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Capetonians escape roaring Lion’s Head fire

TALI FEINBERG

When local artist Beezy Bailey evacuated his Cape Town house on Sunday night, it brought back memories of his holiday home in Plettenberg Bay, which burned down in runaway fires a year-and-a-half ago.

“Thankfully, my Cape Town house is fine, but if it had caught fire, I would have lost 30 years of work,” says Bailey, who is working on a book about his decades-long art career. “It was thanks to the fact that the wind direction changed and the heroic firefighters that no property was damaged this time round,” he says. “The firefighters were like an army going into battle.”

Capetonians on both sides of Lion’s Head watched as the city’s beloved mountain was engulfed in flames on Sunday evening as high winds fanned the fires that crept within 50 metres of their homes.

Though the city was already covered in smoke from fires in outlying areas, it brought home the reality of living so close to mountains and the forces of nature. In spite of there being no official call to evacuate, many chose to do so, including Jewish families living in Fresnaye.

Jessica Jedeikin’s apartment borders the mountain. As soon as she saw the fire, she rushed over to remove her cat. “At about 18:00 there was a lot of smoke, and we were concerned that it was affecting her. As we were driving away, we saw the fire was coming nearer. By 20:00, there were calls from the body corporate and the block to evacuate. There was pandemonium as everyone was running around. The fire had come over the mountain, and was creeping closer and closer.

“By 20:30 it was about 200 metres away from the entrance to the block. Everyone started panicking, packing, and trying to evacuate. There was a lot of smoke at this stage. We could barely see anything, and everyone was covered in black soot. I had two bakkies in the parking area, and I had a lot of family and friends to help get everything out of my apartment that I could [move],” she recalls.

“At about 20:35, there was a

call saying that we had to be out of the building in 30 seconds. We made it, but the parking lot was gridlocked. Then we managed to get out of there.”

Jedeikin says that the police arrived only at 22:00, and knocked on doors to make sure that everyone had evacuated. “Just before 23:00, a miracle [occurred]. The wind switched, and the flames started heading away. They

more times than I can remember. I know how quickly these fires can spread,” she says.

Her toddler was very aware of what was going on, especially as he has been fascinated by the nearby Arthur’s Road shul fire a few weeks earlier. “We had to convince my husband’s parents to leave the home they were house-sitting on Top Road. The fire eventually came right up to their

of your brain is telling you to take precious, irreplaceable things, but the practical part of your brain is telling you to take things like clothes, toothbrushes, and a bottle of milk for the baby.”

The family piled into two cars, and went to a hotel that was fortunately able to accommodate them at the last minute. “The owners are Jewish, and were so kind and understanding. They

was the less stressful option for our kids. While we are saddened by the extent of the fire, we are extremely grateful that our family and home are safe.”

JP Smith, the Mayoral Committee Member for Safety and Security, says that the fire might have been caused by people cooking on the mountain after cooking utensils were found at the place where it is thought to have



Lion’s Head burning
on Sunday night

Photo: Mike Eloff / Twitter

had been a few hundred meters from people’s doors. Thank G-d everything was okay and safe, but it was very scary.”

Emma Levin and her family were out swimming when they smelled smoke. “Within about 30 minutes, we felt the fire getting stronger, and ash started to rain down on us.” Anxious to get home, she knew she might have to evacuate. “I grew up in Camps Bay, and we evacuated our home

house.”

By 20:00, the Levins decided to evacuate. “We were not evacuated by officials, but in case it did come down to that, we did not want to be doing it in the early hours of the morning, in the pitch dark, in a total panic, with two distressed kids, forgetting to take important things. It’s very hard to know what to take. As organised as I thought I was, not everything was easy to find. The emotional part

loaned us a camp cot, and most importantly, didn’t mind our cat! The kids were unsettled, and fell asleep late. We stayed up watching the fire until the early hours of the morning.

“The next day, we went home to an ash-filled house and pool, and found that the fire had come within 50 metres of the top of our road,” says Levin. “It would have been too stressful and smoky to have stayed. Leaving

ignited.

At its peak, more than 70 firefighters – both professionals and volunteers – and about 20 firefighting vehicles were on the scene battling the fire. There was no damage to property, but hiking trails and vegetation have been largely destroyed. The Lion’s Head route, which was due to re-open on 15 February following routine maintenance, has now been closed indefinitely.

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:33	Johannesburg
19:15	20:28	Cape Town
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AUTO AFRICA

African Jewish communities get mainstream recognition

JOSEFIN DOLSTEN – JTA

At a conference on Jewish life in Africa held in New York at the end of January, Magda Haroun spoke of being only one of a handful of Jews left in Egypt, a country that was once home to a Jewish community of 80 000.

Abere Endeshaw Kerehu shared the struggles faced by the approximately 8 000 Jews still living in Ethiopia, who face anti-Semitism at home but have not yet been allowed to immigrate to Israel.

Others offered a more optimistic picture. Rabbi Levi Banon said Casablanca, Morocco, was home to “a small but very vibrant” Jewish community that operated 22 active synagogues, while Remy Ilona urged acceptance of a growing community of Nigerian Igbo people whom he says are practicing rabbinic Judaism.

The conference, hosted by the American Sephardi Federation and the Morocco-based Association Mimouna last week, is noteworthy not only because of the range of perspectives it offered, but also because it included speakers from emerging Jewish communities in Africa, such as Ilona’s group, alongside those from established communities in countries like Egypt and Morocco.

Though there is an increasing number of people seeking to practice Judaism in sub-Saharan Africa. They have largely been ignored by the mainstream Jewish community and Israel. Organisers say this is the first conference to focus on Jewish Africa that is not exclusively for academics.

Marla Brettschneider, a professor at the University of New Hampshire who researches Jewish communities in Africa, said it was significant that the conference was being hosted by the American Sephardi Federation, a mainstream Jewish group.

“It’s potentially huge,” she said. “Most of the work that I know of in the area is super marginalised, and I’m one of the few people in that field as an academic who has a relationship to the rest of organisational and mainstream Jewry. The divide is a big gulf, so it’s really interesting to me to see that [there’s] work generated from organisations that have infrastructure, that are long term organisations, trying to bridge the gap.”

About 250 people attended the conference, including ambassadors



Rabbi Capers Funnye, left, and Martha Leah Williams, at the Jewish Africa Conference in New York

and representatives from Morocco, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, Israel, Egypt, and Nicaragua. Malcolm Hoenlein, the Executive Vice Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations, and Adama Dieng, the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, delivered opening and closing remarks respectively.

Bonita Nathan Sussman, the Vice-President of the Jewish outreach group Kulanu, said the conference was a sign that the larger Jewish community was paying attention to Africa.

“What this conference is doing is [showing] that mainstream Judaism is beginning to notice them,” Sussman said. “It is a huge accomplishment and a huge gift to be seen and spoken about in the same breath as they do North African Jews because for the most part, North African Judaism really had very little to do with newly emerging communities.”

The New York-based group, which organised a film festival that was part of the conference, has facilitated community conversions in countries such as Madagascar and Cote d’Ivoire.

Critics of such work in Africa say that groups should not be converted en masse when there is no local Jewish community or infrastructure to support them. Many of the people Kulanu work with believe they have Jewish roots, claims that have not been corroborated.

Jason Guberman, the Executive Director of the American Sephardi Federation, said the event grew out of his work with Association Mimouna, an organisation founded by Moroccan Muslims to educate about Jewish history in their country, as well as an increased interest in Africa in the Jewish community.

“This idea of Jewish Africa grows out of [our connection with Association Mimouna] and our working together, and the recent pivot to Africa of many in the Jewish community, of many in the Moroccan community, of Israel of course, looking to Africa and seeing both some of the oldest and some of the newest Jewish communities,” he said.

Guberman views his community as a connector between mainstream groups and African Jews. The traditional Sephardic diaspora includes Jews who trace their lineage to Spain and Portugal, as well as the Mediterranean basin, the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

Continued on page 11>>

Torah Thought

Is religion still relevant?

Cyberspace, outer space, inner space. Smart cards, smart bombs, stem cells, and cell phones. There is no denying it. We live in a new age. Science fiction has become scientific fact. And the question is: in this new world order, with science and technology changing the way we live, is religion still relevant? Do we still need to subscribe to an ancient and seemingly long-obsolete code of laws when we are so further advanced than our ancestors?

This question reminds me of little old Hymie Levy of London, who somehow found himself attending a cocktail party in the company of aristocracy. Poor Hymie was completely out of place mingling with the lords and ladies of British royalty and high society. One duchess was so irritated by this ordinary Jew’s presence, that she confronted him directly. Oozing sarcasm, in her finest elocution, she told him, “Did

you know that my family traces its lineage back to the very people who were personally present at the signing of the Magna Carta!” Hymie was unfazed. He gave a little shrug of his shoulders and whispered straight

into the ear of Her Haughtiness, “Un mein zayde, Moishe, vos poisonally present by de giving of de tzen commandments!”

Have the ten commandments passed their sell by date? Are faith and doubt, murder, adultery, thievery, lying, and jealousy out of fashion? Notwithstanding all our marvellous medical and scientific developments, has human nature itself really changed? Aren’t the very same moral issues that faced our ancestors still challenging our own generation?

Whether it’s an ox cart or a Mercedes, acting in road rage or courteous co-existence is still a choice we must make. Looking after aged parents is not a new problem. Whether it is Adam and Eve or Michael and Sheryl, the grass somehow always seems greener on the other side. For some inexplicable reason, the other guy’s house, horse, or Porsche still seems more attractive and desirable than our own.

Has anything changed? Yes, today we have astronauts and space stations, laser beams and laptops, but the basic issues and choices human beings face remain identical. Once upon a time, the question was, do I hit him with my club, or slice him up with my sword? Today, the question is, do I call up the nuclear submarines or send in the guided missiles?

Technology has developed in leaps and bounds.

Fantasies of yesterday are reality today. Communication, automation, and globalisation have altered our lives dramatically. But the core issues, the basic moral dilemmas have not changed one iota. We still struggle with knowing the difference between right and wrong, moral or immoral, ethical or sneaky, and not even the most souped-up computer on earth is able to answer those questions for us.

Science and technology answer “how” and “what”. They do not address the question of “why”. Why are we here in the first place? Why should I be nice to my neighbour? Why should my life be nobler than my pet Doberman’s? Science and technology have unravelled many mysteries, but they have not answered a single moral question. Only Torah addresses the moral minefield. And those issues are perhaps more pressing today than ever before.

Torah is truth, and truth is eternal. Lifestyles change with the geography. The storylines are different, but the gut-level issues are all too familiar. If we ever needed religion – or in our language, Torah – we need it equally today, maybe even more so.



Rabbi Yossy Goldman Sydenham Shul

South African

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Van Heerden’s anti-Israel op-ed ‘dishonest and ignorant’

NICOLA MILTZ

South African academic and columnist Oscar van Heerden has defended the blatantly anti-Israel opinion piece he penned on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The piece, which appeared in the *Daily Maverick* on 24 January, received widespread criticism from experts in the community this week.

Van Heerden was publicly lambasted by the community for his piece: “We all owe the Palestinians our support in word and deed.”

His verbal onslaught starts, “The Palestinians are being decimated. Bombs are being dropped on them, rockets are deployed to kill them, and snipers are at the ready to finish the job where the other methods failed. It begs the question, what have these Arabs done to deserve such treatment? And, what can be done to stop it?”

“...an advocate for radical anti-Israel activism whose fundamental aim is to defame, demonise, and ultimately isolate and destroy the Jewish state.”

When asked if he has studied the Middle East, he said, “As an international relations scholar, I take interest in a number of areas throughout the world, especially where conflict exist and political economy matters.”

He insisted that never having been to Israel or to the Palestinian territories did not mean that he couldn’t have an opinion. “Should we have made a similar demand of those millions of people around the world who actively participated in the anti-apartheid movement? Did they really have to be here to understand and appreciate the utter oppression and dehumanising situation the black man found themselves [sic] in? I found this argument flawed, akin to arguing that one cannot empathise and actively support a cause if one has not had that lived experience.”

In his piece, Van Heerden argued that there was a need to adopt the

ANC’s four pillars of the struggle, namely: international isolation, mass mobilisation, underground intelligence, and the armed struggle, against Israel.

His explanation for this proposal relied almost word for word on a controversial, highly inflammatory speech delivered by ex-CNN contributor, Marc Lamont Hill, at the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with Palestine. Hill was fired for this speech, yet Van Heerden practically lifts it in its entirety.

Simon Plosker of *HonestReporting*, which monitors the media for bias and inaccuracy in coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict, accused Van Heerden of plagiarism.

“It’s questionable, however, as to how Van Heerden’s piece ever made it past the *Daily Maverick’s* editor,” said Plosker.

“One of the definitions of plagiarism is copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not. We think Van Heerden’s piece certainly qualifies.

“Did Van Heerden really understand so little about the subject matter that he had to regurgitate someone else’s hateful words,” he asked.

“The *Daily Maverick* should be ashamed and embarrassed that Oscar Van Heerden’s lazy and intellectually flawed op-ed ever saw the light of day,” Plosker wrote this week.

Van Heerden told the *SA Jewish Report*, “Lamont Hill’s speech is in the public domain, and I acknowledged and attributed the speech to him, so unfortunately this does not constitute plagiarism. At no point did I pretend the content [was] mine.”

As for his heavy-handed criticism of Israel, which critics say borders on blatant anti-Semitism, Van Heerden said, “This is most unfortunate. Wherever one looks at the definition and/or understanding of anti-Semitism, nowhere does it talk of Israel as a state. Zionists make the link between the state of Israel and the Jewish people. Having a problem with the state of Israel in no way constitutes anti-Semitism.

“Arguing for the dissolution of the state of Israel in its current form does not in any stretch of the imagination amount to advocating for the ethnic cleansing and genocide of Jews. This is a poor and clumsy attempt at discrediting any persons that identify with the plight of the Palestinian people.”

According to his media blurb, Van Heerden is a scholar of international relations, where he focuses on international political economy, with an emphasis on Africa, and the South African Development Community in particular. He completed his

Warfare and the Boycott Divest Sanctions movement (BDS), South African-born Israeli journalist Rolene Marks, and journalist David E. Kaplan wrote a joint response that was published as a right of reply in *Daily Maverick*.

They accused Van Heerden of insulting South Africa’s intelligence.

“Van Heerden isn’t the first openly anti-Semitic commentator to crucify Israel unabashedly as the nation-state of the Jewish people. However, he provides an astonishing display of academic ignorance of the Middle East, and Palestinian and Israeli

David Saks, the Associate Director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, described the piece as “shamelessly propagandistic from start to finish”.

He told the *SA Jewish Report* there was not even a “token attempt at arriving at a balanced analysis through a considered weighing up of the competing perspectives of the relevant parties”.

Rather, he said, the piece uncritically presents as indisputable fact one damning accusation against Israel after another without anywhere considering or even mentioning what Israel has to say in response to such charges.

