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# ■ Volume 22 – Number 35 ■ 12 October 2018 ■ 3 Cheshvan 5779

# ■ south african Jewish Report

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## Dirco plays ping pong on SA ambassador’s return to Israel

NICOLA MILTZ

Has the South African ambassador to Israel returned to work in the Jewish state or not? That is the million-dollar question that is confusing politicians and civilians alike.

It remains a mystery as to whether Ambassador Sisa Ngombane is back in Israel in his official capacity, or whether he has merely gone back to sort out some personal things before returning home.

The South African public is being told totally different things.

Local Jewry are quietly celebrating that Ngombane is back in Tel Aviv and opening the way for South Africa to become a role player in future peace negotiations in the troubled region.

“He is back,” said Zev Krengel, the Vice-President of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD). “We are not popping champagne because our enemies are fighting hard, and it doesn’t guarantee that a downgrade of the SA embassy won’t happen,” he told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

But, for now, he said, the community was happy.

Ngombane’s return to work has been refuted vehemently by the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (Dirco), which insists that Ngombane remains “recalled until further notice”.

Dirco spokesperson Ndivhuwo Mabaya insisted this week that Ngombane was in Tel Aviv for “personal reasons”. When asked when he could be expected back, he said, “Does it matter when he’s back? When his personal reasons are completed, he’ll come back. He may even be back, I don’t know.”

He said the embassy continued to “function fine”. It was like a school. “If you are a school and the principal goes on holiday, the school is still a school. The embassy is still an embassy,” he said.

When the *SA Jewish Report* visited the SA embassy in Israel this week, it was all but deserted. There appeared to be only one person on duty, and it was very quiet. The person who was in the front booth, apparently answering the phone, would not say who he was or what his position was. He was clearly not the ambassador. He said he knew the status of the embassy, but was not allowed to talk to anyone, let alone journalists.

Many people who have sent South African passports in for renewal have waited six months or more. When asked about this, the man at the embassy said it could take up to eight months.

The *SA Jewish Report* requested an interview with the ambassador almost as soon as Ngombane went back to Israel. After repeated requests, the newspaper got a response saying that the “ambassador is unfortunately not able to meet with you for an interview”.

“Communications on the matter of Ambassador Ngombane’s recall is a matter that is entirely the prerogative of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, our headquarters in Pretoria,” writes Teddy Ceke, the Tel Aviv Counsellor Political for Dirco.

Ngombane – who slipped quietly into Israel on 17 September without fanfare or announcement – clearly finds himself in a diplomatic seesaw. His future hangs in the balance as politicians attempt to figure out the conundrum.

Ngombane was recalled hurriedly to South Africa on 14 May in protest against Israel’s actions to defend itself against violent Palestinian protests at the Gaza border which resulted in the death of about 55 people. Ngombane, who has been South Africa’s ambassador to Israel since 2013, was recalled “until further notice”.

Only two months ago, Dirco said it would not return its ambassador until progress in the conflict had been made.

So, news of his hushed return came somewhat as a surprise. The South African

embassy in Ramat Gan sent a formal letter to the protocol department of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs announcing his return.

Dated 20 September, the letter said that the South African embassy “presents its compliments” to the foreign ministry in Jerusalem and to all diplomatic missions accredited to the Jewish state, and “has the honour to inform” that “Mr Sisa Ngombane has returned to Tel Aviv”.

Although there were ongoing negotiations for a long time, Krengel said, “We were pleasantly surprised. We are very happy and we believe it is the right thing to do. We believe President Cyril Ramaphosa and the ANC are being true to the ANC’s policy of engagement.”

Israel’s Channel 10 published a copy of the letter on Thursday, 21 September. This was followed by other media outlets reporting that the ambassador had “quietly returned” to Israel.

As soon as local media ran the story, there was a backlash from Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS-SA) and other pro-Palestinian lobby groups who lashed out at the government.

Dirco immediately issued a statement that

clearly contradicted the message from the embassy to Israel. It said Ngombane was “still recalled for consultations, and has not resumed his duties as an ambassador for SA in Israel”. It added that he had returned to Israel to deal “with urgent family and personal issues”.

International Affairs and Co-operation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu has been under increasing pressure from Palestinian support groups including BDS-SA to implement the decision taken by the ANC in December 2017 to downgrade the SA embassy in Israel.

These anti-Israel groups slammed the government for resuming ties by sending its envoy back to Israel, calling it the “return and not-return” of the ambassador.

Insiders believe the swift yet silent return of the ambassador has something to do with President Cyril Ramaphosa’s visit to the United Nations (UN). Some speculate that Ramaphosa made sure Ngombane was in Israel before he (Ramaphosa) would come face to face with world leaders including President Donald Trump.

Continued on page 4>>

## Zulu leader’s fervent support for Israel



Israeli Ambassador to South Africa Lior Keinan gives Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi a personal letter from Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, wishing him a happy birthday. See story on page 5.



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# Velaphi found guilty of hate speech

NICOLA MILTZ

Gauteng government employee Velaphi Khumalo has been found guilty of hate speech after his Facebook comments called for the country to be “cleansed” of white people. The Equality Court ruled last Friday that his vile comments that South Africans ought to treat whites like Hitler treated Jewish people were hate speech. The court said he was not literally calling for a white genocide, but his words “hurt the nation-building project” and that blacks and whites should be held to the same standard.

Judge Roland Sutherland’s judgement ended a protracted legal process which dealt in depth with the definition of hate speech as set out in Section 10 of the Equality Act. Sutherland ruled in favour of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) in its case against Khumalo, declaring his comments to be hurtful, harmful, and a promotion of hatred. The court ordered him to pay legal costs, and told the National Prosecuting Authority to investigate whether he could be criminally charged.

Khumalo was also ordered to provide a written apology to all South Africans acknowledging that his comments were hate speech. In it, he needed to admit that he was wrong, and that he would never make such remarks again. He was ordered to remove all references to the comments from social media. Khumalo wrote two posts on Facebook in January 2016. On 4 January, amid a storm over comments made by estate agent Penny Sparrow, Khumalo wrote, “[We should] cleanse South Africa of all whites. We must act as Hitler did to the Jews. I don’t believe any more than is a large number of not so racist whit people. I’m starting to be sceptical even of those within our movement 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 already seen.” In a subsequent posting, he wrote, “Noo seriously though u oppressed us when u were a minority and then manje [now] 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 [burned] alive and skinned and your off springs used as garden fertiliser.” Khumalo, who at the time worked as a



Velaphi Khumalo

sports officer for the Gauteng provincial government, said he wrote the posts after Sparrow used the social media platform to liken black people at the beach to monkeys. He said he was “deeply hurt” and in a “state of anger”. The Equality Court fined her R150 000. Sutherland maintained: “The thrust of this message is that whites should be ostracised, marginalised, excluded, indeed totally ‘othered’, dehumanised, and legitimately be subjected to violence.” The judge agreed with Khumalo’s lawyer, Stuart Wilson, that the posts couldn’t

literally be interpreted as a call for genocide against white South Africans, although he said it “purports to legitimise violence towards whites”. Sutherland said that whether Khumalo’s comments were hate speech depended on the interpretation of the reader. Defending Khumalo in his heads of argument, Wilson said Khumalo had experienced direct and indirect racism growing up in South Africa. He called the comments “grotesque”, but said they did not harm anyone. He maintained they could not reasonably be viewed as intending to incite violence and were meant only to respond to Sparrow’s insults. The ruling said Khumalo’s posts harmed South Africa’s “social cohesion”, and could potentially harm the nation-building project. Khumalo was brought before the Equality Court in Roodepoort previously over the same comments, when his political party, the ANC, took him to court following his Facebook comments. Without legal representation or providing evidence, he signed a settlement agreeing to pay R30 000 to a charity and to work actively towards helping achieve equality. To date, there has been no proof forthcoming that he has paid the amount. Sutherland said the R30 000 imposed already was enough, although the court ruled that Khumalo would have to pay the

SAHRC’s legal costs. The Gauteng government put Khumalo through a disciplinary hearing, but allowed him to keep his job after he apologised for his actions.

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:55	18:45	Johannesburg
18:39	19:32	Cape Town
17:46	18:37	Durban
18:04	18:55	Bloemfontein
18:10	19:04	Port Elizabeth
18:00	18:53	East London

## Torah Thought

# Cure loneliness by showing up and caring

When G-d created Paradise, each new creation was accompanied by the declaration, “*Ki tov*”, (It is good). Only human loneliness was deemed unworthy of G-d’s support – *lo tov he-i’yot le-vado* (It is not good for man to be alone.) G-d realised that there is no paradise for those who are isolated, without partnership, companionship, and community. And so, Adam and Eve were united to share life’s joys and tragedies. Rabbi Jack Stern once wrote, “The way we usually approach the subject of loneliness is the way we

used to approach death and dying before it was almost forced into the public arena – mostly by avoiding it, because we have all seen lonely people sitting next to other lonely people on lonely park benches, and they are the people

we would least like to be. So, we shy away from the subject altogether, because in our idealised, packaged version of healthy adjustment, there is no room for loneliness, not even a little bit.” Loneliness is far from a rare and curious phenomenon. The creation story of the Torah reminds us that loneliness, unfortunately, seems to be a central and inevitable fact of human existence. How ironic it is that the more crowded the world gets, the lonelier we feel. How ironic it is that the more technologically advanced we become, the more sophisticated, fast, and far-reaching our tools of communication, transportation, and transaction become, the more we experience disconnection, alienation, and separation. This is not solitude. Solitude is coffee and a newspaper, a bath, and a glass of wine. Solitude is a walk in the morning breeze, a beach chair at sunset. Solitude is being alone with a meandering thought, a silent prayer, a daydream, a remembered melody. Solitude is a stolen hour writing in a diary, practicing a skill, listening to music. Solitude is being alone by

choice. Lonely is being alone not by choice. Our tradition teaches us to care for the widow, the stranger, and the orphan. But, if we are honest with ourselves, do we act to the best of our abilities? Have we failed to show up for those in our families, our communities, who bear the burden of a loneliness they never chose, even if we could do something about it? Or worse, did we contribute to another’s loneliness? Healing power resides in simply showing up, in putting our arms around someone else, in dedicating an hour to performing a mitzvah for someone else. Anyone who spends an hour making a *shiva* call, visiting the sick, reaching out to someone who’s family is overseas, volunteering at an old-aged home, or reading to children, knows this. When we reach out to another, the hand of G-d reaches out, and takes away a little of the loneliness. May 5779 bring us closer together.



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# SA-born businesswoman may bag US ambassadorial position

NICOLA MILTZ

Jewish South African-born Lana Marks, a bespoke handbag designer to the world’s rich and famous, has been pinpointed in world media as the future United States ambassador to South Africa.

However, the US Embassy in South Africa says it has not been informed about her, despite international media reports saying that this East London-born businesswoman was handpicked for the job by US President Donald Trump.



Lana Marks

This week Robert Mearkler, US Embassy spokesperson, told the *SA Jewish Report* that “the White House has not announced a nominee”.

Marks, born Lana Bank, left the sleepy town of East London about 40 years ago with her British psychiatrist husband, Neville Marks, and has lived a life less than ordinary ever since. She is the owner and Chief Executive of Lana Marks Collections, and has built an internationally-recognised fashion accessory empire. She has up-market stores in Palm Beach, New York, and Beverly Hills. Most recently, she opened an exclusive store at one of Sol Kerzner’s spectacular hotels, Atlantis The Palm in Dubai.

Her coveted leather handbags are, according to her website, made from alligator, crocodile, ostrich, and lizard.

Marks, 65, who lives in Palm Beach, has come a long way from East London, known as “slum town” and its residents as “slummies”. Having attended Stirling Primary School and Clarendon High School, she counts the late Diana, Princess of Wales, as one of her dearest friends, and even named a bag after her. She has designed exotic leather bags for Hollywood’s A-list stars attending the Academy Awards. The late Elizabeth Taylor, Charlize Theron, Angelina Jolie, Dame Helen Mirren, Kate Winslet, and Jennifer Aniston, are just some of her clients.

Many of them adore Marks’ most expensive red-carpet classic, the well-known, diamond

encrusted Cleopatra Clutch, which goes for up to R1 million. Other bags will set you back anything from \$10 000 (R147 818) to \$400 000 (R5,9 million).

Mearkler puts the media reports down to “chatter on Twitter”, and insists that while he is aware of the recent media reports about Marks, no announcement has been forthcoming from Washington.

“We have no update on a nominee for US Ambassador to South Africa. It is our White House, and not the Department of State, that begins the process, and it will be the White

House that will make an announcement if/when a nominee has been selected,” he said.

Despite this, the dwindling, yet close-knit East London Jewish community is abuzz that one of its own might be considered for the high-ranking position – a post that has been vacant since Patrick Gaspard resigned in 2016.

Lifetime resident and former friend of the

Bank family, Louis Robinson, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the Banks were very well known and involved in the local Jewish community. He described them as socialites, saying that the family loved the movies, which might explain Lana’s taste for Hollywood and the lifestyles of the super-rich and mega famous.

The family lived on a large property with all the lavish suburban trappings, including a tennis court, swimming pool, and bar. The home even boasted a movie theatre, which in those days was “quite something”, said Robinson. Lana played tennis, he recalled. He did not know how far she went with it, but remembered her being “quite good”.

Marks has said she played international tennis, gracing the courts at the South African Open, Wimbledon, and Roland Garros. However, according to an article in *Business Day* in 2006, the details of her tennis playing days are sketchy.

Her childhood also included ballet. Both extra murals, she has claimed, instilled in her a strong work ethic and discipline, which helped her career.

Although his memory is hazy, Robinson said the late Alec Bank was a property developer and builder who owned many blocks of flats in the town. He was a member of the Hebrew Order of David, and the former president of the Chaim Katz Lodge No 25.

Said Robinson, “On Sundays, Alec Bank liked to show movies in his specially built home

cinema with a reel projector. He could seat up to 40 guests.”

It is believed that the family owned the drive-in at Beacon Bay, and that Lana’s mom, Blanche, had a movie rental business and hired movies and projectors.

Robinson’s mother, Zahava, 91, told the *SA Jewish Report* that she played bridge with Lana’s mother Blanche for many years, and that “Blanche was very good at flower arranging”.

Marks often recounts the story of where it all began. In numerous interviews, including a recent *Hello Magazine* spread, she tells how she became a handbag designer after she was

invited to a birthday celebration for Queen Elizabeth II aboard the royal yacht Britannia.

After searching in vain for a red alligator handbag to match her suit, she concluded that “a niche existed in the market place for luxury, exotic leather, fashion handbags in fabulous colours”.

