa's Jewish communities, where tolerance is growing, but still falls short of what is required.

Most people who know me, know I'm a pretty contrary character with a whole host of strong opinions, that can seem quite conflicting. Using the labels we are seemingly so fond of, here is how I can be perceived: Jewish. Does not believe in G-d. Gay. Socially liberal. Politically conservative. Does not hate everything about Trump. Does not like much about modern leftism and social justice movements. Zionist and staunch defender of Israel.

I credit my parents and siblings for encouraging me to always think for myself and form my opinions and beliefs. I grew up in Victory Park, and went to King David Victory Park. I went to the campus shul for most of my youth. I was a pretty normal kid in most respects, but maybe a little more observant and clued up on religion and Israeli politics than most.

Like many kids here I was well socialised in our unique brand of traditional Orthodox Judaism. Going to a good many Bnei Akiva camps (where I later became a madrich) certainly helped.

However, unlike most kids, I had a secret self that I struggled to grapple with, a self that my

Jewish upbringing offered nothing positive about. I had always felt a strong attachment to my Jewish social and cultural identity.

It was a strange experience indeed to find myself sitting in a yeshiva in Petach Tikvah (having gone to spend a gap year in Israel on a year-long Bnei Akiva programme) and finally accept that I did not believe in the religious truth claims that underpin Judaism.

It was a liberating experience to realise that my lack of belief did not make me appreciate and value my Jewishness any less. I consider that my first experience of coming out. In that I admitted I was an atheist, albeit a Jewish one.

We have to show our children that there are other ways of being and loving that are beautiful and natural and worth being proud of. That is what Pride is all about.

Without doubt the fact that I was not straight, yet had been taught that to be anything other than that was sinful, was the grit around which my cognitive dissonance swirled and grew. It took a few more years before I was able to finally realise that I was who I was, and could not spend any more time caring about what other people might think of me because of sexual orientation or lifestyle.

So when I was 24 I took the plunge and came out to friends and family. All throughout my youth I struggled to feel proud of who I was. To be honest I struggled to shake the feeling that I was deviant or damaged in some way, that

I was not as good as other 'normal' people. I grappled with the notion that to embrace my sexuality would see me becoming a massive disappointment to my family.

For years I feared the thought of coming out, yet actually it turned out to be the biggest non-event in that my wonderful family remained just that. And all my friends are still my friends.

Nothing around me actually changed, no one treated me any differently and life just continued. To date I have not had a single negative encounter with anyone in my community and that is significant.

When I go to shul with my parents, no one cares that I don't believe in G-d and no one cares that I'm gay. I'm still warmly welcomed by the community I grew up in and by the rabbi there.

Now of course I don't think that my experience can be said to be entirely representative of our community, but I do think that it shows that our community is a lot more liberal and progressive than many give it credit for.

To me it seems that for the most part, most people couldn't care less about who anyone chooses to have sex with, just so long as they're Jewish of course. The only problem is that my boyfriend of six years isn't Jewish (although his dad is) and it seems a little strange for me to ask him to convert. Also I'm really not sure what the Beth Din would even do if we went to them to tell them that he wanted to convert in order to marry me.

On the subject of religious authorities, it is so important that they come out as tolerant and supportive. I remember when chief Rabbi Mervin of the United Kingdom spoke out so vocally against the disgusting terrorist attack on that gay nightclub in Orlando in 2016. In

OPINION

Adam Sachs



so doing, he took a moral stand against such homophobic terrorism and empathised with the victims. His moral leadership should be an example for the entire global rabbinate to follow.

But the thing is, condemning such attacks should be a given and whilst the growing tolerance in our community is encouraging it is far from sufficient. Our community must do more to be inclusive, to let LGBT+ people know that they are loved and can be proud.

Without a more active embrace of difference our community is not doing enough to tell its kids that it is ok to be who they are. When I was younger I simply could not reconcile who I knew myself to be, with the religious narrative, that any sexual orientation or activity outside of the carefully constructed cage of heterosexual relationships and marriage was sinful. There were no stories of anyone who was not straight, no positive role models outside of the heteronormative variety. This kind of socialisation has to end because it does not speak to the reality of this world. It is necessary to not just acknowledge difference but to make our communities' acceptance of it visible. We have to show our children that there are other ways of being and loving that are beautiful and natural and worth being proud of. That is what Pride is all about.

• Adam Sachs has an honours in philosophy and also majored in Politics and English. After finding his professional home in tech, he now coaches and leads user-centric product development teams in B2B, B2C and SAAS startups.

Awards recognise previously excluded icons

JORDAN MOSHE

The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards this year is striving to recognise those who haven't been acknowledged for their contribution in the past. To do this, changes have been made to certain awards to pay tribute to those who have made a difference.

The new awards will open the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards to a new audience, according to Howard Sackstein, Chairperson of the board of the SA Jewish Report. "We are honouring those who were previously excluded, and recognising that some of them have gone beyond previous criteria, even reaching iconic status," he says.

Absa has introduced the following new awards: the Absa Business Icon Award, Absa Business Award, and the Absa Professional Excellence Award. The first two will replace the Absa Entrepreneur Award, the Absa Unlisted Company Award, and the Absa Listed Company Award.

Said Sackstein: "In the past, there was often no real distinction between listed and unlisted companies. Relatively small enterprises could be listed, and massive ones could be unlisted. They were differentiated based on a mere technicality.

"Enormous businesses were perhaps not generating a profit, while smaller ones were flourishing and making a sizeable profit. We therefore don't want to distinguish between them as listed or unlisted. The people involved in them are all business people, are all eligible for recognition, and need to be acknowledged."

One thing was evident, says Sackstein. "We often received nominations for senior partners in law firms or vice-chancellors who ran universities with huge budgets. We have also received other nominations of people who engaged in business but never fitted into these company categories. It was clear that not enough recognition was being given to the people who didn't meet the previous criteria, and this needed to be addressed.

"We need to reward and recognise these outliers.

We resolved to do this by establishing the term 'icon'. We all have names in our heads of people who founded businesses that were truly trailblazers. These people broke new ground, innovated novel solutions never seen before, employed hundreds of people, or shook up the business realm in some way. These are people of iconic status, and we want to pay tribute to the difference they have made in the world of business."

Addressing the Professional Excellence Award, Sackstein says the time has come to recognise people who were not previously accounted for in former criteria.

"Our community includes several nurses, architects, educators, doctors, and other professionals whose work couldn't feature previously," he says. "These are professional people who have risen above the ranks to become the cream of the crop in their respective fields not only locally, but internationally.

"Over the years, South Africa has produced several Nobel Laureates, many of whom were Jewish. We asked how such tremendous tributes could be recognised within the context of our awards. There's no question that they must be, and this new award allows us to do so. The reputations of great contributors must be recognised, and the Achiever Awards now has a unique opportunity to acknowledge as many people of stature as possible."

Sackstein acknowledged that the establishment of criteria for this award was rather difficult. "I have no doubt that our judges are going to have an extremely difficult time," he says.

"How can you compare a doctor and a stockbroker, or weigh up the accomplishments of a nurse against those of an educator? The task is daunting, and I must say that I don't envy our judges in the least. Using indicators such as overall success, reputation, innovation, contributions, and previous recognition, they are going to have to make an informed decision. They really have their work cut out for them."

THE ABSA JEWISH ACHIEVER AWARDS 2018 CALL FOR NOMINATIONS THE RE-GENERATION

2018



The Absa Business Icon Award

awarded to a Jewish person who has achieved iconic status within the business community

Nominations close at 17:00 on 13 July 2018

Nominations are open to the public and all nominations should be sent via email to nominations@sajewishreport.co.za or visit www.sajr.co.za

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Dr Ethel Zulu: farmer, ANC stalwart, Israel fan and Comrades runner

NICOLA MILTZ

Farmer, Dr Ethel Zulu-Mokwele, smiled quietly to herself last Sunday while the Comrades Marathon was taking place. Instead of running it for the fourth time, she found herself hundreds of kilometres away at the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) annual national conference, surrounded by people eager to listen to her farming journey.

Struck with a bad dose of bronchitis, the committed runner pulled out days before the race after months of preparation. But, an invitation to be a panellist at SAFI was exactly what the doctor ordered to lift her spirits, seeing it as a sign of divine intervention.

"G-d knew I had to be at the conference, so he gave me a cold," she told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

The devout Christian and longstanding member of the ANC has recently returned from an educational trip to Israel, where she attended the 20th Agritech International Agricultural Exhibition and Conference in Tel Aviv last month. The experience not only changed her life, but completely changed her impression of the Holy Land and the people in it.

"I never really knew what to expect, but I am amazed by Israel and its people. Their knowledge of agriculture and sustainable farming is incredible," she said. "What a



Dr Ethel Zulu-Mokwele doing what she loves most, at her Bee Tree Farm, outside Pretoria

place, what a people!"

Zulu-Mokwele, who has a doctorate in nutrition, is a crop farmer, nutritionist and the owner of Bee Tree Farm in Cullinan, a 30-minute drive from Pretoria. She supplies vegetables to various supermarkets in and around Pretoria, and to the local community.

She spent years in the department

of agriculture working in the skills-development sector, training farmers in North West Province. When she moved to Johannesburg several years ago, she decided it was time to practice what she preached, and took up farming herself.

"I soon realised that the challenges of farming were out of this world, and that I was a beginner."

Since acquiring Bee Tree Farm, she has been on a mission to secure financing, and most important of all, the knowledge how to become a successful, sustainable farmer.

Her passion and enthusiasm has placed her in the path of other farmers and suppliers in the industry, many of whom, coincidentally, have been Israelis keen to help.

"They helped me along the way, offering advice and expertise, out of the goodness of their hearts," she said.

She drops names like "Yossy, Ami, Rami, and Amit", a range of farmers, agronomists (plant specialists) and suppliers, all willing to share their expertise and time.

Earlier this year, she was invited to attend the Agritech conference jointly hosted by *Farmers Weekly* and the Israel Trade Mission. While there, she was introduced to Lior Keinan, the Israeli Ambassador to South Africa, and Amit Lev, the Israeli Trade Commissioner to South Africa.

Her passion and enthusiasm was noted, said SAFI's Mark Hyman, who nominated Zulu for sponsorship to attend the conference.

Three weeks later, Hyman said an anonymous donor came forward to secure the sponsorship she craved.

"I was so excited," she said, "I couldn't

believe it."

The international conference and the many people she met while in Israel opened her eyes to how little she knew about her trade.

"I was like a farming joke before my trip to Israel," she said.

What amazed her most was the willingness of Israelis to share their knowledge of sustainable farming. "Everyone was so warm and friendly, knowledgeable, and eager to help me," she said.

She visited working farms during her short – but intense – stay and had hundreds of questions answered. She made contacts with plant specialists and irrigation experts all keen to show her new farming and watering methods.

"I have come back to South Africa on a high," she said.

Sadly, upon her return she has had to field criticism from friends and colleagues who are not pleased with her pro-Israel sentiments.

"I have told them that I am a farmer and a Christian, and the Israeli farming method is the way to go," she said.

Not only can these methods help her, but she can spread the word and help others.

She said she was saddened by the recent actions of high ranking politicians insistent on cutting ties with the Holy Land, saying, "I close my ears to the noise. Prayer is more powerful."

"These politicians do not realise the impact this can have on farmers in this country. We can learn so much from the Israelis about how to care for the land," she said. "The Israeli way is all about soil preservation and giving back to the land, not destroying the land."

Israeli journalist battles 'industry of lies'

>>Continued from page 4

In 2013, Yemini was invited to join Tzipi Livni's new party, The Movement, and to become a Knesset member. Yemini declined. "To be a journalist is more effective than being a Knesset member," he says.

"I need to show people how to distinguish legitimate criticism from lies and distortion."

Yemini explains the difference between the two: "There is a judge in America who, when asked what pornography is, said, 'I'm not sure I can define it, but I think I would know it when I see it.' It's the case here. Sometimes, you can smell it. But if you are against some policy, it doesn't mean you are anti-Semitic. You can be against settlements or in favour [of them]. The same with policy. We do it all the time in Israel. I can't tell anyone not to criticise – I do it myself."

"But there is a phenomenon that is frightening. It is the same kind of demonisation of Jews that was seen in the 1930s, but this time it is against Israel and its Jewish population. This is not criticism. When the BDS speaks, it lies – it is demonisation."

"Today, media and academia are the channels through which false information is processed. No one will criticise them for publishing lies. It's easy."

Yemini expressed frustration over the double-standard so often applied to Israel. Addressing the ongoing refugee issue, he says, "Nothing is special about the situation in Israel. Italy just declared it was kicking out 600 000 asylum seekers and refugees. Germany and France are discussing how to deal with refugees in their own countries. Israel has the debate like any other country. Why single out Israel? In Sweden, 12 refugee centres were torched recently. If this had happened in Israel, everyone would call Israel a fascist, racist, Nazi state. It happened in Sweden, not Israel. Yet Israel is singled out again and again!"

However, BDS has no practical impact on Israel. "Here and there it does," Yemini says "but only symbolically, like the recent withdrawal of Argentinian soccer team. When singers or stars boycott us, yes, we feel it culturally. But, economically, no. Israel prospers no matter what BDS does. We have

poverty and social gaps, but the economy is stronger than BDS."

The biggest fear in Israel is Iran, he says. "Iran is subverting every corner of Middle East, not only Israel. It does what it can to provoke instability. Look at Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain. Iran has dangerous aspirations, not only in the region. Its regime believes in Jihadism, which means creating a global caliphate that will rule the world."

Although the proposed two-state solution has the potential to bring stability to the region, Yemini maintains that Palestinians are not committed to the cause. "Most Israelis support two states for two people. I support two states for two people. Unfortunately, the Palestinians don't support this."

"More than a state, they want the destruction of the Jewish people," he says. "They call it by a nice name – the right of return. In 1948, it was the norm – millions were forced out of homelands, and people wanted national liberation and self-determination. Waves of population exchanges happened in Europe, Pakistan and India at the same time. They don't call it a Nakba! I've never heard of the Pakistani Nakba, although 7 million were forced from India or vice versa. And I never hear about the German Nakba, where between 2 million to 16 million people were forced out!"

