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Giant Menorah Lighting

SUNDAY 2 - SUNDAY 9 DECEMBER 2018

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Dear Friend,

Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated annually by lighting the Chanukah Menorah, as a symbol and message of the triumph of freedom over oppression and of light over darkness.

"It is a timely and reassuring message, for the forces of darkness are ever-present. Moreover, the danger does not come exclusively from outside; it often lurks close to home, in the form of insidious erosion of time-honored values and principles that are at the foundation of any decent human society. Needless to say, darkness is not chased away by brooms and sticks, but by illumination. Our Sages said, 'A little light expels a lot of darkness'.

The Chanukah Lights remind us in a most obvious way that illumination begins at home, within oneself and one's family, by increasing and intensifying the light of the Torah and Mitzvos in the everyday experience, even as the Chanukah Lights are kindled in growing numbers from day to day. But though it begins at home, it does not stop there. Such is the nature of light that when one kindles a light for one's own benefit, it benefits also all who are in the vicinity. Indeed, the Chanukah Lights are expressly meant to illuminate the 'outside', symbolically alluding to the duty to bring light also to those who, for one reason or another, still walk in darkness".- The Lubavitcher Rebbe.

In light of this call we have launched a country-wide campaign to ensure that every Jewish home in South Africa can have a Chanukah Menorah and that our work-places, offices and malls become beacons of the light of miracles.

Please join Jewish communities around the world by lighting your menorah each night of Chanukah (2 - 9 December) and join our Giant Menorah lighting event each night outside the main entrance to Sandton City, especially on the first night (2 December) for a great event including a huge Menorah competition for children!



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Rabbi Michael Katz



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Rockets, mortars, retaliation, repeat – welcome to the Gaza belt

ILANIT CHERNICK

Fifteen hours. That’s all it took for Hamas to shoot 460 rockets and mortars at southern Israel. I was there for eight of those hours. Running, watching, listening, holding my head, taking cover, and of course doing what I like to do best, speaking. At 5pm on Monday evening, a friend and I decided to head out to southern Israel after what had been a long 16 hours of waiting for what Hamas threatened would be mass retaliation.

It followed a botched operation by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), which I covered from its start on Sunday night until the last rockets fell in retaliation in the early hours of Monday morning, and then again as details slowly trickled in from 8:30 that same morning. We waited and watched as Hamas buried its seven dead. Something in my gut told me that the “pathetic” volley it sent over on Sunday night would be nothing in comparison to what was coming. My intuition was right. As we made our way down south, my phone starting pinging. Rocket alert, after rocket alert, after rocket alert. It carried on for about 20 minutes, and soon after, it was confirmed that 100 rockets had been launched into southern Israel from Gaza in that tiny space of time. I was there when it reached 400. I had no words to describe the severity of the situation. As we entered the danger zone, we saw in the darkened sky an Iron Dome interception just ahead of us, then a massive orange explosion to the side of us as Israeli F-16s retaliated. There had just been a rocket attack. Welcome to the Gaza belt community.

I had been there just a week before. Things were calm, residents were angry, but there hadn’t been rockets in two weeks – a real feat. We were told certain roads along the border were closed, but found the one leading to Kfar Aza wide open, so we took the road less travelled, and made our way to an area just more than 1.6km away from the Gaza border.

We had a clear view of Gaza city to our west, and Sderot and Ashkelon to the north of us. We waited. Within 20 minutes, the sky lit up for a moment, and the quiet was shattered by the cries “Tzeva adom!” meaning “colour red” – a sign that there was an incoming rocket attack. The sirens wailed, and we ran. Fast. There was no real bomb shelter, so we took cover behind a large concrete building and waited. The booms were loud. They sounded close. I counted at least six rockets – looking like slow moving shooting stars – coming up from the side of us. The same thing happened again and again, about eight times. Like a washing machine. Rinse, cycle, repeat. Minutes later, Israeli fighter jets could be heard, and even louder booms shattered the silence. Israel was retaliating. I saw the flash as

the air strike hit its target, and minutes later retreated. It went quiet for about half an hour. Peaceful. The sound of nature, jackals howling, crickets, even some birds. The dichotomy of having these two scenes side by side. Nature, beauty, and the sounds of war in the foreground baffled me. As we relaxed, a loud boom in the field next to us made the ground shake, then the sirens

even a siren, the Iron Dome intercepted an incoming rocket. As we watched, it hit a rocket far in the distance. Then another airstrike by the IDF in Gaza City. The biggest and loudest I’d seen all night. Later, we learned it was the Hamas TV building that we had seen being pummelled to the ground. The cycle repeated, on and on. We watched

The top three floors of the apartment were completely destroyed in the attack. One person was dead, and three others injured. Speaking to traumatised residents, most said they hadn’t felt this afraid since the 2014 Gaza War. “We don’t have sirens often, and to have had to have been rescued by the IDF from my building after it was hit by this rocket was



A home in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon was destroyed by a rocket fired from Gaza this week

sounded again. This time there wasn’t even five seconds to get to cover. One, two, three, four loud booms – all believed to be mortars. We understood. Hamas knew we were there, they could see the large lights being used by the TV crews next to us. This was later confirmed when I spoke to an army officer at the gas station nearby who said that our position was extremely dangerous. “What, you think they can’t see you with those big lights?” he told me, pointing to the lights in an empty patch of ground we were using as our base. Minutes later, we found ourselves in the outer bomb shelter as the Tzeva Adom sounded. Again, quiet. No retaliation this time. But the drones were closer and louder. Out of nowhere, without

as rockets flew over us, to the side of us, and into Sderot and towards Ashkelon. This time, it was sirenless as the area wasn’t in immediate danger, like a sick fireworks display. More interceptions, more loud booms. Later, we heard that apartment buildings had been hit in Ashkelon, and there were injuries. At 12:45, we headed there. The smell of gas and burning was strong as we arrived at the packed street. At least 100 people in nightgowns, shoeless, and in pajamas were out of their homes, and part of the road was cordoned off by police and emergency services. They had been evacuated because one of the gas lines in the building had been hit, and there were concerns about further explosions.

terrifying,” one woman said. I did a livestream video for Facebook, and while filming, the siren’s piercing wail sounded. People ran, some screaming, others flailing their arms as they tried to find a safe spot. I hid next to a wall in an alleyway with no time to get to a shelter. The rockets flew straight over us, loud and bright. Not far behind was a deafening whoosh from the Iron Dome interceptors. Loud bangs sounded close by, one after the other. Despite the siren ending, we were told not to get up for at least another five minutes. Within that time, there was another earth-shattering bang. In that moment, for the first time all night, I was truly afraid. The trauma was real, the people visibly shaken.

State security minister says no real terror threat in SA

JORDAN MOSHE

South African Minister of State Security Dipuo Letsatsi-Duba makes it clear that while the Jewish community is under no particular threat, the department of state security takes seriously its mandate to protect the country’s citizens.

She expressed these views in an exclusive interview with the *SA Jewish Report* last Friday about the country’s level of vulnerability to terrorism in light of the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre, which rocked the Jewish world recently.

“We identify any threat to the country, and assess the risks associated with it,” said Letsatsi-Duba. “Our system is well oiled. We use our resources to pick up whatever information we can on potential threats to our safety.

“We put measures in place all the time, though we have not experienced major terrorism issues here,” she said. “At the moment, there are no major threats to our country in terms of terrorism.”

Letsatsi-Duba has been State Security Minister since February 2018, having served as deputy minister of public service and administration before that. Prior to her appointment to the national executive, she served on the ANC’s provincial executive committee in Limpopo, and was also its provincial treasurer.

Her department informs the government about any potential threats to national stability, and the safety and wellbeing of our country, including terrorism, sabotage, espionage, and organised crime.

It carries out its mandate in conjunction with other government departments, operating in subject-specific clusters which include representatives of the departments in whose purview the matter at hand may fall.

According to the minister, while the global trend towards extremist behaviour is alarming, the depth of the problem differs from country to country. “Geopolitics is particularly complex,” she said. “Today, you see one thing, tomorrow another. The extent of the presence of extremism in South Africa needs to be gauged constantly. It’s only by being informed that we can craft a strategy that can be adjusted when the need arises.”

The minister stressed that her office was always alert to the possibility of terrorism, citing the existence of threats beyond our immediate borders such as pockets



Minister of State Security
Dipuo Letsatsi-Duba

of terrorism in Mozambique.

In spite of reports in the media about the existence of extremist or terrorist training camps inside South Africa, Letsatsi-Duba maintains that there is no concrete evidence to support the theory. “We’ve had these reports from all over the world,” she said.

“All sorts of groups are telling us that there may be camps in our country that serve as training or transit camps. We’ve probed this, and combed the country, even scouring the deep rural areas. However, we have picked up no actual training of ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) nor Hezbollah trainees is the country. As far as we know, it doesn’t exist.”

Addressing the ongoing trial of the suspects accused of planting a bomb in a mosque in Verulam, the minister maintains that the incident is “isolated”, and is not in any way connected with ISIS or any other terrorist group.

“We follow up to ensure that

community in particular, and we feel, as the state, that we have the capacity to address these security concerns ourselves. We strongly believe there is no need for private security. If everyone employed their own private security, the country would be in a state of chaos. This issue needs to be discussed, and regulations must be put in place.”

While her office has not ruled out the possibility that the incident in Pittsburgh could have consequences for Jews in South Africa, she doesn’t believe there is a particular threat in the country at present. “We are very concerned because we have a large Jewish community here,” she says. “If they are attacked, it is the state’s concern as they are our citizens. Measures are always in place to protect them. However, at this moment, we have no information about a particular threat to the Jewish community in our country.”

However, Dube said the channels of communication between her office and the leadership of the Jewish community remained open. “We plan to have further meetings with Jewish leadership, and have agreed that a line of communication is always open. Our office is ready to address any specific issues. The relationship is one of comradeship, as issues of security are relevant to us all. We are in the same trenches fighting terrorism,” she said.

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Torah Thought

Resist the Laban herd mentality

Modern-day society has sprouted all types of gurus. We have experts on childcare and healthy eating, education, and entertainment. Self-help books top bestseller lists every year.

I’m often challenged as a rabbi with the question: What is the Torah’s place in modern day society? Does Judaism truly have something to say about every aspect of our life, or are the volumes of the Torah better left on the bookshelves in our libraries?

More than 3 000 years ago, our forefather Jacob was on the run. His brother Esau had tried to kill him, so he had taken shelter with his uncle Laban, tending

his crops, marrying his daughters, and earning himself a comfortable living.

After continual scheming by Laban, Jacob decided it was time to go home, and he took his family and cattle and headed out for the

Holy Land. Laban pursued Jacob, and only thanks to G-dly intervention was Jacob’s life saved.

During their argument, Laban challenged Jacob on leaving without his permission: “These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle.” (Genesis 31:43)

What was Laban saying? He had literally sold his daughters to Jacob, demanding that he work 14 years for the privilege of marrying them. Jacob had worked another seven hard years for his herds of cattle. What demands could Laban have of him?

Laban was arguing a finer point. “The children belong to me,” said Laban. “You, Jacob, are fine the way you are – a man raised in the old country whose natural habitat is the tents of Torah learning and prayer. But what do you want of the children? They belong to another generation, another world. They must be raised in the spirit of the times, equipped to earn a living, and a place in society. Do you truly expect them to negotiate modern life with nothing but your ancient books? You are a good man, Jacob, but leave the children to me ...

“The cattle are my cattle, Jacob. I wouldn’t dream of interfering with your spiritual life, rabbi – I’ll be the first to admit that I’m no authority on religion. By all means, consult your sacred books on how to keep the Shabbat or how to light your Chanukah candles. But when it comes to business affairs, do you think that the stock market conforms to the standards of the Shulchan Aruch (code of Jewish law)? That you can retain both your competitive edge, and your Talmudic ethics? You’ll be eaten alive out there. Reserve your piety for the synagogue and study hall, but do yourself a favour – leave the cattle to me, okay?”

Jacob refuted Laban then, as we must refute the Laban inside us now. Judaism has something to say about every aspect of our lives, and must be as relevant to us as it was to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob thousands of years ago.



Rabbi Pini
Pink, Chabad of
Greenstone

Former deputy Israeli ambassador to SA drawn into Gaza rocket anguish

JORDAN MOSHE

On Monday evening, the skirmish raging between Israel and Hamas became very real for former Deputy Israeli Ambassador to South Africa, Michael Freeman, and his wife, Sigalit. They learned that the home of Sigalit’s mother had been hit by rocket fire, and neither of them was in a position to do anything.

Currently based in London on a diplomatic posting, Freeman and his wife found themselves drawn into the conflict in spite of being miles away from the southern borders of Israel. Shortly after 22:00, Freeman tweeted, “My wife was on the phone to her mum in Ashkelon when a rocket hit their house moments ago. ‘The living room just exploded,’ she shouted, ‘I have to go.’ Praying that all are safe and well.”

In the house at the time were Sigalit’s mother, Sara Noakh, her sister, Yifat Yosef, and niece, Roni. Although Sigalit’s father also resides in the Ashkelon home, he was in hospital in Tel Aviv at the time, having undergone surgery for bladder cancer the day before. Yosef was in Ashkelon that day to take care of her mother, who had suffered a fall the week before and broken her shoulder.

Although recent months have been quiet, Noakh says they have grown accustomed to the reality of regular rocket fire. “Up until this past conflict, everything has been fine,” she says. “Unfortunately, we have become used to the flare-ups over the past 10 years. Ever since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, the rockets have been coming. Sometimes more and sometimes less.”

“Our house was built many years ago, and we don’t have a bomb shelter or sealed room. It means that every time there is a siren or rocket attack, there is nowhere to run or to hide; just stay in the house and pray that everything will be okay. There were some very close encounters. Rockets landed in our neighbourhood in the past, but nothing too close. Israel has developed some amazing technology, and the Iron

Dome system that shoots down rockets in the air has made a big difference, but we know it can never be perfect.”

In this case, the encounter was more than just close. Sigalit says that in the middle of the call to her mother, the sirens started sounding. “I asked her how it was, and she said that in the past few hours it had got really bad with dozens of rockets. I remember thinking that the sirens seemed louder than normal.

“Then there was a boom. It was so loud, I can’t even describe it. My mum shouted that the living room had just exploded, and the phone went dead. I went into a panic. I didn’t know what had happened, and whether my mum, sister, and niece were ok.”

Sigalit contacted her husband immediately, and though he was in Wales speaking at a university, he went straight home to London. Fortunately, Sigalit was able to make contact with her sister about 20 minutes later, learning that she and her other relatives were all unhurt.

Nevertheless, the experience was traumatic. Says Yosef, “The brothers and sisters were taking it in turns to be at the house to look after my mum. It was my turn when Hamas started firing rockets. Even though my family lives in Beer Sheva and I wanted to get back to them as there was



a danger of rockets being fired on them, the constant rocket fire meant I couldn’t get out of Ashkelon.”

