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## Soccer-goalpost tragedy far from over

NICOLA MILTZ

When the father of Hugo Paluch – the Yeshiva College boy who died after soccer goalposts fell on him – heard that another boy had died in the same tragic way as his son, it “shook him to his core”.

Dov Paluch told the *SA Jewish Report* this week, “I could not comprehend that soccer goals had taken another precious child’s life in less than 18 months since I lost my boy.”

The devastating news changed something in him. The intensely private Paluch knew it was time to do something. After some agonising soul searching, he decided to go public in December in a bid to kickstart a nationwide conversation around safety at schools and sports grounds.

First, he tracked down the father of Kiyan Singh, the eight-year-old Durban boy who was struck by a goalpost during strong winds in late November.

“I had to find him and reach out,” Paluch said.

For Sahil Singh, it was the call he was waiting for. “Dov’s phone call came exactly when I was looking online to find someone out there who had been through this.”

The heartbroken fathers spoke for ages in what would become the first of many calls. Their shared grief and pain united them in an unimaginable way.

“That feeling of finding someone who understands exactly what you are going through is so rare. Dov understood immediately,” Singh told the *SA Jewish Report*.

His son’s accident happened at the Riverside sports grounds during a match between local club Riverside

and Juventus football clubs’ junior teams. The soccer-crazy boy was a substitute goalkeeper for the local side Juventus.

After reaching out to Singh, Paluch then wrote an opinion piece which

was published in *News24* and *IOL*. Just as the holiday spirit set in, the community was unsettled by media reports about Paluch’s intention of

suing Yeshiva College. This close-knit community had been there right from the start when tragedy struck the Paluch family. Inevitably, legal proceedings shift perceptions and create controversy.

According to Paluch, the family had started legal proceedings soon

about the importance of safety at schools followed Kiyan’s untimely passing, he insists.

In his article he said, “I was angry because no parent should have to bury a child. But mostly I was angry because after Hugo was taken from us, naively, I thought that it could not happen again.” His letter states that at the same time as there was a huge outpouring of love and support from the community, “there was inadequate response from administrators around meaningful efforts towards safety”.

Asked if a lawsuit could have been avoided, Hugo’s mother Nicole explained, “Everything we have done and continue to do is to ensure that in Hugo’s memory, nothing like this ever happens again. We need schools in South Africa to take accountability for the safety of our children. They are in the business of looking after children, and keeping them safe during the school day should be their first and foremost priority. If no one takes accountability, then change cannot happen.”

Their beloved first-born son, Hugo, 14, died in June 2017 after soccer goals fell on him during break at school. Described as a freak accident, it gripped the community locally and abroad as Hugo slipped away after fighting for his life for 11 days in hospital.

Those who knew him said he was no ordinary child. Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein – a friend of the

Continued on page 25>>



Left: Tess and Sahil Singh with their sons the late Kiyan (left) and Aran. Right: Nicole and Dov Paluch with Sydney, Armin and Poppy (with Hugo, inset).

and Juventus football clubs’ junior teams. The soccer-crazy boy was a substitute goalkeeper for the local side Juventus.

was published in *News24* and *IOL*.

Just as the holiday spirit set in, the community was unsettled by media reports about Paluch’s intention of

after Hugo’s passing. “It was part of a process that had begun many months ago,” he said.

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# Whatever you’re feeling, there’s a psalm for it

JORDAN MOSHE

In much the same way that there is an app for everything, there is a psalm for every requirement as well. So says Chabad House Director Rabbi David Masinter.

If you are sad, there is a psalm to help you. If you are mad, there is one too. If you are finding it hard to concentrate, you will find a psalm to help, and so it goes, according to Masinter.

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“With so much negativity in our world, we need all the help we can get to find positivity. The positive energy of prayer works to find it,” he says.

Masinter launched a *tehillim* (psalms) campaign on Wednesday this week in honour of the start of the 70th anniversary of the year when the Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, assumed leadership of the Chabad movement.

Part of the Rebbe’s vision was for every Jewish home to have Jewish texts within its walls, says Masinter. Masinter’s campaign is to ensure that every family has a book of psalms in their home, and one that has an excellent English translation.

“The book of psalms is a work of divine inspiration that enables anyone to give expression to whatever they may be feeling,” he says. “The Rebbe knew very well the innate power of *tehillim* and their ability to achieve great things in any situation no matter how challenging.” This year, therefore, Chabad’s annual book publication will be geared towards



a unique book of *tehillim*, making these special prayers accessible to all Jews.

Featuring the original Hebrew text alongside an English translation produced by Chabad,

the book will include a comprehensive variety of *tehillim*.

Launching a sweeping drive that covers the entire country, Masinter is committed to getting a copy of the book to every Jewish teenager in South Africa, as well a shortened version to every primary school pupil as well. “No one will be left out of this project,” he says. “Those who cannot afford to buy one will be included. This is a project for all Jews.

“Psalms break all barriers and express innumerable feelings,” he says. “Anyone can say them at any time. No matter his age or situation, a Jew is never removed from G-d, and just needs to bring out the connection that lies within him.”

This project follows another recently launched campaign in which Masinter set up a series of 18 art installations around Johannesburg, all of them bearing simple injunctions aimed at passers-by, including “Tell someone they look great”; “Complain less, smile more”; “Make someone a coffee”; and even “Call your mom”.

At a time when negativity pervades South African society, Masinter is committed to turning the pessimistic outlook of its citizens around. Not only does he promote positive thinking in the Jewish and broader community, he aims to change the way we view reality.

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:38	Johannesburg
19:15	20:37	Cape Town
18:15	19:36	Durban
18:15	19:53	Bloemfontein
18:15	20:08	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:56	East London

## Torah Thought

### Sticking to tradition

How important is tradition in Judaism? Obviously, very important. There is even a major song in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* devoted to tradition!

In spite of the effects of secularism, there is still a need for us to feel connected to our roots, our heritage, and a sense of belonging to the Jewish people.

But for vast numbers of our people, tradition is not enough. Not only for the rebellious among us, but for many ordinary thinking people who decided that to do something just because “that’s the way it has always been done” is simply not good enough.

So what if my grandfather did it? My grandfather rode around in a horse and buggy! And if my bobba never got a university degree, why shouldn’t I? Just because my grandparents practiced certain Jewish traditions, why must I? Perhaps those traditions are as obsolete as the horse and buggy.

There are masses of Jews who think this way, and who will not be convinced to behave in a Jewish way just because their grandparents did.

We need to tell them why their grandparents did it. They need to understand that their grandparents’ traditions were not just for tradition’s sake, but for very good reasons. And those same rationales still hold today.

Too many young people are put off tradition because some cheder teacher didn’t take their questions seriously. They were silenced with a wave of the hand, a pinch of the ear, or the classic, “When you get older, you’ll understand”.

There are answers. There have always been answers. All our traditions are founded on substance and have intelligible, credible underpinnings. There are only a handful of mitzvahs that require a leap of faith. If we seek answers, we will find them in abundance; including many layers of meaning, from the simple to the symbolic to the philosophical, even the mystical.

This week’s parsha features the *Song of the Sea*, sung by Moses and the Jewish people following the splitting of the sea and their miraculous deliverance from the Egyptian armies. Early on, we find the verse, “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him, the

G-d of my fathers and I will exalt Him.”

The sequence is significant. First comes “my G-d”, and only thereafter the “G-d of my fathers”. While the “G-d of our fathers” – in other words tradition – plays a very important role in Judaism, an indispensable prerequisite is that we must make G-d ours, personally. Every Jew must develop a personal relationship with G-d.

Authentic Judaism has never shied away from questions. Every page of the Talmud is filled with questions – and answers. You don’t have to wait for the Pesach seder to ask a question.

When we think, ask, and find answers to our faith, then the traditions of our grandparents come alive. Once a tradition has become ours, we then realise that this very same practice has been observed uninterrupted by our ancestors for many centuries, tradition then becomes a powerful force that can inspire us forever.



Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Sydenham Shul

## World News in Brief

### No Holocaust victim bones

A sonar scan of the bottom of the Danube River in Budapest has revealed no human remains.

Volunteers for Zaka, an Israel-based orthodox Jewish group, conducted the search on Tuesday for the bodies of some of the thousands of Jews shot dead on the banks of the river from 1944 to 1945 by Hungarian Nazi collaborators.

Slobo Koves, the head of the Chabad-affiliated EMIH Jewish federation of Hungary, told *JTA* that the team operating the sonar would be back next month for another scan. Zaka provides emergency services and collects human remains for burial after natural and manmade disasters.

In 2011, human remains were discovered during construction work on a bridge overlooking the Danube. DNA tests run on the bones in August 2015 found that at least nine of the 15 samples were Ashkenazi Jews from Europe and that six others could also be.

The murders by the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross are at the heart of an ongoing and polarising debate in Hungary about how government-led and other commemoration efforts should address the issue of complicity. The Mazsihisz Jewish Federation has accused the government of whitewashing this complicity, though EMIH has disputed this.

“Whether this is controversial or not is really not an issue,” Koves said of his group’s efforts to find the remains of Arrow Cross victims. “The only thing that matters is the major mitzvah of bringing the victims to burial.”

The rabbi said the government was helpful in obtaining permits for the searches. (JTA)

### Gadot for *Lego* movie

Gal Gadot will be heard as *Wonder Woman* long before the sequel to her megahit film is screened in 2020.

Gadot will voice the character in *The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part*, which will open next month in theatres in the United States, according to movie blogs and fan sites, including *Flickering Myth*.

The Israeli actress will be joined by several others who portray DC characters on the big screen, with Jason Momoa voicing *Aquaman*, and Margot Robbie as Harley Quinn from *Suicide Squad*.

*The Lego Movie* was released before Gadot first performed as *Wonder Woman* in *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*. (JTA)

South African Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

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# Jewish man killed in Kenya attack was 9/11 survivor

TALI FEINBERG

Jason Spindler, the Jewish American man who was one of 15 victims of a terrorist attack in Kenya on Tuesday, had previously survived the 11 September terrorist attack in 2001.

His brother Jonathan Spindler, confirmed the death of his sibling at the Dusit Hotel on Riverside Drive in Nairobi. “It’s with a heavy heart that I announce that my brother, Jason Spindler, passed away this morning during a terror attack in Nairobi. Jason was a survivor of 9/11 and a fighter. I am sure he gave them hell,” Jonathan wrote on Facebook.

“Jason was trying to make positive change in the third world in emerging markets,” his mother Sarah Spindler told *NBC News*. “We all miss him so much. And it’s so sad that such a bright young person is taken away by terrorism.”

Spindler was the chief executive and managing director of I-DEV International, a strategy and innovation firm that works with corporations, social enterprises, and impact investors to build business-based partnerships.

He joined the Peace Corps after the 9/11 terror attacks, and was a graduate of New York University Law and the University of Texas at Austin. He was the recipient of grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Clinton Foundation, his mother said.

Spindler spoke at conferences around the globe, lectured at leading business schools, and had advised heads of state, Fortune 500 corporations, and growth-stage businesses. He was an Adjunct Professor at Middlebury College’s Graduate Program for International Studies, and had a Juris Doctorate from New York University.

The CEO of Coca-Cola Africa, Peter Njonjo, was a personal friend of Spindler. Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Nairobi, Njonjo said: “Jason was an active investor and supporter of the Kenyan startup space, and played a major role in raising venture capital in East African tech projects. He was very well

respected and helped a lot of start-ups, linking young companies to investors. He was doing extremely well, so this is a huge loss to the startup system in East Africa.

“What I liked about him, was that he was very tenacious resilient, persistent and innovative, as raising these funds was a huge challenge.”

A man named Joshua Rugema tweeted, “Jason Spindler was an amazing guy. He loved people and Africa. Our last conversation was in the restaurant he was gunned down in. I’ll never forget it.” Another tweeter, Patrick Sieyes, said, “Jason was



an incredible entrepreneur who worked tirelessly to improve the livelihoods of millions of people.”

Of the 15 victims, 11 have been

identified as Kenyans, one – Spindler – an American, and one more has been identified as a British national. The remaining victims have yet to be identified.

Steve Felder, a South African expat who has lived in Nairobi, explains that the premises where the terrorist attack took place was partly a business and office park, and partly a hotel. He’s not sure why it was targeted, but possibly because security was not as strong there compared to other places (which he describes as “fortresses”), or because there are a lot of people there during the day.

He does not think Jews in Kenya need to fear for their safety. “On the contrary, Kenya is a country with a deeply religious population, and a generally strong affection for Jews,” he says. “Unfortunately, the threat of terrorism will remain ever-present. However, it is typically perpetrated against Kenyan people as the primary targets.”

Al-Shabab – the Somali-based extremist group that is allied to al Qaeda – claimed responsibility for the attack. Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta said on Wednesday that security forces had killed the Islamic extremist gunmen. The same group carried out the 2013 attack at the nearby Westgate Mall in Nairobi that killed 67 people.

## Zimbabwe’s Jewish community keeps its head down in the chaos

TALI FEINBERG AND JORDAN MOSHE

“Mayhem and chaos reign supreme here,” said a Jewish Zimbabwe resident this week. “It is so scary to be cut off without accurate information or contact. People have no access to doctors or any medication, and don’t know when they will. We have no way of knowing what tomorrow will bring. I was tear-gassed on Friday, I am confined to my home now, and am completely in the dark about what will happen next.”

This woman asked to remain anonymous out of fear of reprisal. Zimbabwe has come to a grinding halt in the wake of protests and clashes that have rocked the country this week.

She is just one member of the tiny Jewish community which is weathering the storm. While some Zimbabweans are secure in their homes, others have been caught in the crossfire caused by the looting and chaos erupting across the country.

“We’re an extremely small minority,” says Arnold Joffe, the head of the Harare Hebrew Congregation. “We’re staying put at home, and not venturing out much, because if we do, we can’t be sure if we’ll encounter empty streets or utter chaos. The situation is volatile and subject to sudden change.”

By Wednesday this week, the situation in Zimbabwe was extremely tense. “Opposition and civil society leaders critical of the government are being arrested. The Movement for Democratic Changes’ offices were set ablaze on Monday evening, and the military have moved into the high-density areas around Harare, with reports of civilians being rounded up, beaten, and tear-gassed in their homes,” says democracy and human rights activist Alana Baranov.

She says the wave of unrest was sparked by the

first day of a three-day national stay-away called for by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions in response to the deteriorating economic situation in the country. Given the dire situation of most Zimbabwean citizens, the stay-away has become a violent wave of looting and destruction.

Demonstrations turned violent as roads were barricaded, shops looted, and vehicles burnt. “The government shut down the internet on Tuesday in an attempt to quell the protests and inhibit Zimbabweans from organising mass action,” says Baranov.

The lack of communication has also resulted in the proliferation of rumour and misinformation, heightening the fear and panic gripping many people. “Cut off from the outside world, we hear all sorts of rumours,” says the anonymous resident. “I’ve heard that between three and 21 people have been killed in the clashes - there is no exact figure. I’ve also heard that the police are turning a blind eye to looting and, in some cases, even joining in.”

While members of the community may be in their homes trying to carry on as best they can, some Jewish residents are outraged at what is befalling average Zimbabweans. “We’re fortunate to be safe in our homes,” says Bulawayo resident Leah Louth, “but out on the street, there are people who have no roof over their heads and are exposed to danger and violence.”

She continues, “I’ve never seen Bulawayo reach a point like this. The western suburbs are a war zone, yet we’ve had no word from the government. While we can hear the army mobilising and returning to barracks at night, we can’t see what’s going on outside.”

Louth says that the internet shutdown is a particularly heavy blow, as it prevents people

from contacting loved ones to make sure that they are safe. It therefore violates basic human rights. “We’re relying on text messages,” she says. “An SMS bundle costs more than a data bundle, and people are too poor to afford them. Children can’t tell their mothers if they’re safe, fathers can’t check where their daughters are. The basic text message has become a privilege.”

She concludes, “[There is] no official communication; the internet service provider was intimidated into shutting down the internet, and people are dying on the streets. This situation is beyond absurd, and yet it hasn’t appeared on any international news station anywhere. What has to happen for this to be noticed?”

Country Communities Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft says the community is “lying low”, and his office has been calling twice a day to evaluate the situation. He has been approached by many South Africans with family in Zimbabwe who have been trying to get hold of them in the communication blackout. “The situation is getting very ‘hot’ for the first time in many years, but we hope for better days,” he says.

Ex-Zimbabwean Dave Bloom received communication from someone in Harare on Wednesday morning who said that the situation was “very worrying and dangerous. The rioting is in the high-density suburbs, the police are breaking down doors, and arresting people without reason.”

Says Bloom, “The army and police are cracking down hard. I suspect people in the community are safe in their homes, but I’m not sure how long that can go on. The old and vulnerable will probably be hardest hit in getting food and medical services.”

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# Shylock post on social media exposes BDS anti-Semitism

NICOLA MILTZ

BDS South Africa (BDS-SA) is forever denying that its anti-Israel stance is anti-Semitic. However, a post the organisation put out on its own social media account in mid-December exposed the truth.

The post in question referenced William Shakespeare’s play, *Merchant of Venice*, using the famous writer’s despised Jewish character of Shylock – the stereotypical greedy, hook nosed, miserly Jew – as an analogy for the South African Jewish community.

“If the famous Williams (sp) Shakespeare had written his 1596-99 play, *Merchant of Venice* in this generation, he would have been accused of hate speech, condemned, sidelined, and declared a racist. That is because the play centred on a greedy and conscienceless Jewish money lender, Shylock, who insisted on slicing a pound of flesh from a debtor despite offers to pay him double the money he had advanced. A similar scenario played out in South Africa on 4 December when the Supreme Court of Appeal, stopped some racists organised under the South African Jewish Board of Deputies from taking a pound of flesh from Bongani Masuku, Head, International Relations, Congress of South African Trade Unions.”

This post was put out in response to the Supreme Court of Appeal’s (SCA) recent judgement in favour of

Masuku, who was accused of hate speech. Masuku, in his capacity as international relations secretary of Cosatu, had on two previous occasions been found guilty of hate speech for inflammatory comments and threats he made against local Jewry who support Israel, and Jews on campus.

After having been found guilty and ordered to apologise, he took the matter on appeal and in a highly controversial and surprising move, the SCA upheld his appeal. The matter will now be appealed in the Constitutional Court.

Seeing this as a victory for its cause, BDS-SA welcomed the SCA judgement, thereby firmly aligning itself with Masuku, who amongst numerous utterances called at the time for the “perpetual suffering” of the Jewish community.

BDS-SA’s derogatory post was speedily removed when its handful of Jewish supporters complained that the organisation had gone one step too far down the slippery slope of Jew baiting.

So often accused of being anti-Semitic for its rabid and extreme criticism of Israel, BDS spends much time trying to convince the world that its condemnation of the state of Israel does not equate with anti-Semitism. As recently as last week, it posted a tweet saying, “BDS is not, and should never be confused with anti-Semitism. Rather, it is our moral consciousness put into action.

Suggesting that BDS is synonymous with anti-Semitism invisibilizes Jews who are active in the BDS campaign.”

The organisation’s latest anti-Semitic post flies in the face of its continual attempt to appear to stand for human rights.

Acclaimed academic, author, and expert on anti-Semitism, Professor Milton Shain, described the post as “awful”.



Bongani Masuku

He told the *SA Jewish Report*, “Although barrels of ink have been spilled as to whether Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* is a ‘blood-libel narrative’, the cartoon provided by BDS clearly raises the possibility that crude anti-Semitism has informed those responsible.”