"The Palestinians deserve self-determination, even if historically they never had a nation. There never was a Palestinian Prime Minister, but if they want one now, I respect that. But, can they tell me I have no right to self-determination? Or someone here from BDS tells me I have no rights? Excuse me? What are you talking about? It's not just hypocrisy. When you deny rights to only one people out of all people in the world, it's anti-Semitism."

Yemini concludes: "I want peace. Even if for now we have no partner, we need to emphasise we want change. I don't know if I will see peace in my lifetime because the Palestinian heritage is to oppose peace. We cannot forget that they rejected the partition plan. I am not optimistic, but I support any steps that will lessen the conflict."

THE ABSA JEWISH ACHIEVER AWARDS 2018 CALL FOR NOMINATIONS THE RE-GENERATION

2018



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- A short motivation for the nomination

Counterattacking Israel's detractors

STEVEN GRUZD

The fledgling State of Israel faced a physical threat when Arab countries wanted to wipe it off the map. Today's threats are in cyberspace, on university campuses, and in the media.

It's a war that is systematically undermining the Jewish state's right to exist. And South Africa is in the eye of the storm.

This was the picture that emerged at a panel discussion on "The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Debunking Defamations, Defending Israel" co-hosted by the South African Zionist Federation and Maccabi South Africa in Johannesburg last Thursday.

"Not a single Palestinian intellectual has ever mentioned a Jewish State for the Jewish people," Tapiero said, "because they don't consider Jews as a nation with rights to the land."

Rabbi Carlos Tapiero, the Deputy Director General of Maccabi World Union, argued that peace with Palestinians is elusive because their leadership will not accept Jewish existence in Israel. To them, Zionism has no legitimacy, it is merely a European colonisation project that will eventually fail. This notion is "perfect to sell in South Africa, and they have done it efficiently".

Tapiero displayed the logos of Palestinian organisations. None of their maps acknowledged Israel's presence. All depicted so-called Palestine extending from the

Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River.

"Not a single Palestinian intellectual has ever mentioned a Jewish State for the Jewish people," Tapiero said, "because they don't consider Jews as a nation with rights to the land."

Tapiero emphasised the importance of building alliances with Christian communities and encouraging them to make it a religious imperative to fight the delegitimisation of Israel.

Yair Fraiman, the Director of Public Diplomacy at the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy, asserted that Israel was fighting a new kind of warfare, one that "didn't start yesterday". While the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban put South Africa at the epicentre of anti-Zionist activism, the roots of the delegitimisation campaign stem from the 1975 United Nations General Assembly Resolution that Zionism is Racism (repealed in 1991).

Though BDS was ignored or shrugged off for years, Israel is now putting money into combatting its delegitimation. Fraiman said Israel recognised that it needed a new organisation to face this rival "on the cognitive battlefield", in academic, legal and media terrains, hence the creation of his ministry two years ago.

His unit seeks to create synergy in the pro-Israel community. Fraiman spoke of posting effective infographics on social media showing the recent rocket attacks by Hamas from Gaza, with the hashtag #IsraelUnderFire.

Ben-Dror Yemini speaking at the panel discussion



But, he admitted, "We are losing the battle of ideas. Their message and story is better." Israel is portrayed as a powerful Goliath against the underdog Palestinian David. "Let's face it, who supports Goliath? Everyone supports David."

South Africa is a key theatre in this (dis)information war. Fraiman said he hoped to work more closely with the South African Jewish and Christian communities.

Ben-Dror Yemini, an Israeli journalist, erstwhile peace activist, and author of the book *Industry of Lies: Media, Academia and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, is committed to exposing and

refuting untruths about Israel.

Yemini asserted that not every criticism of Israel was unwarranted, a case of demonisation or antisemitic, and it was "counter-productive" to claim otherwise.

He said, "I am proud to come from a democratic country where everything, including lies, can be published."

He gave some choice examples of blatant lies, such as baseless and ludicrous claims that no Arabs or Muslims live in Tel Aviv, or that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called at the UN for the expulsion of 1.6 million Palestinian citizens of Israel.

He also put into context the 1948-49 Israeli War of Independence, in which between 20% and 40% of Arabs living in the land of Israel were "forced out", saying that reciprocal emigration and

massive population transfers were the norm in the first half of the 20th century. When empires collapsed, millions migrated in conflicts in the Balkans, between Turkey and Greece, and in India and Pakistan. While much is made of Palestinian refugees, there is little acknowledgement of the 850 000 Jews expelled from Arab States in the 1940s and 1950s.

Students with little knowledge imbibe too many lies from their professors. "Francis Bacon said, 'Knowledge is power'," Yemini said. "The whole of BDS is based on 'Ignorance is power'."

The battle against BDS will continue.

SA author unable to collect literary award

TALI FEINBERG

Writing novels was Bevan Frank's life-long ambition, but when he was awarded the 2018 IndieReader Award for Popular Fiction at the Book Expo America for his first novel, he wasn't able to receive it in person. Just a couple of weeks before the event, this young Cape Town-born author had a stroke.

"I would have loved to attend the ceremony in New York in June, but, as a consequence of the stroke, I was unable to fly anywhere," Frank said. "It's not the first time I've missed receiving an award in person. When I was awarded 'best writer' by the [UK's] Institute of Internal Communication, I didn't know that I had been shortlisted and, although invited to attend the award lunch in London, I didn't go!"

Not being at the event hasn't diminished the importance of the recognition. "It was always my childhood dream to write a novel, and completing *The Mind of G-d* was the fulfilment of this," he told the *SA Jewish Report*. "It's been a long road, but nothing is impossible if you set your mind to it. As the great quote from Madiba goes, 'It always seems impossible until it is done'."

He said having a stroke was "a huge shock". "I'm in my early 40s, so it came completely out of the blue. I wasn't in any risk category for strokes. I don't have high cholesterol, I don't have high blood pressure, I'm not overweight, I'm relatively fit, and I don't smoke."

Frank grew up in Cape Town, was educated at Herzlia, and completed a BA degree in English and Political Studies and a postgraduate LLB at the University of Cape Town (UCT). "Growing up in the Cape Town Jewish community, I was always encouraged by my parents, friends, and family to pursue my writing. Attending Herzlia built on this support and encouragement," said Frank. "We were taught to question things and to challenge and debate the facts. This way of reasoning and thinking definitely helped prepare me to

conduct research, which is important for any author.

"I've been writing since as far back as I can remember. From the age of eight, I would have letters published in local newspapers," he recalls. "I used to also write stories about various characters. This was the beginning of my writing road, paving the way to being editor of the school newspaper, matric yearbook, and the SAUJS newspaper at university, and then ultimately into the professional domain."

After qualifying as an attorney, he decided

Bevan Frank



Photo: Jamie Murray

to follow his passion for writing and editing, and in 2014, he moved with his wife and their three kids to the UK, where he took up a job in corporate communications.

His book is a thriller set in Cape Town. A mysterious black box is stolen from UCT. When the professor working on the black box project disappears, it is up to his daughter, Liz Greene, the novel's protagonist, to find out what happened to her father and his groundbreaking research. Is it a coincidence that the president of the US is in Cape

Continued on page 12 >>

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THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Netanyahu links North Korea summit to tough stance on Iran

MICHAEL BACHNER AND AGENCIES

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday hailed US President Donald Trump's summit in Singapore with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un as "historic" and an "important step" in denuclearising the Korean Peninsula, while linking the meeting to the US leader's "tough stance" on Iran.

"I congratulate US President Donald Trump for the historic summit in Singapore," Netanyahu said. "It is an important step in the effort to denuclearise the Korean Peninsula.

"President Trump also takes a tough stance against Iran's attempt to arm itself with nuclear weapons, as well as against its aggression in the Middle East. This is leaving its mark on the Iranian economy," he continued, referring to Trump's withdrawal from the landmark 2015 pact

last month.

"Trump's policy is an important development for Israel, the region and the entire world," Netanyahu said.

Trump and Kim held the unprecedented meeting in Singapore, after which they signed a joint document praised by both leaders.

On the heels of the Singapore summit, the US President on Tuesday said he hoped to negotiate a "real deal" with Iran over its nuclear programme after Washington's renewed, "brutal" sanctions kicked in.

"I hope that, at the appropriate time, after the sanctions kick in – and they are brutal what we've put on Iran – I hope that they're going to come back and negotiate a real deal because I'd love to be able to do that. But right now, it's too soon to do that," Trump told reporters after meeting Kim.

Trump withdrew the US from the nuclear deal on 8 May. The 2015 agreement required

Iran to curb its uranium enrichment in exchange for relief from international sanctions. Following his withdrawal from the pact, Trump has announced the restoration of US sanctions, while European leaders are trying to preserve the deal.

Iran has said it will ramp up its uranium enrichment capabilities and last week, opened a new facility geared toward producing enrichment centrifuges that will operate within the limits of the nuclear deal.

Israeli ministers also applauded the Trump-Kim meeting over the "strong" message it sent to the Islamic Republic.

Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz told *The Associated Press* that North Korea giving up its nuclear weapons would send a "strong" signal to Iran. He said it would "increase pressure on Iran" to give up its nuclear infrastructure and capabilities.

Regional Co-operation Minister Tzachi

Hanegbi also drew a parallel with Iran, praising the summit as "a mortal blow" to the Islamic Republic's regional policies.

"The first glimmerings of reconciliation between the US and North Korea are a mortal blow to the radical axis led by Iran," he said on Tuesday.

"This is just the beginning of a long and exhausting negotiation process, full of crises and disagreements. But the bottom line, as of now, is welcome: Trump's aggressive and uncompromising policy is proving itself. This is wonderful news for the free world, and for Israel."

The summit – unthinkable only months ago – comes after the two nuclear-armed foes appeared on the verge of conflict late last year as they slung personal insults, and Kim conducted nuclear and missile tests.

• *Times of Israel* staff contributed to this report.

MISS IRAQ IS EMBRACED BY ISRAELIS AT ICONIC MARKET



Sarah Idan, Iraq's representative at the 2017 Miss Universe pageant – whose Instagram photo last year with her Israeli counterpart forced her family to flee the Middle Eastern country – was cheered and hugged this week by shoppers at Mahane Yehuda market in Jerusalem during a visit to Israel.

BILLIONAIRE GEORGE SOROS TOSSES WELL-MONIED HAT INTO BREXIT RING

ROBERT PHILPOT

Two years after Britain voted to leave the EU, and just less than 10 months before it is scheduled to do so formally, the battle over Brexit is raging more fiercely than ever.

Negotiations between Prime Minister Theresa May's government and the EU over the terms of the United Kingdom's divorce and its future relationship with the trading bloc have stalled. There is a series of knife-edge votes in the British Parliament due next week.

In this climate, a new warrior has entered the fray.

Last week, George Soros, the billionaire financier and philanthropist, fired the starting gun on a fresh effort to stage a second referendum and thus halt Britain's departure from the EU.

The bête noire of rightwing populists throughout Europe and the United States, Soros's involvement has sparked anger among hardline "Brexiters" and allegations of anti-Semitic slurs.

Soros's Open Society Foundation is bankrolling Best for Britain, reportedly providing £800 000 (R14 million) of the £2.3m (R40 million) the anti-Brexit group has raised for a nationwide campaign which commenced last weekend.

The organisation is focusing on persuading Parliament to give Britons a final choice on any agreement between May and Brussels about Britain's continued membership of the EU.

Its message is being driven home by newspaper and billboard advertisements asking, "When will we know what we voted for? We all deserve a final say on the Brexit deal."

The effort is a long shot. May has adamantly rejected any further public votes, and Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the opposition Labour party, has also opposed a second poll.

Soros followed the announcement of the campaign with a widely reported speech last week delivered in Paris.

"Brexit is an immensely damaging process, harmful to both sides," he argued. "Divorce will be a long process, probably taking more than five years. Five years is an eternity in politics, especially in revolutionary times like the present.

"Ultimately, it's up to the British people to decide what they want to do. It would be better, however, if they came to a decision sooner rather than later. That's the goal of an initiative called the Best for Britain, which I support."

DEPUTY MINISTER HOSTS FIRST IFTAR DINNER

RAPHAEL AHREN

Deputy Minister Michael Oren on Tuesday evening hosted the first-ever fast-breaking event in honour of Ramadan held under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office.

The traditional iftar dinner was originally planned to take place at the Prime Minister's Office itself – where Oren has an office – which would have marked the first time an event marking the holy month of Ramadan was held at the epicenter of Israel's executive branch.

But Oren said that the office could accommodate only 70 people, and since more than 100 guests had responded to his invitation, he had to relocate the event to Parliament.

It may not have been the first iftar there, he allowed, but the event was still the "first-ever multi-partisan iftar here at the Knesset".

"The State of Israel is proud of its minority populations, who enjoy freedom of religion – Druze, Bedouins, Circassians and Christians," Oren said. "This is true democracy."

While Israel is a Jewish state, it is situated in the Middle East and "respects the traditions and the heritage of our region", he said. "Against the hatred and the terror that surrounds us, it is especially important to strengthen the ties between us through tolerance and mutual respect, to show that it's possible to create a different Middle East."

Oren, who served as

Israel's US ambassador between 2009 and 2013, recalled that he started a tradition to hold an iftar dinner at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

"I used to get invitations to iftar dinners from the French embassy and the German embassy, the British embassy – everyone had their own iftar. And I asked myself: 'Wow, we have a Muslim population that, by percentage, is much higher than France or Germany. Why is there no Israeli iftar?'"

His staff in DC "were a little surprised, but I insisted" and so the next year, the Israeli mission to the US hosted its first iftar dinner, he recalled.

It's a tradition that is still observed by the current Ambassador, Ron Dermer, every year, he said.

Tuesday night's event was attended by members of Israel's Arab, Druze, and Bedouin communities, including religious leaders, heads of regional councils, and social activists.

A handful of foreign diplomats, including the Ambassadors to Israel of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, and Paraguay, were present as well.

For about half an hour, the Muslim dignitaries praised Oren for being the first senior representative of the Prime Minister's Office to organise an iftar dinner.

One official asked that it become a permanent fixture, similar to the President's residence's annual event marking Ramadan.