She recalls how terrifying the experience was. “I remember hearing the siren, and then noise and glass flying everywhere,” she says. “I screamed at my mum and daughter to get away from the living room and see if they were ok. The glass, dust, bits of ceiling fell everywhere. It was terrifying. “Within minutes, the ambulance and rescue teams were there. We couldn’t get to the front door, so they broke it down to get in. They took us out into the street for a doctor to check that we were ok. My mum grabbed the home-made biscuits – she is a great baker – and we went outside. When it was clear to go back in, we did.”

When they returned, they found that they had lost all their windows, shutters, and front door. The ceiling was cracked, as were the walls, but thankfully the building itself was still standing. Their neighbours, however, had not been as lucky.

“The house opposite took a direct hit, and our house experienced the reverberations,” says Noakh. “Our home was not as badly damaged as others.”

In spite of the damage, Noakh was adamant about returning to her home and remaining there. “This is the home we bought when we got married,” she says, “even with the glass everywhere, no windows, and no front door, I wanted to sleep in my house. And I did. There were more sirens, but I wasn’t going to be chased out of

my home.” Yosef says that her mother wouldn’t be deterred. “My parents served in the army, and were career commanders. They met in the army, and they have kept some of the traits. Mum was insistent on staying the night. My daughter Roni was really scared, and she insisted on sleeping in the corridor.”

Sigalit says that her sister is experiencing trauma only now, after having left Ashkelon. “Even I was shaking the whole night, and couldn’t fall asleep,” she says. “I got on a plane on Wednesday morning to go and spend time with my mum in the house.”

Come what may, Noakh is determined to remain in her home, and refuses to bow to terrorism. “We will stay in Ashkelon and in our house,” she says. “I hope the rockets will stop, and we will live in peace. We hope it will come, and we will be able to live with our five children and our 11 – soon to be 12 – grandchildren.”

She concludes, “When we were younger, my husband and I used to go into Gaza to buy food and products. We had Palestinian friends. The Palestinians and the Gazans aren’t our enemies; Hamas and radical terrorists are our enemies. Disposing of Hamas is good for the Palestinians, for Gaza, and for Israelis.”

Deputy minister ducks and dives over downgrade

TALI FEINBERG

Though Makgabo Mhaule, the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, admitted that the South African government would downgrade the South African embassy in Israel, she downplayed what it meant in a National Assembly plenary session on Wednesday.

“South Africa will continue to use its multilateral structures to engage with Israel, and downgrading the Israeli embassy does not equate to cutting relationships,” she said. “We will still have offices in Israel, and it will have offices here. This does not lead to cutting off communication – it will be there, if requested.”

This was in response to a grilling by the Economic Freedom Fighters’ (EFF’s) NR Mashabela and Ahmed Shaik Emam of the National Freedom Party (NFP) as to what was happening with the proposed downgrade, and why there was still an

Israeli embassy in South Africa.

She responded to the latter, explaining that the South African government had no control over shutting the Israeli embassy down. It was up to Israel to decide.

The Inkatha Freedom Party’s Nkhuleko Hlengwa called the downgrade “regressive diplomacy”, saying, “If you downgrade the embassy, you are contributing to instability in the region and not offering solutions.”

When questioned whether South Africa still supported a two-state solution, the deputy minister said South Africa would always support dialogue, but was against human rights violations. She said, “Those that are oppressing enjoy oppressing other people... we will always be on the side of those whose human rights are violated.”

Reverend Kenneth Meshoe of the African Christian Democratic Party demanded clarity, saying, “Some countries are known to have poor

human rights records, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, and Sudan, and South Africa has never condemned them or withdrawn diplomatic ties.” He said that it would be in South Africa’s best interests to maintain diplomatic ties so that it could have an influence in the region and remain a credible mediator.

To this, the deputy minister replied, “The embassy is not shut down, it is open. It’s just downgraded. There is a difference between shutting down and downgrading. We still have offices there. We cannot just withdraw from other countries on the basis of one country fighting with another – we will mediate when requested.” She said that her department was training mediators, but did not answer the reverend’s questions.

Shaik Emam of the NFP said that all attempts at resolving the conflict had failed, therefore South Africa couldn’t play any meaningful role in

Continued on page 15>>

JAWITZ

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ON SHOW THIS SUNDAY

Glenhazel - Inviting buyers from R3.299 Million
Leigh Avenue. A gorgeous, modern, chic family home waiting for new owner. A well loved character gem consisting of 5 spacious bedrooms. Stunning main en suite with huge walk in dressing room. 2 luxurious bathrooms (mes). 3 baronial reception rooms onto entertainers patio. Stunning pool and lovely garden. Asking more. Web Ref: RL6495
Directions: Northfield into Leigh Ave
Joel Harris 082 926 0287 | Marco 082 048 2644

Danni Heymann – from victim to leader

NICOLA MILTZ

Danni Heymann, the King David Victory Park Grade 12 pupil at the centre of last week’s anti-Semitic WhatsApp voice note, went from being a victim to feeling sympathetic and genuinely fond of the boy who sent her the message.

In fact, when this 18-year-old came face to face with her tormentor last Sunday, she said she discovered a regular 14-year-old boy. To her surprise, instead of finding a monster before her, she saw what she referred to as a “brave” young man desperate to seek her approval and forgiveness.

She told the *SA Jewish Report* that the whole ugly episode had opened her eyes to a new world.

“It has changed me. I see things differently now, with a new perspective,” she said this week. “I can look deeper into things, my vision is broader. I know I have an opportunity to do good, to do amazing things.”

This is a far cry from how she felt little more than a week ago when she received a vile message from a Grade 8 pupil at Treverton College in KwaZulu-Natal. It floored her, she said.

The message said, “We all agree that you should have died in the Holocaust. You know those ashtrays full of Jewish people ... maybe they should have added you to that little pile. What do you call a flying Jew?” To which his friends in the background shouted, “Smoke!”

Danni is no stranger to bullying, having experienced it first-hand. She also knows

how it feels to move to different schools, and she is intimately acquainted with the harsh and unforgiving effects of teenage anxiety, having suffered it for many years.

She tells how she was a part of a group who were the friends of her boyfriend at the time. “It seemed their mission was to make me cry, because they would always seem to laugh at my tears,” she recalls. They would call her demeaning and ugly names both in person and on WhatsApp groups. “I was always sad and my self-esteem was zero.” After a really bad bout of bullying, she cut ties with them and her boyfriend. He then wrote a disgusting message about her on social media. It took her a long time to recover.

“Over the next year, I lost a fortune of weight, ate healthy food, and exercised every day. I worked so hard at school, my grades increased 20%. I now look in the mirror and see a girl that has gone through a lot of pain, but who has also conquered a mountain that was terribly hard to climb.”

Her experience gave her the tools to cope with difficult situations, and may be behind the wisdom she has shown throughout this episode.

It was this experience that enabled her to mentor the young boy who asked her for help because he was being cyber-bullied. She told off the bully. The bully’s friend then sent her the voice note.

After receiving it, through her tears, she questioned how a young boy could have so much hate in him. It was even more baffling, considering she has a brother the same age who she couldn’t imagine having the ability to spew such hatred.



However, instead of lashing out and seeking revenge, Danni chose an altogether different approach: reconciliation and forgiveness.

“I wanted this awful, negative incident to be turned into something positive that we could all learn from. How would it help to get him expelled from school? Anti-Semitic comments happen all the time on social media. There had to be a way to address it without causing more hate.”

The boy and his father flew up from KwaZulu-Natal over the weekend to meet Danni and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) to ask for forgiveness, and address the wrongs he had committed. Following the meeting, Danni said that he had immediately brought out her “sisterly instincts”.

“He amazed me with his bravery. It could not have been easy for him. He walked into the room with confidence, but I could feel the pain at the back of his throat.

“He genuinely apologised for his hurtful comments, and expressed true willingness to learn about the Holocaust. He said he was ignorant, and wanted to know more. He blew me away with his bravery,” she said.

Danni said their interaction was deeply moving.

“I cried in the car afterwards,” she said, “Just seeing him struggle and me struggle at the same time – it was overwhelming.”

She sent him a WhatsApp message afterwards, saying how she felt, and told him she didn’t want them to lose touch. “I told him that I had turned from his victim into a friend, and that if he needed someone to talk to, I was a phone call away.”

It could have turned out very differently.

On 6 November, Danni posted the voice note she had just received online. It took minutes for it to go viral, and elicited a broad range of responses here and abroad, mostly from people baying for the teenager’s blood.

Yet in a bizarre twist to the plot, Danni turned the incident into a positive learning experience not only for herself, but for the entire community and beyond.

Her response to the incident has been described as “mature and gracious”, and it surprised her peers, who did not see this coming. Danni is not your typical King Davidian, said some this week. For one thing, she has tattoos, and by her own admission, she loves to socialise and is open to trying new things.

Her King David dramatic arts teacher, Renos Spanoudes, described Danni as “insightful and intelligent”, someone “who is not scared to go where angels fear to tread”.

This would have been a tough week for the pupil and his co-conspirators, as their school’s disciplinary process began on Monday.

Mary Kluk, the President of the SAJBD, and the director of the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre, said she had been working very closely with the school and its Headmaster, Kean Broom, to turn the situation into a positive learning opportunity for all concerned.

“He has been extraordinary. He is sensitive to the hurt, and aware of the impact this has had on the community. He is completely and genuinely committed to sensitising all the learners at his school.”

Kluk said the school was eager to start sending pupils to the Holocaust & Genocide Centre this week, in spite of the beginning of exams. A group of 60 learners attended the centre on Wednesday. Other visits were being arranged.

Wendy Kahn, the National Director of the SAJBD, said the meeting between Danni and the 14-year-old was warm and honest. “The teenager expressed genuine remorse. His parents were distraught by what had happened, and all three showed a commitment to the education process. The notion that we can blame anti-Semitism on parents is simplistic. There are so many factors that can influence youngsters today, particularly with social media.”

As for Danni, she said the incident had made her want to study psychology so that she can help teenagers deal with their issues. Before that, she would love to visit Israel, because it has made her even more proud of her heritage and her religion.



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Ex-South Africans under fire near Gaza border

NICOLA MILTZ

South African olah Nava Uner has lived through two previous Gaza attacks, but this past week was undoubtedly the worst.

The young mother of a little toddler was petrified as incessant rockets rained down on southern Israel and took over her life in Bnei Nezarín on the border of Egypt, a mere 15km from the Gaza border.

“You have 30 seconds to drop everything and run as fast as you can into the nearest shelter, which is at my neighbour’s house. My son was clinging on to me and crying, “Imma, what is going on? Imma, what is happening?”

“The noise from the sirens is deafening. You see the rockets coming down, and you hear it when they get intercepted by the Iron Dome. It’s crazy,” said Uner, who originally lived in Heidelberg, South Africa.

At the beginning of the week, Hamas in Gaza pounded Israel with more than 460 rockets, missiles, and mortars in a three-day reign of violence.

The SA Jewish Report tracked down a number of former South Africans whose lives had been interrupted because of the rocket fire from Gaza.

Israel and the Palestinian groups agreed to a ceasefire late on Tuesday, after two days of constant attacks. While some welcomed the ceasefire, for many in the south it was a devastating blow.

“People are fed up,” said Uner, who works as a garden therapist at a rehabilitation centre for the disabled.

“Schools close, mothers can’t go to work. There are constant sirens. It is a nightmare,” she said.

“Being a mother has completely changed my experience of these flare-ups. I have a little

life to protect now, whereas before I just had myself to think about. Little people know what is going on; they are not fools. You see the bombs. It’s like fireworks, but it’s not, it’s bombs.

“It’s very traumatic. I try explain to my little boy that it is okay to be afraid, and I tell him Hashem is looking after us and carrying us on his wings.”

For ex-Durbanite Lara Metodi, of Ashkelon, this week’s attack was a case of déjà vu, as she had visions of her apartment being bombed like it had been six years earlier.

“All I could think was that my roof was going to get bombed again. The only difference now is we have the Iron Dome warning us and protecting us. The last time it happened, at 5:30, it was pandemonium. You heard this indescribable noise, then a deafening silence, then the screaming started.”

This week, Metodi’s children rushed to their grandmother’s hous, which has a shelter. She took refuge under the stairwell in her apartment.

“There were too many bombs. The Iron Dome could not intercept all of them, and some got through. For the first time in a while, I was really afraid. Generally, we are immune to the rockets. It’s sad because it has become a way of life.”

The mother of three said her children had been seriously affected by the violence.

“It is a silent killer. My son has post-traumatic stress disorder, and has developed diabetes. It is unacceptable that we have to live like this. People of the south have had enough,” she said.

She is moving house because she can’t live without a bomb shelter anymore.

Veterinarian Louis Snipelisky, of Metar, which



Ashkelon in the midst of the rocket attacks.

Photo: Ilanit Chernick

is one hour from Gaza near Beer Sheva, said the past few days were “very unpleasant”. He experienced two sirens on Monday afternoon at his workplace, the Beer Sheva Veterinary Hospital, which was very disruptive.

“The animals get very distressed by the sound of the sirens. We have only a short while to put some of them in cages while we dash for the shelter. Some vets were in the middle of surgery. It is very scary, you don’t know what to expect.

“The last time this happened, one of the dogs got so scared, it ran straight through a window.”

But for others in Ashkelon, it was life as usual. South African oleh Raphi Bloch said he would be more afraid to walk the streets of Johannesburg than be in his home town, which faced at least 30 to 40 rockets.

Bloch, who is chair of the Telfed regional committee in Ashkelon, said that while residents of the town remained “on full alert”, many got on with their lives and went about their daily chores.

“This has become part of daily life here,” said

Bloch, who is also a member of the Israeli Defence Forces in a reservist unit.

“People are more upset about the ceasefire than the rockets. They are more upset about the fact that the government agrees to a ceasefire rather than following through and stopping this once and for all. The ceasefire gives Hamas the chance to regroup before it goes at it again.”

This week, schools and many businesses closed while the firing of rockets continued.

“But supermarkets were open, and people got on with their errands,” said Bloch, who is also

involved in city search-and-rescue operations.

“It all depends on who you are. I have no young kids living with me at hom; my kids are older and live in other parts of the country. For those with young children, it can be very disruptive. There are sirens going off, people dashing to safe rooms, and parents having to calm kids down.

“You see the missiles, you hear the sirens, you see and hear the missiles being shot down. But people carry on.”

South African oleh Dorron Klein, of Telfed, said that during a flare-up it is stressful, but residents get fair warning.

“It is stressful, but the instructions from home command are clear. If people stay close to their safe rooms, they are fine.”

His daughter, Shaked Kline, lives 300m from the Gaza fence in Kibbutz Nachal Oz.

“She told me that they invited their friends over to sit with them in their safe room. They had quality time together since no one had work or university to go to.”



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The catch-22 situation that is Gaza

As I was heading home on Tuesday, I heard on ChaiFM that 460 rockets had been fired from Gaza into Israel since late Sunday. That is an outrageous number. If every one of them hit inhabited areas, thousands of Israelis would have been killed.