“Such intentional intellectual dishonesty on Van Heerden’s part naturally extends to depicting the Palestinian side entirely as innocent, passive victims, who are apparently being subjected without cause or justification to a whole range of injustices,” said Saks. “Van Heerden writes not as a dispassionate political analyst, in which ostensible capacity he has been provided with a platform on what is generally regarded as a reputable news and discussion forum, but as an advocate for radical anti-Israel activism whose fundamental aim is to defame, demonise, and ultimately isolate and destroy the Jewish state. As such, it can only be regarded as a scurrilous, inflammatory attack on the Jewish people as a whole.”

Renowned anti-Semitism expert, Professor Milton Shain, told the *SA Jewish Report*, “More than 80 years ago, the British philosopher of history, Herbert Butterfield, identified the pitfalls of what he termed ‘presentism’ when analysing the past. ‘When we organise our general history with a reference to the present,’ he warned, ‘we are producing what is really a giant optical illusion.’ Oscar van Heerden demonstrates this lucidly. His critique is a classic example of cherry picking which fails to understand the dynamics of a complex and sadly ongoing struggle between two nationalisms.”

With his latest article, Oscar van Heerden has explicitly signed on to the BDS movement’s agenda, Saks said.



Oscar van Heerden

PhD and Masters studies at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. His undergraduate studies were at Turfloop and the University of the Witwatersrand. He is an active fellow of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflections, and is a trustee of the Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation.

Dan Diker, the head of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Program to Counter Political

society, politics, and security with monstrous disfigurements of fact.

“Far from offering a professional assessment or even the ruminations of an amateur activist untrained in the complexities of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Van Heerden issues a clarion call for the annihilation of the Jewish peoples’ ‘apartheid’ nation-state, and recommends that Iranian terror proxies Hezbollah and Hamas assist in carrying out the mission.”

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Why I needed to stand up against anti-Semitism

British television presenter Rachel Riley spoke at the Holocaust Education Trust Reception in Westminster on Sunday about standing up to anti-Semitism. This is an edited version of what she said.

If you told me this time last year that, come January 2019, I'd be standing in Parliament, addressing a room full of people at a Holocaust memorial event, describing the hideous abuse I've been receiving daily since I started speaking about the growing problem of anti-Semitism in the UK, I wouldn't know where to begin with my incredulity.

My own identity as a Jew has been a confusing one. As I often joke, my mum's Jewish, and my dad's Man United, and we've worshipped far more often at the Theatre of Dreams than I've ever been to shul. But one part of my Jewish identity that forms part of my very being is the deep and irreparable sorrow I feel in relation to the Holocaust.

I've always known that in the lifetime of my own Jewish grandparents, it was enough for some to feel justified in carrying out unspeakable acts of inhumanity against them, like ripping babies out of mothers' arms, and smashing them against walls.

If I had a penny for every cry of, "Where's your evidence" at the bottom of a whole thread of evidence, I'd be as rich as the so-called Rothschild bankers they hate so much.

I visited Auschwitz for the first time in November. Most memorable to me were the videos in the Shoah exhibition of normal looking people in the 1930s – Jews – having fun in swim suits on the beach, playing cricket, enjoying family together, who would soon be reduced to dust.

The enormous mountain of hair, including little girls' plaits, some blonde, some brunette, tied neatly, presumably by their loving mothers, before they would have to say goodbye forever, with all that would be left of them, cut off to be made into fabric. I've never experienced the literal feeling of being

emotionally punched in the stomach like I did standing by that display.

I'd never understood why they did this, nor did I try to get inside the mind-set of a Nazi, to empathise with their feelings, or work out why anyone could ever think this was "noble".

I thought all Jew-haters were like them, loud and proud, and acting through irrational hate which could neither be explained nor understood – and I also thought that that the horrors of the Holocaust would mean that anti-Semitism would never rear its ugly head again.

Sadly, I was wrong on both counts.

I first started following the story of anti-Semitism in Labour after the protest outside Parliament in March last year. I started listening, and I started reading. And, the more I read, the more shocked I became.

At first it was just online. Rothschild bankers here, Holocaust revision there, but gradually I began to see the ripple effects from this undercurrent of anti-Semitism appearing in places I would never have expected.

I finally broke my silence when a number of bus stops in London, the city where I live, were plastered with "Israel is a Racist Endeavour" posters – a reaction to Jeremy Corbyn's attempt to omit parts of the IHRA's (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's) definition of anti-Semitism.

Knowing how decimating the Holocaust was in the years immediately preceding Israel's inception, and the desperate plight of people forced to flee somewhere, anywhere, to safety, and how often they were refused and turned away, I found this description deeply offensive.

Without irony, I'm shown just how little many people understand about anti-Semitism, simultaneously denying any evidence of it whilst actively participating in it. Vilifying me, the Jew, for calling it out, as a paid Israeli shill, angrily comparing Israel to Nazis, or classing me as "Zionist racist scum" in response to me posting about anything but the subject of Israel and Palestine.

On Twitter, the messages I'm sent are often indistinguishable from that which you'd expect from a Neo-Nazi, yet the tweeters are identifiably not Neo-Nazis. The markers of the red Labour rose, coupled with the Palestine flag and the hashtags #GettheToriesOut and #JC4PM along with the standard claim to be "against racism in all forms" are their signature giveaways.

If I had a penny for every cry of, "Where's

your evidence" at the bottom of a whole thread of evidence, I'd be as rich as the so-called Rothschild bankers they hate so much.

In the name of Labour, I've been called a hypocrite, lying propagandist, teeth, tits and ass, clothes-horse dolly-bird, weaponiser of anti-Semitism, fascist, right-wing extremist, Nazi sympathiser, Twitter-cancer, thick, Tory, brainwashed, an anti-Semite, white-supremacist, Zio-political trollster, not a real Jew, a child bully, bonkers mad conspiracy theorist, and a paedo-protector minion



puppet who my dead grandfather would be disgusted by.

After I used the recent anniversary of my 10 years as *Countdown*'s numbers lady as an opportunity to give this topic a bigger platform with an on-camera interview, an 11 500-word article was written with the sole intention of discrediting the many brave and dedicated people standing up to anti-Semitism. I can only describe this article as A-grade conspiracy garbage.

Subsequently, rewarded for his efforts, the author of this article tweeted delightedly to have been followed on Twitter by both Labour Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell and Labour General Secretary Jennie Formby. (I remain unfollowed by them.) On my birthday, I was shown a tweet from Karl Hansen, political advisor to Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary Andy McDonald, which told his followers how I "smear my political opponents",

boost troll accounts, and don't stand up to bullying – I am a bully.

This is the tactic used over and over again against Jews – and indeed anyone speaking out against anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. The victim becomes the aggressor, and the aggressor becomes the wronged-party. It's gas-lighting. They can't attack the facts, so they attack the messenger.

I've had to do so much research and learning to even begin to have the tools to fight this. It pains me to revisit these atrocities, it tires me,

it angers me, but knowledge and truth are our only weapons. If I can do this in just a couple of months, there is no excuse for any Labour official not to take-up the same kind of learning themselves, when they clearly still haven't got to grips with understanding this problem.

You need to know next to nothing to propagate Nazi or Soviet Jew-hating propaganda, reframed to fit today's narrative, which spreads like wildfire and is dangerous. But, you need to know nearly everything in order to combat it. The odds are stacked in the anti-Semite's favour.

We need to re-stack those odds. No-one should have to risk their safety and jeopardise their career speaking out against anti-Semitism in Britain in 2019.

I call on all people, the media and politicians from every side, to stand with us, and Be Louder against anti-Semitism.

Enough is enough.

Orthodox activist creates an international Jewish sex-offender list

NICOLA MILTZ

A website containing an international register of more than 770 alleged Jewish orthodox sex offenders is claimed to be the world's largest database of its kind.

Eric Aiken of Boca Raton, Florida, is the owner and creator of this website*, and is an outspoken advocate for orthodox victims of child sexual abuse.

Over the past four years, he has compiled a list comprising more than 770 names of alleged orthodox offenders. The website brazenly highlights incidents where well-known rabbis and orthodox Jews have been involved in alleged cover ups and sexual scandal.

Aiken, himself a near victim of child sexual abuse, started the website when he began investigating the rabbi who allegedly tried to molest him when he was 18 years old.

"I was shocked when I saw the number of orthodox molesters, many of whom were people I knew. It led me to become involved in advocacy in this area," he told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

"Immediately, I reached out to rabbis to see if there was something that I could do to stop child sex abuse. No one seemed helpful or willing. Most of them did not even return my calls."

So, four years ago, he started compiling a list of alleged offenders. At the time he had about 160 names on it, mostly gleaned from sexual-offenders registries attached to various states in the United States, and some from published articles.

Then, he decided to go public, producing his website with the attached naming and shaming list of alleged offenders.

"All sexual offenders are the enemy. To focus on Jews makes this a Jewish problem and not a societal problem, which it really is."

"My aim is for it to be used as a resource for employers and parents to protect children, prevent abuse, and stop the cover ups," he said.

While researching his website, a common theme emerged. "Orthodox child sex predators are routinely protected and covered up by rabbis and orthodox officials. Victims who speak out or report their abuser to the police are publicly

shamed. Many victims, even their families, are expelled from their communities for speaking out."

Although there are no statistics to back his belief, he believes the database will help to save lives.

To date, it has not been endorsed by any rabbi, but this has not deterred him from continuing his efforts to expose alleged perpetrators. "Despite being told by rabbonim that they support my idea of exposing orthodox child sexual offenders, they do not endorse my website," he said.

The people he names each have what he terms "publicly available information" about them linked in PDF format next to their names.

He insists that he makes no claim that the articles or reports "are truthful or accurate", saying that he relies on reputable news sources for information. He insists that he merely republishes publicly available documents and media reports.

In his disclaimer on the website, he says there are three different categories in the list: convicted, arrested, and not charged.

"When individuals have the word 'convicted' or 'arrested' next to their name, I am not stating that this is true. I am reflecting what one of the attached reports or documents alleges about

that individual. I don't know if this information is accurate," says Aiken.

"When someone is listed as 'not charged', it means that they have not been charged with a crime. The reason they are listed is that their name has come up in a publicly available media report, and I have republished that report next to the individual's name for information purposes only. I do not allege that the listed individual has done anything wrong or has committed any crime."

So far, he said, he had not had any run in with the law, was well versed in American defamation law, and was careful to act within the law.

Wendy Hendler, the Director of Koleinu SA, which runs a support helpline for victims of abuse in the community, said that in theory, the idea of an accessible database of sexual offenders was a "brilliant idea".

"It can be a valuable resource for schools, shuls, and other institutions when hiring new staff to check that there is no history of abuse or behaviour of this nature. Offenders are known to move from one city to another, from one job to the next. They find employment where there is access to minors, and this leaves places like schools vulnerable."

Venezuela – why it matters

TALI FEINBERG

David Akinin is carefully watching the crisis in his birth country, Venezuela, from his adopted home in Namibia, feeling deep concern for the South American community.

“The situation in Venezuela reached boiling point on 23 January, when Juan Guaidó, the President of the National Assembly used article 233 to assume the presidency,” says Akinin, who was born in Venezuela to a Jewish family that came to the country from Spain and Morocco.

Both former President Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó are claiming to be president of the South American country, which is battling for survival against corruption, dictatorship, economic implosion, and the drug trade.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on Sunday that Israel would recognise Guaidó as interim president of Venezuela.

“The time has come to bring back the values of leadership, integrity, and accountability to the country,” says Akinin. “It’s time to pick a side, as the United States announced earlier this month. History will remember everyone who remained silent and didn’t stand on the side of justice, equality, and prosperity.”

He says he is proud of every country that is standing up for the people of Venezuela, recognising the humanitarian crisis the country is facing, and the socio-political oppression that has led to the collapse of its democracy and separation of powers.

There is no food in the supermarkets, and no medicine. Most people have the maximum of one meal a day, and the average Venezuelan has lost 8kg to 11kg.

Akinin and his brothers were kidnapped for a night when he lived in Venezuela. He and his family then emigrated to America, where he excelled. He now lives in Namibia where he has a thriving business and is a young but leading member of the Jewish community.

“Venezuela is one of the most beautiful countries in the world, and was once the strongest economy in South America. At its peak, the Jewish community 20 years ago must have been about 30 000 Jews. Today there may be less than 6 000,” says Akinin.

While there are fears that Netanyahu’s backing of Guaidó may result in a backlash against the Jewish community, Akinin doesn’t believe this will be the case. “The Jewish community is as apolitical as any religious group. I don’t see how the Jewish community should be impacted negatively more than it already has. Venezuelan Jews, like all other citizens, suffer from the current crisis,” he says.

But he notes that “Maduro’s regime kicked out the Israeli embassy in 2009, and his policies have often had an anti-Israel message. For years, there has been growing anti-Semitism, built up as hatred from a regime that funds Hezbollah, Hamas, and others.”

Akinin went on to explain the latest political developments. “Maduro proclaimed himself president illegally for a new term of six years on 10 January, having held dirty elections which had a turnout of about 14% of the electorate. For years, the country’s opposition, which is more than 80% of the population if not more, has been trying to find a solution that was peaceful and constitutional. Many times the elections were



David Akinin (centre) with the late Ambassador of Venezuela to Namibia, Juan Carlos Barrios, and first secretary Edith Lopez

stolen by the official party, but it was very hard to prove.

“This time, the stars were aligned for a constitutional exit to a dictatorial, narco-regime,” he says. “Over the past 20 years, the country’s coffers were raided by the likes of China and Russia, which usurped resources –

Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world – and struck dirty deals with a crew of military and political leaders that fund terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, as well as run one of the biggest drug cartels in the world today.”

Akinin describes the harrowing situation

of people on the street. In the past eight to 10 years, eight zeros have been slashed from the currency – the biggest devaluation in world history. The minimum wage is about R60 a month, and it has been increased 40%, or more than 20 times.

There is no food in the supermarkets, and no medicine. Most people have the maximum of one meal a day, and the average Venezuelan has lost 8kg to 11kg. Child mortality has increased, and diseases that were eradicated decades ago are starting to reappear at epidemic levels. The children of protesters are often kidnapped and held for ransom in prisons in the most horrific conditions.

“Guaidó is taking each day as it comes, calling for peaceful protests, and little by little, getting the right support from the international community,” says Akinin. “There has been an exodus of nearly four million people in recent years. Very soon people will return and rebuild what was once a great nation, repairing its health and educational systems, restoring its infrastructure and economic engine, giving birth to a new republic, and planting seeds of hope in every family’s backyard.”

In the meantime, Akinin will keep a close eye on developments in the hope that the country and its Jewish community can resume their former glory.

World News in Brief

Black Jewish actor violently assaulted in Chicago

Black Jewish actor Jussie Smollett, best known for his work on the show *Empire*, was hospitalised in Chicago on Tuesday following an assault that is being described by police as a possible hate crime.