If President Trump has made his choice, it will still have to be approved by the Senate. It is common practice that before the nomination of an ambassador is announced, the host country, in this case South Africa, is informally consulted. The SABC has reported that President Cyril Ramaphosa is said to be “considering the nomination”.



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# Board vows to keep fighting anti-Semitism

NICOLA MILTZ

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has promised the community it will leave no stone unturned in its fight against anti-Semitism to ensure that the community continues to enjoy the freedoms central to its vibrant way of life.

This was the message of the SAJBD Gauteng Council’s biennial conference held at the weekend.

Gauteng Chairman Marc Pozniak insisted, “To be an anti-Semite in South Africa must and will have consequences. For now, our community is free to walk to shul and free to wear kippot loudly and proudly, but we remain vigilant.”

He said levels of anti-Semitic activity in South Africa remained low compared with other diaspora communities. Over the past two years, there were on average 50 incidents a year, the majority of which took place in Gauteng, where about two-thirds of the community lives.

He said the main source of anti-Semitic sentiment and behaviour was the conflict between Israel and its neighbours. Anti-Israel campaigning sometimes crossed over into an outright attack on Jews. The ongoing

vilification of the Jewish state, he said, continued to threaten the community’s sense of security and comfort.

Nearly all the incidents were non-violent, and were characterised by hate mail or verbal abuse. “Despite this, we can never afford to become complacent. In a volatile, racially divided society like South Africa, there is always a risk that anti-Semitic modes of thinking will become increasingly prevalent, even coming to be regarded as socially acceptable.

“In today’s interconnected world, anyone with a computer and an internet connection has a readily available audience... anyone can be an influencer or opinion maker with minimal regulation or oversight,” said Pozniak.

Almost all of the cases the Board has taken up over the past decade have concerned offensive slurs on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Pozniak said that the rules of the game had changed, and with that the Board’s way of tackling the issue also had to change, all while making sure that battles were chosen carefully.

Realistically, not every incident could be taken up with the relevant existing statutory bodies, so the Board concentrated its efforts on slurs and statements made by prominent public figures.

“Anti-Semitic comments obviously need to be taken more seriously when they are made by political leaders as opposed to ordinary members of the public,” Pozniak said.

He highlighted recent successful outcomes including three hate-speech cases which involved public figures. Two of the cases confirmed that threatening Jews for supporting Israel constituted prohibited hate speech.

“This is important in an environment where the traditionally strong Zionist loyalties of the Jewish community are coming under continual pressure as a result of the aggressive activities of radical anti-Israel lobbies like BDS-SA, and its sympathisers within certain political parties,” Pozniak said.

He said the Board tried where possible to resolve incidents through dialogue and conciliation rather than going the legal route, and highlighted two cases where conciliation had been very successful.

“We firmly believe that where perpetrators display genuine contrition, these are the kinds of outcomes we need to strive towards.”

Pozniak acknowledged that not everyone in the community agreed with this approach, with some saying contrition was not enough, that education was insufficient, and that the Board should adopt a less forgiving approach.

It begged the larger question of how the community and more importantly how we as South Africans should confront the deeply fractured society in the world today.

“Will we side with intolerance and divisiveness, or will we honour the legacy of Mandela and choose the path of unity

and forgiveness? We choose the latter.”

Pozniak stressed that tolerance and forgiveness should not be misinterpreted as weakness.

The Board’s efforts over the past year have been largely taken up with the campaign against the proposed downgrade of the South African Embassy in Israel.

“The hours upon hours of work that has gone into keeping the enactment of this resolution at bay is simply not translatable into words,” said Pozniak.

After his presentation, some time was spent discussing the draft amended constitution of the SAJBD Gauteng Council.

Wendy Kahn, the National Chairperson of the Board, told those present about a poignant and meaningful moment she had experienced over the past year when she visited the



Marc Pozniak speaking at the conference. Harold Jacobs is seated beside him.

Soweto house of mourning of the late Winnie Madikizela Mandela soon after the struggle stalwart’s passing.

Accompanied by the Board’s Charisse Zeifert, and her daughter of 13, the three were welcomed with open arms into the home and enveloped with warmth and a spirit of unity. They were struck by the similarities to Judaism of deep soulful mourning taking place at the house.

“This was a shiva house. The mourners were red-eyed and seated on low benches, and seemed genuinely touched by and grateful for our visit. They embraced us with such warmth during their time of sorrow. It is something I will never forget. They kept saying, ‘Shalom, shalom, shalom!’ It was very moving,” said Kahn.

The moment highlighted for her the vital importance of finding areas of commonality and unity amongst all South Africans. “There is so much that unites us in South Africa, we just have to find the areas of commonality, find the places where we can truly connect.”

The election of the Gauteng executive will be conducted at the next Gauteng Council meeting on 25 November, where President Cyril Ramaphosa is scheduled to speak.

## Dirco plays ping pong on SA ambassador’s return to Israel

>>>Continued from page 1

Ramaphosa left South Africa on 22 September along with his delegation, which included Sisulu, to attend the UN General Assembly in New York.

The two would have rubbed shoulders in every diplomatic corridor with world leaders, many of whom might have enquired about the status of the South African ambassador in Israel.

During Ramaphosa’s visit to the assembly’s 73rd session, he outlined South Africa’s foreign and domestic policy goals and priorities in his inaugural address, as well as the country’s land-reform programme.

“Our resolve to end ongoing conflict and our determination to root out terrorism must be matched by action and by the appropriate deployment of resources,” Ramaphosa told the UN.

“The fact that the people of Palestine have endured occupation and suffering for nearly as long as the United Nations has existed, makes their plight no less pressing, nor their suffering any less acceptable.”

Ramaphosa met the chief executives of major global companies as part of his drive to attract foreign direct investment to help boost the South

African economy.

Apart from numerous trade agreements South Africa has with the US, there has been recent concern about the Trump administration cutting aid to South Africa, as it has threatened do to other nations that frequently vote against the US in the UN.

“Ramaphosa is walking a tightrope on this issue,” said Krengel, “There’s an ANC resolution to downgrade the embassy and pressure from the BDS on one hand, and there is pressure from Western leaders on the other hand. Ngombane, for now, is back. That’s the main thing.”

Wendy Kahn, the National Director of the SAJBD, said this week, “The SAJBD reiterates our call to Dirco to look for ways to contribute to resolving the Palestinian Israeli conflict. South Africa, with our history of attaining resolution through dialogue and negotiation, has a pivotal role to play in facilitating dialogue between the parties. We have applied this to many conflict regions in the world, and we urge [the government] to apply this same international relations strategy to this situation.”



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**JORDAN MOSHE**

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For decades, Buthelezi has had a special connection with several notable figures within the Jewish community. These include Arnold Zulman, in whose home Buthelezi and his wife, Irene, spent many evenings during the height of apartheid, and anti-apartheid stalwart Helen Suzman. Even further



## Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi

Buthelezi was praised by Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan, who said that one of the defining moments in

After a brief musical interlude performed by the Yeshiva College choir, which included songs from the musical *King Shaka Zulu* (which had members of the audience ululating and clapping), Rabbi Avraham Tanzer of Yeshiva College presented a menorah to the prince. "Here is nothing less than a legend," said Tanzer. "You have been a lifelong friend to us and have given your complete commitment to our

Buthelezi concluded by encouraging the audience to lay a firm foundation on which future generations could build a better future and reiterated his gratitude. “When I received this invitation, I thought that it was G-d’s way of giving me the opportunity in the twilight of my life to say thank you to the Jewish people,” he said. “Friends, I am humbled by this celebration. May Hashem bless you for your kindness towards me.”

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# The battle between the Doves and the Hawks

**I** was in Israel when I heard the phenomenal news that the South African Ambassador to Israel was going back to resume his duties. That was word from South Africa. When I mentioned it to the Israelis I knew, they seemed bemused, but for the most part they thought that that the embassy was already closed. For that matter, they also thought that the Israeli embassy in South Africa was closed, and that their ambassador was back home.

So, while I was thrilled, the truth is that it means very little to Israelis whether they have political ties with South Africa.

All they seem to know of South Africa is that things aren't great here – especially for Jews. This is what a number of people – sometimes perfect strangers – told me when they heard where I was from.

But then, the news about South African Ambassador Sisa Ngombane got really blurry when I then heard that the Department of International Affairs and Co-operation had denied that he was resuming his ambassadorial work, citing some story that he had personal issues to deal with. Really! You can read the full story on our front page this week, but this is what I believe is the back story:

My sense is that the governing party is divided into two very disparate sides, one that sees that Israel is not as bad as Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) makes it out to be. It also recognises the importance of a relationship with Israel, and its very supportive partner, the United States. It acknowledges what it can do in trying to negotiate peace in the Middle East. It knows that if it is proactive and open to seeing both sides, it can have a positive impact on a difficult situation.

This side is made up of the people in government I like to call the Doves because they see peace and prosperity as the solution, and are willing to do what they can to get there. They are open minded, and are aware that they will always have a historic relationship with the Palestinians because of how they helped each other during apartheid years, but that there are always two sides to every story. They want to help create a two-state solution.

Then there are the Hawks. They are strongly influenced by BDS. They have met and are acquainted with Palestinian radicals from Hamas – even perhaps Hezbollah. In fact, they invited and welcomed Hamas officials to the ANC's national conference at the end of last year, when Cyril Ramaphosa was elected leader of the party. They hear the organisation's stories, and believe them. They have not spent time getting acquainted with both sides of the story, nor are they interested. They seem quite happy to go with what they are told.

It is this side of the ANC that put pressure on the Jewish community to condemn Israeli activity on the Gaza border back in May. It is this side of the governing party that on a number of occasions this year made public statements insisting that Israel pull out of Gaza. These Hawks are clearly misinformed about integral and very public information that Israel pulled out of Gaza in 2005 – 13 years ago. They clearly don't care that Israel did this, nor that it was done in the hope of benefitting a peace effort. Clearly, this side of the ANC doesn't believe it necessary to check the facts and do its own research.

So, I believe the Doves sent Ngombane back to Israel. Perhaps he has personal issues back there, but I do believe he was sent back to do his job. They knew it was controversial, so they kept it quiet.

When the Hawks and BDS discovered this, they pulled out all the stops to change it. They didn't seem perturbed that the government would look foolish, which it does, at backtracking and causing confusion. No, they were determined that under no circumstances would the South African government have any relationship with Israel. For the Hawks, it is irrelevant what the facts are, and why it is important to send him back. They are interested only in destroying any relationship between South Africa and Israel. It is ugly and unfair, and clearly they are so strong, the Doves have had to take a step back... for now.

My sense is there is such confusion around this, even Ngombane is unsure what to do. He is in Israel, but not at the embassy. While the embassy should be able to operate without him, it isn't. No-one answers phones, responds to emails, and apparently you are lucky to find anyone there. Confusion? I would say so!

While I believe there are a number of wilful Doves, some in top government positions, they don't seem to be exerting enough power to ensure that they do the right thing. Clearly the bullying BDS-ers are making life very difficult for them, using the historic connection with Palestinians as the trump card.

The next few weeks are vital, and we will see who triumphs in this battle. My worry, though, is that if the Hawks win, as South African Jews we will not be left in a good situation. You see, as I have said before, South African Jews and South Africa in general will be the losers in the battle if Israel and South Africa's ties are broken. Not Israel, that's for sure, it barely notices one way or the another.

South Africa can gain only by having a relationship with Israel on technological, trade, and even political levels, and my guess is that the Doves realise this. However, it may be too late after the Hawks destroy the relationship.

From this point, I send out a dove of peace with a message to the government to do the right thing, and let Sisa Ngombane resume his duties.



**Shabbat Shalom!**  
**Peta Krost Maunder**  
**Editor**

# Russian tightrope between Israel and Iran in Syria

If there is something surprising about the downing of a Russian military aircraft a little over three weeks ago in Syria, it is that it didn't happen sooner.

Ever since Moscow took control of the skies over Israel's northern neighbour three years ago, it has walked an increasingly tight rope maintaining the status quo between Israel and Iran who are sworn enemies and both operating inside Syria.

Sometimes when you try to be everyone's friend,  
you land up having no friends.

For a while now, Jerusalem has been making a lot of noise about the close working relationship between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Every few weeks, Netanyahu visits the Kremlin for talks, consultations, or updates behind closed doors. On more than one occasion after his return to Israel, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) has almost immediately conducted massive airstrikes in Syria.

The feeling among Israelis is that while Putin does not approve of the strikes, he turns the other cheek, which from an Israeli military point of view amounts to much the same thing.

Israelis boast how well the two leaders get on. Netanyahu was a guest of honour at the Moscow Victory Day parade in Red Square in May. The two countries have long enjoyed good relations despite the ongoing problems besetting the region.

But in reality, all the showmanship didn't stop relations plummeting to an unprecedented low. This doesn't mean that a severance of diplomatic ties and Russian imposition of sanctions is likely. For now, at least, the matter seems to have been dealt with.

The crisis started after a Russian reconnaissance plane was mistakenly shot down by Syrian air defence units, killing 15 Russian servicemen on board. Moscow launched an official investigation. This concluded, with the help of radar imagery, that the IAF was solely responsible for the tragedy by using the Russian plane as cover and exposing it during a raid on Syrian targets. Jerusalem denied any responsibility, and blamed Syria and its ally Iran for the incident.

A number of analysts – both Israeli and Russian – feel the mask has dropped and “Russia has revealed itself as an enemy of Israel”. What’s more, many suggest, there’s been a resurgence of traditional anti-Semitism in Russian nationalistic-religious discourse, with stereotypes like “Jewish treachery” and “Jewish ingratitude” again surfacing.

As one observer wrote, “Many Russians hear on Putin’s media outlets that in exchange for giving permission to use Syrian airspace and a number of other gestures to the Jewish people of Israel, their country has paid with the plane disaster. They easily identify with the popular anti-Semitic image of ungrateful Soviet Jews who were saved by Stalin and by the Russian people from annihilation, but who continued to cultivate ties with the enemies of the Soviet Union.”

This view is best summed up by the comment expressed by many Israelis I've spoken to that, "It's classic anti-Semitism – Syria shoots down a Russian plane, and Israel gets blamed!"

In response to the incident, Moscow last week



## DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier



delivered its S-300 surface-to-air missile system to Syria. The move is meant to protect Russian troops and military infrastructure in the country. However, many in Israel interpret it as a slap in the face, as Jerusalem has repeatedly campaigned against this, fearing it could hinder the IAF's aerial capabilities.