That didn’t happen, thanks to all the measures Israel takes to protect its civilians. The Iron Dome, for one, was hard at work trying to ensure that any rocket aimed at a populated area was stopped long before it reached its destination. This protection mechanism is used at a massive financial cost to the Israeli economy.

Nevertheless, the two-day attack claimed two lives and injured 85 people. It also caused anger, fear, frustration, and devastation in some people’s lives.

That was not the intention. Those rockets were aiming to kill and maim as many Israelis – men, women, children, whoever – as possible.

So, why am I not hearing world outrage? Am I naïve to expect under the circumstances that the world would be angry that this is happening? Perhaps. I guess I should know better. There was hardly a peep about it in the mainstream South African news. That is the way of the world – especially South Africa.

Truth is, even in Israel, some have been quite blasé about the shelling, referring to it having happened “down south”.

However, having been to the Gaza border recently, I have such a clear picture of the lovely, apparently peaceful, towns and kibbutzim on the border. I don’t have to imagine too hard to have an inkling of what their life was like this week. No work. No school. No going to get food for the children. Staying as close to the shelter or their safe room as possible so that they can get there in seconds. Being trapped. And while the number of rockets was unprecedented, rockets being fired across the border into this region was not new.

Many Israelis who live near to Gaza spend a great deal of time in their safe rooms or praying that the rockets don’t land anywhere near them.

Most of those people “down south” are angry with the Israeli government. They believe it has been soft on Hamas (which is behind the rockets), by pulling back with a ceasefire agreement.

It is not because they don’t want the shelling to stop, to the contrary. It is about the fact that the ceasefire is only as good as the people who uphold it. There have been many ceasefire agreements, and clearly they aren’t upheld for very long. The shelling comes back again and again, sometimes more rockets, and sometimes less.

These people, as quoted in a recent article we ran, can’t get post-traumatic stress disorder because they can’t get past the trauma. The children live from Tzeva Adom (red alert siren) to Tzeva Adom.

I can understand their anger. However, what is the alternative? War? Sending Israeli troops into Gaza to make Hamas stop? Is that the solution? I hope not.

I sent a message to a woman in Israel, who is very dear to me, on Wednesday. She has a son and his family living in Ashkelon, and I wanted to let her know that I am thinking of them. She said that for her son and his family, it hadn’t been pleasant to run to the sealed room at night and not go to school. She said she was also very worried about her grandchildren in the army. The part that got to me most, though, was her last line, “Thank G-d we were not dragged into a war.” She is a mother, grandmother, and fourth-generation Israeli. No matter what people say, I do not believe anyone really wants war. They want to be safe and live without the constant threat of violence. They want their enemies to stop trying to destroy what they have in Israel.

When people say that Israel doesn’t want peace, and it is the aggressor, perhaps they should spend a day in Sderot, Ashkelon, Kfar Aza, and other places on the Gaza border. It might help to understand the desperate need for a solution to the Israel-Palestinian crisis. It is enough!

I only wish I had an answer to this catch-22 situation. I don’t, though. I will leave that to the brilliant strategists I would love to believe populate the Israeli government.

In this edition, however, we have tried to connect with as many people who have been drawn into the Gaza rocket fire this week, from ex-South Africans to a former Israeli Ambassador to SA. We wanted to bring their experiences home to us on the southern tip of Africa.

In one of these stories, it was quite telling that while we are concerned about our brethren in Israel, they are concerned about us in South Africa. This man said he feels safer in Ashkelon under fire than walking through the streets of Johannesburg. Go figure!

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

The toll of the Gaza rockets

Late on Tuesday, a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas went into effect. While at the time of writing the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) had still not confirmed the existence of such a truce, Israeli citizens living in the south of the country were told they could return home and to “normalcy”.

It was the culmination of two days of violence during which, according to the IDF, more than 460 rockets were fired at Israel, with the Iron Dome countering 190 of them.

Most of the rockets hit open fields, although a few dozen landed inside Israeli cities and towns. One person was killed – a 48-year-old Palestinian who had worked in Israel for 15 years. A 19-year-old Israeli soldier is (at the time of writing) in a critical condition after a bus transporting his unit was hit. He has undergone two major operations, and doctors say his condition is improving. Seven Gazans were killed in the same period.

It was the largest number of rockets ever launched at the Jewish state within a day – even more than the worst days of the last Israel-Gaza war in 2014 – and the Israeli air force responded by hitting more than 170 Hamas and Islamic Jihad targets.

The flare-up was triggered on Sunday night, when an Israeli secret operation in Gaza went wrong. Some media outlets have referred to it as “a significant Israeli intelligence and operational failure”.

While acting undercover, one of Israel’s most elite commando groups was discovered, and although they managed to kill seven Palestinians, including a senior commander of the armed wing of Hamas, they had to return to Israel under cover of fire. An Israeli senior officer was killed, and another injured. Their names have not been released. While attending the funeral, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin said he’d come “to thank and to salute a hero, on behalf of the entire State of Israel. The very best of our boys, whose memory will be forever engraved in our hearts.”

Before reportedly agreeing to the ceasefire, the Israeli security cabinet met for seven hours on Tuesday. But public opinion is against them, and media criticism is also growing, pointing fingers at what is perceived as a weak government response to Hamas.

Many on both the right and the left of the Israeli political spectrum are demanding that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu do more to end the rocket threat from Hamas and “deal with Gaza once and for all”.

They argue that Hamas leaders have been emboldened by the prime minister’s repeated statements that he isn’t interested in an escalation in Gaza, and his limited response whenever violence flares up. Increasingly, it seems, they’re right. Hamas leaders certainly feel that they can get away without paying too much of a price whenever they launch military action across the border. Celebratory demonstrations were held in several cities in Gaza over “the victory of the resistance”, during which Israeli leaders were mocked for their “failure” to deal with the escalation.

By contrast, in southern Israel, demonstrations against the ceasefire attracted a lot of attention. Protestors blocked roads and burned tires, chanting “Bibi [Netanyahu], go home”. For a long time now,

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier



they have felt abandoned.

There is some irony here. Netanyahu heads the most right-wing government in Israel’s history, and yet it has repeatedly decided to pursue ceasefires with Hamas. Netanyahu is supported by the heads of all the Israeli security services, but not by his Defence Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, who has been very vocal in his opposition and who on Wednesday announced his resignation. He wants action to be taken. It is still too soon to say what will be the impact of Liberman departing the coalition but Netanyahu retains a majority – albeit slight – in the parliament. But the prime minister is concerned about the price that would need to be exacted from any ground operation in Gaza. Assuming that Israel topples Hamas, who will replace it? This is a question Netanyahu has no answer for. There is no group or leader currently in the wings, and the ensuing chaos could be more detrimental to Israel in the long-run.

Netanyahu is also cognisant of what is happening on the international stage. His recent historic trip to the Gulf State of Oman is a step, he believes, in opening up Israel’s relationship with other Gulf states. No doubt he is hoping that ties with those countries could result in money being invested in Gaza, which in turn could help ease the situation there and detract attention away from Israel.

There is of course also the Iranian threat in Syria and Lebanon, which Netanyahu believes requires attention and resources. And then, always on the backburner, are the upcoming Israeli elections. Who knows how a war with Gaza might end – and Netanyahu doesn’t want to take any chances with ratings that currently put him as the favourite to win another premiership.

In a nutshell, Netanyahu believes that even after two days of heavy rocket barrages, there is no justification for going to war in Gaza now. But he’ll face some political fallout because of this. It’s also risky because, as was demonstrated this week, efforts at reaching a long-term ceasefire arrangement with Hamas can easily go awry.

For weeks now, Egypt, the United Nations, and Qatar have been mediating between Israel and Hamas and, as recently as last Sunday morning, the signs were that a longer-term truce was taking hold.

But the problem is that past ceasefires – and indeed the current uneasy calm – have proven to be unsustainable. Since the last Israel-Gaza war in 2014, the situation along the border has remained tense with an occasional flare up of violence.

The situation was recently exacerbated by the months-long “Great March of Return” in which more than 200 Palestinians were killed as tens of thousands demonstrated along the border fence each Friday. So, while on the one hand Israel’s southern citizens are back to “normal”, it could be temporary.



Israel’s military launches a missile on Tuesday from the Iron Dome air defense system, from a position in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon.

Photo: Menahem Kahana/AFP/Getty Images

Trump, Trumpism, and the danger of words



OPINION

Milton Shain

“The president is not directly responsible for acts of domestic terrorism, but he should be more careful with his language.” That’s the way the *Economist* headlined its report on the horrific Pittsburgh killings just more than two weeks ago.

Its statement is probably a little soft on US President Donald Trump, but reasonable nonetheless. Or is it?

Any cursory observer of United States politics and the Trump phenomenon will know that the temperature of bigotry has spiked since the business tycoon took office in 2017. In less than two years, presidential discourse has plummeted to divisive lows, informed by menacing tweets, ugly comments, and fascist-like rhetoric.

While it is true that a lone-gun lunatic can explode at any time, and does not need a Trump to turn into a killing machine, it is naïve to assume that language is without consequences.

It does not help when the president of the United States refers to neo-Nazis who marched in Charlottesville as “very fine people”, or fabricates the presence of ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) operatives among Latin-American refugees making their way to the southern border of the US. That’s the least of it.

Trump has persistently berated a free media, and defined journalists who disagree with him as traitors – effectively un-

American. We have heard it all before.

The Pittsburgh killer, Robert Bowers, may well have snapped without Trump’s populist goading, but it is apparent that he was not immune to the toxic and populist discourse emanating from the White House.

Like parcel bomber Cesar Sayoc, who was arrested for posting pipe bombs to critics of Trump, Bowers inhabited a cyber-like echo chamber of anti-Jewish hate and conspiracy, taking oxygen and solace from the White House tone. The tiny psychopathic subculture that he belonged to was nurtured by a broth of prejudice that appealed to the crudest of human instincts.

Simply put, Trump’s language and dangerous buffoonery provide cover for nasties and allow them to come out of the woodwork. They have never had it so good.

As *New York Times* journalist Bari Weiss told talk-show host Bill Maher, Trump has “inculcated an atmosphere of conspiracy minded thinking”. The floodgates have been opened.

What began with Rush Limbaugh decades ago and morphed into Fox News has now come to maturity in dark corners of the internet. It is scary. Decency has disappeared. In a world of easy connectivity and precise social media, we need to rethink the boundaries of freedom. John Stuart Mill’s case for free speech in his classic *On Liberty* seems irrelevant as a guide to our times.

Bowers had an account on the internet site GAB, which has since been taken down. It was riddled with hate. “There is no #MAGA [Make America Great Again] as long as there is a kike infestation,” he wrote only a few days before he discharged his AR-15-style

rifle and three Glock 357 handguns in the Pittsburgh synagogue. The target was not random.

On a YouTube video which Bowers posted, mass migration and calls for diversity were condemned and blamed on Jews. A week before the massacre, the Pittsburgh synagogue had held a “refugee Shabbat”. Holocaust denial, too, crept into Bowers’s arsenal of hatred. One of his postings called for the gassing of Jews.

The US president is not an anti-Semite, but he has effectively endorsed bigotry.

Bowers was a walking time bomb whose fuse might well have been ignited by Trump’s poisonous rhetoric. Under Trump, the Republicans have employed language that builds upon well-worn tropes, known all too well by observers of Jew-hatred.

Who could miss the way in which Republicans targeted Janet Yellen, Lloyd Blankfein, and George Soros in the build-up to the mid-term elections?

Trump himself tweeted a message from an anti-Semitic message board showing a Magen David atop a pile of cash. Don’t kid yourself, the man is a bigot. “Blood suckers” and a “global power structure”, including “international banks” are secretly plotting against ordinary Americans, he alleged in

one outrageous communication.

The surge of illiberal populism today is not unique to Trump. It has flourished globally in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008. For casualties of the crash, distinctions between left and right mattered less than the cleavage between elites and “the people”. Jeremy Corbyn, Jean Luc Mélenchon, Marine Le Pen, and Geert Wilders have all done their best to exploit this populist mood.

Trump is an exemplar. Basing his politics on identity and exclusion, he has defined the so-called real America which he repeatedly tells his followers will be “great again” under his leadership. Trump understands his base and its hatred of Washington and its experts. Like all populists, he claims that he alone represents the people and defines his political opponents as enemies.

Of course, Trump is not an anti-Semite, but he has effectively endorsed bigotry. Anti-Semitic incidents have risen disturbingly since he has occupied the White House. Cause and effect are difficult to prove.

The president of the world’s leading power, however, should be dousing the flames of hatred and division rather than throwing petrol on them. Trump is determined to fight “others” who are “trying to destroy our proud American heritage”.

Unfortunately, the classic “other” has for centuries been the Jew. At least, that is what some of Trump’s followers understand.

• Milton Shain is the author of ‘A Perfect Storm. Antisemitism in South Africa 1930 – 1948’ (Jonathan Ball Publishers), which won the Recht Malan Prize for English and Afrikaans non-fiction in 2016.

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Herzlia pupils face discipline over Israel protest

TALI FEINBERG

As Herzlia Middle School’s prestigious prize-giving evening came to a close, two Grade 9 boys stepped forward from the rest of their grade on the stage and knelt down (known as “taking the knee”) in front of the audience when the Israeli national anthem, *Hatikvah*, was sung. The audience was shocked at what many people believed was a flagrant disregard of the ethos of the school.

The Grade 9 pupils were invited onto the stage to honour them and bid them farewell as they graduated from middle school. They were joined by a vocal ensemble to sing the national anthems.

Taking the knee during a national anthem is a protest popularised by American football players who have used it to draw attention to police brutality and racial inequality in the United States.

Many parents at the school were incensed by this behaviour, and believed the children should be expelled, while others felt it was the right place to show dissent and verbalise their opinions.

One parent at the school, who is close to the families of the two pupils involved, said he believed the boys were protesting against the current Israeli government’s occupation and treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

“They took the knee as they felt that *Hatikvah*, which represents the hope of Jews around the world to be free and have their own homeland, should not be sung when these messages are so clearly ignored. The boys believed this to be obvious in the way the Israeli government is dealing with Palestinians in the occupied territories, who live in untenable circumstances.”

In an email sent to Herzlia parents on Tuesday evening, Geoff Cohen, the Education Director of United Herzlia Schools (UHS), wrote, “The

Herzlia Middle School prize-giving is a formal and prestigious public event, showcasing the school and staff while celebrating its pupils’ achievements. The boys’ inappropriate kneeling action demonstrated deliberate and flagrant disregard for the ethos of the school, the leadership and governors, teaching staff, the parents, and their fellow students by publicly embarrassing the school and offending those present.”

