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# south african Jewish Report

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## Velaphi Khumalo makes public apology for hate speech

NICOLA MILTZ

Velaphi Khumalo, the man who wrote on Facebook that blacks should do to white people what “Hitler did to the Jews” has eventually apologised to the nation. This follows a lengthy court battle that has been described as a pivotal case in defining the limitations of hate speech.

Khumalo, an ANC member who is employed by the Gauteng department of sports, arts, culture, and recreation as a sports promoter, apologised unconditionally for the comments he made on Facebook on 4 January 2016.

“I admit that my comments were hurtful not only to white people, but also to black people. My comments were wrong, and I undertake not to utter them again in private or public spaces,” Khumalo wrote in a public statement.

“I accept the decision of the Equality Court that the comments constituted hate speech. I will not repeat them, or any other remarks

that contravene Section 10 of the Equality Act.”

He stressed that his comments were fuelled by the events of the time, and that he “should have known better”.

Mark Oppenheimer, an advocate for the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), told the *SA Jewish Report* this week that the judgement was very important. He explained that it cleared up ambiguities in the law as to the Equality Court’s requirements for hate speech.

“For example, in the Penny Sparrow case, the court found that you needed only one of the three requirements for hate speech listed in the Act. The court found she committed the act of hate speech because her words were hurtful.”

The Khumalo judgement says that it is now required that words must be hurtful, propagate hatred, and be incitement to harm or harmful directly. “All three must now be present to constitute hate speech,” said Oppenheimer.

Explaining further, he said, “So there is a higher threshold for what constitutes hate speech, and this makes it a pivotal judgement. It gives much more clarity as to what constitutes genuine hate speech as opposed to speech that is merely hurtful. The judgement is significant for freedom of speech because it narrows the scope for declaring hate speech.”

Oppenheimer said the case was also a victory for the rule of law, and the fundamental rights of individuals, whatever their race, to be treated equally before the law. He explained that the court rejected the argument that you cannot have hate speech directed at whites, only at blacks.

Back in 2016, Khumalo posted on a Facebook group called *Political Debate SA* amid a storm over estate agent Sparrow’s hateful comments.

He wrote: [We should] “cleanse South Africa of all whites. We must act as Hitler did to the Jews. I don’t believe any more than is a large number of not so racist whit people.

I’m starting to be sceptical even of those within our movement ANC. I will from today unfriend all white people I have as friends from today u must be put under the same blanket as any other racist white because secretly u all are a bunch of racist fuck heads, as we already seen.”

In a subsequent posting, he wrote: “Noo seriously though u oppressed us when u were a minority and then manje (now) u call us monkeys and we suppose to let it slide. White people in south Africa deserve to be hacked and killed like Jews. U have the same venom moss. Look at Palestine. Noo u must be bushed (burned) alive and skinned and your off springs used as garden fertiliser.”

In his apology, Khumalo said he wrote the posts after Sparrow used the social media platform to compare black people at the beach to monkeys. He said he was “deeply hurt” and in a “state of anger”.

Referring to Sparrow’s remarks in his apology, he said, “Those remarks made me angry. I responded in kind. I accept that I was wrong to do so.

I did not intend to harm anyone. I was hurt and angry.”

Khumalo said he accepted the Equality Court’s decision that it was not what he intended that mattered, but whether the remarks might reasonably have been understood to be intended to damage the nation-building project and other white people.

Khumalo said as a sign of respect for the rule of law, he had instructed his lawyers not to appeal any aspect of the Equality Court’s judgement.

“I would also like to urge my fellow activists who interact [with] and or manage the Facebook pages *Political Debate SA* and *Independent Thinkers* not to allow such platforms to deteriorate into a racists’ ranting page,” he added in his apology.

“I am sure that the purpose of the groups is to engage frankly. However, there is a difference between frank talk and racism. I clearly crossed that line. I hope others in future will take my case as an example, and refrain

Continued on page 4>>

## Our community saying no to child abuse

See story on page 5





# Siblings share devastation of California fires

TALI FEINBERG

“We were evacuated from multiple homes, lost one home completely, and narrowly escaped losing our primary residence. It was quite a harrowing experience,” says ex-Capetonian Julian Maimin, who has been living in the United States since 1988.

Maimin was speaking about his experience over the past week of being caught up in the California wildfires, described as the deadliest in the history of the US state.

“We actually witnessed our home being saved on *CBS News*, while it was being engulfed in flames. It was completely surreal to be watching our own home on the news with a sense of futile resignation that all was lost.”

His neighbour, who refused to evacuate, also sent footage to him of his home being saved. The latest figures, released on



Flames from the Woolsey fire surround a house in Malibu, California

Photo: David McNew/Getty Images

Sunday by US officials, state that 150 000 acres of land have been scorched, almost a third of the size of Johannesburg, according to *TimesLive*.

Firefighters have managed to contain only 65% of the fires. The death toll, which has risen to 79, is expected to increase as firefighters continue to battle the flames. Rescue personnel are searching for nearly 1 000 people who have gone missing.

“Since we couldn’t go home to retrieve any of our valuables, all we had were the clothes on our backs,” says Maimin. “We’re fortunate that our home lost at Malibu Lake wasn’t our primary residence. We’re back at home in Calabasas now, and despite the loss, feel very blessed.”

His sister, Lauren Maimin Dromy, describes how her family’s holiday home in Malibu was saved. “The residents in our little community of Paradise Cove spent 10 hours personally fighting the flames until the fire department was able to come with fire equipment. Because of the brave

men and women in our community, our bungalow was spared.”

She says it’s been two weeks since the fires, and the area still has no electricity. “The only way in and out of the cove is by boat, so food, water, household supplies, and dog food is being brought in on jet skis, paddle boards and small water craft which can get close to shore. I’m so thankful to our community for its commitment to do whatever it could to save the cove, and to our brave fire fighters, who are our heroes.

“We are now using the bungalow in the cove to help others who have been displaced – it’s the least we can do given the devastation of Malibu. Thank G-d our place was saved, others weren’t as lucky. We have friends who’ve lost everything, and yet they still find a way to help others.

“We are a strong community here in Los Angeles and Malibu, and we will figure this out and move forward, being just a little more grateful for our health, our family, our friends, and our community,” she says.

## JNF offers to help to California fire recovery

Israeli environmental organisation Keren Kayemet L’Israel-Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) has offered its assistance in helping California recover from its recent devastating forest fires.

“We have been following the situation with the horrific wildfires in California, including the unprecedented destruction of communities and the devastation to surrounding forests,” Daniel Atar, World Chairperson of KKL-JNF, said in a letter sent on Tuesday to Vicki Christiansen, the Chief of the United States Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of those who have perished. We want to express our solidarity, encouragement, and support, and offer our assistance if there’s anything we can do to help.”

The two organisations have worked together for about 30 years, including assisting and sharing knowledge in the field of forestation whenever necessary, according to the JNF. Most recently, the US Forest Service aided KKL-JNF in cases of forest fires in Northern Israel during 2006 and 2010.

At least 79 people have been killed and nearly 1 000 remain missing in the wake of a fire in Northern California and two in Southern California near Los Angeles. Thousands of homes and buildings also have been destroyed, including an entire town, and the homes of several Hollywood stars. The fires have also destroyed or damaged Jewish camps, a day school, and other Jewish institutions.

Heavy rain is expected this week in Northern California, which will tamp down fears of more fires there, but could bring flash flooding and mudslides. (JTA)

### Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:15	Johannesburg
19:15	20:14	Cape Town
18:15	19:12	Durban
18:15	19:30	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:45	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:33	East London

### Torah Thought

## Confront horror by asking ‘why?’

In Parashat Vayishlach, we find Jacob fearing for himself and his family as he prepares to confront his brother Esau for the first time since stealing his birthright so many years before.

At the time, Esau was so angry, he threatened to kill Jacob. Understandably, even though decades have passed and they are both now married men with children and grandchildren of their own, Jacob is unsure how Esau will receive him. The news that Esau has come to greet Jacob with a large “retinue” does not help matters, and Jacob decides to send his family back across the river, at a safe distance, until he is sure whether or not Esau’s retinue is a welcoming party or a military force.

Alone, Jacob then settles down for the night.

This is when he has his famous encounter, wrestling with “a man” (we know not who) throughout the night. Much has been written over the ages about the nature of this “other” whom Jacob wrestles. It is a divine messenger?

Esau? Is Jacob struggling with himself?

One passage of Talmud (Chulin 91a) uses this encounter, rather, to issue a warning: from here it is derived that a Torah scholar should not go out alone at night.

It is often easier when something unpleasant happens to focus on the *tachlis* (nuts and bolts) of how to prevent it from happening again, or happening to someone else, instead of focusing on why it happened in the first place, facing the more wide-scale challenges that might need to be addressed in order to ensure a long-term solution.

In the wake of the horrific shooting in Pittsburgh, we see both of these conversations happening throughout the Jewish world – some focusing on security measures in our Jewish synagogues and institutions, and others focusing on the broader concern of how to understand and combat anti-Semitism. Of course, both conversations are necessary.

At the same time, it is important to make sure that our answer isn’t just to batten down the hatches and stay indoors. Although Jacob’s struggle leaves him injured, it also leaves him blessed. Dr Avivah Gottlieb-Zornberg writes that, “In order to overcome

debilitating anxiety, Jacob must expose himself to fear, to encounter what he most dreads. He must confront the nameless horror of the man who grips him, of that which binds him arm and leg, if he is to acquire the partial freedom of a limping-hero who has learned his new name – and, incidentally, the mirror identity of the face of his dread.”

Jacob goes to sleep a fearful man and wakes up renewed, with confidence. Though his new name indicates his struggles are far from over, he is now ready to face them head on. And, when he goes out and faces Esau, he finds himself not threatened, but embraced. We, too, must find the confidence to go forward unafraid. This is not the time to hide away indoors. This is the time to walk boldly forward, to reach out, build bridges, and work to repair the ages-long damage between us and our long-lost brothers and sisters.

Am Yisrael Chai. The People of Israel, the people whose struggle is a part of their very name, will not just survive – we will LIVE. Kein Yehi Ratzon!



Rabbi Emma Gottlieb, Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation

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# US president nominates Lana Marks as ambassador to SA

NICOLA MILTZ

South African-born couture handbag designer Lana Marks has been officially nominated by United States President Donald Trump as the new US ambassador to South Africa.

This is in spite of the Jewish, East London-born socialite not being an experienced diplomat. Her expertise lies in the high-end fashion industry, and she is a personal friend of Trump.

The Deputy Spokesperson of the US Embassy in Pretoria, Carrie Schneider, confirmed that on 14 November, Trump had nominated Marks to be the next US ambassador to South Africa. “If confirmed by the Senate, Ms Marks will join a long list of distinguished Americans who have served in this important position,” she said.

According to the statement from the White House, “President Donald J Trump announced his intent to nominate... Lana J Marks of Florida to be ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the United States of America to South Africa.”

The US has not had an ambassador in South Africa since Patrick Gaspard vacated his post in December 2016, with its mission being overseen by a chargé d’affaires.



Lana Marks

celebrities like Benoni-born Charlize Theron, Jennifer Aniston, Angelina Jolie, and Helen Mirren; and for her friendship with the late Diana, Princess of Wales. She is the owner and chief executive of Lana Marks Collections.

But according to newspaper reports, Marks also allegedly has a trail of business and personal lawsuits against her. She is currently embroiled in a bitter family feud involving millions with her sister, Anne Pogroske, 62, in Australia and her brother Malcolm Bank, 58, a dentist in Israel, over the family’s trusts and assets.

Marks, 65, is being sued by her estranged siblings who have accused her of “unlawfully” taking millions in property, jewellery, and cash from a family trust, and from their ailing mother, Blanche, who has dementia.

It is a complicated affair which has been going on for several years. Marks’s sister, Pogroske, told the *SA Jewish Report* that her relationship with her sister had soured to such an extent, she no longer wanted anything to do with her.

Marks is good friends with Trump and first lady, Melania.

The presidential couple celebrated with them at Marks’ daughter’s wedding, held at Trump’s famous Mar-a-Lago Club, when Tiffany Marks married Simon Isaacs on Valentine’s Day in 2010. The lavish wedding was the talk of the town, and the bride wore a ruffled organza gown by Oscar de la Renta. According to local news reports at the time, the wedding for 300 guests included pyrotechnics, two cocktail receptions, a six-tiered wedding cake, and an ice sculpture.

According to the Palm Beach Daily News, Marks is the fourth member of the exclusive, private Mar-a-Lago Club – founded by Trump – that the president has nominated for an ambassadorship.

When Marks became aware of her nomination on 21 October, she tweeted: “Lived in S Africa a third of my life; studied at Wits Univ; spoke fluent Xhosa; passed the Hoërtaalbond Eksamen in Afrikaans; background in SA political, economic, social & media landscape; businesswoman for 30 years; mom for 37 years; wife for 42 years; ninja, forever!!”

Marks’ nomination comes at a time of tense relations between the two countries after a tweet in August in which Trump asked his secretary of state to study South African “land and farm seizures”.

South Africa accused Trump of stoking racial divisions with the comments, which it called “misinformed”.

