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The ruthless killing of a man who loved Israel passionately

NICOLA MILTZ

The Chairman of Likud SA, Sergio Kowensky, was shot dead in broad daylight outside his factory in Benrose, Johannesburg, this week. As news of his tragic death rippled through the community, people wondered why he was killed and who killed him. How was it possible that a man, loved by so many, could meet a fate so brutal? The initial fears were that this could have been the work of anti-Israel fanatics, given that Kowensky spent his entire life dedicated to Zionist ideals, with an intense passion for the well-being of the State of Israel. He was an outspoken supporter of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party, and was not afraid to speak his mind on matters related to Israel. He represented Likud on the South African Zionist Federation management committee. Could his right-wing Zionism have led to his untimely demise?

Others put it down to just another senseless act of urban violence on the crime-ridden streets of Johannesburg. In the days following his passing, the SA *Jewish Report* attempted to piece together the puzzle. As far as the police investigation is concerned, it is still very early days. However, shortly after midday on Tuesday, 2 July, Kowensky arrived at his workplace, Serpini Air Conditioning at 103 Main Reef Road, Benrose. Before he had time to realise that his life was in danger, he had been shot several times, and left for dead on the side of the road. The assailants did not take his car, his wallet, or his cellphone before fleeing. The shots alerted workers in his factory and others in surrounding businesses. What ensued was the frantic mayhem that accompanies such futile brutality. First on the scene was his beloved youngest son, Joni, 32, who had received a panic-stricken call from the on-site security guard, telling him to call an ambulance. En route to his father’s factory, the younger Kowensky feared the worst, and made calls to Hatzolah and Netcare. Despite the desperate efforts of paramedics, Kowensky, 67, succumbed to his injuries. According to friends closest to him, Kowensky was a deeply spiritual man who attended weekly Torah classes with monotonous regularity. He kept the Sabbath, and gave generously to charity with an open heart. His lifelong friend, Arnold Garber, also from Argentina, said he was deeply saddened. “Sergio was a great guy. He loved spending time with the residents of

Sandringham Gardens, and would go there for shul services from time to time. He was genuine and kind. We had known each other for 40 years.” He said that Kowensky had attended a weekly Monday night shiur for the past ten years. This week, the regulars gathered in his honour. Steve Zagey of Likud SA described Kowensky as a “deeply committed man” who was actively involved in breathing new life into the Betar movement, something he felt strongly about. “He was kindhearted and charitable, and the State of Israel meant everything to him,” he said. His friend Mike Fisher described Kowensky as a “mensch” who cared about those going through difficult times, and did a lot of charitable work “behind the scenes”. According to Fisher, Kowensky was not shy to speak his mind on Israel, and

was known to members of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. In recent months, Kowensky had experienced ugly “labour-related issues” at his company, causing him much distress. According to sources, Kowensky was allegedly involved in fraught wage negotiations with staff members at his company, which left a number of staff disgruntled. It is understood that Kowensky’s company went into liquidation towards the end of last year, and staff were retrenched. The details surrounding the final outcome of this situation remain sketchy. Some speculate the murder may have been revenge for the many lay-offs. His friends and family would not be drawn on the matter. Whatever the motive behind his untimely

death, Kowensky leaves a devastated family and a host of close friends who continue to sing his praises. Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Kowensky grew up in the small town of Moisés Ville in the province of Santa Fe, which was founded by Eastern European and Russian Jews escaping persecution in 1889. His late parents, Zaidel and Leah, were Holocaust survivors who came from Belarus. According to the family, Leah was a partisan and had the nickname “The Fighter Girl”, which has been acknowledged by Yad Vashem. Kowensky qualified as a Hebrew teacher, and taught at the local school in Moises Ville where his parents were both teachers. The family made aliya, and Kowensky later studied engineering at Haifa Technion. **Continued on page 4>>**

The lone SA Jew saving lives at the World Cup



Professor Efraim Kramer
at the 2018 FIFA World Cup.
See story on page 4.

Newly opened adoption files may shed light on missing Yemenite children

The Knesset approved a Bill on Tuesday to allow families who came to Israel from Yemen in the early days of the state to find out whether the children they claimed were kidnapped from them were in fact put up for adoption.

According to the new law, anyone who is concerned that a close relative may have been taken from the family and put up for adoption can ask a senior social worker to check adoption records to see if their relative’s name appears there. If the relative was put up for adoption, the Attorney General will be notified, and will ask the courts to decide whether to give the details of the adoption to the family seeking missing relatives.

Currently, citizens who were themselves adopted may search for their family upon reaching the age of 18. Families seeking

children who have disappeared did not previously have access to the adoption files.

Since the 1950s, more than 1 000 families – mostly immigrants from Yemen, but also dozens from the Balkans, North Africa, and other Middle Eastern countries – have alleged their children were systematically kidnapped from Israeli hospitals and put up for adoption, sometimes abroad.

Likud MK Nurit Koren who chairs the Knesset lobby tasked with researching what is known as the “Yemenite Children Affair”, and whose own cousin disappeared at a young age, praised the new law.

“This is a historic, revolutionary law which will give answers to the families,” she said. “Today, many families in the state have suffered for many years from uncertainty about their dear ones, and they will now, finally, receive answers.

“This proposal is another of the many steps I advanced within the committee I head, whose goal is twofold. The first is to reach the truth of the matter,” she said. “The second is to ease the bureaucratic burden on the families involved in the affair. Opening the adoption records will give an answer, and will help us to reach the truth.”

The law follows a February Bill which allowed the opening of graves for the purpose of genetic testing, allowing the families of children who went missing in the Yemenite Children Affair of 1958-1970 to seek a court-ordered exhumation of remains to enable DNA comparisons.

About 49 000 Yemeni Jews were brought to the nascent State of Israel in Operation Magic Carpet in 1949-1950.

Disputed by scholars and seemingly refuted by three state commissions that examined the affair and concluded that most of the children had died, the case has kept resurfacing, not least because most of the families were not given their children’s bodies or informed of their burial places. Furthermore, the death certificates were riddled with errors, and most of the missing children were sent army draft notices 18 years after their alleged deaths. There have also been cases in which adopted children were able to confirm, via DNA tests, that they were from Yemenite families who were told that they had died.

The Bill comes after the state archives declassified 400 000 documents on the affair in December 2016. (Times of Israel)



Israel State Archives worker looks at classified documents related to the Yemenite Children Affair

Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
17:11	18:03	Johannesburg
17:32	18:28	Cape Town
16:51	17:45	Durban
17:12	18:05	Bloemfontein
17:03	17:59	Port Elizabeth
16:57	17:51	East London

Haredi Orthodox legislators threaten government over Bill to draft more yeshiva youth

A Bill setting military enlistment quotas for haredi Orthodox yeshiva students passed its initial reading in the Knesset in spite of threats by haredi legislators to bring down the government if it becomes law.

The legislation requires that a minimum number of students serve in the military, or the government will reduce the annual budget allocation for yeshivas. The target will increase each year for 10 years.

Secular and non-haredi Israelis have long complained that far too many young adults studying in yeshivas are exempt from mandatory army service. Haredi leaders say army service would corrupt their youth, and distract them from their studies.

About 63 legislators voted in favour of the legislation and 39 against after a more than three-

hour debate that lasted into early Tuesday morning. The legislation must pass two more readings to become law.

The centrist and secular Yesh Atid party, which is in the opposition, voted with the ruling government coalition in favour of the legislation. This ensured its passage, since the haredi Orthodox parties publicly oppose the legislation. Ahead of the vote, Yaakov Litzman, the head of the United Torah Judaism (UTJ) party, threatened to leave the government if the Bill was enacted. The loss of UTJ’s six Knesset seats would put the coalition below the number needed to remain in power.

Legislators from UTJ and the Sephardic Orthodox Shas party reportedly remained outside of the Knesset plenum’s chamber until it was clear the measure would have enough votes to pass the first

reading. They then entered and voted against the legislation.

The Arab Joint List, which has 13 Knesset seats, did not take part in the vote. Arab-Israeli citizens are not conscripted into the military.

The government wants to pass the legislation before the summer session ends on 18 July.

Last September, the Supreme Court struck down a law that increased the number of draft exemptions for haredi Orthodox yeshiva students. The court gave the government one year to rework the draft for haredi men.

If the yeshivas do not meet the targets for three years in a row, the law will be thrown out, and all haredi men will be required to enlist. The 2018 target enlistment stands at 3 348, reaching 6 844 by 2027. (JTA)

Torah thought of the week

When destiny beckons

Pinchas, the hero of this week’s Parsha, was previously unheard of. Though he belonged to the “royal family” as the grandson of Aaron, he was an unseeded young man, who with a single act of bravery, was catapulted to stardom.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 82a) tells the story. Zimri, a prince of the tribe of Shimon, publicly flaunts his intimate relationship with a heathen Midianite princess. Moses is momentarily stymied. Pinchas respectfully reminds Moses that he himself taught the principle that one who behaves as Zimri did may be executed by the zealous.

Moses responds that since Pinchas remembered this, he, Pinchas, should be the one to carry it out. Pinchas does just that, and a terrible plague that had taken the lives of thousands is stilled. G-d blesses Pinchas with His Covenant of Peace, and Pinchas goes down in history as the hero who saved the day.

other prominent elders and leaders, and they are all silent. In the face of such brazen moral travesty, all these great men stand back. Who, then, am I to step forward? How can I, little old me, a new kid on the block, stand up and say what I believe in their august presence? Surely I must keep quiet.

But Pinchas did not say that. And thank G-d he didn’t. Had he kept his silence, the plague might not have been averted, and Pinchas would have remained a non-entity.

This, says the Lubavitcher Rebbe, serves as a powerful lesson to all of us. If you witness a situation in which you feel that you can make a difference, then you must. The fact that greater people than you seem paralysed should not necessarily mean that you too should remain idle. Perhaps this is your unique chance to do something historic. Perhaps you are earmarked for greatness, and G-d is opening your window of opportunity. Deny yourself this moment, and you deny destiny.

In the story of Purim, the Megillah records how Queen Esther is asked by Mordechai to intercede with King Ahasuerus on behalf of her people. She explains that she fears this may be suicidal for her. Mordechai responds with rather strong words: Relief and deliverance will come for the Jews from another place, and you and your father’s house will perish. What Mordechai was telling Esther is that the chance to singlehandedly save an entire nation doesn’t present itself every day. It is a unique moment, and ought to be seized. If you won’t do it, someone else will.

Pinchas reminds us that when opportunity knocks, we should open the door quickly. Destiny could be beckoning.



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AUTO AFRICA

Will there be a hate speech ruling? Velaphi Khumalo waits...

NICOLA MILTZ

Hate speech accused Velaphi Khumalo faces an uncertain future as he awaits the judge’s final call on whether he will be found guilty or not.

This card-carrying ANC member who said he wanted to “cleans (sic)” the country of all white people by acting “as Hitler did to the Jews”, among other hateful comments, sat stony faced in the Equality Court in the South Gauteng High Court this week.

Judge Roland Sutherland heard arguments in the matter between the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and Khumalo and the appointed *amicus curiae* (friend of the court), the Legal Resources Centre (LRC).

The 29-year-old employee of the Gauteng Provincial Government, who works as youth sports officer, looked utterly bemused as intense legal argument wafted over his head.

The case is not a cut and dried matter of hate speech. It is one that spans uncharted, complicated legal territory, in which the judge is called upon to rule whether his court has jurisdiction, and if it is actually hate speech.

Going back to 4 January 2016, an angry Khumalo published two widely circulated and reported statements on Facebook. He claimed they were made in reaction to comments made by KwaZulu-Natal estate agent, Penny Sparrow, who called black beach goers “monkeys” on her Facebook page.

“...white people in south Africa deserve to be hacked and killed like Jews. U have the same venom moss. (sic)”

His first statement at 05:39 was: “I want to cleans this country of all white people. We must act as Hitler did to the Jews. I don’t believe any more that the is a large number of not so racist white people. I’m starting to be sceptical even of those within out Movement of the ANC. I will from today unfriend all white people I have as friends from today u must be put under the same blanket as any other racist white because secretly u all are a bunch of racist fuck heads. as we have already seen. (sic)”

His second statement at about 11:00 was: “Noo seriously though u oppressed us when u were a minority and then manje u call us monkeys and we suppose to let it slide. white people in south Africa deserve to be hacked and killed like Jews. U have the same venom moss. look at Palestine. noo u must be bushed alive and skinned and your off springs used as garden

fertiliser. (sic)”

The SAHRC argued this week that these statements are hate speech directed against white people and against the South African Jewish community, and that they fall outside the ambit of freedom of speech. It said Khumalo’s statements had the effect of being hurtful, inciting violence, and hatred and... amounted to a call for genocide against white people in South Africa.