He stressed that the issue was not about an individual pupil’s right to question or hold an opinion which differs from the mainstream ideologies of the school. “Our concern is about the time, place, and manner in which such views were displayed, and the blatant flouting of school rules, Herzlia’s Zionist values, and the values of Herzlia’s Menschlichkeit pillar. It showed a lack of respect, pride, gratitude, responsibility, compassion, and understanding of community.”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, Cohen emphasised that Herzlia had forums to debate and express opinions, but this was not the right forum, and it had brought the name of the school into disrepute. He pointed out, however, that both boys emphasised that they were Zionists

and believed in Israel’s right to exist, but were protesting the policies of the current Israeli government.

Cohen said he would not share the disciplinary measures that had been put in place, as the school did not make public dealings with individual pupils or their families. However, in the email, he said he and Middle School Principal Shane Brorson, in consultation with the management committee of the school’s governing body and the chair of the board of trustees, had decided on a set of consequences that were designed to be disciplinary and educational.

“We have informed the boys and their parents of the sanctions we are imposing, and encourage everyone to move forward positively,” he said.

The parent who is close to the families said the boys probably chose to make their stand during prize-giving because “Herzlia does not provide for proper free debate and channels to discuss the Palestinian-Israeli problem. All discussion is carefully scripted, and the participants are chosen so that no one with significantly differing views may speak. Often, the excuse given is that there are four tenets which anyone allowed on campus must support. For example, they must

support the two-state solution – this, when half the Israeli government in power does not support the two-state solution.”

He said the two protesting boys had received a lot of support from other pupils, and even teachers. “They have, on the other hand, also endured a huge amount of hate speech, including being called ‘Nazis’, and being told that they should leave the school and go elsewhere.

“I don’t believe the pupils expected such a huge outcry about what is essentially an act of conscience. It is clear that a large part of the Jewish community is unable to accept free speech as a right. This has been shown by the number of parents who have called for the boys to be expelled,” he said.

The parent said he knew that the boys believed in Israel’s right to exist, and were staunch Zionists. “That does not mean agreeing with the current government’s policies,” he said. “I believe we should all be incredibly proud of the boys, and the courage it must have taken to take a stand in an environment that does not provide for free expression. They are true leaders, and represent the hope of all free-thinking Jews around the world.”



Adrian Gore – lifetime achiever at 54

JORDAN MOSHE

The founder and Chief Executive of Discovery, Adrian Gore, was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at the annual Sunday Times Top 100 Companies Awards last week.

He joins the ranks of recipients including Johann Rupert, Christo Wiese, Brian Joffe, Nelson Mandela, Allan Gray, Stephen Koseff, and several others.

“I really believe that my success is because of the country, not despite it,” Gore said this week. “That is very important. A lot of people are in a negative narrative all the time, and think they would be great, and [could] do it anywhere. I could not have.”

Held at the Empire Conference and Events Venue in Parktown on 8 November, the black-tie gala dinner celebrates the Johannesburg Stock Exchange-listed companies that have delivered the highest returns to their shareholders over the past five years. In 2010, Gore received the Sunday Times Top 100 Companies Business Leader of the Year Award.

Gore founded Discovery in 1992 with a simple vision: to enable people to live healthier lives, and have incentives to do so. “We aspire to be a force for social good, and have a desire to make a meaningful impact on society. We are here to change the world, not just tag along,” Gore said

in 2013.

Speaking to the *Times of Israel* in 2013, Gore said that his focus had always been on solving problems in a real, economically viable way, and this is what underpinned Discovery’s innovation. “We have to be a force for good, genuinely, from an ideological perspective,” he said. “Corporate social responsibility dollars are not enough. It’s really about society-building in an institutional and financial form.”

According to Gore, opportunities for investment and economic growth can be found in South Africa, but only if we look past our inherent negativity.

Speaking recently at the Discovery Leadership Summit, he said South Africa’s GDP was 2.5 times bigger than it was at the beginning of democracy, and the country’s economy was almost as big as Austria’s and Switzerland’s.

“Give our country a chance,” he said, making a case for optimism that is not naïve, but fact-based. He described South Africa as a place of opportunity and a huge market, which was why Discovery had grown into a global business.

Praising Gore for his achievement, Ron Derby, the Editor of Business Times, said, “In an age where everyone and their dog is talking about disruptors and their impact on established businesses, Gore is perhaps the most successful in that regard.”

Right to protest enshrined in our constitution

Taking the knee – or kneeling in protest during the singing of a national anthem – achieved wider prominence earlier this month in the United States National Football League. It all started when the San Francisco 49ers’ quarterback, Colin Kaepernick, went down on one knee during the singing of the national anthem in 2016 to protest against racial injustice. Since then, many more players have done so during Super Bowl week to protest against police brutality against minorities.

Though it prompted a backlash by US President Donald Trump – who like some Herzlia commentators, called for the players to be “thrown off the field” – taking the knee has been a symbol of public, peaceful protest since it was adopted by Martin Luther King Jr in the US civil-rights movement of the 1960s.

Because the Herzlia children are enrolled at a Jewish school, they can be expected to respect the school’s values, particularly in regard to the state of Israel. However, they also have a constitutional right to peaceful protest and freedom of expression.

Right to protest

Article 16 of South Africa’s constitution – freedom of expression – enshrines the right of all South Africans to receive or impart information or ideas, as well as academic freedom.

These freedoms are backed up by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states in its preamble: “Disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from

fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.”

Humanium, an international NGO based in Geneva, says that rights to freedom of thought and expression also apply to children, who have the right “to think freely, and ... determine what will be the principles which will guide their existence”.

It says children “have the right to participate in the life of their society”, and are “free to have thoughts which evolve and change according to their degree of maturity and discernment”.

The right to freedom of speech is thus a constitutional and universal human right.

Right to criticise

Herzlia is a Jewish school, and therefore supports Israel. Though the school supports the existence of the state of Israel, this doesn’t extend to enforcing blanket support for the government and policies of the day. The school should not deny students the right to express political convictions that may contradict those of the school, particularly if it is done peacefully and within the safety of the school environment.

Protest wasn’t anti-Semitic

The recently released working definition of anti-Semitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance states that it isn’t anti-Semitic to criticise Israel’s policies, but it is anti-Semitic to deny Jewish people the right to self-determination, or to single Israel out among nations for criticism.

Desirability of a questioning mind

What is an education if it doesn’t encourage our children to question?

OPINION

Julie Leibowitz



Enforcing beliefs is anti-educational. Like parrot learning, it encourages our children not to think, not to enquire, and ultimately not to learn.

Enforcing beliefs at school – and not allowing children to express contrary opinions – is diametrically opposed to a 21st century education, where an independent, creative thought process is precisely what is needed to survive in the new world of work.

It discourages children from developing a conscience and a sense of social activism born of moral conviction. Social activism is not just a “nice to have”; it underpins the modern world, from governments to corporations, which are increasingly seeking to “do well by doing good”.

The right to express contrary views and to protest is enshrined in our democracy – so long as it isn’t hate speech. By protesting against the singing of the *Hatikvah*, the students were expressing this right.

Herzlia should value these pupils’ integrity, sense of conviction, and independence of mind. Rather than singling them out for punishment, it could turn their protest into a learning opportunity.

Though they should be discouraged from disrespecting the values of the school during a public assembly, Herzlia should create an environment in which contrary ideas can be debated in safety and for the benefit of all.

• Julie Leibowitz is the mother of children at a Jewish school in Johannesburg.

Waze founder uses tech and tenacity for tikkun olam

STEVEN GRUZD

The T-shirt of Waze founder and Israeli start-up king Uri Levine displays his business philosophy: “Fall in love with the problem, not the solution.”

In 2007, his frustration with traffic jams led this Israeli to co-found Waze – a community-based traffic and navigation app with 250 million users – which he sold to Google for \$1.1 billion (R15.8 billion) in 2013. It freed him to drive other start-ups seeking to solve big problems.

He shared his entrepreneurial journey with the *SA Jewish Report* in Johannesburg last week.

Levine says that, like many Jewish entrepreneurs, he is driven by the concept of tikkun olam. “I can change the world, and I want to make it a better world for the next generation, for my kids,” he says.

Born in Tel Aviv in 1965, Levine says, “From the early days, I had the two things that were the combination of the entrepreneur I am today: I was a troublemaker and a computer geek.”

In the Israeli army, Levine served in an intelligence technology unit. He has a message for diaspora Jewish communities: “If you want to do a favour for your kids, send them to do military service in Israel. It helps them to mature faster, defines them, builds character with much more grit, sustainability, and leadership. And it develops skills that are very important for the rest of their lives.”

After years as a developer at voicemail company Comverse in Israel and the United States, Levine ventured out on his own in 2000, first trying to develop mobile email.

“Building a start-up is a roller-coaster journey, essentially a journey of failures. You try many things, and eventually find something that works. You never give up,” Levine says.

Waze was conceptualised with two Israeli partners in 2007. Says Levine, “I hate traffic jams. And every time I run into something at a personal level that I don’t like or get frustrated about ... I actually allow myself a longer period of time to remain frustrated, so that I can try to think if I can change that.”

He realised that to fight traffic he needed a community of drivers sharing the driving conditions where they were in real time.

“So many people told me this will never work. Persistence is the critical part of it.”

He chuckles as he explains Waze’s unusual spelling. “We wanted ways.com, but that cost half a million dollars that we didn’t have. Waze.com cost \$12 000, which we did have.” He says the only criterion for a good product name is pronounceability.

Waze was publicly launched in 2009, and achieved massive growth in 2012. “Google came in 2013 and made us an offer, and we simply said ‘yes’. I left the day after the acquisition so I could build more start-ups.”

His website, www.urilevine.com, displays these diverse new ventures. Moovit, in 2 500 cities worldwide, is like Waze but for getting around on foot, bicycle and public



Uri Levine

transport, and is growing faster than Waze did.

FeeX makes transparent the opaque financial fees on investments that eat up huge value. Zeek has created a marketplace for unused store credit and gift cards. Engie deals with the frustrations of visiting the mechanic, helping to diagnose car-repair requirements. FairFly helps save money on fluctuating airfares after tickets are booked. Refundit simplifies VAT reclamation for

tourists, which 95% of people never do. SeeTree uses drones to diagnose the health of individual trees in orchards. LiveCare is a wearable alert system for older people in assisted-living facilities.

“I keep on building them,” says Levine. “They all have the common denominator of trying to solve big problems. And, they are all doing good, and doing well.”

“If you’re trying to solve big problems, and you’re successful, two things are going

to happen. One, you’re going to make an impact; you’re creating value. Two, if this is a big problem, it’s going to end up being quite a big company.”

To figure out how to build a solution, Levine really tries to understand people’s perception of the problem, and who the right person to execute it would be. It’s always someone with persistence, who can take hard decisions, and develop strong teams to follow him or her. Good mentorship – someone knowing what to do when and imparting that – is vital.

“The bigger the frustration is, the easier the marketing is. Fall in love with the problem. It’s an easier story to tell.”

Levine still chooses to live in Israel. “It’s called the ‘start-up nation’ for a reason. The country itself is a start-up. It is a miracle how successful it has been in 70 years. Living in a rough neighbourhood always helps. You develop persistence, and realise that giving up is not an option right now. You need to be creative, very quickly, to overcome the deficits we have.” He cites how a tiny, dry country like Israel today leads the world in water and desalination technology.

He also believes that Jewish history has fostered entrepreneurship. Almost 2 000 years without a country fed the need to survive in difficult places. Education has been critical, and everyone was taught to read and write. The written language was valued. He observes that the adulthood ceremony in many ancient cultures was to hunt an animal. “In Judaism, it is to read the Bible, but not just read the Bible; do it in front of other people.” He adds the dynamics of parental encouragement, and a community of people who protect and defend each other, making people more capable and supported.

Those wanting to boycott Israeli products for ideological reasons “should go back to the Stone Age then, because Israeli technology is everywhere”, Levine says. He muses that it’s funny that some countries have become so pro-Palestinian. “What value have Palestinians brought to the world?” he asks, compared to Israel.

Finally, Levine says there is huge opportunity for Israeli companies in Africa, with so many big problems to solve. But it is up to the African countries to bring them here, to make a strong business case. “Otherwise, Africa will come last.”

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German ambassador declares ‘never again’ to Holocaust survivors

MIRAH LANGER

“I was born 50 year ago, but until I was 29 and was sent by the [diplomatic] office of Germany to Ukraine, I had never consciously met a Jew in my life.” Martin Schäfer, the German Ambassador to South Africa, revealed this to a group of 14 Holocaust survivors who he invited for brunch at his Pretoria residence this week.

He had never met a Jew because every Jew in his home town had been wiped out during the Holocaust. “No one was left. In the little home town where I come from there was a synagogue that was burnt down. And there was a Jewish cemetery that no one really took care of. There were no Jews.”

He said that he, as well as other embassy representatives, felt honoured and humbled that survivors had accepted the invitation to spend the morning with them.

“It was Germans that did what they did to you. They killed your relatives and your friends; they humiliated you; they put you in concentration camps; they tortured you.”

“I would like to say that what was done in the name of my country, my state, and my people was an incredible disgrace. It must never happen again.”

While decades had passed, he knew it was “still very much alive” for the survivors.

“That we engage with one another, that we can become friends despite everything that has happened, this is a great miracle,” he said.

“I presume that some of you continue to have nightmares. There cannot be a single day in your lives where you do not think about what has happened to your friends and families ... and to the people that were of your belief.

“What is behind us – and between us – is very deep and painful, but still, I am honoured that you are with us here,” said the amiable ambassador, who brought his 13-year-old daughter, Emma, with him to the event. Schäfer said that he struggled to reconcile his family connections with history.

In particular, he said, he often mused on the complexity of his connection to his own grandfather.

“I loved my grandfather, [yet he] was a soldier and a member of the National Socialist party. Why did he do what he did?”

“I don’t know what he did, because he wasn’t willing to disclose it until the end of his life.

“Those questions haunt me, they haunt us Germans, and they might haunt even you.”

“Why was it that a civilised nation like the Germans were able to commit such terrible crimes, to sink so low into the abyss?”

“I don’t have an answer. I don’t know if anyone has an answer. Those people who committed the mass murder, when the war was over they returned to their families, their homes, and their civil life, and never again committed any crime. It is unbelievable, and it is inexplicable.”

Schäfer noted that Germany had accepted full culpability for its history. He gave the example of how it was decided to erect a memorial to the

murdered Jews of Europe in the heart of Berlin.

“There is no other nation in the world that would erect a monument, in the most important part of its capital, to display the worst part of what happened in its history,” he noted.

Schäfer said that while “nothing can be compared to the Shoah, still nations celebrate the better parts of their history and forget about the worst parts. We didn’t have that option.”

As such, he believes that while there is unease around increased support for the right wing, nevertheless the “political middle ground stands very strong”.

He said the German people would “never accept something like [the Nazi] regime again”.

The survivors asked Emma to speak about her impressions of the Holocaust as a member of the youngest generation.

She said she believed it remained the responsibility of all Germans to familiarise themselves with history.

“Even though it is very far in the past, every day I think about how some people could do something



Martin Schäfer and Veronica Phillips

so awful to another person,” Emma said.

