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south african Jewish Report

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Volume 23 - Number 5 ■ 15 February 2019 ■ 10 Adar 1 5779

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Marriage

Leading lady
The secret

Parenting

and pornography

Anxiety

Rockstar rabbi

Raising kids in Hollywood

Israel

The metaphysics of anti-Semitism

SINAI ENCORE

The 21st century Jew

Thank for not making me a man

Relevance of shul

The new genetics

SINAI

Moral dilemmas

The high cost of living as a Jew

Gifts my mother gave me

All this, and so much more.

That time of year is approaching. The time when we come together as a community to be inspired, uplifted and united. Over the past eight years we have heard thoughts and ideas from some of the most phenomenal minds in the world – and this Sinai Indaba, they're back.

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SINAI INDABA



CAPE TOWN

SUNDAY 24 FEBRUARY | CTICC 2 | DOORS OPEN 9:00

10:00

Major General Yaakov Amidror

World shifts of power

As the Berlin Wall fell, bringing the curtain down on the Cold War, political commentators talked about “the end of history”, and the ushering in of an era of unprecedented peace. Nearly three decades later, the world is more dangerous and divided than it has ever been. Strongmen leaders hold the reins in countries such as Russia, Hungary, Turkey and the Philippines, and are gaining traction across Europe and Central Asia. Global Jihadism remains on the rise, even in the wake of a waning Isis. New, frightening forms of warfare are emerging, and new battle lines are being drawn. In this wide-angle view of global geopolitics, Major General Yaakov Amidror – former National Security Advisor to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu – fills us in on the international picture. What has changed under Trump? What does Russia want? What’s up with North Korea? What role do emerging superpowers China and India have to play? What are Iran and the Saudis playing at in the Middle East? Are intergovernmental forces such as NATO and the UN becoming obsolete?

10:00

Rabbi Simon Jacobson

Marriage: The secret

We live in times of crisis for intimacy and relationships. Marriage rates in the west are plummeting, and for those who do take the plunge, almost half end up getting divorced. Is there a formula for a healthy and successful marriage?

Discover what more than 3 300 years of Jewish wisdom says about the art of love and the soul of marriage, igniting the passionate spark of intimacy, resolving conflicts at home, and finding and maintaining fulfilling relationships. Rabbi Simon Jacobson delivers a marriage masterclass.

JOHANNESBURG

SATURDAY 2 MARCH | SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE | GRAND OPENING 20:00

SUNDAY 3 MARCH | SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE | DOORS OPEN 9:00

10:00

David Sacks

Lessons from raising kids in Hollywood

Parenting is among the most mysterious of adventures. It’s a lifetime journey where you are equipped with everything except the map. Nonetheless, the Jewish people have been blessed with Divine wisdom that can provide a torch to light up the darkness.

In this talk, David Sacks will cull from personal stories and experiences growing up in New York City, and raising children in Hollywood, California, drawing from both mystical teachings and very practical *halachas*, that inform both the psychological components of parenting to the Torah vision of how to do our best at this most vital task.

10:00

Rabbi Dr Akiva Tatz

Brave new world. The new genetics

Welcome to the 21st century – a time where designer babies, genetic editing and preventing genetic abnormalities are all reality. This is a world where we have recently discovered a unique Jewish gene. It’s a world we need to prepare for.

Join Rabbi Dr Akiva Tatz as he explores how these advances are affecting modern life and explains what young people need to know about them, before marriage.

10:00

Rabbi Zev Leff

Shalom: The Divine symphony

Shalom means hello and goodbye. Shalom means peace. Shalom is a name – one of the names of G-d, in fact. But, its essential meaning is something all-encompassing – literally.

Perhaps the most hallowed Jewish value, shalom is about harmony and wholeness, a unity within diversity, the coming together of disparate parts all playing their role to perfection in a Divine symphony. Join Rabbi Zev Leff on a journey into the heart of Judaism.

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11:00

Rabbi David Aaron

Relevance of shul

Historically, the synagogue has played a central role in Judaism, driving the identity, vibrancy and dynamism of Jewish community life. However, in the 21st century, where there is so much competition for people’s attention, as they are building communities everywhere – book clubs, yoga classes, online – we need to rethink the way we interact with our shuls in order for them to maintain their centrality in our lives. Rabbi David Aaron tackles the issue head-on, going back to the shul’s spiritual roots.

Join him as he explores the transformational power of prayer, and how it’s enhanced by doing it together, as he charts a path for the shul as a bustling, vibrant hub of inspiration and creative Jewish expression.