The S-300 system fires missiles from trucks, and is designed to shoot down military aircraft and short and medium-range ballistic weapons. The system make things more difficult for future IAF strikes against weapon convoys destined for the Lebanese militant organisation Hezbollah in Syria. It also helps protect Iranian forces in the country from Israeli attacks.

But in the bigger picture, what is just as concerning is that three months are needed before Syrian soldiers are able to manage the system independently. Thus, for now, it will be Russian officers operating the missiles against Israeli aircraft.

Imagine if one of them was to shoot down an Israeli plane? This might be a moot point, though, as American President Donald Trump has reportedly agreed to the immediate delivery of an additional number of F-35 stealth war planes – considered the best fighter jets in the world – to the IAF. They are allegedly able to carry out combat missions in Syria without being detected by the S-300 anti-aircraft batteries.

Many Russian citizens criticise Israel for behaving as it wishes. The official Russian response, in part, can be interpreted as a warning to other countries to be wary of shooting down Russian planes. But neither side wants a serious bilateral crisis, and both are already working on easing tensions.

Netanyahu announced last Sunday that he and Putin had spoken via telephone and “agreed to meet soon in order to continue the important inter-military security co-ordination”.

At the time of going to press, Deputy Russian Prime Minister Maxim Akimov, had arrived in Israel for discussions on economic co-operation. Netanyahu used the opportunity to stress the importance of continued dialogue between the countries over common threats.

In essence, what exists between Moscow and Jerusalem over the latter's military behaviour in Syria is a "gentleman's agreement" that, especially now as the war in Syria winds down, is critically important to Jerusalem. If Russia so chooses, it can hurt Israeli interests by covertly supplying arms to parties Israel regards as her enemies. It can also threaten to shoot down any Israeli plane approaching Syrian airspace.

Netanyahu has repeatedly vowed he will continue to uphold military co-ordination with Russia in Syria. However, he will have a hard time changing the new reality in that country, despite the delivery of the new American stealth fighters and his frequent visits to Moscow.



# Friday afternoon at the Gaza border

PETA KROST MAUNDER

The Gaza border is not on the tourist map of Israel, but it sure provides a better understanding of the ongoing bitter conflict.

Last Friday, on 5 October, we were as close as civilians could get at the time to the Israeli side of the Gaza border.

Almost every vantage point to the border was closed off to journalists and civilians, with army tanks turning people away. That is, except for the Black Arrow (Chetz Shachor) Memorial site, a site to commemorate paratroopers killed in battle, and celebrate the heroic deeds of those in action.

This site has become a down-time place for off-duty soldiers, and a place for journalists to see what is going on at the border down below. We were 900m from the border and binoculars helped give us a view of what was happening.

We found out later that day – once safely back in Jerusalem – that about 20 000 Palestinians had participated in a border protest. Three Palestinians, including a 14-year-old boy, were reported killed and dozens injured as they threw hand grenades and attempted to get into Israel.

As we stood there at about 15:00, we felt the excitement and fear in the air as across the border, hordes were visibly growing. We could see smoke coming from different points on the

other side.

Fridays have become known for violent protest on this border – which recently became almost daily occurrences. The protests began in March this year, with a series of uprisings dubbed the “March of Return”.

The protesters are known to throw rocks, Molotov cocktails, as well as shoot border troops to try and breach the fence. They also launch incendiary kites and balloons into Israel, sparking fires that have destroyed forests, burned crops, and killed livestock. According to the *Times of Israel*, more than 7 000 acres of land have been burned.

As we peered through binoculars at those amassing on the border, a young, dark-haired woman told us, “They always send women and children to see how many they can get shot. If you have a look carefully, you can see.” She was wiping her eyes. Thinking she had been crying, I asked what was wrong.

“I got caught in teargas down there,” she said, pointing to the border. I thought she was a journalist who got caught in the crossfire, but she laughed, and said she wasn’t.

Her name was Inbal ben Shitrit and she lives on Kibbutz Nachal Oz, the closest place in Israel to Gaza.

“We are so close that when the Gazans open their window in Shejaiya (the Gazan neighbourhood on the

other side of the border), I open mine,” said Inbal, a singer.

She explained that she grew up in Gush Katif, a group of Israeli settlements within Gaza that were demolished in 2005 when Israel withdrew from Gaza. “I was also in the army in this area, and was caught in an explosion that wounded me,” she said, pointing to the side of her body. “Since then, I knew I was meant to be here.”

I found it astonishing that someone



Inbal ben Shitrit

would want to live on this conflict-ridden border. “I love this area, it feeds my soul. It is so quiet and beautiful. I wouldn’t live anywhere else.”

As she said that, we heard machine-gun fire and saw more smoke. We turned to look across the border, which from where we stood was a

long stretch of heaped earth, and saw the numbers mounting and apparent activity. We couldn’t quite make out what was happening, but it was 16:30, the time protests generally start on a Friday.

Then the press photographers near us started pointing their cameras up and getting into a huddle to discuss something.

Inbal shouted across to ask them what was happening, and told me they thought they could see balloons.

I knew she was talking about children’s colourful helium balloons, otherwise known as incendiary balloons, that are used by Hamas to send explosives across the border. She told me they were often found with toys attached to attract Israeli children. “Isn’t that sick? They have no value for human life, especially children,” she said.

She went on to tell me that children on the Gazan side were told they would be paid if they went to the Israeli border, and their families were told that they would get a lot of money if their children were killed. “Why do people do that?”

I wouldn’t know, I told her, as more gunfire was heard, and more people seemed to fill the space behind the Gaza border.

The gunfire was getting more frequent, and it was time for us to leave.

Close by, we stopped at a sealed

off iron enclosure. It was the site of one of the first tunnels that had been dug, in which Hamas operatives had attempted to make their way into a nearby kibbutz. This was the first of many that had been stopped.

Our Israeli guide told us that Hamas’ intention was to get through and kill as many Israelis as it could, and then head home. Because of these tunnels, Israel is now in the process of building a 60-kilometre subterranean wall around Gaza that will extend dozens of metres below the ground, and will detect and destroy tunnels that attempt to penetrate Israeli territory. It will also have an above-ground metal fence adorned with sensors.

As Inbal said before we left, “We just want to live a quiet life in this beautiful place. I don’t want enemies. I don’t want people dying, I just want to live peacefully. I know there are many in Gaza who want the same thing, but there are also so many who don’t.”

As Hamas’s Gaza Chief, Yahya Sinwar, reportedly stipulated to Gazans, “The March of Return will continue... until we remove this transient border.” The protests, he said, “mark the beginning of a new phase in the Palestinian national struggle on the road to liberation and return... Our people can’t give up one inch of the land of Palestine.”

“We are not about to stand here and wait for them to kill us and take our country,” said Inbal.

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# Rabbi Tanzer celebrates his second barmitzvah

JORDAN MOSHE

The name Rabbi Avraham Tanzer is synonymous with youth Torah education in Johannesburg, and has attended many a barmitzvah at Yeshiva College, the school he helped build. This Sukkot, the community joined him in celebrating his second barmitzvah, and his 83rd birthday.

The community paid tribute to a man who played an instrumental role in establishing Yeshiva College more than 50 years ago, and raising the bar of Jewish education in South Africa.

There were celebratory shul services, and a lavish brocha held at Glenhazel shul on Yeshiva College campus, featuring renowned Jewish acapella group, Kippa Live.

“Rabbi Tanzer is known by all for his kindness and ways of peace,” says Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein. “Despite his soft-spoken gentleness, he has played a major role in transforming the Johannesburg Jewish community.”

Goldstein and Tanzer are close friends and associates. “Today, the Yeshiva College campus, with its school and minyanim, is a powerhouse of Torah learning and living that has had an impact on the entire Johannesburg Jewish community and, by extension, South African Jewry and the Jewish people worldwide. At its heart has been the brilliance, warmth, kindness, and clarity of vision of Rabbi and Rebbetzin Tanzer,” Goldstein says.

Tanzer was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1935, and arrived in South Africa in the early 1960s to take up the position

of associate Rosh Yeshiva at the school, which had been in existence for only 10 years at the time. He was brought out for what was supposed to be a two-year stint.

Tanzer was reluctant to leave his native city for South Africa, but felt that the commitment was not particularly onerous, and that he could return home if the need arose. “My wife, Marcia, was the one who was eager to come,” laughs Tanzer. “She’s from Baltimore, and wasn’t reluctant the way I was. When I told her about the offer, she replied, ‘Great! When do we leave?’”

Tanzer describes the culture shock he experienced upon arriving in the country. “In those days, the South African Jewish community was nowhere near what it is today,” he says. “The community had very little religious understanding. There was no natural Jewish constituency, and so it had to be created almost from scratch.”

As part of this task, the then 27-year-old Tanzer was also expected to further the education development of the recently established Yeshiva College Boys High School, then catering only for a small number of male students. Asked at the time by the *Zionist Record* to describe his vision for the school, Tanzer said, “Our aim is to see the Yeshiva College grow, both in scope and in the number of students, and to produce a generation of Torah-conscious Jews who will inspire the community by



their example.”

He certainly made every effort to see this happen. Tanzer explains, “We set out to expand the school, and in those days could achieve this only by going from door to door and telling local Jewish families about what we had to offer. This school, which today is so much more than what we knew then, was built up brick by brick, student by student.”

One of the school’s first pupils, Chaim Cohen, remembers these formative years clearly, as well as the impression this man made on him and others. “Rabbi Tanzer arrived in South Africa and the Yeshiva when I was in Form 3 (Grade 10) as it was then known,” he says, “and has been my rabbi for the past 55 years.”

He continues, “Rabbi Tanzer would often

impress on students that when a person passes on, the only thing they leave behind of great substance and importance is their name, something which lives forever. He cared for every person individually, and ensured that no student was ever turned away from the Yeshiva if they couldn’t afford the fees. He always insisted that a Torah education was far more important than the payment of school fees.”

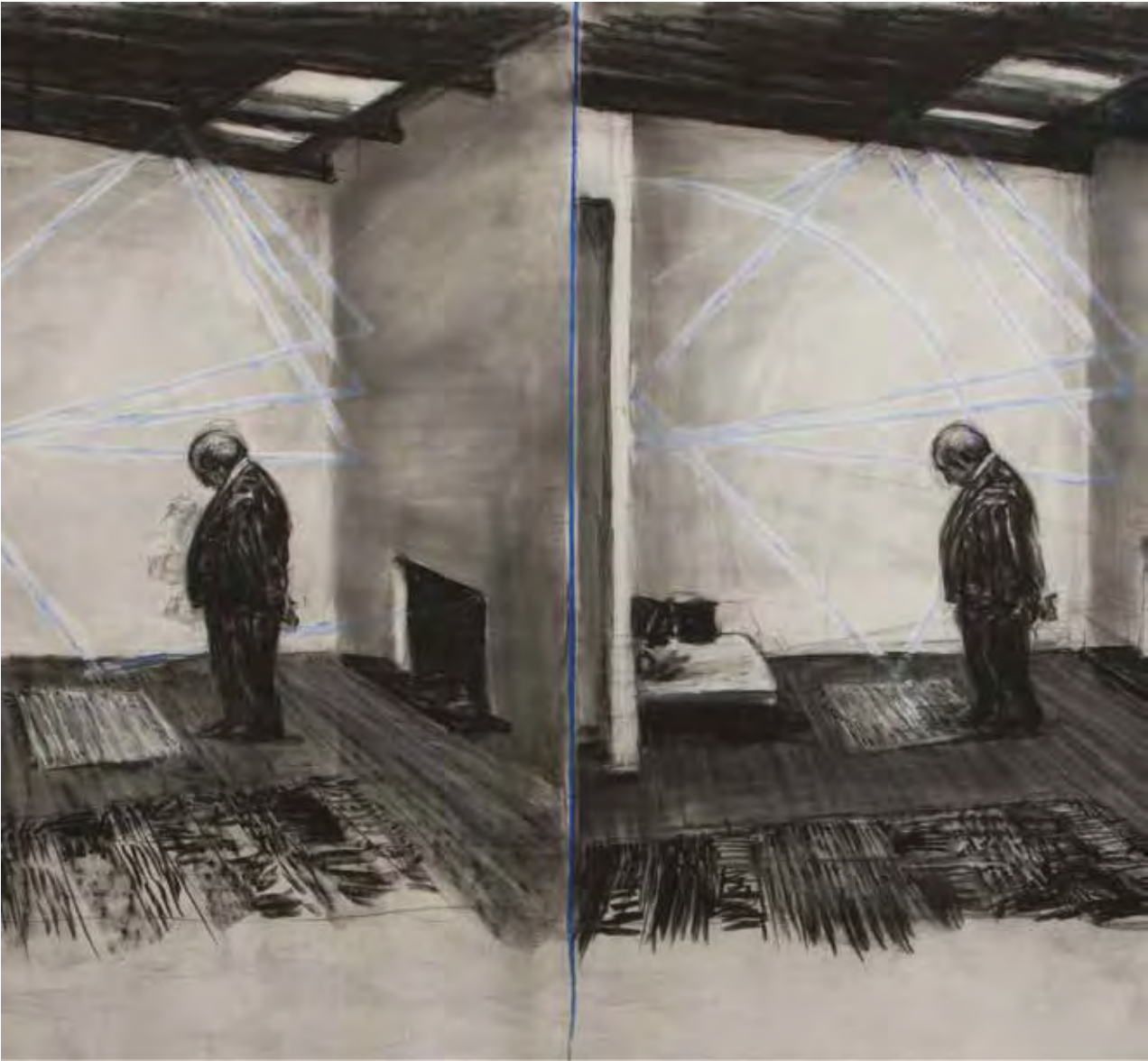
After his initial two-year term was up, Tanzer and his wife opted to stay and develop the community further. Over time, alongside his contributions to the school, Rabbi Tanzer became the

founding rabbi and leader of the Glenhazel Area Hebrew Congregation, a community of 750 families, catering to the individual needs of many groups of congregants. His involvement in both the shul and school continues today, and he remains the Rosh Yeshiva of the entire campus.

Tanzer maintains that his work in the community is only part of a greater effort of multiple people, and stresses what a privilege it has and continues to be for him to be involved in it.

“Whatever you are and whatever role you play in life, you need to do your utmost always,” he says. “Hashem will always do the rest. We cannot see around corners or know what we are going to become, but if we can look back and feel content, then we are truly blessed.”