“I am so happy that some of us Germans and Jews are able to talk now; I am very thankful that you decided to come.”

It was a sentiment shared by the survivors who attended.

Doris Lurie, a survivor who fled from Vienna, said the event was key in helping to get over “the fact of us and them”.

“There was a time when I would not have liked to fraternise with Germans, but that soon faded. They are no longer to blame; they are a different generation – you cannot hang it onto them. We have all become more friendly. It is not a matter of forgiveness anymore.”

Concentration camp survivor Don Krausz said the event was an intervention that helped “lessen the pain, lessen the hatred, and bring people together”.

Hungarian survivor Veronica Phillips, aged 92, put it succinctly when commenting on her impression of the ambassador.

“He is a real mensch!” she declared.

Moshe Silberhaft: 25 years as the travelling rabbi

DAVID SAKS

Moshe Silberhaft was just 14 when he set out for Messina, South Africa’s northernmost town, just before the high holidays of 1984. He did not suspect then that his brief visit would mark the beginning of a life-long personal and professional connection with small-town Jewish life.

That year, he was one of a number of Yeshiva College student volunteers who officiated at festival services in small rural communities around the country. Thereafter, until he finished school, he continued to officiate at the Messina high holiday services.

In 1993, following yeshiva study in Israel, and two years as a military chaplain on the Namibia-Angola border, he took up the position of spiritual leader to South African country communities. In doing so, he became the seventh in a line of rabbis and reverends to hold that position since the establishment of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies’ (SAJBD’s) country communities department in 1949. Over time, he would impress his unique stamp on the work of his department in a way that would distinguish him from his predecessors.

Both inside South Africa, as well as in the small and even more isolated pockets of Jewry in various sub-Saharan African countries, Silberhaft became known as “the travelling rabbi”. He has become the public face of the Jewish world and the link between the mainstream community in the large urban centres and those still living in smaller rural towns and hamlets around the country.

For many lonely and usually elderly country Jewish residents he is one of the few – if not the only – remaining links they have with their people and heritage.

In spite of the many long and lonely hours of constant travel to every corner of South Africa and beyond, Silberhaft continues to be as highly motivated as he was when he first stepped into the position.

“When people ask what motivates me after 25 years of touring the length and breadth of Southern Africa, I can honestly assure them that, irrespective of the difficulties, every tour I undertake is a new experience that brings unique challenges. At no point have I experienced a loss of motivation or enthusiasm. A particular person, smile, handshake, gesture, joke, story, or memory along the way renews my positive energy to serve,” he says.

This year marks 25 years of Silberhaft’s services to South African country communities. During this time, he has been involved in the official closure and winding up of a number of rural congregations, among them Pietersburg, Bethlehem, Bethal, and Potchefstroom. He has also assisted in the unexpected revival of one (Hermanus), and the

establishment of a new community in Plettenberg Bay.

Inevitably, the nature of his work has changed over the years. With rare exceptions, there are today no longer any small-town communities as such, but rather a scattering of mainly elderly individuals whom he visits and assists as required. Organising volunteer officiants for the high holiday festival services continues to be part of his department’s brief.

However, a great deal of time and resources are now devoted to ensuring the maintenance of the more than 20 000 graves in more than 220 Jewish cemeteries countrywide. In the absence of local Jews to look after them, the cemeteries have become vulnerable to natural deterioration and vandalism (often, but not always, motivated by anti-Semitism). In a number of cases, squatters have moved in, occupying the abandoned tahara (cleansing) houses, and sometimes tombstones have been removed and used for building materials. Under Rabbi Silberhaft, the practice of laying tombstones flat in a bed of concrete has been widely adopted to prevent future vandalism.



Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft

Another important function of his department is, wherever possible, to preserve and document the heritage of country Jewish life. This Silberhaft would do through the mounting of memorial plaques on noteworthy historical sites, and ensuring that written records and remaining artefacts are transferred to the board’s archives for safekeeping.

Most recently, Silberhaft was involved in the restoration of the “smouse” monument outside Graaff-Reinet, which uniquely commemorates the pioneering role itinerant Jewish pedlars played in pioneering the rural economy.

Most South African Jews today live in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban, with smaller concentrations in Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, and East London. Outside of those centres, Silberhaft estimates that perhaps 1 400 still remain, ranging from one or two individuals in a particular small town through to those living in relative growth areas like the southern Cape coast. In that area, there has been an increase in the number of Jewish residents, resulting in the establishment of the Southern Cape Jewish Association about 10 years ago.

Silberhaft has a rich range of anecdotes about his experiences over the past quarter-century, and the many unique and interesting characters he has met – people of a type all but unknown to the average

Johannesburg or Cape Town shul-goer.

One was Miriam Dritzter, who notwithstanding her conversion to Judaism, retained the doggedly independent, ultra-conservative attitudes of her rural Afrikaans background. She and her son, Gregory, were eking out a living on their derelict farm near the Lesotho border when Silberhaft discovered them, and began visiting and assisting them. After Gregory’s death, Miriam’s behaviour became increasingly erratic, to the point that she began shooting at anyone (including police) who strayed into her vicinity. In the end, not without much persuasion on his part, the rabbi arranged for her to move to a retirement home in Bloemfontein.

In Mafeking in the tense months leading up to SA’s first democratic elections in 1994, deadly clashes took place between opponents of Lucas Mangope’s regime in Bophuthatswana and his Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) supporters. Silberhaft found himself cold-shouldered by the local black population, but discovered that this was because any strange white man with a beard was suspected of being an AWB member, and treated accordingly.

Many of those Silberhaft comes into contact with, while not being Jewish themselves, have had a connection with the local Jewish community. He once met an Ermelo resident who looks after the Jewish cemetery who, having never met a rabbi before, asked nervously whether Silberhaft wanted to circumcise him.

These and many more such anecdotes appear in Silberhaft’s 2012 book *The Travelling Rabbi – My African Tribe*, written in collaboration with veteran journalist and editor Suzanne Belling, who accompanied him on many of his visits when she was executive director of the SAJBD Cape Council.

Rabbi Silberhaft acknowledges that, in all likelihood, the day will come when only the cemeteries will remain in the towns which he visits. Until then, however, there is still a great deal for him to do.

“For nearly seven decades, it has been our job to keep a watchful eye out for those who have, perhaps, been left behind in the headlong rush to the cities, or to overseas destinations where much of our once strong community now lives,” he remarks.

“No matter where they might be, however, Jews the world over need rabbis – to circumcise their sons and prepare them for their Barmitzvah portions, to marry them, and, heaven forbid, to bury them. And all this in a Jewish way.”

Be patriotic and lean into the rainbow nation, urges business leader

NICOLA MILTZ

Colin Coleman, who has headed up Goldman Sachs Southern Africa for the past 18 years, doesn't believe there is a magic bullet to fix South Africa's soaring unemployment, but says it is not insurmountable.

"There is no quick fix. But the new dawn begins with a partnership to end corruption in SA. With everybody putting shoulder to the wheel to invest in a better future," he told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

Coleman is one of President Cyril Ramaphosa's go-to men when it comes to the South African economy. The inner workings of the market, politics, banking, and global capital is what makes him tick.

He has travelled a long road since his student activist days as leader of the National Union of South African Students (Nusas) when he met the young Ramaphosa, then head of trade union federation Cosatu during the crucial, politically tense mid-1980s.

Coleman has a clear picture of what a great South Africa will look like. "The South African dream is really the rainbow nation working for everyone. A nation where everyone is participating in a non-racial democracy, in a thriving economy, effectively growing a middle class that participates in the socio-economic benefits of democracy, of freedom." Sadly he says, "We are a long way off that dream."

He says that in 24 years of democracy, the country experienced 14 years of remarkable buoyancy. First, there was an economic recovery from a broken system, then there was significant progress, with growth on average of 3.2% through that period, with the upper end of the growth period hitting 5% at the end of the Mbeki period.

The community, in its economic life, needs to be inclusive of South Africans, employ people, reach out, be innovative, create consumer products which people can participate in, and help grow the economy."

"Unemployment was not coming down as fast as one would've liked, but it was 21%, and moderating downwards," he says. Unfortunately, then the wheels came off.

"We had the double whammy of the 2008 financial crisis, where 1 million jobs were lost, and Polokwane, which effectively delivered a decade of growing institutional corruption and decay of the state."

Unemployment is now 27.5%, narrowly defined.

Following the Zuma decade, "We now have to reform the state, modernise state-owned enterprises, create investment, and create a culture of clean democracy. We have to recapture non-racialism, because the Zuma years really polarised racial conflict."

For the past two and a half years Coleman, former Investec Chief Executive Stephen Koseff, and other business heavy-weights have worked tirelessly to address youth unemployment.

The overwhelming majority of those who have won their political freedom remain locked out of the economy, Coleman says, with "nine million people not working who would like to, and more than 50% of those being youth".

"For the black majority, democracy has delivered political freedom without economic benefit."

It's not all negative, but far from the dream, he says. Partnerships are what will get South Africa back on track, and the CEO Initiative is part of this. "Many Jewish-founded businesses are part of the CEO Initiative," he said.

Under the leadership of Jabu Mabuza, representatives from business, labour, and the government are working together with urgency to transform the economy and stimulate inclusive and sustainable growth.

As part of the CEO Initiative, Mabuza asked Coleman



Service (YES) initiative, launched by Ramaphosa in March this year.

"The idea behind YES is to get one million young interns into businesses over three years, or 330 000 interns a year, doing a one year paid internship. The government has gazetted a set of incentives for businesses to take people in," Coleman said.

He insists that the Jewish community has a vital role to play in making South Africa great.

The community, he says, should "lean into the rainbow nation" and commit to making a lasting contribution to the country.

"The community needs to participate in giving oxygen to the rainbow nation. It's a cultural, social, economic, and political project. The community, in its economic life, needs to be inclusive of South Africans, employ people, reach out, be innovative, create consumer products which people can participate in, and help grow the economy."

Coleman urged the community to "create the future you want. Don't complain about the future you won't get."

One of the ways the community can play its part is to get involved in YES.

"Depending on the size of the business, get your businesses to take on small, medium, or large numbers of people as part of YES.

"The best way for the Jewish community to argue its corner is to behave as patriotic citizens in the first place. The more people participate in society and government, and in partnering in various ways, the more those voices will resonate and be able to carry a voice on other issues."

Coleman says Ramaphosa is universally highly regarded, but the real issue isn't Ramaphosa and his leadership, it's whether he can create momentum and support around him to succeed with his plans.

Coleman stresses that next year's election is "a big moment".

"Do we stick with our historic racial voting patterns in the country, or do we get behind Ramaphosa and his party as the best hope for non-racialism in SA?" he asks.

He believes that should the ANC get more than 60% of the vote under Ramaphosa's leadership, he will have a broad and powerful mandate to govern, to get the Cabinet of his choosing, to put in place the policies of his choosing, to effectively rid himself of corrupt people, and through that, to drive SA forward. "If he gets less than 50%, I think he is going to be in an extremely compromised position from a political point of view."

"We're going to go through tough times, this is not going to be seamless. The pity about the Mandela and Mbeki years is that people took the seamless transition, and the period of growth and non-racialism for granted. What unfolded in the Zuma decade revealed the ability of those who don't participate to seize the political system to gather resources for themselves. And to be destructive."

Now, he says, South Africans need to re-create a future with everybody participating and benefiting.

"In times of greatest fear, the Jewish community has tended to live in its own ghetto instead of embracing the challenges," Coleman says.

"During apartheid, the community was absent. I've lived through it. When my family members were detained, we were shunned by the Jewish community, we weren't embraced. I've seen the Jewish community retreat under pressure, and we are going to have our pressure again.

"There is going to be a lot of uncomfortable things going on. It's important to embrace, engage, and be part of the solution. The future you want for your children is the future you have to make."

Michael David

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"BEST SPOT IN GLENHAZEL"

Judges in dip end with dessert hummus

JORDAN MOSHE

Whether you’re Israeli or South African, you know that hummus is, by definition, a savoury dish prepared using chickpeas, spices, and olive oil. Whether you prefer adding za’atar or sesame seeds, the fact remains that hummus is a savoury dish. Zehu! (That’s final!)

But, what would happen if we substituted the garlic, lemon, and olive oil with cinnamon, vanilla beans, and coconut oil? Odd as this may sound, these variations are gaining popularity, giving rise to a dish some look at with horror and others with curiosity. It’s called dessert hummus.

Not unlike the popular savoury Middle Eastern dip, dessert hummus is also made from chickpeas, but is essentially its sweet counterpart. The idea, which was floating around on the internet for a few years, became reality in 2017. The founders of Delighted By Hummus, a niche dessert hummus brand operating in the United States, got a \$600 000 (R8.6 million) investment on an episode of *Shark Tank* when it pitched the idea to the programme’s panel of investors.

According to New York-based online media outlet Insider, the founder of Delighted by Hummus, Makenzie Marzluff, was inspired to create dessert hummus on her way to a Super Bowl party.

“I wanted to bring a healthy cookie dough that could be eaten by the spoon,” Marzluff said. “I thought, ‘Why not put chickpeas in the blender, and see how it comes out?’ I added other cookie dough-like ingredients to the chickpeas, and it resulted in dessert hummus!”

Since the company’s inception, hummus in flavours including chocolate mint, brownie batter, and pumpkin pie have hit the shelves of American supermarkets. Some celebrate the creation of a virtually



The judges: Steve Steinfeld, Danny Abebe and Ayellet Black

guilt-free, gluten-free, and vegan-friendly dessert. Others express outright horror at the very thought of combining the grainy texture of chickpeas with the cloying sweetness of chocolate in paste form served in a tub.

Dessert hummus taste test

Because dessert hummus has not yet reached our shores, the *SA Jewish Report* embarked on a mission to create and sample different variations of the dish to see whether the concept is a culinary crime or modern-day marvel.

Reaching out to a number of local kosher restaurants and caterers, we invited members of our community to try their hands at creating a dessert hummus dish of their own following a simple mandate: it had to be made of chickpeas, and it had to be sweet.

And so, representatives from Feigels and Brioche, together with a panel of hand-picked judges, assembled at the *SA Jewish Report’s* offices for Johannesburg’s first dessert humus tasting.

Including Habonim Shaliach Danny Abebe, Israeli Deputy Ambassador Ayellet Black, and Instagram food blogger Steve Steinfeld, the judges



were instructed to award a score out of 10 to each of the seven hummus variations presented, and declare one the winner. This would be done without knowing who had prepared the dish, based on the combination of flavours, the texture, and overall impression.

“I’ve been dreaming about this for a while now,” admitted Black as the dishes were set out before the judges. However, they all looked somewhat apprehensive at the thought of sampling hummus paired with chocolate, blueberry, granadilla, and other sweet flavours.