There have been many strong reactions on social media platforms following Marks’ nomination, some downright rude. Some warned her that the position was not for the faint-hearted, others desperately tried to explain the sad state of corruption in the country.

Some tweets asked her to look out for the interests of farmers, and asked whether she was familiar with land reform.

## What to make of South Africa welcoming Israel-Hamas ceasefire



OPINION

Steven Gruz

On Thursday last week, the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) issued a statement welcoming the halt to two days of hostilities between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Interpreting these terse statements is like reading tea leaves. What is not said can matter the most. Dirco’s apparently measured tone deserves closer scrutiny.

The department’s full statement read: “The South African government welcomes the ceasefire brokered by Egypt between Palestine and Israel following two days of Israel’s aerial attacks on Gaza. This latest flare-up is the worst since the 50-day conflict in 2014.

“We call for maximum restraint and express the hope that there will be no renewed escalation in Gaza or in any of the occupied Palestinian territories.

“We reiterate our view that there can be no military solution to the Palestine-Israel conflict.

“The goodwill displayed by both parties to the ceasefire is a positive and welcome development that should serve as a catalyst in resuming the long-stalled Middle East peace process, leading to a two-state solution with the people of the state of Israel living in peace and harmony with the people of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.”

What can we divine from this brief statement?

First, there is no mention of the 460 rockets fired by Hamas in Gaza into Israel. It talks only of “two days of Israel’s aerial attacks” and not what provoked them. Israel is once again cast as the villain and “Palestine” as the innocent victim. Hamas, considered a terrorist

She was warned to lock her doors at night; asked how long it took her to put her make up on; and whether she intended opening a handbag shop. Tweets about land invasions, poverty, government corruption, and black economic empowerment gave Marks her first introduction to the online chatter that she can come to expect if and when she hits our shores, with warnings that “local Twitter can be ruthless”.

President Cyril Ramaphosa is believed to be considering her nomination. Marks did not respond to requests for comment.

organisation by Israel and much of the West, is not even mentioned. No surprises from South Africa here.

Second, the statement hopes for “no renewed escalation in Gaza or in any of the occupied Palestinian territories”. Does it mean the West Bank? East Jerusalem? The Golan Heights? Some see all of Israel as illegitimately occupying “Palestine”, the entire area from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. This vagueness plays into that narrative.

Third, the statement is consistent with South Africa’s long-held support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that peace negotiations must resume. But it never mentions that the state of Israel should be a Jewish state, rejecting all notions of an ethnic-based political system.

Fourth, it calls for “peace and harmony” between Israel and “an independent, sovereign Palestinian state, based on the 4 June 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital”. These “borders”, really the ceasefire lines on the eve of the Six-Day War, would certainly need to be negotiated in any bilateral settlement. Decades of United States-led proposals have advocated “land swaps” to incorporate the major Jewish settlement blocs currently in the West Bank into any redrawn Israeli frontiers. The two-state solution is increasingly remote, though. Even US President Donald Trump has said that the parties themselves must choose two states or one state.

Finally, Dirco roundly rejects the American recognition of a united Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

The tone may be more tempered than the vicious broadside delivered against Israel in May over the Gaza-fence violence, but ultimately, South Africa’s views on the conflict, who is to blame, and the means of resolution have not changed in substance.

• Steven Gruz is an analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs.

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# Jewish community in public protest against sexual abuse

JORDAN MOSHE

Energetically brandishing placards, demonstrators took a decisive stand against abuse in our community on Wednesday afternoon.

Encouraged by the hooting of passing cars, taxis, buses, and trucks, members of the Jewish community gathered at the roadside in Sandrigham to take a stand against sexual abuse in our community, and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

The demonstration was organised by Koleinu and Shalom Bayit, both local organisations committed to fighting abuse. “Today, we take a stand for men, women, and children who face abuse and tell them that they are not alone,” said Rozanne Sack, the Co-Director of Koleinu. “We need to break the silence which surrounds cases of abuse even when it is not popular to do so.”

The decision to gather in public on the side of George Avenue was of particular significance. Said Wendy Hendler, the Co-Director of Koleinu: “When people heard about what we were doing, many of them said we would regret drawing such attention to abuse in our community. People said to me that I should expect a backlash for bringing our community into disrepute.

“This makes me very angry, because we need to be open about these things in order to be the light to other

faith-based communities. We are the pathfinders who are determined to tackle the silence, and make sure that these things do not happen.”

Nicholas Ingel, a survivor of abuse, said that it resulted in a loss of his sense of self-worth.

“I found myself sitting on the couch with a gun in my mouth on many occasions,” he recalls. “I asked Hashem for strength to pull the trigger, and at the same time, begged him to help me prevent myself from taking my life. I strove to give my life value, and find something to live for.”

Aged three when his parents divorced, Ingel moved to Cape Town with his mother, and fell prey to a string of abusers while there. “When I was six, my mom took to sending me to spend nights and weekends with gay friends she had at the time. They raped me. And, after going through that ordeal, I stood in the locked room while they slept, looked out the window, and thought to myself, what have I done that is so terrible that has caused my mother to put me through this experience?”

It was after suffering this trauma repeatedly that Ingel said he lost all understanding of love, trust, and respect. The cycle of abuse was perpetuated when Ingel’s mother sent him to a group of drug dealers in town. “My mom killed herself when I was sixteen,” he says, “so I’ve never been able to ask her why she sent me to these places. Part of me wants to believe that she used the drugs, and didn’t send me there because she



wanted me to go through what I did.

“Those dealers raped me. A six-year-old boy was penetrated by 10 individual men. I couldn’t understand what I had done to have to endure it.”

Ingel suffered abuse for four years, took to drinking at the age of nine, and at 36, was on the brink of taking his life. It was at this point that he chose to sober up, speak out, and make an effort to regain control of his life. Still, the trauma he underwent lingers today.

“Until today, I cannot understand love,” he says. “I’ve been married and divorced, and I doubt I’ll marry again. I cannot comprehend what it means to trust or to love as a consequence of abuse.”

He stressed that initiatives to break the silence early and support victims are almost inexpressibly vital. “People need to know that abuse kills. Someone has to be the one to stand up and prevent the cycle of abuse from turning. Being a victim

of abuse does not allow anyone to abuse someone else in turn, and is no excuse whatsoever.”

Like Ingel, Olivia Jasriel took years to break her silence and speak out against her abuser. “It took me 34 years to come out and speak,” she said. “Children feel that they will not be believed. They keep their trauma to themselves for years and harm themselves more.”

Abused by her tennis coach, Bob Hewitt, when she was in high school, Jasriel saw him brought to justice and sentenced to prison for eight years a few years ago. Having served two years in jail, however, Hewitt believes that he has served enough time, and is pushing for release.

“My trauma is ongoing,” says Jasriel. “I lost my family because of that man. He convinced them that I was lying and they testified against me in court. They still don’t believe me today. Why should he be allowed to return to his family when he has

made sure that I will never have a family again?”

Jasriel explained that though Hewitt has admitted his guilt in court, he remains unrepentant, and has yet to offer an apology. “He doesn’t believe he belongs in prison because his act was not committed with violence,” she says. “If he is released, I am terrified he will find me and kill me.”

In spite of her fear, and her belief that the justice system is failing children who fall victim to abuse, Jasriel is determined to make sure that her abuser remains behind bars. “I will not let him go home again,” she says. “I will keep saying he cannot and will not stop. People like him deserve to stay in prison.”

Other people who spoke at the protest were child development and protection specialist Luke Lamprecht, psychologist Joanne Zagnoev, and Parktown Boys hostel matron Mariolette Bossert.

Hendler closed the protest by stressing that as a Jewish community, we could not allow misguided compassion for the perpetrators to blind us to the severity of their actions.

“Our drive to be compassionate trips us up,” she said. “We believe in kindness to the extent that we allow ourselves to be put at risk in our attempts to show compassion to perpetrators and excuse their behaviour. We need to equip ourselves to be sensible.”



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# A small protest that brought out the worst in us

Two Herzlia Grade 9 boys went down on one knee in front of their parents and their school during the Israeli national anthem at their annual prize giving. They were clearly protesting the government of the state of Israel. Those are the facts.

What happened after this totally belies belief, and brought out the worst in our community, some of whom said horrendous things, including making ugly threats.

Some, determined to shame the boys on social media, even named them, while the school was trying to avoid this. People demanded that the school expel these boys, and teach them a “real lesson”. The boys were called traitors, BDS-poster boys, even anti-Semites.

Others called the school weak, an insult to education, and so the name-calling progressed. And that was just from our own community.

As Jew was at Jew’s throat, the mainstream media was having a field day, turning this into something it certainly was not. It created a story about a school that was oppressing young boys who dared to voice their disapproval of a “pariah nation”. The whole thing is ridiculous, unfair, and untrue.

These are boys – yes, boys – of no more than 15. They are impressionable, very bright, and very eager to make a statement about their pro-Palestinian views at an unashamedly Zionist school.

This is not the first time they have aired their views at the school. They have been known to challenge the school, even visiting speakers on the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

These are strong-willed and determined youngsters, and as much as they wanted to cause a scene, I do not believe they had an inkling that it would cause what has become an international furore. Even Jewish ANC veteran and anti-Israel activist, Ronnie Kasrils, put pen to paper in support of the boys and against Herzlia, and BDS-supporters did so too. As we put this newspaper to bed on Wednesday night, Kasrils was discussing this with an equally one-sided journalist on national television.

Did Herzlia actually do anything wrong, or is it just trying to give its children a good education? Did it make mistakes? I believe it is doing the best it can under fire. Is it an excellent school? Absolutely! Is it a Zionist-based school? Absolutely!

Should its pupils be allowed to question? Yes! Should they publically embarrass the school? No! However, is taking the knee at a prize giving in the presence of parents embarrassing the school publicly? It may not have been when it happened.

However, this all happened after a week in which Hamas fired 460 rockets at Israel and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to a ceasefire, which caused a fair amount of consternation in the Jewish state.

The South African media virtually ignored the mini-war in the Middle East, which irked the community no end. Unsurprisingly! Then, the national media picked up the school story, which in reality was an in-community issue, and certainly was not national news material.

But the two school boys taking the knee at their prize giving turned into a huge story, and as it grew in the media, so the community got angrier and angrier on social media.

Whether or not the boys did anything wrong, nothing they did deserves to cause this crisis.

People are talking about taking their children out of Herzlia if the school doesn’t expel these boys. Seriously! Is this not overreacting?

This is the same school that has given their children an excellent education to date, and hasn’t changed an iota. Where are you going to take them that they can still get the kind of Jewish education you want them to have?

I feel for the leadership of Herzlia. It soon became very obvious that they were damned if they did, and damned if they didn’t. That is quite simply because there are two sides within the community now, and they are both rabid.

We have all overreacted! We have taken this too far!

However, this is a Jewish communal issue. It impacts on all of us. We really need to discuss at exactly what point questioning Israel is taking it too far? Is it acceptable to question Israel, or should we blindly support whatever Israel does?

We certainly didn’t blindly support the South African government. In fact, our chief rabbi led us in protesting the rule of former President Jacob Zuma. Israelis certainly don’t blindly follow the Israeli government. In fact, there are so many political opinions there, it is hard to find two people who agree.

So, how much can we question what the Israeli government does, and still remain within the confines of South African Zionism? Is it okay to disagree with something the Israeli government does, or does that make us anti-Zionist?

These are questions we need to address as a community. This incident has highlighted the fact that we are extremely emotional about Israel, and have very strong, but differing views. We need to thrash that out between us, and find a way of doing this in a discursive, not destructive and ugly manner.

Is it a national story? I don’t believe so. These children were not abused. They were not shut down. They were not expelled, nor were they harassed at school.

Herzlia was upset with their behaviour because it shone a potentially negative light on the school. I don’t blame it for being upset, because it didn’t do Herzlia any favours. Nobody wants the school they love, and the reputation they work so hard at building, to be taken in a bad light.

So, what do we do now?

We back off Herzlia, and let it get on with teaching children, something it does extremely well. We bring in experts to work with the schools to give them the bigger picture of what goes on in the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

Even after that, it is possible that not every scholar or his parent is going to agree with how the Israeli government deals with the situation. Do we then ostracise them because they have different views? Or do we agree to differ – as long as they respect our right to hold our views? I would hope that we are big enough to follow the latter path.

We Jews have enough enemies. We don’t need to make enemies of our own people because they disagree with our views. Look around you, we all differ in some of our opinions.

Let’s rather live and let live, and work together against our real enemies, not our brothers and sisters with different views.

Before I sign off, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the SA Jewish Board of Deputies for inviting the *SA Jewish Report* to go with it to meet the minister of state security, who we wrote about last week. It is by virtue of the board’s ongoing relationship with the minister that we had this access.

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



# Netanyahu fighting to maintain coalition government

For most of this year, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been trying to get his coalition partners to agree to early elections. These would have helped him capitalise on his Likud party – and particularly his own – strong showing in the polls.

Early elections would have pre-empted the corruption indictments against him that are now expected in the first quarter of next year. If he is charged, there will inevitably be calls for him to step down. Indeed, a new four-year-mandate instead of the slightly less than-one year he currently holds would have served him well.