Joey Schnide responded to BDS-SA’s Shylock post by saying, “Gonna preface this by saying I’m a very strong supporter of BDS and very much want the movement to succeed. That being said, this is absolutely disgusting. Beyond the fact that as a Jew this makes me feel ill to read, it’s also a terrible look for BDS. BDS is not inherently anti-Semitic and we already have to spend a ton of time making the case that we aren’t anti-Semites. Horseshit like this discredits our whole movement. If you care about the success of BDS or you (sp) Jewish allies, you should take this down immediately.”

Another post said, “Please help anti-Zionist Jews who support BDS. Please do not reproduce anti-Semitic tropes and rhetoric while officially representing BDS (or ever for that matter). I am ashamed that an official BDS page has shared something so disgustingly anti-Semitic.

“There are loads of anti-Zionist Jews who would be happy to help you see why this is truly vile, please reach out if you are unable to understand the problem here.”

Shain said the fact that the post and cartoon was removed – apparently at the behest of Jewish supporters of BDS – “shows how close to the border of Jew-hatred the cartoon and tweet sailed”.

“Money-lending, greed, the perversion of law, revenge, and the distinction between law and love all resonate deeply with Western tropes

of anti-Semitism. This is hardly surprising. Insofar as the literature of BDS does not support Israel’s right to exist, it is arguably an anti-Semitic organisation. Of course, while I am aware that not supporting the idea of a Jewish state cannot axiomatically be considered anti-Semitic, it is extremely naïve to wish Israel away. Invariably, such sentiments tie in with anti-Semitism. An hygienic form of anti-Semitism, in other words. As the post and cartoon illustrate, many of the advocates of BDS hate Jews.”

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies criticised the post, saying, “It is ironic that an organisation that purports to stand for human rights would use an age old, vile, anti-Semitic stereotype in an effort to demonise SA Jewry.” By doing this, it said, it revealed its true anti-Semitic colours.

“According to BDS, our community is like Shylock, namely, ‘ruthless’, ‘vindictive’ and ‘merciless’,” said the Board.

British sociologist Dr David Hirsh criticised BDS, saying, “The core business of BDS is not as much about resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as creating a hostile environment for SA Jewry. No amount of hiding behind ‘Jewish voices’ can excuse ongoing incidents of anti-Semitism, of which it has a long history.”

BDS-SA Chairperson Professor Farid Esack did not comment, in spite of attempts to reach him.

## Most South African Jews of Sephardi origin are entitled to EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND, ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT

A common misconception is that South African Jews of Ashkenazi heritage are of Lithuanian descent, and that only those who are able to prove their eligibility for Lithuanian citizenship are able to obtain a European passport. The fact is that most South African Jews do qualify for European citizenship, whether they can prove their Lithuanian lineage or not, and most South African Jews of Sephardic heritage are also eligible for European passports.



Adv. Avi Horesh has in-depth knowledge of the applicable legislation and in his experience, the majority of South African Jews have ancestors who were illegally deprived of citizenship. As their descendants, these Jews are eligible for European citizenship which will result in them obtaining an EU passport.

**Ashkenazi:** It is important to understand that until 1918, all of Eastern Europe was divided between three empires: Russia,

Prussia, the Austro-Hungarian empire. Neither Poland nor Lithuania existed until 1918.

At the end of WWI, the territory was divided, and countries like Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and others were born/reborn. Only then did residents become citizens of these countries. As a result, people who, for example, were born in Riga (nowadays Latvia) could actually be Lithuanian or Polish.

Horesh advises that eligibility for a Lithuanian or Polish passport depends on the city from which your grandparents (or their parents) hailed.

Horesh says many South African Ashkenazi Jews of Lithuanian origin have been refused Lithuanian citizenship because their heritage is actually Polish. They would, accordingly, be entitled to Polish citizenship and a EU passport.

After World War II, the borders in Europe changed, resulting in cities changing nationality. The resultant effect for descendants of Jews who were born in Vilnius, for example, is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined, but an application for a Polish passport may very well be successful.

**Sephardi:** The descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are most likely eligible for a Portuguese



passport. If applicable, Horesh is able to obtain an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which an application for European citizenship can be made and will most likely be successful. Portuguese citizenship enables one to enter the United States without the need to apply for a visa.

In addition, Horesh is filing many applications for descendants of Sephardi origin who arrived in South Africa from Greece, Turkey, and North Africa. Descendants from other countries in the Middle East – even Holland – are also potentially eligible.

Horesh resides in Israel, but has spent seven years in Poland, and is recognised as a leading lawyer in the field of European citizenship, with a full

understanding of local immigration laws.

Living in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – offers him quick and easy access to Poland and Lithuania. Accordingly, he is able to work closely with local professionals who assist him in tracing the documentation required for successful applications for European citizenship.

In addition, and as a result of his close ties with Portuguese authorities, to date he has had a 100% success rate with applications for Portuguese citizenship.

**Horesh is available to discuss your specific details. He is often in South Africa, and can meet you in person to discuss your specific needs.**

I will be in Johannesburg and in Cape Town from the end of January until early February. Please contact me for an appointment. My South African phone number is +27 64 745 5273 • Email me on [adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com](mailto:adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com)



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# Coming out of the silly season

As we do our best to get back into the swing of things and drag our brains back kicking and screaming from our relaxing holidays, it is hard to imagine that it’s back to the grindstone. There is something so luxurious about waking up in the morning without any set plans.

Another thing about being on holiday, though, is that we let our guard down to a large degree. Few of us remain glued to the news, and some even make a point of avoiding anything that is too serious. No wonder they call it the “silly season”.

The thing about this time of year is that devious souls use it to get things done that they don’t want others to notice. What better time?

Also, people so often say and do things that show them for who they really are without their business masks on. Sometimes it might take a little bit of alcoholic lubrication, but not always.

A case in point of using this time to get things done was in December 2017, when the ANC pushed through the decision to downgrade the South African Embassy in Israel. In this case, it used the ANC electoral conference where Cyril Ramaphosa unseated Zuma as its smokescreen.

I recall the vivid picture painted by Zev Kregel, the President of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, who was the only person in the room opposed to the motion. It was like a soccer match with a rough team playing against a single player whose side had empty goals.

In December 2018, after most of us had let down our guard, BDS South Africa (BDS-SA) posted the ugliest statement I have ever seen on social media. I was astonished that it could be so openly anti-Semitic, using the imagery of Shakespeare’s moneylender, Shylock, from *The Merchant of Venice*. (See page 4)

Did it do it because it thought nobody would notice? Did it do it because it slipped up and let its guard down? Who can tell? It appears that its true sentiment towards Jewry came through despite frequent denials that it is anti-Semitic.

Suffice to say, even its own supporters were horrified.

And then it removed this post, supposedly expecting that no one would notice, and no harm was done.

Fortunately, some of us were watching and on guard, like the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, which put out a

statement immediately.

What is interesting is that I, for one, have often wanted to believe that BDS-SA was a moral organisation that had human rights at its very core. It would mean that as a Jewish community, we only had to have opposing views about Israel. It would then just be a debate or a disagreement, but nothing sordid. We could simply agree to disagree.

But, the reality is that there has never been a time when BDS-SA has seen the humanity in Israelis or others living in Israel. And, clearly it doesn’t think much of the rest of us Jews either. For the organisation, it is about Israel being all bad and the Palestinians being angels, never able to set a foot wrong. There are all forms of anti-Semitism in the world and today, this is recognised globally as “the new anti-Semitism”.

No matter how hard BDS-SA continues to try couch its sentiments by making out that it is fighting for the underdog against an ogre, the truth is out.

In our news section of this paper, there are a number of stories that you may argue are not the most up to date news because they happened in the silly season.

Here is our reasoning for this: when things happen in the quiet time when no one is expected to be watching, we should never ignore it when it has an impact on us. Most of these stories were ignored by the mainstream media, and yet they apply to us directly. For this reason, we bring them to you.

Although we have some tough stories, this edition is mostly one of celebration. It is our “Matric Matters” edition (pages 9 to 24).

What a joy it is to see so many phenomenal young people graduate with distinction into the rest of their lives.

While I truly appreciate the hard work and commitment it takes to get distinctions, I believe there is way too much pressure on our children to achieve them.

I understand the importance they hold for our youth to get into university, but at what cost?

We need to be careful about where we put the emphasis in matric in the knowledge that not everybody is a straight-A kid. There are so many different paths for our youngsters to take, and they don’t all lead to university. Not going to university doesn’t mean they can’t be hugely successful. What is success anyway?

For some, getting seven distinctions is easy, but for others it is impossible. Is that person, for whom it is impossible, any less capable than the one with all those distinctions? Not a chance!

I know we are a community that values education above all else. I subscribe to that wholeheartedly, but education is much broader than distinctions in matric.

Having said that, we congratulate each and every matriculant for getting through the pressure cooker, and wish them the best of luck in launching the rest of their lives. You are our future!

On that note, it is with sadness that we bid farewell to international businessman and philanthropist extraordinaire, Ronnie Lubner, who was by his own admission the poster boy for the view that school years are no predictor of success in life (page 26).

The *SA Jewish Report* sends condolences to the Lubner family.

We would also like to wish all of you the most successful and joyful 2019.

**Shabbat Shalom and Tu B’Shvat Sameach!**  
**Peta Krost Maunder**  
**Editor**

# Israeli elections down to two men

Israeli elections are still three months away, which is a lifetime in Israel. So much can happen between now and then that when election day arrives on 9 April, much of what is written here could be obsolete.

As things stand now, however, the elections will boil down to two people: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who’s running for his political survival, and Israeli Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit.

It wasn’t so long ago that Netanyahu insisted that he wasn’t going to call for early elections. He argued that Israel was facing existential challenges that only he and his government could surmount.

Then suddenly at the end of last month, he announced he was bringing the elections forward by eight months.

Most Israelis agree this was an attempt to put pressure on the attorney general, who needs to decide whether he will indict the prime minister or not, and if so, on which charges. The issue has morphed into a political one.

Mandelblit is doomed if he does, doomed if he doesn’t. He must also decide when to act. If he postpones his decision to indict Netanyahu until after the elections, Israelis will not be happy. It means they will go to the polls without knowing if the candidate they are potentially voting for faces charges of bribery, lesser charges, or no charges at all.

But should Mandelblit decide to indict Netanyahu before the elections, he will also be attacked. The premier and his right-wing support base will accuse him of meddling and trying to disgrace Netanyahu ahead of the polls.

As if this is not enough of a headache, there’s been a major upheaval among Israeli political parties recently. Because of the proportional system for electing parliament, there has never been a clear majority for any one party in the country.

For decades, Labour (a social democratic and Zionist party from which all Israeli prime ministers until 1977 originated) and Likud (a centre-right political party chaired by Netanyahu) dominated the political scene. But in recent years – and months – they’ve splintered into smaller, more ideologically-driven factions.

On the left, the Zionist Union (an alliance between Labour and the Hatnuah party, headed by Tzipi Livni) broke up. On the right, Bayit Hayehudi (the Jewish Home) ministers Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked left the party they’d established to set up a new one called Hayemin Hehadash (New Right).

They’re hoping to take votes away from Netanyahu, but the increasing divisions

## DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier



might mean that Likud is the only right-wing party certain to meet the electoral threshold of 3.25% of votes. The creation of centrist parties has further split the political playing field.

If there is one politician who might give Netanyahu a run for his money, it’s former Israeli Army Chief of Staff General Benny Gantz. He’s running almost neck-and-neck with the premier, polling number two (38%) behind Netanyahu (41%) in popularity.

At the end of December, Gantz formed a new political party called Hosen Yisrael (Israel Resilience Party), but at the time of writing, he had still not publicly stated his position on various issues. History has shown that Israelis rally behind generals when they’re in the army, but as soon as they step into the political arena, they lose popularity. No doubt, once Gantz presents his platform, he will too.

As things currently stand, the polls also predict that the next parliament will be comprised of parties currently in Netanyahu’s coalition. Gantz is likely to be watching how things unfold before he makes his move as he’d rather be in the next government as opposed to being pushed into the opposition.

The only person who can realistically, therefore, stop Netanyahu from winning a fifth term in office is the attorney general. But he’s already dragged his feet for months, so it seems unlikely he’ll rush to intervene in coming weeks. Certainly, this is what Netanyahu is banking on.

On the other hand, Mandelblit has said that, it is “an obligation to decide” on a course of action pre-election so that voters have the necessary information. So, who knows what will happen.

Assuming that Netanyahu wins the election, his power will be severely diminished if he’s forced to fight the charges as a sitting prime minister. In such a scenario, it’s unlikely he’ll survive for long.

For now, the country is in full election mode, and candidates are vying for airtime. It’s highly unlikely that they’ll take the looming indictments against Netanyahu out of their campaign speeches. But the attorney general needs to make sure that the campaigns are taken out of all discussions regarding the indictments.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit



# What happened to Friends Restaurant?

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

A photograph of the entrance to Friends Restaurant with a sign saying, “Friends Restaurant has closed down” went viral on Jewish social media during the holidays, causing much consternation.

The restaurant near Glenhazel went into voluntary liquidation on 31 December 2018 after two years of trading, according to the restaurant’s shareholders, Russ Timothy and Dennis Cohen.

“We understood that it’s always risky when you do kosher,” says Friends Restaurant’s sole director and majority shareholder, Timothy. The decision to close wasn’t an easy one, he says, and was due to a number of factors that had an impact on the bottom line – there was no single aspect that led to the restaurant’s demise.

“A restaurant is a tough enough business as it is. I’ve been in the game for 30 odd years. When you’re dealing with kosher, it’s a whole different ball game. We learned an expensive lesson. You have Beth Din fees, you have mashgiach fees, that alone comes to about R40 000 to R45 000 a month. Then you’ve got staff fees – labour’s expensive these days and we had three kitchens. The costs just add on.”

Coupled with astronomical rental costs, that together with water and lights, came to almost R150 000 a month, running the restaurant simply became uneconomical.

Says Timothy, “Fruit and vegetables weren’t the problem, but meat’s expensive, no matter how you cut and dice it. You’ve always got to try and offer value, and it’s tough to offer value when 90% of your turnover is meat.”

With meat dishes came the challenges posed by the controversies that hit South Africa’s kosher industry in 2018. “The Stan & Pete issue



**The sign on the Friends Restaurant door**

affected us, we definitely felt a bit of a decline in turnover at least two months after that saga,” says Timothy. “Maybe people didn’t trust kosher anymore. We also felt it when one of the butcheries had their food pulled off the shelves at Pick n Pay because people were phoning us and asking where we were getting our meat from. They were scared to eat out.”

With low breakfast turnover and fluctuating lunchtime traffic, Friends Restaurant started feeling the pinch. “We were almost fooled into a false sense of security because evenings were good because there no-one else was really offering dinner,” says Timothy. “However, in the daytime, there was a plethora of options. No-one’s pointing fingers at anybody, it’s just one of those things. I’m disappointed, but it is what it is.”

Timothy also feels that the kosher food market has become somewhat saturated. “The community is shrinking, but if you’re looking to eat kosher food in Joburg, you have about 29

options – including bakeries, supermarkets with take-out, and restaurants.” With Nussbaums adding its own restaurant offering, things became even more complicated. “I can’t compete with its prices – I’m buying from it, how do I compete with it?” he asks.

In spite of speculation that the split from Friends Bakery somehow contributed to the demise of the restaurant, Timothy says this wasn’t a factor. “We decided to split from the bakery about a year and a half ago. For me, it wasn’t working. Our focus was on a restaurant that happened to offer bakery goods. We were never a bakery, the bakery was always offsite. The split took away a lot of turnover, but it also eliminated a lot of expense.” He also refutes claims that there were any disagreements over the use of the Friends name.

Ultimately financial negotiations with landlords, the Beth Din, and staff didn’t yield results, and Timothy and Cohen decided to cut their losses.

“No-one’s to blame, it’s just a culmination of

**Board of Deputies comes to Deep Fried Man’s defence**  
NICOLA MILTZ

Comedian and satirist Deep Fried Man, aka Daniel Friedman, has left social media following a tirade of hateful anti-Semitic abuse and threats to his and his young family’s life.

It was so bad, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) came to his defence. “I have not witnessed such hatred on such a large scale for a long time,” said Wendy Kahn, the board’s National Director.

Friedman, who is the Citizen’s online news editor, has been unfairly lambasted for a video he made in 2015 that was allegedly manipulated

a very crappy year, and the fact that we couldn’t come to an arrangement with people on our expense list,” says Timothy.

Yet, with the closure of the Friends Restaurant comes the welcome news that the original Friends Bakery, that used to operate in Ridge Road, will begin trading again – this time at Off The Strip in Sandringham. “We had restraint of trade after we split from the factory so we couldn’t reopen,” says original Friends Bakery owner Ruben Genish. “But since it has now closed, we’re entitled to do so.”

After finally being granted their Beth Din license, Friends Bakery plans to open for business next week. Says Genish, “We’ll offer very unique and special products – a few styles of kitkah will be available, for example. We’re preparing many surprises, as well as all the things we’re known for. We’re looking forward to seeing all our old customers!”

Timothy adds his seal of approval. “It’s fantastic that the bakery is reopening. The Friends name needs to stay alive. I wish it well.”

Continued on page 20>>

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# Rare haemophilia revealed after bris

TALI FEINBERG

A baby boy born in Cape Town is critically ill with haemophilia, which came to light when he did not stop bleeding after his Brit Milah.

“This case is unprecedented,” says Dr Dean Gersun, who is also a mohel. “In fact, the mohel helped to detect the condition, as this was the first time in 43 years of doing Brit Milah that he could not stop the bleeding. Therefore, he realised something was wrong.”

Gersun emphasises that the actual Brit Milah was perfect, and it was thanks to the mohel’s training and experience that the baby’s underlying condition was picked up.

“As regards the actual Brit Milah performed, we wish to reassure the community that this was not the cause of the undiagnosed underlying condition,” says Dr Richard Friedland, the Chairperson of the Regulatory Board of Brit Milah in South Africa.

The child’s parents confirm that their son has “a rare genetic blood disorder called haemophilia, in which he has a deficiency of the protein blood factors [resulting in his] blood not clotting properly. Generally, people who have haemophilia are missing only one factor, but our son is missing three factors. He is one in 100 000 people who have inherited combination haemophilia.”

The child’s case is so rare, he is the first documented patient in South Africa to have this specific haemophilia, and there are less than 200 documented cases in the world.

In spite of the rarity of the condition, “Halacha broadly deliberates upon how the Jewish obligation to circumcise an

eight-day-old male infant is affected by haemophilia,” writes Samuel Reisman in his paper, “Haemophilia in Jewish Tradition and Genomes”. Reisman is pursuing a degree in biology at Touro College in New York City, and he received a Bachelor’s of Talmudic Law from Beis Medrash Gavoah in 2012.

“The Talmud rules that after two separate occurrences in which brothers haemorrhaged and died at circumcision, the third son should not be circumcised,” he continues.

**The child’s case is so rare, he is the first documented patient in South Africa to have this specific haemophilia, and there are less than 200 documented cases in the world.**

If this is the case, why has it never been a concern to check for the condition before a Brit Milah? “Because it is usually picked up before the Brit Milah because of a family history of haemophilia,” says Gerson. “And if there is no family history, it is usually discovered during the bumps and bruises of birth, or from the pinpricks a baby undergoes in the hospital.”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, Reisman says he’s not sure why routine haemophilia screening is not implemented. “Generally, routine screening is implemented if a condition fulfils at least the following criteria: it is relatively common or if it has extremely high morbidity or mortality rate; it can be tested for with high sensitivity and

specificity; and it can be effectively treated. Haemophilia testing is highly accurate and treatable, but I suspect the reason it is not routinely tested for is that it is not common, and mortality from haemophilia is exceedingly low.