Served in the form of tartlets, the dishes from Brioche featured three variations of chocolate-based hummus, each paired with a different filling or topping, including peanut butter, citrus, honeycomb, and marshmallow. They included a brownie batter hummus tart with marshmallows and honeycomb; a Reese’s Pieces, peanut butter chocolate hummus tart topped with Ferrero Rocher and citrus infusion; and a chocolate orange hummus tart topped with candied orange zest.

Taking a different tack, Feigels presented its variations in traditional tub form, layering savoury hummus with different sweet toppings such as ginger, blueberry, butternut, pecan, and granadilla. These included Cinfull Butternut, a pecan topped dish which included pieces of sweet butternut; the Zesty Lemon, with added piquant ginger; Granadilla Thrilla; and The Berries.

Taking to their task with relish, the judges sampled each variation

in turn. Although they frequently admitted to liking the dishes, they often remarked that they were more like a dessert than actual hummus. Biting into a tartlet, Abebe said, “I like it. It’s tasty, but where’s the hummus here?”

Steinfeld seemed to share the sentiment. “This is more dessert than hummus,” he said. “I do like it, but I don’t really see how it can be considered hummus at all.” The others agreed, but their reservations certainly didn’t stop them from enjoying their sampling.

Steinfeld said that in spite of entering unknown territory, the two caterers had done a remarkably original and creative job. “The way they have approached the brief is certainly clever,” he said. “Their interpretations, though very different, combine flavours in unusual ways that are interesting and quite exciting. Pairing savoury with

declared the citrus variation prepared by Brioche to be the winner. A close second was the cinnamon butternut dish prepared by Feigels, which in spite of resembling a type of hummus charosset or tzimmes, delighted the judges with its novelty.

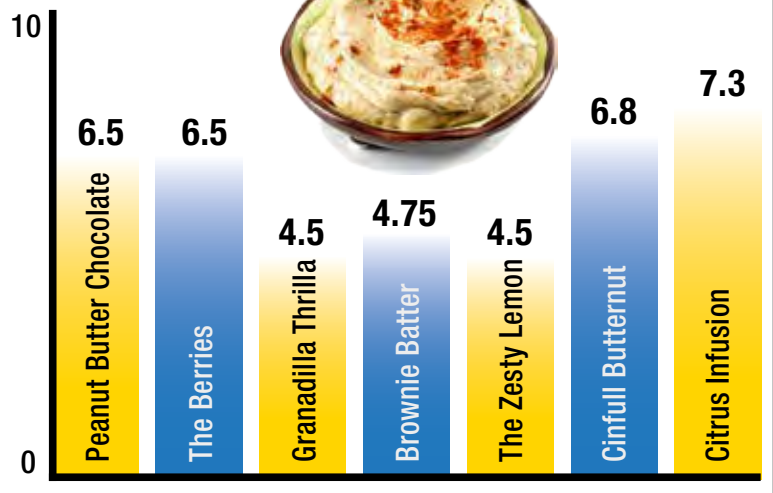
“I don’t really like hummus myself, and had to find a way to make it different,” said Carla Erasmus of Brioche. “I wondered how I could make something different from something traditional, and ended up making a dessert by doing something weird. It was a lot of fun, and I got the chance to get creative with it.”

Tamar Dakes of Feigels felt the same. “I asked myself: what do you serve a sweet hummus with? How do you eat it? Dessert hummus is unlike anything else. We had to come up with a way to make sure that it was still hummus, but with a dessert twist. It was lots of fun to try make something different.”



Photos: Ilan Ossendryver

The hummus scores



Beit Shemesh’s new mayor is a reluctant feminist icon

SAM SOKOL

When Aliza Bloch was elected mayor of Beit Shemesh last month, it ended a decade of haredi orthodox control over this small bedroom community of just more than a 100 000 residents.

The site of numerous clashes between haredi zealots and their secular and national-religious counterparts in recent years, the city – located in the scenic Judean hills midway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv – has come to be considered both in Israel and abroad as something of a microcosm of Israel’s religious “kulturkampf” (conflict between civil government and religious authorities).

Haredi orthodox usually follow the most insular, gender-segregated, and often non-Zionist interpretation of religious Judaism. Modern orthodox or religious Zionists, more engaged in modern society, often bristle at the haredim’s strictures, especially in public places.

Bloch’s victory in municipal elections – making the veteran modern orthodox educator the first female mayor of Beit Shemesh – was held up as a victory for feminism by voters tired of what they saw as the city’s unwillingness to stand up for their rights.

However, Bloch, who spent years as the principal of a local high school, shrugs off suggestions that she is the embodiment of religious Zionist

feminism. She prefers to describe herself as a candidate first, and a woman second.

Speaking to JTA in her cramped campaign office in a rundown house only blocks from the city’s newly constructed municipal building, she insisted that she “didn’t win because I’m a woman, I won because I’m Aliza”.

While her supporters have shared Photoshopped pictures on social media of her riding on the shoulders of soldiers – another cohort typically targeted for ridicule and violence by the city’s small but active community of zealots – Bloch insisted that she was just a resident who ran because she felt she was the most qualified for the job.

“I don’t feel like a symbol. I believe in an idea, and in making changes. I ran because of my ideas about how to run the city, not as the feminist candidate. But I am also a women,” she explained, describing her identity as multifaceted. “The way to create change is to show people that they aren’t defined by only one thing.”

Her haredi opponents demonised her, distributing fliers predicting that she would close down religious schools and introduce a bus service on Shabbat. Bloch campaigned on a platform of unity, she said, noting that she won in part due to the thousands of haredim who voted for her, and the thousands more who refrained from voting in spite of exhortations from their communal leadership to support Moshe Abutbul,

the haredi incumbent.

As part of this effort to reach out to the haredim on their own terms, Bloch refrained from using her image on advertisements in haredi neighbourhoods, a tactic that some activists found slightly ironic, given their long fight against a municipality that had long refused to use images of women on official publications.



“The number one rule for change is having people hear your message,” said Shoshana Keats Jaskoll, the founder of the religious women’s advocacy group Chochmat Nashim, and a supporter of Bloch, who has been vocal on the issue of the erasure of women.

“I understand her choice to not show her face in certain neighborhoods because had she done so, they would not have come out to

listen to her. She wasn’t fighting a battle for her face, but a war for the city, so to win the war, she sacrificed a smaller ideal for the larger ideal.”

Jaskoll expressed hope that Bloch would take firm action against the graffiti and street signs instructing women to dress modestly that have proliferated in certain Hasidic neighborhoods in recent years.

meetings to get the cameras up, and she’s not even mayor yet.”

Bloch agreed, saying that she would enter into dialogue with the extremists, setting out a series of red lines, and that “the minute they have clear borders on what is allowed, all life will be different”.

“There will be no patience for any act of violence,” the mayor-elect said, adding that there was the possibility of opening a police station in the extremists’ neighbourhood, but declining to go into any sort of detail.

Rena Hollander, an attorney and another local women’s activist who headed the local branch of the religious Zionist Jewish Home party during the recent election, is herself a newly elected member of the city council. Hollander said that she intended to “empower women in the city” through a variety of measures, including pushing for the use of affirmative-action policies in municipal hiring that went largely unenforced during Abutbul’s tenure as mayor.

However, while Bloch agreed that she would definitely work to advance the cause of women in Beit Shemesh, she was careful to show that she was not defined by her gender. Bloch said the city could become a model of co-operation between people where “it doesn’t matter what their background is”.

Beit Shemesh, she said, had the potential to become “a model for the state of Israel”. (JTA)

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Holy urge: the rabbi who markets sex toys for marital harmony

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Rabbi Natan Alexander stresses that his business, Better2gether, which sells sex tools online, exists for the greater good of helping couples improve their marriage.

“I’m not interested in creating *koch* (gossip) for the dinner table,” the Gush Etzion-based rabbi says when asked about his business. “Actually, I don’t care if people koch, as long as I have the blessing of my wife.”

It’s a statement that says a lot about this rabbi, psychoanalyst, and educator’s approach to life and marital counselling work. He believes consent and communication with one’s spouse is the most important factor in a loving, kosher marriage.

Rav Natan, as he is known, is no stranger to South Africa, having lived here from 2010 to 2013, when he and his wife were Bnei Akiva shlichim. He says that a lot of his realisations about sexuality counselling came from work he did in the movement.

He describes his online business, which he set up more than two years ago, as a “safe” site which differs from other sites in a few key ways.

First, the name, Better2gether, shows the intent of the site – to improve one’s sex life with one’s spouse. “Often in the Western world, the message is ‘I don’t need a partner. I will please myself’.

Better2gether’s name says that these are tools – not toys – to improve your sex life with your spouse.”

Second, there is no nudity, vulgar language, pornographic material, or advertising on the site.

Third, the site offers education about sexuality and related issues. This is done via blogs, and the ability to ask questions online. Rav Natan has enlisted numerous sex therapists within orthodox Judaism to answer questions confidentially.

There are also articles by experts on issues as diverse as “Passionate marriage: forever an oxymoron” and “Enhancing your emotionally committed relationship”.

The site isn’t just for religious consumers, but when it comes to learning about the opposite sex, or having sex, observant Jews do have specific strictures. These include separation of the sexes socially and educationally, halachic rules about sex, and a ban on nudity, pornography, mainstream media, and the internet. Even discussion of sex is often a taboo subject, sometimes left to confidential sessions with a rabbi or rebbetzin before marriage.

“Some people have said to me that they just couldn’t ask their rabbi these questions,” Rav Natan says. He points out that a real problem is that many rabbis just aren’t comfortable or approachable enough to talk to about these issues. It can lead to people going to “spiritually unsafe” places to get the information they seek.

“My first supplier in Tel Aviv said, ‘Natan, I am so happy you are doing this. So many religious people walk into the shop, and are seeing things they shouldn’t be seeing’...”

He says the response to the site has been overwhelmingly positive,

and though it isn’t making a huge amount of money yet, that’s not the point. “The end goal is to open up the conversation about sexuality, and give people the tools to improve or make their sex life more exciting. It also provides tools for people who have specific sexual issues.”

As a rabbi, educator, and psychoanalyst, Rav Natan, who received smicha in 2010, uses the word “communication” a lot. Sexuality is just one – though important – facet of this.

“Lack of communication leads to the breakdown of a marriage,” he says. “Communication applies to everything from where we move the couch, to how to educate our children. Sex is the most intense form of communication we have. This is because we are most vulnerable when we are having sex – and our bodies do not lie. In having sex, we are communicating our real self.”

He points out that unlike some other religions, Judaism celebrates sexuality, seeing it as a holy urge. Even more unusually progressive is the fact that in Judaism, it is the duty of the man to please his wife sexually.

“This is a beautiful mindset,” he says. “In the Western world – and this comes out in pornography – there is the notion of male dominance, and the woman having to do anything to please a man. The man is the one with the power in the bedroom. Torah is the opposite. If a



Rabbi Natan Alexander

woman is sexually unhappy, there is a halachic problem.

“Statistically, up to 70% of women do not have an orgasm through penetration only. It is up to the man to learn about what his wife’s body is communicating to him,” he says.

“We need to create this effective, open communication on the first night of marriage. We have the responsibility to create a safe environment so our spouse can be honest with us.”

Rav Natan also runs an online marriage consulting site, www.ravnatanalexander.com, and lately he has been involved in realising another of his passions: helping men to be self-confident leaders who take responsibility for others.

He has created a group called Leader of the Pack, which holds events for men in Israel and the United States. The club focuses on helping men to realise their “G-d-given role as leaders and protectors”.

It ties in with the issue of marital harmony, because “G-d charged men to stand up, lead, and protect. Women want men to take responsibility.”

Rav Natan is careful to stress that this isn’t about wielding physical power – overpowering or dominating one’s spouse or family – but learning to take responsibility for caring and protecting others.

“The problem is that men are educated to be powerful, but are not educated to take responsibility, for example, for the education of their

children, or the happiness of their spouse,” he says.

Being a stand-up leader has traditionally been refined through initiation ceremonies, war, or the “tribal mindset” of always being prepared for danger or death, Rav Natan says.

“Israel has a strong sense of male brotherhood, but even now in countries like the United States, men are realising the need to be more aware and protective.”

It may seem like a large leap from sex toys to leadership. But this pioneer educator, who prides himself in seeing a need and stepping up and doing the things others aren’t willing to do, has an overarching goal: to improve our relationships, and make them more holy.

Making aliya in his 90s

JORDAN MOSHE

Many South Africans are opting to make aliya, but not many do so at the age of 95. Ivor Kotzen is packing up his worldly belongings, and moving to the Jewish state.

In spite of having had a heartfelt desire to move to Israel for a number of years, it is only now that the time is right for the Israeli chapter of his life to begin. “It’s the land of my ancestors,” he says. “I am glad to be going home.”

His move to Israel will bring him closer to his children and grandchildren who live there. “My father needs more care, and feels strongly that he should be in a place where he has children and grandchildren,” says his daughter, Deborah Amos.

“He is expecting a richer life, surrounded by his immediate family.” He is excited to be living in the same country as his two children, six grandchildren, and 17 great-grandchildren.

Not only will he be living in the same country as his family, but in a flat in Ra’anana within 20 minutes from all of them.

“At the moment, he is in an old-age home in Johannesburg and hating the institutional way of life,” says Deborah. “He is feeling very lonely, but will now

be moving into a flat only five minutes away from my sister.” Deborah, who lives on a kibbutz up north, works as a geriatric nurse at Beth Protea old-age home in Herzlia three to four days every week. So, she will be close by much of the time.

“Having him in Israel will make it easier for his children to see him. With him near us, we will be able to take care of him, and surround him with family so that he won’t ever be lonely.”

While Kotzen will certainly not lack for company or care – with both his family and a live-in caregiver looking after him – he says he will miss South Africa.

“I will miss my relatives and friends in Joburg and Cape Town,” he says. “Joburg in the spring with the jacarandas in bloom, blossoms spreading a lilac carpet across the roads and lawns, are the things I will long for.”

According to the Israel Centre of South Africa, there is increasing demand for aliya among older people. People in their seventies, eighties, and even nineties are approaching it to arrange emigration to Israel.

Says Sue Resnick, the head of the centre’s aliya department, “Obviously younger people and families are making aliya, but older people are certainly making aliyah as well to retire or to join their children.”



Ivor Kotzen with his daughter Deborah Amos

Populist nationalism and Jews, an incompatible mix



OPINION

Gavin Rome

It is almost six months since the passing of Phillip Roth, America’s foremost Jewish novelist. In the deeply sad aftermath of the massacre of Jews in a Pittsburgh shul, one of Roth’s most famous novels seems to possess an almost uncanny contemporary resonance.

In 2004, Roth wrote *The Plot Against America*. The novel is about a family of American Jews in Newark, New Jersey, who are strong supporters of President Franklin D Roosevelt. In the novel, FDR loses a bid for a third term to Republican presidential candidate and world-famous aviator Charles Lindbergh, who is (and was) an isolationist, nationalist, populist politician.