It said that Khumalo also implied that Jews “deserved” to be “hacked and killed”.

The SAHRC said in papers before the court: “The depiction of Jews as venomous hearkens back to the longstanding racial and religious vilification of Jews, a practice commonly referred to as ‘Jew baiting’.”

It criticised “The odious abuse of the history of the Holocaust... the express glorification of its methods of mass murder, and the shameful attack on the memory of its victims, the great majority of whom were Jews, and the ancestors and relatives of almost every South African Jewish family today.”

When Khumalo made his statements in 2016, it caused an outcry. It led to the ANC laying a complaint of racial discrimination against him in the Equality Court in Roodepoort, dealing only with his first statement.

Soon after his statements, Khumalo was reported to have apologised to the ANC and his employer, describing his comments as “emotional”. The ANC still brought a complaint to the Roodepoort Equality Court in mid-2016 for racial discrimination.

The SAHRC brought a complaint in the Equality Court in the Johannesburg High Court towards the end of 2016, unaware of the ANC matter.

Early in 2017, Khumalo entered into a settlement agreement with the ANC, and admitted to hate speech. He agreed to pay the amount of R30 000 in monthly instalments over 30 months to a charity chosen by the ANC. He was further given a final written warning by his employer, the Gauteng Provincial Government.

Meanwhile, the SAHRC and Khumalo entered into a settlement agreement in the Johannesburg Equality Court. He admitted to uttering hate speech, and agreed to an apology, as well as paying damages of R150 000. The damages were suspended on condition that he refrained from hate speech.

Acknowledging that this was not the first Equality Court dealing with this case, the Equality Court in the Johannesburg High Court subsequently decided that more input was necessary to clarify the matter.

It ordered the parties to make written submissions, and the LRC be appointed as the *amicus curia*. The court also invited the Minister of Justice, represented by the state attorney, to be made aware of the matter.

Both of Khumalo’s statements were then included and ordered to be heard together, not separately. The court further asked Advocate Stuart Wilson to represent Khumalo going forward.

The main issues argued before Judge Sutherland covered, first, whether the court had the jurisdiction to deal with the matter in light of the fact that the ANC had already brought a complaint at the Roodepoort Equality Court and that the matter had already been settled. Second, it once again tackled whether Khumalo’s statements amounted to hate speech.

In answering papers, Khumalo’s counsel argued that his comments were not hate speech, they were “triggered by instant rage and fury”.



Sparrow’s hate speech caused Khumalo to be “deeply hurt and extremely upset” and argued that his statements were a “knee jerk reaction to that anger”.

In Khumalo’s heads of argument he admits that his comments were “grossly inappropriate”.

Advocate Wilson argued “There is no doubt Khumalo should not have said what he said, and that he sincerely and deeply regrets it.”

He argued that Khumalo had already apologised, had been disciplined by his employer, and had already been sued for hate speech in a different Equality Court. Wilson said Khumalo’s statements did not constitute hate speech, and that a reasonable person would have read the words in context, and would have understood them “as meaningless hyperbole”.

He argued further that Khumalo, who grew up during apartheid, was deeply offended by Sparrow’s comments which compared black people to “monkeys” who had been “released” onto public beaches for New Years’ Eve. Even more offensive to him, he said, were the “goading and hurtful” remarks made on

Facebook in support of Sparrow’s comments.

Wilson submitted that a reasonable observer would understand that he was “a young black man responding angrily to an affront to his dignity”, and that he had no genuine intent to cause anyone any harm.

Advocate Mark Oppenheimer for the SAHRC said: “However abhorrent Penny Sparrow’s racist hate speech towards black people and however repugnant the commentary she evoked in her apologists, Khumalo’s statements were out of all proportion to the provocation. He, in fact, responded with a call to genocide.

Oppenheimer insisted that a public apology was essential. “It would send a signal to others that they should not do the same.”

Counsel for the LRC, Irene de Vos, argued

that Khumalo had paid his dues as he was ordered to make a public apology and pay R30 000 after a complaint lodged by the ANC regarding the same remarks he had made on Facebook. She further argued that his comments did not constitute hate speech.

“Mr Khumalo’s expression fell short of the requirements of hate speech,” De Vos argued.

Buang Jones, the Provincial Manager of the SAHRC said, “In our legal submissions, we’ve requested the court to refer its findings, if it is found that Khumalo’s statements amounted to/ constitute hate speech, to the NPA [National Prosecuting Authority] for a decision for the possible institution of criminal proceedings. We can’t pre-empt the outcome.”

Jones said he hoped the court would deliver its ruling within the next three months.

Khumalo has still not offered proof of payment to the ANC, and he has kept his job.

Judgement has been reserved. In the meantime, Khumalo waits.

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The lone SA Jew saving lives at the World Cup

NICOLA MILTZ

While a South African sports team is nowhere near the World Cup in Russia, we do have one esteemed representative on the field. His name is Professor Efraim Kramer and he is FIFA’s Tournament Medical Officer. A Shabbos-keeping, kippa-wearing, self-confessed adrenalin junkie, Kramer lives in Glenhazel when he’s not gracing the world’s best stadia.

This week, the *SA Jewish Report* caught up with Kramer – who presides over all the medical and anti-doping operations of FIFA World Cup 2018. It happened to be moments before the Mexico v Brazil kickoff held in Samara – the sixth largest city on the Volga River, known as the country’s space capital.

“I don’t do cosmonauts, I do sportsmen and women,” said a chipper Kramer from the Samara Arena, where he was responsible for making sure that all medical operations were in place to ward off any medical disaster during a tournament of this magnitude. “Every stadium is a small city,” said Kramer, “Someone’s going to trip and fall, someone’s going to have chest pains, someone’s going to have asthma, someone can even have a baby! This stadium is a city of 45 000 people – anything can happen.”

Not for one minute does Judaism get neglected in the excitement. On the contrary, Kramer says he has been in contact with “every single Jewish community” through the length and breadth of Russia.

Kramer specialised in sports medicine, and has been passionately involved in emergency medicine for the past three decades. The latter included “mass gathering medicine”, which resulted in him being called on to assist at the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. “Since then, I have been involved with FIFA Medical, helping to establish international norms and standards for football medical services and football emergency medicine. I have focused on the prevention and management of sudden cardiac arrest on the field,” he said.

As the retired co-founder and medical director of Rescue South Africa, Kramer specialised in disaster response. He has attended medical emergencies at the sites of earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and floods. He has also covered events like pop concerts, Comrades marathons, and large cycle tours. As a FIFA football emergency physician, he manages emergency medical services at several FIFA tournaments, including the FIFA World Cup in Brazil in 2014, and FIFA Women’s World Cup in Canada in 2015. Right now, at the World Cup in Russia, Kramer explains that each



Professor Efraim Kramer instructing medical personnel in Russia

stadium requires at least 250 medical personnel. His team get to the stadium three hours before the start of the match, and are present during the match and for about an hour after spectators have left.

“That’s about a six-hour long party. It is a long time with people screaming and jumping up and down,” said Kramer. He wouldn’t miss it for the world, though, saying there’s “nothing to beat” the atmosphere at a World Cup match.

This year, the World Cup has 32 national teams. A total of 64 matches will be played in 12 venues in 11 host cities. Each host city has a FIFA venue medical officer who works hand in hand with the local organising committee. Their aim is to ensure the highest standard of medical services, including first aid and emergency support to participating teams, the FIFA delegation, guests, and spectators during the tournament.

“It’s a gigantic team effort, and it has taken about three years to organise,” he said, “So far, it has been fantastic.”

Kramer spent many weeks in Russia last year holding training workshops and meeting medical personnel to set up the iconic tournament’s intricate medical operations.

With many days still to go before the World Cup final, he said his team has treated at least 9 000 patients, and he anticipates many more as the country is hosting more than a million fans.

Not for one minute does Judaism get neglected in the excitement. On the contrary, Kramer says he has been in contact with “every single Jewish community” through the length and breadth of Russia. And, he has had more kosher food delivered to his hotel door than he “can ever eat”.

He has been warmed by the many secular-looking Russians who have walked up to him greeting him with a *shalom aleichem*.

“There is a slow migration into the open for many Russian Jews. Many are secular, or they simply do not

know they are Jewish, or they are still too afraid to come out,” he said.

During the World Cup, Kramer spends Shabbos in his hotel room at the Radisson Royal in Moscow, reading, relaxing, and recharging his batteries. Shabbos comes in at 21:00 on Friday and ends at 23:00 on Saturday, so he has ample time to prepare for the oncoming “next six days of madness”.

Kramer is the former Head of the Division of Emergency Medicine at Wits Medical School and former head of Thelle Mogoerane Regional Hospital Emergency Department. He stepped down from these positions last year to give others a chance. He is still a Professor of Sports Medicine at the University of Pretoria. These days, he spends half his day in Kolel (a special learning programme) at

Yeshiva Maharsha in Johannesburg when he is not running around the world with FIFA.

Kramer, who grew up in Welkom in the Free State, insists he never had a calling to become a doctor. He claims it was “fluke” that he landed up applying for medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand, with one matric distinction. “I wanted to be a traffic cop,” he recalls with a laugh.

Having said that, he loves being an emergency physician, as it “gives me the opportunity to save lives”, although “you’ve got to be a little crazy to do it”.

With many days still to go before the World Cup final, he said his team has treated at least 9 000 patients, and he anticipates many more as the country is hosting more than a million fans.

There are 6 000 medical staff falling

under the FIFA medical umbrella who work hand in hand with the Russian healthcare system.

Kramer looks forward to being reunited with his wife, Nadine, and their three daughters and sons in law who all live in close proximity to each other in and around Glenhazel. He can’t wait to meet his new grandson, whose bris he missed last week.

But he wouldn’t have missed the chance of working at the World Cup for anything. He marvels that “a simple South African out of the Free State can hold this position”.

“Going from sports medicine at Tukkie’s to the grand stadia in St Petersburg, this is proof that if you aim for the moon, things like a loving family, passion, commitment, and caring colleagues can catapult you there,” he says.



Professor Efraim Kramer at training workshops in Russia before the World Cup

The ruthless killing of a man who loved Israel passionately

>> Continued from page 1



Sergio and Alison Kowensky

He met his wife, Alison, a South African, while in Israel.

“My father breathed Zionism,” said Joni this week. “As a religious man, he knew all sides and engaged everyone on the subject, including those who held opposing views. He knew the history of Israel backwards, and enjoyed engaging people on the subject, including people like well-known United States lawyer Alan Dershowitz.”

He attributed the re-opening of the Betar Southern Africa movement to his father.

Kowensky co-authored a religious book written entirely in Hebrew with Rabbi Shimon Pinsky, the title of which translates loosely as, “The Meaning of 40 in the Torah”.

The World Likud Board and Council sent messages of condolences to the family. Chairperson Yaakov Hagoel and Chief Executive Ifat Ovadia-Luski said in a letter: “We are shocked and saddened at the tragic death”. They said Kowensky was a “dear friend” who was a “great Betar and Likud activist who dedicated his time and effort to the State of Israel and the Jewish people”.

The funeral for the late Kowensky will take place in Israel. The family is holding a service for him on Thursday, 5 July, at 16:30 in the Yeshiva College main shul.

Kowensky is survived by his loving wife Alison, and their three children: daughter Michal, 42, (Michal’s husband Marc and their two children), and Kowensky’s sons Doron, 40, and Joni, 32.

US rabbi’s arrest garners global attention

MIRAH LANGER

By Wednesday afternoon, more than 2.62 million people across numerous social media platforms had viewed footage of an elderly rabbi protesting, and then shuffling along with his hands cuffed after his arrest in Philadelphia on 30 June.

The man is 84-year-old Rabbi Arthur Waskow. He was arrested protesting outside an ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] facility in Philadelphia, after speaking at a civil disobedience rally against recent changes to the American government’s policy on illegal immigrants which resulted in significant numbers of children being separated from their parents at borders.

“Criminals are living in the White House who would tear away even nursing children from their mother’s breasts.”

The video, tweeted on 30 June by Stance Grounded @SJPeace, went viral. It showed a frail old man with a patterned kippa shaking as he held the microphone in front of the access door to a building. Someone had to support him up by holding a hand against his back. He told the police gathered nearby: “If you need to arrest us, so be it, but remember who the real criminals are.”