“The rarity of having such a severe mixed coagulation disorder raises questions whether a routine screening programme for all newborns is practical. However, there are rarer conditions screened for routinely in the United States if they have high morbidity and there are treatments,” he says.

Dr Rosie Schwyzer, a paediatric haematology and oncology expert based in Johannesburg, says that haemophilia appears in one in 5 000 males, and it would be difficult to test routinely for the condition. If a family is concerned, she recommends looking at family history for any bleeding disorders in males or menstrual issues in females. Only about 30% of haemophilia cases are not hereditary. She points out that, “Any significant bleeding after a circumcision needs to be taken note of. Mothers must be empowered to trust their instinct if there is bleeding and it doesn’t seem right.”

Ultimately, Jewish tradition notes the risks of circumcising a baby with haemophilia, but emphasises that it is mainly a hereditary condition. “Many haematology and medical textbooks acknowledge that the first recorded description of haemophilia and genetically transmitted disease is found in the Talmud,” writes Reisman.

“The Talmudic description of haemophilia was two millennia ahead of its time, as the

first modern description was recorded in 1803. Perhaps the Talmudic scholars were in a good position to notice this disorder and its hereditary patterns empirically because the universal Jewish practice of circumcision on the eighth day after birth facilitated the prompt diagnosis of bleeding disorders.”

In his paper, “Haemophilia and circumcision – from observation to classification: connecting a Talmudic presumption with a modern diagnosis”, University of Michigan Professor Daniel Eisenberg agrees with this view. “The story of haemophilia in Jewish law provides a fascinating insight into the observational powers of the rabbis.

“We also see the flexibility of Jewish law, and how it responds to up-to-date medical information to provide accurate Halachic rulings. It should give at least a small degree of humility to our modern minds to realise that rabbis in Israel, many centuries before the first medical description of haemophilia, had not only recognised its inheritance pattern, but had established laws to guard the health of babies who might have the disease.”


Meanwhile, the family of the little boy in Cape Town has thanked all the medical staff who are caring for their son, and the community for its ongoing support.


• *His parents have requested donations to Haemophilia South Africa in his honour for a refuah shleima (prayer for recovery) at [https://fundrazr.com/71RoBf?ref=ab\\_17oxYc\\_ab\\_64izcrEj4XC64izcrEj4XC](https://fundrazr.com/71RoBf?ref=ab_17oxYc_ab_64izcrEj4XC64izcrEj4XC)*

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**JORDAN MOSHE**





# Private schools ponder the A to IEB of education alternatives

TALI FEINBERG

What curriculum is best for our children’s future? Is it the National Senior Certificate (NSC), the Cambridge A-levels, or the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) curriculum, or a combination?

These are the questions being considered by schools and parents around the country. At the end of 2018, United Herzlia Schools (UHS) confirmed it was introducing the Cambridge A-levels curriculum as an additional matric option for its scholars.

The International Cambridge Global Perspectives and Research syllabus will be launched this year in Herzlia’s middle and high schools. “This innovative curriculum is centred on developing 21st century skills and competencies of research, reasoning and communication,” says Herzlia Education Director Geoff Cohen.

“With a view to offering a Cambridge matric qualification as an alternative to the National Senior Certificate (NSC), A-levels will be offered in the high school from 2020 to those who wish to pursue an international curriculum. This will position Herzlia uniquely by offering three different matriculation streams – vocational, National Senior Certificate, and A-Levels.”

At an information evening for parents late last year, Cohen and Herzlia High Principal Marc Falconer explained that the introduction of A-levels came about after Herzlia had thoroughly investigated switching from the NSC to the IEB curriculum followed at most private schools outside of the Western Cape.

However, the UHS found that the NSC as administered in the Western Cape was of a

high educational standard, which made it not worth changing at this stage.

In addition, it is the curriculum offered by most independent high schools in that province, so to do the IEB would be to ‘go it alone’ without the support of other schools. Meanwhile, adding A-levels would link UHS up with other schools doing the Cambridge curriculum. Its leadership realised that if any change was to be made, the addition of the Cambridge international qualification would be the most valuable option for all involved.

They also realised that the Applied (AP) English and Applied (AP) Maths offered at the school was at the same academic level as A-levels, but that the students doing those additional subjects were not getting additional point scores towards university. “This is because IEB offers AP Maths and English, so this cannot count for points for an NSC school. If Herzlia were an IEB school, then these subjects would count,” says Falconer.

Therefore, the UHS decided that if learners were going to take ‘stretching subjects’ like these, it might as well be an international curriculum.

Cohen emphasises that doing A-levels is not a one-way ticket to international universities. “It does not mean [students] will get into international or local universities with any greater ease, but the rigorous academic training will make them better prepared for university,” he says.

Locally, South African universities have a vested interest in the NSC, the Cambridge curriculum is not well-known, and A-levels are less broad than is the case internationally, which some universities may see as a disadvantage.



Internationally, Herzlia students who apply to universities will still have to do psychometric tests and compete against the 35 million other students around the world who do A-levels every year. In addition, hundreds of South Africans have entered international universities on the NSC and IEB.

Cohen also emphasises that A-levels are not for everyone. “It is extremely rigorous, on the level of first-year varsity. It allows learners to delve deeper into three chosen electives, which means they have to be extremely committed.”

Furthermore, students have to decide which track they will follow at the end of Grade 10, and it is extremely difficult to join the A-levels curriculum late or drop out of it. “It would be very hard to swap,” he says. The school will offer in-depth counselling and assessments for each child to help them and their parents to make this decision.

Those doing A-levels will be able to choose three of the following subjects as their electives: economics, history, maths, chemistry, physics, literature and language, and possibly art.

To do this, the students will “write off” their first additional home language and maths papers in Grade 11, so that they have more time and space to do their electives.

In addition, all Herzlia students will do the Cambridge Global Perspectives curriculum from Grade 10 onwards, which will train them in the Cambridge methodology should they choose to do A-levels. Herzlia will be training its teachers in this course, and in teaching A-levels.

Practically, students doing A-levels will join their peers doing the NSC in class, but they will do a double period of their chosen subject. The school will ensure that there is no sense of elitism in the classroom. For those parents whose children are doing A-levels, there will be no real change in school fees besides the cost of the actual exams, which comes to about 90 pounds (R1 586) in total.

Cohen and Falconer say that they have had excellent support and experienced fantastic generosity from other Western Cape schools doing the Cambridge curriculum, and that online resources for teachers and learners are exceptional.

“We are excited about the academic and deep learning potential of the Cambridge curriculum, not just for the pupils who are doing the course, but for all the staff involved, and the ongoing development of their departments and ultimately for the school,” says Falconer.

“The King David Schools are not considering A-levels currently,” says Rabbi Craig Kacev, Director of the South African Board of Jewish Education. “The schools

write an IEB matric together with applied courses in Maths and English. This matric has been shown to be of a high standard, with students gaining access to all local universities as well as many international universities – and most certainly all Israeli universities.

“For students to excel in the IEB matric and contribute to the many other areas of school life – to gain a holistic education – it takes a tremendous amount of time and dedication. To add further examinations and curricula would add unnecessary further pressure,” he says.

“The IEB is the best exam to write,” says Dr Eirwen Oswald, an experienced educator and the principal of a Johannesburg school.

“Although the curriculum is the same as that of government schools, the assessment is very different, and it is this that makes for a superior exam. Content is not the focus in an IEB paper, so children who learn parrot-fashion style will not excel in this exam. The IEB papers are designed to test understanding and skills rather than just pure content. Therefore ‘own voice’ becomes a focus, and the candidates are exhibiting skills like succinct argumentation, the application of knowledge, and understanding of the curriculum. These skills are vital for success in the workplace and at university. Statistics show that many of the candidates who do very well in government state exams often fail first-year university because they do not have the skills to cope.

She says the IEB is accepted in many countries overseas. “I taught at an international school for many years, and a large number of our students were accepted and were successful at international universities.”

Meanwhile, some other schools have taken yet another route. Redhill School in Johannesburg is now an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, offering the IB Diploma Programme, or the IEB.

“Students thus have the opportunity to choose either a local or international qualification. Both are recognised by South African and international tertiary institutions,” says Joseph Gerassi, the Executive Head of Redhill School.

“The Diploma Programme offers a holistic, well-balanced curriculum that includes a compulsory core programme comprising of theory of knowledge, an extended essay, and an evaluation of a student’s CAS (creativity, action, and service). Students in the IB are expected to complete this core successfully as well as a balanced, rigorous academic programme consisting of six subjects from different subject areas. This ensures that students are prepared fully for the transition into tertiary institutions.”

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SEVEN DISTINCTIONS



**Leah Gluckman:** English, Afrikaans, Maths, LO, IT, Life Sciences, Visual Art

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS



**Claudia Greenberg:** English, Afrikaans, Maths, LO, Economics, History, Physical Science

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS



**Joshua Russak:** English, Afrikaans, Maths, LO, Accounting, Economics, Physical Science

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS



**Simona Stone:** English, Afrikaans, Maths, LO, Hebrew, Physical Science, Visual Art

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS



**Anna Valkin:** English, Afrikaans, Maths, LO, Drama, Life Sciences, Physical Science

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS



**Skye Zive:** English, Afrikaans, Maths, LO, Economics, Life Sciences, Physical Science

SIX DISTINCTIONS



**Kayla Dibowitz:** English, Maths, LO, Business Studies, Economics, Visual Art

SIX DISTINCTIONS



**Ryan Kaplan:** English, Maths, LO, Accounting, IT, Physical Science

SIX DISTINCTIONS



**Peter Oki:** English, Maths Lit, LO, Drama, Economics, History

SIX DISTINCTIONS



**Zac Rubin:** Maths, AP Maths, LO, Accounting, IT, Physical Science

SIX DISTINCTIONS




**Dylan Solin:** English, Maths, LO, Accounting, Economics, IT

SIX DISTINCTIONS



**Benjamin Weinstein:** English, Afrikaans, Maths, Hebrew, IT, Physical Science

FIVE DISTINCTIONS



**Zac Cohen:** Maths, LO, Accounting, Economics, Physical Science

FIVE DISTINCTIONS



**Jamie Joffe:** English, LO, Drama, Economics, Visual Art

FIVE DISTINCTIONS



**Alon Katz:** English, Hebrew, IT, Life Science, Physical Science

FIVE DISTINCTIONS



**Max Russak:** Maths, LO, Accounting, Economics, Physical Science

FIVE DISTINCTIONS



**Jared Shorkend:** English, Maths Lit, LO, Hebrew, Life Sciences

FIVE DISTINCTIONS



**Joshua Tarlie:** English, Maths, Accounting, Drama, Physical Science

FOUR DISTINCTIONS



**Zachary Bloch:** Maths, Accounting, Business Studies, Economics

FOUR DISTINCTIONS



**Aaron Glanz:** Maths, Accounting, Economics, IT

FOUR DISTINCTIONS



**Jared Levy:** English, Maths Lit, Business Studies, Drama

FOUR DISTINCTIONS



**Gabriel Lipschitz:** English, LO, Drama, History

FOUR DISTINCTIONS



**Raphael Nathan:** Maths, Drama, IT, Physical Science

FOUR DISTINCTIONS



**Jaydin Pina:** Maths, Accounting, IT, Physical Science

FOUR DISTINCTIONS



**Samuel Pogrund:** Maths, Accounting, History, Physical Science

FOUR DISTINCTIONS



**Adam Rawray:** English, LO, Drama, History

FOUR DISTINCTIONS



**Julie Wilensky:** English, LO, Drama, History

THREE DISTINCTIONS




**Daniel Gelbart:** Accounting, Business Studies, Economics

THREE DISTINCTIONS



**Lauren Hirsch:** English, LO, Hebrew

THREE DISTINCTIONS



**Mathew Jacobson:** Maths, LO, History

THREE DISTINCTIONS



**Ethan Mknassi:** Economics, History, Physical Science

THREE DISTINCTIONS



**Saffron Meltzer:** Drama, History, Visual Art

THREE DISTINCTIONS



**Benjamin O'Regan:** Afrikaans, CAT, History



# The stories behind 2018’s matric achievers

Matric is the ultimate leveller and means different things to different teenagers. Being a matric achiever is not necessarily based on academic prowess and distinctions alone. It is for this reason that we asked the various high schools around the country to point us in the direction of some of their top matric pupils. The few individuals chosen were not necessarily the top academic achievers, but had a story to tell.

They represent every one of the phenomenal matriculants from 2018. We apologise for not including all the stories. We just didn’t have the space!

## Grade 12s need a break

JORDAN MOSHE

Matric is a consistently stressful year. No matter what you do, you feel the pressure to achieve those distinctions as the year progresses.

But, marks are not the be all and end all, say Yeshiva College’s head boy and girl for 2018, Liad Shulman and Liat Shear. They believe that if you really want to make a success of your matric year, you have to remember that results are only a small part of a bigger picture.

Having said that, both achieved seven distinctions in matric. So, the two certainly committed themselves to their academic responsibilities. However, says Shulman, “There’s so much more to this year in your life, and if you don’t see it that way, you’ve missed something vital.”

Like hundreds before them, Shulman and Shear had grand study plans prior to beginning matric, only to find that life had other ideas. Says Shear, “No matter what study routines you plan, you find that you have to be far more flexible than you imagined. Driving lessons, Shabbatonim, socialising, even taking time to watch TV are all important activities. They are part of the matric experience.”

Both keen public speakers, Shear and Shulman enhanced their matric experience with meaningful engagements. They devoted time to preparing and presenting speeches for events held during the year, not only earning A+s.

As tempting as it may be to withdraw from social life and remain buried in one’s books, it is important to remain connected and engaged with others, they say. “At some point at the beginning of the year, the class realised that we weren’t all in individual sinking boats, but in one big burning boat together,” says Shulman with a chuckle. “The need for camaraderie and to connect with others in the same situation is so important. You can’t be serious all the time. Whether it’s engaging in banter with teachers or asking stupid questions, have a laugh with your friends, and carry on.”

It’s unfortunate, they say, that few are able to look beyond their matric year, and see the greater scheme of things. Not only do fellow students become competitive, their behaviour can become hateful – even vindictive, says Shear. “When some people get their marks, they want to know how well they did in comparison to other people,” she says. “They get aggressive about their results, and forget what they’re really getting them for. All they want to see at the end of the year is a number on a piece of paper that’s better than someone else’s.”

The two say this culture must change. Says Shulman, “How can a percentage on a sheet of paper determine a learning culture, and the way you live your life? There are people who are far more talented at art, and would excel if they took it, but succumb to the pressure to take science because people say they need it to succeed after school or because everyone else is taking it.”

Says Shear, “Even with a full house of distinctions, you aren’t guaranteed that you’ll get a space in a medical-school programme. Receiving a distinction isn’t what people make it out to be, and may not actually be worth the extreme stress and pressure students put themselves under.

“Matric is the conclusion of 12 years of preparation,” Shear says. “So much work goes into that final mark that you can forget to appreciate the journey you go on to get it. If you remember to work hard but also play hard, be mindful of the bigger picture and set realistic goals, you’ll come out with more than just a matric.



Liat Shear



Liad Shulman

## Matric not a drama for Torah Academy achiever

JORDAN MOSHE

Excelling in drama at Torah Academy Girls High is not run of the mill, but then neither is Chani Zlotnick, who did just that in her matric year.

In many schools, matric subjects like drama are considered a soft option for B-grade matric students. Zlotnick, who got a distinction for two subjects including drama, says they are a different kind of difficult, and perhaps even more rewarding.

“A student who thrives in doing art is a top achiever as much as one who thrives doing maths,” says Zlotnick. “You don’t have to be a genius with eight distinctions to be considered a brilliant student, and the stigma against subjects beyond the norm needs to change.”

A ballet dancer since the age of four, Zlotnick also took drama classes as an extramural activity until the end of Grade 11. So determined was she to enjoy her school career, she chose to pursue drama as a matric subject – the only one in her class to do so.

“When I chose to study drama, business, history, and consumer studies along with the compulsory subjects, I made a decision to take classes that I knew I’d find interesting and would enjoy. There’s little point to learning something which doesn’t fascinate you, and believe me, these subjects can be just as hard as any other.”

She admits she does enjoy maths,

but Zlotnick – who describes herself as dramatic to the core – connects deeply with dramatic arts. “Taking drama as a school subject is very different to drama as a hobby,” she says. “You learn techniques which enable you to nurture your abilities, and you get the chance to put them to the test in really competitive spaces.”

The only person to take drama for matric at her school, Zlotnick frequently felt pushed to new levels. “Because I was the only person my age taking drama as a subject, I’d often be grouped with students in the year above me for classes and practicals. I had to prove to myself that I was up to the challenge, sidestepping anxiety, and just enjoy what I was doing.”

In spite of the stresses of matric, Zlotnick says she found her anxiety levels dropping as the year progressed. “When you’re surrounded by people who are stressed out, it’s not easy to stay calm,” she says. “We’d often joke about the number of drugs we were all on to cope with the pressure.

“While I did freak out at the beginning, I found that by the time exams came, my anxiety levels had dropped. I suppose I just got used to the pressure, and was determined to see the year through as best I could.”

In fact, it was through shared stress that Zlotnick believes her classmates achieved



Chani Zlotnick

some form of unity as a group. “Although we were a class of only 12, we had never really gotten along. We had to have therapy as a group in Grade 9. It was only while suffering

from the same pressures that we found allies in each other, and together we pushed through.

“It’s stupid to get worked up over something like matric. Distinctions are overrated. I’ve seen people overwork themselves, and end up doing worse than they would have done if they’d avoided the stress.

“A distinction doesn’t show what really matters, and if you simply do what you can to meet your own expectations, it’s worth so much more.”

Zlotnick is taking a gap year at the Tzohar Seminary for Chassidus and Art in Pittsburgh in the United States. She is also considering pursuing a career in law, a profession for which she believes her dramatic inclination is well suited.

“Drama has given me the ability to make myself heard, to stand up in front of other people, and invest myself completely in what I’m saying.”

She concludes, “Thinking that ‘artsy’ subjects are for weaker students is completely wrong. Even artistic people can be top achievers, and they can define their own success based on their strengths.”

## Redhill matriculant goes outdoors for inspiration

JORDAN MOSHE

For many students, matric means endless hours behind closed doors, with heads engrossed in books studying. Redhill School 2018 matriculant Gabriel Fine ran a recycling initiative at his school, raised R10 000 for Woodrock Animal Shelter, and organised sleep-out projects, as well as other initiatives.

In spite of the demands of matric, Fine believed the outside world should be embraced and not shut out.

“Since I can remember, I have had a special connection with nature,” he says. “Apparently my first word was ‘spider’, and because my parents are allergic to virtually every kind of cat and dog, the pets I’ve had have been everything but standard, including hedgehogs, lizards, and others.”

After attending Parkview Primary, Fine enrolled at Redhill at the beginning of high school because he liked its ethos of community, diversity, and small class sizes.

With a chemical engineer for a father, he was fascinated by the sciences and biology, both subjects to which he was drawn when he started Grade 10. Although he also took up accounting and IT, his heart lay in the study of the world and its natural wonders.

“IT intrigued me, and because I enjoy the mathematical elements of problem solving, I took it,” he says. “But I ended up dropping it in Grade 11 when the workload became too much, and I kept to biology and science. I wanted them to remain my focus.”