Smollett was exiting a restaurant when two men approached him. The Chicago Police Department reported that they “gained his attention by yelling racial and homophobic slurs at him”. They then proceeded to attack Smollett, pouring an “unknown chemical substance” on him, and wrapping a rope around his neck.

The Hollywood Reporter reported later in the day that Smollett said his attackers yelled “MAGA!” or “Make America great again!” during the incident – a reference to President Donald Trump’s campaign slogan.

Smollett was born to a Jewish father and

African-American mother. He portrays a gay musician on *Empire* named Jamal Lyon. In 2015, Smollett came out as gay, telling Ellen DeGeneres, “I choose not to talk about my personal life. But there is, without a doubt, no closet that I’ve ever been in.”

In addition to *Empire*, he has appeared in the films *Alien: Covenant* and *Marshall*.

Many users expressed their outrage at the attack on social media.

“This reported attack on Jussie is a disturbing reminder of the terrible homophobia and racism that plagues our society,” Anti-Defamation League Chief Executive Jonathan Greenblatt said. “We call on police to investigate this vile incident as a hate crime, and work swiftly to bring the alleged perpetrators to justice.”

Jewish comedian Dan Levy, known for his role in the popular sitcom *Schitt’s Creek*, tweeted, “Horrific, heartbreaking, and deeply disturbing. Combat this hate by donating to a black/LGBTQ organisation today.”

Empire co-creator Danny Strong also spoke out, tweeting, “The terror of racism and homophobia has no place in our society. It is the most indecent way to live. Whoever did this, do not forget that you are nothing but hate-filled cowards while Jussie’s talent and activism will continue to shine a bright light on to the world for decades to come.”

Smollett is reportedly in good condition at the hospital. Authorities are asking witnesses to come forward to assist the investigation into the attack. (JTA)





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Protecting children from sexual misconduct at yeshivot

TALI FEINBERG

When we send our teenagers and young adults on study and leadership programmes in Israel, we assume they are in the safest of hands. But an incident that took place in Israel involving a prominent rabbi has brought this issue to the fore.

In 2013, a prominent rabbi, Rav Moti Elon, was convicted of committing an indecent sexual act against a minor on two occasions.

A storm has now erupted around Rabbi Haim Druckman, a leader of the national-religious movement in Israel, who publicly backed Elon in spite of his conviction, even after evidence arose several weeks ago of new incidents of sexual abuse by Elon over the past 12 months.

In early January, a major anonymous philanthropist who has contributed millions of dollars to Bnei Akiva and its various institutions froze donations because of the expected participation of Druckman at the movement’s upcoming world conference, according to the *Jerusalem Post*.

Druckman, the chairman of Bnei Akiva yeshivas and seminaries – and perhaps the most influential rabbi in the national-religious sector – has been criticised for stating that the judge was wrong to convict Elon, and inviting Elon to lecture at his Ohr Etzion Yeshiva in Merkaz Shapira.

“The threat of sexual abuse afflicts every society in the world. Therefore, as a community, we need to adopt an approach of zero tolerance, transparency, and accountability when dealing with these issues...”

On 22 January, Druckman finally issued a statement expressing the importance of standing up to sex offenders and predators – and on the side of those harmed by such people.

Yet some feel this was not enough. Even the president of the Rabbinical Council of America and eight former presidents jointly called on Druckman to apologise to the victims of Elon, and acknowledge that he made a mistake in supporting Elon in 2013. They also said that he should establish professional guidelines to protect students of yeshivot from sexual molestation and abuse.

Last week, the leadership of Bnei Akiva Australia and the Zionist Federation of Australia wrote a letter saying that “child protection and welfare are of paramount importance to Bnei Akiva. This case reinforces the importance of being extra vigilant in protecting our *channichim* (participants) and *channichot* who are our foremost priority. It is for this very reason we are disappointed that Rav Druckman not only supported a continued sex offender back in 2013, but to date has failed to apologise or express regret for that support.”

Illan Biddle, the National Chairman of Bnei Akiva South

Africa, said, “As Bnei Akiva South Africa, we see the protection of our *channichim* as our number-one priority. As a result, we have a zero tolerance policy towards any sexual harassment. Moreover, our madrichim have attended sexual misconduct lectures and training sessions by psychologists. With these high standards, we affirm the safety of our *channichim* on all our programmes.”



Nicci Raz, the National Director of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), said, “The SAZF supports the underlying principle recently expressed by the Australian Zionist Federation that protection of our children is the highest priority and abuse should never be condoned, nor covered up. It is for this reason that the SAZF works closely with the leadership of all the Jewish youth movements locally to ensure that those in positions of authority who are responsible for looking after our children are well educated on safety, security, and protection protocol and policies.”

She said that as a mother who is sending her daughter on a Bnei Akiva gap-year programme this year, she had full confidence that her daughter was in safe hands.

Manny Waks, himself a victim of child sexual abuse, and who started Kol v’Oz, which works to

prevent abuse in the global Jewish community, said, “Rabbi Haim Druckman is the de-facto head of Bnei Akiva worldwide, so when we send our children on Bnei Akiva programmes, they go through Druckman’s institutions.

“At the same time, if there are other victims of Moti Elon and others within the national religious movement, this approach by Druckman would ensure that the

victims remain silent because they have seen that the leadership prefers to stand with the perpetrators rather than the victims.”

In this context, “What are we doing to ensure that our children are protected by the leadership in Israel?” asks Waks.

In South Africa, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein has taken a zero-tolerance approach to any forms of abuse, and has set up an Abuse Review Board as a safety net to ensure that every report of abuse is properly dealt with and that no victim is left unprotected.

“The threat of sexual abuse afflicts every society in the world. Therefore, as a community, we need to adopt an approach of zero tolerance, transparency, and accountability when dealing with these issues,” says Goldstein.

“For these reasons, I established the board to ensure that no

accusation of abuse is swept under the carpet. We must confront this threat with fearlessness, honesty, and relentless commitment.”

The chief rabbi has thrown his support behind Koleinu SA, which is working to combat any form of abuse in the Jewish community.

“Once a report is made,” says Koleinu SA Director, Wendy Hendler, “it is absolutely critical that the organisation removes the alleged

perpetrator from any involvement with children with immediate effect.” This was not done in the Elon case.

“The worldwide consensus of Halachic opinion holds that suspected or actual cases of child abuse need to be reported directly to the police without first obtaining permission from the religious authorities,” says Hendler, who is herself a rebbetzin.

“Do not make the classic mistake of believing that a rabbi who is your spiritual leader is incapable of such acts. Religious observance does not necessarily preclude people from performing sexually deviant acts on either adults or children,” she says.

But, are rabbis protected in these cases? “Yes, because people generally tend to want to believe that their religious leader – in whom they have placed their trust – is innocent. The psychological axiom is that we want to feel safe in our world, and admitting [the contrary] rocks

a person’s world to its core,” says Hendler.

“Rabbis are also human beings who can commit heinous sexual offences. In fact, rabbis need to be held more strongly to account because they have a platform entrusted to them, and in a way this makes it easier for them to exploit vulnerable individuals, whether they be students or community members.”

Hendler believes that rabbis should be trained in the nature of sexual predators, their poor prognosis for rehabilitation, the danger they pose to the lives of unsuspecting victims, and the real damage caused to institutions which are soft on them.

“Furthermore, institutions should never deal with these cases internally as there is an unconscious bias towards protecting their institution and making sure that its reputation is unsullied,” says Hendler.

“This prevents the correct protocols being implemented. The result is that the rabbi continues to molest into the future. There are external bodies in every community worldwide which are well equipped and specialised to manage these cases in accordance with the law of their country.”

Hendler emphasises that parents should make sure that the institution their child is attending is compliant in terms of having a policy, reporting protocols, and training, monitoring and vetting staff.

“In Israel, Tahel [a crisis centre for religious women and children] has a certification process for child protection which ensures that the organisation becomes a safe space for children. Parents must find out this information before sending their children off to learn in Israel. There is nothing pushy or impolite about asking these vital questions, which could be life-saving. It also places pressure on these institutions to implement safety policies and procedures.”

• *Tahel can be contacted on tahel@crisiscenter.org.il. Koleinu SA can be contacted on koleinusa@gmail.com or its helpline: 011 264 0341.*

Orthodox activist created an international Jewish sex-offender list

>>Continued from page 4

She said that while it was good that the South African Constitution protected individuals’ rights to privacy, the public should have some access to the sexual offenders register to safeguard themselves against hiring past offenders.

South Africa has a National Register for Sex Offenders, administered by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. It records names of those found guilty of sexual offences against children and mentally disabled people. The register is not open to the public, and is kept strictly confidential.

Anyone found guilty of a sexual offence against children and the mentally disabled is put on the register. An employer in the public or private sector working with children or the mentally disabled can apply for a certificate from the registrar to see if a name is on the register. According to experts, this is a bureaucratic process, and not easy to obtain, however.

No one including the registrar is allowed to

disclose or publish any information contained in the register, including the names of convicted offenders. Any unauthorised disclosure or publication amounts to a criminal offence.

Johannesburg attorney Ian Levitt, who has experience in sexual-abuse cases, said a database could jeopardise survivor privacy and lead to his or her identity being exposed, which was concerning.

“One main reason why we were successful in overturning the 20-year bar on prosecutions was that survivors of sexual abuse face massive challenges in coming forward to seek justice,” said Levitt.

“Any person who is concerned about the survivor should focus on enabling that survivor to come forward and seek justice, rather than fear possible exposure on a widely circulated media or database of sexual offenders,” he said.

“If there is no way that publication of a convicted sex offender’s details can link

him or her back to the survivor, I think the offender’s naming and shaming can be a powerful weapon. But again, the offender must have been convicted, and his or her exposure must not in any way link to the survivor whose interests remain paramount.”

He questioned Aiken’s motive in exposing only orthodox Jewish abusers on his website. “All sexual offenders are the enemy. To focus on Jews makes this a Jewish problem and not a societal problem, which it really is.

“I have no problem with him exposing all the Jews, but then expose everyone else too. Lay people will read this website as [indicating] a major problem in the Jewish community. That is a massive problem, because it could lead them to feel safe in the non-Jewish community, where this behaviour is just as rife.”

• *The SA Jewish Report has chosen not to print the name of the website as we cannot verify its accuracy.*

Bibi’s Africa strategy picks up steam



OPINION

Steven Gruzd

Last week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu flew to the north-central African nation of Chad. The roundtrip took 23 hours. He met Chadian President Idriss Déby Itno in the vast landlocked country’s sweltering, dusty capital, N’Djamena (Arabic for “place of rest”).

The next day, Chad restored diplomatic relations with Israel, severed in 1972. Netanyahu called his fourth visit to Africa since 2016 “a breakthrough into the heart of the Muslim world”. Two more Muslim-majority states – Mali and Morocco – might be next.

While Israel is chipping away at Africa’s automatic support for the Arab world, it needs patience and a strong, sharp chisel.

Meanwhile, things seem back on track for Israel’s Africa outreach, even though a planned high-level leaders’ meeting in Lomé, Togo, in October 2017 collapsed precipitously. Domestic unrest in the Togolese streets plus pressure from pro-Palestinian quarters (including, it is said, South Africa and Morocco) scuppered the summit. Plans to relocate the meeting to Israel never materialised.

But what, exactly, does Israel want from Chad, ranked 186th (out of 190) on the United Nation’s Human Development Index? Israel’s per capita GDP is more than \$42 000 (R572 884); Chad’s is about \$900 (R12 276). Déby’s rule since 1990 has been despotic, and denigrates human rights.

“Chad is the most climate-fragile nation on

earth,” says Ross Harvey, senior researcher in resource governance at the South African Institute of International Affairs. “Its vulnerability to the impacts of climate change are especially severe, not only because of the risk of both droughts and floods, but also because of extreme poverty and frequent conflict.” Chad’s fragility is compounded by massive migrant flows in its neighbourhood.

Chad’s domestic problems aside, it might be another vote in favour of Israel (or at least an abstention) in international forums.

It may also prove that Muslim-majority states can benefit more from peace than hostility with the Jewish state. (Chad, however, has already paid a heavy price for rapprochement. Ten Chadian peacekeepers were killed and at least 25 injured in a revenge attack by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in northern Mali.)

Finally, it could open new markets. The optics of a diplomatic triumph could also help Netanyahu as Israel heads to the polls on 9 April.

There are also potential long-term gains. Stability and prosperity in Chad will help close down terrorist activity in Africa. According to Harvey, “A presence in Chad will allow Israel to conduct on-the-ground intelligence gathering for new insight into how extremist groups like Boko Haram operate. If Chad benefits developmentally from Israel’s support, trade relations will serve the Jewish state well in the long run.”

Israeli water technologies can help Chad improve its agricultural productivity with much less water, and Israel can offer cutting-edge intelligence and military services.

Other diplomatic windfalls loom. Israeli officials say Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga of Mali is due to visit Israel before the elections. The states briefly had diplomatic ties from 1960 to 1973. Netanyahu’s 2017 meeting with Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta in Monrovia, Liberia, apparently precipitated this thaw.



Photo: Steven Gruzd

Ever the wily politician, Netanyahu is also rumoured to be visiting Morocco in late March. Apparently Rabat is seeking better ties with Washington, through Jerusalem. US support for its position on the Western Sahara (which Morocco has largely occupied since 1975) would be invaluable. Restoring relations with Morocco would bump up Netanyahu’s popularity.

Guinea renewed ties with Israel in July 2016, after 49 years.

Elsewhere, Israel plans to open its newest embassy in Africa in Kigali in April, coinciding with commemorations of 25 years since the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Both small, dynamic countries share a tenacity in overcoming tragic histories and fast-tracking development.

A direct Kigali-Tel Aviv flight is being planned. Israel has quietly dropped plans to repatriate African refugees from Israel to Rwanda.

“During the early 1960s, Israel was considered a friend of newly-independent Africa. This honeymoon ended with the 1967 and 1973 wars. What we are seeing now is a slow process of diplomatic rediscovery, less defined by the increasingly complex and ambiguous Arab-Israeli issue than Africa’s development needs,” says Greg Mills of the Brenthurst Foundation, which has co-hosted the Israel-Africa Dialogue since 2017 with the University of Tel Aviv.

“Israel has a strong development and democratic record, both of which increasingly resonate with African populations. There are dangers of course,” he says, “not least that Israel has to take care to side with Africans, and not just their governments, and to steer clear of the murky world of arms deals.”

South Africa is surely shooting itself in both feet if it downgrades diplomatic relations with Israel, given how Africa moving inexorably the other way.

• Steven Gruzd is an analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs. He recently co-published ‘Israel’s ties with Africa: A focus on Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa’.

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



Destroyed Warsaw, January 1945

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 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 Cape Town from 31 January to 5 February and Johannesburg from 6 to 9 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

Chabad rescues Jewish Studies at Crossroads

JORDAN MOSHE

Chabad House has come to the rescue of Jewish children at Crossroads School who were about to lose their weekly Jewish Studies lessons.