The book describes how the fictional President Lindbergh uses his office to unleash and direct populist anger at Jewish immigrants. In a fictitious news report of that time, Roth depicts the president rallying his political base with the following cunningly crafted populist invective.

“September – December 1941. [President Lindbergh] delivers his ‘Who are the war agitators?’ radio speech to an America First rally in Des Moines on September 11. [An] audience of 8 000 cheer when he names ‘the Jewish race’

Deputy minister ducks and dives over downgrade

>> Continued from page 3

negotiation. He said that 330 days had passed since the resolution was taken, and asked, “How soon can we have this matter resolved once and for all? Sanctions worked for South Africa; they can work for Israel.”

The deputy minister answered that her department was going through the process “step by step”. The first step had been implemented, which was “to establish people in the department to work on other steps to follow”. She said they would “take into account the time frame, the structure of the liaison office, its mandate, and its communication structure”. This report would be submitted to Cabinet, then to a portfolio committee, and Parliament.

The Democratic Alliance’s Sandy Kalyan pointed out that Israel had strong economic ties with South Africa, and queried how these would be affected by the downgrade. To this, the deputy minister responded, “We are not cutting relationships or economic ties – this is just a downgrade.”

The IFP’s Hlengwa pushed back again, saying that South Africa “cannot be both a player and a referee” and it couldn’t mediate in good faith if it had already taken sides. “A downgrade is exactly that – it’s going downwards! And it’s not in anybody’s interest,” he said to applause from the floor.

The deputy minister responded by saying, “There are no sides here,” to which the gathered MPs groaned in disbelief. But the EFF said that the downgrade was needed “to teach Israel a lesson”.

In response to the plenary session, South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) National Director Wendy Kahn said, “There has been such conflicting messaging around the downgrade. It would be a mistake to take one statement as the definitive response. The SAJBD continues to engage with all parties involved in this issue, encouraging engagement in the interests of peace-building.”

as among those most powerful and effective in pushing the US — ‘for reasons which are not American’ — toward involvement in the war.”

The nightmarish world described in the novel seems sadly all too real. A self-described political nationalist is the actual, non-fictitious occupant of the White House. US President Donald Trump’s populist rants are directed not at Jews, but at alien “non-white” refugees.

So, is Trump nonetheless good for the Jews? After all, he supports the agenda of the Israeli government, moved the embassy to Jerusalem, and is by all accounts Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s best friend. To those who have embraced Trumpism for these sorts of reasons, I nonetheless plead, “Wake up!”

The history of Jewish survival and renewal is a clear renunciation of a core Trumpian doctrine, namely that “might is right”. As former United Kingdom Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks so often reminds us, the most repeated command in the Torah is the following: be kind to the stranger, because we too were once

immigrants and strangers in a foreign land.

There is thus a moral argument against the tactic of aligning ourselves with the now powerful anti-immigrant populists. Welcoming strangers is a fundamental Jewish ethic. Abraham welcomed strangers; Pharaoh enslaved them.

There is also a practical argument against doing so. American columnist Peter Beinart has persuasively argued that “hate them, not us” is a losing strategy because once empowered, bigots widen their targets. For those who define America (or for that matter Poland or Hungary) as a white Christian nation, Jews will never be white enough.

The murderer whose corrosive hate fatally targeted the Jews of Pittsburgh imbibed freely of the poison directed at refugees, and was enraged by the fact that members of the Pittsburgh community are part of an organisation that still seeks to assist refugees and immigrants. Trump’s adoption of an anti-immigrant “America

First” ideology is violently incompatible with Jewish ethics and Jewish interests.

I am saddened when I encounter the support for Trump that seems so prevalent among many in our community. How do we forget that Nazi sympathisers (such as Lindbergh in America and Hendrik Verwoerd in South Africa) shouted their “my country first” slogans, while railing against the “threat” of mass Jewish immigration?

In *The Plot Against America*, a few members of the protagonist’s family, for reasons of narrow self-interest, attempt to align themselves with Lindbergh’s movement. Their efforts to do so prove to be futile and tragic. The novel contains a powerful warning that attempts to align ourselves with ultra-nationalist movements do not end well.

• Gavin Rome is a senior counsel at the Johannesburg Bar. He has acted as a Judge of the High Court on several occasions.

ד"ר



Director: Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School

Nestled in the wooded Glen in Cape Town’s Camps Bay, The Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School (PJJDS) is a Jewish educational institution which caters for children from age 18 months (playschool) to Grade 6. This unique school blends a solid curriculum with religious education, values and practise.

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The Shabbat morning kiddush food frenzy

Seventy-five years after the Holocaust, there are certain aspects and defining features that we need to relinquish slowly. Letting go is never easy, but given that we are now three generations post-Holocaust, we should probably accept – no matter how anxious it might make us – that we are no longer in danger of starving to death.

True, there are still many who want to see us dead. The past few weeks have proven exactly that. But, given that we now reside in the frenetic and ADD-like millennial age, the chances are remote that our enemies will have the patience and staying power to watch us wither away slowly.

I have never been a fan of the shul kiddush (colloquially called the “brocha”) and generally find myself at home following that Shabbat morning service. It’s not because I don’t like people and/or crowds. I just don’t like the mob mentality that takes over the community when faced with a limited amount of sushi.

I always fear that at any moment, I could become poor Simon in *Lord of the Flies*, with the whole group turning on me and beating me to death (or near death) just because I was rumoured to have been the beast (or glutton), or the one who finished the last piece of the cheesecake. And so, in order to avoid the danger, I either hang back and pretend I just don’t want anything, or go home to the safety of my home where CAP is just a panic button away.

After an absence of some years, I recently felt ready to venture back to a shul kiddush. I have done a lot of work on myself in the intervening years, written a few books on my journey of self-discovery. I have exorcised some of my more (or less) attractive demons. I finally felt ready to face the past, and embrace the future. I felt centred, confident, and contained. No sashimi could upset my equilibrium.
Or so I thought.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



Nothing has changed. There is still the same heightened level of anxiety and panic (that might have been mine). Mothers of young children and mothers of old children remain the scariest as they forage for food for their sugar-high young’uns. And talkers still stand in front of the fruit so that no one can access it without shoving them out the way. Cold drinks remain warm, and the polystyrene cups still produce a remarkable amount of foam when you try to pour a Coke Zero. That is, if you are lucky enough for them not to overbalance just as the liquid meets the cup, spilling on the suit you have just received back from the dry-cleaners.

It’s still always hot. And uncomfortable. Everyone still looks at what you have filled your plate with to check what they might have missed. Or to judge you because given your recent weight gain, is four rugelach the wisest of choices? And there is always someone who wants to kiss you “good Shabbos” with a mouth full of chopped herring.

And I hate herring. Unless it’s Anne Cohen’s baked herring.

The ugly and beautiful truth is that few of us are at risk of malnutrition. We are thankfully very blessed (read: fat). In truth, if those anti-Semites who want to see the last of us were smart, they would consider sponsoring the croissants at the kiddush. You see, there is more likelihood that we will die from obesity than from starvation.

Either way, it is now more than 70 years after the Holocaust. We can’t afford to forget anything about the period. But we might want to consider suspending our food anxiety for a few hours on a Shabbat morning.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Restorative, not punitive, justice

Last week’s issue reported an especially upsetting anti-Semitic incident in the form of a voice note sent to a young community member by a Treverton College pupil. The message quickly went viral, generating much outrage.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies was extensively involved in the matter, engaging on a continual basis with both the sender and the recipient of the message, their respective parents, and the principal of Treverton.

Sincere apologies were extended by the perpetrator and his father, and the Treverton principal also issued a statement. The school has instituted a thorough investigation into the incident, and a disciplinary process is taking place against all the pupils involved.

On Sunday, the board hosted a meeting of the families to build on the spirit of understanding and reconciliation created over the previous few days. We are now working with Treverton and the Durban Holocaust Centre on shortly instituting Holocaust education and sensitivity training for the offender and other pupils at the school. I commend all parties, especially the young community member targeted by the demeaning, hurtful communication, for the way this painful incident was turned into an opportunity for learning and healing.

Repellent taunts and “jokes” about the Holocaust, particularly among adolescents, are certainly nothing new. The board was dealing with such incidents even when I was a schoolboy. Similarly, inter-school sports events involving Jewish schools not infrequently feature Nazi salutes and similarly crass behaviour on the part of the opposition and/or their supporters.

Isolated incidents of this nature are probably inevitable, and are generally dealt with by the schools themselves, without bringing in outside parties. What has altered the situation greatly is the advent of social media. In the past, it was possible to contain the negative impact of anti-Semitic behaviour, since usually, the number of people involved was limited. Now, reports of such incidents

can very quickly end up resonating throughout our community.

The board believes that wherever possible, educational processes aimed at behavioural change are critical in addressing anti-Semitism and other forms of hate in our country. This is especially true when the perpetrators are still young.

When we are dealing with a 14-year-old boy, one who has admittedly made a shocking error, but is clearly willing to acknowledge his wrongdoing, sincerely apologise for it, and undergo a remedial educational process, it is restorative rather than punitive justice that we seek to achieve. Last year, for example, we were involved in a similar case of Nazi-themed insults, this time from a pupil at an Edenvale school. It led to an arrangement whereby, on an annual basis, Grade 9, 10, and 11 pupils now receive tolerance and sensitivity training through the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

When confronted with unrepentant and unremorseful anti-Semites, on the other hand, we will spend 10 years or more in court, as we are doing with Bongani Masuku and Tony Ehrenreich. This week, Masuku’s appeal against the Equality Court hate speech judgment against him was heard before five judges in the High Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein.

Our professional staff has assisted the outstanding legal team running the case on behalf of the South African Human Rights Commission, and both the board’s National Director, Wendy Kahn, and Associate Director, David Saks, attended the hearing.

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



Above Board
Shaun Zagnoev

Must women be naked to be heard?

In light of United States President Donald Trump’s reputation for lewd remarks about women, it is fitting that a bare-breasted woman chased his motorcade on the Champs-Élysées in Paris on Sunday. He was en route to events marking the centenary of the World War I armistice. The words “Fake Peacemaker” were written on her chest.

Theatrics aside, we live in a chilling era, when the world’s most powerful man is told to rein himself in by a topless woman. This was done because his actions and language evoke the kind of foolish nationalism that led to World War War I between 1914 and 1918.

About 9.7 million soldiers and 10 million civilians died in that war. Rational people watch with alarm at the drift towards aggressive nationalism today.

Women using their bodies for politics is not new. It’s a potent weapon capable of moving a male-dominated domain. English suffragettes in the World War I era demanded voting rights for women by chaining themselves to railings, storming Parliament, and battling police.

They wore long dresses appropriate to the time. When imprisoned, they went on hunger strikes, leading the government to force-feed them.

Afterwards, Parliament gave women over the age of 30 the vote under certain qualifications, and 10 years later, full electoral equality with men.

Their campaign had a Jewish thread. In November 1912, female Jewish leaders founded the Jewish League for Woman Suffrage, linking feminist goals with Jewish loyalties. They aimed to unite Jewish suffragettes of all shades of opinion.

South African women have used their bodies to make dramatic statements, particularly about violence against women. According to the World Health Organisation, South Africa’s 2016 femicide rate was 12.1 per 100 000, almost five times higher than the global average of 2.6 per 100 000. Statistics SA reports that 138 per 100 000 women were raped in 2017, also the highest rate in the world. The number is probably higher, with a large percentage of



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

rapes going unreported. According to a South African Police Service report of 2018, femicide increased 11% over the past two years.

It’s incredible that a country which was the darling of the world two decades ago contains such poison. People fighting back have a bitter struggle.

At a Gender-based Violence and Femicide Summit in Irene at the beginning of November, attended by President Cyril Ramaphosa and more than 1 000 delegates, female survivors of sex trafficking, rape, abuse, and violence recounted the horrors, and demanded stronger laws.

What courage it must take for a woman to bare herself publicly as a gesture about society’s sickness. Phindile Ncube did it. Speaking from the podium, she said she was kidnapped, kept in a house in Tembisa, and raped by a gang of eight men over several days. As a result, she had to undergo five surgical operations on her stomach – including one procedure to remove plastic that had been inserted in her.

She spoke emotionally about the desperate pain of seeing her attackers back on the streets after serving only four years in prison – again, an incredible indictment of society. How did we come to this?

Then, in a shocking move, Ncube lifted her dress, wearing nothing underneath, exposing her body for all – including Ramaphosa – to see the scars.

Audience members covered their eyes at the spectacle. Facing the president, she said, “I was not born like this. This came as a result of my attackers, and I have to carry the scars while they walk free ... Our lives can’t be paroled, Mr President, the minimum sentence for sex offenders must be at least 50 years.”

Some people would say even 50 years is not enough.

Letters

JEW HATERS DO NOT CARE ABOUT JEWISH FACTIONALISM

The death of 11 fellow Jews, gunned down in Pittsburgh by an anti-Semitic neo-Nazi, is a stark reminder that hatred and bigotry are often fuelled by irresponsible, reckless speakers.

It’s not only racist bigots who foment such pain, division, and senseless killing. The killing of the soul and the poisoning of the mind are extreme human frailties. People in positions of leadership in particular should guard their speech. Donald Trump and Julius Malema come to mind.

Of course, there is your average man, too. Having attended both orthodox and progressive shuls, I am constantly reminded how critical the two camps are of each other. How ridiculous to continue

this silly, destructive, narrow-mindedness. Jew-haters do not care about Jewish factionalism.

As a Lemba, I have listened to a man who told me that the Lembas are not Halachic, and thus are not Jews. This is in spite of Torah and DNA evidence to the contrary. Getting upset and angry with such ignorant, holier-than-thou, insensitive people is not the solution. It’s what drives and spurs on bigots.

Would anti-Semites discriminate between black and white Jews? Since ancient times, no Jew-hater has ever spared a Jewish community based on colour, nationality, and factionalism. So, why do we persist in being divisive based on such pettiness?
– Colin Jantjies, Cape Town

| Monday (19 November) |
|--|
| • The Union of Jewish Women hosts Judith Katzew, lecturer in insurance and commercial law at the University of the Witwatersrand School of Law on <i>Where lies responsibility for harm caused by driverless electric cars?</i> Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053. |
| Thursday (22 November) |
| • The Women’s International Zionist Organisation (Wizo) hosts <i>Yes, you can! Exercising in your 40s or 80s, age is just a number!</i> Spend the morning being pampered in the elegant opulence of Hotel 33 Melville Road, a stunning boutique hotel. |

| |
|--|
| Guest speaker: Oriana Azizollahoff. Time: 09:30 for 10:00. Venue: 33 Melville Road, Hyde Park. Cost: R180 per person. Booking essential. Contact: Jenny 011 645 2515/ wizojhb@beyachad.co.za |
| • Hebrew speakers meet at 10:30 on the second floor at Beyachad, 2 Elray Street Raedene. |
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A universe of flawed heroes: Stan Lee was ahead of his time

TED ANTHONY

It became easy, in recent years, to dismiss him as the wisecracking grandpa of the American comic book, a past-his-prime gimmick who cameoed alongside Earth’s angstiest superheroes in the high-grossing Marvel blockbusters of the past decade.