This week, however, Netanyahu was the one urging coalition partners not to jump ship. So what changed? In one word – Gaza. And, more specifically, Netanyahu’s insistence that Israel agree to a truce even after Hamas launched about 460 rockets and mortars at the Jewish state in less than 48 hours. This was the heaviest barrage since the two sides fought a war in 2014.

To his right-wing support base, the prime minister’s behaviour was indecisive and weak; many wanted him to return fire with fire.

His tough-guy image took a hammering and as a result, Likud has dipped in the polls. The best thing now, Netanyahu knows, is for time to pass so that his supporters can forget their frustration and disappointment.

Hence, ironically, it’s Netanyahu who now needs an election to take place as late as possible. It’s not by chance that he’s given himself the defence-minister portfolio, the first time ever in his long political career.

He must re-convince the Israeli public of his security credentials in coming months as the country heads towards elections.

Former Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman played to public anger by last week announcing his resignation in protest against Israel’s acceptance of the informal truce with Hamas. It’s the second time in less than five years that Lieberman has resigned over Israel’s action – or as he argues, inaction – in Gaza. The last time was on the eve of the previous Gaza war when, then as foreign minister, he complained that Israel’s reaction to rocket attacks from Gaza had been weak and insufficient.

But Lieberman was banking on other parties following suit. For a few days it looked like they would, and Netanyahu’s coalition government hung in the balance.

Lieberman’s party, Yisrael Beytenu, has been flailing for some time, and while its popularity spiked in the immediate aftermath of his resignation, it’s likely to be short-lived.

Holding new elections as soon as possible would have been best for him, but other coalition partners are remaining on board. Naftali Bennett who heads the third largest coalition party, the Jewish Home party, initially issued Netanyahu with an ultimatum to make him defence minister or he’d follow in Lieberman’s footsteps.

Bennett has long criticised Netanyahu’s reluctance to respond more forcefully to Gaza rocket attacks, and supports ground incursions into the strip.

But Netanyahu’s answer was that he intended to keep the defence portfolio for himself. That is in addition to the foreign and health ministries he currently heads. “In the light of the critical challenges currently facing the State of Israel... We are in a particularly complex security situation. At times like these, you do not overthrow a government. It’s irresponsible,” said Netanyahu. Bennett

**DATELINE:  
MIDDLE EAST**

*Paula Slier*



eventually capitulated.

Explaining his about-face, Bennett argued that it was not a time for party politics, and in the interests of Israel’s security, he would stay in the coalition. However, opposition parliamentary members claim Bennett’s political aspirations were at play. Some even suggest a private deal was cut between the two leaders. It’s no secret Bennett has his eye on the premiership (as do so many other politicians).

Still, Bennett didn’t agree to stay in the coalition without a price. He’s likely to push for more right-wing legislation and action in coming weeks, especially as he feels the government has lost its right-wing character.

“The security situation today is not more dangerous than what it was a few months ago,” he said. However, he criticised the government for waiting too long to take legal action because it was afraid to be caught in legal entanglements.

He cited the ongoing evacuation of the illegal Arab outpost of Khan al-Ahmar, legislation to stop the generous salaries paid to terrorists by the Palestinian Authority, and the demolition of terrorists’ homes. In all three cases, Bennett is demanding action.

In a nutshell, Bennett feels the government is hesitant in its actions, and thus emboldens Hamas and Hezbollah. “What Netanyahu describes as ‘responsibility’ is often perceived by our enemies as hesitancy, and the line between the two is thin,” he said.

Certainly, now would not be the right time for the coalition to fall apart. Hamas is watching Jerusalem’s every move, and is celebrating Lieberman’s resignation as a success in potentially toppling Netanyahu’s fourth government.

Observers are concerned that self-satisfied Palestinian leaders could embark on further military provocation against Israel. What will



happen in the future will in part be determined by Hamas’ behaviour. Will it abide with the ceasefire or continue with incendiary kites and rockets, forcing Israel – read Netanyahu – to respond?

The prime minister is trying to avoid this, not least because of the lives that will be lost, but also because, he argues, it’s unlikely that a long-term peace will follow. The Gaza front will haunt his political chances as the country gears up for another parliamentary election.

Elections are formally set for November 2019. They could conceivably take place any time between late February and early November. That’s a span of just nine months, but in Israeli politics, nine months can be a lifetime. In the meantime, Netanyahu’s government will continue to cling to a one-seat majority in the 120-seat Knesset (Parliament), and the prime minister will continue to face coalition crises – the last of which is certainly far from over.



# Israel’s ties blossom with Brics – bar one



**OPINION**

*Steven Gruzd*

The Brics bloc – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – has three billion people, and covers a quarter of the world’s land mass. These emerging powers are already challenging fading American and European dominance on the global stage. Why have four of them deepened their economic, political and military links with Israel, with South Africa notably out of step?

For one thing, they don’t let their sympathy for the Palestinians scupper a good deal. For another, they recognise Israeli superiority in fields like cyber security, technological innovation, and counter-terrorism. After the Cold War, they’ve let pragmatism prevail.

Tellingly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to attend the inauguration of Brazil’s President-elect, Jair Bolsonaro, next January. Netanyahu has visited China three times, India once, and Russia six times (and met President Vladimir Putin nine times since September 2015).

He’s never visited South Africa.

Geographical and ideological distance made Israel’s ties with Brazil relatively weak. The left-leaning Brazilian government recognised Palestinian statehood in 2010 (balanced by then-President Lula da Silva’s trip to Israel that year). Brazil condemned “disproportionate use of force” by Israel in Gaza in 2014, and temporarily recalled its ambassador.

The right-wing Bolsonaro, dubbed the “tropical Trump” for his crassness, political

incorrectness, and nationalist views, however, is openly pro-Israel. He promised to downgrade Palestinian diplomatic representation and move Brazil’s embassy to Jerusalem (but fudged after Arab outrage). He plans to visit Israel, the United States, and Chile on his first presidential trip.

While Joseph Stalin’s Soviet Union initially supported Israeli statehood, anticipating a socialist ally, it became virulently anti-Zionist during the Cold War. After the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics collapsed in 1991, more than one million Russian Jews made aliyah.

Russian is Israel’s third most spoken language, and Putin clearly considers Israel part of the Russophone world. The countries have closely co-ordinated interventions in Syria since September 2015, and will move beyond a recent incident in which Russia blamed Israel for the deaths of 15 airmen. Russian public support for the Palestinians (and Iran) has not stopped close collaboration with Israel on drone purchases, two-way tourism, oil, nuclear technology, and innovation.

India opened its Tel Aviv embassy in 1992, but low-key relations predated that. It feared losing its leadership in the developing world by openly embracing Israel during the Cold War. Today, India is Israel’s biggest customer for military equipment, and they share intelligence and conduct joint military training. Relations flourished after President Narendra Modi’s election in 2014. He visited Israel in 2017, and Netanyahu went to India in 2018. There is considerable co-operation in the fields of agriculture, biotechnology, information and communications technology, innovation and science, oil and gas production, space

exploration, and tourism. India, too, is simultaneously pro-Palestinian, and extremely close to Israel.

Connections with China dwarf these, however. About 26 years after formal relations commenced, China is now Israel’s second largest trading partner. Israeli exports to China in the first half of 2018 were \$2.8 billion (R39.3 billion), up 80% year-on-year. Since 2016, Israel and China have eased visa regulations, started direct flights, and undertaken hundreds of joint research projects and student exchanges.

market, and less overt ideological pressure around the Palestinian question. Israel seeks to balance its over-reliance on the US, which has blocked some deals in weapons and technology being sold to China.

South Africa’s souring relations with Israel are well documented: it includes a threatened diplomatic downgrade, the recall of the ambassador, and a constant, vicious, one-sided invective against Israel.

South Africa pushed the Palestinian issue when it hosted the 10th Brics Summit in

July. The Johannesburg declaration says, “Ultimately, lasting peace can only be established through broad-based, inclusive national dialogue with due respect for the independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of each of the countries of the region... We reiterate the need for renewed diplomatic efforts to achieve a just, lasting, and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict...



China has lapped up Israeli technology in solar energy, medical devices, cyber-security, irrigation and desalination, robotics, weaponry, and agriculture. China invests heavily in Israeli start-ups. More than 1 000 operate in China.

And, China is doing big things in Israel. It is refurbishing Haifa port, and has plans to build a high-speed rail link between the Mediterranean and Eilat, an alternative to the Suez Canal.

China’s growing role as a rising world power has drawn Israel closer. Jerusalem sees Beijing as an alternative to Europe, with a massive

through negotiations with a view to creating an independent, viable, territorially contiguous Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel.”

Fairly mild and sensible stuff. Perhaps the other Brics tempered the declaration’s tone? Now, if only they could convince South Africa what it really stands to lose by shunning the Jewish state.

• Steven Gruzd is an analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs.







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# Kneeling down leaves uproar in its wake

TALI FEINBERG

“Regardless of the pros and cons of the specific situation, Herzlia has to be commended for creating an environment where kids feel empowered enough to voice their concerns in public,” tweeted Piet Viljoen this week, one of the lone voices that did not pick a side in the “taking the knee” incident at Herzlia Middle School.

His comment came after two Grade 9 pupils at Herzlia Middle School were disciplined for kneeling down in protest during the singing of Hatikvah at their prize-giving, leading to an international media storm.

In a voice note made public, one of the boys said they decided to protest because, “we don’t support currently what Israel is doing... It’s like in America, when you have NFL players who take a knee during the anthem, they support what the anthem stands for, but they don’t believe the country is fulfilling those ideas, so they can’t stand for it.”

He also said he hoped their actions would bring people more towards the centre of politics, and create greater willingness to talk about Israel’s challenges instead of it being a taboo topic.

But, in many ways, the incident has deepened the fissures in a Cape Town Jewish community that is hurt, angry, and on the defensive.

Said Professor Adam Mendelsohn, Director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town: “The episode has exposed existing fault lines, confirming that this is a community that no longer has a consensus view about Israel. But in doing so, it has furthered divisions. We are living in an age of polarisation, social media, and protest by gesture or spectacle. The first and last of these are not new, but all have combined in ways that are distinct to the present moment.”

This means that views are being expressed on social media instead of in safe spaces for debate. “Social media is rarely a place for nuanced discussion, persuasion, and listening. It is good at confirming views and cementing positions. Yes, some good may come of it all, but it will take lots of work from here on out to produce those positives,” he said.

Indeed, social media erupted in response to the pupils’ gesture and the school’s actions. On the one extreme, community member David Hersch said on Facebook, “Expel them and let the shame follow them for the rest of their lives. Their fellow pupils should be encouraged to shun them and their parents as well.”

On the other extreme, many expressed support. Former Herzlia Head Boy Daniel Mackintosh tweeted that he “beamed with pride to read about the #HerzliaTwo, who demonstrated a key Jewish value – having an ‘argument for the sake of heaven’ – for truth. Their bravery is an example to us all on our collective obligation to oppose the #Occupation – well done!”

A hundred Herzlia alumni who opposed the punishment of the pupils signed a letter, saying, “The school’s action betrays the best values of the Jewish tradition, and is a flagrant violation of the students’ constitutional rights to freedom of expression and opinion.” They asked, “Would the line be crossed if the learners had knelt during Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrica to protest against state capture?”

Herzlia alumnus Adrienne Jacobson wrote a letter in response, saying, “As a proud Herzlia alumnus, I would like to put my name together with my fellow Herzlia alumni family to a different letter. One that speaks of support, unity, and love for our school which has faced an unprecedented, gruelling challenge this past week. We salute you, Geoff Cohen, the trustees, and the board of governors for your fair leadership and consideration of all factors during this tough time, and for your modelling of our Herzlia values. You have acted with

integrity in accordance with the ethos of the school and its values, and we stand together with you.”

In a statement, United Herzlia Schools (UHS) emphasised that it stood for free speech. “UHS emphasises respect and dignity for all... UHS is an academic institution that strives to develop critical thinking as part of its educational offering. We are fortunate to live in a country with a progressive Constitution that allows for people to express their diverse opinions. This should always be conducted with respect for the dignity of others, including those who wish to participate in the school’s traditions and heritage.”

University of Cape Town’s Professor Deborah Posel echoed the need for raising children to be critical thinkers. Regarding the two boys, she said, “They’re opening up important questions about Jewish schools, and are doing so well-informed, from the inside. There are, no doubt, other pupils who would disagree, but that in itself is an opportunity to open things up. Let’s hear these articulate young people. They have important things to say. We may agree or disagree, but they merit the respect given to thoughtful interlocutors in controversial and contentious discussions.”

While the debate rages, school life is carrying on as normal and it appears the actions that these two pupils took are actually insignificant in the bigger picture of school life.

According to South African Zionist Federation Chairman Rowan Polovin, “There is absolutely nothing heroic, noble, or smart about a Jew who kneels in protest whilst Hatikvah is sung. It simply means that they are Jews with trembling knees, afraid of standing up for their own people,” he wrote in a blog post that has since gone viral.

“The episode has exposed existing fault lines, confirming that this is a community that no longer has a consensus view about Israel.”