At the end of last year, the South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE) took the decision to cut funding for Jewish Studies classes at non-denominational remedial schools. The board cited the costs of funding its own new remedial school, King David Ariel, as the reason.

In the absence of funding, schools

that were unable to absorb the costs themselves had no choice but to call on parents to pay for the lessons if they were to continue. Such was the case at Crossroads.

Parents were upset and angry because for most of them, this is the only Jewish learning their children have access to. What’s more, the children love these extramural lessons.

Says Shereen Sheer, the parent of a pupil at Crossroads, “The Jewish community is very strong at Crossroads and the school has always supported our beliefs. We need our kids to have access to

Yiddishkeit.”

Like most parents, Sheer assumed that the SABJE oversaw all Jewish schools, when in fact it represents King David Schools only. This meant, as SABJE General Director Rabbi Craig Kacev explained, that King David parents were subsidising Jewish Studies at other schools, which wasn’t fair.

When Rabbis Pini Pink and David Masinter heard about the plight of Jewish children at Crossroads, they immediately stepped into the breach, making sure that Crossroads could continue to offer its Jewish Studies programme.

Pink, the Youth Director of Chabad House, liaised with Crossroads, and arranged to subsidise the programme to ensure its continuity.

“The rationale is that every Jewish child should be provided with a Jewish education, especially those who are not able, for whatever reason, to attend a Jewish school,” says Pink. “It’s crucial that no one be left out.”

The agreement reached will allow educators Rabbi Azriel and Rebbetzin Laia Uzvolk – who have been overseeing the programme at Crossroads until now – to continue

to teach it. They will partner with Chabad to create a new Jewish Studies syllabus at the school.

“The Uzvolks will work together with me to create a new and exciting curriculum. This is being funded by Chabad House,” says Pink.

Together with funding from Chabad, parents are also encouraged to contribute to the running of the programme. Chabad and the school, however, stress that donations of any amount are welcome, and those who are unable to contribute will not be excluded.

Cape Board takes Holocaust commemoration to Government



Holocaust survivor Miriam Kleinebscht

JORDAN MOSHE

While countries across the world observed international Holocaust memorial day on Sunday, the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies held its ceremony in the Cape Town Council Chambers.

Marked annually on 27 January, the day commemorates the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Soviet forces who unearthed the untold horrors it contained. Together with Cape Town city councillors, the board unveiled a series of mosaics made by Herzlia High School students which depict the Neue Synagogue in Berlin which was attacked on Kristallnacht in 1937.

The ceremony is part of the Cape board’s “No Place for Hate” campaign, which aims to educate people about the destructiveness of hate and intolerance. “We want the city of Cape Town to understand that there is no place for discrimination of any kind,” says Cape Board Director Stuart Diamond.

“Together with the city’s elected leadership, we want to highlight the power of connection, which is possible only through the elimination of hatred. The mosaic project is literally right outside the council chambers, and we hope this will encourage [leaders] and their visitors to pose the difficult questions, and address issues surrounding hate.”

Guest of honour at the event was 96-year-old Miriam Kleinebscht, a Holocaust survivor and refugee who fled to South Africa. Recalling fondly the West German coal mining village of Bochum in which she had grown up, she spoke of a community of 1 152 Jews who had been living there since 1349, and its first synagogue, built in 1594.

Tragically, this beautiful heritage was violently lost with the rise of Nazi oppression. Kleinebscht described her family’s relief at eventually finding refuge in South Africa when she was just 13.

Much to the horror of her and her family, their South African haven would witness the rise of the Nationalist government and its apartheid policies about 10 years later, scarily replicating the Nazi laws. Ending her speech with a loud and resounding message, Kleinebscht said, “On this, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we must acknowledge the past both in Germany and South Africa, and say, ‘Never again!’”

Rael Kaimowitz, Chairperson of the Cape Board, stressed how vital it was that we remember that past. “What begins with Jews, doesn’t end with Jews,” he said. History shows that when there is an increase in anti-Semitism, there is an increase in prejudice against other minority communities, including Islamophobia. “With racism on the rise in South Africa, this is an important reminder. There should be no place for hate in this country.”

Is a BA ‘bugger all’, or essential future-proofing?

JORDAN MOSHE

Amid talk about the fourth industrial revolution and the jobs of the future, there has been a resurgence of the debate about whether Bachelor of Arts or humanities degrees are worth doing.

Humanities degrees are often considered soft options with severely limited earning potential. When compared to more technical or financial degrees, those focusing on language, literature, or even psychology are seen as poor substitutes.

However, the truth is that not only are such “artsy” degrees as – or even more – important than technical or financial areas of study, their graduates are as employable as scientists and accountants.

“This debate is certainly nothing new,” says Professor Garth Stevens, the acting head of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). “It’s an old question society has asked time and again, every time in a different iteration.”

In part, this is because humanities subjects are frequently cast in a negative light because of their requirements. “Humanities degrees generally don’t require maths and science, which many other degrees do require,” says the former Vice-Chancellor of University of Cape Town, Dr Max Price. “For different reasons, there are students who don’t have maths and science who often default to humanities, and they are less well prepared for university in general.

“This creates the impression that the humanities are easier subjects, or that the standards are not as high, but the standards are demanding. Many humanities subjects are more difficult than some in commerce or even medicine in terms of what they demand in order to do well. A first in a humanities subject is generally more difficult to achieve than in a science subject.”

Stevens says he believes it is a circular argument. “To shore the humanities up against any other area of study is an artificial distinction,” he says. “Everybody is talking about the onset of the fourth industrial revolution, and how that means we need to leave certain subjects behind, without realising that these subjects are an integral part of the fabric of the future.

“The technological industry itself is derived from the humanities. The drive to innovate, the need to consider problems critically and develop solutions are all soft skills – the very domain of the humanities. Even more importantly, those who say that technology is taking over forget that humans still need to do something, and that is to continue to think critically.”

Important though this need may be, many argue that a humanities graduate doesn’t have the same earning capacity as a BCom or engineering graduate. Given that a number of scholarship foundations across the country offer funding only for the study of technical or financial degrees, this argument seems to have some validity.

“The aim of the scholarship is to promote forward movement and growth,” says Jodi Bailey, South African Country Manager of the Moshal Scholarship Program. “This means that we aim to enable students to break the cycle of financial difficulty as fast as possible, and get a return on their studies by entering the workplace as soon as possible.”

Not unlike many scholarship programmes, Moshal offers scholarships to deserving candidates in a very particular scope of subjects, including economics, IT, and business. Bailey stresses, however, that this doesn’t mean that those who have humanities degrees are not employable.

“Although people have little respect for the profession, the truth is that educators can earn a decent wage,” she says. “However, it



takes time to progress to that level. It’s not as immediate as it is with certain financial or technical degrees. Such degrees enable people to move faster, and pay their success forward by bringing their families out of financial difficulty.”

This process, stresses Bailey, is not applicable to every person. “Earning capacity is not the reason to take up a finance degree. Money appeals to everyone, and for that reason everyone wants to be a chartered accountant because they believe that they make millions. [But], if a person’s not cut out for it, or has talents elsewhere, it’s a terrible idea to take up a technical degree.

“Career guidance in this country is sorely lacking, and students aren’t being taught to pursue what really matters to them or is in their interest. Their interest could earn them more in the long run than a career that appears lucrative.”

The statistics confirm this.

According to Stevens, the notion that those with soft skills aren’t as employable as those with hard skills is completely inaccurate. Citing a Wits’ survey, he says about 81% of Wits humanities graduates secure stable employment by the time they graduate.

“This is a stark contrast to the information people peddle,” he says. “Humanities graduates are absorbed as quickly as others. Some maintain that BAs are vague and therefore unemployable, but roughly 60% of graduates report being employed in a very specific job relevant to what they studied. This speaks for itself.”

Therefore, while those who have commitment to and passion for engineering or accounting can pursue such degrees, students who better fit the mould of a BA shouldn’t be discouraged. In fact, if a person chooses the area best suited to them, it inevitably improves their career prospects because they are passionate about what they are doing.

“A BA degree doesn’t close doors, but opens up opportunities,” says Price. “Ideally, every university student should have a liberal arts degree. Its tenets apply to careers which appear completely removed, including law and engineering. In the United Kingdom, graduates with classics degrees in Greek, Latin, or even ancient history are among the most employable at corporate consulting firms because they find that they have the skills most necessary to do the job. It’s not the subject itself that makes them employable, but the skill set they have acquired.”

He concludes, “The graduates of today will probably work in four to five jobs in their lifetimes. It is said that more than 50% of the jobs people will be doing in 10 years’ time have not yet been invented. Students need to be equipped to handle different jobs, and broaden their perspectives. A humanities degree is an investment that provides skills that will last a student through career changes, and well into the future.”

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JAWITZ

PROPERTIES

French historian debunks myths at Holocaust memorial

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

“The rise of anti-Semitism is an international – not French – phenomenon,” said Professor Renee Poznanski, a Jewish French-born Israeli historian.

“[France] may have preceded other countries when it comes to extremism, but it has a vast [international] following in this regard. I feel quite pessimistic [about developments],” she confided to the *SA Jewish Report* on the resurge of anti-Semitism worldwide.

Poznanski was the keynote speaker at the 2019 International Day of Remembrance for Victims of the Holocaust at the Holocaust & Genocide Centre in Forest Town, Johannesburg, on 27 January.

She is the author of a number of books on the Holocaust, including *Jews in France in World War II*, and *Drancy un camp en France* (a camp in France) – referring to the notorious internment camp in Paris, from which many thousands of Jews were transported to extermination camps.

The date 27 January is significant, as it is the day the Auschwitz death camp was liberated by the Soviet army in 1945. Auschwitz has since become the symbol of the Holocaust. This year also marks the 80th year since the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

Numerous survivors attended the memorial in Johannesburg. They were born in Poland, Hungary, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, Belarus, Lithuania, and Rwanda. Diplomatic staff from Germany, Turkey, Poland, Sweden, Croatia, Israel, and the United Nations were also present.

Martin Schäfer, German Ambassador to South Africa, said 27 January was “a difficult day for Germans”.

“We have to face what happened in the name of the state and the [German] people,” he said, pointing out that, “Nothing is self-evident, even 74 years on.”

Schäfer said he was grateful for the friendship and interaction established with Holocaust survivors in South Africa. “I am grateful for the unbelievable miracle of being able to commemorate, mourn, and cry with you about the pain and losses inflicted by the state of Germany, the German people, perhaps even my own family.”

Describing the Holocaust as “the most evil crime that the earth has ever seen”, Schäfer said it was “a shame that it took the effort of the entire world to liberate the Jews of Auschwitz and elsewhere”. Stating that the liberation of Auschwitz was also the liberation of Germans, he pointed out that liberation depended on efforts to remember, to share the pain and loss of those who had suffered, and to do everything in one’s power to make sure that (such crimes) were never repeated.

Schäfer observed that genocide is often sparked by hatred of the other so deep, it is taught to children. “Germans considered the French a ‘hereditary enemy’,” he said. It was taught at school. “The consequence was three wars [in the 19th and 20th century] that ravaged Europe. After World War II – and over the grave



Jewish deportees are seen here in the Drancy transit camp in France, 1942

of millions – we have overcome this hatred through the will of leaders and the people. There is now no ‘enemyship’ between Germany and France.”

If that was possible, he asked, why aren’t we optimistic about eradicating anti-Semitism?

His optimism was not shared, however. United Nations Secretary General António Guterres said in a message broadcast to the audience, “This year, there has been an alarming increase in anti-Semitism. The centuries-old hatred is growing stronger with the rise of neo-Nazism, attacks on Jews, and bigotry on the internet. Mainstream policies are also targeting minorities.”

Poznanski spent time debunking

current popular myths by French historians and the media about the role French citizens and the French resistance had played in saving Jews.

How was it possible, she asked, that of the 330 000 Jews living in France in 1939, 75% had managed to survive the Holocaust – one of the highest survival rates in Europe? The answer was complex. It was due to a combination of factors, mostly geopolitical in nature, including the fact that country to the east of France was occupied by Italy, which gave Jews a certain amount of sanctuary and undermined the German occupation in northern France.

It had little, however, to do with sympathy of French citizens for the plight of Jews, or efforts by the

French resistance to save Jews. “The vast wave of sympathy by the French for Jews is a fraud,” she quoted an historian as saying.

“The Vichy authority [in southern France] had a firm resolve to pursue anti-Jewish policy,” Poznanski said, undermining myths by right-wing historians that leader Philippe Pétain’s government was actually working behind the scenes to rescue the country and French Jews. “This was also not a marginal element. It was supported by a significant portion of the population.”

Likewise, the French resistance was largely indifferent to the fate of the Jews, she said.

“Until the imposition of the yellow star, the vast majority of French

citizens placed their hopes in Pétain, including his anti-Semitic attitudes about the Jewish problem. Spiritual authorities, also never denounced these laws. So, too, publications in general.”

After the imposition of the yellow star and the roundups of 1942, there was a certain amount of indignation at “the barbarous methods imposed by a barbarous country”.

Jews found it easier to make allies and avoid arrest – including amongst the Gendarmerie, or French police – by late 1943, Poznanski said, when there was the sense that an allied victory was imminent. It was only then that anti-Semitism began to lose its relevance. Even then, this was often contradicted by crackdowns against Jews, and a general sense of isolation from the wider population.

Jewish survival must also be attributed to rescue networks organised by Jews themselves, Poznanski pointed out.

Jewish writer Leon Werth, who fled Paris in 1940 to escape German occupation, wrote in 1943, “Nothing can prevent this from taking place.” This sentence has relevance today. Though Poznanski believes the only way to prevent the resurgence of anti-Semitism is through a massive education campaign on the subject, she said, “Poland confronted the past, but look at what is happening now?”

Pointing to the inherent complexity of history, she said, “Human reality is not black and white, but grey. Reality is complex. It is only by understanding the past in all its nuances that we can understand the present.”

Warsaw Ghetto eyewitness accounts bring history to life

TALI FEINBERG

A group of 60 men and women in the Warsaw Ghetto risked their lives to create an archive of documents that they then hid in the ghetto. It was their way of bearing witness to history as it unfolded around them.

Under the leadership of the enigmatic Dr Emanuel Ringelblum, these brave people wrote diaries, and collected papers, posters, photographs, art, music, and testimonies, despite the fact that they would be executed for doing this work.

Their story was turned into a documentary shown in more than 40 countries on Sunday to mark the United Nations International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

The Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre took part in the worldwide screening premiere of the film *Who Will Write Our History*.

The film explains that Nazi propaganda depicted Jews in the ghetto as vermin awaiting extermination, and Ringelblum realised that if he did not create a counter-narrative, this would be all that people would believe in years to come.

“As an historian, Ringelblum saw that a new historical moment was beginning, and that this was the most important story he would ever tell,” explains a narrator in the film.

But, he could not do it alone. In heart-pounding scenes, we see his group meeting secretly, and deciding that writing what they saw around them would be their act of resistance. They met on Shabbat, and gave themselves the code-name *Oneg Shabbos* (Joy of Shabbat).