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12:00

Slovie Jungreis-Wolff

Being Jewish, marrying Jewish, staying Jewish

Living in a diverse, open, democratic society is one of the blessings we have today – yet, inevitably, such freedom comes with its own formidable challenges. In a world of constant change, how do we maintain strong Jewish roots? In a world of democratised information and instant communication, how do we continue passing on our ancient tradition to the next generation? In a world of equality and acceptance, why *should* we marry Jewish? Most fundamentally, in a world where identity itself is in question, what does it mean to be a Jew?

Acclaimed relationships and parenting instructor, Slovie Jungreis-Wolff, tackles the issue of intermarriage at its roots.

12:00

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Rabbi David Aaron

The four Kabbalistic secrets of healthy relationships

Research shows that healthy relationships are the key determinant of health, happiness and longevity. But, relationships are more than just the secret to living a good life. In Kabbalistic thought, they are the very foundation of creation, the building blocks of the world.

In this deep yet practical talk by Rabbi David Aaron, discover the four key secrets to building beautiful, loving bonds with parents, children, spouses and friends.

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Riding the storm: How Israel is adapting to a rapidly shifting Middle East

Dramatic changes are sweeping the Middle East. Alliances are shifting quickly and what were once sworn enemies are becoming crucial allies. Proxy wars are being fought across the region, swirling geopolitical tides are turning an already volatile part of the world into a tinderbox, and political posturing, backchannel bargaining and under-the-table agreements have reached a fever pitch not seen since the Cold War. The question is, what does all of this mean for Israel and what unique challenges and opportunities does this situation present? How is the Jewish State maintaining its qualitative military edge? What has the Netanyahu administration been up to these past few years as it seeks to safeguard Israel’s long-term security interests? Major General Yaakov Amidror – former National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister – offers a no-holds-barred look into Israel’s military, security and strategic affairs.

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The 21st century Jew

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South African Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

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Adventurous Israeli dies at Victoria Falls

TALI FEINBERG

Ofer Cohen, aged 34, literally had the world at his feet when he visited Victoria Falls earlier this month. But that all came to a tragic end when his body was found floating in the Zambezi River last Tuesday. It is suspected that he drowned when taking a spontaneous swim without a lifejacket.

Cohen is the second Israeli to die at Victoria Falls over the past few months, says African Jewish Congress (AJC) Rabbi, Moshe Silberhaft. The other Israeli collapsed and died at Victoria Falls Airport in December.

“Ofer was missing for two days, but we didn’t know that until someone sent an SMS to my mom to tell her he had passed away,” says his sister Tamar Cohen. “We hadn’t heard from him for two days, and we were worried, but we thought it might be a scam. My husband who works in IT looked into the message, and said it was real.”



“He died as he lived, embracing the world in its original form, with all its terrifying beauty.”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Israel, she describes her late brother as “a free spirit who loved adventure”. She said he had told their parents not to worry as he travelled the globe as a skydiving instructor. Travel was in the family’s blood.

“My mom travelled from Argentina to Israel when she was 19, and my grandfather left Poland when he was 13. So travelling is part of who we are,” she said.

Their grandparents were Holocaust survivors, and Cohen entered Zimbabwe alone on his Polish passport for a 30-day visit. In fact, just before he died, he asked his family to send him the video of his grandfather’s Holocaust testimony. But the file was never opened.

A report made to the police stated that Cohen “drove in an X-Trail belonging to one of his friends

on Sunday going to the Zambezi River. While there, he walked down the gorges to take photos before deciding to swim.”

The report continued, “His friends noticed that he had not returned, and looked for him on Monday. They again went on a search on Tuesday, whereupon they saw his clothes on the edge of the river before spotting the body floating on water.”

Ayellet Black, Israel’s Deputy Ambassador to South Africa, says the embassy was alerted to Cohen’s disappearance and death by Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which

beyond borders”.

A skydiver by profession, Cohen wrote on Facebook two years ago that he had logged more than 4 500 skydiving jumps in more than 40 locations in more than 11 different countries on five continents. “I was trying to remember the last time he had a permanent address in Israel. I think it was when he was 19!” says his sister.

Cohen said that he had seen “the Andes mountains, the Pyrenees, Sierra Nevada, Mount Fuji, Kilimanjaro, and the lowest point on earth from the sky. I got to land on the sandy beaches of two oceans,

conscious. But this time, something must have gone wrong. The area is known to be unsafe.

Local police were reluctant to descend the steep gorges to retrieve the body last Tuesday, instead waiting for a specialised sub-aqua unit, according to *TimesLIVE*. Two police divers from Bulawayo arrived and teamed up with rafting guides last Wednesday morning. It took more than two hours for the rescuers to recover the body. They used a swing line to bring Cohen’s body to the top of the gorge on a stretcher.