But Stan Lee, who died on Monday aged 95, was far more than that. It’s no stretch to say that he helped redraw the world of American fiction. And he certainly made sure everyone knew it.

From the ashes of pulp magazines and the radioactive raw material of post-war uncertainty about science and power, he summoned – not singlehandedly, but certainly without parallel or peer – a textured, self-sustaining universe of imperfect heroes.

The father of Marvel presented comic book America – which meant, at the time, mostly adolescent boys – with a pantheon of deeply flawed protagonists who, in spite of their presence in so many tales to astonish, were in many ways just like you and me.

These outcasts and misfits rose to the alarm clock’s buzzing, and slogged to work each morning to get the job done, not in a fanciful Metropolis or Gotham, but on the actual streets of New York City and in the imperfect America beyond it. For them, the struggle was the thing – no

matter whether the task was saving the world, paying the rent, or trying to make ends meet as a freelance photographer, or a blind lawyer, or an itinerant stunt motorcyclist.

Unlike DC Comics’ iconic heroes, many of whom had been destined for greatness as the last sons of doomed planets, Amazon royalty,

to Lee, the son of Jewish immigrants, who as Marvel’s editor-in-chief wrote many of the books himself during comics’ “silver age” years of the early 1960s.

“One of the things we try to demonstrate in our yarns is that nobody is all good, or all bad,” Lee wrote in a column for Marvel’s March

youth, and to push publishers back toward pabulum, and you’ll have some idea what Lee accomplished at the beginning of the 1960s.

Suddenly here was Tony Stark, a genius inventor with daddy issues (and, we would eventually learn, an alcoholic narcissist) who fixed his literally broken heart by turning himself into Iron Man. Here was Peter Parker, a meek high-school nerd who had no clue how to handle the creepy abilities and hormonal changes bestowed upon him by the bite of a radioactive spider on a class field trip. Talk about playing to your target audience.

Here was Bruce Banner, a military scientist who tried to save someone from one of his test blasts, and ended up locked in a battle with his own angry, destructive id – hardly an incidental narrative in an era when psychotherapy and self-help were sharply on the rise. And here were the X-Men, mutants, and perpetual outsiders, whose struggle to find a place in the mainstream on Earth has been variously framed as a parable for race relations, anti-Semitism, and the “red scare”.

Even Steve Rogers, whose Captain America was the most Superman-like of the bunch, had demons. He was the skinny kid rejected by his World War II draft board, who wanted so badly to fight that he volunteered to be a guinea pig for a “super-soldier serum” that would turn him into the ultimate fighting machine.

There was another, less-noticed corner where Lee was equally groundbreaking. As Marvel’s editor, in an age before computers were in every pocket, he worked tirelessly to develop a relationship with his audience.

His regular column, Stan’s Soapbox, talked directly to readers in a way that presaged the kind of access to celebrities that Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram afford today.

And within his emerging pantheon of white-male angst, Lee was often an enthusiastic champion of progressive views about race, if not always gender. The now-fabled Black Panther first appeared in a Marvel comic book in 1966, becoming one of the earliest mainstream superheroes of African descent, though it took until 1973 for him to snag a marquee spot in a comic titled *Jungle Action*.

Marvel is a calibrated commercial juggernaut now, its stories drowning in the merchandise that amplifies them. It has been dismissed as mass-produced storytelling for a mass-produced age. Yet somehow, among the things Lee manages to leave behind is a lingering sense – snake oil, maybe, but potent nonetheless – that with Marvel’s tales, still, anything might happen.

Because, as Stan Lee knew well before America did, we still want our fantastic, unlikely superheroes to be just like us. Or, more saliently, we want to believe that we can be just like them. (*Times of Israel*)



The late Stan Lee, the creator of comic book franchises such as ‘Spider-Man’, ‘The Incredible Hulk’, and ‘X-Men’

or rightful kings of the sea, the likes of Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, Iron Man, the Ghost Rider, and the Incredible Hulk composed a catalogue of human frailties – schmoes – who inadvertently, or negligently, wandered into the traffic of destiny.

Some moneyed, some working class, all neurotic, they had powers thrust upon them by misfortune or questionable choices. And, sometimes it was hard to tell the heroes and the villains apart. Sort of like real life.

This was in no small measure due

1969 issues. “Even a shoddy supervillain can have a redeeming trait, just as any howlin’ hero might have his nutty hang-ups.”

It’s hard to overestimate how groundbreaking this philosophy was in a nation that, with a tone set by production-code Hollywood since the early 1930s, had spent three decades positioning largely unambiguous heroes at the centre of its rising mass culture. Add government efforts in the 1950s to demonise comics as the mind-decayers of America’s

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Becoming a mom after 40

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Forty is the new 20 when it comes to having babies, experts say. “Having babies over 40 is almost the norm now,” says Dr Peter Koll, a gynaecologist and obstetrician at Mediclinic Sandton. “For the past few years, I’ve even had one or two pregnant women in their 50s every year. It’s just the way our society is evolving socially. People are increasingly postponing pregnancy – we’re seeing a massive rise in older moms.”

Although there are increased risks of pregnancy complications after 40, these are not dramatic, Koll says. It all depends on whether or not the woman has pre-existing medical conditions. “If the patient is very healthy, has a reasonable level of fitness, isn’t excessively overweight, and has no medical problems like blood pressure issues or diabetes, then the risks are actually very low. If they do, however, then the risks rise considerably – gestational diabetes and hypertension are more common here. Ultimately, it’s still an individual’s choice as long as they understand the risks.

“The vast majority of pregnancies over 40 will be normal. The statistics are still on your side,” Koll says.

Well-known clinical and organisational psychologist Dorianne Weil, AKA Dr D, who herself became a mom to twins after 40, agrees that older moms have become more prevalent. Her insights, largely based on research and professional work with



Dalia Segal with Eva-Rose

older mothers, are also coloured by her own experience. “In the past 20 years, the number of women having children in their 40s has tripled,” says Dr D. “The number of moms between 20 and 24 has fallen exponentially. Becoming a mother is now more associated with whether the time is right for you, rather than with your

biological clock. “Many think older moms would lack energy or be impatient, but there’s much contrary research about that. Having children older is, in fact, associated with a longer life, according to scientific research.” The advantages of having children later include a more established career and a better chance of returning to work, she says. “There’s also almost no doubt that if you had your children later, you really wanted them. You probably took a good look at your reasons, and you had a clearer idea of what role you, your husband or partner, and help would play. I have found that you’re less apologetic about asking for help, as you’re likely to be more assertive and confident.”

This also means you’re potentially more honest with your kids, and willing to admit your mistakes, which means they learn from your example. On the downside, says Dr D, you probably won’t be around for as long as you’d like for your grandchildren. There’s also much more worry about the pregnancy, the birth itself, and the baby, as risks increase.

Asked about other trends associated with later parenting, Dr D says you’re generally unlikely to sweat the small stuff. “You have a bit of perspective, having been through quite a bit yourself. You know your priorities. But conversely, you can also be anxious about doing everything right.”

For actress Gina Shmukler, having a child at 43 allowed her to establish and cement her career. “Waiting wasn’t a conscious decision, I just always thought I’d be able to have children when I felt it was my time. I was living in New York and I was very career driven. I got married in my mid-30s, and when my husband and I decided we were going to try and fall pregnant, I’d just turned 39.” Yet, Shmukler landed a role in *Mamma Mia*, and she and her husband decided to wait another year. “Through reflexology, acupuncture, and an amazing doctor in Cape Town, we ultimately had a child naturally,” she says.

“I think one possibly parents more consciously as an older parent. You certainly know you’ve been given an amazing gift. For me, when I was ready to have kids, it was something that I really wanted. I felt that I’d had an entire life before I had a child – a very rich, challenging, passionate, and fulfilling life. I’m always going to be a working mom because I love my work, but now I love both – motherhood and my career.”

Joanne Abel never dreamed she’d have a child after 40. She also never expected to do it alone. Abel’s husband passed away when she was two months pregnant. “It was hard for me to absorb the sudden shock of that, but I realised that I could become a victim or a survivor. I don’t think I had a choice. Being older also helped me because there was a maturity about it. I didn’t want to give birth to a child in miserable circumstances. G-d gives you the inner strength to cope and move forward.”

Today Abel has a beautiful little girl who’s almost six. “She’s very happy, confident, and well adjusted,” she says. “My parenting style is different to what it would be if I was younger. There’s pros and cons to both. I’m also a teacher, so I see it from both sides. I think one has the maturity,

being older, to deal with a lot. Just the energy levels are lower, but fortunately, I’m very fit. I’m very lucky to have travelled a lot, and done a lot in my life prior to having her, so there’s no mid-life crisis looming! I’m very spiritual, and I believe that everything happens for a reason. She’s a miracle child. I could have had nothing, and I’m just so blessed.”

For Dalia Segal, having a child after 40 was a conscious decision. “I hadn’t met anyone, and I always said to myself that I’d try to fall pregnant alone at 40 if nothing had changed,” she says. Yet, she delayed it and only set the wheels in motion at 42, when a friend gave her the kick she needed, encouraging her to live with no regrets.

“Many think older moms would lack energy or be impatient, but there’s much contrary research about that.”

“I always planned to wait for a sign,” says Segal. “When I did eventually go to Vitalab [a centre for assisted conception], they said that because I was 42, the chances weren’t great. But, at the first scan, they found I had so many eggs for someone over 40 – more than some 20-year-olds. There was my sign.” Segal had IVF, and fell pregnant. Now, her daughter Eva-Rose is seven months old.

Joanne Abel with Michaela



“She’s changed my life,” says Segal. “I’m a playschool teacher, so I’ve been with kids for a long time, but it’s totally mindblowing how different it is when it’s your own. I do think I’m a calmer mom being older, but then I’m a calm person. I’ve done it by myself, but I’ve been blessed with so much help.” Being a teacher, Segal also thinks she’s a bit more streetwise and cautious than younger moms. “I’m not neurotic, but you’ve heard so many more stories, so if there is something worrying my baby, I do get it checked out straight away, whereas some young moms I know don’t always [do that]. Ultimately, though, the kind of mom you are just reflects who you are.”

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International ORT summit an educational experience



The ORT SA contingent leaving OR Tambo for Argentina.

Arriellah Rosenberg, the Chief Executive of Jewish educational NGO ORT South Africa, recently welcomed home 13 exhilarated teenagers from a week-long trip to the World Youth Encounter in Argentina, organised by World ORT and Scholas, an international welfare group promoted by Pope Francis.

The summit was attended by 500 youths from all over the world. It is set up to expose youngsters to different cultures, languages, and customs, and to strengthen the global ORT network by facilitating interactions among this generation of learners and their peers.

As an organisation that promotes 21st century skills, ORT said the encounter imparted skills of networking, collaborating, and connecting with diverse people from different cultures and languages.

Seven ORT countries were represented: Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Spain, Israel, and South Africa.

ORT SA was represented by 10 Grade 10 pupils from King David Linksfield and Victory Park, as well as three pupils from Ivory Park and Alexandra high schools in Johannesburg, accompanied by three teachers.

Pope Francis celebrated the encounter in a video message to the students thanking those who made the

event possible. “I would like to celebrate together with you this meeting of people, different religions, countries, languages, and realities,” he said.

For Kgopolang Masoga, a student from Alexandra, it was a motivating experience. “One thing that ORT taught me,” he said, “is that being the best is not that important, but doing your best is all that matters. When you are working hard you will succeed in life.”

Those sentiments were echoed by teachers from the ORT-affiliated King David Schools in Johannesburg. Mandy Gruzd said she had watched children “open up and take everything in. They have learned so much and grown so much in the few short days we have been here,” she said.

“I have made friends from all over the globe using Google Translate,” said Dylan Martheze from King David Victory Park. “I loved each and every second of being in Buenos Aires. I loved the culture and drinking chimarrao tea, and have made friends forever. Thank you all so much for this experience and I will never forget it.”

“Education is more than schooling, it is about assuring we provide the resources and the possibilities for our learners to accomplish their dreams and their potential,” ORT said.

Panders: champs of Unity Soccer

There was a competitive air at the Jewish Unity Soccer event at Gemmel Park in Linksfield, Johannesburg, last Sunday. More than 80 players from Johannesburg and Pretoria took to the field on a sweltering hot day, the fourth annual event of its kind, sponsored by Blue Label Telecoms and Soul Workout. The action was enjoyable and fierce.

Following the early round-robin matches, four teams made it to the semi-finals: Vichai (Pretoria), Maccabi, Panders, and Chabad FC.

Panders, who were last year’s champions, and Maccabi emerged as the winners, and everything was set for the big final.

At full time, the two teams were locked one-all. In extra time, however, the Panders scored once and then, with Maccabi pressing for the equaliser, Panders struck and scored again. Their counter-attack gave them a well-deserved 3-1 victory.

Panders collected their gold medals, and the R3 000 prize money.

Said organiser Ilan Herrmann from Soul Workout: “The soccer is very competitive, but is played in good spirits. There is something special about getting everyone together around a sports event. Next year, we would like to branch into girls’ soccer as well.”



Panders show off medals and prize money following their second consecutive win of the Jewish Unity Soccer.

Celebrating Sigd at King David Victory Park

Sigd, a celebration of the Ethiopian Jewish community known as “Beta Israel”, is held annually on 29 Cheshvan (7 November). The festival celebrates the renewal of the covenant between the Jewish people, G-d, and the Torah. For centuries, it also marked the Ethiopian Jewish community’s belief that they would return to Jerusalem. Today, because most members of the community have made aliya to Israel, it is an opportunity to give thanks for that dream becoming a reality.

Ethiopian Jews were first rescued and airlifted to Israel by the Israeli government in



Isabella Friedman, Gabriel Shapiro, Kira Fisher, Joshua Dove, Bar Ben Koha (Shinshin), Gabriel Ferreira, Ambar Pencharz, Adam Danilowitz, Tamar Moross, and Chad Rayd.

two undercover missions in 1984 and 1991. Aliyot from the community have continued to trickle into the country to this day. The day is celebrated with prayer and traditional food, crafts, music, and dance. King David Victory Park High School celebrated the festival in a special assembly on Friday 2 November 2018.

Empowering teaching assistants at Torah Academy

Teaching assistants at Torah Academy Nursery School recently graduated from a five-week training course in child development.

The course was developed and presented by teacher Marissa Koffler, with input from preschool teachers Mish Berkowitz and Chana Rivka Lewin. The topics covered included child development from birth to six, educating the

whole child, different types and stages of play, the value of creative art activities, as well as different types of therapies and referral.

At the end of the course, a prize-giving ceremony was held. The assistants received their certificates and were cheered by children, teachers, and parents in a moving expression of appreciation for the school’s dedicated assistants and their empowerment through education.



Teachers and teaching assistants at Torah Academy Nursery School’s prizegiving ceremony.



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