“Nothing is unimportant,” Ringelblum tells the group. His believed it was the everyday life and death around them that was vital to record, and that Jewish history is not only that of rabbis and philosophers, but also of the people on the street. “He loved the Jewish masses, and the language of the Jewish masses –

Yiddish,” notes the film.

It was in many ways the first battle against “fake news”, and the realisation that the source of the story is as important as the news itself. Ringelblum knew that even if he and his group did not survive, their testimonies would be able to tell this story more genuinely than any Nazi propaganda.

What is so powerful about the documentary is that we see the characters speak the very words they wrote in their diaries. History is brought to life as we get inside the heads of people living through the Holocaust.

But as the Final Solution closes in on them, fewer and fewer of those voices survive. The great deportations take most of them to Treblinka. Those remaining in the ghetto decide to fight the Nazis in an uprising. The Jews of Warsaw fought off the Nazis for four weeks, holding them off longer than the Polish army did when Germany invaded Poland.

As the ghetto goes up in flames, the remaining archivists write their last wills and testaments, and the



whole collection is buried deep within the ghetto, in metal boxes and milk jars. One 19-year-old who helped to bury the archive wrote, “I hope to live to see the time when the great treasure will be dug up, and scream the truth at the world.”

One of the last acts of resistance of the Oneg Shabbos archivists was to send a message through the Polish underground to London, where they shared what they had discovered about the gassing of Jews in the east. They had come to know about it from a survivor of Chelmno, who had made his way to Warsaw and told them about it. This survivor’s testimony is the first written account of the gassings at Chelmno, and is preserved in the *Oneg Shabbos* archive.

The message from Warsaw was read on the radio across Britain, and to them it was a great victory. But it was bittersweet, as the Jews of Poland were wiped out. Of the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust, half were Polish Jews. Only two *Oneg Shabbos* archivists survive.

After the war, two caches of the archive were dug up from deep under the rubble. One cache has still not been found. But the message of writing as an act of spiritual resistance, and the pen as mightier than the sword, is as relevant today as it was then, noted the Director of the

South African Holocaust & Genocide Foundation, Richard Freedman.

To mark the commemoration, he called survivors to light candles of remembrance. Some of them had witnessed the very scenes depicted in the film. “I’m shaking... I heard Ringelblum speak to us in the ghetto,” said survivor Miriam Lichterman after the film.

The evening also included the award of the Marlene Silbert Prize to students graduating as educators who wrote essays describing how they would teach the Holocaust in their classrooms. “This prize is about passing the baton onto the next generation,” said Freedman.

The audience was also addressed by UN Secretary General António Guterres, who noted that anti-Semitism was rising globally. “It falls to us to be ever vigilant,” he said. “Now more than ever, let us unite in the fight for universal values and build a world of equality for all.”

More than a quarter of Europe’s Jews murdered in just three months, new data shows

ELSABÉ BRITS

New research shows that the majority of deaths during the single largest murder campaign of the Holocaust, Operation Reinhard, occurred over just a single three-month period in which 1.47 million Jews died.

A study done by Lewi Stone, Professor of Biomathematics at Tel Aviv University and RMIT University in Melbourne, has been published in the peer review journal *Science Advances*.



Operation Reinhard (1942–1943) was the largest single murder campaign of the Holocaust, during which about 1.7 million Jews from German-occupied Poland were murdered by the Nazis. But the shocking scale and rate of this operation has been revealed by Stone, a mathematical biologist. He used spatiotemporal visualisation, data, and mathematics to plot genocidal events.

Most victims of this operation perished in gas chambers at the death camps Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. However, the tempo, “kill rates”, and spatial dynamics of these events were poorly documented, until now.

Using an unusual dataset originating from railway transportation records, this study identifies an extreme phase of the hyper intense killing of about 1.47 million Jews. Therefore, more than 25% of the Jews killed in all the six years of World War II, were murdered by the Nazis in an intense 100-day surge.

Stone’s analysis was based on carefully compiled train records presented in a book (1987) by Professor Yitzhak Arad, a well-known Holocaust historian and former director of Yad Vashem. It showed about 500 train transportations from 400 different Polish Jewish communities.

The study identified a “kill rate”, using data science and visualisation, of extreme magnitude almost twice as high as the Rwanda genocide, and a Holocaust death number roughly 10 times higher than commonly believed.

Using Arad’s data, Stone estimated the rate at which the Nazis killed Jews during Operation Reinhard, showing that most of the murders occurred in just three months – August, September, and October 1942. On average 450 000 victims were killed each month. Of the 1.7 million victims of Operation Reinhard, about 1.5 million, were murdered during these three months. About 15 000 murders per day, every day.

“The operation began in March 1942 and lasted 21 months, concluding in November 1943. In this operation, the three key death camps, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka, were set up with the intention of eliminating every Jew in German-occupied Poland, the region known as the General Government (GG).

“Detailed records of the killings are almost non-existent because of the Nazis’ tight secrecy around Operation Reinhard. Any information that was recorded was deliberately burnt and destroyed by the Nazis during the war for fear of future incrimination. In addition, a large percentage of murders have to be attributed to widespread shooting, since a ‘Holocaust by bullets’ took place in parallel both in and outside the GG.

“Because Auschwitz has long been viewed as the central symbol of the Holocaust, the Reinhard death camps have received relatively less attention for many years. While Auschwitz had a reasonable number of survivors to reconstruct history, very few survived the camps of

Operation Reinhard to convey their experiences,” Stone writes in the study.

The Deutsche Reichsbahn, the German National Railway, played a critical role in transporting millions of Jewish victims to the death camps, and the “special trains” that transported the victims were kept on strict time schedules. The railway employed almost half a million civil servants and 900 000 workers, and knowingly participated in the killings, according to the study.

Compared to the 1994 Rwanda genocide, which has been suggested as the most intense genocide of the 20th century, the murder rate during Operation Reinhard was 83% higher, according to Stone. He views comparisons of genocides – which has become popular – as distasteful.

Stone estimates that the Nazis’ murder campaign could have continued at this pace had there been more victims living in German-occupied Poland, but instead the murder rate tapered off in November 1942.

There was essentially no one left to kill, he says. It could have continued, but the shocking truth is the majority of Jews in Poland were dead.

The Nazi agenda was then revised to transport and murder the remaining Jewish populations of Europe to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination facility. Auschwitz was operating on a continual basis from 1941, but had exceptionally high “kill rates” in 1944, according to the study.

Stone says especially when comparing modern genocides, historians, social scientists, policy-makers, and journalists have consistently relied on inaccurate

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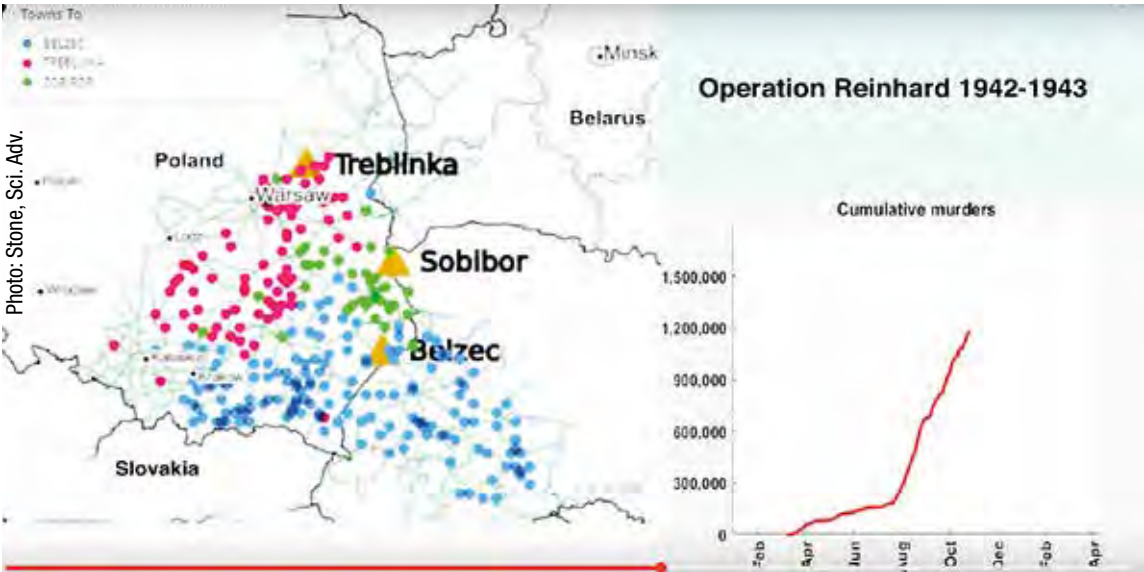
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Number of victims deported to the death camps a month, with almost all being murdered, plotted as a function of time (months) from 1 January 1942

assessments that greatly underestimated the Holocaust “kill rate” during Operation Reinhard.

“These underestimates have been repeated for nearly two decades without substantial criticism, a pattern that has effectively rewritten the history of the Holocaust in a way that diminishes its historical standing and the scale of human life it encompasses.

“These underestimates have arisen and persisted because of a lack of awareness of the details concerning the Reinhard death camps, and the effectiveness of the Nazi efforts to obscure those details during the war. Our analyses shed new light on this period of the Holocaust and provide a clearer and detailed picture of the dynamics and rates of the major events as they unfolded during Operation Reinhard.”

Why does this matter? “The Holocaust stands out as a demonstration of how the efficient machinery of government was turned on people in an unparalleled way. It transcended in its ruthlessness and systemic efficiency. This is the key lesson of the Holocaust that I believe must not be forgotten,” Stone said in release from RMIT University.



Professor Lewi Stone

“The power of graphing more specific data helps us to understand the co-ordination involved by a state machinery responsive to the Führer’s murderous will, and the necessity of large-scale organised support to carry out the murders: train routing of hundreds or whole communities, administration staff, and complex logistics networks at a time when Germany’s resources were stretched by the war effort.”

But this research also highlights the magnitude of the intensity of killing during the Holocaust, in spite of that being called into question in recent decades, says Stone.

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Salvaged Soviet-Yiddish songs nominated for a Grammy

PENNY SCHWARTZ – JTA

In the despair of the Soviet Union’s fierce World War II battles against the Nazis, a 42-year-old Jewish man from Odessa wrote a song in Yiddish poking fun at Hitler’s failures to seize control of Ukraine’s coal and oil resources.

On the High Mountain, written by Veli Shargorodskii about the war experience from 1943 to 1944, ends with the words, “Germany is in trouble, Hitler is kaput!”

The satirical song was among hundreds collected during the war by Moisei Beregovsky (1892-1961), a Russian-Jewish ethnomusicologist and Yiddish scholar. Beregovsky led a team of colleagues and volunteers for the Kiev Cabinet for Jewish Culture, a department of the Ukrainian Academy of Science.

Beregovsky and his colleague, Ruvim Lerner (1912-1972), planned to publish an anthology of the collected songs, a continuation of Beregovsky’s earlier groundbreaking work to preserve Jewish folk songs and Yiddish and klezmer music.

But after the war, their hope was dealt the cruel blow of Stalin’s vicious anti-Semitism. In 1950, Beregovsky was arrested, convicted of Jewish nationalism, and jailed for five years. Soviet authorities confiscated his monumental collection of music from the war years, and he and Lerner died believing their work had been destroyed.

Now, following an unimaginable series of unlikely events, these rare and revealing songs, presumed lost to history, were rediscovered and have been brought back to life in *Yiddish Glory: The Lost Songs of World War II*. (Six Degrees Records).

The recording has been nominated for a Grammy Award among five finalists in the world music category.

The winners will be announced on 10 February in a live broadcast from the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Yiddish Glory is among the fewer than a handful of Yiddish-language recordings to have been honoured by the Recording Academy. The Klezmatics scored a Grammy in 2007 for best contemporary/world music album; at the time, awards in world music were divided between traditional and contemporary. In 1982, the Klezmerim were nominated for best ethnic album.

Yiddish Glory represents a multi-year, ambitious undertaking led by Anna Shternshis, a professor and scholar of Soviet and Yiddish culture at the University of Toronto, and Pavel Lion, a Russian-born musician and scholar of Yiddish literature who goes by the pseudonym Psoy Korolenko.

Produced by Dan Rosenberg, the music was arranged by Sergei Erdenko, acclaimed as Russia’s greatest living Roma violinist.

They gathered an all-star band including Juno Award-winning vocalist Sophie Milman, a Jewish jazz performer based in Canada who was born in Russia.

The recording, hailed on scores of best-of-2018 album lists, includes 18 tracks. The extensive liner notes include lyrics for all the songs in English and Russian translation, as well as fascinating background

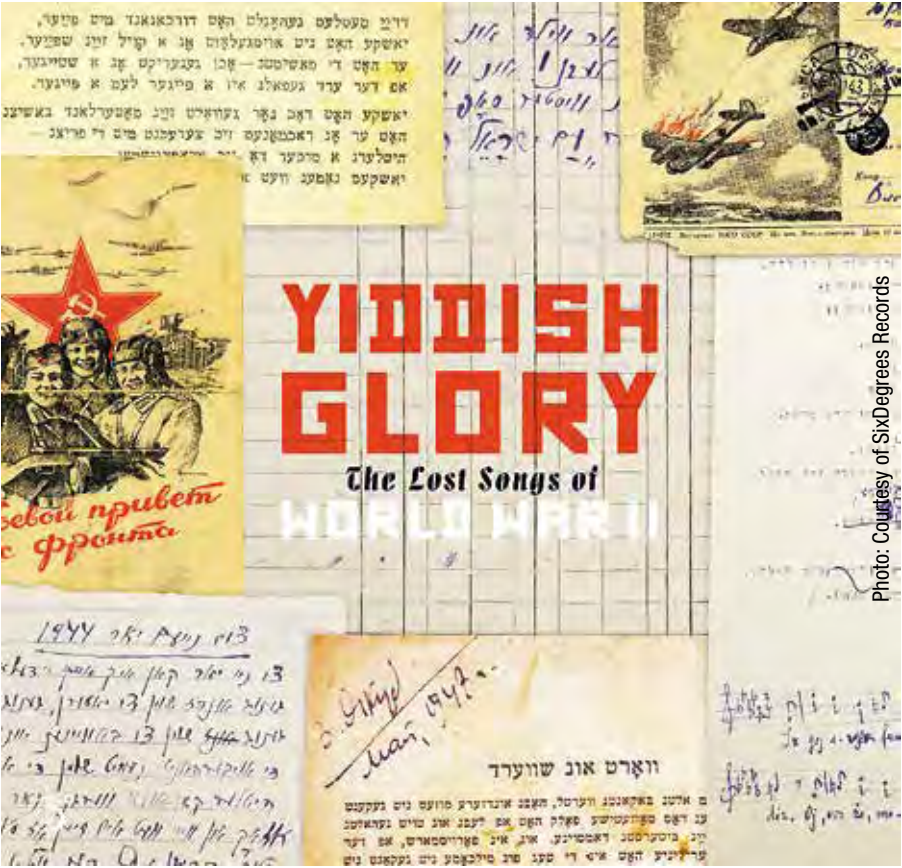


Photo: Courtesy of SixDegrees Records

‘Yiddish Glory: The Lost Songs of World War II’

material and archival images.