“We are hoping that when we get

from more people he knew, and their memories of Ofer,” says his sister. “He kept in touch with a lot of people. One friend even named his son after him.”

Indeed, a year ago on Facebook, Cohen wrote, “It is over a decade now that I’ve been browsing through this world like it was a fairground full of views, flavours, wisdom, and love to be explored. But above all, there are people. The fact that the digital waves of love and encouragement I get are coming from over 25 countries around the globe... is good reinsurance I made good choices for my life.”



Ofer Cohen on his African adventures

has a hotline and department for Israelis in distress.

“As soon as we heard, we dropped everything to help find him, and then to begin the long repatriation process. It is extremely complicated, but we were helped by so many people along the way, including ZAKA [emergency response teams in Israel] and the Chevrah Kadisha from Zimbabwe and South Africa, and many people on the ground.

“Israel wanted to ensure that the repatriation was as quick as possible so the family has one less thing to worry about, and it was done in record time,” she said, pointing out that “the South African Jewish community’s efforts really go

and saw many other seas from a bird’s-eye view.

“I even crossed between two countries’ airspace with my parachute. I took almost 3 000 people on their first skydive as their instructor, and got to use my reserve parachute seven times. I hope for many more years of skydiving, travelling, and new experiences, he wrote.”

So, it is not surprising that he may have decided to swim in the Zambezi River close to Victoria Falls where he was staying. “He never did anything by the book,” says his sister. From what she understands, he had swum in the river a few days earlier, and he was always safety

his phone we will be able to piece together what happened in those last few hours,” says his sister. She says he was due to spend two weeks in South Africa before travelling to Kenya to do skydiving training for the army there.

Black confirmed that Cohen’s body arrived in Israel on Monday morning. “He will be buried in the place where we grew up, which is right next to the airport. I think that would have made him happy, as the airport was his favourite place!” says his sister.

Cohen leaves a legacy that extended around the world as he made close friends wherever he went. “Every few hours, we hear

One such friend is Kathi Diamant, who lives in San Diego, and treated Ofer like a son. “Like everyone I know who met Ofer, I loved him immediately, was impressed with his open heart and lust for life,” she says. “He came and stayed with us in San Diego several times, and we gave him a key to our house so he could come and go whenever he wanted.”

She travelled to Israel for the funeral, and wrote: “Ofer Cohen, an illuminating spirit in human form, will shine forever. Those who knew Ofer were blessed to have known him. He died as he lived, embracing the world in its original form, with all its terrifying beauty.”

Venezuela's opposition to renew ties with Israel

Juan Guaidó, recognised by 50 countries as Venezuela's interim president, says he is working to "renew ties" with Israel.

Guaidó told a reporter from the Israeli daily *Israel Hayom* that he is "confident" that Israel will help his country by sending humanitarian aid, since Venezuela has sunk into poverty under socialist President Nicolas Maduro.

Guaidó, the president of the National Assembly of Venezuela, declared himself the country's interim president on 23 January, and called on Maduro to order new elections, saying that Maduro's 2018 re-election was fraudulent. The country's military remains loyal to Maduro.

"I am very happy to announce that the process of stabilising relations with Israel is in full swing," Guaidó said. "It is very important

for us. We will renew ties, later we will announce the appointment of an ambassador to Israel, and we really hope an ambassador from Israel will come to us."

Guaidó said that siting the country's embassy in Jerusalem, where it was located before it closed, "is one of the subjects we are talking about. I will declare the resumption of ties and the site of the embassy at the proper time."

Venezuelan Jews in Israel have been active in efforts to enlist support for Guaidó, according to the report.

The late President Hugo Chavez recalled his ambassador from Tel Aviv in 2006 over the war with Lebanon. Chavez severed diplomatic ties with Israel over its 2009 military operation in Gaza.

About 6 000 Jews live in Venezuela, down from about 20 000 more than three decades ago. Most left the country for places such as the United States, Canada, and Israel after facing anti-Semitism and economic turndown under Chavez and Maduro.

Anti-Semitic acts in France rose 74% in 2018

Anti-Semitic acts rose 74% last year.

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner said on Monday night that the total reported acts of anti-Semitism was 541 in 2018, up from 311 in 2017, according to local reports.

The latest incident occurred on Monday, when a tree planted in the Paris suburb of Sainte-Genevieve-du-Bois in memory of Ilan Halimi was chopped down. Halimi was a young man who was kidnapped and tortured in 2006 because a gang thought that his Jewish family had money to pay ransom.