A second video showed Waskow seated in a wheelchair. A policeman bent down and placed plastic ties across the old man’s shaking hands. The police then had to pass a walking stick back to the old man. Yet, even with this aid, two people had to support him to help him get up. He then shuffled, painfully, step-by-step, as he was escorted into a police van.

“Criminals are living in the White House who would tear away even nursing children from their mother’s breasts,” the rabbi is recorded as saying shortly before being taken into custody.

“You are citizens as well as police officers. We invite you, we beg you, we urge you, we implore you as citizens to be aware of the criminals that are wrecking the decent lives of decent families.”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* in the wake of the video’s global reach, Waskow said his primary reaction to all the attention was “astonishment”.

“It is my 25th arrest over the past 55 years, and none of them have got anything like this response,” said the veteran civil-rights activist.

Waskow, who has been named by *Newsweek* as one of the 50 most influential rabbis in America, told the *SA Jewish Report* he believed the attention was due to the fact that a policy involving the suffering of children was “the ultimate horror for many people”. Further, he said, the image of a rabbi, as a carrier of a moral tradition, being arrested, struck a deep note with the public.

Waskow was born in Baltimore in



From a video show a policeman bending down and placing plastic ties on Rabbi Arthur Waskow's shaking hands

1933, according to the website of The Shalom Center, which he founded. He was ordained in 1995 by a trans-denominational rabbinic committee that included a rabbi whose lineage was in the Hassidic tradition, a Reform rabbi, a Conservative rabbi, and a feminist theologian.

He has a PhD in American history,

with a dissertation on The Race Riots of 1919. He has lectured extensively at various universities, and published numerous books, including *The Freedom Seder, a New Haggadah for Passover*. He is associated with the Jewish Renewal movement, and says he has always been inspired by a Jewish sense of justice.

During his long history of seeking social justice, Waskow also spoke out against the apartheid regime.

He told the *SA Jewish Report* that he had made the call to end racial oppression after making contact with South African-born Reform Rabbi Brian Walt, who is a founder of Rabbis for Human Rights.

Beyond the focus on his most recent arrest, a sustained drive was needed to “light up dark places in our society” and ensure that “decent human life” was upheld, Waskow said.

“The time has come in the US, and in other places where there are ultra-right-wing governments, [to foster resistance]. The way to gather is the way we did it [at the protest]. We were... in communion.”

While the public response to the rabbi’s protest action and arrest was positive on the whole, there was sporadic criticism.

“It’s sad because of age... but I guess if u break the law that’s what happens,” tweeted someone called Lynn.

Another tweeted: “That was so pure and whole hearted, it actually brings me to tears.”

William Ashmore tweeted: “I hope to be 85 one day, and have at least half of the spirit for humanity that this man has.”

Some suggested that the rabbi’s presence linked the current immigration policy and Jewish history: “I will stand with my Jewish brothers and sisters who recognise that they’ve seen this before,” one tweeted.

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south african

Jewish Report

Before we start packing for Perth...

South African Jewry is concerned that anti-Semitism is not just rising, but spiking. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) this week laid criminal charges against three people for hate speech.

In our lead article last week, we quoted David Saks of the SAJBD as saying that on average, six incidents are reported a month, compared to six incidents in just a couple of days in one week.

It seems quite frightening, but can I suggest that before we start packing for Perth, we look at the reality.

I am not convinced that anti-Semitism is in fact growing at a speed. I believe it has far more to do with social media, and how easy it is to press buttons without our heads connecting to our fingers.

If anti-Semitism is growing so fast, so too is racism, so too is bullying, stupidity, even ignorance. And, as it happens, so too is regret... after the fact.

You see, too many people don't stop and think of the consequences of their actions, and simply Tweet, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat and then, they may well be sorry. However, once it is out there in cyberspace, the damage is done, and there is very little anyone can do to erase it.

Picture this, someone is angry about the way they perceive they were treated in a business deal, so they lash out where they know it will hurt. When you are dealing with Jews, everyone knows which button to press. Does it mean that person is anti-Semitic? Yes, in all likelihood they are. However, if it wasn't so easy to put it on social media, would their racism be so public and so damaging? Probably not!

If they were to confront that person about it, it would be invariably more difficult to be so abusive if there was a human being in front of them. They would also have time to prepare what they were going to say or do before going one-on-one with their "enemy".

That's not to say they wouldn't say the same thing, and it would probably end up being a personal battle, but not a full-scale anti-Semitic incident that affects all of us.

The same goes for WhatsApp groups, when someone in the group angers others, and it builds up into an anti-Semitic incident. Again, the underlying anti-Semitism is there, but the anger escalates so quickly when your fingers are attached to your emotions (and not your head). It is too easy to type out a message that you will regret, especially when you are being spurred on by someone else in the group who is saying equally ugly things.

Then the damage is done, and the incident is reported. The SAJBD has to take it up because it is, indeed, an anti-Semitic incident. And so it goes on ...

You need to know that I am not undermining these incidents, and I am not saying they are not anti-Semitic. They are, and they have to be dealt with using the most serious legal means.

What I am saying is, let's put this in perspective. Social media is dangerous in that across the world, the rise of social media has turbocharged abuse, to quote the *Huffington Post*. It's not just about anti-Semitism, it's much more general than that.

As former Constitutional Court Judge Albie Sachs pointed out at the South African Human Right's Commission's national hearing on racism and social media last year: "... Social media is capable of destroying the values we want to achieve as a society..."

Stuff magazine Editor Toby Shapshak, speaking at a panel discussion on the subject, said, "On social media people say things they would otherwise never say to someone in person. Technology shows human nature in all its characteristics."

In the article on page 3, we address Velaphi Khumalo, who made the most revolting statements on his Facebook status in January 2016: "I want to cleanse this country of all white people. We must act as Hitler did to the Jews. I don't believe any more that there is a large number of not-so-racist white people. I'm starting to be sceptical even of those within our movement of the ANC."

To date, the man is still defending himself in court, and it is not nearly over. Would he think twice if he knew then what he knows now? Who knows! But if people did think twice, we might not have this social media racism epidemic that is hurting our community and making it look like anti-Semitism is spiking.

My belief is that anti-Semitism exists, and many people don't like us for their own reasons, be it jealousy, ignorance, or just the need to feel they are better than others. I don't believe anti-Semitism is increasing on a large scale.

What is increasing is anti-Israel sentiment, which is spilling over into anti-Semitism because the two are so intrinsically linked. The South African government and ruling party's rabid anti-Israel sentiment is fuelling this.

You don't get to demand publicly that South African Jews condemn the country they are indelibly linked to without masses of people thinking there is something wrong with the Jews. This statement was made by Minister of International Affairs and Co-operation Lindiwe Sisulu a few months ago, but the wound still smarts... She made no apology, and she should have.

Having said that, the ANC did the right thing in condemning the recent spate of anti-Semitism. "Our disagreement and abhorrence of the violence and human rights meted against the Palestinian people by the State of Israel, at no stage should be used as an excuse for hate speech against Jewish or any other people," read the statement put out on 22 June by ANC spokesperson Pule Mabe.

While I appreciate the ruling party doing this, it needs to realise that – much like everyone on social media – once a statement is out there, it can't be removed. It needs to be cautious about how it deals with its anti-Israel sentiments so that it doesn't have a negative impact on us as Jews.

On that note, I still believe we are a long way from needing to pack for Perth. We live in an amazing country where there is never a dull moment, but it is a democracy, and life here is good.

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Sara Netanyahu circus represents Teflon leadership



DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier

I have never met Sara Netanyahu, the wife of incumbent Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. I have never interviewed her, nor been in the same room as her.

Most Israelis have the same experience. And yet, this hasn't stopped all of us from having an opinion on the woman everyone in Israel seemingly loves to hate.

I remember a cameraman once telling me that he arrived at the Netanyahu's Jerusalem residence for an interview with the Prime Minister, only to be confronted with a screaming Sara who demanded that the crew wait outside.

It corroborates many other such tales of a woman who is depicted as being petty and difficult. Certainly, the news value of what Sara does or doesn't do is often minimal; but the soap opera drama that is her life appeals to many.

In the latest twist, she's been charged with fraud and breach of trust for allegedly misusing public funds to pay for restaurant meals that were delivered to her home between September 2010 and March 2013. They were valued at 360 000 shekels (R1.3 million) in total.

Her trial begins on 19 July, as the prosecution sets out to prove that she knowingly committed a crime. Sara will have to take the stand and explain herself, while an overzealous Israeli media and public pounce on her every word.

But it's less the trial, and more the insight it offers that is important. Sara is implicated in a number of other cases aside from this one, as is the Prime Minister himself, who is embroiled in a series of corruption investigations. What does the handling of this case teach us about what we can expect in others?



Forty-one years ago, Leah Rabin, the wife of then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, was spotted in Washington making a withdrawal from an American bank account she shared with her husband.

At the time, it was illegal for Israeli citizens to hold bank accounts overseas. This one had been opened about nine years earlier, when Rabin was the Israeli Ambassador to the United States.

Legally, it should have been closed when he was recalled. Then Attorney-General Aharon Barak argued that a leader must be held to the same judicial standards as an ordinary citizen. Although Leah Rabin said she alone had operated the

account, her husband publicly accepted joint moral and legal responsibility, and resigned as premier.

The "dollar account affair" as it came to be known is often quoted as one of the reasons the then left-wing Alignment – later to merge into the Labour Party – lost the 1977 election to Likud.

Fast-forward to today. No one expects Netanyahu to resign over the charges facing his wife – least of all him, but are they really less serious than the ones Leah Rabin faced all those years ago? After all, Sara is up against a possible criminal conviction for defrauding the state. It could result in five years behind bars – although it's unlikely she'll be forced to face this sentence.

Benjamin Netanyahu says he wasn't aware of anything. And why should he be? After all, he is running the country, and presumably doesn't have time to notice who is catering the meals he eats at home.

But does this let him off the hook? When he argues that he cannot be held responsible for the actions of his wife, it is worth remembering that Yitzhak Rabin felt he could be.

This is the problem with the whole sordid affair. There is a sense of entitlement that floods the Prime Minister's residence in Jerusalem that allows Sara to believe she is above the law, and can behave anyway she wants.

She has said, repeatedly, that her husband would be earning millions if he was in the private sector. It suggests that she believes that because the couple has somehow "sacrificed" themselves for the good of Israel, they're entitled to special privileges. This is, of course, nonsense.

Sara repeatedly claims the media is intrusive and reports on her every move. While she's right on this score, the "obsession" is fuelled by a public that is horrified by behaviour that has no place in the home of the country's top public official.

The trial is unlikely to affect Netanyahu's popularity and political stability. The so-called "Sara problem" is part and parcel of the Netanyahu

brand. If anything, Israelis tell me they pity the Prime Minister for having to go home each night to a "house of horrors" – as their residence has been described.

But it's taken three years to get to this point; from when the police first handed in their recommendations, to an indictment being issued by Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit.

Clearly, Mandelblit did not want to become the first AG to indict the wife of an Israeli Prime Minister. He offered Sara the option of producing a medical report that would have declared her unfit to stand trial, but she refused.

Now, if Mandelblit has such difficulty making a decision to indict in a case that is about meals and small-time fraud, it certainly suggests that he won't be in a rush to make any moves that could potentially lead to a Prime Minister being dismissed. Certainly, this is what the Netanyahus are banking on.

But the Rabin "dollar account affair" should serve as a warning. So should the fact that Israeli courts have sent a Prime Minister and President to jail. But for many watching the trials and tribulations of Sara Netanyahu in court, there is the belief that this time around, things might be different. It could take many more years before this Prime Minister is charged. If ever.

• *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.*

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- The award for which the nominee is nominated
- A short motivation for the nomination

Palestinian child’s personal jihad is effective propaganda

JORDAN MOSHE

While most 12-year-olds focus on academics, sport or just having fun, Palestinian Janna Jihad is spreading her message of resistance in South Africa, calling on sympathisers to protest the Israeli occupation.

Dubbed “the world’s youngest registered journalist” by certain media outlets, this 12-year-old resident of the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh is in South Africa until 20 July to participate in Mandela centenary events. She is also scheduled to engage with South African human rights organisations.

Born in 2006, Janna Tamimi, more commonly known as Janna Jihad or Janna Jihad Ayyad, started “reporting” at the age of seven. After initially using her mother’s iPhone to capture videos of protests near her home, she claims she began her career when she realised that there was no one photographing events in “Palestine”.

Using her own camera, she films and reports protests, attacks, and everyday happenings in the region, and then posts the videos on social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and Facebook, on which she has more than 270 000 followers.