In spite of the academic challenges presented by his Grade 11 year, Fine didn’t think twice when elected to head up Redhill’s environmental committee. He held this position for the final third of the

Grade 11 year, and two-thirds of matric, working with 10 other students on the committee in devising and running various environmental-welfare initiatives and similar campaigns.

He explains, “I was excited to be part of a committee that aligned with my passion, and which could make a difference.

“Involvement in a committee like this during matric is really special. It makes you attach value to your time, and evaluate what is meaningful and what isn’t. You learn how to work with others and combine your efforts to do something significant.”

Beyond his environmental contributions, Fine also maintained his school sporting career during matric, serving as vice-captain of Redhill’s basketball and hockey teams.

Fine remained equally committed to his academic endeavours. Admitting to being a less-than-diligent student at the outset of the year, he found that he learned how to rely on himself and on his abilities. “In the end, it’s all up to you,” he says. “You trust your teachers to do their part, but they cannot see you through it.”

The key, he says, is to find an energising outlet that rejuvenates you and gives you the necessary spirit that matric requires. For Fine, it was spending time in nature. “Whenever I was studying, I really wanted to be sitting on the beach doing nothing else,” he laughs. “But, whenever I could, I’d spend time fishing with my brother or doing something outdoors that would recharge me and give me what I needed to



continue. Some people draw their energy from socialising, some from sport, and some from exercise. Find your source and use it.”

Beyond scoring seven distinctions in his final exams and coming eighth in South Africa in the Biology Olympiad, he believes the environmental committee had a tremendous impact on the school.

“When we started our term, there was a general feeling that the environmental committee didn’t do that much. By the time we stepped down, we had changed that perception and shown people that we could actually do things that make a difference to our environment. We showed them that change was possible.”

Although he considered studying overseas, and has sat the SAT tests for admission, Fine’s love for South Africa and her oceans has determined that he will pursue a degree in

chemical engineering at the University of Cape Town this year. In spite of initially considering studying zoology or marine biology, he believes that this choice equally enables him to make positive contributions to the natural world.


“The ocean is always close to my heart,” he says. “Not only will I be living near it, but I’ll be trying to find ways to make it and the natural world at large a better place. Chemical engineering hasn’t closed any doors to working with the environment. It has given me a different way to make a contribution.”




# TORAH ACADEMY BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

FIVE DISTINCTIONS

THREE DISTINCTIONS







Ellie Joffe: Afrikaans, Maths, LO, Hebrew, Physical Science

Levi Kinn: LO, Physical Science, History

TWO DISTINCTIONS

TWO DISTINCTIONS







Ariel Yachad: LO, Physical Science

Yakov Drutman: LO, History

TWO DISTINCTIONS

TWO DISTINCTIONS






Yoni Glassman: LO, Physical Science


Yehuda Goldberg: LO, History

# TORAH ACADEMY GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

THREE DISTINCTIONS

THREE DISTINCTIONS







Shoshana Baddiel: LO, Hebrew, CAT

Yakira Levitan: Maths Literacy, LO, CAT

TWO DISTINCTIONS

TWO DISTINCTIONS





Batya Naparstek: LO, Hebrew

Daniella Slasky: LO, Business Studies

TWO DISTINCTIONS



Chani Zlotnick: LO, Dramatic Arts



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Bringing martial arts to matric

Not letting adversity get in the way

JORDAN MOSHE

Torah Academy Boys High School matriculant Ellie Joffe applied the principles of karate learnt over many years to his matric year.

Like many sports, karate demands balance and discipline. Maintaining poise, a clear mind, and focus are all essential to be a successful martial artist. Like karate, matric requires control and stability, and as a karatika, Joffe has learned to apply his martial arts to his studies, bringing everything into perfect balance.

A keen soccer player and the director of children’s services at Chabad of Norwood, this Torah Academy student realised early in his matric year that balance was critical to success – it paid off with five distinctions in his case.

“Karate gives you physical and mental stability,” says Joffe. “Eleven years of training have shown me that not only does it relieve stress, it teaches methods which you can apply to life, even to school, to make sure that everything stays in balance.”

Although he put his karate lessons on hold for the second half of his matric year, Joffe strove to apply the principles of balance and focus to his studies throughout the year. “You take the year as it comes,” he says. “After working hard, you have to disconnect, and balance work with relaxation. But when you’re working, you have to swing in the other direction, and give yourself over to studying – forgetting about your phone entirely.”

It is for this reason that Joffe continued to run children’s services at his shul throughout his matric year, no matter the pressure he faced. Without fail, he’d arrive at shul on Shabbos, and ensure

that the youth were engaged. “Responsibilities don’t just go away when you have matric pressure,” he says. “The things you need to do are still there. I had to just go ahead and do them. It’s especially rewarding because you know you’ve done something in a balanced way.”

A constructive outlet is virtually indispensable, he says, especially when you’re feeling the stress of matric. “I have an older brother who did brilliantly in matric. To some extent, his reputation put pressure on me, especially when people

would see me and say that they had no doubt I’d succeed because of how well my brother had done. Although I was stressed, the balance I struck put it into perspective, and evened things out.”

According to Joffe, this mechanism and its application to the work involved in matric is worth more than the end results. “The way you learn to work and grow is worth more than the distinction you get at the end,” he says. “Yes, they are important, but distinctions aren’t necessarily indicators of a good approach. If anything, the pressure they create is the benefit – it fuels you and makes you create a method that works for you and helps you succeed in your own way.”

True to his ethos, Joffe will be pursuing a gap year in Israel at the Ma’ayanot Yeshiva, where he will spend time learning and playing soccer.

Although his school career is over, Joffe seems determined to continue his balanced approach to life. He concludes: “What comes, comes. Everything is about balance and perspective. Get your priorities right, and understand that they are part of a bigger picture.”



Ellie Joffe

JORDAN MOSHE

When David Da Costa celebrated his Barmitzvah, his late grandfather gave him a personalised book he had written for him containing life advice.

The book’s longest chapter was devoted to education, stressing its importance. He moved schools six times, was held back a year, and was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) early on at school. In spite of this, Da Costa emerged from his matric year with six distinctions.

“I always compare myself to others, but not in the typical way,” says Da Costa. “I look at their achievements, and use them to motivate me to strive and learn as much as I can.”

After starting his journey at Yeshiva College, it was in Grade 2 that he first encountered academic difficulties. Da Costa was enrolled at Bellavista School at the beginning of Grade 3. While he felt more at ease surrounded by people with similar challenges and teachers willing to assist, he didn’t like the idea of being at a remedial school.

“While I did cope with the work, and felt at home in that space, it was when I went into other spaces with people my age that I felt awkward. I was young, but I knew I could be as good as my friends who were attending regular schools. This feeling took its toll on my performance.”

Da Costa transferred to King David Victory Park, (KDVP) where he had to redo the year. He was somewhat at odds with his younger classmates, and in spite of settling in and even taking up school sports, he moved once again, and enrolled back at Yeshiva College during the third term of his Grade 5 year.

“I felt socially out of place at KDVP,” he says. “I’d see my friends who were still at Yeshiva, and felt I wanted to go back there. I had also developed a religious appreciation which wasn’t really [being] satisfied, and thought that Yeshiva would provide it.”

Unfortunately, the age difference between him and his classmates at Yeshiva became a particularly sore point, creating a rift between them. “They behaved like children do, and excluded me in so many ways. They kept away from me, making the distance caused by the age difference even worse.”

Da Costa bore this exclusion for a few years, going all out



David Da Costa

to improve his academic performance along the way. When he reached Grade 9, however, he stopped to wonder whether he should press on under such trying circumstances. “I asked myself whether I wanted to be surrounded by such people. What sort of environment did I want to expose myself to, especially in light of my drive to perform better?” he says.

Once again, Da Costa transferred during the third term of the academic year, completing Grade 9 at King David Linksfield. Taking up cricket and rugby, finding like-minded friends and a niche in which he finally felt at home, he forged ahead and progressed through senior high school.

“I was used to averages of 60-65,” he says. “I pushed myself, and eventually received my first A ever in Grade 11. While it was exciting, it wasn’t really a surprise. I felt proud not because of the mark, but because my efforts were paying off.”

At the end of 2017, Da Costa tore a knee ligament while playing rugby – an injury that has since prevented him from playing sport. “I always identified myself through sport, but once that was gone, I didn’t really know who I was,” he says. “My plans to join the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) after school wouldn’t work out, and I wouldn’t be able to play rugby.”

Changing his perspective, he seized the chance to enhance his school performance. His zeal would produce four As in his first prelims, and resulted in him becoming one of the top three in business studies in the second prelims and being awarded a medal for academics at the matric prize giving.

“I improved my marks in increments. I would gain a percent or two, and then plateau, then increase a little more. It was gruelling and slow, but it was worth it.”

Having emerged with six distinctions and an 83% average in his finals, Da Costa says his story may look like a dramatic change of fortune from the outside, but it was a slow, challenging process inside.

“These things take time,” he says. “I don’t look at myself and see a miracle, but someone who progressed slowly, and made something out of a difficult situation. For me, concessions and remedial allowances were excuses that I could use to not try [as hard as I should]. I pitted myself against the top academic achievers and saw myself as one of them, not as a remedial child.”

Da Costa’s grandfather would be proud.

## Victory Park twins prove benefit of studying together

STAFF REPORTER

Writing matric can be a lonely journey. Hours spent in solitary confinement with a pile of past exam papers from schools in every corner of the country.

The loneliness combined with the pressure of having to achieve marks that will ensure an entry into tertiary education adds to the stress on young lives.

For twins Gaby and Josh Nossel, 2018 matriculants at King David Victory Park, the experience was

very different. “We have always worked and studied together” says Josh. “I can’t remember a time throughout our school career where my brother and I weren’t doing things together. Homework, projects or studying was always a combined effort.”

The twins were also almost inevitably next to each other on the soccer or rugby field, creating a strong combination through their mutual understanding of each other.

It was obviously worthwhile, considering that they were King David Victory Park’s top achievers.

The boys have always done the same subjects, and have achieved very similar marks. “There hasn’t been more than a 1% difference in our marks since primary school, but we have never competed with each other,” says Gaby. “We have slightly different strengths, with Josh preferring languages, and my preference for maths.”

They say that research supports the value of studying together. Students are able to absorb the work better by looking at their notes while a peer is explaining something

Continued on page 21>>

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KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL VICTORY PARK

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<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Jamie Gordon: English, Afrikaans, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science, History</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Jason Mervis: Maths, Hebrew, Physical Science, French, LO, English, AP Maths</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Gadiel Shepherd: Hebrew, Life Sciences, Maths, LO, English, Physical Science, AP Maths</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Carl Koton: Hebrew, Life Sciences, LO, AP English, English, Afrikaans</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Loren Kramer: English, Maths, Physical Science, Life Sciences, Business Studies, LO</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Tova Swartz: English, Maths Lit, Hebrew, Business Studies, LO, History</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Benjamin Valkin: English, Hebrew, LO, Music, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Kayla Vardi: English, Maths Lit, History, Dramatic Arts, LO, Visual Art</div>
<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Nicole Kochukov: English, LO, Maths, Life Sciences, History</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Nathan Lieberman: Maths, Dramatic Arts, English, isiZulu, AP Maths</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Noa Nafté: English, LO, AP English, Hebrew, Visual Art</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Liad Peretz: Maths, Physical Science, Life Sciences, Geography, LO</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Shira Rosentvaig: English, LO, AP English, Maths Lit, Dramatic Arts</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Rebecca van der Walt: Life Sciences, LO, English, History, Maths Lit</div>	<div>FOUR DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Natasha Lipschitz: English, Hebrew, LO, AP English</div>	<div>FOUR DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Rebecca Matisonn: English, LO, Dramatic Arts, History</div>
<div>FOUR DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Yaron Peretz: Dramatic Arts, LO, English, Maths Lit</div>	<div>FOUR DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Benjamin Pincus: Business Studies, LO, English, Maths</div>	<div>FOUR DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Mira Rudnick: English, LO, Dramatic Arts, AP English</div>	<div>THREE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Megan Arenson: English, Visual Arts, LO</div>	<div>THREE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Erin Bleiden: Maths Lit, LO, English</div>	<div>THREE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Danni-Lee Heymann: English, Dramatic Arts, LO</div>	<div>THREE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Elias Judin: English, LO, Life Sciences</div>	<div>THREE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Ruby Lazarus: Business Studies, LO, English</div>
<div>THREE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Gabriel Marcus: English, Maths, IT</div>	<div>THREE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Tyra Parsons: Business Studies, LO, English</div>	<div>TWO DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Orion Avinir: Dramatic Arts, English</div>	<div>TWO DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Aryn Bloch: Geography, LO</div>	<div>TWO DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Justin Bolnick: Business Studies, LO</div>	<div>TWO DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Maya Rutstein: LO, English</div>	<div>TWO DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Mikaila Sher: LO, Dramatic Arts</div>	<div>TWO DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Paige Sundelson: Maths Lit, Dance</div>
<div>TWO DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Joshua Sweidan: English, LO</div>	<div>TWO DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Lee Tankle: History, Geography</div>	<div>ONE DISTINCTION</div> <div>Laurie Blacher: LO</div> <div>Ayden Miller: Dramatic Arts-Music Practical</div> <div>Joshua Modlin: Maths Lit</div> <div>Shannon Mosselson: Maths Lit</div> <div>Josh Phillips: Maths Lit</div> <div>Jonty Segal: LO</div> <div>Serena Steinhauer: Dramatic Arts</div>					






KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL LINKSFIELD

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<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Callan Kotzen:</b> Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science, AP Maths</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Shani Rosenfeld:</b> Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, History, LO, Maths, Physical Science, AP English</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Aiden Smith:</b> Accounting, English, Hebrew, IT, LO, Maths, Physical Science, AP Maths</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Adam Witt:</b> Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, IT, LO, Maths, Physical Science, AP Maths</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Jamey Wolpe:</b> Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science, AP Maths</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Ariella Chertkow:</b> English, Hebrew, isiZulu, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Gia Croock:</b> Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Martin Glazer:</b> Accounting, English, History, LO, Maths, Physical Science, AP Maths</div>
<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Natasha Horwitz:</b> Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Geography, Hebrew, LO, Maths</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Nicole Kamionsky:</b> Accounting, Afrikaans, Business Studies, English, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Kira Katz:</b> Accounting, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science, AP Maths</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Jonathan Kier:</b> Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Geography, History, LO, Maths</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Adam Seef:</b> Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Yael Ben Melech:</b> Dramatic Arts, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, AP English</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Jade Berson:</b> Afrikaans, Dramatic Arts, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Max Brenner:</b> English, History, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science</div>
<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Adam Chlewitz:</b> Accounting, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>David Da Costa:</b> Business Studies, English, Geography, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Yonatan Davis:</b> English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science, AP Maths</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Daniel Flaum:</b> Accounting, English, Geography, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Rachel Gerber:</b> Accounting, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Gina Izerel:</b> Afrikaans, Dramatics Arts, English, Hebrew, IT, LO</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Ariela Jacks:</b> Afrikaans, Dramatic Arts, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Jonathan Katz:</b> English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science</div>
<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Kira Levy:</b> English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Saul Mayers:</b> English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Ariel Raz:</b> English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Daniel Suttner:</b> Dramatic Arts, English, IT, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Rael Ware:</b> Accounting, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Juliana Bentel:</b> Accounting, English, LO, Maths, Visual Arts</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Ethan Berman:</b> Business Studies, English, Hebrew, History, LO</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Jesse Davidovitz:</b> Consumer Studies, English, Geography, LO, Life Sciences</div>
<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Jesse Itzkin:</b> English, History, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Aaron Kress:</b> Accounting, English, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Natalia Laffer-Liebson:</b> Accounting, Business Studies, English, Hebrew, LO</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Yonatan Lipshitz:</b> Accounting, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Noah Marks:</b> Business Studies, English, Hebrew, History, LO</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Lori Mirkin:</b> English, Hebrew, History, LO, Life Sciences</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Tyla Parker:</b> English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Physical Science</div>	<div>FIVE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div><b>Oren Shaff:</b> English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths</div>




KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL LINKSFIELD

FIVE DISTINCTIONS




**Farren Solarsh:** Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, Life Sciences, Maths

FIVE DISTINCTIONS




**Shira Walt:** Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Jamie Benater:** Accounting, Hebrew, Maths, Physical Science

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Yakira Fisher:** English, History, LO, Maths Lit

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Joshua Jackson:** English, Hebrew, History, LO

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Ariel Kartun:** Accounting, English, Geography, LO

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Terren Lefkowitz:** English, Geography, Maths, Physical Science

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Ariel Lipshitz:** English, Hebrew, LO, Maths

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Ross Nowitz:** English, Hebrew, History, LO

FOUR DISTINCTIONS



**Asher Radowsky:** English, Hebrew, LO, Physical Science

FOUR DISTINCTIONS





**Nicole Rock:** Business Studies, English, Geography, LO

**THREE DISTINCTIONS**  
**Jaimee Bayhack:** English, LO, Visual Arts  
**Stephen Blumenthal:** English, History, LO  
**Kayla Buchalter:** English, Hebrew, LO  
**Lauren Clacher:** Hebrew, LO, Maths Lit  
**Gabriella De Abreu:** Hebrew, LO, Visual Arts  
**Carly Diamond:** Hebrew, History, LO  
**Michael Goldman:** Accounting, Maths, Physical Science  
**Jaden Harris:** English, History, LO  
**Nurit Joselowsky:** English, Hebrew, LO  
**Jenna Lazarus:** English, History, LO  
**Benjamin Levin:** Geography, LO, Maths  
**Joshua Nathan:** English, History, LO  
**Jacob Ogus:** Business Studies, English, LO  
**Natanya Porter:** English, LO, Maths Lit  
**Daron Rubin:** English, Hebrew, LO  
**Liron Sharon:** English, Hebrew, LO  
**Kayla Strous:** Afrikaans, English, LO  
**Marc Ungar:** Business Studies, English, LO

**TWO DISTINCTIONS**  
**Joshua Black:** LO, Maths Lit  
**James Brenner:** Accounting, Maths  
**Sam Cohen:** LO, Maths  
**David Cramer:** LO, Maths Lit  
**Keiren Faurie:** LO, Maths Lit  
**Damon Fine:** English, LO  
**Mikaela Goldsmith:** English, LO  
**Adam Gordon:** LO, Life Sciences  
**Demi-Lee Harris:** Hebrew, LO  
**Joshua Labe:** LO, Maths Lit  
**Jordana Liebmann:** Accounting, Hebrew  
**Brandon Raik:** Business Studies, English  
**Jordan Rod:** Business Studies, Maths Lit  
**Shira Sacke:** English, LO  
**Ryan Selesnik:** Maths, Physical Science  
**Oren Shani:** English, LO  
**Adam Uria:** Accounting, Maths

**1 DISTINCTION**  
**Tal Aarons, Cassi Aluf, Idan Barak, David Bellon, Gordon Blumenthal, Jake Danino, Zachary Davies, Jason Davis, Saul Dozetos, Chloe Edery, Yaeli Elimeleh, Jai-Aimy Ginsberg, Jesse Goldblatt, Taye Horwitz, Dylan Jacobson, Amber-Jade Joselowitz, Gavriel Kabb, Amy Katz, Kayla Koral, Tannah Levick, Avi Maor, Brad Milwidsky, Tyron Neimann, Noah Plein, Tori Rabinowitz, Joshua Sarakinsky, Jamie Schroder, Brett Slotsky, Steven Stern, Joshua Taurog, Dean Zier**

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# Cyber and social bullying most prevalent at our schools