The incident followed a number of swastikas and anti-Semitic epithets being painted around the city in recent days, including on a local bagel shop.

In Sainte-Genevieve-du-Bois near the memorial to Halimi, Castaner said that "anti-Semitism is spreading like poison", and that the government would fight it.

He called anti-Semitism "an attack against hope".

Torah Thought

Ain't it a joy to complain?

Sol visits his old friend, Abe, who has recently acquired a new dog.

"Nu, vot kind of dog is he?" asks Sol.

"He's a Jewish dog, and his name is Irving," Abe replies.

"Votch dis," Abe continues, as he cocks his head towards the dog. "Irving, fetch!"

Irving ambles over to the door, slowly turns around, and starts to speak: "Why are you talking to me like that? You constantly order me around, 'Irving, sit! Irving, stay! Irving, out!' What am I, *gehakte* herring? You expect me to sleep on the floor, with my arthritis... You feed me *farkakta* food full of salt and fat, it tastes like dreck! You should eat it someday! You never even take me

for a decent walk! It's out of the house, a few steps, and right back. Maybe if I could stretch out a little, my sciatica wouldn't kill me so much!"

Sol is gobsmacked, "Abe, your dog is amazing!"

Mississippi bans boycott of Israel

The Mississippi House of Representatives passed a bill that would prevent the state from doing business with companies that boycott Israel.

Following a vote of 88-10 last week in the lower house of the state legislature, the measure now moves to the senate.

It prevents the state retirement system, treasury, and any state government entity from investing in a company that boycotts Israel. The bill calls on the state to develop the list of boycotting companies.

Existing investments as of 1 July 2020 would have to be sold within 120 days after the list is published, though exceptions can be made for investments that the state determines are necessary.

At least 27 states have legislation banning boycotts of Israel, though some are facing legal challenges.

Trump calls on Ilhan Omar to resign

President Donald Trump has called on Republican Ilhan Omar to resign from Congress for showing anti-Semitism.

"It's terrible what she said, and I think she should either resign from Congress, or she should certainly resign from the House Foreign Affairs Committee," Trump told reporters. "What she said is so deep-seated in her heart, that her lame apology, and that's what it was, it was lame and she didn't mean a word of it, was just not appropriate. I think she should resign from Congress."

Omar, in her first term in Congress, said on Twitter on Sunday that the American Public Affairs Committee paid legislators to be pro-Israel. After condemnation from Republicans and Democrats, including the Democratic leadership in the United States House of Representatives, she said she "unequivocally" apologised after speaking with "Jewish allies and colleagues who are educating me on the painful history of anti-Semitic tropes".

Omar recently apologised for a 2012 tweet in which she accused Israel of "hypnotising" the world, acknowledging that she had unwittingly echoed anti-Semitic themes.

Republicans are pressuring the House Democratic leadership to remove her from the influential Foreign Affairs Committee, noting that Republicans removed Republican Steve King from committees after he questioned why it was taboo to embrace white supremacy.



Ilhan Omar

King also apologised, but Trump did not call for his resignation. King was an early backer of Trump's candidacy.

Critics of the president noted that he had not apologised for various comments they describe as bigoted. In the past, he has drawn fire for calling for "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States", for saying a judge could not be impartial because of his Hispanic ethnicity, and, as recently as Saturday, mocking Democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren's claim to Native American ancestry by seeming to invoke the Trail of Tears.

"Mr President, Congresswoman @IlhanMN apologized for using an anti-Semitic trope and demonstrated leadership," Chelsea Clinton, whose mother, Hillary, lost to Trump in the 2016 election, said on Twitter. Chelsea was among the first Democrats to call on Omar to apologise.

"When have you ever apologized for your embrace of white nationalism, and your exploitation and amplification of anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, racist, xenophobic, anti-LGBTQ hate?" Clinton asked Trump.



Rabbi Ari Shishler, Chabad of Strathavon

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blanche to launch an anti-Semitic genocide.

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Each Adar, we are offered the same opportunity. We'll always find reasons to complain, but Adar is about joy. Joy comes from active participation, rather than armchair grumbling. Joy strengthens when we unite with our community. Joy means that circumstances don't paralyze you, but that you can generate your own happiness, under any circumstances. And the secret of joy is to recognise that G-d is in charge, and can fix it all in a heartbeat.

We've got two months of potential simcha – joy without limitations. We should grab the opportunity.