“If they have legitimate criticism of Israel, they ought to stand up and voice it in the appropriate places. Do not falsely claim that there is no space to do so when there are multiple spaces created specifically for discussion and debate. Treat those with whom you disagree respectfully, and they will listen to you respectfully,” he added.

Writing from Israel, Herzlia alumnus Mia Levitt Frank, asked, “Does singing the anthem mean one identifies with a government? I hope not. As an Israeli, I sing Hatikvah with pride,

## Veronica Phillips’ story of survival

TALI FEINBERG

Holocaust survivor Veronica Phillips, aged 92, was very nearly rescued during the Holocaust. As an 18-year-old girl living with her family in Budapest, she was almost saved by the efforts of diplomats like Raoul Wallenberg and Carl Lutz, who issued passes to Jews living in that city.

Though her family managed to get passes, they were destroyed by Arrow Cross thugs in the street, sealing the family’s fate. Like many Hungarian Jews, Phillips landed up being deported to Ravensbrück.

Most Hungarian Jews were herded into Auschwitz and decimated in record numbers. In fact, one tenth of all the Jews murdered in the Shoah were from Hungary.

Phillips’ story is told in a new feature-length film, *The Secret Survivor*, directed by Johnathan Andrews and made with the United Nations #GetPeaceProject, the Embassy of Switzerland in South Africa, the Embassy of Israel in South Africa, and the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

Phillips, one of the Holocaust survivors to settle in South Africa, has rarely told her story in full before. At the start of the film, she says she does not want to take it with her to her grave, and wants to leave it for future generations.

Slowly, she shares how she lived a carefree and comfortable life as a teenager in Budapest, with her parents and younger brother. The family owned a sweet shop, and Phillips thrived at school. Yet, she describes a dark undercurrent of anti-Semitism that was part of everyday life. For example, she was not allowed to be in the school yearbook because she was Jewish. At other times, she heard classmates saying, “Jews are rats.”

At the same time, because Hungary was allied to Germany for most of the war, its Jews stayed safe while their counterparts in Poland and Lithuania were being massacred. It was only when Hungary was occupied by Nazi Germany during the end of the war that Jews began to be deported.

Meanwhile, Phillips’ father was taken for slave labour for four years – the same fate as many other Jewish men – but he survived. She and her family were made

to move into a tiny flat with another family, part of the ghettoization of Jews, who were forced to live in certain buildings. However, they weren’t cut off from the rest of the city. She and her mother worked in a factory, but were not paid. They also couldn’t access their bank accounts. Survival was hand to mouth.

Then, on 1 December 1944, during the dying days of the war, Phillips and her father were suddenly deported. She describes the harrowing nine-day journey in the cattle cars in great detail, and it is difficult to watch a refined, elderly lady talking about such scenes. Then, in the coldest winter on record, she arrived at Ravensbrück, a concentration camp mainly for women that had by then also become a death camp.

The chaos of these moments is reflected in the way Phillips tells the story in the film. In spite of the infamous organisation levels of the Nazis, by then, Ravensbrück was a disordered, hellish place that was left to its own devices. Phillips was housed in a giant tent with thousands of other women. Most did not understand the language. There was no food, no toilets, and no medicine. A gas chamber had been built, and Phillips recalls how the smell of burning flesh will never leave her.

She was then taken on a “death march” – the Nazis last act to destroy the Jews of Europe. The way Phillips ultimately survived is revealed in the documentary, and the moment when she is reunited with her family is truly heartbreaking, but hopeful.

Phillips story is boosted by fascinating historical commentary from experts, including Tali Nates, the Director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre. They give insight into how intense the Holocaust was in the final months of the war, and how important the Final Solution was to the Nazis, even as the Third Reich was

and I hope for a different government. I wish for a society more liberal, more respectful of others, more pluralistic.”

As a psychotherapist, she goes on to explain that the term “identified patient” used in family therapy refers to one family member unconsciously selected to represent a problem in the family system. In organisations, the term is used where an individual or group signifies a problem or complex issue in the system. A courageous family or organisation will conduct deep reflection, and raise questions about their own responsibility.

“Following this idea, the recent incident invites questions to be raised by the leadership of the school. What does it mean to be a Jewish school in the diaspora? Who and what does the school represent? What does it mean to support Israel? How are all streams of Judaism represented in curriculum and activities? How is the concept and complexity of a ‘Jewish democratic state’ addressed? In what way are differences of opinions and dialogue practically encouraged and celebrated in the school? Where and how does social equality play a role in the organisational culture of the school? What are teachers committed to?

She concludes, “I sincerely hope the school as an organisation will grab this opportunity to conduct a deep and open inquiry around the values, norms, and ideologies practiced on a daily basis.”



imploding.

We learn about the tragedy of Hungary’s Jews, as diplomats desperately tried to save them in the face of relentless deportations to Auschwitz, and how so many more could have survived had the war ended earlier.

In a moving comment from Martin Schäfer (South Africa’s German Ambassador), we hear how his generation still feels guilt and responsibility for the Holocaust, and that he “bows his head in shame” to all Holocaust survivors.

Phillips survived, but the Holocaust has haunted her whole life. She suffered eight miscarriages, was never able to have children, and still holds feelings of vengeance in her heart. She never reveals that she is Jewish if she can avoid it. She did not share some aspects of her story for most of her life, even with her husband.

Yet, she managed to continue contributing to society, especially as a brilliant microbiologist and geneticist at Brunel University. She eventually moved to South Africa, where she was a lecturer in microbiology at the University of the Witwatersrand for 20 years.

Her final message is that “she will forgive, but she will not forget”, and she implores her audience to “be human”.

• *The Secret Survivor* is showing at Ster-Kinekor cinemas in November.



# Albie Sachs calls for more inclusivity on land



Albie Sachs

## TALI FEINBERG

Retired Justice Albie Sachs describes land expropriation without compensation as both a “hot potato,” and a “nettle”. But he is glad that at last the country is grasping it, he says. It had to be confronted sooner or later.

Indeed it is being confronted head-on, with Parliament’s joint constitutional review committee formally resolving last Thursday to recommend the amendment of section 25 of the constitution to allow for expropriation of land without compensation.

This means that the first “hurdle” to expropriation without compensation has officially been passed. “That decision will provide the electioneering ticket for political parties ahead of the 2019 poll. But an actual constitutional amendment will emerge only well after the 2019 elections,” writes Marianne Merten in the *Daily Maverick*.

Although Sachs was one of the writers of South Africa’s progressive Constitution, he has always been open to the fact that “the Constitution should be a document that in a principled and comprehensive way recognised the need to correct the systemic and continuing injustices of the past”. He said this last year in a lecture presented on the centenary of Oliver Tambo’s birth.

“This meant that it should not entrench any specific economic model nor be used as a mechanism for freezing the status quo. Rather, the Constitution should leave it to the democratically elected Parliament to find the best way to achieve substantive equality for the formerly oppressed people in their daily lives,” he continued.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, Sachs confirmed he still stands by this statement. For Sachs, “the process has been put on the table in a manner that is inclusive and thoughtful, where the objective is to deal finally with a huge historical injustice that has led to other historical injustices.

“Second, it’s being done in a manner in which everybody participates, bringing the nation together to find a solution, and third, in a manner that aims to ensure that in achieving that solution, food production is maintained, the economy isn’t hindered, and a new class of highly productive African family farmers and entrepreneurs emerges,” he says.

To his mind, the challenge will be to

pass on the skills, financial support, and know-how to enhance the economy. In this regard, agribusiness has a big role to play.

Sachs says most of the physical farming in this country is done by black people, but now more knowledge should be added to that skills set. “This is not to destroy that knowledge, but to share it – then everyone benefits.”

In addition, he says many companies are finding land that they are not using. “This could be utilised, because the biggest pressure is for affordable housing in urban areas, so that people can be close to their places of work.”

Sachs knows of farms where black people have lived for generations, where their forebears are buried, and where they have a direct and strong connection to the soil. “I could see a solution where they get a growing equity share in land they’ve worked, while the existing farm owner stays on in the farmhouse, imparting skills, developing a shared ownership where both sides have an interest in the productivity of the farm.

“The most important thing is that everybody is involved in a solution, and it is done according to the law in a transparent and public way. It could give a huge lift-off to the country. It is very clear that those leading the process want to avoid land grabs like happened in Zimbabwe. That is not on the agenda at all, it is not what South Africans want. We have learnt what happens when something is not inclusive and benefits a few people with strong state connections,” he says.

Sachs recalls working with Cyril Ramaphosa as the country made the transition to democracy. “I found him to be absolutely outstanding in his vision, style, and thoughtfulness. He encourages people to challenge him, and he is a strong consensus seeker. He has a broad vision, including everyone in discussing and preparing for the future,” he says.

He believes that that the future is bright, and that South Africa could well be on the verge of new breakthroughs, in spite of the fear many are feeling: “How many people in the world felt that we could move from the racist oppression of apartheid to an open, democratic society based on equal rights for all? Yet, we South Africans did it. We spoke to each other. People will find that the open invitation now to participate and make a contribution is very rewarding.”



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Photo: Reuters/Amir Cohen

**Israelis run for shelter as a siren sounds during a rocket attack at the southern city of Sderot**

In the wake of the recent rocket attacks in Israel, we are appealing to South Africans to please donate to our current Bomb Shelter Project. Kim Scop, our new executive fundraiser, has set a goal during this miracle month of Chanukah to raise enough money to put up at least 8 bomb shelters in Sderot, Ofaqim and Ashkelon – as close as 10km from Gaza City.

These bomb shelters enable Jewish people to reach safety within the critical 15 second period.

Even with the intervention of the Iron Dome, adults, children and seniors are affected with PTSD by the extremely loud explosions and constant siren alerts.

The Jewish National Fund of South Africa (JNF SA) partners with The Keren Kayemet (KKL) of Israel whose staff are on the ground to directly support the vulnerable and affected residents and interact with the children in a fun way to reduce their trauma and stress.

It costs in the region of R126 000-00 for a small bomb shelter and R590 000-00 for a bigger bomb shelter. Individuals who purchase a single bomb shelter are acknowledged with a plaque in their name on their bomb shelter.

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# Jews make gigabyte mark on ‘techpreneurship’

MIRAH LANGER

Could the next Google come from Glenhazel? A fresh Facebook be conceived in Camps Bay or a super-smartphone devised in Sandton?

With Jewish South Africans increasingly turning to the technology industry as a career choice, the digital dimension has become a hotspot of *nachas* (pride and happiness).

The SA Jewish Report spoke to a number of local Jewish “techpreneurs”, as well as industry expert Arthur Goldstuck, about some of the trends in this innovative space.

Goldstuck, who runs World Wide Worx, a technology market research company, says that while interest in technology-based careers is on the increase in general, the demands of the job resonates with values common in many Jewish communities.

“Jewish families tend to value both education and entrepreneurialism,” he says.

“The technology field lends itself powerfully to both, especially as emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the internet of things places higher demands than ever before on information technology education.”

For Darren Cohen, an associate partner at Business Science Corporation (BSC), the popularity of techpreneurship is linked to how “Jewish people have always been creative problem solvers”.

“In the face of adversity and many challenges throughout our history, Jewish people have responded with adaptability and innovation,” he says.

In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, Cohen suggests that it therefore, is no surprise that Jewish people, with their entrepreneurial spirit, are contributing to rapid growth in this space.

Rodney Kuhn, the co-founder of a Johannesburg-based technology start-up, adds another facet to ponder when it comes to Jewish interest in techpreneurship.

“Entrepreneurs, particularly in tech, are drawn toward an ideal that is intrinsically Jewish – we want to create and bring meaning into the world but we also want to be free citizens and live our lives courageously without any fear of persecution. In addition we are comfortable with risk and uncertainty,” he explains.

Certainly, on a global scale, Jewish people have been behind some of the greatest technology success stories. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin are all the ultimate Shabbat table guests.

Goldstuck lists a number of other industry greats who might once have been barmy boys saving up to buy a starter computer.

These include Larry Ellison of Oracle; Michael Dell of Dell Technologies; as well as Ehud Shabtai, Amir Shinar, and Uri Levine, the founders of Waze; and Dov Moran, generally regarded as the inventor of the USB memory stick.

Goldstuck believes the potential exists for their South African counterparts to make digital waves.

In particular, in South Africa, “we are seeing a large number of Jewish innovators in areas like blockchain [digital currency] and fintech [financial technology]”, he notes.

Yet, Calabash co-founders, Leanne Stillerman Zabow and Kyla Maimon Edinburg are proof of just how original techpreneurial projects can be. The two clinical psychologists noticed a gap in the market for technology to be used to assist professionals to rack up Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points.

“We started an online platform where health professionals can earn CPD points by watching video lectures online.”

While initially, they focused on producing video lectures for psychologists and other mental-health experts, they are now expanding to a website that shares content for other professionals as well.

“This work... allows for sharing of knowledge in a manner which transcends the constraints of time and geographical location,” says Zabow.

Ultimately, the two hope their work will contribute to the growth of an international “learning community”, she says.

For Kuhn, a co-founder of Sortd, an email-based business productivity suite, the ability to transition from a small-scale business to one with a global reach is one of the greatest perks of the job.

Leanne Stillerman Zabow and Kyla Maimon Edinburg

“The strongest businesses like Dropbox or Airbnb just started with one or two people, and those businesses could scale.”