Hosted by the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, Jihad visited South Africa in 2017 to spread awareness about the violence in her home region as part of the Pals4Peace tour with the nongovernmental organisation Shamsaan Children of Palestine. Speaking to local media in Durban this past Monday as the ambassador for Shamsaan, Jihad spoke about her work in Palestine, sharing videos and stories about the conditions for children living there.

“I live in Palestine, and am the youngest journalist in the world,” she says in a recording of her address. Narrating a video being screened to her audience, Jihad points out the presence of Israeli civilians in one of the shots. “That’s our water spring. Those are Israeli occupation settlers who stole our land,” she says. “They are on their way to a spring under Israeli occupation protection. They stole houses and the land of our village.”

In many of her previous videos, the narrative Jihad uses is much the same. While she does frequently report on events as they unfold around her, she expresses views which are not supported by fact, and are often inflammatory. One recording shows her at a demonstration surrounded by dozens of other Arab protestors. Jihad explains that soldiers are firing teargas at them. However, she goes on to say that these soldiers have arrived to occupy more land, and to kill children. In another, she is filmed pointing out Israeli soldiers on a distant hilltop, and states that they have come with the sole purpose of killing children. Not reserving her vilification for soldiers, she goes as far as branding Israelis as, “terrorist people who come into our land trying to kill people”.

She often makes statements that are completely false. In one such video, Jihad is speaking from her home for Turkish news channel TRT World, explaining why she pursues her mission. “A lot of times, settlers will just come in and kill children with their cars. We have humanity and mercy, not like them.” She says this when car-ramming is part of the terrorist *modus operandi* against Israeli civilians, and no instances of the reverse have been recorded.

In another video, Jihad can be seen standing beside the body of a motionless child, whom she explains was the victim of Israeli violence. She claims, “He has been hit by a rocket.” However, the child does not appear to have any injuries, nor is there any evident impact around him.

Jihad hails from an activist family which is well-known in the Western media as being a radical “Palestinian propaganda machine”. Its involvement in politics dates back to 1948. Her



mother, activist Nawal Tamimi, accompanied her to South Africa.

Jihad is the niece of activist Bassem el-Tamimi, and the cousin of youth activist Ahed Tamimi. Bassem has organised protests against Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank, has been arrested by the Israeli authorities more than a dozen times, and encourages the throwing of stones at Israeli soldiers by locals in his village. His daughter, 17-year-old Ahed, is best known for appearances in images and videos in which she confronts Israeli soldiers. Ahed was detained by Israeli authorities last year after she, her mother and cousin approached two soldiers outside the Tamimi home, and were filmed slapping, kicking, and shoving them.

A clip posted on Facebook by Bassem in August 2014 shows an eight-year-old Janna screaming in English at a group of Israeli soldiers, calling them “terrorists” and declaring

confidently that “all the world” is with the Palestinians. She concludes by telling the soldiers “we will kill you”.

“In a situation where conflict is asymmetrical, material provided by youngsters becomes potent,” says American political commentator Brooks Spector. “When a child is sharing their experiences, the message becomes compelling, and we are glued to it. This despite the fact that the report may not be balanced, comprehensive, or accurate. Material from a young woman like this is addictive. The question for audiences is less about its accuracy than about it being the testimony of a child.

“Unless the report is debunked as the product of specialist film makers, it will remain in vogue. The only way to address this is by sharing equally compelling stories from the other side. A press release from a prime minister simply won’t cut it. We need to ask how to put these reality reports into context, and address them

From peoplehood to power

HOWARD SACKSTEIN

Avraham Infeld struggles. Like anyone born in South Africa named Aubrey, who suddenly becomes known as Avraham, Infeld struggles with issues of identity. What is this amorphous thing we call Jewish? No wonder no one understands us, when we ourselves don’t know how to define being Jewish.

Infeld, President Emeritus of the Hillel student campus movement and one of the most dynamic Jewish educationalists alive, tells of an experiment conducted around the world. Jewish students are told apple is to orange and banana, pants is to shirt and jacket, Jew is to (blank) and (blank). Jewish students are required to fill in the blanks.

Answers to this simple question vary greatly depending on geography and understanding. In North America, students generally answer Jew is to Christian and Muslim. For them, Judaism is a religion. But how then can you be an atheist Jew or a Jew who practices another religion?

In Israel, students answer Jew is to Arab and French or British, for them Judaism is a nationality or more accurately a mix between nationality and ethnicity. But how then can you be a South African Jew or an American Jew. How can you be a Christian or Muslim Israeli? How can you be an ethnicity if your ethnicity is made up of people of different colours, shades and cultural identities?

In Russia today, Jewish students answer the same question, Jew is to Russian. They don’t see themselves as Russian, maybe because of the old Soviet classification system, which designated Jews as a separate ethnicity apart from other Russians. Says Infeld, Jews who intermarry tell him that they have married a Russian. The fact that they and their families have lived in Russia for hundreds of years has still not made them Russian.

In South America, most Jewish students speak fluent Hebrew, but they are unable to recite any of the Jewish prayers. For them Judaism is about language and culture.

These are some of the struggles surrounding the enigma of how to define ourselves. If we are a religion, the holders of truth, then we should be sending missionaries into Africa to convert people, says Infeld, not sending Chabad to South Africa to give us whisky. If we are a religion, why should we be entitled to a state? If we are a religion, we should have a Vatican, but no Catholic makes aliya to the Vatican.

If we are a nation, as the Israelis believe, why are there Jews in Cape Town?

And so, Infeld searches for a definition that best describes the sui

generis nature of us, as a people. Until about 250 years ago, we described ourselves as *ama*, a people, a family, *bnei Yisrael*, the children of Israel. Says Infeld, we are a people, *mishpocha*, a family. One which you are either born into or adopted into.

The struggle in the modern era, says Infeld, is to be unified as a people without being uniform. Our mission and the mission of Jewish leadership must be the renaissance of the Jewish people.

Infeld says that for millennia, we have lived amongst people who hated us. Today, in many parts of the world, we must now learn to live with people who love us. This is an even greater challenge.

We need to define our new common mission as a Jewish people. We had a mission to build Israel, to free Soviet Jews, today we appear to be lost without a new common cause. And, our mission must lie in the direction of G-d, for it was G-d who gave us the mission to make all of the people of this earth blessed by our presence.

But says Infeld, the greatest challenge today is the paradox of power. Those who have no power go like sheep, but those who attain power need to learn how to use it wisely.

Aubrey Infeld was educated in the first intake into King David Schools in 1948. In the 70 years that followed, Avraham has become one of the wisest counsellors of the Jewish people. He boasts that he is one of the few people to receive an honorary doctorate without having written a book or a cheque.

To remedy that situation, Infeld has now penned a book of his thoughts titled *A Passion for a People*.

• *Infeld was a guest of the Jewish Literary Festival in Cape Town. His book is a compulsory read for any Jew in the modern era.*

for what they are.”

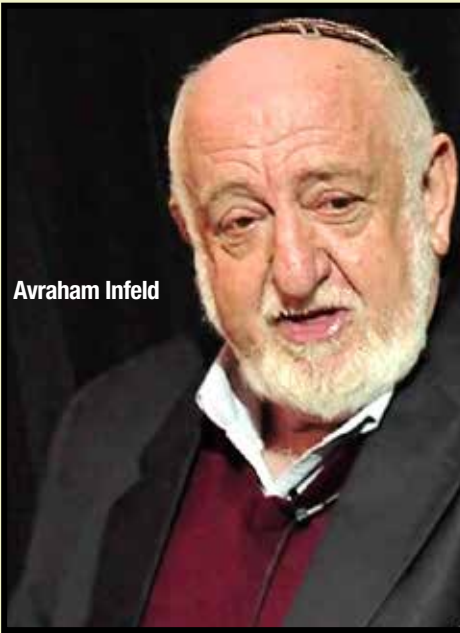
Nevertheless, others have expressed doubt as to the real impact Jihad has in promoting her cause. “Jihad is part of the Tamimi family clan, which is notorious for using its own children as props and propaganda tools,” says Shaun Sacks, an analyst at the NGO Monitor.

“While the anti-Israel cause may attract significant attention in South Africa, that is all they have to offer,” he says. “BDS [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions] and its friends use the same worn-out phrases and gimmicks to grab headlines and attention. Janna was here not long ago, and even though she got some media attention, her impact was minimal. In the long-term, it was insignificant beyond the BDS world in South Africa.”

He continues: “Her current trip will attempt to garner greater media attention. This will be done by co-opting any South African issue. She will make multiple references to Mandela, talk about her ‘experiences’ with apartheid and lack of access to quality schools. Ironically, her fame is due to her command of English and easy access to social media, a luxury that is unavailable to most south Africans her own age.”

Sacks also expressed scepticism about her being called a journalist. “How does this particular 12-year-old qualify as one of the world youngest journalists?” he asks. “Most teens have social media, and many have become gifted writers, but playing up this young girl who has no actual qualifications is an insult to an industry that has worked tirelessly to provide quality information from multiple angles.

“When you see the sources that support her, it’s clear that she is another example of children being manipulated as propaganda tools. These include Al Jazeera, IOL.za, Russian Television News, Turkish outlet TRT World and Vice Media. Not exactly a wide variety of opinions about her.”



Tikkun Olam for the selfie generation

TALI FEINBERG

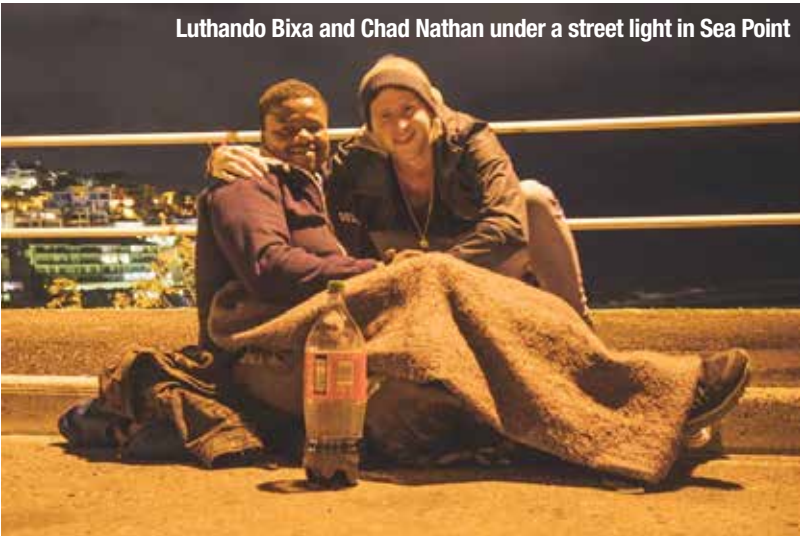
It was a chance meeting that turned Chad Nathan’s life as a talented Instagram “self-influencer” into helping someone less fortunate who wanted much the same things as him.

Until a few weeks ago, Nathan’s livelihood, self-worth, and sense of well-being came mainly from one source: himself. As a successful and talented Instagram “influencer”, his days revolved around taking photos and videos of himself and his activities, which he shared with more than 12 200 followers.

From this, he receives sponsorships, freebies, business opportunities, and the devoted following of fans from all over the world, who enjoy his exhilarating photographs and GoPro videos. “I’m living my dream,” says Nathan, but when he noticed a student of a similar age studying under a street light outside his Sea Point apartment in Cape Town, it made him stop and think.

“I first saw Luthando in March. He was sitting on the pavement by my flat, with papers and books spread out. Intrigued, I asked him what was up, and he said he was studying there, as it was too unsafe and noisy to do so in the townships. He also enjoyed the ocean, and watching people walking past. He said he was studying for a tourism diploma as he had excelled in those subjects at school, and dreamed of being a tour guide one day. I gave him something to eat and some money, and left it at that.”

Nathan went overseas, and when he returned in June, he once again saw Luthando studying under the street lamp. By now, it was winter – cold and dark – and in that moment,



to eat, Nathan did just that. He posted an Instagram “story” (an informal video that disappears after 24 hours), sharing his new friend’s tale, and asked everyone viewing it to contribute the cost of a cup of coffee to support him. With the tools at his fingertips, he then created a BackaBuddy crowdfunding platform, and the donations came pouring in.

“My phone basically blew up with messages, and offers of help. People wanted to donate stationery, office space, money, and just give their support. Within six days, we raised more than R36 000, and it’s still going up,” says Nathan, who is in awe at how effortless and rewarding the experience has been. He says he is fortunate that many of his mentors, international Instagrammers with thousands of followers, shared his message. Many of the donations came from overseas.