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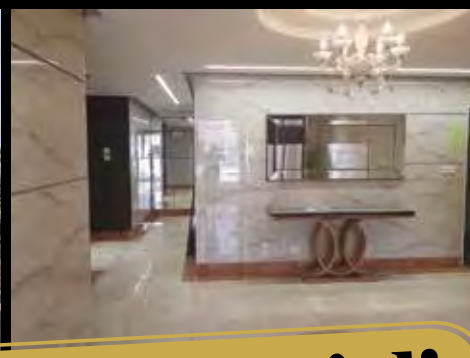
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# Albie Sachs champions preservation of Cape Town’s Maiden Cove

TALI FEINBERG

Former Constitutional Court Judge Albie Sachs is on a personal mission to make sure that Maiden’s Cove is accessible to all, and that this area does not undergo development.

“For many people in Cape Town, this was their only outlet to the ocean on the Atlantic Seaboard during the apartheid era,” he tells a group of young people enjoying the tiny beach. Behind him is a grassy verge and Lion’s Head, and boulders extending around rock pools, making the small beach feel both cut off and protected from the outside world.

The retired judge has become the patron of the organisation Maiden’s Cove for All (MCA), and took the *SA Jewish Report* to the beach to see what would be lost if plans to develop this area went ahead.

MCA is opposing the City Council selling and leasing this land to private owners, who plan to build a commercial and residential development that would alter the unique natural and public features of the cove. While the dispute is over a small spot on the coast, it has critical relevance for the city and the country.

The organisation was recently admitted to intervene in the case brought by the Clifton Bungalow Owners Association in the Western Cape High Court to oppose the development. “The people who use Maiden’s Cove weren’t consulted on this plan. There were no notices put up, the people weren’t involved, they were rendered invisible. We’re not against the area being developed and upgraded, but not a commercial development that will destroy its very special character and heritage,” says Sachs.

If the development went ahead, portions of it would come right down to the edge of this tiny cove, taking away the parking lots used by families to access it, Sachs says. Furthermore, he explains, the incoming residents of the proposed apartments would manage the area, seeking to make it a quiet, “private” beach, and essentially deciding how it could be used.

He hopes that this case will lead the Cape Town City Council to reflect on the way in which it approaches the use of public land. “It holds the land in trust for present and future generations. The people should be the first to be involved in discussing how to improve the facilities here. The question of making money out of the land has got to give way to the question of preserving this astonishingly beautiful coastal asset.”

Since leaving the court, Sachs has not lent his name to a public cause, so why this one? He explains that he grew up in nearby Clifton, so this area has special meaning for him.

“Being raised in a very politicised family, I felt so acutely the fact that Clifton and beautiful parts of Cape Town were preserved for whites only. I climbed Table Mountain regularly, and I’d look down and feel distraught because I was hating beauty... and you know something bad is happening when you hate beauty... because it is being preserved on racist grounds for one section of the community. So, it’s very upsetting that in a way this is being repeated in practice, allowing



development to keep Capetonians apart, and preventing the majority of our people from feeling at home on the coast.”

Importantly, MCA has offered an alternative, namely to enhance

the area into an urban coastal park, similar to Green Point Eco Park, which is a space for all. Additional braai facilities and playground equipment could further add to the family orientation of the place. “You

start with people, not with money,” says Sachs. “So, the process should be started again right from the beginning. It’s something I feel deeply about, so I allowed my name, very comfortably, to be added as patron.”

Why is this relevant to the Jewish community, both in Cape Town and nationally? “In an indirect but not unimportant way,” says Sachs. “The nearby Glen Country Club was built when Jews were excluded from most country clubs. This area was seen as a kind of ‘backyard’ part of Cape Town, so Jews were ‘allowed’ to have a club here, on rocky, wild land. Jews know what it is like to be subjected to racism and exclusion, and many Jews have strongly supported MCA.”

In fact, Sachs’ cousin, Bennie Rabinowitz, was a key leader in Sea Point’s ‘Sea Front for All’, “which also fought for the idea that our beautiful coastline must be kept available for everybody, instead of being used to make quick profits for developers and

quick income for the city”, he says.

From Sachs’ point of view, “environmental aspects are crucial for Cape Town, and these precious assets must be guarded. Cape Town is very dependent on the indirect benefit of Table Mountain, access to beaches, the beauty, [the fact that] that tourist buses can stop here, and the mountain extends to the sea. These are priceless things. There are some things money can’t buy, and this is one of them.”

“Many people in the Jewish community remember the difficulties of their grandparents’ generation, and can empathise quite genuinely with people denied real opportunities. They manifest a great deal of open mindedness and generosity because they genuinely feel for their fellow human beings. In a small way, Maiden’s Cove for All is an example of that larger, all-inclusive vision.”

## Saved by the kindness of strangers: reflections on the Kindertransport

MIRAH LANGER

There are always heroes amid the horrors of war. They are often from ordinary backgrounds, but prove extraordinary in their unwavering sense of humanity.

Bernard and Winifred Schlesinger were such a couple, according to Monique Vajifdar, the daughter of Kindertransport survivor, Hedwig Leonore Vajifdar (nee Feig). Although the Schlesingers already had five children of their own, they took in twelve more children as part of the Kindertransport.

“My mother [known as Leonore] was incredibly lucky to be hosted by this amazing family. They were generous, proactive, and loving,” said Vajifdar as she detailed how her Berlin-born mother was saved by the Kindertransport.

About 10 000 children were saved by the scheme, in which Jewish child refugees were brought from Germany on the brink of war to Britain and put in foster homes.

Vajifdar spoke at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre recently about the Schlesingers and the Kindertransport, the 80th anniversary of which will take place on 2 December.

“What I think is extraordinary about the Schlesinger family is that they worked out what they could do at an insane time in history, and they went out and did it. They were an example to all of us of keeping their heads when others all around us were losing theirs.”

Years before the Schlesinger family took in Leonore, she was already contending with the transformation of her birthplace, Berlin, into a seething site of anti-Semitism.

Born in 1927 to a well-off German Jewish family, Leonore’s life of governesses and holidays to the Swiss Alps was turned upside down by the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party.

Underneath the seemingly “comfortable existence” of her family, her home, like that of many other German Jews, was filled with “anguished discussions” as their once seemingly solid place in society crumbled.

Although her family – with deep historical roots in Germany – were determined not to be forced to leave their homeland, the eruption of Kristallnacht, from 9 to 10 November 1938, changed everything.

When a family member was tasked by a Jewish organisation with selecting twelve

children to go on the Kindertransport, Leonore’s parents asked if she could be one of them.

“My mother was sent out of Germany in March 1939 as a child refugee in the Kindertransport with all her worldly goods packed into an old-fashioned travelling trunk.” Her only childhood possession was a paint box.

“She was 11 years old. She has always felt that her childhood was stolen.”

Monique said that for many years, it was impossible to get her mother to open up about her experiences. “For most of my life, my mother denied remembering much of her childhood; she blanked it out as it was too painful.”

Yet, following the reunion of both the 60th anniversary of the Kindertransport, as well as Highgate hostel where the children were looked after, her mother finally wrote down some of her memories.

Vajifdar read extracts of her mother’s painful and poignant reflections.

“The Schlesingers rented a house for us... We arrived there on 16 March 1939, and stayed until we were evacuated out of London just before the beginning of the war.”

Leonore recalled having to learn English quickly to cope at the local primary school. She remembered how the boys and girls were separated into two dormitories, but “worked out a



Rabbi Erwin Zimet singing with Kindertransport children in London

system of communication using something like a string to talk to each other”.

She also paid tribute to the Schlesingers’ extraordinary efforts. “Not only were the Schlesingers surrogate parents and grandparents, their children feel like siblings to us.”

“The Schlesingers never made the refugee children feel that they were in any way unequal to their children. They never made me feel in any way indebted to them. I can never adequately thank them for all they did for me.”

After her time with the Schlesingers, Leonore was evacuated to the countryside amidst fears that London would be bombed.

A week before the outbreak of World War II, Leonore’s parents arrived in Britain, having managed to escape from Germany. “The war took a lot away from me, but it gave me back my parents.”

Although the family then lived within very constrained means, “For the first time, we all lived together in close proximity. Not surprisingly, we became very close.”

Although England was a haven from the war, it was not wholly hospitable. At one point, Leonore’s father was interred as an immigrant alien on the Isle of Man alongside Nazis.

As a child, Leonore herself was repeatedly accused of being a German spy by other children. “Although this was ignorant playground prejudice, it wasn’t easy for her to deal with,” notes Monique.

Throughout, Leonore never forgot the role the Schlesingers played. She recalled how when the war ended, the family took her out to dinner, complete with red wine, to celebrate. Winifred also never forgot a single one of Leonore’s birthdays.

Today, five of the original dozen who were taken in by the Schlesingers remain. A total of 120 people now form a group of those who survived due to this couple’s action – and they remain in contact with the Schlesinger children.

Monique’s family’s past experiences have deeply shaped her own. As she describes it, much of her life has been about “collecting and hoarding small fragments of memories”.

“Today, I speak for people who can’t or won’t.”

One of the profound lessons her family taught her was to take true delight in life. Having “lost almost everything that had made up [their] identity, they relished life”.

“It was a particular gift my mother’s family had: [To enjoy]... even the twists and turns of the English weather. To seek out the first bluebells every year; to notice the spring leaves as they unfurled; to follow a butterfly in the garden; to relish friendship and family.”



# THE KESHET PROGRAM AT SHEBA MEDICAL CENTER: ON THE CUTTING-EDGE OF TREATING CHILDHOOD AUTISM DISORDERS

BY KEN STEPHENS

(Ramat Gan, Israel)-The Keshet Center, under the tutelage of world-renowned Dr. Lidia Gabis, is celebrating its Bar Mitzvah year (13) as a mecca for diagnosis, treatment and research of autism spectrum related disorders.

Keshet, located within Sheba Medical Center's Weinberg Child Development Center at the Edmond and Lily Safra Children's Hospital, offers multidisciplinary evaluation and treatment for children with developmental disabilities from newborn through adolescence.

The Center currently provides clinical services to over 1000 new children per year, and sees approximately 800 ongoing patients per month.

The Center includes three daycare facilities for disabled children and care is provided daily to the children by a professional team of teachers, therapists and consultants.

Dr. Gabis and her team of highly trained professionals have created the **Keshet Intervention Program**, a unique method of intensive intervention designed for preschool children with autism for inclusion in regular education. It is a bi-weekly intensive multidisciplinary treatment program including parents as part of intervention team. During the past 12 years more than 350 children finished the program and were entered into regular education programs. During the new school year, the program will be provided to 40 children. The success of this program has created a demand

that is twice as many as Keshet can accept.

"In the past, many parents had no idea what to do with their kids because autism is not an easy thing to deal with. However, when parents become involved with this program, they have the tools and knowledge of what to do and how to deal with their children," revealed Dr. Gabis. "We are also involved with research and evaluation regarding the use of a human-like robot called 'Casper' to teach and treat children with autism. I would like to see 'Casper' make Aliyah so we can see if a robot can indeed have a positive impact on children with autism spectrum disorders. The future is here."

Within the realm of cutting-edge research, Dr. Gabis is in the midst of conducting a new pharmacological study of combined Autism treatment using a drug used for Alzheimer's (Donepezil) in tandem with with Choline. The research was recently submitted for publication this year. The combination showed improvement in language in young children with autism.

Keshet and the Weinberg Child Development Center also highlights a "Babies at Risk" clinic, which has an open door policy for diagnosis of newborns through 2 years of age with developmental concerns. Parents can refer their children if there is any concern, including siblings of children with autism, findings during pregnancy or any parental or Tipat Halav concern. The diagnostic process is expedited



Dr. Lidia Gabis at Sheba's Keshet Center

and multidisciplinary. Based on 300 babies who were referred to this clinic, a significant diagnosis was made in more than 90% and an autism diagnosis in 40%.





And there is the "Fragile X Resource Center", which is a clinic, research and resource center for families at risk or with children with Fragile X Syndrome. Several

studies are on -going, including a national epidemiological study.

Dr. Gabis' stellar reputation has spurred international collaborations with autism specialists at the renowned **Cambridge University in England** and Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York.

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# Jews and their relationship to chocolate

JORDAN MOSHE

Jews have a deep connection to chocolate – not just to eating it, but to its development as a confectionery.

Since the discovery of cocoa, Jews have been involved in the story of chocolate. The first Europeans to discover cocoa were crew members sailing to the New World with Christopher Columbus, some of whom were Jews.

Setting sail in 1492, the same year Jews were expelled from Spain, Columbus and his crew encountered strangely shaped almonds, and brought some back to Spain. It was, however, conquistador Hernán Cortés who carried the art of making the Aztecs’ xocoatl or “bitter water”, to Spain. Considered a sacred drink associated with fertility, chocolate was served cold and flavoured with chilies.

The Spanish nobility adored the energising qualities of this chocolate drink, but disliked its bitterness. To please European taste buds, something new had to be created. The concoction of early sweet chocolate by combining three primary ingredients – cocoa, sugar, and vanilla – was actually pioneered by Jews.

Jewish brothers David and Rafael Mercado, living in present day Guiana, invented early machinery to process and refine sugar, and the first modern cocoa processing plant was the brainchild of Benjamin d’Acosta

de Andrade, a Portuguese *converso*, who was secretly Jewish.

As Spanish and Portuguese Jews sought refuge from the broad reaching perils of the inquisition, some packed and took along with them the new-found chocolate tastes, techniques, and opportunities, supplying and extending chocolate to larger markets around the world.

In fact, it was thanks to Jewish refugees fleeing the Portuguese inquisition in France that chocolate as we know it came into existence.

Former Portuguese Jews were allowed to live in France as “new Christians”, and heavily restricted in their ability to travel, own land, and trade. One industry was open to them: chocolate manufacturing. Relying on contacts with other Jews and secret Jews in the New World, the French community imported cocoa and processed early chocolate treats. However, Jewish commercial success bred resentment. The local chocolate guilds compelled the authorities to prohibit Jews from working in the chocolate trade.

The French instituted discriminatory laws, and the Inquisition spread to the colonies, forcing Jews to flee to Dutch territories such as Curacao and New Amsterdam, the future New York.

The French restriction was rescinded in 1767, and the Jewish community near Bayonne resumed its chocolate production, selling new chocolates to an eager French public.



By 1854, Bayonne boasted at least 34 chocolate companies, and was known as the premier chocolate producing city in France.

As for those Jews who had fled further afield, America proved fertile ground for furthering the development of chocolate. In colonial America, the chocolate trade was introduced and dominated by two Sephardi Jewish families, the Gomez family in New York, and the Lopez family in Rhode Island.