Sortd, started by Kuhn and co-founder Wayne Silbermann, began with the trio scratching their own itch. “We were faced with [the question]: how do we manage this continuous pipeline of emails that stream into your inbox like a firehose that never stops?

“From that, we thought, what could be bigger than trying to solve the world’s email problems?”

Once they had positioned their product as a solution on that scale, “You are immediately positioned in a global ecosystem. You are able to reach out to the greatest thought leaders in tech from around the world. That is what makes it exciting, and also makes it globally competitive.

“The nugget here is that you have to solve problems that are meaningful to you. If they are meaningful to you, it is likely they will be meaningful to other

people around the world,” offers Kuhn.

Goldstuck says that as traditional careers like medicine, law, and business are “disrupted by emerging technologies”, it makes sense that information technology will become an increasingly popular professional path.

“The future of business and society is not a fixed destination. Information technology is a field that will define the future of business as well as the future of work.”

The symbiosis between business needs and technology is encapsulated in Cohen’s work at BSC, in which immersive technologies such as virtual, augmented, and mixed reality are being developed for use in business, particularly for training.

“Because virtual reality (VR) is fully immersive, it offers a more holistic human experience. It appeals to the senses, the mind, and importantly, the emotions.”

“This technology moves people, thereby enhancing key concept retention and evoking behavioural changes.”

A primary focus area for the company has been in safety training – such as for mine workers. However, it has begun branching in other directions as well.

For example, in partnership with an American nongovernmental organisation, the company is creating a virtual reality tool which teaches meditation and martial art skills, to children suffering from cancer as well as recovering opioid drug users.

“This tool will form part of a clinical trial to assess the changes in neural pathways that immersion in VR and meditation can create.”

While these techpreneurs are already blazing a trail into the future, Goldstuck offers advice to those hoping to follow suit.

“Be fluid and flexible, and ready to change direction at any time,” he advises.

“It is up to individuals to combine [traditional] education with their own exploration of what is possible, and be ready to embrace new ways of doing things – constantly.”

Goldstuck says that in his experience “creativity and curiosity are just as important as information technology skills”.

Zabow and Edinburg’s experience perfectly illustrates this. “When we began working on Calabash, we did not have the required technological skills to realise our vision,” Zabow says. Nevertheless, “we did not wait to have all these ducks in a row; we pushed ahead in our desired direction”.

Soon a software developer noticed their forays into the digital space and came on board offering the required skills. Therefore, their advice to budding techpreneurs is simply, “Be brave, and start somewhere!”

As Kuhn quips, “startups take chutzpah!”

Rodney Kuhn and Wayne Silbermann



# To celebrate Israel, we must see the country, warts and all

JORDAN MOSHE

Seasoned Israel entrepreneur and Middle East expert, Avi Jorisch, brought a message to South African Jews this week, insisting that if we really want to appreciate what Israel has achieved over the past 70 years, we need to see the country for what it is, warts and all.

“Israel has the ability to make the world better for everyone, but if we want to see the full extent of the power that is Israeli innovation, we need to take it as it is, and see it, warts and all,” he told the audience in an exclusive address at Investec on Tuesday morning.

Jorisch was in South Africa for a 36-hour visit this week at the invitation of Aish South Africa. He addressed a dinner on Monday night, and then the Tuesday morning group.

He is a thought leader in exploring global innovation trends, the Arab world, counterterrorism, and illicit finance. He is also a student of Islamic history, and the author of five books.

Speaking about his latest book, *Thou Shalt Innovate: How Israeli Ingenuity Repairs the World*, he reiterated that if we saw the good and bad in Israel, we would be able to celebrate what a marvel the Jewish state is, and help it fulfil its social contract to help the world as an innovator and a think tank.

Although a banker at heart, Jorisch developed an obsession with Israeli tech innovation in 2014, and wanted to get to the heart of its success. “I wasn’t interested in looking at Israel as an economic miracle,” he said. “Jews making money is nothing new. Neither was I concerned with start-ups. I wanted to find mature Israeli tech companies,

and understand how they have made such an impact, and improved the lives of thousands of people.”

By way of explanation, Jorisch explored the various technological projects where Israel has shown innovation in recent years, including in the areas of water and medical technology. On the subject of water, he said, “Israel is the only country in the world that is entirely water independent. Effectively, it is the only water superpower. Thanks to its development of certain innovations, Israel has achieved a unique position that no other country has.” For a country that is 60% desert, Israel’s advancements in water desalination, drip irrigation, waste water recycling, and other such inventions are unquestionably astonishing.

“Sixty percent of Israel’s water is sourced from the ocean,” said Jorisch. “Four hundred desalination plants exist around the world, and Israel built every one of them. Israel also recycles 90% of its waste water. The runner up is Spain, at 18%.” One of the only countries that charges its people the full cost of water without any subsidies, Israel has clearly made a concerted effort to conserve water where possible, and according to Jorisch, this will result in it assuming a prominent position in years to come.

“By 2025, Egypt will run out of water. The same will happen in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. In 20 years, Iran and Israel will become friends because of Israel’s water technology solutions. Arab countries won’t turn to the United States for water, but to Israel. The future for Israel is certainly bright.”

The innovation analyst went on to speak about the country’s medical innovation. “The

average emergency medical response time in the world is 20 minutes,” he says. “For a person who needs immediate attention, this is too long. In Israel, the average is three minutes, and often 90 seconds in major cities.” This is possible only because of United Hatzalah’s Ambucycle network, regular motorcycles used by volunteers throughout Israel to make sure they get to emergencies within the first few minutes.



Other medical marvels include GPS mapping of the brain for precise surgery, robots which can map out human spines for back surgery (and perform it themselves), even exoskeletons that enable quadriplegics to run marathons. What underlines them all, said Jorisch, are three common factors.

“First, Israeli society is diverse,” he says. “Arabs, Christians, Bedouins, and Jews work together towards the same goals. Then, there is the fact that Israel places great emphasis on two of its major institutions, universities and the military. Lastly, the religious or prophetic vision of Israel is what lies at the heart of the culture of innovation.

“For 1 500 years, Jews have said in the aleinu prayer the line, *letaken olam be’malchut Shakai* (improving the state of the world

in the kingdom of G-d). We have a social contract to help the world, and bring light to all its inhabitants. Jews have sought meaning for thousands of years, and have found it in helping others.”

Cautioning that this does not mean that Israel is the most innovative country on the planet, Jorisch stressed that Israel shines by going from nothing to something in spite of its problems. “It’s a start-up nation, not a scale-up nation,” he says. “Israel has its problems: the divide between rich and poor, the Palestinian conflict, and others.

“However, it is in spite of these problems that Israel continues to offer opportunity. When the state was established, Ben Gurion said that the gates of Israel had finally opened to the Jews of the world after 200 years. However, he added that the country now had a privilege and obligation to tackle 20th century problems and do good for the whole world. This lies at the soul of the state.”

Jorisch stressed that for too long, we have been feeding younger generations a narrative of victimhood, and that the time had come for a change of dialogue. “The time has come to tell younger people what they can do to make the world better.” Through innovation, Jews share a drive to do good, and change life for all. We are at a point in time when we are empowered to make the biggest difference ever, and have waited 2 000 years for this opportunity.”

He concluded by saying, “By taking the good and the bad of Israel, by seeing it for what it really is, we can celebrate it, and take it to new heights. Yes, we are concerned about its challenges, but we cannot overlook the things it has done, and continues to do that make us say, ‘Wow!’”

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# Measles outbreak in Israel reignites vaccine debate

TIDI BENBENISTI

The recent measles outbreak in Israel has once again revived the polarising debate surrounding vaccination.

While in many parts of the world measles has been rendered innocuous because of inoculation, there are those who continue to take a stand against it, questioning the efficacy of the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) jab.

Considered one of the leading causes of death in young children, measles is highly contagious and according to the World Health Organisation, can be prevented with a vaccine.

One fatality has been recorded thus far in Israel – the death of an 18-month-old baby from the Neturei Karta community in Jerusalem’s Mea She’arim neighbourhood. Many believe it could have been prevented if the child had been vaccinated.

With a vaccination rate of reportedly 50% or less in the country, the choice not to vaccinate is not uncommon among some members of the ultra-orthodox community in Israel. Although the ultra-orthodox communities in Jerusalem and Bet Shemesh have experienced the largest number of reported measles cases, the outbreak has spread to the centre, in Tel Aviv, and as far north as Sfat.

In early November, 17 children in Williamsburg and Borough Park in Brooklyn, United States, were diagnosed with measles, according to the New York City Department of Health, three having contracted it while on a visit to Israel, it’s been claimed.

In 2018, more than 1 300 cases of measles have been reported in Israel, with many proponents of the vaccine claiming that non-vaccinated children are putting children at risk, calling for them to be barred from playschools. While there is no law forcing parents to vaccinate their children in Israel, the Knesset is to discuss ways to engage parents opposed to vaccination.

In South Africa, the health department advises mothers to vaccinate their children. Vaccines are offered free of charge at all state clinics, not only to protect children, but also the most vulnerable, an overview shared by Johannesburg GP, Dr Sharoni Cohen.

“There are lots of myths around vaccination, and with the advent of social media, these are spread more easily. There is a lot of fear, but it is completely unfounded, particularly regarding the MMR vaccine. About 10 years after it came onto the market in the United Kingdom, a study linked the vaccine to autism, which caused panic and decreased the uptake of the vaccine. But that study has been completely discredited, so there’s no validity to that link at all,” she says.

Cohen says she had her children vaccinated because she has seen firsthand what happens to children who have not been vaccinated. “When I was still working for the state, women who didn’t have easy access to local clinics couldn’t get their kids vaccinated easily, and the children were profoundly ill with illnesses that were vaccine-preventable. Ultimately, I strongly endorse vaccination as a strategy to improve public health because there is no doubt of its efficacy and its long-term goal of keeping all children as safe and healthy as possible.”

But it’s this very point that the anti-vaccination lobby is disputing, including a healthcare practitioner in Johannesburg, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of her position. “I do not vaccinate my children because they have not been tested for the MTHFR (methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase) gene which is present in up to 60% of the population and increases the chances of vaccine-related injuries. I have seen vaccine damaged children and adults. I do not agree



with the use of aborted foetal cells,” she says.

“The vaccines are grown on cancer cells, and the outcome for cancer still unknown. On every vaccine insert, it says it has not been tested for carcinogenic, mutagenic, and fertility effects,” this health practitioner says.

“The vaccine manufacturer has no liability for injuries, which is worrying. Studies are often paid for by manufacturers, which skews the results, and the Centers for Disease Control and Food and Drug Administration hide pertinent information. Vaccines contain glyphosate and are contaminated, for example, by retrovirus HERV-K and SV-40, which have a known association with cancer.

“Vaccine immunity wanes, and the majority of the adult population are not up to date with vaccines, so herd immunity does not exist. Parents inactivate the vaccine by giving fever-reducing medications, so being vaccinated is a false sense of security.

“There are positive benefits to having childhood illnesses if managed correctly. Vaccines bypass the body’s natural barriers, so it creates an overloaded immune response, and a weakened system. Many healthcare professionals do not vaccinate, which is a red flag about safety. My research comes from healthcare professionals, vaccine inserts, and medical journals. Many parents who do not vaccinate, once did, and suffered damage or death of their children, which is worrying,” she says.

A senior paediatrician who has just returned from a visit to Israel, says that vaccination should be reserved for killer diseases. “Today, people vaccinate against anything; they vaccinate against chicken pox, mumps, but those are not diseases that can do anything to you, so you shouldn’t vaccinate. Nobody argues that vaccination is completely harmless, but in the Haredi community, they are against vaccination. There, they have taken it to another extreme. Because, when you live in crowded conditions, measles can spread like wildfire, and it’s a very dangerous disease. Measles is one of the most dangerous and common diseases that affect mankind. It can be fatal. Where we have facilities to combat a disease and combat fatalities, even one death is too many, and we should vaccinate,” he says.

Dr Melinda Suchard, the Head: Centre for Vaccines and Immunology at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), warns about complacency when it comes to measles and vaccination.

“Thanks to the impact of vaccinations, measles deaths have become much less common, although measles remains a major killer, particularly of young children. Our

grandmothers knew people whose children died of measles. We have become complacent, and have forgotten about the dangers. Measles is also one of the later immunisations, given at six and 12 months of age. Sometimes moms go for their six, 10, and 14-week immunisations, and forget to go back for later visits. Some mothers have also been influenced by opinions on social

media or the internet, which may not be reliable sources of information. Reliable information sources should be consulted, such as “Vaccine Information for Mothers and Caregivers”, available on the website of the NICD, [www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za),” she says.

“In South Africa, every child is offered vaccination, but it is not mandatory. I think a law that would make vaccination mandatory might be helpful, unless the parent signs a form refusing vaccination. Patients and their parents have the right to autonomy. I don’t think they should be forced into vaccination against their will. But, most of the time, they are merely hesitant about vaccines rather than opposed to them, and such a law might increase vaccination rates, which would protect the whole community. Schools should also check vaccination cards before Grade 1 or Grade 6. Many children may just have missed certain vaccine doses without their parents being aware that they are not up to date,” says Suchard.