Shabbat times this week		
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19:15	20:14	Cape Town
18:15	19:16	Durban
18:15	19:34	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:45	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:34	East London

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BDS milks it as Clover deal with Israel turns sour

NICOLA MILTZ

In an uncharacteristic move, the Department of International Relations (DIRCO) took down the anti-Israel lobby for attempting to scupper a much-needed multi-billion-rand foreign direct investment (FDI) deal with an Israeli-led company.

The proposed deal between Israel's Central Bottling Company (CBC) and Clover, South Africa's biggest dairy producer, stared trouble in the face last week as heavy pressure from Boycott Divestment Sanctions South Africa (BDS-SA) took its toll.

BDS has been hell-bent on destroying the R4.8 billion investment deal, which would be a desperately needed financial boost for South Africa's struggling economy.

However, in the face of the deal potentially taking a nose dive, DIRCO said out loud, "South Africa is open for business." In other words, hands off this deal!

DIRCO spokesperson Ndivhuwo Mabaya told media this week that if the transaction was "approved by the necessary competition and regulatory bodies, we see nothing wrong with the deal".

In this dramatic and positive pro-Israel move, arguably for the first time ever, DIRCO indirectly told BDS to back off, defending the proposed offer by international consortium Milco to buy out Clover Industries.

It took place in the same week that President Cyril Ramaphosa made it clear during his State of the Nation Address that the government was continuing its drive to attract FDI into South Africa, saying, "We aim to raise even more investment this year."

In 2018, Ramaphosa set a target for luring investment of \$100 billion (R1.3 trillion) by 2023 in an attempt to stimulate economic growth, which has fallen far short of the 5.4% annual target set in the National Development Plan.

Notwithstanding DIRCO's sentiments, BDS has already seriously damaged the Clover deal by placing enormous pressure on Brimstone Investment Corporation to pull the plug.

Johannesburg Stock Exchange-listed Brimstone Investment Corporation – a black-empowerment investment company which is part of the bidding group led by Tel Aviv-based CBC, was forced to "review"

its role in the transaction following "widespread outrage", it said.

No sooner had the announcement been made about the buyout offer, BDS went to work on a sinister campaign to smear CBC to try stop the deal from taking place. It did this regardless of the obvious positive financial spinoffs such a deal could have for South Africa, and the powerful impact it could have on combatting the country's rising unemployment levels.

BDS set its tentacles of minions throughout civil society, business, and labour circles, as well as Muslim

in business with Zionists who are oppressing Many & murdering Papestinians (sp) and stealing their land. Brimstone selling their souls to the devil for dollars."

Radio Islam tweeted, "Israel's CBC linked to former Mossad agent complicit in atrocities against Palestinians."

Iqbal Jassat of the anti-Israel Media Review Network described the deal as a "Clover sellout", and said that MRN had "kicked off a public-awareness campaign". In a lengthy and highly scathing article he said, "Rudimentary research on CBC reveals it to be

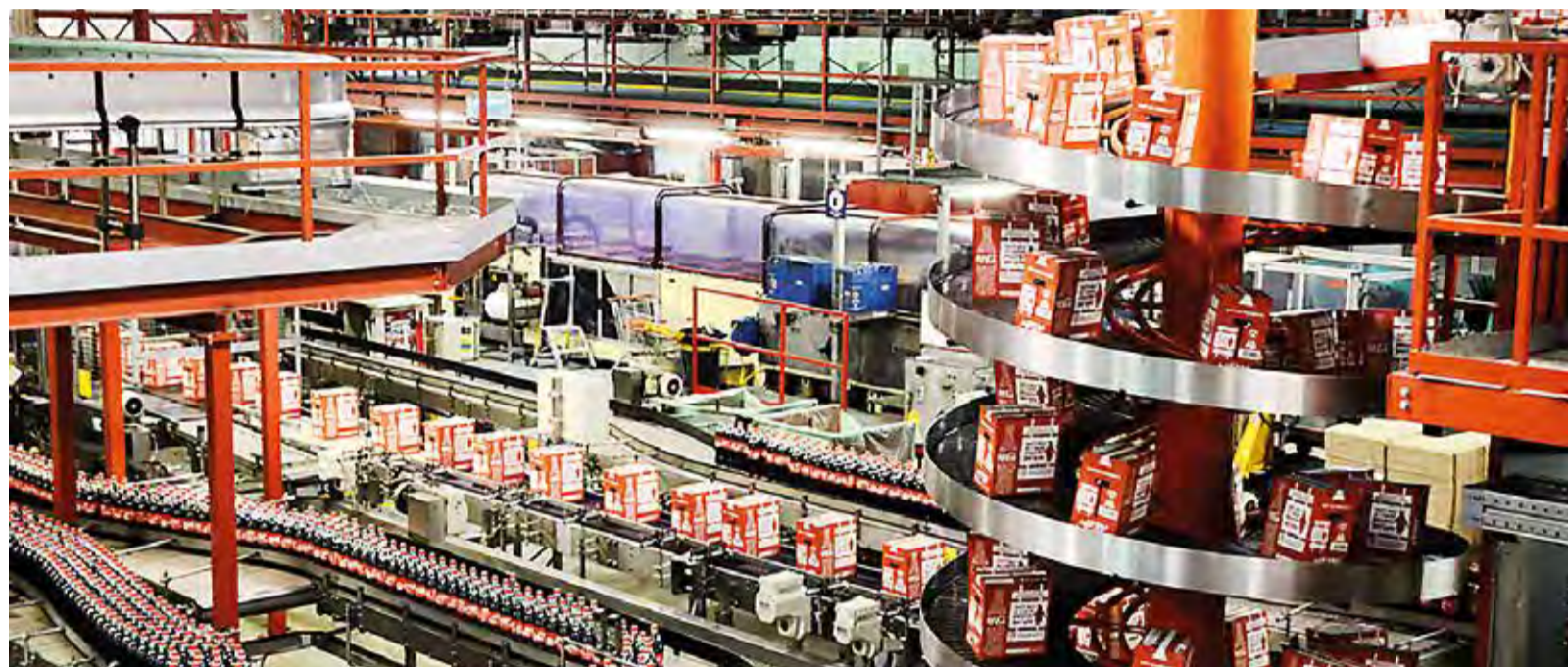
Africa has the highest youth-unemployment rate in the world, and BDS wants us to reject R4.8 billion in foreign investment into Clover because the money comes from a Jewish country. They are a selfish hate group that does not care about the unemployment crisis in this country."