Jews from all walks of life wrote the first-person lyrics – from Jewish Red Army soldiers and refugees, to victims and survivors of Ukrainian ghettos. They ring with defiance, revenge, love, hope, and Jewish humour.

Shternshis was stunned by the Grammy nomination.

“Given the whole history, where it all started... it’s unbelievable,” she told *JTA* in a phone interview.

It is an extraordinary tribute to Beregovsky and his colleagues, who risked their lives and suffered consequences for

their dedication to Jewish culture and memory, said Shternshis, the director of the University of Toronto’s Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies.

Shternshis learned about the material by chance in the early 2000s, when she was doing research at the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine in Kiev, where librarians discovered Beregovsky’s collection in unmarked boxes in the 1990s.

She recognised the find as a historical and cultural treasure trove.

“I was shocked on so many levels,” said Shternshis, recalling when she delved into thousands of pages of yellowed, sometimes

tattered paper with typed or handwritten lyrics. Steeped in the history of Russian Holocaust literature and the music of the region, she was incredulous that she didn’t recognise a single song.

The songs were notably distinct from music from Vilna, Warsaw, and Lodz, with references to Stalin and the Soviet Union.

“The music had no parallels,” Shternshis said.

Only about 10% of the songs included musical notation. Some referenced or gave hints of popular tunes of the times.

After Korolenko immersed himself in the material, a process he described as “musical archaeology,” he took a leap of faith to compose or adapt melodies, sometimes drawing on popular or folk music.

On the High Mountain, the first song, leads with the soulful call of David Buchbinder’s trumpet. The lyrics are a nod to an old Yiddish counting riddle, and Korolenko’s lively melody recalls that famous folk tune.

Several songs offer ground-level, vivid descriptions of the massacres in Babi Yar, Tulchin, and Pechora in Ukraine.

Mames Gruv (My Mother’s Grave) is a child mourning the death of his mother sung by Isaac Rosenberg, Shternshis’ son, who was 11 at the time of the recording. He is beyond

thrilled that he’ll be attending the Grammys, said Shternshis, who has to miss the ceremony.

The fifth cut, *Mayn Pulemyot* (My Machine Gun), describes a Jewish soldier’s pride at using his machine gun to kill German soldiers. *Shelakhmones Hitlern* (Purim Gifts for Hitler) strikes a lighter note in comparing Hitler with Haman, the villain of the Jewish holiday of Purim.

Milman brings smooth, sultry vocals to *Kazakhstan*, a cabaret-style ode of gratitude to the land where a quarter-million Jewish refugees survived. It’s the only song on the album in which Erdenko composed a new tune, combining Roma, Yiddish, and Romanian styles. The song is deeply personal for Milman, whose grandmother survived as a Soviet Jewish refugee in Kazakhstan, and for Erdenko, as a tribute to the Roma who were also victims of the Holocaust.

Rosenberg, the project’s producer, often thinks about the composers who took pen to paper, many of whom were killed during the Holocaust.

“They felt it was important to try to share their personal stories, their warnings about fascism, and their dreams for a better future in the faint hope that these stories would someday be heard,” he wrote in an email.

Former Starbucks CEO seriously thinking of running for president

MARCY OSTER – JTA

Former Starbucks Chief Executive Howard Schultz said he is “seriously thinking of running for president”.

In an interview aired on CBS’ *60 Minutes* on Sunday night, Schultz told correspondent Scott Pelley that he would run as a “centrist independent” in spite of being a lifelong Democrat.

Schultz said the reason he would run as an independent, which critics say would help President Donald Trump’s chances of being elected by splitting the vote, is that both parties “are consistently not doing what’s necessary on behalf of the American people and are engaged, every single day, in revenge politics”.

When asked “what effect” his being Jewish would have on his campaign, Schultz noted, “I am not running as a Jew if I decide to run for president, I’m running as an American who happens to be Jewish.”

He also said, “I have great faith in the goodness and kindness of the American people. We elected an African-American president. I’m old enough to remember in 1960 when John F Kennedy was running, and there was an outcry of hate that no Catholic should be president. I am Jewish, I have faith in G-d.”

Schultz, who is 65, briefly addressed some of the issues of the day. He said there should be a “fair and equitable way” for illegal immigrants to become United States citizens; that every American “deserves the right to have access to quality health care”; and that the 2018 tax cut should have focused less on business and more on the people who need it the most, those “who don’t have \$400 (R5,456) in the bank”.



Howard Schultz

In late June, he became chairman emeritus of the company he founded in the 1980s. He is also the former owner of the Seattle Supersonics NBA franchise. His net worth is about \$3.5 billion (R47.7 billion), and he told Pelley that “we’ll be fully resourced to do what’s necessary” to run a presidential campaign.

He said as a coffee entrepreneur running for president, he would “recruit and attract people who are smarter than me and more experienced, more skilled”. He said there would be a “complete separation” between him and the company for the duration of a campaign.

The Democratic Party in Washington, where Starbucks was founded, has called on Schultz not to run as an independent. Tina Podlodowski, the chair of the Washington State Democratic party, said that he could garner enough votes, mostly from Democrats, to push more states for Trump. She recently sent him an invitation for a coffee date to discuss his plans when he is Seattle on his recently launched book tour.

Schultz has written about his hardscrabble Jewish upbringing in New York, and about his transformative encounter in Jerusalem with Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, who headed the Mir Yeshiva.

Linksfield Shul reinvented as a vibrant communal space

JORDAN MOSHE

When Asher Marcus attended shacharit services in Linksfield Shul as a King David Linksfield High School pupil, he couldn't help looking around him and thinking that his surroundings were a tad dull and uninspiring. Little did he know he would become the architect responsible for transforming the space, creating an environment that would inspire a community.

Today the director of Hubo Architectural Designers, Marcus is responsible for bringing a new perspective to the shul, a project which has been in the offing for many years.

Although only the first phase is complete, the New Link (as the shul complex is called) is intended to inspire and uplift the congregation, offering something unique for every age group, be they religious or not.

campus. By then a qualified architect, his aim was not to get rid of the existing building, but to enhance and add to it.

"People were excited about the possible designs and changes, and a committee was set up to manage the project and find donors," he said. The project was not commissioned by one person but many, becoming a home-grown vision for the shul that developed organically.

"Linksfield Shul is unique in that it is the only shul in the area, and it shares a campus with a school. Six hundred students use it daily, and a community consisting of a variety of people occupy the space of Shabbos," Marcus says. "The goal was to activate the space, and make it usable 24/7, tapping into the potential the campus had to offer."

Marcus says he didn't focus on the building as a shul, but as a space with much more to offer.

"I envisioned a safe, modern space that just happened to have a shul in it. A place



space, and the shul is only one of them. We want to foster a positive Jewish experience for every person here, and saw that this space could deliver just that," he says.

"The philosophy of the big shul has become 'reinvent or die slowly'. Big shuls are no longer being built, suggesting that the model doesn't work. However, the truth is that it's a beautiful model that can achieve so much if it makes the most of what it has available. *Shtiebels* [smaller shuls] are niched, while larger shuls are spaces for everyone that have tremendous potential."

He continues, "Today it's not enough for a big shul to say that its 50-year history justifies its existence. Nostalgia is not a reason. Every shul needs to ask itself what its purpose really is, and find an answer that will create a vision for survival. These shuls need to reinvent themselves, becoming big community centres with a shul instead of simply big shuls."

With funding from various donors (amongst them Dis-Chem founders Ivan and Lynette Saltzman), construction began in February 2018.

Marcus and his team sought to utilise and accentuate various pre-existing elements of the building, converting it into something modern and refreshing. By Rosh Hashanah

2018, both campus shuls, hall, kitchen, foyer, and bathrooms were ready.

Although not yet complete, the front of the shul now features the "youth box", a cubical space overlooking the shul's entrance that will become a recreational area for the shul's youngsters on Shabbat.

Other new features include a Jerusalem city walk which captures the spirit of Old City through various replications of its architecture, and a state-of-the-art mikvah.

The same transformative principle has been applied to the shul's interior, which now includes elements that completely redefine the shul experience. The two upstairs women's galleries are now connected by a bridge. The bimah has been lowered and enhanced with laser-cut images representing the 12 tribes, and the iconic ten commandments at the front of the room are made to appear as though they are floating.

"With every design, we tried to make it seem as though it had originally been built that way," says Marcus. "We wanted people to feel that it was still the shul they knew, but with something refreshing about it. The shul was built in 1977, and we wanted to play on the nostalgia of the community while looking into the future."



An untold amount of planning and co-ordination has gone into this project. Says Marcus, "After taking a gap year in Israel, I spent time dedicated to the shul's youth in Shabboses while studying architecture. I met regularly with Associate Rabbi Levi Avtzon at the shul, and together we tried to create a vision for what the shul should look like."

When a few community members expressed an interest in change in May 2017, Marcus took up the challenge to redesign the shul and modernise its

for youth to hang out, for mothers to catch up, for fathers to learn in, and for grandparents to attend recreational classes. It's not about being religious, but being in a space that welcomes you for any purpose."

This vision was shared by Avtzon. "We wanted a community centre with a shul, not a shul with a community centre. We aim to offer numerous portals of access to this

Sunday (3 February)

- Second Innings hosts Craig du Preez, motivational speaker and author, on *Bitter Taste of Orange – Deceit, Collusion, Corruption*. 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
- The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre hosts the opening of its newest travelling exhibition, *The German-Jewish Dilemma: the Story of the Hochfeld Family*, with visiting guest speaker and director of the Lemgo Municipal Museum in Germany, Jurgen Scheffler. Time: 15:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. RSVP to dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za, or 011 640 3100. Free admission, donations welcome.

Monday (4 February)

- The Union of Jewish Women hosts Ivor Schwartzman, former judge of the Gauteng High Court, on *Whither SA*. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053
- The South Africa Zionist Federation has opened registration for the Hebrew ulpan of 2019. Join one of our three classes based on a free assessment at our registration evening on 5 February, from 18:00 to 19:00. Classes will commence on 12 February 2019. Discounts are available if you are making aliyah. For more information, or to secure your place, contact Beauty on 011 645 2601/ admin@sazf.org.

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Johannesburg Cricket Club honours the woman who made it possible

NICOLA MILTZ

It was a chance phone call to Lael Bethlehem – then Chief Executive of the Johannesburg Development Agency – that brought about the creation of the Johannesburg Cricket Club (JCC) in 2007.

Today, the JCC serves 200 members, young and old, who have come to love it as a safe-haven and home away from home. It is a spiritual place of upliftment, where cricket is “more than just a game” says Chairman and Co-founder Indarin Govender.

Just 12 years ago, the JCC was an unused, forgotten, derelict piece of land in the heart of dingy, run-down Bertrams.

Today, with the help of a handful of passionate, cricket loving, civic-minded individuals, the JCC is a thriving club, steeped in the tradition of cricket. A mere stone’s throw away from Ellis Park and Troyeville, on the Rea Vaya route, it is a magnificent pocket of inner-city rejuvenation holding the promise of upliftment, social cohesion, and hope.

Because of her part in making it happen, the JCC made Bethlehem and cricketing legend Dr Ali Bacher honorary life vice-presidents of the club at a recent awards luncheon. Geoff Rothschild, the former Chairperson of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, was made an honorary life member.

Govender told the *SA Jewish Report* that Bethlehem was a “sterling human being”, and was considered “the centrepiece” of the club.

Bethlehem and Govender have known each other since their days as anti-apartheid activists. According to Govender, they have always had a mutual respect for one another.

“I remember vividly the Thursday afternoon in February 2007 when I called Lael, saying to her that we should consider building our first inner city cricket oval in Joburg,” he said.

He expressed his vision for a place that would serve the needs of the community in the inner city, becoming a magnet for youth, and a place of hope and dreams. Bethlehem latched onto the vision, and called him the next day saying that she “had found a piece of land – let’s do it!”

Bethlehem comes from a sporting family. Her mother, community stalwart Marlene Bethlehem, was an avid tennis player. A sport lover, she was immediately open to the idea of a cricket oval in the inner city.

Govender said the JCC’s roots extended back to 1992, when he and his late brother Neville and a group of men from the township of Chatsworth in Durban arrived in Johannesburg and established the Chatsworth Old Boys Cricket Club.

“We played without a home ground, using our car boot as the changing room. It was always our boyhood dream to one day build a cricket oval of our own.”

In 2007, when Bethlehem identified the land, “the dream became a reality”, said Govender. They renamed the club the Johannesburg Cricket Club, and named their home ground Hope Village.

It is hard to believe that the land

on which it now stands was once destined to be included in the dust heap of no-man’s land. It has been lovingly transformed into a daily celebration of cricket and tradition. Cricket has breathed new life into the suburb, as players and spectators alike come together to celebrate



Govender, the life force of the club, said, “It’s a quaint, village cricket oval, with trees and shrubs and greenery, carefully designed with a lot of heart and soul, with the idea of creating a place for youngsters to feel safe.” The club’s mission has always been to “root the game of cricket in the inner

meeting new friends and learning life skills and valuable life lessons, said Govender.

It has a well-tended vegetable garden, which serves the community, and a cricket oval fit for a one day international, with floodlights, pavilion, and all the amenities to host top-level cricket matches.

city”, he said.

Bethlehem, now an investment executive at Hosken Consolidated Investments, said the JCC had a special place in her heart. “I am truly honoured to be part of this extraordinary cricket club. It is more than a club, it is a great institution of our city, built from the grassroots up,

by people who care deeply about our community.

“I worked for the city for many years, and I can honestly say that this is the project that gave me the most hope and pleasure. Urban regeneration can work only when it involves genuine partnership with a committed group of people. Who would have known that Bertrams would be so blessed to have a group of people who are driven by love, honour and principle? Thank you to all who sustain this club and help build the lives of youngsters that play cricket here. May you go from strength to strength.”

Govender said the luncheon marked the effort and dedication of individuals at the forefront of the sporting miracle that is the JCC.

The club’s patron, George Bizos, unveiled the honours board. Cricketing greats Michael Holding and Hoosain Ayob, members of the Greek community, and corporate allies, were among those honoured. Groundsman Amon Malukle was made an honorary life member, and lauded for the club’s profitable vegetable garden, which successfully serves the community using hydroponic farming methods.

The master of ceremonies, radio personality and TV host John Robbie, who has previously been honoured by the club for his support, once described the JCC as “the best kept secret in South African sport”, a place

that serves as a model for cricket development worldwide.

The club’s members participate at all levels of competitive league cricket under the auspices of the Gauteng Cricket Board, spanning youth teams from U9 to a senior team playing in the Premier League.

It also runs a successful feeding scheme every Saturday, providing a hot meal for about 200 children after they take part in a cricket clinic or kiddies yoga.