Choosing not to vaccinate should not be a criminal offence, says Cohen, as there are still people who don’t have easy access to healthcare. “If anything, that should be addressed first before any legislation is passed. But I do think parents need to consider very strongly whether they’re being responsible in not vaccinating their children, because the scientific evidence is strong and the experience is there that vaccinations are safe, widely used, prevent disease, and that lives have been saved because of them.”

and really see?

We opened our eyes, and started to stroll. And once we started looking, we saw that every tree was a different shade of green. We saw a red bishop in the reeds, and palm swifts, doves, and pigeons sailing past above us. We heard the wind in the trees, and yes, we heard the roar of the city beneath it all.

But Johannesburg, with all its noisy “cityness”, is also one of the most tree-filled cities in the world. So, we stood in the shade of a Cyprus tree and discussed the uses of trees and their multiple mentions in the Torah.

Trees are accorded a special place both in narratives and in Halacha, from the first mention of their creation, through to the prohibition of cutting down a fruit tree during a time of war. But, do we ever stop to just appreciate what trees do for us on earth?

Life would be impossible without them, and yet sadly, most of the time we’re too busy to appreciate and enjoy them. In other words, we’re too busy to stop and smell the roses.

So, here’s a challenge for those of us in the urban jungle: step outside your house, take a walk down the road, stand under the leafy shade of a tree, watch a bird flit past, and take a deep breath of that oxygen (made for you by an obliging tree). Open your eyes, and breathe in the world!

## Glenhazel park walk helps us to see the Halachic wood for the trees

ILANA STEIN

Last Sunday morning, at the jaw-creaking hour of 06:00, a small group of people took a walk in the park, marvelling at birds, trees, and the deep blue sky before the heat of the day hit.

I’m not talking about the Kruger Park (although that is a walk not to be sneezed at), but rather the park in Glenhazel known as the Japanese Gardens. If you don’t know it, it is a large park just off Northfield Avenue that has a small stream meandering through, flanked on each side by scores of large trees.

The walk was one of the Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning’s latest adventures. Though the academy is about bringing Jewish texts and history into an engaging and adult headspace, it is also about appreciating the world around us, whether natural or cultural. So, it created the Urban Jungle Walk and 15 brave – or just awake – adults and children joined it for a walk through a park in Joburg.

Johannesburg is not a place lauded for its beauty (any Capetonian will tell you this). However, there is beauty wherever you seek it or open your eyes to it. Even in the suburbs, there is much to appreciate. We chose one of the city’s green lungs – in Glenhazel to boot – to make this point. Indeed, everyone realised that it was bigger and had more life in it than they’d realised.

We began by pointing out that within the *brachot* (blessings) that we say each morning, one thanks G-d for “opening the eyes of the blind”. While this may have other meanings, part of that blessing, so close to the beginning of the day, is to remind us that the beauty of the world is indeed all around us. When we walk to shul or step out for a cuppa on our *stoeps*, do we take the time to open our eyes





# Jewish American violinist pays flying visit to Cape Town Philharmonic

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Jewish-Russian-American violinist Yevgeny Kutik was in South Africa for four days this month on a whistle-stop visit, in which he played with the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra and performed at the South African Jewish Museum.

“Usually when I travel to a city, my management finds ways to connect me to the community, both Jewish and general. I’ll teach a master class,” he told the *SA Jewish Report* in a Skype interview after he left.

“It sometimes happens – you fly somewhere, you play a concert or two, you leave, and don’t really get to be a part of the community at all. I’m not a big fan of that.”

It was because he enjoyed playing with the Cape Town Philharmonic two years ago, that he wanted to return to do this again. “I like the orchestra, the musicians, the administration, the city hall,” he says.

Kutik has played with some of the world’s major orchestras. It was, however, his performance of *Oyfn Pripetchik* in front of 10 000 people during the March of the Living in Poland in April that tugged at his heartstrings.

“Doing something so emotional, so personal, in a location that draws up so much memory, history and obviously, pain for the Jewish people, for my heritage, is a very different feeling, much more personal,” he says. “It was an emotion-filled experience.”

The song is about a rabbi teaching his young students the aleph-bet. By the end of the 19th century it was one of the most popular songs of the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe, and as such, it is a major musical memory of pre-Holocaust Europe.

The emotive *Oyfn Pripetchik* was one of the piecwes that he played to a spellbound audience at the SA Jewish Museum on 5 November.

Born in Minsk, Belarus, Kutik immigrated to the United States with his family in 1990 at the age of five. He is now based in Boston.

The 33-year-old hails from a very musical family. His mother was his first teacher when he started learning to play the violin at age five; his father and grandfather were trumpet players in the Belarusian Symphony Orchestra.

“I was surrounded by music from age zero,” he says. “They say I showed an interest in music from a very, very early age. I have to believe them, I don’t remember.”

His parents left the Soviet Union because of the “horrific” anti-Semitism they experienced there. His mother had been fired from a job, being told that the organisation had already reached its quota of Jewish employees.

“Even in pre-school, when [my parents] would take me,” Kutik relates, “they started noticing that the parents of the other children singled me out as the Jewish one. Stuff like that really pushed them over the edge.”

When his family arrived in the US, he says, “we were very much supported by the umbrella organisation that encompasses hundreds of small Jewish communities across the US”.

“What they did for my family personally in the months, weeks, day of our arrival, and years after, was so profound in terms of support in restarting our lives. They really became a second family to me and my family. It’s something I’ve lived with, processed, and been aware of my whole life in everything that I do.

“Being able to travel around for Jewish federations was really the very least I could do to give back. That involved playing for various communities across the country, and telling them about our experience to be living proof of the work that they do, and inspire them to continue.”

With all the distractions of the modern age, are young people still interested in classical music? “Yes,” he says, “but it’s a challenge. It used to be that everybody played a musical instrument for a couple of years in their education. I’m seeing more and more how important that education is, especially elementary education.

“Personally speaking, purely about the US, I find it tragic how in so many communities,

when there are budget cuts, you start with the arts. I know that very well from my mom being a teacher in public school, and seeing communities across the country cut their arts budgets.

“Having said that, I do think that on the flipside – YouTube, the Internet, iTunes – the ease of downloading a fantastic performance has made classical music probably more widely listened to than ever before. It’s effortless now to go and listen to Brahms Symphony No. 2 – it’ll take you literally five seconds, and the move of one muscle in your body.

“More and more people are hearing [classical] music, they’re just hearing it on their own terms. Most people don’t have 40 minutes to listen to a Brahms symphony. Some people have five minutes that they want to spend listening to a part of that symphony, and when they have some more time, they’ll listen to five more minutes of it.

“Music is consumed in a different way. It’s more accessible. It’s our responsibility as artists to find a way to modernise reaching out to these audiences. We have to use the tools at our disposal, new technology, new avenues of



distribution, and new platforms.”

His latest project, *Meditations on Family*, involves the release of very short pieces online on a weekly basis from 18 January. “It will be a living archive devoted to exploring family, memory, heritage, and

immigration, through a series of eight short works.

“The goal is to try and convince people to spend two minutes of their week with me, to absorb the material, and then come back the next week,” he says.



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# No one happy after Shabbat diverts El Al flight to Athens

MARCY OSTER

An El Al plane bound for Israel that was delayed from taking off in New York was diverted to Athens on Friday to allow Shabbat-observant passengers to disembark. That’s what we know for sure. What happened on the plane? That’s another story.

The flight, which had been scheduled to leave John F. Kennedy Airport at 18:30 on Thursday, took off more than five hours late. Bad weather had delayed the arrival of the crew by at least a couple of hours, and then prevented the departure of hundreds of planes. The plane required de-icing more than once as it waited in line to leave.

By 23:30, dozens of passengers on the plane demanded to be allowed to disembark in New York, fearing that they would still be airborne after Shabbat began. The passengers were told to take their seats so the plane could return to the gate and they could disembark, but instead, the plane took off.

Here is where the stories diverge. Some passengers on social media posts accused religious Jewish passengers of being physically and verbally abusive during the flight when they realised that they would not land in Israel in time for Shabbat. Others said El Al flight attendants withheld information and then service to religious passengers during the flight, and did not tell them until several hours later that the plane would land in Athens.

Ben Chafetz, the Client Services Director for 121eCommerce.com, said he was among those who were asked to leave the plane, even if it meant losing his ticket.

“Four hours into the flight, the captain announced that because of the Haredim, the plane would stop in Athens,” Chafetz wrote, using the word for fervently religious Jews. “At which point, all the people who wanted to get off for Shabbos could get off the plane first, and then [and here’s the kicker], all the people who wanted to continue to Israel would also have to get off the plane and go on a different plane from IsrAir to go to Israel.

“What a shame... I wish El Al had told the truth. We were stopping in Athens because El Al made a series of bad calls, and once it landed, it could not depart on Shabbos which is why it needed a non El Al plane to continue to Israel on Shabbos.” The national carrier is not allowed to fly on Shabbat.

The decision to land in Athens angered orthodox and non-orthodox passengers, for different reasons.

“To be very clear, no one was angry at the stewardesses; everyone understood that they did not make the decisions,” Chafetz wrote. “We were asking to speak to the pilot, or someone who could speak for the pilot. Again, there were no attempts to break into the cockpit, there were no physical altercations. Yes, there were some raised voices, but most of the time [I have the videos to prove it], it was secular Israeli passengers who came to yell at the passengers who were concerned about Shabbos that we were ruining their weekend.” Passenger Roni Meital told a

different story in a post on Facebook. “After 24 hours to reach Israel, I am broken, broken mainly because of the lack of respect of people who are observant, who observe tradition and Shabbat, who took this issue a step too far,” Meital wrote.

Meital thanked the flight crew for its patience and tolerance in spite of the aggressiveness of some of the passengers. She wrote that “after six hours of flying, I suddenly heard screaming, and saw a flight attendant crying after she was hit and pushed, amid threats that they would break open the door to the cockpit”.

She also wrote: “I found myself standing and [physically] protecting flight attendants who were crying, and who just wanted to catch their breath after the [violent] behaviour toward them.”

Meital called on others to share her post.

Yehuda Shlezinger, religious affairs reporter for the *Yisrael Hayom* newspaper, was on the flight and said that reports about the behaviour of religious passengers were exaggerated.

“I must confess, when I opened the news sites on Saturday night, and saw the crazy headlines about ‘bad’ Haredim who ‘pushed flight attendants and threatened to break into the cockpit’, I was livid,” he wrote. “Thousands of likes, hundreds of shares, tons of venom on social media, and the news was completely fake. I double-checked the boarding



pass in my pocket to make sure we were talking about the same flight.”

Chafetz went on to describe the beauty of a Shabbat spent in a hotel literally across the street from the airport, with meals provided by the local Chabad.

“Hasidim sat and schmoozed with Zionists, Modox [modern orthodox] sat with black hats... I only use these labels so you can visualise the seating, but there were no labels at this *seuda* [meal]; we sat in true *achdus* [unity],” he wrote.

El Al issued a statement saying that the extreme weather in New York

had caused numerous cancellations and delays for hundreds of flights including its own flight departing for Israel on Thursday evening.

“In spite of the cancellation of many flights, we succeeded in releasing Flight 002 from New York for our passengers, including an intermediate stop in Athens,” the airline said. “El Al arranged onward flights to Israel that day for all passengers. Passengers who preferred to remain in Athens for Shabbat were cared for by company representatives, and El Al will return them to Israel after Shabbat

is over.

“We apologise for any discomfort caused to our customers, but as said, we preferred to have the flight leave New York the same day.”

*Arutz Sheva*, meanwhile, reported that the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yitzhak Yosef, gave permission for another delayed El Al flight from New York to land on Friday afternoon after the start of Shabbat. Yosef invoked an exception that says Shabbat may be violated in order to save a life. A passenger on the flight was said to be seriously ill. (JTA)

## Linda Sarsour apologises to Jewish members of Women’s March

BEN SALES

Linda Sarsour released a statement apologising on behalf of the Women’s March for causing harm to the movement’s Jewish members, and for being too slow to show its commitment to fighting anti-Semitism.

“We should have been faster and clearer in helping people understand our values and our commitment to fighting anti-Semitism. We regret that,” read the statement issued on Tuesday afternoon.

“Every member of our movement matters to us – including our incredible Jewish and LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] members. We are deeply sorry for the harm we have caused, but we see you, we love you, and we are fighting with you.”

The Women’s March organised mass protests against President Donald Trump in January 2017, and has since been a leading liberal activist group working on behalf of women’s empowerment.

The organisation has come under renewed fire recently for Co-Chair Tamika Mallory’s associations with Louis Farrakhan, the virulently anti-Semitic leader of the Nation of Islam.

In February, Mallory posted a photo of herself with Farrakhan after he gave a speech laced with anti-Semitic statements. Following an outcry over the incident, the Women’s March released a statement saying, “Minister Farrakhan’s statements about Jewish, queer, and trans people are not aligned with the Women’s March unity principles.”

The controversy bubbled up again recently, when actress Alyssa Milano said she would not speak at next year’s Women’s March because she felt that it had not adequately addressed anti-Semitism. On Monday, Women’s March co-founder Teresa Shook called on the movement’s

current organisers to step down because they have “allowed anti-Semitism”.