TALI FEINBERG

Zara Abelson is still haunted by the bullying she experienced 20 years ago. As someone with learning issues, she had been to a remedial school, but dreamed of attending a Jewish school and making Jewish friends. “Instead, from the minute I arrived, I was bullied,” she recalls. Abelson acknowledges that bullying exists in all schools, but she experienced it at a Jewish school. In particular, she says, “Jewish schools can be harsh because there is a certain mould you need to fit into. If not, the nastiness comes out. I was bullied purely because I was different. I was seen as an alien.” Abelson has discussed her story with many parents, and her sense is that bullying is much worse today because of cellphones. “At least when I was at school, I experienced it from only morning to afternoon, Monday to Friday. Home was my safe space. But now with phones, kids can never escape it,” she says. Indeed, according to a recent global survey, South Africa has the fourth highest rate of cyber bullying in the world. Twenty years later, Abelson still hears those bullies’ voices in her head. It has made her want to stop bullying in its tracks by sharing her story at schools, shuls, youth groups, and anyone who will hear it. While she receives enthusiastic responses from schools and parents initially, few have followed through by asking her to present her story. “It’s not being discussed. Just like our community is starting to talk about sexual abuse, we need to talk about bullying. We need to be active, build programmes, and talk about it. I have huge dreams about this.” Many feel disillusioned, however. For Sarah\*, the mother of Jane\*, the only solution was to remove her daughter from the school she was in. “Around the time of her Batmitzvah, Jane cut her hair short

and told me she thought she was different,” said Sarah. “That’s when the homophobic bullying started. She got an anonymous SMS calling her a ‘f\*\*king lesbian’, she saw graffiti in the girls’ bathroom saying ‘Jane is a faggot’, and someone wrote the word ‘fag’ in block letters on her locker. It was devastating, but the worst part was that the school wouldn’t do anything, and made no effort to find the culprits,” recalls Sarah.

parents tried very hard to meet her teachers and the school principal, nothing was done. They pulled their daughter out of the school, and she completed Grades 11 and 12 at a different school. She is happy, accepted, and “is a different child”. “Her new principal says she can’t believe the school let a girl like this go,” says her mother. “But they lost her because of hate. There is definitely a thread of homophobia, racism, and sexism in Jewish schools, and it needs to be dealt

to use common sense, to support others, and to show compassion and understanding,” says Geoff Cohen, Director of Education at United Herzlia Schools. If bullying is identified, “the school’s response should be sensitive, and we need to be aware of not bullying the bully. We always need to investigate the situation. In all cases, the consequences should be determined by the severity of the bullying, the age of the pupil, and the prior history.”

suspension, even expulsion. “King David Schools have very comprehensive bullying policies. Internal surveys of parents and students indicate that there is minimal physical bullying, with most bullying being relational, emotional, and cyber in nature,” says Rabbi Craig Kacev, the Director of the South African Board of Jewish Education. “Research indicates that school staff probably witness only 4% of bullying incidents and, as such, the school is dependent on students reporting incidents,” he says. “If they are reported, they are investigated and responded to by the school leadership and social services. Very often the schools hear of these incidents when it is too late to intervene meaningfully.” Kacev says that the most difficult forms of bullying to respond to are those of social exclusion and cyber bullying. “The school is not able to force students to be friends with other children against their will, and most social interaction occurs after school hours. Likewise, the ubiquitous nature of social media leads to a tremendous amount of bullying on chat groups and the like which occur on weekends or in the evenings. “Much of what is called bullying today is conflict, which still needs to be dealt with in schools, yet is too quickly escalated to being termed bullying. There is no doubt that in order to respond effectively to all forms of bullying, a team effort is required in which parents and schools give the same message, educating for kindness, empathy, and caring. Let us not forget that children learn behaviours from the adult role models in their lives,” Kacev says. \*Names have been changed to protect anonymity

• Zara Abelson can be contacted about her presentation on bullying at [zara@zarios.co.za](mailto:zara@zarios.co.za)



At the end of Grade 9, the school counsellor recommended that Jane be removed from this environment. Her parents had always offered to take her out of the school, but she felt that if she left, the bullies would have won. Yet one night at the Shabbat table, she told her father that she wanted to leave. Although her

with the same way kids who act in protest of Israel are punished.” So, what are our schools doing to combat bullying? “Each and every pupil has rights, namely to feel safe, to learn and grow, to be respected, to be valued, and to be different. However, with rights come responsibilities, namely: to respect yourself, to respect others,

The school aims to include measures to prevent – as well as remediate – bullying. These can range from peer-mediation programmes to counselling and assertiveness training. The consequences of bullying range from contracts and written warnings to withdrawal of privileges, community service,

NINE DISTINCTIONS

Daniel Teeger: AP English, Afrikaans, English, History, IT, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science

EIGHT DISTINCTIONS

Gabriel Isaacs: AP Maths, Accounting, Afrikaans, Business Studies, English, LO, Maths, Physical Science

EIGHT DISTINCTIONS

Hannah Kahlberg: Afrikaans, English, French, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science

EIGHT DISTINCTIONS

Doron Swartz: AP Maths, Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS

Joseph Kaplan: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS

Tayla Lemmer: Afrikaans, Dramatic Arts, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS

Akiva Levitt: AP Maths, Accounting, English, IT, LO, Maths, Physical Science

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS

Galia Ovad: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS

Liat Shear: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS

Liad Shulman: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science

SIX DISTINCTIONS

Gabriella Bondi: English, History, LO, Maths, Physical Science, Visual Arts

SIX DISTINCTIONS

Eitan Chipkin: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Physical Science

SIX DISTINCTIONS

Gabriella Osrin: Afrikaans, English, History, LO, Life Sciences, Visual Arts

SIX DISTINCTIONS

Gavriel Wolberg: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, History, LO, Maths

SIX DISTINCTIONS

Elisheva Wolovitz: English, History, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science


FIVE DISTINCTIONS

Yonatan Oudmayer: English, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science




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FIVE DISTINCTIONS




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FIVE DISTINCTIONS




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FIVE DISTINCTIONS




**Megan Riesenburg:** English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Naflati Diner:** English, LO, Life Sciences, Physical Science

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Yishai Dredzen:** Hebrew, IT, LO, Maths

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Shirel Ganon:** Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Sarah Machanik:** Dramatic Arts, English, French, LO

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Yael Rosen:** English, Hebrew, History, LO

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Kayla Tobiansky:** English, Hebrew, History, LO

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Gabriel Urdang:** English, History, LO, Maths Literacy

THREE DISTINCTIONS




**Daniella Kahn:** Dramatic Arts, English, LO

THREE DISTINCTIONS




**Amber Kopelowitz:** English, History, LO

THREE DISTINCTIONS




**Ruby Marcolongo:** Dramatic Arts, English, Maths Literacy

THREE DISTINCTIONS




**Tamar Swisa:** Dramatic Arts, Hebrew, LO

THREE DISTINCTIONS



**Bradley Tanchum:** Business Studies, English, LO

THREE DISTINCTIONS



**Sapir Yehudai:** Hebrew, LO, Maths Literacy

TWO DISTINCTIONS

**Akiva Jankelowitz:** English, Geography  
**Ariella Rosenberg:** Dramatic Arts, LO  
**Gadi Sachs:** LO, Maths  
**Jordan Sandler:** English, LO  
**Peri Schleider:** Dramatic Arts, Maths Literacy  
**Hannah Snaid:** Dramatic Arts, LO  
**Daniel Wolff:** Business Studies, LO

ONE DISTINCTION

**Rachel Greenblatt:** LO  
**Jamie-Lee Hack:** LO  
**Yechiel Hummel:** Hebrew  
**Michaela Levy:** LO  
**Allon Lipshitz:** English  
**Cameron Veffe:** English

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# Powerful Jewish women: Tips from the top

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

The statistics are clear – girls are doing better than boys, on average, at school and university. However, the “female advantage” disappears in the workplace, where women are paid less than men, and are rarely found in positions of power and influence. So, what’s holding women back, and how do powerful women overcome the obstacles?

There are numerous reasons for it, the most obvious of which is the fact that women are usually primarily responsible for home and childcare. Many opt to give these their full attention at the expense of their career.

The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to High Court Judge Sharise Weiner, former Vodacom executive Joan Joffe, and journalist and author Mandy Wiener – three Jewish women who have reached the pinnacle of their profession – about what it takes to succeed.

### What qualities does it take to rise to the top of your profession?

**Weiner:** It takes tenacity, dedication, hard work, and a good sense of humour. It is accepted that women must work harder than their male counterparts to be fully recognised. **Joffe:** You must differentiate yourself from others. You can do this by being excellent at what you do, by making



Sharise Weiner



Mandy Wiener

yourself visible, by making alliances along the way, and of course, by working exceptionally hard. You need to have a vision for yourself, and an appetite for risk. Plus, a big dose of passion. And, you need a supportive and caring partner.

**Weiner:** Above all, you must have an inherent talent in doing what you do. That, coupled with passion and plain hard work, is everything. You have to have a drive to achieve, and you have to be willing to do whatever it takes to get there.

### Were there other promising women in your class who fell off the career ladder. Why?

**Weiner:** There were few women in my graduate class. As far as I know, only one or two are still in the profession. The legal profession is very patriarchal, and was obviously more so in the 1970s. Some women chose to pursue other careers, while others chose family life. As an advocate working for oneself, taking off time to raise children can result in the total loss of your practice. **Joffe:** Certainly, some of my colleagues didn’t pursue a serious career. In some cases, it must have been because their priority was not to go after career success at all costs. In life one has to make choices, and many women have chosen to

lead lives other than in the generally competitive and stressful scenario of serious career life.

**Weiner:** I have some colleagues who have carried on as frontline journalists despite having had children, and their husbands are the primary caregivers. Then, there are others who gave up their careers in journalism to go into corporates or something similar. And then there are those like me, who have tried to adapt their careers to have the best of both worlds, which is not always possible.

### Is it possible to balance home, family, and a career?

**Weiner:** Work/life balance is a misnomer. What I learnt was that I had to do the best at work when I was there, and the best at home when I was with my son. Trying to achieve balance simply adds to the frustration. You can do both, just excel at each when that is what you are doing. Of course, having a great support system makes this easier. My husband was a very hands-on father. In addition, he has always been the cook in our family. I also had the invaluable support of my parents who could assist with lifts, homework, and so on. It alleviated some of the guilt.

**Joffe:** It is extremely difficult for women to balance a highly successful career with the responsibilities of family life. It can be done, but it requires serious effort. Having assistance in the form of a willing partner, mother, mother-in-law, or home helper can assist, but there is absolutely no substitute for the presence of the parent.

**Weiner:** Work-life balance is a myth. I read a comment from a Silicon Valley chief executive recently who described life as a working mom like walking on a tight rope with a balancing pole – sometimes you lean towards work and neglect your kids, and other times, you lean towards your kids and neglect your work. That’s the reality. You can’t have it all, all of the time.

### What have you had to sacrifice on

### the way to the top?

**Weiner:** From time to time, I sacrificed spending more time with my son. But today, he is a well-adjusted young man with a great respect for women. In his view, I would have been a terrible stay-at-home mother!

**Joffe:** I didn’t spend enough time with my family. I regret that, and so, I think, do my wonderful sons and husband. One can’t recover the many precious moments of being together that we all missed. I also had no time for leisure activities and hobbies. But that’s the way it was and, while I do regret a few things, I loved almost every moment of a thrilling business career.

**Weiner:** When you’re building your career, you have to throw all of yourself into your work. It means



Joan Joffe

long, long hours, and sacrificing time with your friends and having fun. You get very serious very quickly when dealing with the kinds of stories we do, and it’s difficult to disconnect and decompress. I was extremely fortunate that I was relatively successful early on, so at least now I can enjoy the benefits of that.

### What are the main issues career women face?

**Weiner:** Female advocates still face huge obstacles in their career path. Taking time off to raise children, meaning a few years (not 10 days),

can kill one’s career. I have seen this happen to virtually every woman who did this. The glass ceiling is still there, although more and more women are thankfully shattering it. Complex commercial cases are, in the main, given to men. This is changing, but very slowly, and it only involves a few women at the Bar. One of the biggest problems that women experience in all professions and careers is sexual harassment. It is rife, and not adequately dealt with by professional bodies and corporates.

**Joffe:** I never believed in a glass ceiling. Certainly, I never saw one. If one is really good at what one does, one can achieve almost anything. The hardest part is achieving a balance between work and everything else. One has to make choices, and understand the implications of those choices.

**Weiner:** I doubt any of my male colleagues are answering questions for an article on work-life balance and whether they have faced any issue in their career because of their gender. The very fact that this is still being highlighted is a problem, because if we continue to treat it like a challenge that we’re female, then it always will be one. Some (actually most!) of the very best, most respected journalists in the country are women.

### Do you think the business or corporate world is doing enough to accommodate women?

**Weiner:** Some corporates have introduced good benefits and accommodations for their female employees. It has changed dramatically over the past decade, and is to be welcomed. **Joffe:** Some companies do offer “perks” like flexible working hours, day-care centres for young kids, and generous maternity (and paternity) leave. Definitely many more need to offer these and other benefits. **Weiner:** I imagine more can be done for women, but it would also be great to see a cultural shift where we see more stay at home fathers supporting successful career women.

## Board of Deputies comes to Deep Fried Man’s defence

>>Continued from page 7

According to Friedman, there is no love lost between himself and Petzer. He told the *SA Jewish Report* that this was “a smear campaign that worked”.

It stems from an article Friedman published online which exposed Petzer for being the host of a Discord chat room in which racist content was being shared and discussed.

The SAJBD entered the fray when social-media attacks on Friedman turned into what it called “a Pandora’s Box of hate”, which spiralled into a racist, anti-Semitic onslaught opening the floodgates of hate on all fronts.

“Petzer’s provocative and inflammatory video caused the public to vilify Friedman, which then ignited a spate of anti-Semitism, and resulted in the board coming out in defence of Friedman whose life and family has been threatened,” Kahn said.

In a Facebook post last Friday, the board said, “The anti-Semitic responses that were levelled against comedian Daniel Friedman after his 2013

satirical song was manipulated by Willem Petzer are unacceptable and should be condemned unequivocally. This is a clear case of the demonisation of a Jewish community member, which resulted in him, as well as the broader Jewish community, being harassed and demeaned because of his Jewish identity.

She said that the board had also received countless racist and anti-Semitic posts, which it had removed due to their sensitive content.

Love him or loathe him, Deep Fried Man has controversial views on most things, including Israel. Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, he said he had often disagreed with the board in the past, but despite this and his views on Israel, he was “touched and moved” by how the board had handled the situation.



Deep Fried Man

“Politics aside, it is an effective organisation in dealing with anti-Semitism.”

He was particularly moved by an article published in the *Citizen* written by the board’s David Saks, who came to his defence.

Saks described the “fall-out” from Petzer’s “stunt” as “exceedingly ugly”, saying that the many hateful messages received by Friedman would have been bad enough had they been levelled at him personally, but “many went a great deal further by using his Jewish background as the basis for their vitriol”.

“The increasing readiness of people of all backgrounds to make Jews the scapegoat of their country’s problems by peddling crass anti-Semitic conspiracy theories is symptomatic of a deeply unhealthy society,” Saks wrote.

Friedman wrote earlier on his social media pages,

“I stand by the [original] video, which satirises white South African fears of genocide, a word which most rational people realise is a ridiculous way to characterise farm murders – a very real and shocking crime which has been politicised and divorced from the other horrific forms of crime that all South Africans face daily – by people with an agenda.”

Friedman said this week the response had been frightening, and had made him want to take a step back. He described the incessant bombardment of hate and vitriol on social media as “highly shocking”.

“I’m not a religious person, but this has made me realise and understand how much anti-Semitism is out there. The personal hatred directed at me was one thing, but all this Nazi stuff was the thing that shocked me the most. I had no idea so many South Africans had so much hate in their hearts. It made me feel sad and despondent. It is so hard to change people’s minds from this blanket hatred based on race or religion. It was very scary,” he said.



# Standing alone and standing strong

STAFF REPORTER

The 2018 head girl of Merrifield Preparatory School & College in East London, Leah Schewitz, was the only Jewish person at the school and, for many of her peers, she was the only Jewish person they knew.

Schewitz, who got seven distinctions in matric in 2018, told the *SA Jewish Report*, “Being a Jew in a secular environment brought me closer to my faith as I often had to stand alone, but I was proud to do so.”

She moved to Merrifield School “with wooden cabins in the forest as classrooms” in Grade 8 because it was the only school nearby that offered an Independent Examinations Board matric. While she quickly learned to love her school and peers, she said she often had to “stand alone” because of her views on Israel or her spiritual beliefs.

“Being Jewish is part of my identity. [It’s] who I am, what I believe in, and the way I conduct my life,” she says. That wasn’t about to change simply because she was the only one at her school.

“I felt a certain level of responsibility being the only orthodox Jewish person, besides my siblings, at school because for a lot of students, I was the only Jew they knew and were most likely going to know. If I acted or behaved inappropriately, that is what they would know of Jewish people,” says Schewitz.

“I tried to see the positive side, and although my knowledge of Jewish Studies is a bit behind being at a non-Jewish school, it made me aware of being Jewish. I had a strong sense of pride that my parents instilled in me from a young age, and the courage to often stand alone.”

She told the newspaper that when you go to a school with many different religions and cultures,

“there is bound to be tension”. However, she said her school handled “every anti-Semitic incident immediately and in the correct manner”.

Her friends were understanding and caring, and if she missed school for a *chag* (holiday), they would offer to help her catch up. “Many of my close friends loved coming to our house for Shabbos, and learning about our traditions”.

She had a lot of responsibility – not least regarding her studies – in her matric year. “Being head girl and house captain was a lot of work and responsibility, but it was a huge honour, and I really enjoyed all my duties.

“My biggest achievement at school was winning the President’s Award [for Youth Empowerment] at gold level and receiving a fellowship for three years in a row. To be awarded for giving back to one’s community as well as being yourself, and the fact that people saw me as kind and

caring was a big deal for me. While I am proud of myself for achieving six distinctions, I believe that as long as one does their personal best, it is enough.”

Schewitz said she was also extremely humbled to be chosen as head girl. “I was selected because I am a strong leader and get things done to the best of my ability in a considerate and respectful manner. I was on the Student Representative Council for two years prior to that, which stood me in good stead to be able to get involved and add value.”

She said her school was supportive of her. “My school has always supported me as an individual, and I think would be proud of me no matter what religion I was. It was about the quality of education I got at the school, not so much my religion.”

Now, she is going to dig deep into her roots as she



Leah Schewitz

heads to Israel for the Bnei Akiva programme, Limmud. “Bnei Akiva changed my life. Going on the December camps for the past four years gave me the opportunity to make incredible friends and get the tools I needed to go back home and be the only Jew,” she says.

In August, Schewitz will leave the programme to study at Stern College for Women in New York, and is excited to be surrounded by Jewish people so she won’t have to stand alone.