“The #helpluthando hashtag trended on Instagram and well-known brands pitched in. Cape Union Mart donated a windbreaker, and ProFind Sports donated two pairs of shoes that Luthando desperately needed. A dentist even gave him a

family so that he could have a bright future. That was just earth-shattering for me,” Nathan says.

As the days went by, Nathan used his talents to make powerful videos sharing the story, including drone shots and music. He also took Luthando to Chapman’s Peak – a dream for the aspiring tour guide – and shared it with everyone who was rooting for him.

“I always took my studies for granted, and here is someone sitting out in the freezing cold, studying the whole day to get his qualification.”

“Instagram is all about ‘me, me, me’, but for once, it wasn’t about myself. I could use social media to make a difference,” says Nathan. Unbelievably, he lost about 350 followers while sharing Luthando’s story, but gained many more. He explains that Instagram is all about creating perfectly curated visual images to gain as many likes as possible, so breaking the mold was risky, but completely worth it.

Nathan plans to help someone in a similar way every few months, and is going to encourage others from the Instagram community to do the same. The Jewish values of Tikkun Olam (healing the world) and chesed (kindness) have come to life for him.

What’s next for Luthando? Nathan will ensure that the money raised is safeguarded and invested, and will use it to help him find accommodation (he is sleeping at the Haven Night Shelter) and to cover basic needs. Nathan also wants to help Luthando to get an internship in the tourism industry. “Ultimately it’s about teaching a man to fish. I want to help him get on his feet to support himself.”

The experience has changed his outlook. “I always took my studies for

granted, and here is someone sitting out in the freezing cold, studying the whole day to get his qualification. Many people messaged me saying, ‘I’m sitting here studying for an exam I really don’t care about, in a warm house drinking tea, and suddenly, I am so grateful after hearing Luthando’s story’.”

The experience has also been empowering for him. “Now, Luthando calls me ‘Batman’, and I’ve been able to change his life!” Sometimes South Africa’s problems can be so overwhelming, they can have

a paralysing effect, leaving us not knowing where to start, Nathan says. This experience has shown him that “helping one person might not change the world, but it could change the world for one person”.

For Nathan, South Africa’s future looks bright. He has managed to achieve his dreams, and use the same platform to improve the world. “Social media is the future. We can use it to do good. My goal is to travel, make epic videos, get paid for it, and help those in need at the same time. I think that’s pretty damn cool!”

• To contribute, go to <https://www.backabuddy.co.za/help-luthando-and-friends>
If you are able to assist Luthando to get an internship in Cape Town, email Chad on chad@wildginga.com.

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Photo: Chad Nathan

Nathan saw the light. He wanted to help this man – and he knew just how to do it. He could tap into his Instagram following, and if each person contributed, they could change Luthando’s life.

After inviting Luthando into his flat to get warm and have something

free check up!”

Both Nathan and Luthando are 25 years old, but they have had completely different lives. “Life has been relatively easy for me. When I was little, I dreamed of going to space. When Luthando was little, he dreamed of being adopted by a white

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After emigrating, there is nothing better than coming home

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

An unstable economy, a highly charged political environment, and the threat of crime are just some reasons why many South Africans leave our shores seeking greener pastures. Yet, the same could be said of many of the countries in which they find themselves. In fact, an increasing number of emigrants are coming home.

According to figures from Economist Loane Sharpe, a staggering 400 000 professional South Africans have returned home since 2009. Gia Kalk, Talent and Brand Manager at Homecoming Revolution, a global headhunting firm for Africa, says her company’s observations echo this trend.

Founder Angel Jones originally set up Homecoming Revolution in 2004 as a non-profit organisation aimed at encouraging South Africans abroad to return home. The company commercialised in 2013, and now focuses on finding and placing globally experienced African talent across the continent, with a focus on middle management up to C-Suite.

“We refer to ourselves as the ‘brain gain company for Africa’,” said Kalk. “Our aim is to help reverse Africa’s brain drain by bringing some of the continent’s best and brightest home. Home comers are highly sought-after due to their unique combination of global experience and local commitment.”

According to figures from Economist Loane Sharpe, a staggering 400 000 professional South Africans have returned home since 2009.

There are also considerable drawbacks for expats. “Africa offers significant opportunity for the diaspora,” said Kalk. “Goldman Sachs has identified South Africa as the ‘big emerging market story’ of 2018.”

Indeed, the number of enquiries from South African professionals interested in opportunities back home has trebled since the start of this year,” Kalk said. “This is due to the significant shift in political and economic sentiment in the country since the start of 2018. We’ve been receiving enquiries from South Africans in the UK, US, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, and Australia interested in opportunities back home.

“Many enquiries have come from young families who want to return home and raise their children with family and friends close by,” Kalk said. Lifestyle, a sense of belonging, exciting career opportunities, and a sense of purpose are some of the reasons



The Lerner family when they bought their house in Australia

why many of their clients are keen to return.

The call of family and friends was definitely a factor for Jacqui Schewitz and her husband when they returned to South Africa from Israel a few years ago with their then one-year-old son. “We’d lived in Israel for five years, but we just found it too difficult there,” she said. “We made Aliya because of the appeal of living in Israel – it wasn’t about wanting to leave South Africa.

“But in Israel, there was no family, there were no connections, all the things you take for granted here. We’d been planning our lives in Israel, but we eventually decided to come back. It’s not necessarily South Africa itself that drew us back, but rather the fact that this is where we grew up, this is where our family and connections are. This is where we know people, and we know the community. That familiarity is so important.

“Now with two kids, I also like fact that there’s a grey area in South Africa. Israel’s very black and white, there’s no middle ground. South Africa is very understanding of that [factor]. At the moment, we see our future here and we have no plans to move. Life’s pretty good in South Africa. We have our hardships, but there are amazing opportunities here that we take for granted. We don’t realise how lucky we really are.”

For Nola Lerner and family, returning to South Africa after living in Sydney for ten years was simply about coming home. “We weren’t unhappy in Australia – we had a very good life. We’d finally bought a house, the kids were in good schools, and everything was actually good,” she said.

“My parents had come to live in Sydney for a little bit, but it hadn’t worked out for them and they’d just moved back to South Africa. We decided we wanted to be back home. There was something that was missing – that drumbeat of Africa. It’s in your soul, and it never leaves you.”

Lerner is also frank about the challenges that come with emigrating. “We felt like outsiders for ten years. As immigrants, you spend your life feeling like you don’t quite belong as much as you try to assimilate.”

The Lerner family moved from Johannesburg to Cape Town just a few years before going to Sydney. “In the short time that we’d spent there, Cape Town felt

like home to us. That was our home base, and if we were going to come back to South Africa, that was where we were going to be. No future anywhere in the world is absolutely guaranteed, but our future is in Cape Town for now. Our kids are happy at Herzlia. We’re settled.”

Those who emigrate often look to create a brighter future not just for themselves but for their

current or future kids. Yet, in some cases, it’s the kids who long for a life in South Africa.

Such was the case for Yoni Travers, who was born and raised

“There was something that was missing – that drumbeat of Africa. It’s in your soul, and it never leaves you.”

in Manchester, but now calls South Africa home. His South African mother left Cape Town and moved to Manchester more than 20 years ago. She got married in England and had Yoni.

“We came to South Africa once a year for a holiday, and I just started loving the place,” said Yoni. “I came to Johannesburg straight after school to study in a yeshiva, and then stayed on. I’ve been here for two and a half years now. I’m happier living in South Africa. I like the weather, the people, and it’s just generally a nicer place. I have a lot of friends who’ve moved out here as well. I see my future here.”

Just one more week to nominate your Absa Jewish Achievers

JORDAN MOSHE

With only eight days to go until the deadline, it’s time to submit your nominations for this year’s Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.

By getting your nominations in as soon as possible, you can be sure to acknowledge those unique individuals who deserve the *kavod* of an achiever’s award.

With nominations pouring in daily, the excitement surrounding this event is mounting. “We have new names coming in this year that we’ve never heard of before,” says Howard Sackstein, the chairperson of the *SA Jewish Report*. “Many are entering nominations because of our new categories, and previous nominees are re-entering to have another go at it. There are opportunities for everyone.”

Beyond excitement from the community, arrangements for the event are well underway, and all logistical matters are being finalised.

“The judging dates are being set at the moment,” says Sackstein. “We have some well-known personalities on the judging panels, including Brian Joffe, Deon Friedman, Dawn Nathan-Jones, and Dorianne Weil.

“Everyone is gearing up for what will be a month of careful judging, thoughtful consideration, and calculated evaluation,” he says.

The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards acknowledges those whose contributions to society are deserving of recognition, and pays tribute to men and women who have enhanced our community.

From entrepreneurship to the arts, community service to leadership, the various awards presented seek to acknowledge individuals from across the professional spectrum for their work.

“We celebrate South Africans who have changed the very fabric of our nation – it is they who are our role models and inspiration,” Sackstein says.

The spectrum of categories is broad, affording recognition to professionals from every field who deserve to be recognised for their remarkable contributions to our community and country. These include the Absa Business Icon Award; Absa Business Award; Absa Professional Excellence Award; the Creative Counsel Entrepreneur Award; the Europcar

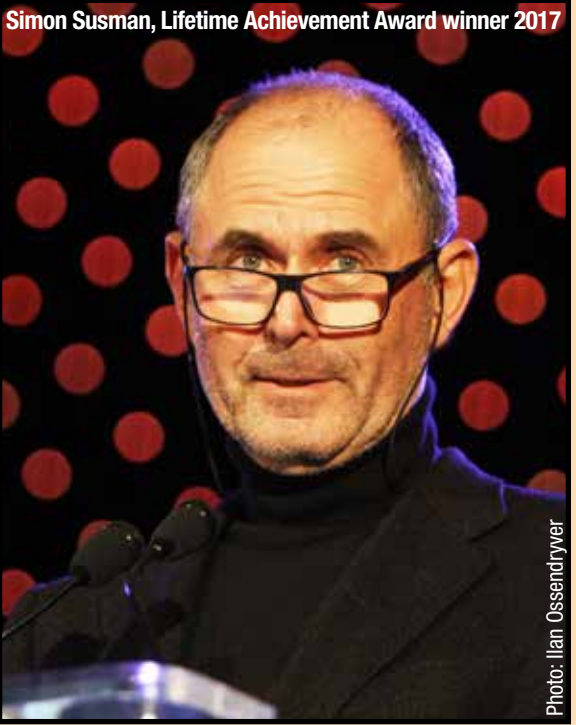
Jewish Women in Leadership Award; the Lifetime Achievement Award; the KIA Community Service Award; the Arts, Science, Sports and Culture Award; and the Humanitarian Award.

Says Sackstein: “We have received hundreds of nominations, and expect to receive plenty more. People recognise that this is a unique opportunity to pay tribute to the great people who live among us and perform amazing things. We encourage everyone in the community to do the same.”

“We remind the community of the upcoming deadline, and urge them to get their nominations in as soon as they can.”

Nominations are open to the public.

All nominations should be sent via email to nominations@sajewishreport.co.za. Nominations must include: The nominee’s name, telephone number and email address, the award for which the nominee is nominated, as well as a short motivation for the nomination. Nominations close at 17:00 on Friday 13 July.



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Murderous medicine: the role of psychiatrists in genocide

MIRAH LANGER

“Where are you taking us?” So reads the inscription on the memorial of the infamous Grey buses which, during World War II, were used to transport psychiatric patients to their deaths at the hands of doctors and nurses.

“The grey bus is to the Aktion T4 [programme in which psychiatric patients were ‘euthanised’] what the cattle car... is to Auschwitz and the Shoah,” said Professor Michael Robertson, Health Ethics Associate at the University of Sydney.

Professor Robertson explained how the killings of psychiatric patients, often in gas chambers, later became the prototype for the chief murder method in concentration camps.

Robertson was speaking at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre in Parktown. He explained how in October 1939, the SS Einsatzgruppe [mobile killing] detachments began the sporadic gassing of psychiatric patients in hospitals in Western Poland.

“From December 1939 through to January 1940, the first victims of Operation Aktion T4 died in a gas chamber built in a prison complex in Brandenburg.”

As part of this, “the Gemeinnützige Krankentransport – also known as the Gekrat – was a ‘benevolent’ transport company which was supposed to help transport people from institution to institution. What it was actually doing was taking them from psychiatric hospitals and facility care institutions to transitional [sites] – and then to their deaths.

“These buses would come into asylums and cause terror because patients knew that the people who left didn’t return.”

A replica of a grey bus now travels around Germany as a memorial to the atrocity, while another is placed in a fixed location in Ravensburg.