Cocoa trader Aaron Lopez, an ardent supporter of the American Revolution, wrote that the shortages incurred by the political climate were especially hard on kosher Jews, who were “forced to subsist on chocolate and coffee”.

Back in Europe, chocolate continued its rise to fame. The delicacy was indispensable for Austrian Minister Prince Klemens von Metternich, who had a penchant for food experimentation.

In 1832, the prince sought to impress dinner guests with a new dessert, and in the absence of his chief cook, the task fell to a 16-year-old Jewish apprentice, Franz Sacher.

The youth’s impromptu creation – a sponge chocolate cake layered with apricot jam and coated with chocolate icing, served with a swirl of cream – not only became known as Sachertorte, but Vienna’s signature dessert.

As time passed, the 19th century witnessed other innovations such as the introduction of powdered chocolate and, quite importantly, the mass-produced chocolate bar. It was in the 20th century, with the rise of Nazism, that the exodus of Jewish chocolate-makers from Germany resulted in European Jews bringing their chocolate-making skills to new

countries.

Latvian chocolate factory owner Eliyahu Fromenchenko fled rising anti-Semitism to settle in pre-state Israel, where he founded Elite, the iconic Israel chocolate company whose products are recognisable anywhere thanks to the cow which appears on the wrapper.

Fromenchenko would inspire a new generation of chocolatiers to take chocolate to new heights in Israel. Over the past 20 years, Israel has developed a vibrant chocolate culture.

Business partners Max Fichtman and Oded Brenner helped launch another chocolate revolution in 1996, when they founded the store Max Brenner, intent on forging a new culture of chocolate in the Jewish state.

The chocolate industry remains unique in Israel, with high-quality chocolate manufacturers dotting the country, making chocolates with flavours such as pistachio, jasmine, even cardamom.

So entrenched has chocolate become in the Jewish homeland, Israeli scientists have even found reason to argue that eating chocolate cake for breakfast can be healthy, helping us to lose weight!

Clearly, the histories of Jews and chocolate are tightly interwoven. It is yet another achievement to chalk up, but the day we discover how chocolate can guarantee permanent peace for the Jewish homeland will be a sweet one indeed.

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# King David Schools’ kindred spirits

MIRAH LANGER

From *The Love Boat* to *Love Island*, *From Russia with Love*, to *Paris Je t’aime*, many have searched for romance in a myriad of milieu. Yet, for scores of King David High School sweethearts, it was in the very hallways and corridors of school that love blossomed.



Jean and Franklin Gaylis

### Franklin and Jean Gaylis

“I remember seeing her upstairs outside her classroom. I was on the field. She caught my attention.”

So says Franklin Gaylis about the time, in 1971, when he first saw his wife, Jean. She was 14 and Franklin 16. They have now been together for 47 years.

“When our eyes connected, that moment... was *beshert* [preordained],” he reflects.

Jean also feels that they both knew from the start it was real love: “It was official from day one.”

However, she confesses that the first meeting was a little more strategically orchestrated than pure chance.

“I had obviously noticed Franklin way before. Franklin was a water polo player. I noticed that on the billboard, one of the students had taken a number of photographs from swimming galas and water polo matches.

“There was a black and white photograph of Franklin wearing his water polo cap. I actually went to the student who took the photograph and asked him if I could buy it – he gave it to me...”

“I held onto that picture for a long time before we actually met.”

Jean says that while she was not a shy person, the social norms of the time were such that it “was not *pasik* [acceptable] for a 14-year-old girl to approach a 16-year-old boy. Girls were modest.”

As such, the day Franklin gazed up to the corridor of her class was a lucky encounter.

Franklin soon heard that he “might have a chance” with Jean.

“I was impressed. She was the *balaboste* [like the queen bee] of her grade.

“I invited her out on a date. We went to overs [hanging out] at a friend’s house.”

Throughout school and into their tertiary studies, the couple were inseparable.

The day that Franklin got his medical-school results – he is now a urological surgeon in San Diego where the couple are based – he decided it was time to propose.

“I went to the bank and cleared R590, which was my Barmitzvah money.”

With his precious savings, Franklin bought a diamond, and went to Jean’s house.

He found her sunbathing by the pool – and it was here that he proposed.

Together ever since, they now have two children and a grandson.

Reflecting on a love that started with a water polo photograph, Franklin suggests that he is not even entirely certain if this was the last photograph which Jean sought from the budding student cameraman.

“I think later she commissioned the guy to take more photographs of me. I have got another photograph of me at school, just walking around, totally oblivious.”

At this memory, the couple start to giggle.

### Lance and Talya Kier

A mock auction at a Grade 8 orientation braai at Linksfield brought Talya and Lance Kier together.

“The guy prefects auctioned off Lance, who was a matric [Grade 12] prefect, to the Grade 8 girls. A whole group of us won the bid,” says Talya of their meeting in 2004.

Not yet entirely au fait with high-school humour, the girls took their winning seriously.

The next day, “We went to find him in the auditorium after prayers to give him the money.”

Lance said he was bemused.

“I said, “Guys, it’s not for real; you don’t have to bring the money.”

However, Talya was still hopeful:

“He always remembers that some little blonde girl piped up at the back of the room, and said, ‘Well, I would pay anything for you!’” she recounts of her bolshy move.

“I just laughed. I thought, wow, she has chutzpah,” laughs Lance.

In February, Lance “crossed grade lines” to wish Talya a happy birthday.



Lance and Talya Kier

“He gave me a hug and a kiss on the cheek, and that was the biggest thing in the world!”

Later, at an orientation weekend, Talya seized an opportunity to get his digits.

During one of their conversations, Lance went away for a moment.

“He left his cellphone on the chair, and I quickly phoned myself, then deleted the call on his phone.”

That night, Talya messaged him to say goodnight.

Fourteen years down the line, the conversation between the two, now husband and wife and parents to a baby girl, has never ceased.

Lance attributes the strength of their bond to having literally grown up together.

“The nice thing is that because we started from the beginning, Talya saw me for who I am... We’ve gone from being kids to adults together.”

### Kevin and Jodee Shaftoe

“Greased lightning” struck Jodee and Kevin Shaftoe when they both participated in Victory Park’s production of the musical in 2001.

“While Kev was on the sound and light team, I ran the projectors and had to dress like a Rydell High school cheerleader,” reminisces Jodee.

“We both had feelings for each other, but nothing happened until the play was over, and we kissed at the after party!”

After that, they were “official”.

“Kev used my locker to keep his siddur and tefillin in, so every morning after prayers, we would meet back at the locker, and then Kev would walk me to my first class – hand in hand.”

That connection has lasted long beyond the “summer days” of school into marriage, and now parenthood.

“Our two girls will be at King David



Jodee and Kevin Shaftoe

Sandton soon for primary school,” says Jodee, pointing out their ongoing affiliation with the King David School community.

### Saul and Elinor Sassoon

The first time Elinor heard about Saul, she was not entirely convinced that he was a promising prospect.

“I remember being in Morah Sassoon’s Hebrew class, and her mentioning that she also had a son in Form 1 [Grade 8].

“I thought that he must be the biggest nerd!”

However, by Grade 11, they had begun hanging out within a group of friends, and soon there was a spark.

Their first official public appearance together?

Saul came as Elinor’s date to her father’s secretary’s 40th birthday!

They even shared a kiss that night.

Yet, it was not all smooth sailing.

“The rest of the story goes that after that night, he kind of ignored me.”

In matric [Grade 12], though, they began spending



Elinor and Saul Sassoon

time together again.

“By the end of the year, someone said to him, “Listen, if you kiss her again, she is your girlfriend.”

“So he kissed me again.”

The couple got married in 2005, and now have three daughters.

Elinor says that the success of King David romances like theirs can be attributed to a community connection.

“It is a place of possibility, of adventure, of fun, and meeting people with similar backgrounds and values. It is a safe place to grow.”

### Craig and Barbie Mark

When Barbie and Craig Mark first met at a swimming gala at Linksfield in 1984, they immediately got into a fight.

“I gave him a mouthful about how immature he was, and that he should be singing war cries and not being silly,” says Barbie.

“He just laughed at me, and said he was older than me.” In fact, Craig was in Grade 10, while Barbie was a Grade 9.

Over the next few months, this fiery start turned into a friendship – and more...

“We always used to say we were ‘going out’, and put up our index fingers like inverted commas.”

“Then, the day before his birthday, he said, ‘How would you like to get rid of these [indicating the inverted commas]?’”

Barbie agreed to edit their punctuation.

Because they were in different classes, “We used to synchronise our watches and ask to go to the toilet. We would run behind the prefabs, and meet up with each other.”

Thirty five years later, Barbie says “Craig is my soulmate without question. I realised this when I was thirteen.”

“He is the oxygen for me.”



Barbie and Craig Mark



# Thirty years away from Israel

PETA KROST MAUNDER

Thirty years away from Israel is a long time, especially as it has been on a long-term development binge. When I told people I was going back after having lived there three decades ago, I was informed: “You won’t recognise it” or “It doesn’t even resemble the place you left.” I am relieved to say this was not true. I recognised the country, and especially Tel Aviv, where I had lived.

At eye level, it all looked familiar. I saw the old buildings that appeared to be built on stilts with *trissim* (blinds) in their windows. And going upstairs, if there was a lift, you could just squeeze in. There were the same narrow streets interlinking the main roads of Tel Aviv. It was only when I looked up that I saw the massive development. I saw dozens of magnificent, super-modern high rise buildings.

Getting on the highways that interlinked the cities was something incredible to behold. They certainly weren’t there three decades ago.

There was far more traffic than the old days, but people still hooted at everything, and everyone and drove like they were in a race. That is, unless they were stuck in a traffic jam, which is pretty common as so many more people have their own vehicles. And most of the cars look practically new.

I recall that back then, about two out of three cars on the road were Subarus. I used to think it was because it was the most popular car. Well, it wasn’t, it was just what was most available in Israel. Today, you hardly see a Subaru. In its place are so many different makes and models.

Now, some cars have in-built technology that polices people’s driving skills. So, as a car veers out of its lane or drives too close to the car in front, the driver is beeped at... a lot. To avoid the noise and irritation factor, drivers need to improve their skills.

It is one of the many technological improvements in the “start-up capital”.

There is an app for everything. If you need to know which bus to catch, which direction to walk, or ride, how many stops you need until you get off a bus, there is an app for it. If you want to know what to do in Tel Aviv on that particular day, there is an app for it. And there is Wi-Fi everywhere.

Waze, Israel’s greatest export (bar singer Gal Gadot), guides Israelis and visitors alike to their destinations on the roads. I have to wonder how frustrating it must be for those officials manning speed traps,

cameras, or police roadblocks because Waze makes sure to tell everyone to “*Sim lev* (pay attention)” well in advance when they are up ahead.

Rewind 30 years, and I saw soldiers everywhere. They were on the side of the roads, on buses, having a coffee at a pitstop, or wherever you looked. I got quite used to sitting next to soldiers on buses or bus stops, having their weapons inadvertently facing my direction.

Now, I saw very few soldiers. I wondered where they were, as most young Israelis between 18 and 21 are in the army.

Granted I was there over Sukkot. The explanation I got from a few Israelis is that there are cameras, drones and sensors keeping an eye on what is happening while the soldiers – if they aren’t on the borders or strategically placed – are in air-conditioned offices monitoring the technology.

This high-tech country has made sure that its inhabitants feel secure. There is the so-called iron dome that averts any incoming missiles, and cameras, drones, and sensors across all borders and high-threat zones. I couldn’t help but notice the whirring sound of the drones when I was close to the Lebanon and Gaza borders. All this is so strategically placed, it is hardly noticeable.

When I was last in Israel, we all knew where our bomb shelters were. Now, every Airbnb apartment I stayed in had a safe room, with fortified walls and doors, and a strange, alien-looking silver pipe on the wall. All in the name of safety.

The people haven’t changed at all. They still appear fairly abrasive on encounter, but have the kindest hearts. I know people say that, but I kept being reminded while there. One example was when I took a dive off a bicycle, and sprained my ankle (which I didn’t know at first). We messaged my Israeli cousin in Rechovot to ask about a doctor to visit the following day. He was having none of it, and brought his doctor neighbour to our Airbnb in Tel Aviv at midnight to see what was wrong. He made it clear, despite my insistence that it wasn’t necessary, that they would escort me to the hospital if it came to that.

As it wasn’t serious, they dished out bandages and painkillers and stayed for coffee, leaving at 02:30 on a school night.

I am convinced that Israelis don’t sleep, especially in the Tel Aviv area. I know it is the city that supposedly doesn’t sleep, but it is not just the city. At 02:30 in the morning, you can still get a meal in a restaurant, get your groceries, get a drink, and find bars and night spots pumping. Whereas in South Africa, people go for dinner parties and leave at 22:00 feeling like they had a good evening, in Israel, 02:30 is almost a reasonable time to leave. Frequently, there are midnight traffic jams.

Another thing that remains unchanged is the Israeli preference for hand signals. So, while it is a nation of very verbal people, when it comes to the crunch, messages that say, “Wait”, “What do you think you are doing?” (among other things) and telling people where to get off, are conveyed succinctly with the hands.

Another wonderful Israeli-ism is the country’s fabulous lack-of-space issue. Today, the Tel Aviv beaches are so swish that you never have to sit on the sand or accidentally get burnt as there are deck chairs and umbrellas galore for hire. However, if there is 300m of beach and 150m is full, the next group of people coming onto the beach will sit right in the middle of the crowd rather than finding their own space.

And, so it is when there is some performance or activity happening on the street, in a mall, or wherever. Inquisitive Israelis will gather around to watch. It is a country of people who struggle with FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out).

And, having been there on Sukkot, nobody needed to miss out on the mitzvah of being in a sukkah. There were sukkot everywhere you looked in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and all over the country. I saw them on the beaches, all along Dizengoff Street, Ben Yehuda, King George. I even saw a long-bearded man on roller blades pushing a sukkah on wheels down a main road in Tel Aviv, stopping to ask people in cars if they wanted to perform a mitzvah. And, Israelis ran out to see what was going on.

It seemed to me that Israel – while having become politically more right-wing – has also become more religious. I recall that Israel was a mix of very religious and very secular people. Now, there seem to be fewer hard and fast secular people, and more people finding a version of Judaism to practice, from Progressive, Conservative, to Modern Orthodox, all the way to Haredi. This is visible on Shabbat

and religious festivals, when there is very little activity on the streets (other than on the beachfront).

I also observed that while the world is occupied by Israel’s relationship with the West Bank and Gaza, most Israelis don’t expend energy on this. Obviously, it is part of their lives because of the army, but they seem far more concerned about internal politics, high tech, the economy, and day to day living.