Israel leads in the use of big data to foil terrorism

AGENCIES

Israeli authorities have foiled more than 200 Palestinian terror attacks by monitoring social media and sifting through vast amounts of data to identify prospective assailants ahead of time, according to Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan.

These pre-emptive actions put Israel at the forefront of an increasingly popular – and controversial – trend used by intelligence and law enforcement agencies around the world that use big data technology to track would-be criminals. While the technology appears to be effective, its tactics have drawn condemnation from Palestinians and raised questions about civil liberties.

Erdan, who oversees the national police force, said Israel's use of algorithms and other

technology has been an important factor in lowering the number of knife and shooting attacks in the country in recent years. He planned to share Israel's knowledge with counterparts at this week's International Conference of Internal Security.

"The experience we now have, we can help other countries deal with this kind of terrorism," he said. Working with allies could "lead us to a much better result in fighting lone-wolf terrorists".

But Hanan Ashrawi, a senior Palestinian official in the West Bank, called Israeli profiling techniques "horrific" and an "added dimension" to Israeli control over Palestinian lives.

"They are trying to justify the various ways in which they violate the Palestinian people's rights, including the right to due process and the right to privacy, using Facebook and social media as a



Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan

Photo: Ariel Schalit/AP

means of gleaning information to prove people's guilt ahead of time," she said.

In September 2015, Israel found itself facing the start of a wave of stabbings, shootings, and car-rammings carried out by "lone wolf" terrorists or individuals acting on their own rather than under directions from terror groups. It was a significant

departure from past waves of organised violence led by terror groups like Hamas.

Since then, Palestinians have killed more than 50 Israelis, while Israeli forces have killed more than 260 Palestinians, most of whom Israel says were attackers. However, the number of attacks has dropped significantly – from 170 "serious

attacks" in 2016 to 90 last year, to 25 this year, according to Erdan's ministry.

The most recent attack was a stabbing on Monday in the northern city of Afula, in which a Palestinian from the West Bank city of Jenin seriously injured an 18-year-old Israeli high school student.

Erdan's ministry, working with the Justice Ministry and Shin Bet internal security agency, has created a team to scour an "ocean of data" on social media for objectionable content, and to identify attackers before they act. • Times of Israel staff contributed to this report.

Iranians defy regime on Twitter, express support for Israel

TOI STAFF

As thousands marched in Iran last Friday to mark the regime-led Quds Day – an annual day of protest against Israel – some Iranians launched a Twitter campaign to express support for the Jewish state.

The effort, under the hashtag #WeStandWithIsrael, was a call for peace between the two peoples. A photo shared on the social media platform encouraged users to tweet the hashtag at 21:00 Tehran time on Friday.

A foreign ministry official on Tuesday said the hashtag had featured in tens of thousands of tweets.

"The foreign ministry implements digital public diplomacy in social media networks in various languages, one of them being Persian," said the ministry's Persian Digital Media Manager Sharona Avginsaz.

"In the past six months, our Twitter page 'Israel in Persian' intended specifically for Iranian civilians, has been gaining steam," she told the Mako website, run by Hadashot news. "We have about 60 000 followers, and our messages reach more than 1.5 million people with that Twitter handle alone."

She explained that though Twitter is banned in Iran, many Iranians have found ways to circumvent the restrictions.

"This year, Iranian Twitter users informed us they intended to cause controversy [on Quds Day] with a viral hashtag that would support Israel, and show that the Iranian people do not back the regime and its hatred towards [the Jewish state]," Avginsaz said.

"During this week, our Twitter page reached 2.5 million Iranians. There were tens of thousands of tweets with the hashtag #WeStandWithIsrael, each stating individual positions on why they love Israel."

It was not clear how many of the tweets came from within Iran itself, and how many came from Iranians and people of Persian descent abroad.

Avginsaz asserted that "Most of the Iranian people oppose the regime and its policies towards Israel, and Iranians are always writing to us that they love Israel, that they don't want their regime to use their money to support Hamas and Hezbollah."

Before the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iran was a close ally of Israel.

Avginsaz said many Iranians "still

remember the good relations between Iran and Israel before the revolution". She said some of them saw Israel as a potential ally in the region, as both were non-Arab states in the predominantly Arab Middle East.

The Twitter campaign was not the only friendly overture between the two peoples this week.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu released a video in which he offered Israel's water expertise to Iran he said faced environmental disaster due to persistent drought.

"The Iranian people are victims of a cruel and tyrannical regime that denies them vital water. Israel stands with the people of Iran," Netanyahu said in the English-language video, which featured links to the State of Israel's Persian website with information about water shortages, and to a Persian-language Telegram account.

"Iran's meteorological organization says that nearly 96% of Iran suffers from some levels of drought," he said. "Issa Kalantari, a former Iranian Agriculture Minister, said that 50 million Iranians could be forced out of their homes due to environmental damage. Fifty million!

"Millions of Iranian children are suffering due to mismanagement, to incompetence, and the theft of vital resources by the Iranian regime," he said.

Netanyahu told the Iranians that Israel faced similar water issues and had found ways of dealing with them.

"Israel also has water challenges. We've developed cutting edge technologies to address them," he explained in the video.

"Israel has the know-how to prevent environmental catastrophe in Iran. I want to share this information with the people of Iran," he said.

As Israel does not have ties with the Islamic republic, Netanyahu said it would launch "a Farsi website with detailed plans on how Iranians can recycle their waste water. We will show how Iranian farmers can save their crops and feed their families".

"The people of Iran are good and decent. They shouldn't have to face such a cruel regime alone," Netanyahu said in the video. "We are with you. We will help so that millions of Iranians don't have to suffer. The hatred of Iran's regime will not stop the respect and friendship between our two peoples."

Foreign Ministry responds to vitriol tweeted by fake North Korean account

MICHAEL BACHER

Israel's Foreign Ministry spokesman responded on Monday to an apparently fraudulent Twitter account bearing the name of North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho after it lashed out at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In a tweet, the unverified account – which focuses on vilifying Israel and Jews, often using very vulgar turns of phrase unlikely to be employed by a

61-year-old North Korean diplomat – called Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a "stinking Zionist" and a "criminal" in reference to a video in which the premier offered water to drought-struck Iran.

The tweet also accused Israel of "working overtime" to sabotage a landmark summit set for Tuesday between North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump, adding that Netanyahu "hates" North Korea.

Sharing Netanyahu's video to the people of Iran on Twitter, the tweet said: "Stinking Zionist Netanyahu offers water to Iran; he's a criminal/liar so wouldn't deliver."

Adding criticism of Israel's response to a series of protests and attacks on the Gaza Strip's border in recent months, the account said that Netanyahu "can't be bothered giving water to Gaza;



Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Emanuel Nahshon

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he kills them instead".

The exchange came as Kim was in Singapore preparing for the summit with Trump – a surprising development after months of the two leaders trading colourful insults and grave threats.

"Israel also working overtime to make the Singapore summit fail; he hates DPRK," it added. The Ynet news site reported that Israel had treated the account as authentic after Singapore contacted Israeli authorities asking if it was true that Jerusalem had been acting to hamper the Trump-Kim summit.

Erdan warns Twitter may face criminal charges in Israel over terror accounts

TOI STAFF

Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan has called on Twitter to ban accounts tied to terrorist groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, warning the social media giant may face prosecution in Israel if it fails to do so.

Erdan on Tuesday said he had sent a letter to Twitter Chief Executive Jack Dorsey. He told the International Homeland Security Forum in Jerusalem that unlike other social media companies, Twitter in many cases has declined to remove content posted by terrorist groups.

"It is intolerable that organisations calling for the murder of innocents should be able to run Twitter accounts in the open," Erdan said.

He said allowing such activity could breach Israeli law, and leave Twitter open to criminal charges in Israeli courts.

In March, Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked also threatened legal action against Twitter over the social media giant's alleged refusal to crack down on posts by terror operatives.

"The terrorist organisations switched to Twitter instead of Facebook. The reason is

Photo: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90



Gilad Erdan

simple: Facebook responds effectively to our requests to remove the contents of terrorism, while Twitter ignores them," the minister said. "We are considering legal action against them." She said she was not referring to "legitimate criticism of Israel" but calls for "explicit violence, against Israelis, against Israeli targets, against Jews".

Terror kites shake residents, but not their resolve to stay put

SAM SOKOL

Dani Ben David fiddles with his radio, switching between it and his cellphone as he drives through the Be'eri Forest, a nature reserve located on the border of Israel and the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip.

As his Jeep jolts over the dirt road, he quickly and calmly jumps between multiple conversations, co-ordinating efforts to extinguish the multiple fires that have sprung up across his territory. As Regional Director for the Western Negev for Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael (the Jewish National Fund) (KKL-JNF), Ben David is responsible for maintaining the forest's tens of thousands of acres in the face of Palestinian efforts to torch them and surrounding farmland.

Since April, more than 450 open-air fires have been set along the border region by kites and balloons carrying incendiary materials launched from Gaza. Flying aimlessly over the kibbutzim, they have turned large swatches of what was once an oasis of green in a dry and dusty south into a charred landscape.

Many of those kites have landed in the wheat fields of farmers, causing millions of shekels in damage to the local agricultural sector as well as in the area's vast nature reserves.

"Look over there," Ben David says, pointing to a pillar of smoke in the distance. His finger sweeps across the horizon, noting the locations of several other fires in the distance. "We see three, four, five fires. There are eight fires

now."

"It's like this every day," he continues, describing how more than 4 000 dunams, or nearly 490 acres, have already gone up in smoke over the past two months. "It's doing great damage to the forest,



A firefighter extinguishes a blaze on the Israeli border with Gaza

Photo: Sam Sokol

to the plants and animals. Everything here is burned. We don't really see a solution, either from the government or the army, against this kite terror."

Ben David says KKL-JNF employs 12 to 13 private firefighters who are responsible for the forest, a number bolstered by volunteers from local communities and Israel's overstretched Fire and Rescue Services.

"If we had 10 more it would be good, but we don't have 10 more," he says. "We are doing what we can. You extinguish one, and you move on to the next one."

"These kites aren't toys, they're weapons," he says. "If the IDF [Israeli Defence Force] or government understands that, I hope they will do something."

Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman has pledged to strike back in response to the kites "when it is convenient for us". The army is testing

two types of drones for use against the kites as "part of a comprehensive response, which includes co-operation with firefighting forces and the activity of combat forces on the ground", an IDF spokesman said.

According to police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld, bomb disposal experts have responded not only to kites dragging alcohol-soaked rags, but also explosive devices, "which is a much more serious threat to soldiers and civilians".

"Every day, we have at least 30 firefighters with 10 fire engines to deal only with fires near the fence," Israel Fire and Rescue Services spokesman Yoram Levy says. "In order to respond quickly, we opened five temporary stations in kibbutzim. We have a volunteer unit at Kfar Aza with a fire truck and equipment, and we are about to establish two more units. When we receive intelligence that there might be mass demonstrations [like last Friday], we reinforce our staff as needed."

Levy says the fire service has used airplanes twice, near Kibbutz Or Haner and Kibbutz Karmia, after receiving permission from the Israeli Air Force. (JTA)

Anti-Israel resolutions don't advance peace, Latvian minister says

RAPHAEL AHREN

Anti-Israel resolutions at the United Nations and other international bodies do very little to advance a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Latvian Foreign Minister said last week during a visit to Israel.

In an interview with *The Times of Israel*, Edgars Rinkevics also criticised the Jewish state's "disproportionate" response to recent protests at the Gaza border, though he stressed that Israel had the right to defend itself.

"Over the years, there have been many resolutions at the [UN] General Assembly condemning Israel, calling for the [resumption of the] peace process. But I haven't seen how those resolutions have helped the overall peace process," Rinkevics said.

"I don't believe that

resolutions can be a substitute for a peace process or direct negotiation with the participation of all relevant actors," he said.

On 1 June, the UN Security Council voted on a resolution calling for "measures to guarantee the safety and protection" of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and proposing an "international protection mechanism" for them.

Ten countries, including China, France and Russia, voted in favour of the draft, proposed by Kuwait, but it failed to pass due to an American veto.

This coming Wednesday, the Kuwaiti text is set to be voted on again at the General Assembly, where it is expected to pass with a large majority.

Latvia, a member of the European Union, is committed to adhering to EU consensus, Rinkevics said.

Whenever such consensus is elusive, Riga will take a "balanced position", he said, citing abstentions to the UN General Assembly's November 2012 vote to give Palestine "non-member state" status and the December 2017 vote condemning the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Floods inundate southern towns as freak rains batter country

TOI STAFF

Residents of Sderot and Ashkelon on Wednesday morning found their vehicles submerged in more than a meter of water after storm drains in the southern cities apparently overflowed during a rare June downpour.

Israel was hit with heavy rains this week, causing power outages and severe flooding throughout the country, a highly unusual occurrence in mid-June.

Kibbutz Dorot in the south of the country recorded all-time-high rainfall for the month of June. The meteorological service measured 64mm of rainfall in the Western Negev on Tuesday morning, topping the previous record in Israel of 50mm of rainfall in a day during the month of June.

Sderot resident Danny Hazan told the Ynet news site that the overnight deluge had overwhelmed the city's water infrastructure, taking local residents by surprise.

"The drainage system has totally collapsed. It's been raining all morning and hasn't stopped," he

said. "People weren't ready for it."

Heavy rainfall on Tuesday night through Wednesday was also reported along the coast and in northern Israel. The inclement weather caused power outages in several Galilee towns overnight.

The rain was expected to continue through Thursday, and authorities warned of flash floods in southern Israel's dry desert valleys.

Though Israel's rainy season typically ends in March, this year has already experienced several unseasonable heavy rainstorms later in the year.

In April, 10 high school seniors were killed in a flash flood during a hike along the Tzafit riverbed near the Dead Sea. According to reports, the Principal of the Bnei Zion Military Academy did not heed the advice of meteorologists or an air force forecaster who warned against taking a trip to a flash-flood-prone area.

Police are investigating whether school officials lied to participants about the safety of the trail, and their co-ordination with relevant authorities.