A further tweet said, "South Africans are interested in foreign investment and world-class technology which will help solve our unemployment crisis. It will be extremely disappointing to lose out on R4.8 billion of investment due to

governments that aid and abet BDS, [something which] South Africa, by its lack of a clear stance on the deal, may be perceived as doing."

The Milco consortium is led by CBC, which is offering to buy 59.5% of the South African food producer. Brimstone offered to buy 15% of Clover's shares at R25 each. Other members of the Milco consortium are Ploughshare Investments, which will buy 10.9%, and IncuBev, which will buy 8.3%. Clover's management will retain a 6.3% stake.

The food group's share price jumped 19% to R23.80 on Monday



Coca-Cola being bottled in Israel

student associations in a fierce bid to sway public opinion. It took three days from the time the buy-out offer was announced on Monday last week until Thursday for Brimstone to backtrack.

It is understood that anti-Israel lobbyists from imams to Islam radio talk-show hosts and affiliated media platforms helped to spread toxic information about CBC, accusing it of being complicit in human-rights abuses and violating international law. BDS warned that unless the deal was cancelled, it would "actively initiate, support, and/or join the call for direct action and a militant but peaceful campaign".

On Twitter, Achmat wrote, "Clover cannot be seen bankrolling the brutal Israeli occupation. Hope they end this deal before it starts."

Umm Natheerah tweeted, "Sad to see South African Muslims like CEO of Brimstone Mustaq Brey involved

complicit in Israel's settlement enterprise."

He continued his criticism of CBC, saying, "Owned by the heirs of Moshe Wertheim whose association with the dispossession of Palestine goes back to the period of ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population when he fought in the Palmach terror-militia."

Meanwhile shares in Clover, which also processes products like yoghurt and olive oil, fell nearly 10% on Thursday after Brimstone's change of heart.

Outrageously, BDS welcomed Brimstone's back peddling. It issued a statement saying that it believed that "South African companies are attractive investment opportunities for global investors, and that there will be many alternative investors."

South Africans expressed dismay at the possibility that the deal might be scuppered.

Sowellnomics tweeted, "South

pressure from anti-Semites."

There is strong speculation that the deal is likely to be salvaged, but it is at a sensitive stage.

One businessman in the know who requested anonymity, said, "It's a travesty that this county could potentially see the loss of major direct foreign investment. South Africa is struggling to get any foreign investment at all, and here was a substantial [offer] on the table."

"Not only that, but the Israelis surely had a plan to expand and grow the business significantly with their world-class technology and know-how. The government should have taken a far more proactive role in fighting off BDS threats and intimidation, which is surely what derailed the deal."

"I am also convinced that this debacle is going to scare off major potential investment by developed nations which don't appreciate

morning after the JSE opened, but soon dropped after Brimstone expressed having second thoughts.

The rest of the consortium seeking to take over Clover reiterated its commitment to the proposed transaction.