Having heard so much about this wall separating the West Bank before I got to Israel, I kept an eye out for it. In the end, I had to ask where it was. When I did see it, I was amazed because while it is grey concrete slabs that are an eyesore, they don’t appear to be much higher than the walls we surround ourselves with back home.

Israel remains a wonderful mix of third world and first world. You can be enjoying a feast at a restaurant at the upmarket and newly developed Tel Aviv Port at lunchtime. Then, for dinner you can sit almost in the middle of the road at an eatery in the Yemenite Quarter, where you have to get up and move every time a car needs to pass.

The food is delicious, and seems to be better than I remember, with more variety and costing more. Israel is expensive, especially with our rands. That, too, is very different from when I was last there.

The development and growth in the country is astonishing, and is not stopping for a moment. I foresee that all the areas that are not yet built up will get there soon.

I am left with the certainty that I will not wait another 30 years before I go back. Right now, I am already trying to figure out a reason for my next visit.

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Slowly open one eye. Half-consciously wonder how is it already morning? Check phone. 42 notifications. Exhale. Read through WhatsApp group messages. Wish I could exit group(s). Remind myself that group(s) provides important information. Exhale again. Shower. Scroll through Pinterest for outfit inspiration. Curse Pinterest for showing me only summer outfits when it is 18 degrees outside. Settle on jeans and favourite jersey. Pray no one remembers I wore aforementioned outfit a week ago. Attempt cat eye with liquid eyeliner. Decide that symmetry is overrated. Make peace with the fact that the reincarnated version of Amy Winehouse is staring back at me in the mirror. Turn on laptop. Open series of news sites. Briefly wonder whether 31 tabs is too much to ask of poor laptop. Thought passes. Oh hey, Malema. He’s said what now?! Write news. Make calls. Charge phone. Already on 41% battery. Wolf down food. Answer WhatsApp call from best friend in Israel. Realise phone wasn’t connected to WiFi. Curse. Write more news. Check time. Wonder where the hell time went. Request Uber. Beg Uber driver to drive as fast as he can. Scold inconsiderate person parked in the disabled parking. Race upstairs. Enter studio with 3 minutes to the top of the hour. Put on headphones. Laptop won’t start. Read news off cellphone. Make tea. Update news. Stare in disbelief at another thing Malema has said. Do 2-hour radio show. Listen to all the WhatsApp voice notes I couldn’t listen to while in studio. Reply to messages. Check social media. Stop off at Woolworths. Arrive home. More tea. Write. Eat supper. Decide what to watch on Netflix. Promise myself just one episode. Break promise. Check J-Swipe. Left. Left. Right. Ooh, a match. Left. Remember something I should have done earlier. Curse. Take off makeup. Bye, Amy Winehouse. Get into bed. Write. Reply to more messages. Scroll through news articles on phone. Fall asleep mid-sentence.

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**JORDAN MOSHE**

After their initial shock, guests were ushered into the seminar room to take their seats for the rest of the evening's programme. They were shown a short film titled *The Necklace*. Conceived and directed by KDVP student



## India Milne and Benjamin Abrahams

"If we leave here tonight with the understanding that no sane person could possibly brand these souls as passive, willing lambs led to their deaths, then we will have gained something profoundly special," he said. "We need to focus on the resistance many of them achieved. These people not

Raja was 12 when she entered the camp. She watched her family and friends get deported until nearly everyone she knew and loved had died in the camps. Her parents. Her brother.

It's no easy task to tell the stories of those who lived through the atrocities of Europe in the grip of Nazism. The passion and sincerity with which these students communicated their experiences ensures that those who perished will remain ingrained in our minds for years to come.

"Many who were there from the Jewish community have asked that we pursue similar events with other minority communities," says Bagraim. "This will be done in due course."



# Joburg chazzan instrumental in bringing Profeti Della Quinta to SA

JORDAN MOSHE

When Adam Golding, the chazzan at Great Park Shul, heard the magnificent sound of the Profeti Della Quinta musical ensemble in Vienna almost two years ago, he embarked on a personal mission to introduce their sound to South Africa.

His mission was successful, as they are now heading to our shores.

A musician with a keen interest in early Jewish music, Golding first heard the group perform in Berlin in December 2016 at a festival in which a group under his own leadership, the Lewandowski Chorale, was also performing.

“I was struck by the purity and accessibility of their music,” says Golding. “I had heard of them before, but I had no sense of just how good they really were. I bought every one of their CDs; stupidly, as it turned out, because

Elam Rotem [the founder] would eventually give them all to me as a gift after we met.”

Golding and Rotem hit it off immediately, and hatched the idea to bring the group to South Africa as soon as possible. Says Golding: “I took it on as a personal project. My sole motivation was to expose South Africans – Jews and non-Jews alike – to a type of music which we are deprived of in our country.”

Described as Renaissance and Baroque music meeting Hebrew lyrics and Israeli flair, Profeti Della Quinta will be performing live for the first time in the Southern hemisphere next month.

Singing to packed houses across the globe, the group has graced some of the most prestigious stages in the world, and has been known to bring first timers to their feet with tears streaming down their cheeks. They will be bringing their musical prowess to Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Founded in Israel’s Galilee region by bass singer and harpsichordist Rotem, the group is today based in Basel, Switzerland, where its members undertook further studies of early music at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. The ensemble consists of a core of five male singers, and focuses on the vocal repertoire of the 16th and early 17th centuries, specifically Renaissance and Baroque music. Together, this collection of a tenor, countertenor, and bass singers performs compositions of the periods as well as those written by Rotem, which are inspired by the music style of the time.

The inception of Profeti Della Quinta lies, of all places, in the corridors of the high school Rotem attended. “The acoustics there were unbelievable,” laughs Rotem. “I assembled a few people who could sing, and we would perform mediaeval pieces right outside the classrooms. People heard this weird music, and were excited to listen and know more.” Rotem went on to join forces with other equally passionate Israeli musicians, eventually establishing the ensemble and taking it to Europe.

Rotem has been a fervent admirer of this type of music for years, and has conducted extensive research in the field. In the course of his musical exploration, Rotem came across the works of the early Baroque Jewish-Italian composer Salomone Rossi, a prominent violinist whose compositions often feature Hebrew lyrics. Rotem considers himself a student of the musical master, and identifies strongly with his compositions.

Says Rotem, “We are Israelis, and because Hebrew is our mother tongue, we have the advantage of being able to grasp the true significance of the music and take Rossi’s

work to greater heights.

“He was inspired by the Western musical language, and sought to improve it through compositions for the synagogue. Also, he was privileged to have in his community professional Jewish musicians who were able to assist him in bringing this unique music to life. We are professional musicians in our own right, and happen to be Hebrew speaking, so you could say we are following in Rossi’s footsteps.”

In 2009, the ensemble released its first CD,



dedicated to Rossi’s Hebrew music, and went on to win the York Early Music International Young Artists competition two years later, propelling their international career. The ensemble has since performed in prestigious festivals and venues in Europe, Israel, Finland, Poland, Belgium, Austria, Italy, and other European countries. In 2013, the ensemble made its debut in Canada, followed by concert tours in Japan and the United States.

But, they perform much more than just Hebrew compositions. From *Lamentations* by Emilio de’ Cavalieri, to programmes dedicated to the Italian madrigal repertoire, the group performs a wide array of music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Among Rotem’s own compositions is a musical adaptation of the episode from the Torah in which Joseph’s brethren take their brother’s torn coat to their father after selling him, using verses taken directly from the narrative.

It is because of novelties such as this that Golding has been determined to bring the ensemble to South Africa.

“I was struck by the purity and accessibility of their music,” says Golding. “Baroque music is not often performed in South Africa. Many people classify it as classical music, and the truth is that they are very different. Fortunately, the prominence of the style is growing in South Africa, with more and more performances taking place every year.”

The ensemble will be performing at both the Gardens Shul in Cape Town and Great Park Shul in Johannesburg, and Golding has singlehandedly undertaken the funding and co-ordination of the performances.

Although he has to sell a considerable number of tickets simply to cover his costs, Golding is adamant that his goal is not to make money from this venture. “This is not about profit,” he says. “This is about bringing something unique to our country, and enabling people to experience a musical event that they seldom get the opportunity to attend.”

Golding describes the ensemble as people possessed of the greatest combination of early music and Hebrew lyrics. “No one in the world has done what they do,” he says. “Rossi has been taken to a new level through them.

“I aim to expose South Africans to a music and singing experience unlike any other. No one, from a singer to a person who doesn’t know much about music, should miss this.”

• The ensemble will be performing in Cape Town on 11 November, and in Johannesburg on 14 and 15 November. Visit <https://profetidellaquinta.nutickets.co.za> for bookings and more information.

4am. Alarm. Check Twitter. Check Facebook. Check News24. Check Times of Israel. Check CNN. Hate CNN. Realise its 4:10am. Bathroom rush. Swallow Nexium. And a Concerta. And a Crestor. Did I take Concerta? 4:20! Take a Concerta. Take dogs out. Give dogs a treat. Make coffee. Go over producer notes for the show. Check if it’s light enough to daven. It isn’t. It never is. Hmmm, 2nd coffee? 5:30! Grab a protein shake. Rush to the car. Remember gym bag. Rush back inside. Computer. Headphones. Charger. Check. Gym bag? In the car. Jacket for presentation later! Dammit! Back inside. Drive to studio. Channel hop. Anyone covering something I’m not? They aren’t. Yesterday’s news. Wave at security. Rush upstairs. Second coffee? No time. In studio. Check breaking news. Check Chev funeral report. Anyone I know? Nope. Show starts. Show ends. 9:30am. Gym. Run (okay fast walk) on the treadmill. Not too fast. Shower. Coffee. More coffee. Calls. Promise editor my column is almost done. Decide on a topic. Write column. Submit. Go over presentation notes. Check Waze. Arrive at bank. Meet the team. Present workshop. Inspire. Become inspired. Drive home. Smiling and fulfilled. Love what I do. Prep tomorrow’s show. Fend off anti-Semites on Twitter. Fend off Jews who detest me on Facebook. Hate what I do. Fight with kids over cellphones. Ignore messages. Become anxious. Dinner done. 11pm. Lights out.

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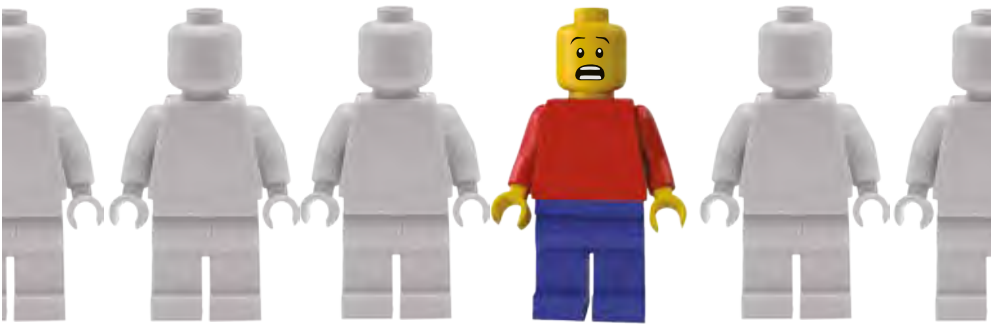
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# The funny side of not fitting in

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Few people laugh about autism or people with Aspergers Syndrome, but a new hit play, *Odd Man Out*, explores the funny side of being different.

“What is normal?” asks Daniel Janks, who plays an autistic man, Ryan, in the hit play at the Theatre on the Square in Sandton. “Ultimately, the play posits that we are all somewhere on the spectrum.”

Written by well-known Australian playwright David Williamson, *Odd Man Out*, which premiered in South Africa on 3 October, describes itself as a “comedy and unconventional love story”. It is highly unusual in that the main character is autistic.

But, the joy of the play is that the pathos of being different is not spelled out, it is conveyed subtly and hilariously through the love story of the two main characters, Alice and Ryan, and the machinations they go through in coming to terms with their neurological differences.

Alice and Ryan meet on a bus, and are quickly drawn to each other. They have little in common, except for a shared desperation to become a couple. However, it turns out that Ryan has Aspergers Syndrome, and is completely socially inept, and Alice struggles to “rehabilitate” him.

Alice has a foreboding that Ryan is different when he asks her out by messaging her a list of his favourite dinner venues – along with their ratings on TripAdvisor – with one clear favourite heavily underlined. Eventually, he asks her to marry him by saying, “If having children is a condition of our getting married, then I’m willing...”

American autism advocacy organisation Autism Speaks describes people with Aspergers – or “Aspies” as the play describes them – as having “strong language skills and intellectual



Russel Savadier, Daniel Janks, Ashleigh Harvey and Michèle Levin performing *Odd Man Out*

ability”. However, they also tend to demonstrate “difficulty with social interactions; difficulty with nonverbal conversation skills; unco-ordinated movements or clumsiness; restricted interests; and a desire for sameness,” among other things.

Janks is brilliant as Ryan, right down to his nervous ticks and clumsy body movements, and we feel his pain and confusion at not being able to fit in or say the right thing.

Alice’s “normality” is a perfect foil for Ryan’s strangeness. Actress Ashleigh Harvey convincingly plays a neurotypical, and rather naïve physiotherapist, who finds herself unable to rescue this “odd” but brilliant man.

“These days, we don’t talk about Aspergers, it’s seen as high-functioning autism,” Janks says. He should know, having researched the subject in preparation for the role, including talking to psychologists and those with the disorder.

“Ryan has an honest approach to life. Alice is trying to figure out why he can’t do the social

dances. He asks, ‘Why would I? Why can’t we be honest in the most brutal way?’. There are times when Ryan appears the normal one.

“I relate to him. A lot of things that make no sense to him make no sense to me. I’ve never been normal – I am dyslexic, Jewish, an actor, and so on. I understand what it’s like not to be normal. I’m also not great socially. And I’m brutally honest. I call things as they are. It annoys people – and I’m fine with that.”

But, writing about a neurological disorder, autism, from the perspective of the “neurotypical” world – and making it funny – is part of a greater message, which is the question: what is normal? How do we cohabit and negotiate togetherness?

“Ultimately, the play is about figuring out how to navigate a complicated relationship. Although it uses autism spectrum disorder, it shows the madness in all relationships – how we manage to negotiate different levels of social ability and comfort with intimacy.”

Adapted to a South African context – the play is set in Cape Town – its message is also particularly relevant to us, Janks says, because in South Africa, we have to deal with difference

and how to manage other ways of being.