Photo: screen capture: Twitter/Hadashot/Robby Perreg

Flooding in Sderot

After violent scuffles, police clear families, protesters from outpost homes

JACOB MAGID

Israeli police on Tuesday evening wrapped up a daylong operation to clear 15 homes in the Netiv Ha'avot outpost after officers gained control of a building where hundreds of teenage protesters had barricaded themselves in a last stand against the court-ordered evacuation and demolition of the structures.

Three people were arrested in the final hours of the eviction in the Elazar settlement, located in the Etzion Bloc south of Jerusalem. One man was detained for assaulting a police officer, and two minors were held for hurling objects at police from the roof of one of the homes.

Two other minors were arrested in the morning for assaulting police officers as demonstrators were still arriving at the West Bank outpost.

Nine officers were injured during the eviction, six of whom required medical attention. Most were released from medical care, but one required additional treatment, police said.

Fourteen of the 15 buildings were cleared relatively peacefully throughout the afternoon, with only passive resistance from demonstrators. In the last home, however, several hundred teenagers barricaded themselves inside, on the roof, on the porch, and in the entryway. To prevent police entry, they used wire fencing, planks of wood, and boulders.

After all the protesters were cleared from the entryway,

officers began evicting the teenagers waiting inside the structure, with four police officers lugging each protester one by one away from the premises in a process that took hours.

Officers faced a considerable amount of verbal abuse from the young demonstrators, who lambasted them for "taking part in the eviction of Jews" and for "conspiring with the enemy".

The homes are expected to be demolished before the end of the week.

In total, 2 300 police officers and Border Police took part in the eviction, during which more than 500 youths were forcibly removed from the site on 15 buses that shipped them to various cities throughout the country.

Tuesday's eviction came 21 months after the High Court of Justice first ruled that 17 buildings in the neighbourhood had been constructed on land not belonging to the state, and ordered that they be demolished by 8 March.

The remaining 15 residential homes were slated to be razed in March, but the High Court granted a three-month delay to arrange temporary housing for the evicted residents.

In February, the Cabinet approved a proposal to begin the process of legalizing the rest of Netiv Ha'avot. The remainder of the outpost includes an additional 20 homes that were also built illegally, but were constructed on parcels declared by Israel to be "state land", and do not stand on private Palestinian property.

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Over 250 000 revellers flood Tel Aviv for Israel's biggest ever Gay Pride parade

TOI STAFF AND AGENCIES

Ripped men in white underwear, pink bunny ears, and black bow ties gyrated through the streets of Israel's Tel Aviv last Friday along with drag queens and others to loud trance music for the annual Gay Pride Parade – the biggest event of its kind in the region.



Israelis and tourists participate in the Gay Pride parade in Tel Aviv last weekend

The Tel Aviv Municipality said that more than 250 000 people celebrated the city's 20th Gay Pride Parade, an event that draws people from around the world to party at the Israeli beach city that has built its image as an oasis of tolerance for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community.

The turnout was the biggest ever in the parade's history.

Tel Aviv's annual parade stands in sharp contrast to most other cities in the region. Across the rest of the Middle East, gay and lesbian relationships are mostly taboo. The pervasiveness of religion in everyday life, along with strict cultural norms, plays a major factor.

Cafés, stores, and lamp posts were decked with rainbow flags across Tel Aviv, with tens of thousands of tourists visiting Israel specifically for the event.

"With all these flags, I already feel at home," said Jimmy Chan, 39, who arrived from China two days ago. "Seeing this parade in such a religious country makes you feel more connected as a community."

Perched on high heels and wearing a black skirt attached with a rainbow flag, a marcher calling

to gays, lesbians, and LGBT, and I think it's a combination of city at the beach and good vibes."

Arab Israeli participant Sahreef Awad said: "There's no difference between anyone. It's just like, you know, culture, colour, nationality, it doesn't matter."

The colourful march began at around noon at Ben Zion Boulevard in central Tel Aviv, before proceeding to the beachfront, along Bograshov, Hayarkon, Frishman, and Herbert Samuel Streets, before concluding at Charles Clore Park, where the main party was held in the evening.

Mayor Ron Huldai kicked off the annual event, telling marchers he was proud to stand in front of them rallying for equal rights. "We will continue to break through the walls of hatred and reach a time when all people are equal in Israel," he said. "This parade has an extraordinary meaning in the sense that we are here, and we are not leaving."

Floats moved through the closed streets of downtown throughout the afternoon, including one sponsored by the British Embassy in Tel Aviv, and decorated under the theme of "Love is Great Britain." The UK ambassador to Israel is David Quarrey, an openly gay man.

Police deployed hundreds of officers and volunteers along

himself Aldifrost, 30, sketched a few dance steps, shaking his long wavy and coloured hair.

"Tel Aviv is the big city of gays!" he said. He is attending for the 10th time. "I come here to party and display my drag-queen show."

Visiting from Germany, Cordelia Lange said that Tel Aviv was "a very vibrant city. It's a city that embraces everything connected



the parade's route and around gathering areas to secure revellers, direct traffic, and maintain public order.

American television personality Andy Cohen is serving as international ambassador for the 2018 parade, and Netta Barzilai, the Israeli winner of the 2018 Eurovision song contest, performed at the event's main stage.

During the celebrations, a group of pro-Palestinian activists gathered on the sidelines of the parade to protest the "pinkwashing" of Israel's LGBT community.

Activists carrying black and pink signs accused the government of highlighting its relatively pro-gay stance compared to its neighbours in a bid to downplay its alleged rights abuses against Palestinians.

To the sound of percussion, they

shouted "stop the occupation!" in reference to Israel's continued military presence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The parade caps off a week of pride celebrations, which featured a glut of rainbow-infused parties and cultural events, that continued through the weekend.

Tel Aviv places a large emphasis on Pride Week because it's a huge draw for international tourists.

The municipality hailed Tel Aviv's status as the world's "most gay-friendly city", and said this year's festivities drew a record number of visitors.

Huldai praised his city for being "a beacon for liberty, pluralism, and tolerance", and vowed Tel Aviv would continue to "support and celebrate our local LGBT culture and act as a welcoming destination for the international gay community".

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You Don't Mess With the Zohan harks back to a more liberal age

STEPHEN SILVER

Whatever else you might say about the somewhat mixed legacy of his work, you can't question Adam Sandler's credentials as an avatar of Jewish cultural pride. Chalk that up to his famous Hanukkah song, which name-checked an array of famous Jews, his Hanukkah-themed animated comedy *Eight Crazy Nights* and the 2008 film *You Don't Mess With the Zohan*.

In *Zohan*, Sandler played an elite Israeli soldier who longs for a peaceful life. The film, released 10 years ago this week, was full of in-jokes about Jews and Israel – hummus practically serves as a supporting character – but it also expressed a liberal Zionist viewpoint that is disappearing from modern Mideast discourse.

Sandler stars as Zohan Dvir, whose superhuman acts of fighting skill are rendered with cartoonish, over-the-top special effects. Zohan, though, is sick of fighting; he'd rather be partying with bikini-clad ladies on the Tel Aviv beach. His dream is to be a hairdresser; and early in the film he becomes emotional while flipping through an old Paul Mitchell hairstyle guide.

During a fight with his Palestinian counterpart, The Phantom (played by John Turturro, of course), Zohan fakes his own death in order to sneak into the US and make his hairdressing dreams come true.

"I couldn't take all the fighting anymore – what's

it all for?" he says in a thick, overstated Israeli accent.

Once in New York, an incognito Zohan finds work in a salon owned by an attractive Palestinian woman (Emmanuelle Chiriqui), and is caught up in a miniature version of the Middle Eastern conflict in a Lower Manhattan neighborhood, where

feuding Israeli and Palestinian immigrants operate businesses on either side of the street. By the end of the film, however, the two sides unexpectedly bond and reach something resembling an Oslo Accord on the Hudson.

The story was loosely based on Nezi Arbib, an Israeli army veteran who moved to the US and started a hair salon. Sandler spent two weeks training with Arbib – in hairstyling, not military tactics.

Zohan has a lot of the scatological, low-brow humour that's long been associated with Sandler's work, as demonstrated in a bizarre subplot that has Zohan making his name as a hairdresser by having sex in the back of the salon with female clients who are decades older than he is. It was directed by Dennis Dugan, who has helmed seven other Sandler films.

But the writers – Sandler, Robert Smigel and Judd Apatow – gave the film an ambitious satirical edge (the script also lifted some Israeli electronics-store humour from a series of 1990s *Saturday Night Live* sketches written by Smigel). It offers a crowd-pleasing, if unrealistic, solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that goes beyond two states.

Outside the pressure cooker of the Middle East, Israelis and Palestinians can flourish together side by side by realizing how much they have in common and toiling toward the same goals. In the film's New York, that means keeping one's business afloat.

Zohan has all the forces joining against villains who turn out to be more dangerous than themselves – a Trump-like real estate developer and his redneck henchmen (led by singer Dave Matthews).

Even in 2008, the film was criticized for being too Zionist and not Zionist enough. Left wing magazine *Counterpunch* denounced it as racist, and criticised it for expressing "a comedic approach to understanding the inner workings of the substandard Arab people". Meanwhile, Gil Troy wrote that the film's "happy ending comes when



Photo: AP Photo/Evan Agostini

Healing genocide wounds through music

NICOLA MILTZ

When musician Jeremy Danneman was a young boy, he used to listen to his beloved grandmother's harrowing tales of how she escaped from the Nazis as a teenager during the Holocaust. Her stories of survival kept him enthralled, and no doubt shaped him into the man he has become.

Danneman, now a well-respected New York-based jazz musician, was drawn to the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide. Understanding and interpreting the two periods in history has become his life's work.

In a bid to try and connect people with a shared pain and common experience through the medium of music, he teaches communities about the causes and effects of war and genocide.

This passion placed him in the direct path of Rwandan musician and vocalist, Sophie Nzayisenga, in 2009. The two were introduced when Danneman, a saxophonist, clarinetist and composer, was doing street performances in Rwanda to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the genocide.

Nzayisenga – a Rwandan who lost members of her family during the genocide – is well known throughout Rwanda as a professional female Inanga player. The Inanga is a large, tough-zither instrument with between 8 and 16 strings.

Their friendship is an unlikely one. Nzayisenga barely speaks English. In fact, when they first met she could not even say "hello", and Danneman is a Jewish guy from the Big Apple. Despite their obvious differences, there is a real musical bond.

"There was an instant connection the minute we were introduced," Danneman said.

Over the years, the pair have kept in touch, Danneman was instrumental in arranging a visit to the US for Nzayisenga to perform. And last year, they released their

first album together, "Honey Wine".

The two have been in South Africa for the past two weeks performing for diverse audiences in Cape Town and Johannesburg as part of the commemoration of the 24th anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide. Their music is described

as Afro folk jazz which fuses traditional African and Western music styles.

Initially, they performed at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, together with percussionist Mpho Molikeng, and bass player Ariel Zamonsky. They performed

the Rwandan High Commission, Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda.

Last Tuesday, the pair played together at the Temple Israel Heritage Centre in Hillbrow.

Reeva Forman, Chairperson of the Centre, said their street performance formed part of an initiative devoted to "sending a clear message against xenophobia and encouraging reconciliation and social cohesion".

She said the aim was to "unite the people of Hillbrow and the inner city through music".

The pair concluded their tour with a street performance outside the Temple titled "Bringing People Together Through Music".

It brought to an end a whirlwind tour which included performances at the Orbit Jazz Club in Johannesburg, the Cape Town Holocaust

melodies and poetry."

In 2015, Danneman and Nzayisenga recorded their collaborative album, "Honey Wine". "It's been a great journey," said Danneman, who lives in with his wife and child in New York, while Nzayisenga lives in Kigali.

This being his first visit to South Africa, he said, "It has been great to connect with other local musicians here. I've found the jazz scene dynamic and vibrant, with a multi-dimensional approach to music. Sophie and I are very happy to have played a role in the commemorations of the genocide against the Tutsi people in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and we hope we have brought some new audiences to the Holocaust centres at a time that is rampant with increased ethnic tensions globally."



Photos: Richard Buckingham

and Genocide Centre, the Capricorn Primary School, the Alma Cafe, Olympia Bakery, and the Alexander Bar and Theatre.

They also met members of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and toured various townships.

Danneman told the *SA Jewish Report* that he and Sophie have a special relationship. "We communicate through music. It's been fantastic working with her. I knew about the Inanga instrument before I went to Rwanda in 2009. I had read about it, and I really wanted to find someone who played it. So it was great when we hooked up. There was a mutual respect and understanding."

Danneman fell in love with street performing in 2009 after marching for 11 hours in the streets of New York with his saxophone. "I met all kinds of people, and I was really taken with the idea of how the artist can reach audiences across social lines."

Around the same time, Rwanda was commemorating the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi people, a topic that Jeremy was interested in because his grandmother was a Holocaust survivor and had shared many stories about the war. He decided to give street performances in Rwanda to commemorate the genocide.

"It was an astounding experience to go to Rwanda and just start playing on the streets, meeting people and talking to them about what I was doing and why."

He was then introduced to Nzayisenga by a local filmmaker. "Her father, Thomas

Kirusu, was one of the most renowned Inanga players in Rwanda," said Danneman, adding: "She's been writing songs for twenty years, combining the traditional art form passed down from her father with her own contemporary



Sophie Nzayisenga and Jeremy Danneman performing at the Temple Israel Heritage Centre in Hillbrow

for members of the Rwandan community living in Johannesburg, who lit candles in memory of those who died during the genocide. Among those present included Freddy Mutanguha, the Director of the Kigali Genocide Memorial and HE Vincent Karega, High Commissioner of

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David and a musical Goliath

NIA MAGOULIANITI-MCGREGOR

“Music set them free.” That’s the tagline for composer and actor Mbongeni Ngema’s new film, *Asinamali*, in which prisoners, through the power of song and dance, find redemption. Executive producer David Dison, a friend of Ngema’s and his legal adviser, believes in the strength of this philosophy as much as he does in the movie.

“The message of *Asinamali*, which was inspired by events surrounding a rent boycott in Lamontville township in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, in the early 1980s, is universal,” says Dison. “And yes, I believe music can set you free because it’s in theatre and music – in all the performing arts – that a transformation takes place in us. I think it’s incredible therapy for prisoners and other people who are oppressed.”