CBC said it wanted to buy Clover as a way of expanding its operations in Africa. Clover has 8 000 employees and operates 13 plants. CBC is Israel's leading manufacturer and distributor of popular beverages including Coca-Cola, Fuze Tea, Tuborg, and Carlsberg beers. It has overseas operations in Turkey and Uzbekistan.

The next few weeks are crucial for Milco, which says it represents a group of operators and investors with extensive international and regional expertise in the dairy, juice, and beverage industries, and that it remains committed to the deal.

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Biggest threat to Israel comes from nation's identity crisis

JORDAN MOSHE

Israel's most pressing issue is the question of its identity. This will define the upcoming elections and the country's future, says former deputy speaker of the Knesset and military commander Yonatan Chetboun.

Addressing an audience at Keter Eliyahu shul in Johannesburg on Monday evening, he said that 70 years after its birth, the state of Israel has passed through childhood and entered the teenage years. Like any angst-ridden adolescent, it is trying to define who it is.

Chetboun said that the values which have defined Israel since its establishment are being questioned and challenged. "Public figures don't speak about security or politics in Israel these days," he said, "Instead, they ask who we are as Israelis, and how we identify ourselves."

Today an infantry battalion commander in the reserves, Chetboun comes from a background of governance and diplomacy, planning and managing numerous projects with government ministries, local authorities, companies, and public institutions. A decorated veteran of the second Lebanon War of 2006, he was part of the Israeli Defense Forces operation in the Lebanese village of Bint Jbeil in which Major Roi Klein lost his life.

This harrowing ordeal framed his talk. Leading a platoon of 70 soldiers into the village to eliminate Hezbollah operatives, Chetboun experienced a moment which remains with him to this day. "I was 500m away from Roi Klein when he jumped onto a grenade, and sacrificed his life for several others. I knew what happened because I heard someone say 'Roi is dead' in my earpiece. It was Roi himself who relayed the message in his final moments, because he was a senior commander who knew someone would have to take his place. Even seconds before he died, that was his priority."

In spite of coming under heavy fire, Chetboun and his men moved in to remove the bodies of Klein and other soldiers from an olive grove in the village. The gravity of the scene before him struck him only years later, he says. "The seven individuals I saw fallen in front of me represented the entire Jewish people," says Chetboun. "Sephardi, Ashkenazi, religious, secular, they were all there. I saw the nation of Israel on the ground in that olive grove."

Reflecting on the experience, he explained that this sense of unity characterised not only Jews, but the state of Israel. "No matter how religious or political one is," he said, "one has his place in the country. Yes, we may disagree and shout, but we are not a divided population."

This sense of unity has empowered the state to take on any conflict so far. Chetboun said that throughout Israel's history, the enemy was clearly defined



Yonatan Chetboun

and engaged with by a united population. "Arab states with clear goals allied themselves against us," he says. "We went to war with a state, be it Egypt, Lebanon, or any other. In the past decade, the situation has changed, and we find ourselves caught between the two sides of the Islamic world as they fight for domination."

"With Iran seeking to lead the Shi'ite side, and Turkey the Sunni, Israel has had to contend with terror organisations acting with the support of either side. With so many players and interests involved, the threat against Israel has changed completely, and is more complicated than ever before."

“No longer divided by left or right of the political spectrum, the population is now clashing over whether the state should be guided by religious or civil values.”

However, in spite of the complexity of this situation, security is no longer Israel's most pressing concern. It is an ongoing concern, but it is no longer the burning issue which occupies politics and the media. The question of identity has taken its place, and will even define the upcoming April election.

Said Chetboun, "For the past few decades, conflicts and development have been pressing concerns that have drawn the population together. After 70 years of discussion about security, the subject has changed, and we are now considering what sort of a state it is. No longer divided by left or right of the political spectrum, the population is now

clashing over whether the state should be guided by religious or civil values.

"Benny Gantz doesn't speak about safety anymore. Instead, he asks whether public transport should be allowed to operate on Shabbat. Yair Lapid is discussing what would happen if Judaism was disconnected from Israel as a state. Not even the left is concerned with land or security anymore. The order of the day is the clash of traditionalist and modernists, with the role of Jewish identity in the spotlight. This split will dominate the elections, not politics."

It is now that Israel's defining sense of unity is being challenged, that it has become more important than ever. Citing a survey, Chetboun highlighted the fact that while they might not consider themselves religious, 85% of Israelis see themselves as believers at some level. "They all feel Jewish in some way," he said. "The values and ideologies which have defined Israeli society, family life, and way of life, which

have held everyone together until now, are being questioned and evaluated by those who want the country to move away from being a Jewish state. The impact would be dangerous and divisive."