Bacher said he was honoured to be recognised by the club. It “deserves every praise for year in and year out taking cricket to the disadvantaged youth in the Bertrams area”, he told attendants at the luncheon. “While so many of our cricket fraternity have taken their eye off the ball, your team have not. Through your efforts, hope and new opportunities are presented to the youth of the Bertrams area.”

Govender told the audience about Bethlehem’s invaluable contribution. He said she was also the brainchild behind the annual corporate cricket day, an event that gives captains of industry the opportunity to demonstrate their support for inner city regeneration.

“Lael is a sister to me. Without her, we would all not be sitting here today. She ensured that the spirit and passion of the club would be ever present at all phases of this project. She simply believed in us.”

MMA champion retired, but not out of the ring

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

“A nice Jewish girl like you doesn’t become a boxer.” That’s what ground breaking Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fighter and psychiatrist Dr Danella Eliasov was told when she first asked if she could compete in boxing.

Undeterred, she went on to champion women’s MMA participation in South Africa. Having just retired from competitive MMA, she’s moving onto the next chapter.

“I started boxing to keep fit initially,” says Eliasov. “As I got better at it, I asked my coach if I could compete, only to be laughed at. Later, I discovered grappling and wrestling, for which I had a natural aptitude. I started to compete – sometimes in the men’s division as there were so few ladies in the sport – and did quite well.”

In 2009, a determined Eliasov became involved in MMA in spite of the fact that there was no opportunity for women to compete. She faced the challenge head-on, dedicated to finding a way to open the sport to women.

In 2010, her efforts paid off when she participated in her first amateur fight – the first MMA bout for women in South Africa. She went on to become the first woman in the country to compete at both amateur and professional level.

“I’m honoured to have been a pioneer of the sport,” Eliasov says. “Now there are many women competing in multiple-weight categories both as amateurs and pros.”

“I’m proud that I helped change people’s views and shatter stereotypes. I gained the respect of fellow athletes, coaches and fans, some of whom had some rather discriminatory opinions initially.”

In late 2018, health concerns prompted a heart-wrenching decision to retire from MMA. “Over the years, I’ve accumulated many injuries. I was

told I should stop fighting,” she says. “In the first round of my last fight, my jaw broke quite badly. I also suffered a broken nose in training just before the fight, so my nose was completely smashed by the end of the fight in round four.

“I underwent a five-hour reconstructive surgery for my jaw and nose. If I were to break my nose again, it would collapse completely. I made the decision that the risks of competing outweighed the benefits, and decided to retire.

“It was a tough decision. I was devastated. For an athlete, the end of a career is a significant loss, and it’s been quite an adjustment. However, with time, it’s getting easier to accept that a new chapter of my life has started.”

Eliasov found the perfect way to include MMA in this new chapter. “I realised how much the sport means to me, so I’ve decided to switch to coaching,” she says. “So far, I’m really enjoying being the coach, and I’m excited every time I work with my athletes.” Having also qualified as a boxing coach, she plans to invest time in coaching

both disciplines.

Eliasov is also using her expertise to give back. “I’m now coaching at Fight With Insight Gym in Hillbrow. It’s an open-access gym founded by child protection and development specialist Luke Lamprecht. It caters to inner-city children and adolescents, most of whom face significant life challenges. Many of them are refugees, and all face socio-economic adversity.”

She has no plans to become involved in any competitive sport at the moment, and says she’s enjoying life without the constant pressure of training and maintaining a certain weight. Always active, Eliasov stays fit by coaching MMA, running, and boxing for fun.

As a psychiatrist, Eliasov feels that boxing can be hugely beneficial for certain patients, so she’s working on integrating her passions. “There are some exciting plans in the pipeline in terms of using boxing as a treatment for certain psychiatric illnesses, including autism, anxiety disorders, and behavioural problems,” she says.

Reflecting on what she’s learnt through competing in MMA, Eliasov says it’s about pushing the limits of body, mind, and friendships. “I’ve learned how amazing the human body is. That one can defy the limits of biology if one’s mind is strong enough. It’s quite empowering to know how far I was able to push myself mentally and physically.

“I’ve also learned that ‘impossible’ is just a construct of our own minds, and that not taking no for an answer is sometimes the best strategy.

“Through MMA, I’ve met people and made dear friends whom I wouldn’t otherwise have met as they come from different cultures and countries.”

Dr Danella Eliasov



Imagine if I were sensitive?



INNER VOICE
HOWARD FELDMAN

I am no stranger to hate mail. I have been photoshopped into gas chambers because I am Jewish. I have been called a baby murderer sympathiser because I support Israel. I have been threatened overtly, and I have had very dangerous looking people arrive at the door of the studio and wait for me to end my show. These haven't bothered me at all. It is part of an expected response to what I do and to what I say. I would be naïve to assume that it won't happen. Especially as I often take on and have uncomfortable conversations. What I don't expect is some of the personal and poisonous responses that I receive from within our own community. Constructive and robust debate has always been part of our ethos as Jews. The magnificence of the Talmud is elucidated in the process of debate, the conflict between the houses of Hillel and Shamai are well known, and scholars continue to disagree on just about everything. It might get heated and passionate, but lines are not crossed. So much so, that it is told that the children of Hillel and Shamai married. Last week, there was an online response to an article I had written in the *SA Jewish Report*. In the original column, I told a story of how we had mistakenly moved into the wrong apartment during our vacation in Plett. I described the incident and what followed, when a not so happy family arrived to claim the same apartment. I made (tongue in cheek) assumptions that they were from Boksburg,

Benoni, Springs, or Brakpan and apparently offended at least one member of the Jewish community. It is worth noting that I never suggested that the family was a member of such community, or even Jewish. Quite the contrary. Indeed, they might have been from Krugersdorp. But that didn't stop the letter writer from taking offence on behalf of every Jew who had ever travelled through the East Rand. He suggested that I was suffering from early dementia (not sure what qualifies him to suggest there is anything "early" about it) and revealed the dark secrets of my past – that I grew up in the "mink and manure" belt of Observatory. Truthfully, I do remember a lot of manure, but no so many minks. Clearly, I wasn't paying enough attention. The letter was bitter, personal, and biting. It was genuinely ugly, and reflected horribly on the anonymous writer – someone who lacked the courage to associate his or her name with it. But, given the names that it mentioned and the details it contained, it was clear that the writer came from within the religious community of Johannesburg. Some time back I wrote an article for *The Times of Israel* about the conflict at the Kotel around the notion of an egalitarian prayer area. I suggested that we achieve so much more by "inviting people to Shabbat dinner than by throwing stones at them". This, of course, being a metaphor for how I suggested it was dealt with. I didn't expect people to agree with me, and welcomed the debate that I thought would follow. What I didn't expect was to be told that I was a "self-hating Jew" and a traitor to my people. The writer, again, came from within my fellow religious world. On my show, when discussing the gay pride

march in Tel Aviv, I was told by a so-called religious person that to even discuss it was to "mock the legacy of your parents". This person claimed that my (dear) late mother would have been ashamed of me. Last week, I wrote an article about school fees (and other costs) that are crippling our community. I used the Maharsha school as an example of one that is trying its best to restore dignity to its parent-body. The response that I received from the less religious schools was to invite me to engage on the topic. The comments that I received from parents in the more religious schools shocked me. Baseless hatred doesn't come close.

In no way do I suggest that everyone who aligns with the more observant communities is intolerant and vocal. On the contrary. I believe that we have a caring, kind, and truly religious community in South Africa. But that doesn't mean that there is not an element that perhaps fails to remember that it is not only about the optics and looking the part, but also acting it. I am vocal on many issues because I believe they need to be addressed. I do not expect, nor hope, that everyone will agree with everything I say, but I do wish for us to debate and argue with an element of respect, and to understand when something is tongue in cheek. Even if they come from Springs.

Letters

ANGLO BOER WAR STORIES FASCINATING, PARTICULARLY ON 120TH ANNIVERSARY

I was most interested to read Jordan Moshe's article about the discovery of an Anglo-Boer War medal awarded to Jacob Bergman. The 1999 edition of *Jewish Affairs*, a journal produced under the auspices of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), brought out a special issue on Jews in the Anglo-Boer War to mark the centenary of that conflict. In my searches through the SAJBD's archives, I came across a striking photograph of three Jewish members of the Middleton Town Guard, namely Jacob Bergman, his brother Joseph, and one Abraham Perl. This photo, it turns out, is also on display at

Beit Hatfutsot, the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv. Ultimately, I chose it as the front cover of this historical special issue of the journal, of which I had recently been made editor. Jacob Bergman is the one seated, while Joseph stands to his right. With 2019 being the 120th anniversary of the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War, *Jewish Affairs* will probably feature further material on this tragic but perennially fascinating conflict. Anyone interested in contributing original essays or information relating to Jewish participation in the war can get in touch with me at david@sajbd.org. – **David Saks, Johannesburg**



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 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.**

I will be in Cape Town from 31 January to 5 February and Johannesburg from 6 to 9 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

UJW brings cheer to scholars by paying for uniforms

Instead of giving Christmas presents, the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) in Port Elizabeth opted to fund lay-byes for school uniforms instead. In this, they followed the example of Professor Jonathan Jansen, the former Vice Chancellor of the University of the Free State (now at Stellenbosch University), who did the same thing.

UJW paid off the lay-byes at PEP Stores in Walmer, Port Elizabeth. The excitement and relief shown by cash-strapped parents when they came to pay their final instalments before the start of the school year was heart-warming.

Some had lay-byes for two or three children, and their delight and the delight of their children when they collected their uniforms made this project all the more worthwhile.

Branch Chairperson Elaine Racussen says they sprang into action at the beginning of January, and inserted the following letter into all the packs still awaiting payment:



Natasha Josias from PEP Stores and Elaine Racussen, Chairman UJW Port Elizabeth, with some of the lay-byes

“We are happy to contribute to your child’s welfare, and are pleased that you have been able to clothe your child in a school uniform. We wish you a very happy 2019 from the Union of Jewish Women.”

WIZO-Magimix partnership puts food on the table

Helen Keller said, “Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much.” When we work together on a common goal, we can achieve things beyond our wildest dreams.

WIZO (the Women’s International Zionist Organisation) in Johannesburg is cognisant of this and is therefore so grateful to Magimix for partnering with it to make a difference in the lives of children and caregivers at Sithandiwe Disabled Care Centre in Lombardy East.

Sithandiwe provides care, support, and community development services for disabled children. It runs a day-care facility for children with disabilities from two to 18 years of age.

After WIZO hosted a Christmas party at Sithandiwe last December, it discovered that the kitchen staff needed help to prepare food for the children who have special dietary requirements. The generous donation of a Magimix food processor will be put to good use, improving the children’s quality of life in immeasurable ways.



Sithandiwe Disabled Care Centre receiving their Magimix

Sandton Sinai Primary appoints new principal

Sandton Sinai Primary School has appointed Lara Salkinder as the new principal of the school. In announcing the appointment, the school said Salkinder had the passion and charisma of a real leader, and embodied everything Sandton Sinai represented in the way she lived her life and her passion for education. It wished her every success in her new role.

In her opening address to parents, Salkinder said, “What struck me [and I might add, lured me] to accept this position is the electric energy of the passion for learning one feels as one enters the school gates. The walls reverberate with the enthusiasm of staff and the students for their school and yiddishkeit, and for the privilege they feel in being a valued and respected member of the Sandton Sinai team.”

Salkinder, together with the heads of departments, Batya Slasky (head of Jewish Studies), Tammy Nicolaou (head of the junior primary), and Sofia Caripi (head of the senior primary), and the talented staff complement, are excited about leading the school to its next phase of growth and development.



**Back row: Sofia Caripi, Lara Salkinder, Tammy Nicolaou, Batya Slasky, and Shira Finkel
Front row: Rabbi Justin Treger (managing director)**

KDL cubs get to know the pack at orientation weekend

“You know, sometimes all you need is twenty seconds of insane courage. Just literally twenty seconds of just embarrassing bravery, and I promise you something great will come from it.”

King David High School Linksfield (KDL) brought these words of Benjamin Mee, the zoo owner of Dartmour Zoo (made famous by the movie *We bought a Zoo*), to life at its Grade 8 Orientation trip.

Instead of twenty seconds, King David gave their Grade 8s 32 hours, and they are now thriving in the jungle. Their theme this year was The Lion King.

A total of 170 Grade 8s and 35 student leaders spent two days together in an introduction to what will be the best five years of their lives. It was jam-packed with fun activities, useful tips, and tricks.

They left for Bronkhorstspuit as strangers, and came back as part of the KDL pride. KDL cubs were exposed to the seven committees that represent the school’s seven pillars it stands on. They were also introduced to the heads of the school.

They got to know each other and ran around at night as if they were the kings and queens of the jungle. They danced and sang, and had hundreds of twenty second moments. Student leaders showed them how “One day, this will all be theirs”, and encouraged them to make the most of it.



Gabi Dave, Megan Tobias, and other Grade 8 pupils

Maccabi table tennis has fans on the edge of their seats

Table tennis fans were given a unique opportunity to watch the game played at an extremely high level last Sunday at the Maccabi Top 16 Table Tennis Tournament in Fairmount, Johannesburg.

Held at the Maccabi Table Tennis Club, the tournament featured some of the best players in South Africa – among them a few Maccabi players. Young talent squared off in front of 50 spectators in an electrifying atmosphere.

The tournament offered participants a shot at glory, and cash prizes for the winner, runner up, and semi-finalists. After an intensive bout of competing, local table-tennis champion Shun Hua emerged victorious.

This is the first of many tournaments Maccabi plans to host. Upcoming tournaments will vary in player level so that everyone will have the opportunity to compete.



Simon Lipschitz

Camp Konka builds the KDVP Grade 8 team

The King David High School Victory Park (KDVP) Grade 8 orientation camp is an opportunity for new pupils to bond with each other, the staff, and the Student Representative Council (SRC). This year’s camp was held at Camp Konka in Rustenburg, where the challenging adventure-based programme brought out the true individual, and showed their ability to work with their peers.

The camp is designed to integrate new pupils while focusing on issues such as teamwork and leadership development. By doing this and encouraging pupils to step outside of their comfort zone, the Grade 8s learned a lot about themselves and group dynamics.

Matric pupil Joshua Dove, who is part of the SRC, had the luxury of welcoming his little brother Ilan (Grade 8) to the KDVP family. When asked about the experience of the camp, Ilan said, “Orientation was great and really fun, but it was special for me as I had my big brother there to help and lead me. We had such an enjoyable and meaningful time because he was there to guide me and show me the ropes.”



Joshua and Ilan Dove

Camp Keshet creates a fun, connecting summer

Most of us are aware of the huge Bnei Akiva, Habonim and not quite as large Netzer end of year Jewish youth movement camps, but few know of Camp Keshet.

Unlike the others, Camp Keshet is held in Muizenberg, Cape Town. It bridges the gap, organisers say, in that it is a camp for kids who require an individualistic approach, and who feel that they would do better in a smaller environment.