Asinamali was formerly a theatre production, which played to audiences in South Africa and abroad in the late '80s. Ngema recently decided to turn it into a movie, and the script became a play within the play. He approached Dison to raise the money. “Come on, let’s make a movie,” he said.

It’s been more than 20 years since Dison met Ngema, and the two formed a lifelong bond.

Dison is from Oaklands in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg; Ngema, from Verulam in KwaZulu-Natal. Dison received a law degree, specialising in entertainment law and civil rights issues – “Freedom of expression was my game,” he says. Ngema moved to Johannesburg and was mentored by playwrights Gibson Kente and Barney Simon of the Market Theatre.

They met when Dison became Ngema’s legal adviser, after Ngema first staged his resistance musical, *Sarafina!* – set during the 1976 student riots in Soweto – in March 1987. It became a hit with audiences countrywide.

“We came from different backgrounds and we lived our own lives, but we have got on incredibly well from day one,” says Dison of his friendship with Ngema. “We both have an appetite for risk and reward, and we both believe that the power of music and song can help South Africa.

“When *Sarafina!* became a smash hit, we took it to the Lincoln Center Theatre in New York.”

Dison and Ngema stayed at the Mayflower Hotel for many months. It was situated near the theatre, which was on Broadway. “It was possibly the biggest formative experience of both Mbongeni’s and my life,” recalls Dison.

“We were just small-town boys from Johannesburg, but the Jewish entertainment executives in the city – including Bernard Gersten, the then executive producer of Lincoln Center Theatre, and well-known director and producer Gregory Mosher – took us under their wing.

“We met producers, scriptwriters and entertainment lawyers. They helped us fine-tune this into a top-class Broadway production. At the same time, Hugh Masekela, by then a New York aficionado, showed us the town.

“*Sarafina!* put Mbongeni on the map,” says Dison. “It was on Broadway for three years, and a huge number of black Americans were conscientised by the production.”

In the late '80s, Dison told Ngema about the Cosatu House Murder Trial, which saw Dison defending eight accused (Dison acted as an attorney full time before he switched to producing). “By that stage, we were mates,” says Dison, adding that Ngema was all ears.

“The SA Railways and Harbours Workers’ Union strike of 1987 was the last big strike in Johannesburg prior to the change in government. The union was very militant and the government tried to break the strike by bringing in non-



Darrell Roodt (producer), Emma Tollman (supporting actress), Mbongeni Ngema (director/lead actor), David Dison (executive producer) at a private screening at the Saxon Hotel.

Photo: Suzy Bernstein

striking workers to do those jobs.

“These scabs were brought in and four of them were murdered. Eight men were brought before a people’s court in the basement of Cosatu House and were convicted and sentenced for the murders of these scabs, some of them to death. We represented the eight accused of acting out the killing.

“The eight had been sentenced to death on 70 counts and Mbongeni, now fascinated by the human drama, started attending the trial and chronicling the whole saga.”



Eventually, Ngema wanted to meet with those convicted on death row. “I got him in as an ‘interpreter’. He even dressed for the part with the help of the wardrobe mistress at the Market Theatre. He arrived wearing a stringy bowtie and glasses. He was already famous by then, so the inmates recognised him immediately.

“They opened up to him and he kept in touch with them. They were part of the whole

amnesty in the early 1990s. Mbongeni’s play, *Township Fever*, was based on this. He’s always had an empathy for prison inmates.”

Dison is sure there’s a movie in there, too. “Most of his plays will work as movies. I’m particularly excited about the one on the late, great Patrick ‘Ace’ Ntsoelengoe, who played for Kaizer Chiefs and during the local off-season, played in Canada and the US.

“Mbongeni is now very much in independent filmmaker mode,” adds Dison. “And I think *Asinamali* – meaning ‘we have no money’ – is one of the finest films made in South Africa.”

But raising money and putting financial structures together is complicated.

“Although raising money and doing deals with TV networks is what I do, it’s not always easy – mainly because South Africa has such a fragmented audience. Only about six million people buy movie tickets, and then, only about five times a year. That makes about 20 million tickets sold in this country a year.

“That’s very low, considering the population. In Australia, for example, they sell 90 million tickets a year with half the population. Nevertheless, I have developed a passion for the independent film business here, which overrides the current obstacles.”

The audiences of this film will be accessed primarily by TV, says Dison, as the rights have been sold to M-Net. “They’ll flight the movie after a 2018 release. They’re expecting a big

SA author unable to collect literary award

>>Continued from page 10

Town at the same time, or is there something more sinister at play? As events unfold, Liz and her friend Tim Fletcher, suddenly find themselves fleeing for their lives.

While doing research for his novel, he came across a real-life project by the Institute of Noetic Sciences, which researches how beliefs, thoughts, and intentions affect the physical world. The project explores whether there is an invisible consciousness that connects all of humanity, and if there is, if we could we somehow measure it and use it to predict the future.

“At the core of the project is a black box that has been affected by major global events, including Princess Diana’s funeral and 9/11. As I waded deeper into my research, I knew that this subject matter had to be shared, and what better way to do it than amidst an exciting thriller, with intriguing characters in a Cape Town setting! I enjoy reading thrillers, so the book I was going to write was always going to be a thriller. I’m inspired by authors like Dan Brown, Frederick Forsyth and David Baldacci,” he said.

The Cape Town setting has been well-received by international readers. “People overseas who

once lived in South Africa tell me the book takes them down memory lane in terms of location and geography, while those who have never been to South Africa say that they definitely want to come and explore the country themselves. I always feel excited when I hear this, as one of my goals in setting the novel in Cape Town was to expose international readers to what I think is one of the most beautiful parts of the world,” said Frank.

This is not the first award he has won for the novel. It was also the Judges’ Choice Award at the Killer Nashville Silver Falchion Awards in the US, and a finalist in the Best Thriller and Best Fiction First Novel categories at the same awards.

“I’m aiming for my book to be as widely read as possible. Winning the award for popular fiction shows the potential for readers around the world to read my thriller, to discover Cape Town and South Africa and, at the same time, to learn about some of the fascinating factual themes embedded in the fiction,” said Frank. “Awards like these are vital for independent authors, and show that new authors can be a force to be reckoned with and can be placed on an equal footing with the more traditionally-established household names.”

audience. Mbongeni’s also got a name in the US, so we’re negotiating with US distribution companies as well. I’m also putting together the music deal at the moment.

“We’re hoping to do four music videos and we’ll start releasing this thing via the videos. Mbongeni is an excellent musician, a genius. He’s put together huge ensemble casts in the past. He’s cut 12 tracks, so this is going to be a combined film and musical.”

The film was well-received at the New York African Film Festival in Brooklyn last week. It will also be screened here, during the Nelson Mandela Children’s Film Festival on Youth Day, 16 June, at Killarney Mall.

Ngema’s works resonate with Dison, who has been involved with civil rights since his days as a student. “I was an activist at varsity and part of the SA Volunteer Services, going out to rural areas and helping to build clinics and schools.

“I come from a politically aware home. My father, a civil engineer, was immensely critical of the Nationalist government and I was schooled in looking after the impoverished.”

He was on the board of the then *Weekly Mail* liberal newspaper (now the *Mail & Guardian*) and defended a few anti-censorship cases. He defended those accused in the Delmas Treason Trial, which lasted from 1985 to 1988 and sought to convict 22 anti-apartheid activists. In 1992, Dison was nominated by the ANC to be a representative at the Convention for a Democratic SA and later co-wrote what would become the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act.

“We don’t see *Asinamali* as an apartheid film, we see it as a prison musical that’s easily relatable,” concludes Dison. “This is heritage stuff.”

Asinamali synopsis

Comrade Washington (Mbongeni Ngema), a black struggle activist, returns to South Africa. His mission: to work with convicts to create a musical play. They face the cruel wrath of the prison authorities as the play comes together, culminating in a performance for a stunned audience, comprising their oppressors. The inmates tell their stories, claim their history and dance back their identity.

The film features an all-South African cast performing a 60% Zulu-language script.

Still reeling from his stroke, he said: “I’m recovering and getting continuous rehab. It’s been tough, and recovery is slow, but I’ve got to take it day by day, go through the motions, and have faith that it will all work out in the end.”

Andrew Russman, a neurologist and the medical director of the Comprehensive Stroke Centre at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, said that up to 25% of strokes under the age of 45 are caused by a dissecting blood vessel in the neck. This is a small tear in a big blood vessel that causes a clot to form and travel to the brain. “Other stroke causes linked to a younger age include migraine, pregnancy, birth control pills, and smoking.”

Frank said having a stroke taught him that life is short. “I know that this is a cliché and people say it often, but this stroke has reinforced the fact that our time on this planet is limited. Life is there for us to embrace and enjoy. I’m going to be living more in the present wherever I can, and will be appreciating each and every day,” he said.

• The book is available as an ebook on Amazon Kindle and from the iStore. The paperback is available through Amazon UK, which delivers to South Africa.

Jewish Youth Day is about the revolutionary spirit

OPINION

Adina Roth



As we mark the anniversary of the June 16 Soweto youth uprising this weekend, it gives us pause to reflect on the ways in which youth in Jewish history have resisted authoritarianism and sparked revolutions.

It was a leftwing Zionist youth group, the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (ŻOB), that sparked the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

Zionist youth movements were central to the establishment of the State of Israel. We could go further back in Jewish history and suggest that Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai's establishment of a learning centre in Yavne when Jerusalem was under siege by the Romans was a moment of revolutionary importance. It paved the way for a new kind of Judaism after the Temple era. But when I think of revolutionaries, my mind goes all the way to Abraham.

The story goes that when Abraham came to believe in the idea of an invisible deity, he was still living with his family in his hometown where everyone worshipped idols.

As the story in the Midrash Bereishit Rabbah goes, Abram's (as he was then known) father was in the idol worship business, and left town one day, leaving young Abram in charge of the business. Because Abram had come to believe in the existence of a power beyond clay and mud, beyond the physical, he smashed his father's idols.

When his father came home, he was dismayed to find his stock in a mess. When he asked Abram what had happened, Abram told him that the idols had got into a fight and smashed each other. His father responded by saying that was impossible. Without skipping a beat, Abram responded, "Well then dad, why do you worship them?"

Some sources suggest Abram was 13 when this happened. I have often wondered why Abraham smashed his father's idols at 13? What might it convey to us about the significance of the age of 13, and the potential of youth?

One of the most ubiquitous ways in which Jewish people connect to tradition is by ensuring their sons have a barmitzvah at 13. There is a parallel Jewish coming of age at 12 for girls. The very word "barmitzvah", "son of the commandment" implies that the child is moving into an adult era of obedience to command, where the child is under command to observe mitzvot.

It conjures images of obedience, the child entering adulthood with a summons to obey tradition, to become a "good Jewish boy or girl".

However, if we think back to Abram, he did not behave like a good, obedient boy at 13. Perhaps to become a son or daughter of the mitzvah, the commandment means that we need to think differently about the imperative of this time.

I often challenge my students by asking them to look around the world and consider what idols adults and society attribute power to today. The children do not hesitate to answer. Phones, technology, money, looks, and popularity are some of the words that pop out of their mouths.

It makes me think that Jewish adolescence needs to be visualised a-la Abraham as a time where we empower our youth with the tools of depth and tradition. However, we are also empowering them with the challenge of becoming the world's revolutionaries.

Do we encourage our children to ask questions, to challenge authority, and to resist collective mindsets? How do we do this in a way that doesn't become destructive, but that builds on what is valuable while removing the fear of taking down what is stale, corrupt, or destructive?

The ritual of barmitzvah and batmitzvah,

if done correctly and deeply, gives each Jewish person an opportunity to have a profound Jewish Youth Day. Barmis and battis become a ritual to empower our youth to look at the society around us, and challenge the norms which no longer serve us.

But there's another secret to Jewish Youth Day: It doesn't need to be reserved for teens alone. Anyone who carries the revolutionary spirit of Abraham can feel inspired to re-imagine community, country, and the

world. They are all welcome to take steps to bring about real change.

Youth Day isn't just about the young, it's about the revolutionary spirit in all human beings, the courage and chutzpah to smash a culture's idols.

• Adina Roth is the National Chairperson of Limmud SA. Limmud will be held in Johannesburg from 3 to 5 August; in Durban on 9 August; and in Cape Town from 9 to 12 August.

Abram smashing his father's idols



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Dads with a difference

NICOLA MILTZ

This Sunday is Father's Day – a day that celebrates the contribution that fathers and father figures make to the lives of their children.

The SA Jewish Report spoke to three dads with a difference who are doing things in a unique way.



Daniel and Jose Ribeiro

Jose Ribeiro

When Daniel Ribeiro stood under the chuppah at his wedding in January this year, he wouldn't let go of his father's hand. It was the ultimate display of a son's love and respect. When he was six years old, his dad, Jose, was involved in a road accident that changed the family forever. On Lag B' Omer on 11 May 2001, Jose's car rolled after he was pushed off the road on the N1 Polokwane highway. He woke up to the news that he had broken his neck, and was a quadriplegic. His youngest child was only four months old.

In the blink of an eye, his wife Tracey had to deal with a baby, three other young children, and a husband battling for survival, confined to a wheelchair for life.

The past 17 years have been a journey of recovery, inner strength, and love, in which hope triumphed over fear. Their deep faith, together with the unwavering support of a community, enabled the Ribeiro family to reconstruct their life.

Jose insists the Ribeiros are "just your average, normal family". He goes to shul and work every day, and the family eats dinner together every night.

"We are more normal than 90% of the families out there," he said. "The only difference is that I'm in a wheelchair. Other than that, we are a very close, loving family which enjoys doing things together."

From the start of his recovery, he and his wife made it their "mission to carry on"; to make every effort to "maintain peace in the home" and to "always put the children first".

"It's not about us. It's about the children," he said, recalling earlier years when he was on hand to help with homework. "I may not have been able to pick them up, but I was

always around."

With the couple's shared faith and strong belief that "things happen for a reason", they were able to "make things work, no matter what".

"We put the chair in the car, and we just carried on. I accepted from the outset that this was part of a plan and that it was all for the good, because there can be no other explanation," he said.