In her statement on Tuesday, Sarsour said the group wanted to have a better relationship with the Jewish community.

“Trying to dismantle oppression, while working within systems of oppression, is hard,” Sarsour wrote. “We are deeply invested in building better and deeper relationships with the Jewish community. And we’re committed to deepening relationships with any community which has felt left out of this movement. We want to create a space where all are welcome.”



The statement strikes a somewhat different tone to the one Sarsour published on Monday, in which she again distanced the group from Farrakhan, but also suggested that criticism of the Women’s March was a deflection from focusing on anti-Semitism from the far right. She said the underlying reason people criticise her is not because of associations with Farrakhan, but

because she is a Palestinian American.

“It’s very clear to me what the underlying issue is. I am a bold, outspoken, BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] supporting Palestinian Muslim American woman, and the opposition’s worst nightmare,” she wrote. “They have tried every tactic at their disposal to undermine me, discredit me, vilify me but my roots are too deep, and my work is too clear, and they have not succeeded, so by proxy they began attacking my sister, Tamika Mallory, knowing all too well that in this country, the most discardable woman is a black woman.”

Sarsour has been a polarising figure to American Jews. Some on the right and centre point to her anti-Zionist activism. This week, the American Jewish Committee condemned her for criticising “folks who masquerade as progressives, but always choose their allegiance to Israel over their commitment to democracy and free speech”, saying it echoed the historical smear that Jews have dual loyalty.

But some progressive Jews have worked with Sarsour, and defended her from charges of anti-Semitism. They point to her fundraising for the funerals of victims of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, as well as her raising funds on behalf of a vandalised Jewish cemetery.

On Tuesday night, soon after posting the apology, Sarsour posted a defiant statement praising the Women’s March on Facebook.

“Don’t let people who have not contributed nor put their bodies on the line define this moment,” she wrote, referencing Shook and other critics. “[T]hose who understand that we are all vulnerable under a fascist administration will define this moment. We will win together. We will write history together. It will be a messy history full of trials and tribulations, hurt and pain, but with the consistent understanding that people are counting on us.” (JTA)



Letters

HERZLIA PUPILS EXERCISING A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

As graduates of Herzlia School, we feel proud that Herzlia continues to produce independently minded pupils.  
The announcement by the headmaster of Herzlia School in Cape Town that two pupils, who kneeled during the singing of *Hatikvah* at the annual prize giving ceremony, would be severely disciplined, is a sad reflection of the disregard for freedom of speech.  
After more than a century of struggle, South Africa passed a Constitution which enshrines freedom of speech. It is a fundamental component of democratic society. We should be ensuring that our children appreciate its importance. When a person exercises this right, it is of the nature of speech that it might offend, annoy, and irritate some who listen to the speech. But provided it is not hate speech, it should be protected.  
Kneeling while an anthem is sung is hardly hate speech. The headmaster argues that the time and place were inappropriate, that the pupils flouted school rules, and that the school’s Zionist values were fundamentally disregarded by the act of kneeling. The answer provided by one of the pupils in a most impressive interview was that although he is a Zionist, he considers that this is not to be equated with concurring with the policies of the present Israeli government.  
This case is not about one’s view of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Whatever one’s view, the pupils were exercising a fundamental right. That is surely what education aims to achieve. – **Dennis Davis, Gilad Stern, Cape Town**

IN ENVIRONMENT OF HATE FOR ISRAEL, OK FOR HERZLIA TO PROPAGATE ONE PERSPECTIVE

I’m referring to the despicable young attention seekers at Herzlia High who “took the knee” during the singing of *Hatikvah* to protest what they called “Israeli treatment of the Palestinians”.  
Does Israel not suffer enough in South Africa and the world from a tsunami of hate and support for the terrorist “Palestinian cause”?  
Of course, the victims of Arab terror and the Arab drive for genocide against Israel’s Jews go unremarked. Israel has a right to exist, determine her own borders, and defend herself as she sees fit. It need apologise to no one for that.  
Arabs have been attacking and killing Jews in Eretz Yisrael since before the 1920s, long before any occupation.  
Until the Palestinians accept that Israel is here to stay, there can be no peace agreement. They want all their demands met, yet refuse even to recognise Israel’s right to exist.  
Why out of a massive landmass under Arab control, and a number of Arab states (today they number 22), is it regarded as such an injustice that a number of Arabs should be a minority in a Jewish state, where they enjoy full civil and political rights?  
Jewish statelessness led to the slaughter of six million Jews during the Holocaust.  
In 1920, Jews were massacred by Arabs in Jerusalem, in 1921 in Jaffa, and in 1929 in Hebron. Thousands of Jews were murdered from 1936 to 1939 in the Nazi inspired Arab Revolt. Since 1948, Arabs have launched wars against Israel to try to drive Jews into the sea. Since Yasser Arafat launched the latest war in 2000, after rejecting a peace deal, thousands of Jewish men, women and children have died in Israel by bomb, bullet, and knife.  
As regards the complaint of the boys that the school curriculum only gives the Israeli side of the story and they want the “Palestinian side”, well the entire media in South Africa and the universities feed the public only the “Palestinian side”. So why shouldn’t Jewish schools be a place where there is a safe space to learn about Israel’s perspective?  
It is reprehensible and vile for liberal, leftist Jews in the diaspora to threaten to withdraw their support for Israel if Israel defends herself with too much force. – **Gary Selikow, Johannesburg**

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But beyond that, we take time – time to speak to Nisha and her family about the love of God. Time to speak to them from the Scriptures. And time to speak to her village, teaching them the truth about leprosy. It’s a long process. Ideas change slowly, but village by village, people are starting to welcome children like Nisha into their classrooms, Sunday Schools and at the village well.

People are being cured of leprosy and people with leprosy are being welcomed home because in the Leprosy Mission, they have an advocate – someone to speak up for them.

But the Leprosy Mission urgently needs your help to carry on speaking up for people like Nisha – people who have no voice of their own.

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## People getting nasty in November

Maybe it's just me, but I am finding people more angry than usual at the moment. I am not sure if it's the insane and unpleasant heatwave that has hit Johannesburg that is causing this rattiness. Perhaps it's because it's November. The year is almost done, schools are winding-down, December holidays are in sight, and people are tired. Really tired and really depleted.

Or, perhaps it's that we are emotionally spent. I have been at this media thing for a while now, and I am not sure that I recall a period where people have been so testy, short, and downright irritable. I communicate in many ways, and they let me know what people think of, well, anything. And I love it. I really do. Mostly. But over the past week, I have seen a level of volatility creep into some of the dialogue. The SMS line on the morning show is one of my favourite modes of communication. Listeners moan and complain, and tell me everything I do wrong.

### INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



And, I encourage it. Whether it's my music choice, my opinion, or anything else, I want my listeners to engage. But last week was a free for all. The SMS line was filled with angry, nasty messages. "Howard, the most surprising part of that running story is that you said you have run a 10km race. I've seen you and I'm struggling to believe it sorry love Brian." "Love Brian?" Really? My immediate thought was that "Brian" must be a friend (soon to be ex- friend) wanting to have some fun with me. So, I put his number into my phone, but my Samsung S9 Galaxy (+) failed to recognise it. Brian, it would seem, was

just someone wanting to note that he had noted that I had indulged in a few empty carbs too many of late. Which is perfectly true. But unnecessarily unnecessary, I thought. The kneeling-boys-of-Herzlia (as they have now come to be known) is another such example. If ever there was a story without substance or allure or anything remotely interesting, this was one. And yet, in less time than it took to bend over, or down, the story had made headlines all around the country, and then all around the world. Reaction to it was extreme, with those condemning them calling for the re-instatement of the death penalty, whilst those on the other team insisting that everyone, including the swimming coach at the school be fired. There was no balance, and there was no understanding. There was just anger. My Twitter feed was no less gentle. I was even tweeted at by Steve Hofmeyr, who was insistent on something that I didn't really understand. And this

was still better than the person who said that my article regarding the kneeling-boys-of-Herzlia was vacuous, and that I should sit down and shut the hell up. It's lucky that I am not sensitive. Economically, it has been a hard year for South Africans. As Jews, we have felt targeted and under-valued, and as supporters of Israel, we have been frustrated and misunderstood. The weather is not helping either. What is clear to me is that we all need a holiday. It's clear that November is an angry month, and that we are now running on emergency tank. We don't have the capacity to detour, and we certainly don't have the patience for anything. Least of all each other. But we need to try. We need to implement a perspective rule, where we take a step back from a situation before responding. That we don't tweet angry, and that we don't take everything personally. At least let's try.

### Community Column

---A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies---

## Exchange with Ramaphosa gives SAJBD conference unique relevance



### Above Board Shaun Zagnoev

This year, as previously noted in this column, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' Gauteng conference is, for the first time, being held in two parts. The first, held on 7 October, comprised the necessary formal, procedural components of such gatherings, and was aimed mainly at our affiliate organisations. The second, aimed at the broader community and organised around the availability of President Cyril Ramaphosa, will take place this Sunday. We are already fully booked, but thanks to the wonders of modern technology, everyone can participate via live streaming (for details, see our Facebook page). The core part of the conference will be an exchange of views between Ramaphosa and eminent business leader Stephen Koseff about the challenges currently facing South Africa, and what is being done, or could be done, to address them. The key message we wish to convey to Ramaphosa and his government is that South African Jewry is fully behind his efforts to get things back on track in our country, and will readily contribute the resources and skills we have in our community to further those goals. This being the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela, we will also celebrate and reflect on the Mandela legacy, with reference to some of those from our own community who, in various fields, have made themselves a part of his inspiring story.

The commemoration of significant historical events and personalities is in itself a worthy exercise, but applying the lessons of those times to the here and now is perhaps even more important in today's South Africa. Nelson Mandela, in spite of the gross injustices to which he and the majority of South Africans like him were subjected under apartheid, was able to look beyond racial categories and see the fundamental humanity of each and every individual. This enabled him to envisage a South Africa in which all citizens, while never forgetting the unhappy events of their collective past, would work side by side in forging a better future for all. We know that in recent years, our society has progressively strayed from that ideal, yet from South Africa's own history, it is clear how far greater divisions between its people can be bridged when sufficient good will, trust, and unity of vision exists. This was the example set by Mandela, and indeed that whole generation who ushered in the new democratic era. We can take courage and guidance from what they achieved as we strive to realise the ideals to which they devoted their lives.

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

## Respect my values; I'll respect yours



### TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

The story which went viral in Jewish circles last week (reported on page 14) about chaos on an El Al flight to Israel which was delayed due to a snowstorm, would have been funny to an outside observer. It would be like a scene from a British comedy, with black-coated Haredim running up and down aisles shouting, and secular passengers cowering in their seats. But for Jews, it captured the poisonous antagonism among them about religion. The plane, which left New York late, landed in Athens instead of Tel Aviv to avoid desecrating Shabbat. The Haredi passengers have been roundly condemned in the media for the ruckus they caused after believing they had been lied to by El Al, and voicing this vociferously to the crew. However, they were clearly displaying the schism in the Jewish and Israeli world, with its own logic. Secular passengers have a right to be furious at the commotion, but need to look deeper. Haredi and secular Jews both tend to see each other negatively. But what should

a person do when his most precious symbol – such as Shabbat observance – is violated beyond his control? Should he throw his proverbial toys out of the cot? Or step back and look for another way? And what about simple good manners? The Haredis' raucous behaviour is objectionable, and they would never have behaved like that on a Lufthansa or Swissair flight. But open-mindedness must allow for a contrary view. The truth is, most secular Jews don't understand how important Shabbat observance is to religious Jews. They "just don't get it", as one commentator said. But, perhaps religious Jews should have planned their travels better to avoid any chance of violating Shabbat – things can always go wrong in the messy world of global travel. Israelis are not, in general, an easy-going, tolerant people. Many Israelis of all stripes, secular and religious, have anger issues and an unwillingness to hear the other side. So here, roughly, are the two sides of the story. Secular passengers claim that 10 or 15 Haredi passengers, dressed in their black hats and coats, ran up and down the aisles, yelling at the staff, "Liars, cheaters, you lied to us!" and started shoving flight attendants, some of whom apparently ended up crying, leading other passengers to intervene. Later, after the flight, other religious commentators

claimed it was not as serious as that. It sounds ugly. But one can also understand the Haredi anger, in spite of their inappropriate response. They had been hesitant about boarding the flight in New York. But, after the pilot told them the plane would reach Israel before Shabbat, and then would not let them off, they were understandably furious at landing in Athens, having to spend all of Shabbat there. The scenario ended up as a power stand-off between Haredim and secular Jews. What's to be done? There has always been tension between religious and secular Jews. The genius of Jewish society derives partly from this. Each side has produced great minds. But the rift today is bitterer than ever, the sides more militant. Even the split between "secular" Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean coast, and "religious" Israel in the Jerusalem hills displays this. Step back for a long view. Jewish survival derives not only from study of Torah and Talmud, but also oppression by non-Jews over centuries, which made Jews stick together. Now that they are not oppressed, must they turn against each other by choice? It is sad and embarrassing. Non-Jews must look at this scenario, and see not a comedy, but a community in vicious chaos, eating its own.