Robertson detailed how, by the end of the Aktion T4 programme, there were six euthanasia centres established in Austria and Germany. By 1941, these centres had also begun to murder prisoners from concentration camps who were too weak to work.

By then, more than 70 000 people had been killed in the scheme – and yet, its impact on the Holocaust was only just beginning.

After all, “after the cessation of the T4 programme, there were several hundred quite skilled mass killers who were unemployed”.

Soon, “these skilled killers were put to work on the much larger project of the elimination of the Jewish population”.

“Many of the Shoah’s most evil perpetrators... honed their craft during the T4 programme,” he said.

“The [T4 programme’s] process of identification of a group, their exclusion from the community... their mass transportation to their deaths in designated killing centres, and the disposal of their bodies, provided the ‘software and hardware for the Final Solution’,” said Robertson, quoting historian Henry Friedlander.

The direct link between the establishment of gas chambers in concentration camps and those originally conceived of by

psychiatrists came about during a visit by Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler to Minsk in August 1941.

“Himmler, and to a lesser extent [Reinhard] Heydrich, were concerned about the welfare of their men tasked with the elimination of enemies of the state – particularly when the decision was taken that woman and children were to be the victims. The anxieties of the senior ranks of the SS increased.”

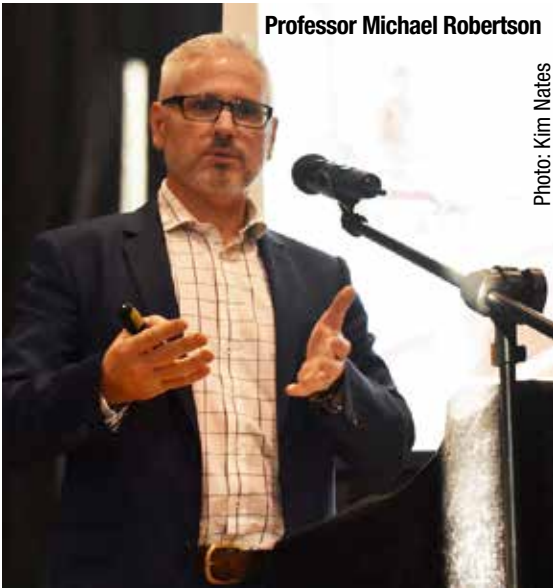
The visit by Himmler to Minsk proved pivotal in finding ‘inspiration’ from the murder methodology of psychiatric patients.

“At one point when visiting the ghetto in Minsk, Himmler is shown a demonstration pit killing of a hundred people from the ghetto.

“Himmler is standing at the edge of the killing pit, and his tunic is sprayed with brain matter... from one of the people shot in front of him.

“Later that day, he travels to a psychiatric hospital in Minsk, witnesses the gassing of psychiatric patients, and he has a Damascus Moment that this is the way things must precede.”

During his discussion of this era of murderous medicine, Robertson noted that eugenics was prevalent in many parts of the world at that time: “In fact, eugenics had a much more virulent presence in the United



Professor Michael Robertson

Photo: Kim Nates

States.”

Robertson added a caveat about the ideology of eugenics, warning that there was a danger of racial purity theories rising to prominence again.

“A failed state, a punished and shamed people, a public health crisis – all led to the potential for populism to take hold.

“This is a phenomenon that we are seeing now: economic instability, the struggle many have adapting to late capitalism. All are fertile ground for demagogues and populists who offer nostrums [schemes], whether they be racist exclusion, or whether they be, as in the case of National Socialism, biological nostrums.”

At a previous event at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, Robert Kaplan,

Professor and Forensic Psychiatrist at the University of Wollongong, expanded on the role of doctors in the Armenian and Bosnian genocides.

“The 20th century is the most murderous century in history,” was his opening declaration.

He said that while the significance of the Holocaust was clear: “We can’t see the Holocaust in isolation; there have been genocides before and genocides since then.”

For example, the Armenian Genocide, which began in 1915, was “a perfect prototype for the Holocaust”.

“The Nazis took very careful notice of what happened,” said Kaplan, pointing out that those behind the genocide were believed to have “set up the first known use of a primate gas chamber”.

As was the case with the Nazi party, “doctors were prominent in the central committee of the Ittihadist



‘Grey Bus’ memorial in Germany

Building of Lost Shtetl Museum begins in Lithuania

TALI FEINBERG

The construction of a new museum in Lithuania to commemorate Jewish life lost in the Holocaust began last week, after a ceremony attended by Lithuania’s top officials – including the country’s prime minister, Speaker of Parliament and foreign minister, as well as senior diplomats and Jewish leaders.

Designed by the same Finnish company which designed the award-winning POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, the state-of-the-art museum, located in Šeduva – 175km north-west of Vilnius – will open in 2020.

The museum complex will include a sprawling Jewish cemetery, which was completely restored and opened in 2015, monuments at three separate sites of Holocaust mass executions and burials, and a symbolic sculpture in the middle of the town.

“It will tell the story of the life of what was once the largest European Litvak Jewish population

living in shtetls,” according to the museum’s website. “Lifestyle, customs, religion and the social, professional and family life of the Jews of Šeduva will serve as the centrepiece of the museum exhibition.

“Museum visitors will be taught the tragedy of Šeduva’s Jewish history, which ended in three pits near the shtetl in the early days of World War II, concluding five centuries of the history of the Jews of Šeduva.”

Ex-South African educator Eli Rabinowitz, who now lives in Perth, attended the ceremony and spoke on behalf of the Litvak Diaspora, especially South African Jews. “Many Litvaks migrated to South Africa, aptly named the ‘goldene medina’,” he said. “Jewish life in the small South African country towns often mirrored that of the Litvak shtetl. We often heard stories from ‘der heim’, describing the rich Jewish cultural life throughout Lithuania, which had existed over many centuries.

“Those Litvaks who left Lithuania before the

Holocaust were indeed lucky. More than 95% of the Lithuanian Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, a greater percentage than any other country,” said Rabinowitz.

“In the future, when we visit this museum, we will be able to access the past with a better understanding of history. We will view the collection of objects and artifacts, giving us insight into how our ancestors lived their cultural, religious, work and home lives. We will learn about their values from their daily lives and from the items they kept and used.

“The museum will showcase the richness and the importance of Litvak shtetl life of years gone by. It will also reflect on the Jewish world that was destroyed by the Holocaust.

“The museum will educate Lithuanians and visitors to Lithuania, and so provide an opportunity to learn from our history and strive for a better world.”

Rabinowitz said he thinks the museum is being built now – before, as politicians and historians have realised, this past is lost to history.

He emphasises that the location is important, as “our Litvak heritage stems from the shtetls in this geographical region in Lithuania – not the bigger cities of Vilnius or Kaunas”.

Lithuania’s President Dalia Grybauskaitė said the laying of the cornerstone “heralds the reconstruction of an important part of Lithuanian history, closely interlinked with the history of Lithuania’s large Jewish community and its tragic fate”.

She added: “The Lost Shtetl Museum will bring back from oblivion the names and faces of many families, friends and neighbours, as well as their customs and traditions.”

Said Lithuania’s Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius: “This unique museum will capture not only the memory of the Šeduva but also the Jewish communities of Lithuania as a whole.”



An architect's drawing of the new Lost Shtetl Museum. The large pitched roofs take their form from vernacular architecture.

Photo: <http://www.arkim.fi/projects/culture/the-lost-shtetl/>

Vegan food versus chopped herring?

Shuls consider wider ‘menu’ to attract youth

JORDAN MOSHE

Young Jewish people want different things to their parents and grandparents. This includes how and where to pray. So, Jewish communities around the world are devising strategies to draw more young people to shul.

Although once standard, the cavernous, ornate shul with long pews, towering bimah, and services featuring *chazzanut* and choirs no longer enjoy the popularity they once did. Larger communities have aged and declined in numbers, with some of their members leaving to seek more intimate, relevant experiences at *shtiblach* (smaller places of worship).

Waverley Shul gets this, and last Monday evening at the shul’s AGM, it set about planning for the future. In a meeting lasting more than three hours, various strategies were discussed, among which was the pressing need to draw youth to the shul by transforming certain parts of its campus. The proposed plan would result in the creation of a youth centre, comprising a teenagers’ shul, a brocha area, and a recreation area in which games such as table tennis could be played. The plan includes an outdoor sports court. This is one of a few options being considered, but the shul has not yet reached a decision.

“No matter what they say, the wider Jewish leadership is not in touch with the general population and youth in particular,” says Rabbi Gabi Bookatz of Waverley Shul. “In the 21st century, young people are forced to be more independent earlier in life, and Jewish youth see little offered by their shuls or community. Judaism has the answers, and we have the ability to offer guidance to help navigate the difficulties of the modern age, but are we providing it, and are we making them a priority?”

There is consensus that too



few young Jews are involved in shuls. “Unaffiliated Jews almost never go to shul unless there is an occasion,” says Rabbi Shmuel Kagan of Mizrahi Shul. “Even then, they are not particularly involved in the service, know what to do, or feel it’s meaningful. Even among observant youth, many don’t attend shul consistently, and when they do, they often arrive late or just in time for the kiddush.”

The Youth Director of Sydenham Shul, Ariel Poyurs, feels the same way. “Youth who are not shul-goers generally spend Friday nights with their families, and then spend Shabbat day at shopping malls and the like,” he says. “Unfortunately, there is little affiliation with Judaism in most cases where people are not attending shul or celebrating Shabbat in some way.”

Those who do attend are opting to go to smaller shuls. Poyurs says that while more “traditional” youth spend time with their parents by attending services at larger shuls and seem comfortable there, the popularity of the big shul is decreasing. “Most religious youth at Sydenham do not particularly enjoy the larger shul model,” he says. “*Shtiblach* are definitely less intimidating and seemingly more family orientated, so youth, if they want to daven, will usually go there.”

Kagan agrees. “The youth view large shuls as outdated and unrelatable,” he says. “While unaffiliated youth may find them more passive and entertaining, and therefore more inviting, religious youth tend to avoid them. I think the more traditional elements need to be modernised – choirs need to be more lively and less drawn out. *Shtiblach* offer a more interactive and personal connection.”

Some say larger shuls don’t need to go, but must strive to remain appealing. “The big shuls cannot become irrelevant,” says Rabbi Gregg Bank, Youth Director at Linksfield Shul. “There is much to be said for generations that come together to daven on a Friday night. We need to adapt the concept. Shuls are incredible platforms for social gatherings, not only prayer, hence the name ‘Beit Knesset’. We aim to get the youth that come on Shabbat into shul, but for us, their mere presence on campus is a success. Keep the model, but adapt it to the times.”

Bookatz says shuls are more than capable of catering for the needs of the youth, but they need to be open to change and embrace the younger generation. “Leaders of communities need to get off their high horse and cater for every age group in their respective communities,” he says.

“The Johannesburg Jewish community is a multifaceted one with many subcultures, and I admit it is therefore hard, if not impossible, to please everyone. The important thing is to know your audience and bear

“Youth want to be cared for,” says Poyurs. “Care about kids, and they will come back. Attention from role models is the pillar of a successful youth service and presence. Create an appealing space where youth can express themselves and feel cared for.”

The challenges faced by the community are a global issue. “In North America, there is no doubt that the fastest growing Jewish sector is the ‘unaffiliated’,” says Rabbi Professor Adam Ferziger, Samson Raphael Hirsch Chair for Research in the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar-Ilan, who was recently appointed head of an interdisciplinary centre to study Judaism in Israel and North America. “That said, we need to be careful not to be beholden to statistics. Numbers are only part of the story. Judaism was never predicated on quantity, but on the quality of Jewish life.”

One of the bolder characteristics of contemporary Western society, he says, is general discomfort with uniformity, and Judaism is



them in mind. Every shul finds itself catering for a niche – they have a clear sense of who they are, what they stand for, and that is what they need to cater for.”

When youth ask to hold their own service on a shul campus, says Bookatz, rabbis must facilitate them, even at the cost of compromising the main shul. “By giving them their own space, you give them a sense of ownership and responsibility,” he says. “They can create a service to their taste, socialise, and create an experience to which they will want to return. It ensures continuity on campus, and a future for a shul. If they aren’t given this freedom, you lose them totally.”

no exception. “For better or for worse, individualism is celebrated,” says Ferziger. “Thus, the age of one synagogue-fits-all seems to be waning.”

“No doubt, we mourn the loss of the sense of unity of the large synagogue, which brings together a wide spectrum of Jews from religious, socio-economic, and age perspectives. Nonetheless, smaller groups offer the warmth, intimacy, and common purpose which many yearn for.”