“We have a great deal of diversity – and we also have high levels of fear, hatred, even disgust of the other,” he says.

Judaism isn’t integral to the story in theme or character, but two out of four of the play’s actors – Janks and Russel Savadier – who plays Gary and Evan – are, in fact, Jewish.

Perhaps it does have some relevance, because Jews tend to be thinkers and innovators, and innovation sits outside of “normal” thought processes. “Many of the great thinkers of the age, if tested, would be found to be on the autism spectrum,” Janks says. “Perhaps our culture skews us towards the spectrum.”

*Odd Man Out* is very funny, but is autism a funny subject? “Autism can be very funny. Everything is funny,” Janks says. “[Playwright] David Williamson is using comedy to communicate messages. Comedy is a wonderful vehicle to prompt us to ask questions.

“At its heart, theatre should be entertaining. We are a little too obsessed with the message – which partly comes from our history of struggle theatre. Perhaps we have forgotten that theatre can be many things.

“It must be terrible to live with autism,” Janks points out. “It’s a huge challenge to be part of the neurotypical world. But it doesn’t make it less of a subject of humour.

“I have a responsibility to portray Ryan realistically. If psychologists and people who are on the spectrum come to see the play, I hope to do them justice, and show the challenges they deal with in the comedy.

“It’s a great play – fun, beautifully directed, well-acted, and talks to things we can relate to. Don’t come for a message, but hopefully leave with one.”

• *Odd Man Out* is at Theatre on the Square in Sandton until 21 October. To book, call 011 883 8606 (Theatre Box Office) or 0861 915 8000 (Computicket). For more information, email [theatreonthesquare@gmail.com](mailto:theatreonthesquare@gmail.com)

## Sukkah bicycle brings the mitzvah to the people

TALI FEINBERG

You get so many variations of sukkahs across the Jewish world over Sukkot, but few are cycled around campus.

This year, a pedi-sukkah was cycled around Jameson Plaza at the University of Cape Town, and drew crowds of students, both Jewish and not, to learn about this chag and enact its mitzvot.

“Pedi-sukkah comes from ‘peddle sukkah’ as it’s peddled around on a bicycle,” says Rabbi Nissen Goldman of Chabad on Campus, who decided to make the sukkah more accessible to Jewish students this year. “We got the inspiration from Chabad Houses around the world who are always innovating with new ideas to reach more yidden, making Judaism more accessible,” he says.

“It was ideal, as we didn’t have permission to erect a seven-day structure on campus, and no cars can access Jammie Plaza, which is the most densely populated social space on campus. So a pedi-sukkah was quite literally a way to make Judaism and Sukkot accessible to Jewish

students, and it was the only way for us to access Jammie Plaza,” he says.

Rabbi Goldman personally cycled the sukkah from the nearby Samson Student House (the Chabad campus house sponsored by the Eric and Sheila Samson Foundation) to upper campus over a highway bridge. “It was very well received. As soon as we entered campus, students started whipping out phones and videoing this crazy spectacle. The Jewish students in particular couldn’t believe their eyes. They’d never seen such a thing before!

David Levin, a past Herzlia pupil, UCT engineering graduate, and Chabad on Campus alumnus, designed and built the structure.







The pedi-sukkah on Jammie Plaza

Photo: Chabad on Campus

4:30. Husband’s alarm goes off. To learn Torah before davening. Attempt to remember this should make me happy. And proud. Fail to embody the Eishet Chayil I aspire to be. Place feet on ground. Hit said ground running. Change nappy. Make bottle. Sweetly sing: “Morning boys, time to get up!” Make and pack 4 x lunches. And water bottles. “Boys, are you up?!” “Boys, food, NOW!” Take breakfast orders. Like the restaurateur that I am. 2 x sun and moons with runny yolks. And Worcestershire sauce. 1 x scrambled eggs. 1 x peanut butter on toast. A bowl of sugar. Lecture on sugar and dental health. Find child eating fizzers behind the couch. Shower. Dress. Can’t cope with sheitel and kids today. #tichel. Tantrum over toast being cut in triangles. Not rectangles. Search for missing school shoe. Search for missing school hat. Missing jersey. Missing jacket. Missing everything school related. Wait in car. Kid runs inside to use bathroom. Fight over Katy Perry vs Shwekey. Listen to The Greatest Showman as compromise. Throw kids at teachers. Rush to meet 2 clients at Naked coffee. (Aka my office.) Attempt to solve shidduch crisis. Fetch vacuum cleaner from repair store. It’s dead. Purchase new vacuum. Commiserate with vacuum salesman over the neglect of these fine machines. Rush to toivel new vegetable strippers for my poke bowl inspired menu. Maybe too excited about this Yuppie Chef delivery? Check up with this week’s dates. “So, how did you leave things?” “He said what?” “Are we still friends?” Fetch 2 youngest from school. Watch other kids run and embrace their moms. Watch mine jump on BP bikes. And race to the other end of the playground. Bribe them with treats. Bottle. Nap time. Race to fetch bigger boys from soccer. Everyone is hot. And thirsty. And hungry. And why can’t you fetch us later/earlier/slower/faster. Placate them with a lecture about gratitude. And street children. Always a winner. Pass street children. Don’t open window. Get a lecture about street children. #parentingfail. Dentist appointment. Tooth pulled. Mild panic attack. Swimming lessons. Where are your goggles? Guitar lesson. (Please, please be musical!!!!) Prepare food for our weekly shiur on chinuch (not given by me). Bath time. Kids clean and shiny. Heart full. For those precious 5 minutes. Supper time. “I only eat steak.” “These peas are too burny.” “Why can’t we have pasta?” Collapse on couch. Utter exhaustion. Husband walks in. “See you chilling with the kids.” Nightly bedtime stories. “Night lights” (A bit male only but in “vesel” in my bed in the dark with Daddy on my tummy speaks bring my/your/US....) THIS is how we stimulate our kids for sleep. No lavender oils here...) “Get back to bed.” “Okay... one cup of water.” “No, we don’t have tornados in South Africa!” Facebook. TV. Phone. Anything to allow my eyes. While O’clocks have a minute to check on each sleeping zuck. Battles in their cradles. Their corners. Their sheer madness. Shower. Bed. #momofboys.

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# Magazine maven draws on past in debut novel

Q&A

Vanessa Raphaely was editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine for 16 years, becoming Editorial and then Content Director of Associate Magazines, a company started by her mother and the queen of women’s magazines, Jane Raphaely. Now, Vanessa has penned her debut novel (although she has also written a children’s book). She describes it as “a fast-paced, twisty, page-turner, with a proper slap in the face of an ending!” She lives in Cape Town, and has also launched The Village Facebook group. *The SA Jewish Report* asks her questions.



**Summarise what *Plus One* is about?**  
The book is about two best friends. The first, Lisa Lassister, is a high-flying South African magazine journalist, living, working and playing in London. Her best friend is Claudia Hemmingway, who is a charming, but complicated movie star, whose career, as the book begins, is about to take off.

One weekend – as young women like them often do – they find themselves on a yacht in Mykonos. They are in the company of assorted rich “lucky sperm [the sons and daughters, of billionaires]” and one very, very powerful Hollywood producer.

Everyone on the yacht, it seems, is harbouring secrets. In the midst of a particularly wild party, someone dies. The after-effects of that weekend haunt both women for years. The novel touches on the themes of female friendship, the #MeToo movement, the discrepancy of power between men and women, how crippling guilt can be, and what is lost when fame is valued above everything else.

**Why did you decide to write a book?**  
I always said I wouldn’t write a book, because I feared that I would not be able to write a good one. I am a proper “super fan” of authors. I love and respect good writing, and just didn’t have the confidence to try, as I knew I would judge my own writing harshly. And I do. But at this stage in my life, it seems stupid to let fear of embarrassing myself stand in the way of a dream, and I did always secretly dream that I would have at least one book in me.

**Did you find the process challenging?**  
I wrote and rewrote *Plus One* sixteen times. Without the help and support of many people – most notably my editor, Alison Lowry, and my agent, Nadine Rubin Nathan – I would have ditched it somewhere around the third draft, and never attempted another.  
Writing novels is hard – much harder than you imagine. Slogging through my last three drafts felt as if I was wading through mud. You’re basically alone with your self-doubt, boredom, and embarrassment. But now that it’s finished and published, all I want to do is get the next one out of the starting blocks. Writing fiction is addictive.

**What does it mean to have written a book?**  
It’s a fantastic feeling, I’m not going to lie. Getting a book published is the fulfilment of one of my dreams – that’s like a 95% perfect feeling. If I could actually make a living from writing books, I’d be feeling 100%.

**Is the story autobiographical?**  
I had a couple of boyfriends in my twenties who were and still are big shots in Hollywood. I worked and lived in London on magazines for 10 years and hung around with way too many famous people.

Without the book being autobiographical, I did write what I know. That’s what you’re told to do in your first novel! But, I’ve got to be absolutely clear that the sex scenes are not based on real life. I have teenagers who are scarred enough by the experience of reading those scenes in the book without suspecting they are true to life. And then, I’m extremely sad to say that most of the #MeToo stuff will be familiar territory to many women. That’s a life experience many of us share.

**Does the book reflect your time in the glamorous magazine industry?**  
Yes, it does, but it is very carefully set in a particular moment and place. I loved my very long and happy career in the business, and am careful to make it clear that the monsters of the ghastly VIVID (the fictional publishing house in *Plus One*) bear no resemblance to the wonderful women and men I worked with throughout my career.

**What is your advice to anyone who wants to write a book, and/or get into the magazine industry?**  
Approach both industries with realistic, not romantic expectations! If you want to get rich, best you head for a hedge fund instead.

**Does the book have any Jewish characters or themes?**  
No Jewish themes in *Plus One*. I’m saving those for the second novel. That one’s about a nice middle-aged Jewish soccer mom with a very surprising side hustle...

**Do any of the scenes take place in South Africa?**  
Yes. Lisa returns to South Africa, from London, heals, and regains her sense of self back home.

**Tell us about the success of the Facebook group you started, The Village:**  
The Village is a phenomenon. It’s a Facebook group for parents of tweens and teens, with 22 000 members currently. It has consistent engagement of 87%, and most surprising of all for a social media community, it’s really kind. It’s helpful, supportive, and useful. It’s really rewarding to be a part of something that actually helps people. Being involved with The Village is a really good feeling.

Wake up fast. Aria calling. Find my slippers. Check phone. 14 emails unread. Reply to 8. Make eggy toast. Aria doesn’t want it. Nescafé. 2 shugs. Make Gaby tea. Quick play sesh with Aria. Say bye-bye. Kiss, kiss. Off to work. Shwet Sandton traffic. Play some tunes, get pumped. Phone calls begin. “Howzit shmanazz...” Arrive at work. Hello. Hi. How’s your o? Espresso. 2 shugs. 9 emails unread. Reply to all. Meeting number 1. Done. Oi, oi. Call back 2 missed calls. Landlord giving me grief. Call Gab. Brainstorm new project. Boom bang island. Meeting number 2. Long and shwet. Done. Call back 4 missed calls. “Yes boss.” “No boss.” “Yes boss.” Put out some fires. Okes just aren’t being okes. Espresso. No shugs. Leave work. Sandton traffic. Back routes (thanks Waze). Pick up milk and nappies. Close call. Home time. Kiss, kiss. Hide and seek with Aria. She’s under the pillow. Round 7. Aria’s supper time. (Run-around-the-house time). ‘Hey Duggee’ episode 34, 15th time. Facetime Bobba. Bath Aria. Bubbles everywhere. Water everywhere. Story time. More story. Dudu time. Have dinner with Gaby. Slammed that salmon 6 love. Have a chat. Gaby loves her work. Chill to the max. Check phone. 17 emails unread. Reply to all. Quick shower. Find slippers. Check phone. 1 email. Ignore. Attempt some reading. FIFA is better. Fall asleep.

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## Ask the right questions before donating to charity

There is no easy way to write this, but I am going to give it a shot.

Jewish South African donors need to exercise more responsibility when deciding which charities they support, based on how compliant the organisation is.

Even if we are quite fond of the person approaching us.

As a rule, we are nice people. We want to help everyone, and often we are uncomfortable with asking the questions that we consider impolite. We probably would have no issue asking similar questions when looking to invest in a business. But when it comes to matters of community, our need not to offend, our guilt, and our naivety conspire to make us timid.

I recall a conversation with a friend a few years back. We had both been approached by a visiting rabbi who was looking for support. Neither of us trusted either the person or the cause. We debated how to approach it, because we didn't want to risk offending the bloke who had approached us.

We decided to be honest with him (more or less). I spoke to him first, and explained that I

would not be funding him. He was not happy at all. But my friend gave him a sizeable donation. When I challenged him on why he had done so, his response was, "It was much easier to give him the money than it was to say no."

A post Zuma South Africa has made us deeply intolerant of corruption. Any whiff of non-compliance from government is naturally seen in the most negative light. We live in fear that we could quite easily go back to where we were – even though we are not even through it completely. And we are right. Corruption has done immense damage to the country. We are, quite literally, still paying the price.

And yet, we don't seem to be as concerned and demanding when it comes to our own community organisations. Of course, there are many of our charities, schools, shuls, and community organisations that are audited, and that would withstand external scrutiny. But sadly, there are also many that are not, and would not.

A recent meeting with a community rabbi shocked me. In discussing this issue, he told me that he would not make a personal phone

call from the shul office. "It's not my money," he explained. Although I considered this to be unnecessary, what hit home was the responsibility that he felt towards money that he considered to belong to the community.

I have often wondered why South Africa sees a massive influx of collectors from Israel. The rand is clearly a problem, the cost of the flight a hindrance, and yet, somehow, we are still viewed as an attractive destination. That can be only because it is worthwhile.

Many (not all) only give a percentage of the booty to the organisation they represent, and much of the charity is used to fund the trip itself. And yet, it is rare that we have the courage to ask a person of G-d these questions.

A rule of thumb as a donor is that we should be asking the following:

- Is the organisation compliant from a tax and governance perspective?
- Are the financials open to scrutiny?
- Does the organisation take good care of the public funds in its control?
- Is there an independent board that will

INNER VOICE



assist the organisation in self-correcting should a problem occur?

- Do we know how much of the donation will make it back to the charity itself?

Mostly, we need to be sure that believe in the cause. We need to confident that the organisation is worth supporting, and that the recipients will receive as much of our funds as is practical.

This should be true if we are donating R18, or R18 000, or R180 000.

There are many wonderful organisations that show good governance and are compliant. But there many that don't, and are not. The choice to support a non-compliant organisation belongs to the donor.