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# King David Linksfield brings Marimba magic to Israel

As part of King David Schools and Israel's 70-year celebration, King David Primary School Linksfield's marimba band departed last Thursday for a trailblazing trip to perform in Israel. Created six years ago, the KDL Marimba Band, is made up of eight King David students between the ages of 12 and 14. They are trained on a weekly basis by extra-curricular teacher Joan Lithgow, who is Musical Director for nongovernmental organisation Education Africa. The Israel trip and the opportunity to share the passion and musical talent of these youngsters internationally has been the long-time dream of Darryl Frankel, the Vice-Principal of King David Senior Primary School Linksfield. After a lot of hard work and many hours of planning and discussions, the dream became a reality. Together with Partnership2Gether and the Israel Centre, the marimba band will tour and perform around the Beit/Shemesh/Match Yehuda region, bringing a taste of Africa to Israel. The group took three combination marimbas and one bass marimba with it to Israel. These marimbas will be left in Israel after the students return to South Africa. Lithgow will train some of Har Tuv's music teachers so that they are able to teach their students how to play the marimbas. The intention is that this musical collaboration will facilitate the creation of a Har Tuv Marimba Band, strengthening the partnership between King David Schools in South Africa and their partner schools and regions in Israel. The students will perform at all three of King David Primary Schools' twinning schools. Pupils will be hosted by families on Kibbutz Tzora for the duration of their stay. The trip will include a visit to Jerusalem, where the group will busk at the Ben Yehudah Market, culminating in a concert for the community of Beit Shemesh. The trip is a powerful venture, giving South African Jewish children the opportunity to play traditional African instruments and share their African heritage in a unique manner. It enhances the twinning endeavour between King David and Har Tuv, and represents South African Jewry in a culturally relevant and meaningful way.



Jordan Milner, Adiv Blumenthal, Aiden Sack, Amit Frankel, Joshua Kahn, Jayden Klotnick, Jonty Hirschson and Eden Novick

## ORT Jet shows power of collaboration

"The word that encapsulates ORT Jet is 'hope'", said Ian Janet, ORT Jet veteran volunteer mentor at the ORT Jet Annual Awards, recently. ORT JET, the enterprise development division of ORT SA, was established to assist, support, uplift, and empower small-to-medium-sized businesses within the South African Jewish community. Said Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, "I would like to pay tribute to the mentors and the mentees, and to

all those involved in the success of ORT Jet. At heart, this is the power of collaboration. These people have the highest standards of ethics and decency, generosity of spirit, and vision. May you all grow from strength to strength." ORT Jet Manager Helene Itzkin pointed out that the contribution of ORT Jet to the economy far outweighs the amount of donor funding required to run the department. "We would like to continue to scale up the work we do," she said. "To do this, we need corporate and other support."



Nadine Hocter, the owner of Sheer Bliss, won the coveted ORT SA Business of the Year Award. The business grew 35% this year alone, and is now a leader in corporate massage.

## Kids' Christmas toys a mighty mitzvah

The Union of Jewish Women (UJW) members rolled up their sleeves in the centre court of the Norwood Mall last Sunday to fulfil their Mitzvah Day Wrap-a-Thon mandate. Mitzvah Day, an annual day of faith-based social action celebrated internationally, was founded by Laura Marks in the United Kingdom in 2005. It is showcased in South Africa by the UJW. A plethora of toys and books for children aged between 3 and 18 spilled out of a number of shopping trolleys. Where there were insufficient goods in any of the age groups, the money (in lieu of toys) generously donated by members of the community and the general public filled the gaps. A few Grade 9 St Stithians College pupils, who were completing their community service,

volunteered to wrap the gifts for boys and girls in different coloured paper with the age group clearly marked on each. At the close of the day, about 370 Christmas presents had been wrapped for children at the Alexandra Township Aftercare Centre (run by the UJW); for children from Pimville and Riverlea; and an extra 40 gifts were earmarked for children in an identified informal settlement. The balance of the large number of books which were not used will be donated to the Johannesburg General Hospital Paediatric OT Department. Mitzvah Day is one of the many highlights on the UJW calendar, and each year, a new and exciting project is undertaken. This year's project will bring Christmas happiness to so many children who otherwise would not be celebrating their special day.



Talya and Loren Storger with Glynis Revenson

# Ariel outdoor day makes learning fun

King David Ariel recently took part in its second outdoor classroom day for 2018. Outdoor classroom day is a worldwide campaign to promote outdoor play and learning. More than 140 000 children in South Africa and 3.5 million children worldwide participated in the day as part of a campaign to introduce innovative ideas for learning and play that involve our natural environment. The outdoor classroom day's website states, "Lessons learnt outdoors, whether maths, science or language, often stay with us for life. Being outdoors helps children focus, boosts creativity and imagination, and can simply be more fun." The notion of the outdoor classroom is based on the belief that children who have the freedom to play today, making friends, getting lost in the moment, and having fun, are better prepared for whatever tomorrow throws at them. Play helps children to build friendships, test their own boundaries, and solve their own problems. It's central to a child's development and their enjoyment of childhood. The classes built on Ariel's first outdoor learning day in May. Sessions were planned around the therapy disciplines at the school, including occupational therapy and speech and language therapy, as well as some core learning and creative skills. They included a mini Olympics session for each class, where the children participated in team games such as tug-of-war, while working on gross motor and co-ordination skills. Rave O lessons were taught in the garden, with the focus on word building skills. MindUp sessions were held, using the current theme of gratitude. Through group discussion, the children explored what gratitude is and ways to display it. They recorded the person or thing they were most grateful for on a leaf, which culminated in the gratitude tree displayed in the school's reception area. Hebrew, art, and science lessons were also held outside, including sketching different parts of the school, and exploring the water cycle. The day ended with a water session under the trees, including a slip and slide, sprinklers, fozzie foam, and ice bites. In spite of the incredible heat, the children all had fun and enjoyed the variety of activities and novelty of learning outdoors, thus meeting the goal of the campaign.



Ethan Jankelowitz, Jordan Rozentvaig and Liorah Schneid

## Progressive congregations join forces for Mensch Mitzvah Day

The Gauteng progressive Jewish community came together last weekend to help the less fortunate of Hillbrow as part of Mensch Mitzvah Day, a global Jewish-led day of social action. They did so under the leadership of Rabbi Sa'ar Shaked (Beit Emanuel), Rabbi Adrian M Schell (Bet David), and Reeva Forman (Temple Israel/SAUPJ Gauteng). After celebrating Havdalah together at the new Bet David Campus in Morningside, about 50 mitzvah makers made more than 1 000 sandwiches and collected soft drinks and sweets for children. On Sunday morning, the group met again at Temple Israel in Hillbrow to hand out the food packages. Face painting and candy floss stations made the day extra sweet for kids, as did jazz-musicians Sipiwe Shiburi on drums and Yonela Mnana on keyboard, who entertained the adults. "It was wonderful to see members of our shuls working hand in hand to bring some *tikkun* (fixing) into this world," said Rabbi Schell. "At Temple Israel Hillbrow, we witness day by day how much help is needed in the neighbourhood. It is my hope that this mitzvah day inspired many to continue their good work, following the wise words of our sages that "one mitzvah leads to another".



Making sandwiches at Bet David in Sandton

Sunday (25 November)	Tuesday (27 November)	Thursday (29 November)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Second Innings hosts Jana Nel performing <i>Beautiful Noise</i>. Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting at 10:30. Venue: Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors. Includes tea and light refreshments. Contact: Linda 011 532 9701</li><li>The Jewish Women's Benevolent Society hosts the Sonia Bernstein Book Fair. Time: 08:30 to 12:30. Venue: Jabula Recreation Centre, Anne Street, Sandringham. Cost: All books R10. Call 011 485 5232</li><li>The Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) invites you to the award winning production of <i>The Revlon Girl</i>. Time: 15:00. Venue: Auto &amp; General Theatre on the Square. Cost: R210 per person. For bookings, call: 011 645 2515/079 746 1902</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>WIZO hosts Clinical Kinesiologist Richard Sutton. Your chance to hear an international lifestyle guru talk about healthy eating and lifestyle. Time: 09:30 for 10.00. Donation: R180 (includes a delicious tea). Call for venue details. Bookings: Joceline 082 441 4375; Lorraine 083 268 8016; Leslie 083 456 3911; or Jenny 011 645-2515/ wizojhb@beyachad.co.za</li></ul>	<p>Yuneal Padayachee, Department of Trade and Industry. Time: 09:00 to 11:00. Venue: 44 Central Street, Houghton. RSVP: khanyi@ortsa.org.za/ 011 728 7154</p>
Monday (26 November)	Wednesday (28 November)	Friday (30 November)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Union of Jewish Women hosts Hilary Joffe, economist, journalist and editor on <i>The economic situation at the moment – hot off the press</i>. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office: 011 648 1053</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Second Innings hosts an outing to the Bush Babies Monkey Sanctuary at Hartebeespoort. Bus departs at 09:00. Meet the bus in the parking below Golden Acres. Cost: R280, includes bus, entrance, and guided tour. (Tours are normally R320 a person, we are paying only R150 per person) Contact: Ros Traub 082 557 5184 and Doris Skikna 076 403 5617</li><li>ORT SA hosts a discussion on <i>How business can assist with youth unemployment</i> and "Learn how to improve your BBBEE scorecard". Speaker:</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ORT SA hosts Lynn Joffe in a creative workshop: <i>How to tell your brand story</i>. Time: 18:00 to 21:00. Venue: 44 Central Street, Houghton. Cost: R100 for ORT Jet members or R200 for non-members. RSVP: samantha@ortjet.org.za/011 728 7154</li><li>Join WIZO every Thursday for a <i>Lunch &amp; Learn</i> shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz. Time: 13:00 at Beyachad, 2 Elray Street, Raedene. Contact: WIZO office: 011 645 2515</li><li>Shalom Masorti Seniors hosts a seniors tea. Time: 14.30 for 15:00. There will be a selection of board games, cards, and of course, the usual convivial, friendly atmosphere. Lisa Hirshowitz will be speaking on her road to <i>frum-kite</i>. Donation of R15 will be appreciated. Contact Esther on 011 485 5619 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings, from 08:30 to 12:30 for more information.</li></ul>



# SHEBA MEDICAL CENTER'S S. A. NATIVE DR. TALIA GOLAN IS HONOURED IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY KEN STEPHENS

Noted American national TV talk show host and broadcasting mogul Armstrong Williams recently hosted an intimate gathering at his home in Washington, D.C. with special guests Dr. Talia Golan, the South African born medical expert who is on the forefront of pancreatic cancer research at Sheba Medical Center, Tel HaShomer in Ramat Gan, Israel and Dr. Ben Carson, United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

During the private dinner, Dr. Golan and Dr. Carson discussed some of the groundbreaking cancer research at Sheba Medical Center. Dr. Golan (nee Feinberg), who made Aliyah from Pretoria to Israel when she was 13 years old and began her career at Sheba nearly a decade ago, is the founder and director of Sheba's Pancreatic Cancer Center. She focuses her research specifically on pancreatic cancer biology with the goal of improving patient treatment and care.

"We are constantly working on new and innovative medicines in collaboration with other hospitals and cancer research units like MD Anderson (at the University of Texas), PMH (Canada) and NYU in the USA," revealed Dr. Golan. "The biggest thing for me right now is working with various research groups to make rapid progress in understanding the

biology of pancreatic cancer, in developing early detection mechanisms for the disease, and in discovering new treatment options. Each of these remains a real challenge."

Williams spent three days at Sheba this past August, filming a variety of segments for The Armstrong Williams Show and Sinclair Broadcast Group, the largest operator of TV stations across the United States. One of those segments included an in-depth and emotional interview with Dr. Golan.

"It was an honor hosting Dr. Talia Golan and Secretary Ben Carson at my home for an evening of thought-provoking discussion about pancreatic cancer and Sheba Medical Center," said Williams. "Dr. and Mrs. Carson were thoroughly impressed as Dr. Golan detailed the progress that Israel's national hospital continues to make in all areas of cancer research. Dr. Golan is a remarkable and humble physician, as well as an incredible spokesperson for the promising progress in cancer research."





Dr. Golan added, "We are making such incredible strides in the field of pancreatic cancer research. It was an honor to be at this dinner and Mr. Armstrong's home to share the incredible progress we are making at Sheba and in Israel."



(left to right)—Candy Carson, Dr. Ben Carson, Dr. Talia Golan and Armstrong Williams.

## SHEBA – ISRAEL'S LARGEST MEDICAL CENTER

Sheba is the beating heart of Israeli medicine. Every year, 1 in 5 Israelis are treated at Sheba. Sheba's world-class innovation and medical research are changing the face of modern medicine, in Israel and around the world. With an emphasis on patient care and integrated medicine, Sheba is doing more than treating illness ... it is changing lives.

-  Sheba treats **1.5 million** people per year.
-  Sheba's staff of **9,000** includes **1,500** doctors.
-  Sheba performs **260,000** diagnostic imaging exams per year
-  Sheba conducts **1,600,000** lab exams per year

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Sheba Medical Center  
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