“There are large synagogues that have succeeded by creating smaller sub-congregations for prayer, study, and socialising, without completely sacrificing the collective strength and financial health of a large congregation.”

What the youth is looking for, he concludes, is dynamism. “Dynamic leaders who know how to communicate, and do not ‘dumb down’ Judaism, but address the issues with sophistication and nuance, can attract younger people.”

“A synagogue that invites young people to take on central lay roles and respects their voices - even when it means losing control over programming, moving to a less formal prayer atmosphere, or heaven forbid, replacing the chopped herring, kichel or fish balls with vegan options, demonstrates that it takes the younger generation’s opinions seriously.”



ADVA'S MIRACLE BABY: AN UPBEAT, FEEL GOOD STORY

BY KEN STEPHENS

Like many women her age, Adva Felsman, 34, went to her gynecologist for a routine Pap Test last year. A few days later, Adva was shocked to discover that the test, followed by a biopsy, revealed that she had cervical cancer.

Fearing that she would not be able to have children, Dr.

addition, it manages Outpatient Clinics, an Emergency Room, Operating Theatres and a Delivery Ward. During the last year, the departments performed over 11,000 deliveries and several thousand surgical procedures.

The Sheba Medical Center constitutes the largest group of obstetricians and gynecologists in

"The surgery was deemed a success, and after a short period of follow-up tests to assure that Adva was free from cancer, Adva was told that she could become pregnant."

Jacob Korach, the Director and Dr. Tamar Perri, the Deputy Director of the Gynecologic Oncology Department at the Josef Buchmann Gynecology and Maternity Ward at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan, put Adva's mind at ease, suggesting and performing immediate surgery during which they removed the cancerous cervix while preserving the uterus, thus allowing future pregnancies (though necessarily by Caesarean section).

The surgery was deemed a success, and after a short period of follow-up tests to assure that Adva was free from cancer, Adva was told that she could become pregnant.

The Josef Buchmann Gynecology and Maternity Center includes two Departments of Obstetrics (including the Sigi & Marilyn Ziering Department of Obstetrics), the Department of High-Risk Pregnancies, the Department of Gynecology, the Department of Gynecologic Oncology, a Day-Care Clinic and several specialized units, including IVF, Infertility, Urogynecology, and Invasive and Noninvasive Ultrasound. In

Israel consisting of over 70 senior physicians, as well as over 30 residents and training physicians.

When Adva became spontaneously pregnant, she experienced premature contractions at 20 weeks. She was admitted to the hospital for tests and bed rest, and at discharge, a high-risk pregnancy medical consultant, closely followed her as an outpatient together with Dr. Perri, her gynecologic oncologist. She continued to have a series of check-ups to see that both mom-to-be and the fetus were doing fine.

When it was time to deliver the baby at 36 weeks, Adva underwent a delicate Caesarean operation performed by Dr. Perri and Dr. Gidon Sinvani, an expert in high-risk pregnancies at the Sheba Medical Center.

A hearty mazal tov to Adva, who delivered a beautiful baby boy!





Mom, dad and the talented Sheba Medical Team have been smiling from ear to ear, after partaking in the birth of this miraculous newborn boy.



Adva Felsman and her newborn son.

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The things our children will never experience

We were having dinner, and discussing what food my wife had prepared for an upcoming trip to the Kruger National Park. The list was uninteresting, and included the predictable.

That is until I asked how she intended to heat everything. “We bought a brothel,” piped my son. “A what?” I asked thinking I had not heard correctly. “A brothel,” he repeated, to my wife’s horror. “No boy,” she corrected, “It’s a skottel. A skottel!”

Which made me realise just how far removed our children are from the world we that grew up in. This is not to suggest that we would have known what a brothel was, but we most certainly would not have mixed it up with a skottel.

Younger parents (those in their 20s or 30s) might still live with the illusion that the chasm between themselves and their children might not be that big. They might still feel very up to date with the latest in technology and trend. But it won’t last. Before they realise it, they too will look at the life that their children are leading, and wonder how to describe their own.

Our children have never had the experience

of the comical multilingual announcement. “Good morning, goeie more, kan ek jou help, can I help you?” That phrase will never trip off their tongues as it might ours, and they have never been threatened that some rowdy bunch was going to throw them “with some stones”.

Most likely, they have never watched any television programme produced in English, dubbed into Afrikaans, and then simulcast back into English on Radio 2000. They will never understand the heart-sinking feeling that because it’s Thursday, they will have to be patient until 8pm in order for the English broadcast to begin. They will never have watched the test pattern as they waited for 6pm for TV to start, and will never contemplate how one was either a Betamax or VHS family.

For that matter, they can have no idea what it is to wait for Tuesday nights to find out what happens next in *Dallas*, and they definitely never spent an entire Northern Hemisphere summer wondering who shot JR. And then, not ever really understanding who pulled the trigger. They also did not learn what a mastectomy is from Miss Elli.

Unlike us, our children were never

burdened with closed shops and cinemas on a Sunday, because it was the “day of rest”.

Our children will never experience riding their bicycles around the block over and over in the July holidays, and having no way for their parents to contact them. They will never know what it is to be completely without technology, and not have immediate access to information should they need it.

Unlike us, they won’t need to listen at the door when their parents speak in whispers about riots and robberies and the dangers of the secret police. Because if they want the information, they can access it.

Conventional thinking is that the generation gap between our parents and theirs was one of the deepest. Many of our grandparents came from Europe, which meant that not only was there a geographical divide, but also a linguistic one, of culture as well as upbringing.

Often, the horror witnessed and experienced by that generation forced them to leave all memories behind, both the bad and the good, which removed them even further from each other.

That said, the advent and exponential fast

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



pace of technological development has had a similar effect on the relationship between us and our children. Add to that the fact that many of us spent our youth under an apartheid regime, something our children thankfully cannot begin to fathom, it distances us even more.

Neither childhood was all good or all bad. Just very different.

It is difficult to understand how our children, who carry part of us, are not part of our experience. It is difficult, as they get older, to not assume that our knowledge is theirs, and that our backgrounds are shared. Shared DNA is just that. And as much as it perplexes us, if we want them to know that a skottel is not a brothel, then we have to tell them. And maybe, let them know that although they are different, both can burn them.

Wounding words. Who decides?

What should we do about the k-word? Flight crew evicted a woman from a flight about to take off from Johannesburg to Durban two weeks ago, after she used the word in an SMS to refer to the black captain and passengers, and another passenger noticed it and complained to the crew. She admitted it was wrong, but protested that he had invaded her privacy by reading her SMS. She reportedly lost her job at her company as a result.

The controversial word goes way back in South African history, and was once common among sections of the white population to refer to black people. To South African ears, it is profoundly insulting, implying that the person referred to is inferior, uncultured, and subject to the power of the word’s user. Colonialism and apartheid’s cruel spirit embodied in a word.

It appears in important literature, for example through the mouth of a clearly racist Oom Schalk Lourens, a complicated character of one of the country’s admired writers, Herman Charles Bosman. Lourens says: “I could never understand why (G-d) made the ‘k’...”

The k-word has a close cousin in the United States in the insulting n-word, which has long evoked emotional reactions. In February, two books regarded as literary classics – the Pulitzer-prize winning novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, depicting racial injustice in Alabama, and *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, which deals with slavery in pre-Civil War America, both of which contain offensive language by racist characters – were removed from school syllabuses in Minnesota over fears their use of racial slurs would upset black students. Both books have been lauded over the years as anti-racist, although set in racially loaded contexts.

The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People supported the decision, saying the books use hurtful language “that has oppressed people over 200 years”. But free speech organisations criticised it, with the National Coalition Against Censorship saying that rather than



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

ignore difficult speech, educators should create spaces for dialogue to teach students to confront racism. It’s like banning Charles Dickens for portraying Fagin, the Jew.

The k-word and n-word have been red flags to a bull in South Africa and the United States. Now, in some quarters, including South Africa, a new word has been added: the z-word (Zionist), which has taken on almost as insulting a meaning when mouthed by virulently anti-Israel groups. How long will this list of no-no’s become?

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies’ decision last week to lay criminal charges for hate speech against three men who posted violent WhatsApp messages against Zionists and Jews, saying the Holocaust would be a picnic compared to what they were going to do to them, will test free-speech boundaries. Should those people be punished for hate speech, or are their utterances legitimate political discourse?

This country is early in the process of defining its red lines on speech. Economic Freedom Fighters Leader Julius Malema, a firebrand political figure, uses militant racial statements against whites and Indians, such as accusations that “the majority of Indians are racists”, and barbs against other groups such as coloureds – should that be allowed? Crude words, when repeated often enough, tend to provoke violent actions by reckless people. Malema is a potential Mussolini-in-the-making, and dangerous.

The topic tends to become irrational. But confronting it is a necessary process in clarifying post-apartheid South Africa. Remember the reputed banning of the children’s novel *Black Beauty* during apartheid because censors didn’t want the words “black” and “beauty” on the same page? Some scholars refute this, but whatever the case, the last thing we need now is to go back to that crazy mindset.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Linkage of anti-Semitism and Israel hostility a global phenomenon

South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Director Wendy Kahn took part in an “Expert Stakeholder Consultation on Monitoring and Combatting Antisemitism” meeting in Geneva last Thursday, where she updated the forum on recent incidents of anti-Semitism in South Africa.

The one-day meeting took place under the auspices of Dr Ahmed Shaheed, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and the American Jewish Committee’s Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights.

Participants included Dr Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, the UN Human Rights Council’s High Commissioner, Rapporteurs from several European Union countries, representatives of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and a range of academics and human rights practitioners. That Wendy was one of the presenters in this distinguished forum is a credit to our community, and testifies to its high stature on the global Jewish stage in spite of its relatively small size.

Wendy spoke about how the board was responding to recent anti-Semitic incidents in South Africa, referring to the legal and constitutional remedies available for confronting racism and hate speech in the country.

She stressed that in South Africa, the majority of anti-Semitic incidents and rhetoric are linked in some way to anti-Israel sentiment and events in the Middle East in general. She learned from fellow participants that South Africa was not unique in this regard; the conflation between hostility to Israel and hatred of Jews is in fact a global phenomenon.

Frequent references were made to the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, an event whose purpose was to fight racism, but which



Above Board Shaun Zagnoev

notoriously ended up facilitating the launch globally of a new form of anti-Semitism, this time revolving around hostility towards the Jewish state.

Wendy also attended a meeting of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) in Israel. This was preceded by the WJC National Community Directors’ Forum, an annual gathering of Jewish communal professionals from around the world to share experiences and discuss issues of common concern.

The board had the privilege of co-hosting this prestigious event in Cape Town last year. We benefit enormously from the support we receive from the WJC, and are gratified by the important part that representatives of our community, historically and in our own

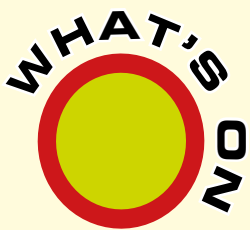
time, have been able to play in this vital institution.

Two board members, Mary Kluk and Gauteng Council Chairperson Marc Pozniak, are serving on the executive of the WJC. During the four-day conference, delegates visited Nahal Oz, a kibbutz, whose fields have been burnt by recent arson attacks from across the Gaza border. That night, the residents they met had to sleep in bomb shelters because of rocket attacks.

On the same day as Wendy was speaking in Geneva, the board laid criminal charges against three local individuals for anti-Semitic hate speech and intimidation. We are receiving strong support from different quarters for the steps we have taken to ensure that justice is done in this matter. As I emphasised in my previous column, anti-Semitism remains a relatively low-level threat to our community, but as we know, it can easily escalate if it is not confronted firmly at the outset, and nipped in the bud.

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

Friday (6 July)	in a big band style, followed by a video, <i>That’s Dancing</i> , which looks back at the history of dancing in film. Time: 14:15. Venue: Beit Emanuel Slome Auditorium, 38 Oxford Road, Parktown (entrance in Third Avenue). Contact: Marilyn 072 243 7436 or Jack 082 450 7622.
Sunday (8 July)	
• The United Zionist Luncheon Club (UZLC) hosts David Saks on <i>Is anti-Semitism on the rise in South Africa?</i> Time: 12:45 to 14:00. Venue: Our Parents Home. Contact: Gloria 072 127 9421 or 011 485 4851.	
Thursday (12 July)	
• Second Innings hosts Lauren Segal on <i>Cancer: A Love Story</i> . Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting starts 10:30. Venue: Arcadia. Entrance opposite Glenwood Lodge in Long Avenue. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors, includes tea and light refreshments. Contact: Linda Fleishman 011 532 9701.	
• The Big Band Music Appreciation Society hosts a programme compiled by Alan Garlick, including a short selection of dance-related numbers performed	
• Join the Women’s International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) every Thursday for a <i>Lunch & Learn</i> shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz. Time: 13:00. Venue: Beyachad. Contact: WIZO office 011 645 2515.	