## HIRSCH LYONS BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS	SIX DISTINCTIONS	SIX DISTINCTIONS	TWO DISTINCTIONS	ONE DISTINCTION
Aharon Rabson: English, Hebrew, Maths, Physical Science, Life Sciences, IT, LO	Shmuel Fihrrer: English, Maths, Physical Science, Life Sciences, Geography, LO	Netanel Hoppenstein: English, Maths, Physical Science, Life Sciences, IT, LO	Daniel Levin: English, IT	Meir Bookatz: IT

## HIRSCH LYONS GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

FOUR DISTINCTIONS	FOUR DISTINCTIONS	THREE DISTINCTIONS	ONE DISTINCTION	ONE DISTINCTION
Elisheva Bome: English, History, LO, Maths Lit	Ayala Sackstein: English, History, LO, Maths	Kayla Levy: Business Studies, English, LO	Gila Levin: LO	Natalia Klein: LO

## IVY ACADEMY

FIVE DISTINCTIONS	FIVE DISTINCTIONS	FOUR DISTINCTIONS
Yaakov Brill: Maths, Accounting, Economics, Hebrew, LO	Shlomo Brill: Hebrew, Maths, Physical Science, IT, LO	Moshe Brill: Maths, Accounting, Hebrew, LO

## A Family of Distinction

Brothers, Moshe (20), Shlomo (22) and Yaakov Brill (18), have proved their academic excellence by achieving 14 distinctions between them in matric last year. Hailing from Israel, the brothers continued their schooling in South Africa by enrolling in Ivy Academy in 2016. Shlomo, the first one to enter the school, was followed by his brother Moshe, and finally Yaakov. With different starting points, the brothers all landed up writing matric together in 2018.

## REDHILL

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS	FIVE DISTINCTIONS
Gabriel Fine: English, Maths, LO, Accounting, Life Sciences, Physical Science, AP Maths	Dayna E Silva: Dramatic Arts, English, History, LO, Life Sciences
FIVE DISTINCTIONS	
Kyra Soicher: English, History, LO, Life Sciences, Physical Science	

## Victory Park twins prove benefit of studying together

>>Continued from page 14

to them. In addition, when a student has to explain a concept to another student, it ensures a better understanding of the problem.

“When we were in Grade 10, we ran a programme at a government school that we called Learn-2-Teach. We taught maths and science to a few other Grade 10s, which had us learning the work so we could teach someone else.” says Josh.

“When you try explain a maths or science problem, you get a real sense whether you understand it yourself.”

Beyond enhancing the learning process, the stress-management benefits of having someone to chat to and not being alone are quite significant. “The two of us would study together, most of the time lying in bed with our notes lying all over the place. To be honest, it wasn’t particularly stressful for us. If we didn’t understand something, we would ask each other. Often we would argue about who was right. I would always remember our arguments and debates in the exams,” says Gaby.

“We also played a lot of Fortnite during exam time. It allowed us to switch off, and in a way, spend time with our friends,” Josh says.

There is no doubt that matric can be an incredibly stressful year, but these two teens make a pretty convincing argument for not doing it alone.



Josh Nossel



Gaby Nossel



# The unbearable pressure of being in matric

JORDAN MOSHE

For many high school students, matric is the most stressful, charged, and demanding experience of their school experience. While a certain amount of pressure to perform can be motivating, it is all too easy for the pressures of finals to overwhelm students at a crucial time when they are making major decisions about their future.

The pressure to succeed may be inevitable, but it is taking a toll on the well-being of our youth. “There are many obstacles and challenges that teenagers are forced to navigate today that children did not face in the past,” says psychologist David Abrahamson. “However, there is no doubt that the pursuit of success is also harming our children. “School academic pressure has increased considerably over the past few decades, thanks in part to an education system obsessed with a narrow definition of success.

With standardised testing, ranking, comparison, and competition, a worrying number of young South Africans suffer from depression and anxiety.” Abrahamson maintains that South Africa’s education system places too much focus on academic outcomes, espousing a very narrow view of success, and a one-size-fits-all approach that negates individuality. “There is too much testing,” he says, “too much competition, and too much comparison between kids. The education system is geared towards achieving the highest marks possible rather than helping pupils to love learning, think creatively, and develop practical life skills” Whether a student is a straight-A performer or struggles academically, the consequences of this system are felt by all. Abrahamson believes that this drive to achieve at the end of 12 years of schooling has become something of an obsession, often superseding the more positive aspects of receiving



an education, and frequently ignoring the negative physical and psychological consequences this pursuit has on children. Among the consequences of this very narrow definition of success is that students have come to believe that a true measure of their overall success is successful admission to university. Putting themselves under tremendous pressure, they lose sleep over getting distinctions, believing that success in finals will guarantee success at university. The truth, says Dr Felix Maringe, the head of the school

of education at the University of the Witwatersrand, is that the evidence doesn’t support the claim that matric success guarantees university success. “While we should give credit and, indeed, congratulate learners from our schools who pass matric and qualify to join our universities, there is evidence which shows that success in school-level examinations can be attributed to teaching methods which emphasise rote learning, excessive and repeated practice. Such methods do not have much relevance to most university learning tasks.” Maringe says that learning at university requires critical thinking skills, identification, selection, and evaluation of evidence to support the development of ideas and understanding. “Many young people have little or no preparation in such skills when they get to university,” he says. “As such, these students find it challenging to make the transition from ‘studying’ to ‘reading’ for the university degree. Succeeding at university is more dependent on reading rather than on studying.” If this is the case, how do matrics – even their parents – avoid the pressure which invariably sets in at

the beginning of their final year? Although there is the obvious and important need to build a culture of resilience in our children, Abrahamson feels it is short sighted just to expect pupils to develop traits and skills to cope with academic pressure. “It is up to the adults in their lives, their parents, their teachers, and educational leaders to work out ways to reduce that pressure, and to question seriously how best to educate their children. “It is important that adults remind the child that these narrow definitions of success, these grades, these numbers, don’t describe who they are, and that their interactions with others, their contribution to society and discovering and developing their own individual strengths, is actually much more important in the long run.” Abrahamson thinks it essential that parents pay closer attention to the individual natures of kids and not just accept that they should conform to fit the system. Parents should not only focus on marks and percentages, but on whether their child is engaged with learning, enjoying learning, and thinking creatively and independently. “We need a revolution in education,” he says. “We need to broaden our definition of success and broaden what we teach. It may mean measuring non-cognitive skills, like character, ethics, or social responsibility. It probably means upsetting power balances in schools, giving kids more control over their learning. It certainly starts with shaking up all the accepted wisdoms that we hold about education.”

## Achieving excellence against all the odds

TALI FEINBERG

“Even if a child has a learning difficulty, they are still able to succeed,” says Romi Malloon, who is studying to be a teacher after battling academically and socially throughout her own school career. While some children sail through school, a large number have to fight tooth and nail to make it through their primary education. On recognising their children are battling, parents get fearful and some go into denial. However, it is vitally important for them to be loving and supportive, and to find the right school path for their particular child. “Research has shown that a bedrock of good early attachment relationships with caregivers goes a long way to promoting resilience,” says clinical psychologist Leanne Stillerman Zabow. This is evident in all three examples of the children listed below who have succeeded in spite of having learning issues at school. Stillerman Zabow says that even if a child is born with a temperament that is not particularly resilient, “if the parents provide a sensitive, responsive caregiving environment, it goes a long way in moulding a child to being a well-adjusted individual”.

“If the environment fits the child’s unique needs, those people born with difficult temperaments can even surpass those with easy going temperaments,” she says. And, even if a child has a difficult early environment, it is essential to keep showing them love and care, and find what it is they need. “Their personality is developing well into adolescence, so there are window periods [in which] we can intervene to provide right support.”

Stillerman Zabow says that schools, parents, and teachers need to recognise that there are multiple kinds of intelligence, and cater to those strengths. In addition, if we want our children to have tenacity, as parents and teachers, we have to have the resilience to help them along their journey. Finally, de-stigmatisation goes a long way to helping young people find their way. Supporting them in getting the help they need, and facing their issues head on, are ways to turn things around and stop children with challenges from “falling through the cracks”.

**CHRISTINA VAN KAMP:** “I just finished my matric exams, and they went really well!” says Christina van Kamp. “I concentrated, focused, and achieved what I wanted to...

I worked really hard!” “Christina was adopted by my step mom as a baby. Her adoptive dad then passed away, leaving them with nothing,” says her step-sister, Sasha. “They moved back to Cape Town to give her mom an opportunity to find work. Her mom met my dad when Christina was six, and they soon moved in with us. By then, Christina had already had a tumultuous childhood, and when placed in a school in Constantia, she was thrown off even more.” Sasha’s father then made the life-changing decision to place Christina at Herzlia in Constantia, where she was soon discovered to be a stellar soccer player and athlete. “Her academics, however, were far below where they needed to be. She managed to pass Grade 7 and was sent off to middle school, where they enlisted a facilitator for her.”

Christina describes Herzlia as a “fully inclusive school”, making it the ideal environment to support students of all abilities. She thrived on the support she was given. Her efforts have since been acknowledged in an award received at her recent valedictory, the Jane and Ellie Lison Award, for “showing considerable development in her approach to her schooling, and achieving excellent results in her studies”. It comes in the form of a trophy with five blue stars – perfect acknowledgement of a young girl who fought every step of the way to get to where she is today. Christina will spend five months on kibbutz in Israel next year. “When I come back, I want to work with children. I’m also passionate about sport, so maybe coaching or teaching.” With her strength of character and determination, her future looks bright.

**ROMI MALLOON:** Romi has just completed her third year of teacher training – something she never dreamed she would achieve. “I was born with severe attention deficiency hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). As a child, I was a bully and as a teenager, I was bullied. I struggled academically and socially throughout school,” she says. Although she failed most subjects from Grade 7 upwards, she was continually pushed

Christina van Kamp



Romi Malloon



Dylan Bourne



to the next grade. But, she felt unsupported by teachers, and had few friends. At the beginning of Grade 10, she hit rock bottom. She was suicidal and anorexic. Yet somehow, she pushed through, and at the end of Grade 10, her principal said the school believed in her, even if she didn’t believe in herself. This was when her mindset began to change, and as matric exams grew closer, she began to work, teaching herself

to study in a way that worked for her. “I got a tutor, and we grafted. We did past paper after past paper. All we did was work. After she left, I would work through the night,” Romi says. In spite of this, her matric prelims did not go well. Yet, when it came to finals, she was confident. “From failing every year, I passed everything, and just missed [getting] two distinctions.” She was accepted to study teaching at Varsity College, and is one year away from getting her qualification. After that, she wants to specialise in teaching autistic children. “I’ve had these dreams since Grade 10, and I’m finally achieving them,” she says.

**DYLAN BOURNE:** When it was announced that Dylan Bourne would be head boy of his school, parents Tim and Vanessa sobbed with joy and disbelief. His achievement comes after a life-long battle with epilepsy and its effects, including depression, isolation, fear, and academic issues. “Dylan was diagnosed with epilepsy when he was four,” says Vanessa. The condition runs in the family. Soon after Dylan was diagnosed, he was put on all sorts of medication that had an impact on his development, his personality, and his future. “The medication made his hands shake, so he often wrote with great difficulty. This meant he would fall behind in school, and he needed support,” says his mom. Unfortunately, his school did not offer support to the family. “I believe we should judge a school by how it handles its most vulnerable. This school literally told me, ‘he doesn’t belong here’ and ‘he’s the one who is making himself different’,” Vanessa says. Dylan was placed at a remedial school where he thrived at first, but then the bullying started. In addition, as a child, he was under the impression that the



CRAWFORD SANDTON

NINE DISTINCTIONS




**Tomer Melnik:** English, Hebrew, History, Maths, IT, LO, Life Sciences, Physical Science, AP Maths

EIGHT DISTINCTIONS



**Gabriella Pillhofer:** Dramatic Arts, English, History, IT, isiZulu, LO, Life Sciences, Maths

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS



**Benjamin Hack:** Dramatic Arts, English, History, LO, Maths, Science, AP Maths

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS



**Adam Norwitz:** English, Geography, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Science, AP Maths

SIX DISTINCTIONS



**Alyssa Smullen:** Afrikaans, Dance Studies, English, History, LO, Life Sciences

SIX DISTINCTIONS



**Aiden Swartzberg:** Accounting, English, LO, Maths, Physical Science, AP Maths

FIVE DISTINCTIONS




**Erin Fuhr:** Design, Dramatic Arts, English, History, LO

FIVE DISTINCTIONS




**Nicole Nathan:** English, Life Sciences, LO. Maths, Visual Arts

FOUR DISTINCTIONS




**Dalia Maram:** Accounting, English, LO, Maths

THREE DISTINCTIONS




**Jamie Porteous:** Music, Maths Lit, LO

TWO DISTINCTIONS



**Tiia Diamond:** Maths Lit, LO

ONE DISTINCTION



**Benjamin Chuvali:** Maths Lit

CRAWFORD LONEHILL

SEVEN DISTINCTIONS



**Bianca Ward:** Afrikaans, English, History, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Science

THREE DISTINCTIONS



**Joshua Pohl:** Dramatic Arts, English, LO

ONE DISTINCTION



**Matt Friedlander:** Dramatic Arts

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# Reflections on matric



OPINION

Marc Falconer


Anyone over the age of 40 who attends a 21st birthday party and does not share any genetic material with the celebrant, or does not at least distantly remember that young adult in nappies, may have to settle in for a long night. It is not one of those invitations which it is easy to excuse oneself from attending. For a teacher, an invitation to a past pupil’s

21st comes with extra pressure. It means that the pupil you taught about three years ago – sometimes more – really wants you there. It also gives a glimpse into the trajectory of a life launched – but not yet entirely set – on its destination. It also puts the end-of-school “hurdle” in a new perspective. Like a galloping herd of wild horses, the group which has recently written the matric exam has leapt over, and has before it the promise of wide-open plains: any direction, any company, any speed. So, there I sat among the other party guests – the compulsory slightly inebriated great uncle and the adoring spinster aunt – and in this case, for some reason, I remember being

seated next to PJ Powers! This past pupil was Nicolas who had been in my matric English class, and who had either sneered, snored or sighed (it seemed to me) his way through many hours of *Hamlet*. A top matric achiever he most certainly was not. (I notice that the school Nicolas attended now boasts a distinction rate of 3.5 per candidate. In the days of his matric, this average was more in the region of two distinctions – the fiscus it seems is not the only sphere of inflation.) In the even remoter days when I was at school, one distinction was considered gifted and, with three, one was on the brink of genius. These days, parents seem a little


shame-faced if their academically aspirant offspring cannot lay claim to a least one. Such nonsense! But there was something quite unusual about Nicolas even then. He seemed to understand that a matric certificate, garlanded or not with As, was not in and of itself a symbol of success. While not to undervalue the work and dedication such achievements entail, it was, as he mentioned in his speech, just a thing one could or could not do. Being able to excel at sitting down at a hellishly uncomfortable desk in a hot and sweaty hall and produce convincing answers in a certain strictly controlled time was certainly a skill. However, it did not necessarily predict one’s ability to run a business, be an ethical employer, find opportunities to grow and develop in one’s work, or be a good friend, parent, spouse, or citizen. And interestingly, for all his modest 67% in English and his somnambulistic approach at the back of the class, his 21st speech was bestrewn with *Hamlet* references. “Brevity is the soul of wit,” he said at the beginning of his focused comments, and so apposite for Nicolas: “This above all: to thine own self be true.” Since we have kept contact over the years, I can report that Nicolas is the founder-owner of a large, multimillion rand waste-disposal company employing many hundreds of people. And now, many years later, I am also able to consider another quote Nicolas contrived to have in his speech – and that was after I had met and considered the quite distinct philosophies of Rabbi Shammai and Rabbi Hillel. The former’s thoughts and opinions weighed and measured and quite possibly coming with some sort of certification (but without exception in this case). The latter, Rabbi Hillel, would almost certainly have nodded in agreement with Shakespeare’s understanding of unexamined potential: “Lord, we know what we are, but not what we may be.”

• Marc Falconer is the principal of Herzlia High School in Cape Town.




## WHEN YOU VALUE THE JOURNEY, YOU REACH THE DESTINATION.

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### Achieving excellence against all the odds

>> Continued from page 22

medication he took for epilepsy would cure him, but as he grew older, he realised that this was not the case. By the time he was a teenager, epilepsy had become his enemy, leading to fear, loathing, depression, and suicidal thoughts. It was recommended that he be placed in a facility for teenagers in crisis. He was unsure at first, but soon realised that he needed help, and agreed to be checked in. While it is every parent’s nightmare to discover that their child is in such a dark place, the family accepted that this was the only way forward. When Dylan checked out after two weeks, he was a changed boy, with increased confidence. He had made peace with his epilepsy. His parents also found the ideal school for him, which focuses on skills instead of academics, and their son thrived. “He has found a passion for cooking, swimming, and archery, his marks have gone up, he has new friends, and the school has zero tolerance for bullying.” As his school’s head boy, Vanessa feels that Dylan “really has an opportunity to make a difference. He can help his peers be comfortable around people with epilepsy, and demonstrate true empathy for others who are different. “Our sincere wish is that Dylan’s story will give parents and young people hope that one can overcome one’s challenges.”



**TIM ALPER – JTA**

While acknowledging that there are no specific regulations

The methodology is gaining mainstream acceptance fast, moving from private academies into conventional public classrooms. In December, one of the largest teachers' trade unions in the country, the Korean Federation of Teachers' Associations, struck a memorandum of understanding with the Havruta Culture Association. The resulting partnership will see scores of regular school teachers learn how to initiate *chavruta*-style learning sessions.





# Farewell to Ronnie Lubner, who lived life large

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Ronnie Lubner was the poster boy for the view that school years are no predictor of success in life. After being expelled as a youngster from seven schools, he went on to make his mark as an international businessman and philanthropist of note.

“All he wanted to do, he said, was play the fool or play sports,” nephew Marc Lubner said of his uncle who passed away on 27 December in Plettenberg Bay. “He was apparently very good at sport.”

“I think it was during the under-16 championships for Southern Transvaal [that] he actually took a set off [tennis champion] Eric Sturgess. That was his claim to fame sports-wise. He always used to tell the story.

“It was a sport that he played throughout his life, and it used to be a point of social interaction wherever he went. He was a great sportsman, and his knowledge of sport was exceptional. He had a passion for sport of all kinds, particularly tennis and football.”

The company that Ronnie launched with son Gary, the Belron Group, at one stage sponsored the Chelsea Football Club, including the year that it won the Triple Crown. Under Gary, Belron, an international auto-glass replacement business, has grown to become the largest of its kind globally.

In spite of his success in business, Ronnie never lost the common touch. Journalist Suzanne Belling remembers that when she worked for his late brother, Bertie, in 1996, Ronnie used to move his chair to sit with the cleaners during office lunches. The siblings were then joint chief executives of the international PG Group started by their



father, Morrie, in the early 1900s.

More recently, Ronnie is well known for having turned around The Houghton lifestyle development in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, which will constitute a “huge, huge” part of his legacy, Marc believes. The business had been started by others, with him being a mere investor, but when it got into trouble, Ronnie intervened.

“He paid off all the creditors, and invested an enormous amount of his own money into what really is an iconic development,” he relates. “He took it upon himself to complete

the project.

“I believe it’s going to be the premier conference facility in the northern suburbs.”

Marc recalls that Ronnie had the ability to use humour to engage with others. “He would walk into a meeting, and immediately set the scene by telling jokes. That would put people very much at ease with him – then he would get to the business of the day.

“What a lot of people missed, however, was that underlying that humour there was often a very serious message. You had to be quite astute to listen to it and not think that the guy was just continuing to play the fool.

“He was certainly an intellect – it wasn’t stupid humour, and it was never crude.

“He had this expression that he was well known for. When people used to say, ‘Will you come back to me?’ on a particular matter or investment opportunity, he used to say, ‘Well if the phone doesn’t ring, you know it’s me!’”

When Ronnie was checking into hospital two days before he died, a nurse told the family afterwards that she had greeted him, saying, “Oh Mr Lubner, nice to meet you!” His response was, “Yes, I know it is.”