Joel Harris

Father of two, Joel Harris, insists that the only normal thing in this world "is the setting on your washing machine".

A Johannesburg-based estate agent and life coach, Harris divorced his ex-wife Jody 14 years ago, but insists that she remains his "soul mate".

They continue to live on the same road, a block away from each other,

she with her fiancé, and he with his life partner Dr Gareth Lorge.

"We are best friends. I even offered to be her flower girl," he said jokingly.

Together they have a son, Jordan, 21, and a daughter Demi-Lee, 18, who they are both devoted to.

Harris, a hands-on dad from day one, has steadfastly "lived his truth" since divorcing his wife and coming out. "We told the children the truth from the beginning. There is no point in hiding something. It only causes problems down the line.

"Irrespective of the initial challenges, we placed peace and serenity first, and thankfully, our kids have turned out pretty ok, pretty stable," he said.

"I tell my kids they have three dads and a mom, and they are ok with that. I actually think they like Gareth better than me," he quipped.

Maintaining a presence in his children's lives and being honest with them have been parenting tools for as long as he can remember.

"I always tell my kids that if someone has something nasty to say, keep silent, and ask yourself: Are they worth responding to?"

"My advice is to give oxygen only to the ones that matter. Those who matter don't mind, and those who mind don't matter. This seems to have worked well."



Harris Family

Jordy Rosenberg

Stay-at-home dad, Jordy Rosenberg, is the go-to guy at school. His car boot is like Mary Poppins' magic carpet bag, containing everything from ointments for stings, plasters for scraped knees, and food for hungry tummies. Rosenberg is man enough to pull off a full-time dad position, the envy of many moms in the parking lot who often bemoan their less-than-perfect partners.

Rosenberg and his wife Wendy, an attorney, swapped traditional parenting roles when they became parents seven years ago, and they have never looked back.

For the sake of their two precious sons, Michael, 7 and Daniel, 2, the couple, who refer to themselves as "Team Rosenberg", took a joint parenting and financial decision. This meant that one of them would stay at home with the kids while the other one would go off to work. In this case, photographer dad chose domestic chaos over the rat race, while attorney Wendy went out and brought home the macon.

Rosenberg has taken the challenge to the next level. He heads up security at Sandton Sinai School, and is always the first to be added to class chats and the moms' WhatsApp groups.

"He is one of the moms," said one of the moms who wishes to remain

anonymous.

Wendy describes him as "a wonderful dad. He's an everything dad".

"He enables me to do the things I need to do, and he makes it possible for me to be more present for the kids when I am around because he is so good at what he does."

She maintains that even if more men stayed at home, many would refuse to do certain tasks which her husband does as a matter of course.

She recalls the time he packed her suitcase for her when she was running late to catch a flight.

"I could jet off while he kept things together at home," she said.

For Jordy, staying at home means managing everything from shopping to chauffeuring the kids around in the afternoons. He plans and prepares meals, runs errands, and most importantly looks after the couple's children.

"Wendy and I have both made sacrifices. I get to spend more time with the kids at the expense of my career as a photographer, and she gets to spend more time at work at the expense of spending more time with the kids."



Rosenberg Family

"It comes at a cost, but we make it work," they say.

There were some challenges in the beginning, Jordy says, like the typical gender stereotyping, sniggers, and judgemental stares, but he has found a home at Sandton Sinai where parents are broadminded and accepting.

He remembers the time when he was kicked out of a mom and baby group because some breastfeeding moms felt uncomfortable having a man around.

He loves the fact that he gets to be around for all those special moments like the first steps, or the first soccer goal. He is very aware that it is hard for his wife to miss these moments.

The advantage of being a stay-at-home dad, he says, are "If you are lucky enough, you get to have the support of a brilliant mom and wife to make your life easier."

Avoid Dad Deficit Disorder at all costs

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Father's Day is all about dads – appreciating fathers, and grandfathers. But aside from being that all-important person in the family who fixes things, makes braais, and "deals" with spiders – dads play a vital role in bringing up boys.

Much research has been done, particularly in Australia, that shows how important fathers – or positive male mentors – are in bringing up well-adjusted young men.

Mothers are usually paramount in the life of babies of both sexes up to the age of six. From the age of six to 14, boys "lock onto their dad, stepdad, or whatever male is around" to learn how to be male. This is according to Steven Biddulph, who wrote the seminal bestseller *Raising Boys*.

During this time, "the father's job is to progressively step up his involvement", Biddulph says. And if there is no father around, then other positive male mentors need to be found. Often male teachers, sports coaches or youth leaders fill this gap, although sadly, there are fewer and fewer men in the teaching profession.

This doesn't mean that mothers should step back, indeed moms are very important for inculcating the ability to be tender and affectionate in their sons, he says. Moms need to continue to hug them, whether they are five, 10 or 15 years old.

However, this is the window of time in which dads have the opportunity to have the most influence on their sons. They are the ones who build a healthy sense of masculinity in their sons – as well as respect for the women in their life.

"All children, and especially boys, need us fathers to demonstrate what healthy masculinity looks like,"

says Marc Loon, the Principal and founder of the Kairos School of Inquiry in Johannesburg. "Achieving maturity is an innate desire in a child, and the physical journey of becoming an adult does not guarantee the psychological journey from immaturity to maturity. Children need mature adults to make [this journey]."

"Even with all our human weaknesses, even as we unintentionally wound them with our flaws, even as we journey along our ever-incomplete journey towards mature masculinity ourselves, we are necessary and vital mentors to our children," he says. "When we model what it means to be a learning human being, holding ourselves accountable when we make mistakes, while simultaneously offering firm boundaries and a consistently loving presence, then, it seems to me, we are fulfilling the role of a healthy father."

"Little things count," Biddulph says. "Playing in the backyard on summer evenings; going for walks and yarning about life and telling him about your own

childhood. Also, working on hobbies or sports together for the enjoyment of doing it. This is when good memories are laid down that will nourish your son for decades to come."

Biddulph has coined the term "DDD" – as opposed to ADD – which stands for "Dad Deficiency Disorder". He talks about cases of boys with absent fathers who developed the symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder or even more serious illnesses. These issues mysteriously seem to clear up when fathers returned from eight months of trucking on the road, or endless medical conferences.

"Enjoy this time when he really is wanting to be with you. By mid-adolescence, his interests will pull him more and more into a wider world beyond. All I can do here is plead with you – don't leave it too late!" Biddulph says.

AUTHOR STEVEN BIDDULPH GIVES SIX TIPS ON HOW TO BE A SUPERB FATHER OF BOTH SEXES:

- Start early by getting involved in caring for the baby. If the mother needs to be away for the weekend, you need to be able to manage without her. Caring for your children helps you to become more in tune with them from birth.
- Make time to hang out with your children. Biddulph doesn't mince his words when he says: "If you routinely work a 55- or 60-hour week, including travel times, you just won't cut it as a dad. Your sons will have problems in life, and it will be down to you."
- Be physically demonstrative by hugging, holding, tickling, wrestling, or just sitting together telling stories, singing, or playing music.
- Tell your kids – often – how great, beautiful and intelligent they are. It's about programming them to be great.
- Enjoy being with your kids by choosing activities you both enjoy. Don't spend time with your children out of a sense of guilt or obligation.
- Lastly, develop ways of disciplining your kids that are calm, but firm. Avoid violence at all costs, but get involved in discipline and decision-making – don't just be a good time dad. Parenting is a team sport.

Standing on broad shoulders

PETA KROST MAUNDER

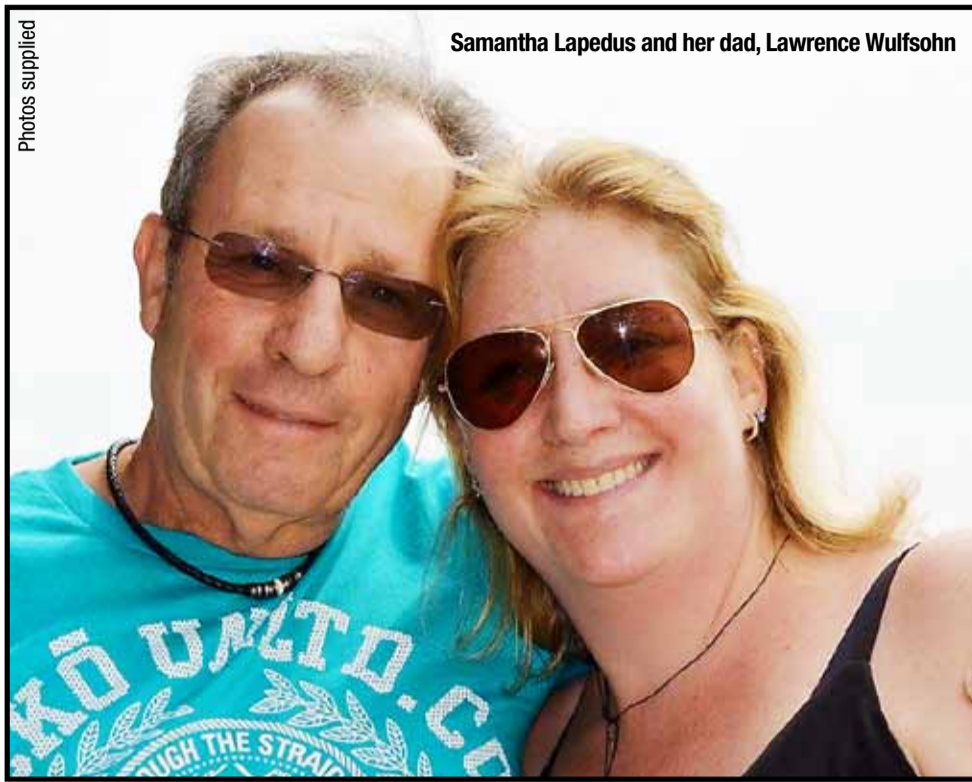
“She married a man just like her father.” How often have you heard people say that? The truth is, the relationship between father and daughter is unique, and a dad is usually the first male object of a girl’s love. It shapes her conscious and unconscious perception of what is acceptable in a life partner, and in men in general, according to Jennifer Kromberg, a clinical psychologist.

Our fathers have an impact on our lives, and often it is only as adults that we realised how this plays out. The SA Jewish Report asked women on Joburg Jewish Mommies Facebook group to tell us what they had learnt from their dads as a Father’s Day tribute.

Avila Egdes learnt how a man should treat women by the way her father treated her mother. “My father, Richard Altschuler, is 88 years old and he loved, respected, admired and appreciated my mother,” she says.

“He treated her with absolute respect and dignity. As a child we grew up knowing, understanding and appreciating that my mother was the rock and roots of our family. I am so grateful to have lived that lesson,” says Avila, a mother of four children.

Linda Lipschitz says: “My dad



Samantha Lapedus and her dad, Lawrence Wulfsohn

builder of everything – from jewellery to bathtubs, lampshades to suspenders”.

She says: “He taught me to trust my creative instincts, and not be afraid of what people thought or said, and to create things myself from scratch.

“He also had very good taste, and taught me that in most cases, ‘less is definitely more’.”

Samantha Lapedus says she learnt never to let life’s troubles stop her. “No matter how many times life knocks my dad down, he always gets up with a smile on his face and positivity.

“When I was 17 and starting clubbing, every time I would go out, my dad would

say ‘have fun, be safe, and whatever do you do, make sure you will be able to tell me and mom tomorrow’. That has stuck with me throughout my life and even now, especially being a mom myself, it resonates

with me constantly,” she says

Timor Lifschitz’s dad taught her that it was just fine to be a child at heart. “I found his greatest life lessons to me to be that you never have to take life too seriously, that the simple things in life give the greatest joy, and money doesn’t buy happiness. He also taught me to invest time in nurturing myself and my interests, and that laughter is the best medicine.”

Dana Nathan says: “My dad, Aubrey Josset, made me cognisant of the fact that we have the ability, with just a small act

of kindness and awareness of the needs of others, to make a huge difference to a person’s life.”

While it saddens her that he never had the chance to meet her two daughters – because he died shortly after her wedding – she says she is doing her best to pass on his legacy to them.

For Shirley Cohen, Father’s Day is a bitter-sweet affair. “Instead of celebrating a father figure in my life, it’s rather about an acknowledgement of what I have learnt from his absence in my life.” Her mother played the role of both parents as she was a single parent in a single-income household.

“In my father’s absence, I learnt to be resilient. I learnt the need to fight for what I believe is right and just in the world, and to take the moral high ground wherever possible. I learnt to protect the weak and stand strong in the face of adversity. My inner strength has given me the ability to survive the rollercoaster of life. I had no father to lean on in the tough times and as a result, I have emerged stronger and more tenacious.

“A mother of two beautiful girls, I intend to pass down that tenacity, self-belief and strength. No-one else’s opinion of me counts more than my own. I am enough.”

My own father taught me that cowboys do cry. His power and strength were not weakened by the fact that he could shed a tear in an emotional moment. That was just one of the many powerful lessons I learnt from the very first man in my life, my dad.

And on that note, I wish you all a happy Father’s Day for Sunday! And if you can’t be with your own father, take time to remember all that you learnt from him.

Dana Nathan and her dad, Aubrey Josset



taught us to wait for the first car to stop at the robot before moving on. This has saved me.”

Julie Leibowitz says her architect father was a fearless creator and “designer and

Human kindness helps to kill the suicide epidemic



OPINION

Alex Wolman

I am driven to do something about the rising number of suicides.

Think of all the celebrities you know who have taken their own lives. Immediately, I think of Robin Williams. I wonder how someone so adored felt so alone? Where have we gone wrong?

Suicide and mental health have been in the news a lot recently. Think of international fashion designer Kate Spade, and now celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain.

It saddens me that it takes the death of a star to bring the issue to light. People who hear the news and say “that’s terrible” or “it really is becoming a big problem” cannot even begin to comprehend how bad it is.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), close to 1 million

people are lost to suicide every year. That means that somewhere on this earth, every 40 seconds, someone is deciding to take his or her own life. Many more attempt it. There are indications that for each adult who died of suicide, more than 20 others may have attempted to kill themselves.