Toothbrush, toothpaste donation puts smiles on the faces of Afrika Tikkun

A wise dentist once said you don’t have to brush all your teeth, only the ones you want to keep! In the interests of a healthy smile, a team of Grade 8 to 12 pupils from King David High School Linksfield went to the Uthando Centre in the Johannesburg CBD. Their aim: to donate toothbrushes and toothpaste to the young people of Afrika Tikkun, a non-profit organisation that caters for the youth.

The group, led by Tarryn Forman, has been collecting toothpaste and toothbrushes at

the school over the past two months. Tarryn, 18, has partnered with Afrika Tikkun before, when she started an initiative to collect books for Afrika Tikkun centre libraries.

“We all have immense power, power which enables us to change the lives of so many by doing the simplest acts of kindness,” said Tarryn when addressiing her school during assembly. “Why would you waste that power? Every single child deserves to smile.”

A thousand dental hygiene products were donated to Uthando.



Tarryn Forman with children from the Uthando Centre

Letters

ANTI-ZIONISM IS ANTI-SEMITISM

When I witness the malevolent campaign by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) and the ruling party and its affiliates: the South African Communist Party, Young Communist League, African National Congress Youth League, Cosatu, Cosas, the South African Students Congress et al, the most malevolent of them all are the “kapo mosers” of the South African Jews for a Free Palestine.

When I see the gross intimidation and hate speech against Jews in South Africa whenever we show any affiliation or solidarity with the Jewish state, including Israel-related functions being violently picketed as well as threats against anyone who speaks up for Israel, I am reminded of the plight of Soviet Jews from the early 1950s until the late 1980s, who faced brutal pressure from the Communist authorities to cut all ties with Israel, aided by the ever pervasive Jewish-born, anti-Israel quislings.

We must not forget the brutal attempts of the Soviet authorities to stamp out Jewish identity and assimilate the Jews by force into the “Soviet people”.

The Soviet media was poisoned by a daily barrage of propaganda against Israel, and Jews were put under draconian pressure to renounce Israel.

In some places Soviet Jews, were accused of “Zionist propaganda” because they recited the traditional prayer at Passover: “Next year in Jerusalem.”

To speak as a Jew, or for Jews, in any Jewish cause, was dangerous. Thousands of Jews languished in Soviet prisons and labour camps for practising their faith, learning Hebrew, or identifying with the Jewish State.

Martin Gilbert wrote in his book, *The Jews of Hope*: “Hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews were electrified by Israel’s victory in the 1967 war. But, it was the shrill Soviet propaganda about Israel’s imminent and total defeat that ignited the fuse of national identity.

“Some recall that this propaganda was so gloating in tone as to heighten to its limit the sense of affinity with the apparently doomed state. From that moment, many Soviet Jews regarded Israel as their nation, and emigration to Israel as their national purpose.”

Gilbert said that each week, and at times almost daily, press articles, television programmes, and wall posters portrayed Israel as a brutal – even Neo-Nazi state.

The propaganda so-beloved of the radical left today: “Zionism is fascism”, “Zionism is racism”, “Zionism is Nazism”, “Israel is an apartheid state”, was incubated in the Soviet Union.

The Jews of the Soviet empire persevered and today, hundreds of thousands have made their homes in Israel.

Israel and Jews are one. Anti-Zionism is Jew-hatred.

Gary Selikow, Johannesburg

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We ask that Sharp-Rite is not mentioned in reporting on the matter, as it is misleading to our customers, and defamatory to the company and its brand. We trust that this letter brings our involvement in the matter to an end, and brings peace of mind to our Jewish customers and suppliers.

Ismael Seedat, Johannesburg

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Little Givers kicks off with a visit to Sandringham Gardens

SIMON APFEL

Sunday mornings are usually as lazy and subdued here as they are anywhere else, but on this particular Sunday, Sandringham Gardens was a frenzy of activity and noise, most of it coming from a group of about 40 kids ranging from toddlers to teenagers.

One over-eager child asked an 89-year-old resident, “What was your favourite food?” If the resident happens to notice that the question was unfortunately framed in the past tense, he doesn’t seem to care. The conversation crackles along.

For the past five years, the Generation Sinai initiative has brought Jewish parents and children together in classrooms across the country to learn and discuss Torah values relating to living a meaningful, socially conscious life.

For this year’s Generation Sinai, in addition to the learning module, the decision was made to take the learning outside the classroom through the “Little Givers” initiative.

One Sunday a month, primary school pupils join South Africa’s Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein on visits and volunteer expeditions at various



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein and Rebbetzin Gina Goldstein with the Little Givers at Sandringham Gardens

the morning playing games with residents, or hearing and sharing stories.

For young kids needing help to break the ice, a series of conversation starters had been prepared. Questions included, “If you could teach a class on any topic, what would it be?”, “What’s the most exciting place you’ve travelled to?”, and “What’s the bravest thing you’ve ever done?”

“It was really sweet to see the kids – some as young as three or four – standing there asking these serious questions,” says Yali Friedman, the General Manager of Sandringham Gardens. “Some of our residents

“but this was something different and special. To see the different generations bonding like this was wonderful. There was just a great energy in the air.”

It wasn’t only primary school pupils. A group of youth leaders – high school pupils and university students from the Base, a shul in Glenhazel, marshalled the younger kids from the community, and brought them along for the morning.

“This was something we really wanted to be part of,” says the Base’s Rabbi Aharon Zulberg. “This is something any community can do – getting people, especially young people, involved in practical mitzvah outreach programmes.

“It could be going to the hospital, the old age home, another part of the city, visiting people who could do with company or some cheering up. There’s a certain thrill people feel that not only inspires them to help others grow, but helps them grow too.”

A similar event was held in Cape Town, with the chief rabbi joining a group of kids visiting the residents at Highlands House.

“I handed out chocolates, it was so great to see the smiles on their faces,” says Daniel Merris (9). “It was interesting that we asked the same questions to people, but everyone had such different answers.”

For Goldstein, it’s these kinds of small interactions that help nurture a new generation of caring, compassionate community members.

“Giving *tzedakah*, helping those less fortunate, making a real difference in the world – this defines who we are as a people, and who we are as a community.”

• To join the Chief Rabbi’s Little Givers campaign, email office@chiefrabbi.co.za or sign up at www.generationsinai.com



Little Givers Eli Warner and Daniel Merris with Highlands House resident Pincus Sanzul in Cape Town

Jewish welfare organisations in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

“Little Givers is about converting the Generation Sinai learning into action,” says Goldstein, “putting the values of *chesed* and *tzedakah* into practice, and making an ongoing, sustainable difference at some of our wonderful social welfare organisations – doing what we can to help them in their holy work.”

On Father’s Day, about 40 children and their parents surprised residents at Sandringham Gardens. Many had baked cakes and biscuits, and spent

don’t see visitors from one month to the next, so this was a real treat for them.”

Shayna Nudelman (9), accompanied by her dad, Shmully, had a heart-to-heart with her grandmother, for whom she had baked a cake.

“I loved spending time with my bubba. I told her about my life. I also really liked speaking with the other old people there. It made me feel happy.”

“Sometimes we get kids visiting on the weekends,” says Friedman,

Women inspired by Philippa Sklaar

Author and champion for women’s empowerment, Philippa Sklaar spoke about abuse at the Women’s International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) Women Inspired branch on 26 June.

The room full of women listened in shocked silence as Philippa shared her story of abuse, and spoke about what life is like for abused women the world over – possibly even someone you know. They heard what it means to be abused, why abused women find it so difficult to leave their abusers, and what can be done to help someone who might be in a similar situation.

It was an enlightening morning on an important topic for WIZO, which has made women’s empowerment a priority across the globe.



Back: Janice Leibowitz, Philippa Sklaar, Brenda Trope, Leslie Fine, and Maureen Shaftoe. Front: Joceline Basserbie, Lorraine Rosmarin, and Merlene Daniel

South African delegates to the international women’s forum in Sydney

Five members of the Union of Jewish Women joined delegates from 16 countries in Sydney, Australia, in May at the International Council of Jewish Women’s Convention. Women from Jewish organisations in Cuba, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Sweden, Poland, Israel, the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada, as well as the council’s United Nations representative, attended.

Professor Gillian Triggs, the former President of the Australian Human Rights Commission addressed the three-day convention. Two ex-South Africans, Vic Alhadeff, the Chief Executive of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, and Ronnie Kahn, the founder and Chief Executive of OzHarvest, Australia’s leading food-rescue charity, kept the audience spellbound with their



Daphne Miller, Peta Feldman, Mary Ndaba-Boardman (an ex South African magistrate now living in Melbourne), Leora Berger, Myra Goldenbaum and Lynne Raphaely

presentations.

Delegates visited the Sydney’s Great Synagogue, attended a talk on the history of Jews of Sydney, and were warmly received at a reception by the Lord Mayor at the Sydney Town Hall. Four South African members of the UJW were appointed to the council’s executive committee.

Gabriel flies high in Croatia

Champion debater Gabriel Brouard-Ancer jets off next week to represent South Africa at the World Schools Debating Championships in Croatia.

Gabriel, in Grade 11 at King David Victory Park, has been knocking at the door of greatness for several years. He has been selected consistently for top school and provincial teams, and has featured prominently in individual speaker points rankings. But he never relented in his pursuit of South African debating colours, and now, his tenacity has been rewarded.

Gabriel is one of five debaters from across South Africa selected for the South African team. Because he is so humble, few people are aware of the countless hours and weekends Gabriel devotes to debating. We are very proud of him, and wish him well in Croatia.



Gabriel Brouard-Ancer

Keeping canine friends warm in winter



Chiara Cohen

Chiara Cohen, 26, cannot bear the thought of dogs in shelters freezing in winter. Describing herself as passionate about two things: children and dogs, she has collected enough money through social media to buy 500 blankets. “We tend to collect for underprivileged people, but why not for animals, as they have no voice?” she asks, saying that she won’t stop here. To contribute blankets, or donate money, contact chiarafavish@gmail.com

Soccer star pops up at Shabbos

Bafana Bafana soccer star Dean Furman attended a pop-up shul in Glenhazel this last Shabbos, where World Cup fever is running high. The shul, led by Rav Ilan Herrmann, also hosted special guest Chazzan Mark Samowitz, who led the davenning beautifully. The 60 attendees gathered afterwards at Michelos restaurant for a Shabbos dinner.

Furman has 44 caps, including captaining the national side on numerous occasions. He has played in England at various clubs throughout his career, and over the past few years, has been playing with local team Supersport United. He spoke about his life, career, and challenges,

accepting a “volley” of questions from the enthusiastic crowd.

In answer to Rav Herrmann’s question about his Jewish identity, Furman said he was proud of his heritage, and enjoyed explaining elements of his faith to players and officials when the opportunity arose.

“I know it’s out there, but I have not really experienced any

form of anti-Semitism in my career,” he said. In the change-room, the players “take the mickey out of everyone – short, tall, fat, thin, black, white, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, atheist – everyone’s fair game and it’s done in good spirit”. Furman married his long-time partner, Natasha, at a shul in England in June.



Dean Furman and Chanan Hurwitz

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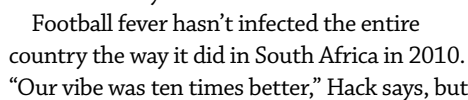
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JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Africa's hopes did look good for a millisecond,

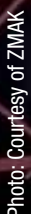
CNAAN LIPSHIZ

As the rival lies on the mat feigning unconsciousness, Brooks ceremoniously puts on a kippa and shouts out in Hebrew: “Blessed are you, Lord our G-d, king of the universe, amen!” as he lands his so-called



Russia's stadiums are relatively small compared to South Africa, holding only about 45 000 people. They have been mostly full and vocal, which is great – even if one of them, the Mordovia Arena, is a bit too close in design to the FNB Stadium in Johannesburg. As the old saying goes, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery – and as we keep saying, “our World Cup was by far the best”.

Brooks began wrestling in 2012 under a different persona, or gimmick, as they are known in the field. A wrestler told him in 2015 that he should create an Israeli character. Initially, Brooks expected his persona to appeal to Jews. But he also ended up a favourite of sorts among non-Jewish audiences who respond to his act because it's provocative, at times funny, unique, and stereotypical. (JTA)



Leor Brooks during a match in Greece

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