Marc remembers a piece of advice that Ronnie gave him in his early days that he has never forgotten. “There was a particular issue that I was battling with. Ronnie took me up to his bedroom, and started to show me what the perfect golf swing was. It had a long follow through.

“He said to me, ‘I’m just going to give you one tip. Like in golf, you have to have that long follow through.’ You can start with a great idea, but you need to follow through with it otherwise it just remains a great idea.”

He was also notorious for his handshake, Marc says. “If you put your hand out to shake his, he would swerve his hand so that you missed it.”

In addition to his jocular persona, Ronnie was “incredibly polite. He was also incredibly generous towards staff that he did well with,” he says, mentioning a houseman who had been in his employ for more than 35 years.

“Ronnie was the type of guy who would give you a task to do, make sure you understood the task, and make sure that you understood that if you took on that task, you’d better deliver. If you delivered, you would be very handsomely rewarded.

“If you didn’t, you’d be given one chance to fix it up, and if you didn’t, you weren’t given too many more. I very rarely heard him raise his voice, yet the words that he used could cut me down to size very quickly.”

As for philanthropy, Ronnie contributed “very generously”, primarily to the Progressive Jewish movement as his wife, Rhona, was a “very devout” adherent. He was also a “very strong” supporter of the Selwyn Segal Society for the Jewish Handicapped, as well as the Arcadia Children’s Home, both of which his late mother had been very actively involved in, says Marc.

An offshoot of Selwyn Segal, the Morrie and Bella Lubner Kibbutz, was a farm bought by Bertie and Ronnie in honour of their parents. They populated it with some of the higher-functioning kids from Selwyn Segal, who worked in the factory making a number of Jewish foodstuffs.

Ronnie was also a supporter of Afrika Tikkun. “With his money, we built the Ronnie and Rhona Lubner Children’s Centre in Alexandra township run by Afrika Tikkun,” says Marc, chief executive of the organisation.

The early childhood and youth-development centre caters for about 4 000 kids a day.

Ronnie’s wife, Rhona, predeceased him by three months. He leaves three children: Gary, Joanne, and Derek.

• A memorial service for the late Ronnie Lubner is scheduled to be held at the Houghton Golf Club on Thursday, 17 January, at 18h00, on what would have been his 85th birthday.



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The late Ronnie Lubner (centre), flanked by trusted advisors and close friends Arnold Forman (left) and Mark Barnes



Hillary Lubner, Marc Lubner, Ronnie Lubner and Nicky de Beer (Field Band Foundation)



# Icon of lefty Zionism is gone



**OPINION**

Gavin Rome

Israel’s celebrated author, Amos Oz, was an icon for how one can be both an unapologetic Zionist and a fierce critic of Israel’s nationalistic, right-wing drift.

This Israeli treasure passed away at the age of 79 on 28 December 2018. In numerous obituaries published in the days after his death, Oz was, for good reason, described as Israel’s greatest novelist.

He was the recipient of numerous literary awards including the Israel Prize for Literature (1998), the highest honour of the State of Israel; the Kafka Prize (2013); the Prix Méditerranée Étranger (2010); the Primo Levi Prize (2008); the Heinrich Heine Prize (2008); and the Goethe Prize of the City of Frankfurt (2005).

Oz, originally called Amos Klausner, was born in Jerusalem in 1939 to Lithuanian parents of a secular, intellectual lineage. A few years after his mother’s tragic suicide and at the age of 15, he Hebraised his surname to Oz and left Jerusalem and his father to become a member of Kibbutz Hulda. He lived there for 35 years, before moving to the town of Arad, and finally, in his latter years, to Tel Aviv.

Oz proudly fought as a soldier in Israel’s wars of 1967 and 1973, yet

fervently opposed militarism. Shortly after the Six-Day War and in an article in the *Davar* newspaper, with some prescience, he predicted that that “even unavoidable occupation is a corrupting occupation”. Oz was a founding member of the Peace Now organisation established in 1978. He was a consistently fierce critic of the settlement and continued occupation of the West Bank.



Oz was a prodigious writer, the author of 40 books, including novels, short story collections, children’s books, and essays. His most famous and perhaps best work is *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, a memoir which has been described as a universal human story but also a very Jewish story. It is the elegiac tale of Oz’s youth, deeply steeped in the joys and sorrow of the birth and early years of the State of Israel. The book was translated into about 28 languages including Kurdish (much to Oz’s reported delight) and has been referred to

as the biggest selling literary work in Israeli history.

To a generation of South African Jews who, like me, came of age in Habonim in the 1970s and 1980s, Oz was the pre-eminent sage of the Zionist, socialist, kibbutz movement. Whilst we were still imbued with the enthusiastic naivety of utopian dreamers, in his writings on the kibbutz, Oz gently reminded us that real life always had a method of altering, softening, and even distorting ideological dreams. For Oz, the kibbutz was not a socialist utopia, but rather, as he famously put it, “the least bad place to live”.

Despite his departure from kibbutz life at the age of 50, it remained the home of his imagination. His burial in the graveyard of Kibbutz Hulda is thus an apt homecoming.

In an interview with *Tablet Magazine*, he said, “I have lived in a kibbutz for more than 30 years, and although I left the kibbutz 27 years ago, I still go back there in my dreams at least once a week. Good dreams, bad dreams, trivial dreams.” In the same interview, Oz, with manifest pride, referred to the characteristics of Israeli society – blunt directness, a lack of hierarchies, and a latent social anarchism – as “the good heritage of the kibbutz”.

Perhaps his most penetrating insight into the prejudiced and one-eyed criticism of Israel is contained in the opening pages of the *Tale of Love and Darkness*, where he writes, “The rest

Continued on page 29>>



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## Most Jews of Polish and Lithuanian origin are entitled to EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT

A common misconception is that South African Jews of Ashkenazi heritage are of Lithuanian descent, and that only those who are able to prove their eligibility for Lithuanian citizenship are able to obtain a European passport. The fact is that most South African Jews do qualify for European citizenship, whether they can prove their Lithuanian lineage or not, and most South African Jews of Sephardic heritage are also eligible for European passports.

Adv. Avi Horesh has in-depth knowledge of the applicable legislation and in his experience, the majority of South African Jews have ancestors who were illegally deprived of citizenship. As their descendants, these Jews are eligible for European citizenship which will result in

them obtaining an EU passport.

**Ashkenazi:** It is important to understand that until 1918, all of Eastern Europe was divided between three empires: Russia, Prussia, the Austro-Hungarian empire. Neither Poland nor Lithuania existed until 1918.

At the end of WWI, the territory was divided, and countries like Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and others were born/reborn. Only then did residents became citizens of these countries. As a result, people who, for example, were born in Riga (nowadays Latvia) could actually be Lithuanian or Polish.

Horesh advises that eligibility for a Lithuanian or Polish passport depends on the city from which your grandparents (or their parents) hailed.

Horesh says many South African Ashkenazi Jews of Lithuanian origin have been refused Lithuanian citizenship because their heritage is actually Polish. They would, accordingly, be entitled to Polish citizenship and a EU passport.

After World War II, the borders in Europe changed, resulting in cities changing

nationality. The resultant effect for descendants of Jews who were born in Vilnius, for example, is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined, but an application for a Polish passport may very well be successful.

**Sephardi:** The descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are most likely eligible for a Portuguese passport. If applicable, Horesh is able to obtain an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which an application for European citizenship can be made and will most likely be successful. Portuguese citizenship enables one to enter the Unites States without the need to apply for a visa.

In addition, Horesh is filing many applications for descendants of Sephardi origin who arrived in South Africa from Greece, Turkey, and North Africa. Descendents from other countries in the Middle East – even Holland – are also potentially eligible.

Horesh resides in Israel, but has spent seven years in Poland, and is recognised as a



leading lawyer in the field of European citizenship, with a full understanding of local immigration laws.

Living in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – offers him quick and easy access to Poland and Lithuania, Accordingly, he is able to work closely with local professionals who assist him in tracing the documentation required for successful applications for European citizenship.

In addition, and as a result of his close ties with Portuguese authorities, to date he has had a 100% success rate with applications for Portuguese citizenship.

**Horesh is available to discuss your specific details. He is often in South Africa, and can meet you in person to discuss your specific needs.**



Avi Horesh

Destroyed Warsaw, January 1945



I will be in Johannesburg and in Cape Town from the end of January until early February. Please contact me for an appointment. My South African phone number is +27 64 745 5273 • Email me on [adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com](mailto:adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com)



# The relevance of Tu B’Shvat for the youth of SA



OPINION

Rabbi Pini Pink

The Mishna in the tractate of Rosh Hashanah teaches us that there are four New Years in the Jewish calendar. On the first of Nissan, there is the new year for kings and festivals. On the first of Elul, there is the new year for the tithing of animals. On the first of Tishrei, the new year for mankind and for years. On the fifteenth of Shevat, the new year for trees. Obviously, the most well known is the first of Tishrei, the day that G-d judges and decides what will happen to all of mankind in the coming year. On the fifteenth of Shevat (often referred to as Tu B’Shvat), G-d decides what’s in store for trees and plants, how much they will grow, will they give fruit, will they survive the winter and continue to stand strong, or will they be struck by a bolt of lightning? The obvious question is why it is relevant to us that G-d judges the trees, or that they have a new year? The Torah teaches “*Ki Adam etz hasadeh* – man is like a tree of the field”. If we take a slightly deeper look, we see that a person resembles a tree in many different ways. One of the special characteristics of a tree is that it never stops growing. Its whole purpose is to grow. It starts as a tiny seed, then grows into a small sapling, and eventually into a tall and strong tree. The surroundings and nourishment this small seed and sapling receive greatly affect its

growth. If a small sapling is deprived of water or sun, its growth will be stunted, it cannot grow on its own. During a child’s formative years, its influence and nourishment are most crucial. Studies have shown that a child’s brain is sponge like, meaning it can absorb and take in all that goes on around it. When surrounded by positive influences, people who fill their lives with studying the Torah and performing mitzvot, we can hope that this positivity will reflect on the child. You would not plant an apple tree in the middle of a barren desert, and expect it to flourish and grow into a fruit bearing tree. In the same way, we can’t put our children and youth in the middle of a world devoid of goodness and expect the next generation to be caring, kind, and compassionate. Our body is dependent on healthy food and drink, the correct vitamins, the right amount of sleep and exercise. But our body is also dependent on our soul, and our soul also needs nourishment. How can we nourish something spiritual? We feed it by performing mitzvot and studying Torah. But, the most important is to remember that all we have comes from Hashem. Of course, the lesson of continued growth applies to children and teens even more than it applies to adults. If we look at the externals of an adult, we won’t notice their growth, even though there is constant subtle change on the inside. However, if we look at a child or teen, we see obvious physical growth. If you measure a child now and then again in a

years’ time, there is a good chance they will have grown taller. As important as it is to grow physically, we also need to grow in character, in who we are, and what we are all about. We need to make sure that we are always striving to become a better person. Another way man is compared to the tree of the field is by connection to fruit. Many trees are fruit bearing. For these trees, this is the purpose of their creation. What is a sign of a healthy tree? A tree that bears many healthy fruit. So too, man was created to produce fruit. These fruit are our good deeds. Obviously, the more good deeds we do, the better people we are. But another important comparison between the fruit of a tree and our good deeds is that the fruit of a tree contains seeds, which allows the fruit to continue to grow after the seeds are planted and begin to grow. Our good deeds, should not be a once-off occurrence, they should be long lasting, and have a domino effect of producing further good deeds. And, just as the seed is deep inside the fruit, our good deeds should be part of who we are, part of our DNA. Living in South Africa in this day and age, we can sit back and watch the world around us, or we can stand up strong like a tree, making sure our good deeds are permeating the society around us. This way, we will have a positive effect on our friends, family, and generations to come.

• Rabbi Pini Pink is the Rabbi of Chabad Greenstone and the youth director of Chabad House, Johannesburg.

# I say tomato, you say cherry... It’s Tu B’Shvat

BEV PRICE

The Jewish National Fund of South Africa (JNF) will this coming week give South African Jewish scholars 6 000 packets of tomato seeds from Foods and Trees for Africa to celebrate Tu B’Shvat. Why tomatoes this Tu B’Shvat? Charmaine Hirshowitz, Agriculture Sector Manager at the Israel-South Africa Trade Office, says that Israeli tomatoes are commercially the most prolific in the Southern Hemisphere. An Israeli company in South Africa has a triangular partnership with a South African agricultural company and an Israeli seed company, using hothouse and open-field cultivation. Cherry tomatoes are an Israeli invention, she says. Apparently, the size of the surface area of these tomatoes is hugely advantageous for their ripening time, making them more commercially viable. Farmers love them because they grow upwards, use less space on trestles, are adaptable to drought conditions, and are disease resistant. As far back as 2012 at the JNF-KKL World Marketing Conference in Israel, it was reported that cherry tomatoes would change the livelihoods of people in many countries. Research continues at its agricultural R&D centre located in Har Hanegev. Studies being done there have helped to develop different strains and growing methods suitable for diverse international soil, water, and climate conditions. Hirshowitz says that the many small business enterprises using cherry tomato “early-entrance-to-market” Israeli tomato seeds are enhancing the local economy. The product manager of the South Africa seed company involved in the partnership is heading to Israel at the end of this month to visit various tomato growers and seed companies. He says that a lot of the tomato varieties sold commercially in South Africa are from Israeli breeding programmes. They are called hybrids, and are non-GMO (genetically modified). His company has worked for more than a decade with Israeli seed companies and breeders to ensure that it stays ahead of new developments in breeding. So, some of these delicious tomatoes will now be growing in and around our community.



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# Anti-Semitism among Yellow Vest protesters demoralises France’s Jews

CNAAN LIPSHIZ – JTA

Four years ago, a heartbroken Bernard-Henri Levy found some solace in how more than a million Frenchmen marched through this city to protest extremism. The Republican March, as it is known, took place on 11 January 2015 amid national mourning after Islamists gunned down 12 people at the *Charlie Hebdo* satirical magazine and, two days later, four people at a HyperCacher kosher store. The silent protesters held signs reading “I am Charlie”, “I am police”, and “I am Jewish”.

That march was “something we have never seen before in France and perhaps anywhere”, Levy, a Jewish philosopher and celebrated author, said at the time. “It’s a kind of miracle, this national unity, this feeling of fraternity, this willingness by Parisians to go down to the street.”

Four years on, he had hoped it would be a watershed moment for French society, he told *JTA* on Wednesday.

Change “alas did not come”, and the march’s “spirit and promise have been betrayed” by another wave of street protesters, he said, namely the Yellow Vests movement. What started out in the northern hemisphere autumn as a series of protests against a hike on fuel prices has been mired since in countless instances of violence against police and a substantial amount of anti-Semitic hate speech.

“Instead of a million people in the street, today we have thousands of homophobes, xenophobes who are anti-republican, anti-journalists, and sometimes anti-Semites. For these demonstrators, it’s as if the bloodbaths never happened,” said Levy, who is scheduled to speak on 13 February at the 92Y Jewish community centre in New York about these and other issues.

Anti-Semitic incidents during protests by Yellow Vests – named for the reflective safety vests they wear – have included signs and slogans describing French President Emmanuel Macron as a “whore of the Jews” and their “puppet”.

There have been many cases of protesters performing the quasi-Nazi quenelle salute, which was created by the French comic Dieudonne M’bala. Dieudonne, a Holocaust denier who has been convicted of hate speech against Jews and others, now delivers his weekly hate sermons online on video platforms while wearing a yellow vest.

These cases, as well as anti-Semitic graffiti and chants, are on the “margins” of the

Yellow Vests movement, according to the National Bureau for Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism. But nonetheless, they have been a feature of that movement since its inception, the bureau’s founder, Sammy Ghozlan, told *JTA*.

Violence against police, meanwhile, seems to have become a hallmark of Yellow Vests protests – even if only a minority of participants engage in it. Hundreds of police officers have been wounded in confrontations with Yellow Vests. Nearly 50 of them were injured on 1 December alone.

That Saturday, multiple cars were set ablaze in Paris’ chic Champs Elysees shopping area. On 11 December,

several police officers were wounded in confrontations that turned whole streets of the capital into war zones shrouded in smoke from burning plastic and tear gas. Some protesters flung yellow paint on police, causing eye injuries. In response, police used water cannons, injuring many dozens.

Attacks on police are particularly troubling to many French Jews, who for the past 15 years have depended on security forces for the protection of their schools, neighbourhoods and synagogues.

But the emergence of anti-Semitism as a characteristic of the protests is more terrifying,



The annual commemoration for the victims of the 2015 jihadist attack at the HyperCacher store in Paris on 9 January 2019

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EVENTS 2019

Event Type	Topic	Presenter	Date
Evening Talk	Understanding Anxiety: Polyvagal Theory Explained	Dr Natalie Solomon	30 January
Two Day Workshop	RAVE-O Training	Bellavista Staff	7-8 February
Lectures	Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties: A Series of Lectures	Various	February- June
Afternoon Workshop	Assessing and Remediating Maths Difficulties in the Senior Primary	Bellavista Staff	13 February
Afternoon Workshop	Using the WISC-V to Inform Intervention	Bellavista Staff	20 February
Evening Talk	Medical versus Non-Medical Treatments of ADHD	Professor André Venter	27 February
One Day Workshop	Pre-Literacy Skills: Building on Solid Foundations	Bellavista Staff	7 March
Afternoon Workshop	Using Narrative Therapy Techniques in an Educational Setting	Suzanne Mackay	13 March
Five Day Workshop	Instrumental Enrichment: Standard I	Fleur Durbach	25-29 March
Evening Talk	Sensory Strategies for Self- Regulation	Bellavista Staff	3 April
Sunday Morning	The Sunday Sessions: Supporting Learners with ASD in the School Environment	Karen Archer & Lauren Davis	7 April
Evening Talk	The Quest to Raise a Secure Child	Tammy Copeland	15 May
Afternoon Workshop	Grade 4: Flailing or Flying?	Bellavista Staff	22 May
Two Day Workshop	The Right to Read: The Science and Practice of Literacy Instruction	Bellavista Staff	30-31 May
Afternoon Workshop	Where there is a Will, there's a Way: Managing Challenging Behaviour	Hennie Vorster	6 June
Afternoon Workshop	Principles of Mediation and Metacognitive Language	Fleur Durbach	12 June
Two Day Workshop	RAVE-O Training	Bellavista Staff	25-26 June
Two Day Conference	Trauma Summit	Various	11-12 July
One Day Workshop	Assessing for Dyslexia: A Workshop for Health Professionals	Kalie Naidoo	23 July
Sunday Morning	The Sunday Sessions: Navigating Motor Planning Difficulties	Bellavista Staff	28 July
Afternoon Workshop	When Teachers are Bullied	Alison Scott	12 September
Two Day Workshop	RAVE-O Training	Bellavista Staff	19-20 September
Evening Talk	Functional Occupational Therapy: The Occupation of the Child	Roseen Ress & Amy Raines	25 September
Afternoon Workshop	A Deeper Dive into Reading & Comprehension	Alison Scott & Michelle Yudelowitz	2 October
Sunday Morning	The Sunday Sessions: Advocating for and Supporting Learners with Dyslexia	Bellavista Staff	6 October
Afternoon Workshop	Working Memory and Anxiety	Debbie Catto	10 October
One Day Workshop	Compassion Fatigue	Suzanne Mackay	16 October
Evening Talk	Father Figures: The importance of positive male role models	Hennie Vorster	23 October
One Day Workshop	Developing a Skills-Based Literacy Curriculum	Bellavista Staff	31 October

\* Bellavista reserves the right to cancel any event due to insufficient interest

## Icon of lefty Zionism is gone

>> Continued from page 27

of the world was generally known as ‘the worldatlarge’, but it had other epithets too: enlightened, outside, free, hypocritical. ... Out there, in the world, all the walls were covered with graffiti: ‘Yids, go back to Palestine’, so we came back to Palestine, and now the worldatlarge shouts at us, ‘Yids, get out of Palestine’.”