All I am suggesting is that the more we fund these organisations, the quieter we should be when it comes to calling out state corruption.

Daphne Kuhn presents by arrangement with the Cameron Creswell Agency

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I'm being shaken. Deb is going to work. I was dreaming I was the host of The Daily Show. I don't have to wake up for another seven hours. Deb is a doctor. Now that's a career. Maybe I should get a real job. Make an actual contribution to society. Back to The Daily Show... 12pm. Time for breakfast. Strawberry Pops. Seinfeld likes cereal. I like cereal. Write new material. Where's a pen? I need a pen. I'm not writing a word until I find my lucky pen. There it is. It's nearly time for lunch - might as well have lunch first. Fruit Loops. One more snack then I'll start writing. Still nothing. Need inspiration. Turn on Comedy Central. It's Trevor again. That could have been me on The Daily Show. No it couldn't. And there's nothing wrong with Tyres and Braaiers on SABC 3. I heard it's just been syndicated in Zambia. #GoingPlaces. Fetch kids from school. Try new material on them in the car. What's the deal with peanuts on an aeroplane... Not even a smile. They want Katy Perry. What am I raising? Are comedians even allowed to be parents? Off to the Baxter to perform Fortyfied. For the fortieth time. They didn't reserve my parking again. Late-night call. Agent has another pro bono job. "No budget." But it's for a good cause. #mitzvah. At least I don't pull cheap publicity stunts like some comedians. Now it's the Chief Rabbi on the phone. Would you let us use your name on a bus stop to promote The Shabbos Project? You're damn right I would!

NIK RABINOWITZ,  
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 26 - 27 OCT 2018



### Community Column

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

## Gauteng expresses confidence in Jewish leadership

Delegates from a wide range of Jewish organisations in Gauteng came together at Beyachad in Johannesburg on 7 October for the biennial conference of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' Gauteng Council.

The main business of the day was outgoing Chairman Marc Pozniak's report on the council's activities over the previous two years, and the ratification of the new Gauteng Council constitution. I congratulate Marc on all that has been achieved under his leadership since taking over from me as chairman in August last year. Congratulations also to the newly-elected Gauteng council. I wish you all success, and look forward to working with you in your upcoming term of office.

The mandate of the SAJBD to represent South African Jewry and take action on its behalf derives from its affiliate organisations. Our regional and national conferences are not just report-back forums, but give us the necessary authority to continue to act as the community's representative spokesbody and civil-rights lobby.

They also enable affiliates to give us input into what we are and need to be doing. We appreciated the useful feedback that was received from the floor, and were encouraged by the confidence expressed by those present in the SAJBD, and how it is performing its role. My thanks to everyone who joined us for the occasion. We look forward to following this formal part of the conference with an event for the broader Jewish community on 25 November. This will be built around President Ramaphosa's address to Gauteng Jewry, and preparations for this historic occasion are now underway.

Tribute to Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi

Prince Buthelezi has long been a household

name in South Africa from his years at the helm of the KwaZulu-Natal government and Inkatha Freedom Party, the political movement that he founded and continues to head, and later as a Cabinet minister and widely respected "elder statesman" in the post-liberation Parliament. He has also been a warm friend of South African Jewry, and a staunch advocate of closer ties between South Africa and Israel. On 8 October, the Board joined the South African Zionist Federation and South African Friends of Israel in paying tribute to this eminent South African statesman. The event, held at the Yeshiva College shul, was very well attended, testifying to how much goodwill there is towards Prince Buthelezi within the greater Jewish community despite the fact that his primary interaction with our community has been in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal.

In my message on behalf of the Board, I stressed how Prince Buthelezi had always been willing to engage and work with us, during the dark days of apartheid and in the new era of non-racial democracy that replaced it. He has shown himself to be a man of principle who acted according to what he believed to be right, rather than for reasons of political expediency. His continued staunch support for maintaining and building the relationship between South Africa and Israel, despite the growing unpopularity of such a stance in certain quarters, is just one example of this. In his gracious response, Prince Buthelezi described his real, long-term friendships with Jews over the years. In terms of the relationship with Israel, he stressed the folly of South Africa's disengagement from the region through ill-considered intentions to downgrade diplomatic ties.

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



# Knowing us, knowing them, healing feels impossible



## TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

Sunday morning’s killing of Israeli employees by an Arab worker at the Barkan industrial zone in the West Bank, a zone punted as exemplifying how Israelis and Palestinians could work together despite political problems, shows again the conflict’s intractability. Will reconciliation ever occur between the sides, even in small doses?

Barkan reportedly has more than 100 different factories where 8 000 Palestinians and Israelis from both sides of the Green Line earn a living.

Jews in Western countries look on with despair: what would it take for meaningful reconciliation to happen? They look to their own countries for possible approaches.

What about South Africa, touted as the exemplar of “dialogue” for resolving problems because of achievements during former President Nelson Mandela’s era? Can this country offer anything? There are gigantic differences between the contexts – historical, religious and cultural. But this country also once attempted to reconcile obdurate differences between sides at loggerheads for generations – black South Africa and white South Africa – even though military power lay with the whites. It has been partially, but not completely, successful.

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1996 followed South

Africa’s political settlement. Is it totally naive to think there might one day be a Palestinian-Israeli TRC, even though there is no Mandela there?

There have been political wrongs on both sides. Even Barkan’s location in the occupied Palestinian territories makes it an obvious target for an attack. But nevertheless, could Palestinians and Israelis ever sit around a table and unpack rationally what occurred during seven decades of battle? It is unlikely to happen anytime soon. The chasm between them is so deep, that mutual understanding is probably impossible in the short term. And victories and defeats in a peoples’ history become incorporated as emotive folklore, never to be forgotten. The Jewish people is as adept at this as any other; Arabs and Muslims equally so.

Add to this today’s “fake news” ethos of social media, where distinguishing truth from lies is often impossible. Past attempts to reveal truth through a process such as South Africa’s TRC seem quaint today amidst the full-blown social-media circus, where truth is utterly malleable. How would Palestinians and Israelis fare?

Many people would say that Middle Eastern politics is so complex, the TRC model is a complete non-starter. South Africa’s problems seem relatively simple by comparison. All we can hope for is an uneasy truce between the Israeli and Palestinian enemies, where each side knows it cannot fully defeat the other.

Sporadic groups of Israelis and Palestinians have formed forums to get to know each other, with small-scale successes. The Barkan zone is an example where, through working together, some progress may be made. Politically, too, there have been some successes, such as the

fact that Arab Israelis – Palestinians, essentially – have full rights in Israel and hold official positions in government and elsewhere.

But healing on a grand scale can begin only after a political settlement. Indeed, South Africa’s TRC happened only after the political settlement. This is still a very long way off in the Middle East, and none of the current crop of leaders, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Palestinian

counterparts, seems willing or able to attempt it. United States President Donald Trump’s much-touted “peace place” is yet to offer any hope.

Continuing with the theme of truth-seeking, a movie opened last week in Johannesburg cinemas called *The Forgiven*, about Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu’s successful role in the TRC. In contrast, in Israel, the killing continues in Barkan and elsewhere. Will a film called *The Forgiven* ever be made about Israel-Palestine?



# THE GREAT BIG CHALLAH BAKE

Feeling the dough between your fingers as you knead it just so. Seeing how it rises, takes a form, takes a shape (of sorts). Hearing the blessing spoken, so loud and so clear. Smelling the scent that beckons in Shabbos and embraces us whole. Tasting the bread of our people, our nation, our day. And smiling because you know the whole world is in it together.

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## Letters

### THREAT TO JEWS COMES FROM LEFT, NOT RIGHT

Geoff Sifrin continually bangs on about what he calls “the rise of the far right” in an alarmist manner. He hasn’t devoted a single column to condemning the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) of extremist Islam.

Let’s get a few things clear. It’s obvious that Hitler and the Nazis were a great Satanic evil of the 20th century, and carried out one of the greatest atrocities in history.

But comparing the Nazis of that time to the rise of the far right, as left-wing commentators are doing, is misguided, if not part of a sinister ploy.

The threat to my people, the Jews, and to the whole of civilization comes from Islamism and its allies on the far left, as well as the New World Order financed by George Soros and co. Islamism is taking over the world violently. Israel is under

threat of genocide courtesy of Iran, Islam, and the world left.

Who is terrorising Jews in South Africa? Not the far right, but the ANC/SACP, BDS, and Jews for a Free Palestine.

Islamists are killing millions of people daily around the globe – Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Animists, and so on, all with the active support of the left-wing world establishment and media To focus on those who oppose the invasion of their countries and the phantom “rise of the far right” is a deliberate diversion by the New World Order to facilitate Islamic world takeover. – **Gary Selikow, Johannesburg**

### MORAL INTROSPECTION ON YOM KIPPUR ‘A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS’

I am a gentile who was greatly moved by the example that the Jewish community sets all South Africans on Yom Kippur, especially at this stage in South Africa’s history.

For all who would stop to watch, listen and think, your actions over the days of fasting, confession, and correction of sins were a wake-up call to a nation that has morally lost its way, as our various commissions of enquiry have sadly proven.

By setting this example, you have indeed been a “light to the nations” (Isaiah 42:6). I thank you profoundly. – **John Lübbe (retired Professor and HOD of Semitics, Unisa), Johannesburg**

**Disclaimer:** The letters page is intended to provide an opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed. Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not reflect the views of the *SA Jewish Report*. The editor is not obliged to use every letter and will not publish vitriolic statements or any letters with inappropriate content. Letters will be edited and – if need be – shortened.

**Guidelines:** Letters are limited to 400 words. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime phone number. Letters should be emailed to [editorial@sajewishreport.co.za](mailto:editorial@sajewishreport.co.za)



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# Givers pack a punch

A large group of little givers, together with Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, visited Yad Aharon & Michael to pack Sukkot food hampers for 650 families in need. The morning was abuzz with vibrancy, positive energy, and a powerful sense of compassion.



## SAUJS election renews commitment to students

The South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) recently held elections and selected the organisation’s 2019 national committee. The incoming committee will focus on making SAUJS a more inclusive organisation, and ensure that every Jewish student has the space and ability to express themselves within the organisation.



# WALK PLAY (DIS)CONNECT

Feeling the strong connection on this day.  
Seeing your community as they walk beside you, Shabbat Shaloms filling the air. Hearing the shouts, the squeals and the laughter as the family spends time together, interruption free. Smelling every morsel as you savour it. Tasting time that is finally your own. And smiling because you know the whole world is in it together.

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# Friends of Israel gather in a sukkah

A sukkah needs to be built using natural elements, allowing for the rain to come in, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein told the South African Friends of Israel (Safi) cultural exchange held in the Sydenham shul sukkah on 7 October.

Goldstein said that Sukkot teaches us the importance of “taking refuge in G-d, not in bricks in mortar”. He was addressing the community, rabbis, and Christian and cultural leaders at the event, which took place in the shul’s beautiful sukkah.

Rabbi Daniel Kaplan explained that the sukkah represented the “clouds of glory” that encamped the Jewish people while they travelled in the desert. These clouds protected the Israelites from attacks from dangerous animals and enemies, and by night, they turned into a cloud of fire, to light up their path. The sukkah, therefore, serves as a reminder that our well-being and livelihood comes from G-d, which is why we remove ourselves from the comforts of our home to live in the sukkah.

Vivienne Myburgh, the National Director of the South African Branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) that part sponsored the event, expressed the need for Christians to stand up and speak out about our shared biblical connection to the Holy Land.



She said that “without knowledge of the Old Testament, Christians would not be able to understand their roots”.

Apostle Allan Mnene from the Blessed Bible Faith Church said, “We read about these holidays in our bible, but celebrating this day with the Jews has really brought our bible to life. Thank you for inviting us to this event.”

The event was serenaded by the Sydenham Shul Choir, led by Josie Stern, with a selection of beautiful traditional songs. Talented singer Mpho Mutula, from the Calvary Worship Centre in Soweto, added to the special ambience.

• *The ICEJ educates Christians all over the world about Israel’s unique calling, political situation, and social challenges.*

## Yom Tov blessings

There’s nothing quite like putting your hand on your child’s head and giving them a heartfelt blessing. On the day before Yom Kippur, hundreds of parents and children gathered from across King David Primary Schools to bless their children at the refurbished Linksfield Synagogue.

**Belinda Hollander blesses her daughter, Sasha, in the refurbished Linksfield Synagogue**



## King David cricketers are victorious

Jacob Sacks from King David Sandton and Benji Stone from King David Linksfield were among the victorious South African U13 team at the World Indoor Cricket Federation Junior World Series in Christchurch, New Zealand, from 29 September to 8 October.

The tournament is held every three years for U13, U15, and U17 juniors. The two were the only Jewish boys selected to the team.

The team won nine out of 10 games in the round-robin stages, beating the Kiwis in the semi-final, and facing defending champion Australia in

the final, where they won convincingly with a 102 – 70 result to take the gold medal. It is the first time that a country other than Australia has won a Junior World Series.



## Redhill School’s Heritage Day celebrates diversity

An incredible 40 nationalities were represented at Redhill School’s special Heritage Day assembly on 21 September, held at the school’s hall.

Students and staff all wore traditional outfits. The highlight of the assembly was the heritage parade, comprising 40 nationalities, which represented the school community.

The parade was preceded by a performance by the junior marimba team, adding to the colour and excitement of the event. It was followed by the Redhill Voices, a choir made up of support staff, academic staff, and high-school students, which performed three traditional pieces to thunderous applause.

**Redhill School students Olivia and Sienna Ho representing Israel in the Heritage Day assembly parade**





Philippa's phone beeps. Ping. FB notification. Immigration sale. 306 comments. 307. Ping. Something about a dog. Ladies are angry. Is it advertising day? No. What about now? Still no. Ping. "Does anyone have any comments about Dr Da-" Admin delete. "Hi clever mommies..." Someone selling something previously loved. It's more previous than loved. Ping. "My child has a temp of 46°". Admin delete. Admin send out warning. "PFAF". Yeah, right. Silver polish. Static spray. Pawpaw cream. Toothpaste. Toothpaste? Yup - toothpaste. Breast pumps. Something about a domestic. Ping. Someone needs a cake. It's urgent. Can anyone recommend a makeup artist? My sister! My mom! My neighbour's in-laws! My husband. Ping. Collecting for someone in need. 406 comments. 407. Only in this community. Only on JJM.

# **JOBURG JEWISH MOMMIES, STOP DOING. START BEING.**

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PREMIUM  
**R 655** pm  
OUTBONUS **R2 500**



48-year-old female  
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