By 2020, the WHO estimates there will be one suicide every 20 seconds. How can we live in a world where this has become the norm? How can people just accept these statistics and carry on?

There is social stigma attached to mental illness This is alarming, as indicated by the statistics.

It’s okay not to be okay. The sooner we realise this, the sooner we can start to fix the problem. It’s okay to delay or rush something, to make an impulsive or a premeditated decision, to do what’s right for one’s self.

Very often, we live the lives we believe are expected of us, rather than how we want to live them. It is time for people to live for themselves while helping others,

Continued on page 18>>

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The Jewish angle to the World Cup is oblique, but it's there

EMILY BURACK

Although soccer's popularity seems to be on the rise in the US, this year's edition of the World Cup might be somewhat of a downer for American Jews who enjoy watching the sport. The US men's team failed to qualify for the quadrennial tournament for the first time since 1986, and there are practically no Jews involved in the games this time around.

Still, there are plenty of Jewish storylines surrounding the international event, which is being held in Russia, and began this week.

The announcer who made "¡GOOOOOOAL!" famous is Jewish.

While Andrés Cantor, an Argentine Jew who grew up in America, didn't invent the ridiculously long call for a score, he certainly popularised it. The call is oddly reminiscent of a long blow on the shofar. This World Cup will be Cantor's ninth as a commentator, and he will serve as lead announcer for the Spanish-speaking Telemundo network. Cantor's Romanian



Former Argentina soccer player Juan Pablo Sorín

and Polish grandparents fled Europe during World War II. At this World Cup, Cantor will be joined by his 24-year-old son Nico, also a sportscaster and sports journalist. Nico told *The Washington Post* last week: "I try to find my own voice."

Israel didn't qualify, but you can still root for two Israel-based players.

Like the last World Cup, and every World



The 2018 World Cup logo in front of Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow

Cup besides the one in 1970 for that matter, Israel did not qualify this year. At the 1970 competition in Mexico, Israel qualified as an Asian team, but shortly after that, it was expelled from the Asian Football Confederation due to political pressure from its Arab neighbours. Since

then, Israel has had to compete and qualify in the European division – a much harder task. So while there are no Israeli players in the World Cup, two footballers who play for clubs in Israel will be competing.

John Ogu, a midfielder for Hapoel Be'er Sheva, is on the Nigerian team, and Predrag Rajkovic, a goalkeeper for Maccabi Tel Aviv, plays for Serbia. So, maybe rooting for Nigeria or Serbia could feel a little bit like cheering for Israel.

Colombia has a Jewish coach.

Jose Pékerman is the 68-year-old Argentine coach of the Colombian team, which has improved its quality of play dramatically over the past decade. The grandson of Ukrainian immigrants, Pékerman started his soccer career as a kid at the local Maccabi Jewish youth club in Entre Rios, a province north of Buenos Aires. At one point, he lived in Villa Crespo, a Jewish

neighborhood of Buenos Aires. He played professional soccer for seven years, but his career as a coach has been much more notable.

From 2004 to 2006, he guided the Argentina squad, a perennial powerhouse. (He was the coach who called up a young Lionel Messi to his first World Cup.) Pékerman resigned following Argentina's loss in the 2006 World Cup quarterfinals, but six years later, he was tapped to lead the Colombians. Before the 2014 World Cup, Colombia had not qualified for the tournament since 1998, but reached the quarterfinals under its new coach. Pékerman, who received Colombian citizenship after the team qualified in 2014, said helping Colombia return to the World Cup was "one of the greatest joys in [his] life".

A famous Jewish player-turned-commentator will be on the Telemundo team.

Juan Pablo Sorín, now 42, was a famous player for Argentina who captained his country's World Cup team in 2006, when Pékerman was head coach. He played for some of Europe's best club teams, including Barcelona, Juventus, Paris Saint-Germain, and Villarreal, before retiring in 2009. He started working as a pundit in 2012, and will contribute commentary for Telemundo this year.

Jerusalem's Jaffa Gate will be turned into a soccer goal during the semifinals.

A nonprofit called Kulna Yerushalayim will host a shootout at the Jaffa Gate, one of the seven entrances to the Old City of Jerusalem, where young Jewish and Arab residents of Jerusalem will try to score. The organiser, Dror Amedi, hopes that a prominent goalie (Gianluigi Buffon, Oliver Kahn, Fabien Barthez, Iker Casillas, or Peter Schmeichel) will participate in the



Photo: Elsa/Getty Images

event. Amedi explained to *The Times of Israel*, "Our goal is to take an event that unites the world and has become a symbol of fraternity between nations, the Soccer World Cup, and use it to create bonds between Jewish and Arab youth in Israel." During the shootout, the World Cup will be broadcast on the walls of the Old City

There's an app for Jewish tourists visiting Russia.

The app, called "Soccer-hay" includes a guide to synagogues, local rabbis, and where to find kosher food. It is available for iOS and Android. Additionally, according to Chabad.org, the Jewish Community Center of Moscow will host a multilingual information desk available daily. It's hard to estimate how many Jewish tourists will attend the tournament,



John Ogu

but the International Sports Travel Agencies Association estimates that 10 000 Israelis will make the trip.

Could Israel show the World Cup on TV for free in the Arab world?

Israel's Foreign Ministry announced in March that the country's national broadcaster plans to show the tournament in Arabic to its neighbours for free. The move would help fans in countries such as Egypt, which qualified for the World



Andrés Cantor

Cup but did not purchase rights to air the games. Qatar's monopoly over the tournament's Arabic-language rights has made watching the tournament in Arabic

expensive for fans.

However, FIFA, the international soccer body, shot down Israel's idea, according to a statement reported by *The Jerusalem Post*. "The Israel Broadcasting Corporation... is not authorised to broadcast any 2018 FIFA World Cup content (including any match coverage) outside of Israel. [Qatar's] beINSPORT is the exclusive media rights licensee for the Middle East and Northern Africa region," the statement read. Israel has not commented. (JTA)

Letters

HEROIC PROTESTORS MAKE A BRAVE STAND

The *SA Jewish Report* attacks anti-Israel protestors instead of addressing the issues they highlight. Its accusations are callous and arrogant, and mirror the Israeli world view that motivates protestors to make a stand in the first place.

One does not need to be an expert on Palestinian history to know that snipers using hi-tech weapons and shooting to kill unarmed protestors on the wrong side of the fence is inhumane. Shame on Daniel Silke for saying that those deaths and the circumstances that drove people to face the bullets – and pull the trigger – is just "the flavour of the month".

A reporter attacks the protestors' "childish paintings" while not questioning the inane photographs on display at the exhibition. Not a single photograph addressed the Israeli Palestinian war, nor the counterpoint of wealth disparity in South Africa. No one thought to highlight the real issues that bind SA, Israel and Palestine. What about land reclamation and the right of return? The exhibition was a white wash; the truth carefully curated out of existence.

One of Israel's most powerful weapons is its ability to demonise and vilify all opposition. If you are not in the embassy exhibition, you are with Hezbollah, who happened to be outside the locked doors.

Protestors are not mindless sheep looking for affirmation from friends. For every friend made, we make an enemy too; the issue has become that binary. We are intelligent individuals whose hearts are broken by the suffering of the Palestinians. We can't bear to watch Israel celebrate its privilege while the Palestinians live under oppressive occupation. We believe the Palestinian destiny is tied to our own. We want to send a clear message to Israel that its policy is opposed.

We do not have to offer solutions to the crisis other than to say that tyranny is unacceptable, and that the onus lies with Israel to pave the way to peace. It is, after all, the one with the power in the region.

I think Kelly-Jean, July and Tiego are heroes for overcoming their fear and putting words into action. They were victorious. – Ben Robert Horowitz, Johannesburg

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Finding the positive in an apparently horrible situation

Hear me out. Part of me feels that the anti-Israel vitriol this week might turn out to be positive. This is not because I am trying to find some liquid in a parched and empty glass, but because if hating Israel is a popular cause for every political party in South Africa, then it will probably not be used as a mechanism to lure voters to the polls next year.

What began as a very successful gathering of the SA Friends of Israel on Sunday at the Johannesburg City Hall has descended into a vile, mud-slinging, hyperbole-filled hate festival for the major South African political parties.

The EFF, no friend to Israel, or Jews or Whites (who they have kindly agreed not to murder this week) launched into what can be described as Nazi-inspired propaganda. The party's statement proposed that Israel contributes "nothing to humanity", which

essentially means that it has no reason to exist. What the EFF has contributed to humanity might be a question in of itself, but hardly the point of this thought process.

The ANC, not wanting to be outdone, outdid itself with its usual rhetoric. This is known to be the modus operandi of a corrupt and useless political party that has failed hopelessly to meet the needs of the people it was elected to serve. It diverts attention as far from its backyard as possible, hoping that no one will notice a tragedy of its own making. Its legacy is a broken health system, poor education, a struggling economy, high unemployment, and almost no service delivery. What began as a magnificent, inspiring struggle movement has become a movement that is struggling. With little hope of recovery.

The DA, while affirming its belief in a two-state solution, reacted by punishing the MCC because she, apparently, had no right to

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



speak for the City of Johannesburg. This is of course absolutely correct, but in all likelihood dishonest. There is no doubt that had she stated that Johannesburg was a friend of Angola, Zimbabwe, Syria or Iran, no one would have cared. Certainly, she would not have been suspended.

Here's the thing. It is well known that the EFF has not had an authentic day in its life. It is all about creating as much noise as possible, and sowing the seeds of fear and hatred amongst South Africans. Its goal is power, not social justice, which means that it seeks popular causes to milk and nurture until it no longer gives them the mileage.

The ANC, although captured by the BDS, is much the same, and with elections approaching, will need to answer the issues and concerns of its people. No amount of concern for Palestine will put food on the table of starving South Africans. It knows that.

And now, the DA has joined in. Whereas I still believe in the ultimate good of this party, there is little doubting its leadership crises. Suspending the MCC was the path of least resistance, which makes sense. It could not afford to open up another front. It would sink it.

The bottom line is that if all the major parties have more or less the same stance on Israel, the focus will need to shift elsewhere. The Israel issue will no longer differentiate them, and they will need to find another thrilling way to gain as much attention as possible.

That can't be a bad thing.

Fiddling with strangers: why do we think we can?

Do you remember a time in this country when people thought it was witty to call a man who seemed effeminate the derogatory term "moffie"? Such pejorative language made homosexual people frightened to be themselves.

That word is mostly gone now, but societies still struggle to catch up with the increasing recognition of different kinds of sexuality which were once hidden.

Other forms of abuse still exist. Incredibly, "corrective" rape of lesbians is still perpetrated in South African townships. It has been highlighted by black lesbian Zanele Muholi, a self-described visual activist working in photography, portraying black lesbian, gay, transgender, and intersex people – the LGBTI community. She is a professor at University of the Arts Bremen in Germany. In a story in the *Guardian* last year, she called her work "a space for people to be visible, respected and recognised".

Her message: Despite having the most progressive Constitution and equality laws, South Africans are far from accepting the prohibition on discrimination based on sexual orientation – in other words, accepting different forms of sexuality. The LGBTI population fears attacks, murders and "corrective" rapes.

Women photographed by Muholi have died after "corrective" rape. A recent play by Phyllis Klotz, the founder of Sibikwa Dance and Theatre Company, called *Chapter 2 Section 9*, reinforces this point. It portrays true stories of black women, broken for being lesbians.

Elsewhere in the world, the picture is different. Last Friday, a festive gay pride parade took place in Tel Aviv, with as many as 250 000 people, for which the city closed major roads.

Religious figures who don't accept gay legitimacy recoil at this, such as leaders of Orthodox Judaism. They say homosexuality is a "choice", not inherently part of a person's identity. They believe that through therapy, people can – and should – be persuaded to choose otherwise.

Are people in the parade transgressing G-d's will? Some say

TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin



no. Others say yes, large numbers don't prove a point.

For rabbis who reject homosexuality, it's a dilemma when a gay member of a congregation wants to hold a formal position in a shul, or to study to be a rabbi.

Or, when a gay Jewish man wants to marry another man, which is legal in 26 countries including South Africa, Australia, Canada and the United States, and wants the rabbi to perform the ceremony.

Is one's LGBTI status a religious or human-rights issue? America's ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, said he was "proud" of the Tel Aviv parade, tweeting: "...Promoting, protecting, and advancing human rights – including the rights of LGBTI persons – has long been the policy of the United States."

Some gay rights activists confront the establishment. Steven Cohen – one of South Africa's most flamboyant performance artists – grew up during apartheid, served in the army, and now lives in Paris. In the past, he courageously attended a rugby game at Pretoria's Loftus Versfeld stadium dressed as a character he devised called Ugly Girl. In feathers and other provocative regalia, Cohen mingled with the ultra-conservative crowd, who called him derogatory names and threatened him.

Why is somebody else's sex life everybody's business? Some people ask why the LGBTI community makes such a parade of it. Why not just be who you are, without a big show? Part of the answer is that "coming out" is difficult. A mass parade gives support.

Pressure on the LGBTI community takes different forms. It may be practical and violent such as "corrective" rape. Or subtle, by shunning and shaming. Outwardly, a world of difference lies between Zanele Muholi's artworks and Tel Aviv's parade. But the message is similar – there are myriad legitimate ways to be human.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Vilification of supporters of Israel threatens SA democracy

Amidst all the negativity, it is uplifting to be reminded how much heartfelt support there is for the Jewish state beyond the confines of our own community. On Sunday, a rousing gathering of more than 700 Christian leaders took place at the Johannesburg City Hall under the auspices of the SA Friends of Israel.

SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) National Director Wendy Kahn, who attended the event, said it was heart-warming to be surrounded by fellow South Africans of all backgrounds who share our community's commitment to and connection with Israel, and who are willing to stand up and declare it with pride.

Regrettably, the event has since become mired in controversy over the utterances of Dr Mpho Phalatse, the city's Mayoral Committee Member for Health. As a result of what Dr Phalatse is alleged to have said at the gathering, Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba on Tuesday suspended her pending an investigation into whether her comments were in line with party policy. For her own part, Dr Phalatse stressed that her comments were made in her personal capacity, and should not be seen as representing the policy of her party.