While his voice on contemporary matters is now stilled, it will endure in our imagination and in our better and more reflective moments. Oz will remain with us because he wrote so much, so elegantly, and so well.

In his memoir, Oz described his very youthful hopes as follows, “When I was little, my ambition was to grow up to be a book. Not a writer. People can be killed ... but not books. However systematically you try to destroy them, there is always a chance that a copy will survive and continue to enjoy a shelf-life in some corner on an out-of-the-way library somewhere in Reykjavik, Valladolid, or Vancouver.” Be assured that it is not only in those places that Oz will live on.

*Gavin Rome is a senior counsel at the Johannesburg Bar. He has acted as a Judge of the High Court on several occasions. His Habonim moniker, for those wondering, was Gadi.*

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# Incendiary stories that turn the world



## TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

What is it about a politician’s speech that you remember afterwards? His catchy phrases? His body language? The urgency in his voice? These are often more memorable than the content. Mostly, he or she is a storyteller on a stage. Occasionally, a story crosses your path which sets you alight with hope, a tale of hero and victory. The oratory of the late gravel-voiced British Prime Minister Winston Churchill

contained such magic. His ability to tell the British during World War II the kind of stories they needed to hear about themselves and their struggle inspired them to confront the most bitter odds and win. One of his most famous quotes from a rousing 1940 speech is, “... we shall fight them on the beaches...” after large tracts of Europe fell to the Nazis. South Africa’s story during the last century was pitched to incredible heights by Nelson Mandela, a rural youngster from the Eastern Cape who rose to the summit, changed the world, and died an elderly man surrounded by loved ones. His heroic journey inspired South Africans to believe they could achieve great things – the triumph of good over evil. It’s not just the story, but how it is told. One

of the Western world’s most stirring phrases came from the immensely charismatic Martin Luther King Jr. In 1963, King inspired the black civil rights movement in America, just before being assassinated, with his “I have a dream...” speech during the protest march on Washington to end racism. There’s always a flip side, however. Hitler was an equally charismatic storyteller, who inspired a culture of hate among millions of Europeans, which poisoned the world and continues to do so. His noxious populism and calls for “lebensraum” tapped into the fears and resentment of vast swathes of German society. It instigated attacks on his “enemies”, whether they be Jews, Marxists, foreign powers, or whatever he decided. South Africa’s positive story had all the charisma and heroism of the others. It inspired the world. But has it been poisoned irredeemably through corruption, factionalism, and racism? The sight of former President Jacob Zuma dancing with President Cyril Ramaphosa before 85 000 people in Durban last week at the ANC’s election manifesto launch, brought a collective groan to many who had hoped our positive narrative was still secure.

If Zuma, in spite of the poison he has injected into the country’s life and politics, could still be lauded by so many thousands, we are seriously off track. Yet, just as Churchill rallied the British at their darkest hour, so we wait for the South African Churchill. Time will tell if it is Ramaphosa. So far, the signs are not good. His speech at the launch was so loaded with tired clichés that the response from many was cynicism. We’ve heard it all before from president after president. It’s not that the country is falling apart. Its people are still friendly. Unlike the proverbial man on the street in many other countries, our people still have a smile for a stranger, even if their lives are tough and disappointing. We are familiar with the more personal stories that play themselves out regularly at ground level. “Have a good life!” was the cheery farewell one youngster called out to a relative passing by last week as he left a Glenhazel pharmacy on his way to life in Australia. He can, because he has the youth and wherewithal to do so. Should we try to make him want to stay? A lot more than catchy phrases in a storyline are required to reboot the country for that.

## Letters

### ISRAEL AND JEWS HAVE MANY SOUTH AFRICAN ADMIRERS

In your editorial “Friends where you didn’t know you had any” (14 December 2018), you highlighted the incident of an Afrikaans lady who was so excited to meet “G-d’s chosen people”. It was through her and her husband’s church involvement that they had found their “love for Israel and the Jewish people”. Thank you for highlighting the fact that the Jewish people and Israel have admirers. In fact, there are many thousands right here in South Africa, as well as in many countries worldwide, whose genuine love for Israel and the Jewish people leads them to sacrifice much to help Israel. Many work with Rev Kenneth Meshoe and his wife, Dr Lydia Meshoe, who you

mention in your editorial, to spread their love and admiration. It is deeply moving to attend their annual tribute to Israel, in which hundreds of Israel admirers converge at a huge church in Boksburg to share their joy, and pray for Israel and the Jewish people. Other organisations, like Bridges for Peace, Ebenezer, and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, collect funds worldwide to alleviate poverty and improve Israeli lives. These and others are comprised of thousands upon thousands of Christian Zionists, whose genuine love for all things Jewish uplifts my soul. It gives me hope that, with their ongoing enthusiastic enlightenment, peace will come to Israel and the world. – **Edna Freinkel, Johannesburg**

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

## Board’s election manifesto calls for greater tolerance and civility

The next few months will doubtless be dominated by news and discussion about the upcoming national elections scheduled to take place early in May. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies is running a multifaceted pre-election awareness and educational campaign called Make Us Count aimed at involving our community as much as possible in the process. The campaign started last year with the drafting and distribution – including to members of Parliament and political party whips – of a document giving the board’s input into the election manifestos of the main political parties. This document highlighted the key areas we believe all parties need to focus their attention on, the involvement of the Jewish

community in these issues, and the underlying principles of care and respect for the individual that need to inform how we, as a nation, go about addressing such challenges. On the last point, we stressed in our manifesto how critical it was for all parties, regardless of difference in aim and ideology, to unite in a commitment to opposing the dissemination of hatred, whether based on race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, or other such grounds. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the birth of democracy in South Africa. In recent years, regrettably, we have strayed far from the spirit of unity and national reconciliation that characterised the early years of the post-apartheid era. While we all need to do whatever we can to restore the values of civility, tolerance, and inclusivity into our national discourse, our political leaders have a special responsibility to lead the way in that regard. There is nothing wrong with disagreeing, even robustly, with what another person has to say, but at all times, it must be

done without resorting to using divisive, insulting, and inflammatory language, especially when it comes to questions of race. I urge our community to observe these standards scrupulously when commenting publicly on the elections and indeed on all issues of broader national concern. We are conducting a voter-registration drive ahead of voter registration weekend on 26-27 January. This is to encourage community members, in particular first-time voters, to contact their local voting stations to ensure that the relevant information on the voters’ roll is accurate and up to date. Later, we plan to host public debates between representatives of the main competing parties. We are also once again putting together an interfaith

election observer team to assist the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) on polling day. This initiative, first implemented by the board for the 2009 national and provincial elections, was an inspiring success, with participation by nearly 100 volunteers from across the religious, ethnic and national spectrum, including Jews, Muslims, Christians and foreign nationals from all over Africa. That success has been repeated at all subsequent national and municipal elections. Thus far, we have had an enthusiastic response, and I encourage those interested in taking part to contact Roseanne Rosen at our head offices (sajbd@sajbd.org). Apart from the much-valued assistance it provides to the IEC in fulfilling its mandate to ensure that our elections remain free, fair, and above board, it is a wonderful way to really make oneself a vital, active part of our robust democratic culture. • *Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Jewish Board Talk, 101.9 ChaiFM every Friday from 12:00 to 13:00.*



Above Board  
Shaun Zagnoev

# THE SA JEWISH REPORT IS HIRING

## Social Media and Office Manager

We are looking for a passionate, well organised, disciplined, and media savvy individual to fulfil the role of Social Media and Office Manager.

The individual will report directly to the CEO and will work closely with our sales and editorial team.

### SOCIAL MEDIA DUTIES

- Manage the *SA Jewish Report* social media platforms by publishing daily posts, monitoring comments, and ensuring that these platforms increase in reach and subscribers.
- Monitor social media groups, trends, tools, and applications; and recommend actions/next steps.
- Regularly report insights gained from social media and website monitoring to the CEO and editor.
- Monitor the company’s social media performance usage reports and tracking search engine results.
- Design and post memes and content that drives engagement and website traffic.
- Develop and implement creative strategies that will increase the *SA Jewish Report*’s social media community.

### REQUIREMENTS

- Technical knowledge and understanding of social media platforms, metrics, insights and tracking
- Basic video editing
- Ability to handle the pressure of meeting tight deadlines
- Minimum two years related professional experience

### OFFICE MANAGER DUTIES

- Reception – Answering telephone calls and taking/relaying messages (calls diverted to cell phone if needed).

## South African Jewish Report

- General office administration.
- Invoicing – weekly after publication, as well as sending PDFs of advert proofs in the paper to clients.
- Helping with debt collecting – emailing, resending invoices, following up and process management.
- Sales orders – Processing sales orders to assist sales executives.
- In charge of maintaining and ordering/buying office and kitchen supplies.
- Dealing with walk-in clients accordingly, as well as calls regarding past advert or article details (when they are looking for contact numbers/ dates/people).
- Overseeing the petty cash and making sure it balances.
- Other tasks as required by the CEO and editorial team.

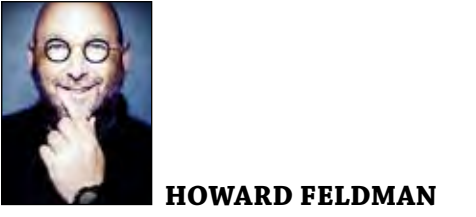
### REQUIREMENTS

- Excellent telephonic and interpersonal skills
- Excellent client relationship skills
- Strong process implementation skills
- The ability to work under pressure while multitasking
- A team player with the ability to work with the rest of the team to render a professional service

## Email your CV to [ceo@sajewishreport.co.za](mailto:ceo@sajewishreport.co.za)



# In Plett, villa mix-up becomes mewling brawl



As a child, December holidays meant Muizenberg. As an adult, we seemed to spend the time on the Atlantic Seaboard. And then this year, for the first time, we decided to give Plettenberg Bay a bash. Spoiler alert: we loved it, even though it started off a little shaky. Here’s why: we had hired unit 12 at a complex that we had never been to. The arrangement was for us to collect the keys from a box on the main road in Plett, and then go to the unit. The keys were waiting as planned, and we found the place with relative ease. So far so good. We drove around for a short while, looked for, and found unit 12, which we knew was a second-floor unit. As I was about to put the key in the lock, the door was opened by the cleaner who was preparing the apartment for the new tenants. We went inside. Didn’t love the place (especially since it looked nothing like the photos we had seen), but decided we would be adults and make the best of it.

After lugging everything upstairs and unpacking, we decided to go shopping. When I tried to lock the apartment, I found that the keys didn’t work, so I took the ones that were in the door and off we went to do what we needed to. I was a little perturbed by the key situation, so checked my confirmation to make sure it was indeed unit 12 that we had booked.

Confirmed. No issue.

Two hours later, the fridge was packed, the meat had arrived from Johannesburg, my wife was making dinner, and I was swimming.

We were ready for our holiday in unit 12. And so was another family of 12 from Brakpan.

The dad had more tattoos than David Beckham (that’s where the similarity ended), and the mom looked like she wasn’t on her first brandy and Coke (not even her second). An array of strange looking others, who most likely lived with them in their mobile home, were also present, and they seemed more interested in a fight than they were in having a holiday. I assumed that they hadn’t beaten up anyone in the 11 hours it took to get from their container on the East Rand, and were itching to get their eye back in.

Their estate agent, although based in Plett, must have also hailed from the Germiston area (perhaps Wadeville) and might even have been related to them. Her ambition quite clearly seemed to be to escalate the situation until everyone slaughtered everyone else, and she could relet the apartment.

When I checked the envelope with the non-working key, it became clear that we were in the wrong flat. We were meant to be in the “Villas” and this was the “Mews”. It was in the same complex, the units were both upstairs, and had the same number of rooms.

Stupid system.

“Ah,” I said apologetically, hoping that everyone would see the humour. I was still dripping wet from the pool, and trying to process how this had all happened. “Give us an hour. Let us pack up, and we will be out of your way.” Turns out that that suggestion was hardly what Mr Boksburg was looking for. “You have 30 minutes!” he screamed, fingers jabbing, and his face very close to mine. I was triggered. “The hell

I do!” I screamed back. “We will take as long as we want. You moron! Get out of here before I call the police!”

I was very brave for a moment, but quickly messaged a friend to come and be my backstop. He is a doctor, so I knew that if he couldn’t help in the altercation, at least he could resuscitate me. I have never been in a physical fight in my life, and there was little chance of me surviving an altercation with this team.


With that, the Springs family exited. I assumed they went to find a nearby bar, but instead they sat downstairs on top of their trailer, and watched our frantic and now disorganised move.

It was terrible. The fridge had been stocked.

Cupboards were neatly packed. Shopping done. And now we had to vacate. Under pressure. Black dustbin bags were filled but then split as we dragged them down the stairs, tomatoes and eggs rolled on the pavement.


The whole experience was awful. It was always going to be unpleasant and frustrating. We had made a mistake, and we needed to rectify it. But it didn’t need to be as confrontational as it was. It was ugly and aggressive, and there would have been the same result if the container family and their agent had behaved with a little compassion.

I don’t know if, given the circumstances, I would have been more patient that they were. But I do know that from now on, should I find myself in that situation, I will try.



# BE KIND & KOSHER IN CAPE TOWN.


Passover packages now available



Sunday (20 January)

- Second Innings hosts musician Malcolm Wood in *Musical Memories With Malcolm*. Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting at 10:30. Venue: Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres, Sandringham. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors, includes tea and light refreshments. Contact: Linda Fleishman 011 532 9701.

WHAT'S ON



Wednesday (23 January)

- Jewish Learning Institute launches new course, *Crime & Consequence*, with Rabbi Ari Kievman. Time: Mornings: 09:45 to 11:15. Venue: Chabad House, 27 Aintree Avenue, Savoy. Evenings: 19h15 to 20h45. Venue: Sandton Central Shul, 8 Stella Street, Sandton, opposite the Gautrain. Contact: [www.jli.org.za](http://www.jli.org.za) 011 440 6600 or [ji@chabad.org.za](mailto:ji@chabad.org.za).

Thursday (24 January)

- Sandton Seniors Club. Time: 10:15. Venue: Chabad Riverclub, Benmore. Contact: Rabbi Ari Kievman [rak@chabad.org.za](mailto:rak@chabad.org.za) or 011 440 6600

Monday through Friday

- Chabad Seniors Club includes memory enhancement, dynamic shiurim, transport, a delicious lunch, technical tutors, and more. Time 09:00 to 13:00. Venue: Chabad House, 37 Aintree Avenue, Savoy. Contact: Rabbi Ari Kievman 011 440 6600 or [rak@chabad.org.za](mailto:rak@chabad.org.za)

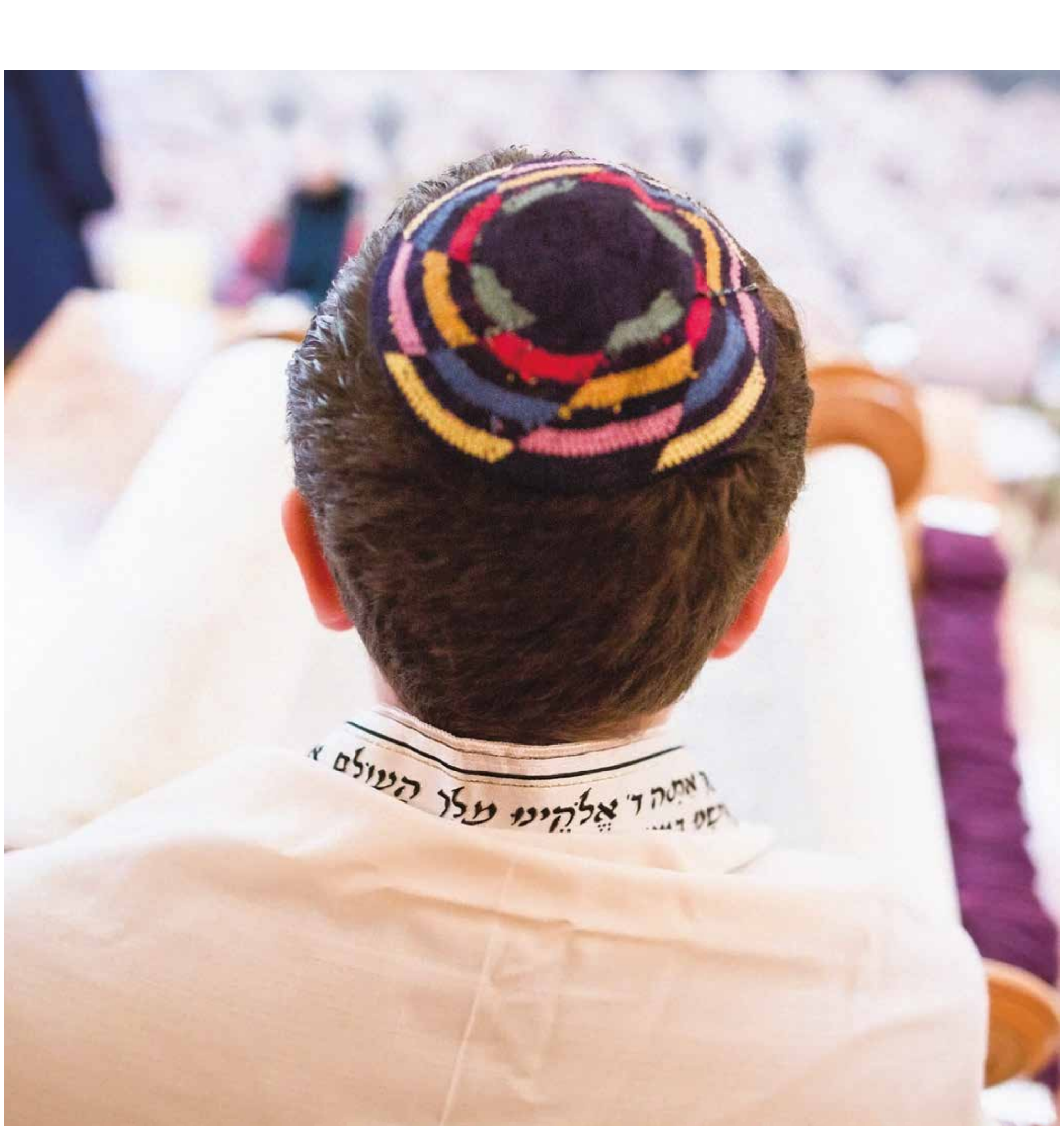
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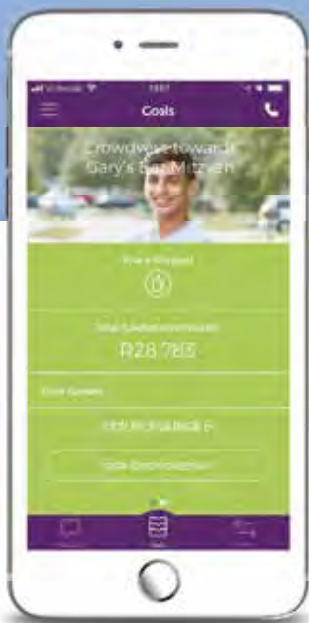
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