“It is perhaps one of the few safe spaces where the children are not afraid of being judged, and they are able to have authentic fun while just being themselves,” says Camp Keshet Head Meir Spector.

In other respects, the camp is similar to other Jewish camps. The main camp is held in December, though there is a winter camp for high school students. According to Spector, the schedule is jam-packed, with two to three outings a day including to Table Mountain, water slides, paintball, and bowling. Other activities include team building and the opportunity for children to bond.

Camp Keshet prides itself on the quality of its madrichim, who are “hand-picked” with the sole purpose of ensuring that the children enjoy every aspect of camp, while also having outstanding role models.

“The madrichim are extremely dedicated, understanding that their duties extend well past the two and a half weeks of camp,” says Spector. “Throughout the year, they are in communication with their channies. In addition, there are multiple reunions. This ensures that Keshet is not just a family for December camp, but rather a family for the entire year.”



Nik Rabinowitz visiting Camp Keshet

African Jewry comes out of the shadows

South Africa today is home to a Jewish community that is by far the largest in Africa, but up until comparatively recently, this was not the case. Rather, the main centre of Jewish life on the African continent was Morocco, with other North African countries like Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, as well as Ethiopia, for many centuries having a substantial Jewish presence.

For various reasons, among them anti-Jewish persecution in retaliation for Israel's establishment, mass Aliyah from Ethiopia in particular, and the end of French colonial rule, the Jewish presence in these countries is very small today. However, a number of organisations have been set up to preserve and promote the rich history and traditions of these communities.

From 27-29 January, two of these bodies, the Association Mimouna and the American Sephardi Federation, hosted "The First Jewish Africa Conference: Past, Present, and Future" in New York. The conference also looked at the still little-known but growing phenomenon of people in sub-Saharan African countries who are practicing Judaism in one or other form, and who up until now have largely been ignored by the Jewish world at large.

Among the more than 250 delegates in attendance was Chaya Singer, Parliamentary and Diplomatic Liaison for the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), who delivered a paper on the South African Jewish community. She was presented with a special award in recognition of what the SAJBD is doing to promote Jewish life in Africa. We hope to see further important events of this nature taking place in future, thereby helping African Jewry to come in from the sidelines and take its rightful place alongside the other great Jewish communities of the world.

This column is paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

The SAJBD and country communities

As early as 1949, the SAJBD saw the need for a special country communities department to assist the by then dwindling Jewish communities in South Africa's rural areas and small country towns.

One of the department's most important functions over the decades has been to ensure that when a country community closes down, the proceeds from the sale of its assets are dealt with appropriately. One of the ways this has been done is to advise the communities to establish trust funds in the name of the former communities.

Former communities that have elected to go this route include Witbank, Springs, Kroonstad, Welkom, and Potchefstroom. Beyachad offers administration services to these trusts, with the capital being invested and the interest used to help fund the work of the department, including cemetery maintenance (more than 220 country Jewish cemeteries are today cared for

by the SAJBD), organising pastoral visits to rural areas where Jews are still living, and helping other designated communal organisations.

The trustees that have been set up include former members of the relevant community and members of the SAJBD. On an annual basis, they meet to assess how the funds have been allocated during the previous year, and how they should be used in the year to come. Two of these meetings have already taken place, and most of the remainder will take place later this week. For questions, or to raise issues relating to country communities, get in touch with Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft on thetravellingrabbi@gmail.com.

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



Above Board
Shaun Zagnoev

Docility: our society's quiet calamity



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

Where are the youth protestors, the "trouble-makers" who keep all societies alive? What on earth will it take for South Africans to become so riled up by the corruption revealed in the Zondo and other commissions that they take to the streets with placards, demonstrate outside the commission's Parktown premises, and block off roads outside the homes of the people implicated in corruption?

Remember the threats by thousands during the anti-apartheid struggle to make the country "ungovernable"? It seemed sure that after apartheid's defeat, protest against injustice would be embedded into this country's DNA. But it appears that docility has won, that the self-indulgence of staring into cell phones for Tweets has replaced action.

What a pity. In 2015 – not that long ago – we had the intense #FeesMustFall movement to stop increasing student fees, and the "Rhodes Must Fall" movement to remove a statue of Cecil John Rhodes, a symbol of British colonialism, at the University of Cape Town. Whether one agreed with all the actions of the angry protestors or not, what was important was the passion they displayed to correct things.

Why is corruption on the gigantic scale revealed by the Gupta and Agrizzi sagas, and the theft of billions in public money designated for poor South Africans, not enough to get the blood of the youth boiling? Is it too abstract and removed from most people's daily lives?

Leaders call for a calm approach, to "let the law take its course". And the ANC, many of whose senior members face corruption allegations, continues to deploy them on its campaign trail, including tainted former President Jacob Zuma. The party says they have

not been legally convicted, so there is no reason for them not to be its public face.

But most South Africans don't believe those guilty of corruption will ever suffer any consequences. If they are charged in court, they will drag out the process endlessly, with appeal after appeal, as Zuma did with the charges against him.

What if a person has had enough of the charade, and wants to protest individually, and not wait for a movement? While South African and Israeli issues differ, there was an example of such an individual act on Sunday in Tel Aviv's Rabin Square. Controversial Israeli performance artist and playwright, Ariel Bronz, chained himself by the neck with a lock and chains to a steel beam that is part of a Holocaust memorial sculpture. He said he was protesting what he called the "substandard treatment" received in Israel by Holocaust survivors. He was staging an "anti-event" on the 74th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. He was injured in the process and hospitalised.

What would be an equivalent individual act in South Africa? Would young people be prepared to chain themselves to the wheels of the expensive cars, paid from the public purse, of corrupt officials who should be working to serve the country rather than driving such cars?

Last Sunday, there was a major cricket match at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg. Cars filled the streets, and happy cricket fans watched the game as if everything was well in the land. But it's like a fourth monkey in the proverbial set of three brass monkeys who see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil, respectively. The fourth one neither sees, hears, nor speaks, he just gazes smilingly at his cell phone, proclaiming, "All is well."

Most people in any society just want to get on with their lives, educate their children, pay the rent and so on. It takes something special to get them riled up, to be a "trouble-maker". This society badly needs some of those.

Letters

CRITICISM OF PALUCH FAMILY MISGUIDED AND INSENSITIVE

I totally disagree with Yvonne Kaplan's letter in last week's *SA Jewish Report*. From the outset, our hearts reach out to the Paluch family over the tragedy that it has suffered. Their tragic loss is ours as well, and we grieve with them.

Having suffered a farm-murder tragedy in my own family, I believe any tragedy is unique, based on its own set of circumstances. Perhaps this is where her letter and message therein unravels and falls horribly short.

Her knee-jerk letter contains several inaccuracies, and a dangerously misguided opinion. Referring to the Paluch family's actions and decision to take legal action as, "keeping this feud alive" is simply not true. There is no feud. Period. Reading the front-page article published in the *SA Jewish Report* which details yet another goal-post tragedy and resulting death, the Paluch decision to take legal action is based on pure freedom of choice, and it is a decision they feel justified in taking.

Their decision represents an action and justified right that could contribute towards preventing a recurrence of a similar tragedy at another time, at another school, and at another sporting event. Their

G-d-given right to take legal action will, in one way, highlight this ever present danger.

Furthermore, if the Paluch family feels legal action is the correct approach to take to bring attention to the obviously ever prevalent danger nationwide (and globally for that matter), then so be it. I also find it amazing that she has personal insight into the Paluch's "spiralling legal costs" and finances. Her words and baseless accusations are extremely hurtful and upsetting in the face of such communal tragedy.

The Paluch legal action has nothing whatsoever to do with whatever perceived "anger and bitterness" she is accusing them of. The content within the front page article makes this clear. No one is "extorting money" from anyone in this tragedy. It is inappropriate and extremely insensitive to use such words.

I would like to suggest that her thoughts and opinions on the matter, both of which she is entitled to, would be better directed in starting a charitable foundation or creating a fund to kickstart a concrete project to ensure the safety of other children. – **Jonathan Cooper, Johannesburg**

PALUCH FAMILY ENTITLED TO FULL DISCLOSURE AND JUSTICE

Who decides whether something is an accident or obvious negligence? Should a devastated family who have buried a child accept the argument of an "accidental", albeit ill-secured soccer post having toppled? There has never even been a simple public apology.

Nevertheless had there been one, surely the Paluchs would still be entitled to full disclosure of what occurred on that fateful day, when Yeshiva College Primary and High School children assembled for break, with inadequate supervision, complaints from numerous parents of bullying in the school, and a goal post that "somehow" toppled and killed a child.

After a narrow internal inquiry failed to expose

a clear timeline of events, and subsequent refusal to respond to the parents' plea to communicate, obviously they cannot be regarded as the litigious party. The Paluch family are merely following the path so sadly paved by a school which has only ever offered silence in response to a catastrophic situation that occurred on its watch. If this was your child, would the adjective "accident" suffice?

And finally, to the Kaplan family, who too have suffered the unspeakable tragedy of losing a child, surely you know the value of others remaining silent, and humbly giving a traumatised family the space to grieve, while seeking justice for their beloved lost child? – **Caroline Myerson, Johannesburg**

The SA Jewish Report will not be publishing any further letters on this issue.



RECENTLY FEATURED:
**FEAR OF INNOVATION
IN THE WORKPLACE**

NO SAFE
SPACE.

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Eight-year-old soccer star shines in Brazil

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The South African SuperSport Football Academy Under-9 team won the Silver Playoffs in the recently held IberCup in Brazil, and eight-year-old Dylan Friedland of King David Sandton was part of the successful South African side.

The IberCup is one of the world's largest international youth football tournaments, in which the best football academy clubs compete against each other in different locations around the world.

This year's tournament was held from 14 to 20 January 2019, in Porto Alegre, the capital of the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, and one of the host cities of the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

Dylan and his teammates showed that not only are they able to compete against some of the world's best academy sides, they can succeed against them too

It included more than 1 800 teams from 80 different countries. World renowned soccer superpowers like Manchester City,

Paris Saint-Germain, and Inter Milan competed for the crown in various age groups.

SuperSport United was in Group C in the Under-9 age group alongside five Brazilian teams – EFB, late Clube de Brasilia, Esporte Clube Juventude, Sel El dorado do Sul, and Grêmio Raça Tricolor.

Dylan and his teammates showed that not only are they able to compete against some of the world's best academy sides, they can succeed against them too. They won three and drew one of their five group-stage matches, and scored 31 goals whilst conceding only 10 goals in the process.

In the following rounds, the team went on to beat Grêmio Maranhense FC, Clube Recife Náutico, and AF Futcenter to win the Silver Playoffs, which also qualifies them for the next IberCup in Brazil in July.

Dylan played eight games in the tournament, scored two goals, and provided five assists. He described the tournament as "exciting". In preparation, he trained on average of four times a week with his team.

His father, Ryan, said that his son started playing soccer when he was six years old. "He played with a club called Pro Athletico, and then he joined SuperSport at one of their coaching schools. They sent him for trials to make the SuperSport academy, where he was selected out of hundreds of kids."



Dylan Friedland

Dylan is in Grade 3. He has always played one age group above his current age for the school team.

Ryan said he was not the only one in Brazil to watch Dylan and his team's matches. "I accompanied him, but he stayed with his team for most of the tournament. A lot of soccer scouts also go to these

competitions to pick up players at a young age."

He describes the experience as "unbelievable". "The way Dylan integrated with his team, to see other teams from all around the world play soccer, and the way they warm up and what their approach to football is, was just amazing. It

was an experience of note."

Regarding the cost of competing in this tournament, Ryan had the following to say: "I paid for myself and my son. We did raise funds, but we allowed all the money raised to go to less fortunate kids in the team who wouldn't otherwise go. We also raised money with the intention of getting a parent to go with each kid at such a young age."

"[In the case of] the next tournament, we suspect part of it will be covered by the IberCup organisation, and we are pretty confident that SuperSport will cover the airfare to Brazil given the success we have had."

Ryan explained how the SuperSport Academy had gained access to the IberCup. "SuperSport United, a professional soccer club in South Africa, applied to the Iber competition and its application was accepted."

Dylan, who wants to become a professional soccer player one day, is certainly at a club with a strong Jewish element to it, as club Chief Executive Stanley Matthews and Captain Dean Furman are both Jewish.

Dylan would also like to go to the next IberCup in Brazil. With his team's experience of this most recent tournament under its belt, they will be looking to go one step better next time in the land that produced the likes of Pelé, Ronaldinho, and Neymar.

BAKERS PROVITA ORIGINAL

19⁹⁹

250g

MED. SMOKED SALMON OFFCUTS

64⁹⁹

200g

SHNEIDERS NAPOLITAINS 72% NAPOLITAINS MILK

85⁹⁹

each 200g

JUNGLE OATS ORIGINAL

31⁴⁹

1kg

SIMPLY DELISH INSTANT PUDDING CHOC & VANILLA

12⁴⁹

each 110g

ULTRA MEL VANILLA CUSTARD

5⁴⁹

125ml

PLEDGE FURNITURE POLISH. VARIOUS

29⁹⁹

each 275ml

PLEDGE MODERN SURFACE CLEANER. VARIOUS

21⁴⁹

each 275ml

ORLEY WHIP DESSERT TOPPING

17⁹⁹

250ml

ELITE TURKISH COFFEE

39⁹⁹

100g

CRYSTAL VALLEY ASSD COTTAGE CHEESE

22⁴⁹

each 250g

ANAT BAKERY WHITE PITAS

25⁹⁹

6's

FRESHPAK ROOIBOS TAGLESS T/BAGS

49⁹⁹

80's

Feigels

Delicious Lasagne

BEEF LASAGNE soft layers of lasagne, mince & sauce, ideally served with a salad

19⁹⁹

/100g

BAR ONE

74⁹⁹

each 55g

NESTLE BAR ONE LARGE

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CRYSTAL VALLEY ASSD COTTAGE CHEESE

22⁴⁹

each 250g

ANAT BAKERY WHITE PITAS

25⁹⁹

6's

FRESHPAK ROOIBOS TAGLESS T/BAGS

49⁹⁹

80's

Feigels

Delicious Lasagne

BEEF LASAGNE soft layers of lasagne, mince & sauce, ideally served with a salad

19⁹⁹

/100g

BAR ONE

74⁹⁹

each 55g

NESTLE BAR ONE LARGE

74⁹⁹

each 55g

CRYSTAL VALLEY LOW FAT COTTAGE CHEESE

22⁴⁹

each 250g

ULTRA MEL VANILLA CUSTARD

5⁴⁹

125ml

PLEDGE FURNITURE POLISH. VARIOUS

29⁹⁹

each 275ml

PLEDGE MODERN SURFACE CLEANER. VARIOUS

21⁴⁹

each 275ml

ORLEY WHIP DESSERT TOPPING

17⁹⁹

250ml

ELITE TURKISH COFFEE

39⁹⁹

100g

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22⁴⁹

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