While the SAJBD agrees that the politics of the Middle East should be kept out of our own politics, we deplore the tactics of anti-Israel agitators who seek to punish, silence, and sideline anyone who presumes to challenge their grossly one-sided narrative.

In a media statement issued earlier this week, we criticised these intimidatory, bully-boy tactics. They are creating an environment in which Israel is "being demonised to a degree that bears no relationship to



Above Board
Shaun Zagnoev

reality" the board said, the aim being to ensure that only one opinion on the subject will be allowed. Dr Phalatse is just the latest target of this totalitarian strategy. Anti-Israel bigotry does not merely threaten the rights of the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of South Africans who are passionate supporters of Israel, it poses a serious threat to democracy in our country.

Keeping in touch with the community

So fast and so drastically is the communications revolution changing the way people interact with one another, it is difficult for organisations like the SAJBD to keep up.

We now rely primarily on electronic communications to keep the community informed. Useful though these platforms are, they should not be allowed to replace traditional, face-to-face interactions. In recognition of this, board members are going out to engage proactively with specific groups (most recently, the Pretoria Jewish community and congregations in Illovo and Sydenham) on issues of concern to South African Jewry, and what the Board is doing about them.

In coming months, we hope to engage with as wide a range of constituencies within our community as we can. It is relatively simple to arrange for a board representative to report-back at an upcoming event, whether it is a communal brocha, AGM, or similar gathering. In this regard, I invite all of our organisations to contact us at rosy@sajbd.org or on 011 645 2521.

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

Human kindness helps to kill the suicide epidemic

>> Continued from page 15

and to stop being concerned with societal pressures.

It's also time people become more accepting of one another. Treat others better than they treat you, not as a testament to their character, but to yours. It is equally important to help others. People feel alone, scared, and sad at times, plain and simple. Happiness is certainly not a constant.

I know all too well that this is easier said than done.

Be the light in someone's rainbow (as cliched as that may sound). Leave your phone on always. You never know, you could be the difference between life and death.

Telling people suffering from depression that they are not alone is no longer good enough. Know that I, Alex Wolman, am here for you if you need me. Anytime, any day.

Anthony Bourdain

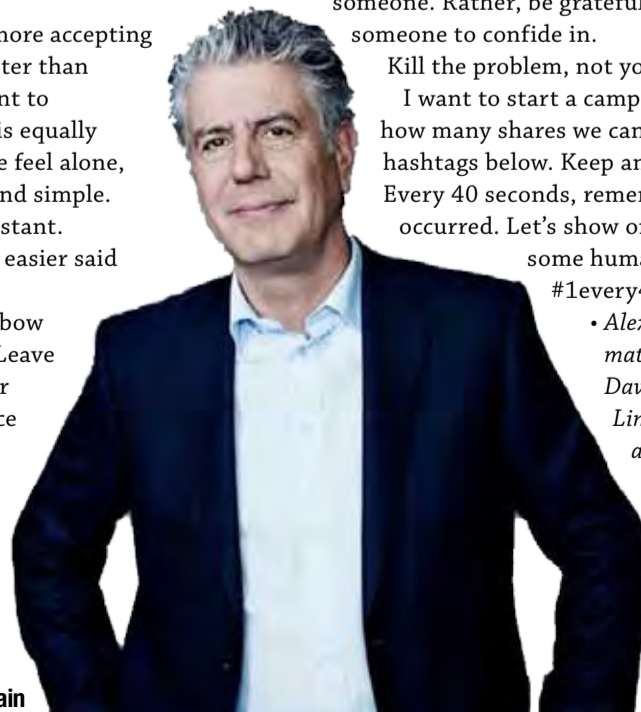
Don't ever be ashamed or afraid to confide in someone. Rather, be grateful that you have someone to confide in.

Kill the problem, not yourself.

I want to start a campaign. Let's see how many shares we can get with the hashtags below. Keep an eye on a watch. Every 40 seconds, remember what has occurred. Let's show one another some human kindness.

#1every40#Imhere

• Alex Wolman matriculated at King David High School Linksfield in 2014, and became a pilot. He is the oldest of two boys, and lives with his parents and brother, David.



Spare the screens, save the child

To prepare our children for the future and help them to be valuable members of society, we need to equip them with the social and emotional skills that a computer cannot provide, says Rabbi Ricky Seeff, the Principal of King David Victory Park Primary School.

Rabbi Seeff was responding to a talk at the school last week by Dr Lizzie Harrison, titled "Living in a Digital World". Harrison highlighted the impact that screen time and content exposure is having on children and offered parents advice on the best way to achieve balance in their children's lives.

"The world will need emotionally intelligent, socially capable, and empathetic human beings to be the leaders of the future, and to produce such people requires a concerted effort not to let screens take over their lives," Seeff says.

Harrison, a qualified medical doctor with a degree in Neuroscience and Psychology, has travelled all over South Africa educating children, parents, and teachers on the dangers facing children today, particularly in regard to social media, technology use, bullying, and inappropriate sexual activity.

Excessive screen time has a number of detrimental consequences for our children, she said, including poor sleep patterns, aggressive behaviour, poor concentration, and poor social skills.

She shared a number of resources

that could be valuable in helping to navigate this scary, uncharted world. The first, www.commonsemmedia.org, is a website that can help parents understand the media their children are consuming and whether it is appropriate. The second, the website of the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.healthychildren.org/english/tips-tools/newsletters/pages/default.aspx, has a multitude of helpful articles on creating a balanced lifestyle at home.

"This generation needs parents to engage wholeheartedly with the challenges the online world poses for their children," Seeff says. "The risks are too great – to emotional and physical well-being. As parents, we no longer have the luxury of naivety."

A marathon achievement



Rabbi Craig Kacev, the General Director of the South African Board of Jewish Education, not only runs King David Schools, he also runs the Comrades Marathon, as this picture shows of him holding the Israeli flag as he is about to cross the finish line of this epic contest.

Message on a flag finds way to Israel's shores



King David High School Victory Park students write messages on flags for the 100th anniversary of Israel

Pupils at King David High School Victory Park this week inscribed messages of hope and inspiration to global Jewry on Israeli flags as part of the *Olim Ladegel* project. The flags have been sent to Israel to join thousands of other flags signed by the younger generation in Israel and around the world.

Two hundred of the flags will be presented at the Ammunition Hill Museum in Jerusalem on Yom Ha'atzmaut this year. They will remain there for few months and thereafter be returned to the archives with the rest of the flags. The flags are to be kept in a "time capsule" to be revealed in 30 years' time, in 2048, for Israel's 100-year anniversary.

Sunday (17 June)

- Second Innings hosts Zara Abelson on "Miracles and Motivation". Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting starts at 10:30. Venue: Arcadia. Entrance opposite Glenwood Lodge in Long Avenue. Cost: R20 for members, R40 for visitors. Includes tea and light refreshments. Contact: Linda Fleishman 011 532 9701.

Monday (18 June)

- The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) hosts guest speaker Erin Mosely on "Dealing with Difficult Past: Truth, Justice & Reconciliation in South Africa and Rwanda". Time: 15:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. Free admission, donations welcome. RSVP dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100.
- The Union of Jewish Women (UJW) hosts Charisse Zeifert, Head of Communications at the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and a presenter on Chai FM, on "Jews in the Media". Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW Office 011 648 1054.

Tuesday (19 June)

- The JHGC hosts guest speaker Erin Mosely on "Custodians of the Dead: The Survivor and Archivist in Post-Genocide Rwanda". Time: 19:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. RSVP to dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100. Free admission, donations welcome.
- The UJW presents an evening on financial insights with experts in the field, titled, "What haven't you thought of in your financial plan?" Time: 19:15. Venue: HOD. Donation: R100.

Contact: UJW Office
011 648 1054.

- The Women's International Zionist Organisation of South Africa (WIZO) Forum presents "First Responders ... From the Men on the Ground".

Bruce Hepburn, a member of the official South African disaster response team, will highlight his rescue missions to Haiti and Japan. He will be joined by Mark Hyman, the Chairman Magen David Adom, on "How Israel Responds to Worldwide Disasters". Time: 09:30 for 10:00. Venue: Beyachad, 2 Elray St, Raedene; Donation: R70 (includes tea and refreshments). Call Jenny: 011 645 2515 / wizojhb@beyachad.co.za.

Wednesday (20 June)

- Jewish Learning Institute with Rabbi Ari Kievman. "Kabbalah of Self; Discover What We're Made Of." Two options available: 09:45 at Chabad House, 27 Aintree Ave, Savoy or 19:15 at Sandton Central Shul, 8 Stella St (opposite the Gautrain). More information, www.jli.org.za or 011 440 6600.

Thursday (21 June)

- The next meeting of Hebrew speakers is from 10:30 to 12:00 at the Beyachad building, second floor.
- Join WIZO every Thursday for a "Lunch & Learn" Shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz. 13:00 at Beyachad. For more information, contact WIZO Office: 011 645 2515.



Business as usual on 85th birthday

A special birthday was held at Yad Aharon & Michael last week for Ivy Grushkin, who celebrated her 85th birthday in her usual manner: packing fruit and vegetables at Yaddies.

Ivy has volunteered at the Jewish Food Fund on a weekly basis for the past 15 years. Her daughter, Glenda Edelson, came from the US to celebrate this special milestone with her. Mazeltov!



Glenda Edelson and Ivy Grushkin

Mitzvahs at the mall

Nothing stops Yakov Rabin, a Grade 7 pupil at Torah Academy, from helping fellow Jews put on Tefillin. Each erev Shabbos, a group from Torah Academy Boys' High School visits a local mall for *mitzvoim*, a campaign to encourage and assist shoppers to perform extra mitzvot.



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Still more to come from SA's trainer of the year

JACK MILNER

Colin Nathan has devoted almost all his life to boxing. "I got my first set of boxing gloves when I was three," he says. Now, his hard work has started to pay off.

He was named Trainer of The Year for 2017 by Boxing South Africa. He has also been nominated to sit on the World Boxing Council Training Committee, the only person in Africa to do so.

This year could be even better. In May, Nathan travelled to Japan with Hekkie Budler on what most pundits considered to be a mission impossible, to wrestle the World Boxing Association, International Boxing Federation (IBF) and *Ring Magazine* junior-flyweight titles away from Japanese boxer Ryoichi Taguchi. "Taguchi had been unbeaten in five years," said Nathan, "and he had unified those three titles."

"We arrived as the challenger, and we knew if Hekkie won, he would be the undisputed world champion in that division. He is the first South African to become a linear (undisputed) champion."

The fight, on 20 May, turned into an absolute bruiser and in the end, all three judges – one each from Japan, the US and South Africa – gave the decision to the South African 114-113.

There was an in-joke among the guys as Budler left South Africa as a

29-year-old and returned as a 30-year-old – older and wiser – as he celebrated his birthday in Japan.

But, there were no celebratory meals. In fact, he almost had to starve himself to get his weight down to the 48.99kg limit.

For many boxing pundits, Budler's victory surpasses those of greats like Brian Mitchell, Dinga Thobela, Sugarboy Malinga, and even Corrie Sanders, because no other South African boxer has held two major titles simultaneously.

Despite the fight taking place in Japan, Nathan said the crowd was extremely fair. "There was no booing, and most people clapped when the result was announced."

Regarding Budler's future, Nathan says they are exploring their options. "We will probably have to go back to Japan as they have another fighter who might challenge," he says.

Next month, Nathan will go through it all again as he will travel to Malaysia with Moruti Mthlale, who will meet Muhammad Waseem. The 15 July bout, for the vacant IBF flyweight title, is on the undercard of the show headlined by Manny Pacquiao against Lucas Matthisse in Kuala Lumpur.

Mthlale, who has a record of 35 wins, 24 by knockout, with two



Colin Nathan carries undisputed junior-flyweight world champion Hekkie Budler on his shoulders in Japan

losses, was working out in Nathan's Hot Box Gym in Glenhazel while Nathan spoke to the *SA Jewish Report*. Mthlale was in top condition despite being 36 years old, which is really old for a fighter. "He doesn't look 36 years old, and he certainly doesn't fight like a 36-year-old," said Nathan. "He hasn't lost a fight for 10 years."

"He was IBF and IBO world champion in his division, but he had to vacate the titles because of politics."

It is no accident that Nathan

became passionately involved in boxing. After all, he is the third generation of his family involved in the sport. "My grandfather started it all. He owned a gym in central Johannesburg. When we lived in Cape Town, I used to see my father coming back from boxing tournaments at the Good Hope Centre. He was also corner man."

"That's when I started to nag him to go with him. He kept telling me I was too young, but after continual nagging, he finally conceded when I was seven years old."

"I bought my first boxing magazine when I was nine years old. It was in 1987."

By the age of 12, Nathan was already a legally licensed corner man. "I was the youngest person ever to hold that licence. Of course, that was before the days they introduced a minimum age of 18. I was granted the licence by the late Marcus Temple, who was head of the Western Cape Board of Control."

Although he was a national judo champion, Nathan has never fought competitively in a boxing ring. He admits, however, it is something he would have loved to have done.

Two days after his 20th birthday, Nathan packed a tog bag and came up to Johannesburg. He got a job as a continuity announcer on SABC1 and

became a boxing commentator.

Two years after arriving in Johannesburg, he opened the Hot Box Gym. "After five years, I moved to where I am now, but it has always been in Glenhazel."

Looking at other prospects, Nathan says he has a very talented woman boxer working out of his gym. "She is a former amateur champion, and will be my first female champion. Women's boxing has been going through a stagnant phase, but it's picking up and is doing well in Europe."

When Laila Ali, the daughter of boxing legend Muhammed Ali, came to fight in South Africa, she trained in his gym, so he has witnessed the level required to generate a woman champion.

Nathan is also bullish about the growth of professional boxers from other countries in Africa. "We have great talent in Africa, but it has been neglected for years. However, television networks are starting to push the sport, and I'm confident that with the extra promotion, we will see some champions coming out of Africa."

While there are a number of Jews involved in boxing promotion, there are no other Jewish trainers of Nathan's level in South Africa. "I'm unaware of any leading Jewish trainers anywhere else in the world either," said Nathan, making him unique in the sport.

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