Although he believes this development is normal for any young state, Chetboun fears that the unity which has enabled the Jewish people and the state to succeed against all odds is at risk, and must therefore be defended at all costs. "The unity of the Jewish people is more important than ever before," he says. "Whether one is religious or not, the source of the traditional values which have defined Israeli society until today are drawn from Judaism, and those who are defending it as a base of tradition are up against a side which wants that to change."

"The outcome of this clash will determine Israel's identity. It will affect everything from the election to our way of life. The unity which has defined the Jewish people is at risk, and the Israeli public will determine the future of Israeli society."

IUA/UCF encourages direct donations to beneficiaries

JORDAN MOSHE

After years of overseeing the fundraising for numerous organisations within the local Jewish community, the Israel United Appeal – United Communal Fund (IUA/UCF) has restructured its funding mechanisms.

From now on, there will be greater onus on community organisations, including the Community Security Organisation (CSO) and the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), to manage their own respective fundraising campaigns.

In a statement released earlier this month, the CSO brought the restructuring to the attention of its donors. CSO spokesperson, Dr Brad Gelbart said that the IUA/UCF would no longer proactively seek donations on behalf of its beneficiaries. However, all donations being made to the IUA/UCF would continue to be transferred to the existing

beneficiaries in the same proportion as previous years.

"The CSO has been raising funds through its own small fundraising team, but it will now need to pick up the shortfall as needed. We are grateful to the team at the IUA/UCF for their efforts over the years."

Until the end of 2018, the umbrella body accepted donations from the public and distributed them among its various beneficiaries. These include the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), the CSO, the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS), the SAZF, and the Israel Centre.

However, after extensive consultations with its donor base, the organisation has restructured its operations to allow for donations to be given directly to a beneficiary of the donor's choice.

According to a statement put out by the IUA/UCF last month, the SAJBD, SAZF, and CSO have

established their own fundraising departments, and will be approaching donors directly to meet their individual fundraising requirements.

Until now, student bodies such as SAUJS have received a grant directly from the IUA/UCF. While the grant will continue to be paid, it will cover only administrative expenses, and any shortfall will be covered by the SAJBD as part of its budget.

The President of the IUA/UCF, Avrom Krengel, said that the organisation would maintain a certain capacity to assist with fundraising, including processing monthly debit orders. "This new structure will allow us to be more transparent and cost effective, and better meet the needs of our donors and beneficiaries. There are different models used to raise funding. It helps to have different mechanisms in place to process the receipt of donations."

He continued, "For the past decade, the Jewish community of Johannesburg has been able to give directly to an increasing number of organisations, including King David and the Chevrah Kadisha. Alongside these individual channels, they could donate through the IUA/UCF, the last umbrella body used for this purpose. Given the momentum of direct donations, it made sense to enable donors to give directly to beneficiaries."

The response from the community has been positive, Krengel said, with people happy to give directly to their organisation of choice, or continue to transact via the IUA/UCF. "The new mechanism enables the organisations to raise more funding than before," he said. "Moreover, the IUA/UCF will no longer shoulder the costs incurred by processing donations."



SAUJS is one of the organisations that will be effected by this restructure

Battle over Habonim heats up in Israel

TALI FEINBERG

Habonim Dror South Africa has expressed its disappointment that Habonim leaders around the world have not been consulted in a dispute about the movement in Israel.

“Decisions are being made for us, behind closed doors, as to who our youth-movement [leaders] can interact with and under what terms,” says Daniel Sussman, *mazkir* (head of the movement) of Habonim Dror South Africa (HDSA).

Some of the issues raised between the kibbutz movement and Dror Yisrael in Israel are: who owns the labour Zionist youth movements? Who should be sending *shlichim* (emissaries) to Habonim around the world? And where should Habonim *olim* (immigrants) settle when they go to Israel?

Dror Yisrael is essentially the “graduate movement” of Hanoar Haoved Vehalomed, Habonim Dror’s sister movement in Israel, says Sussman.

formally cut ties with Habonim Dror around the world.

This means that Dror Yisrael would no longer send *shlichim* to these countries, and it would no longer run education programmes for Habonim tours in Israel. This also means that any Habonim *olim* who joined Dror Yisrael would no longer be able to work with their Habonim counterparts back home. In return, the kibbutz movement would ensure that Dror Yisrael and Hanoar Haoved were funded, and were able to continue their work in Israel.

This possibility led to an outcry around the world, with Habonim youth taking to social media to demand that their voices be heard when making these decisions. Dror Yisrael hopes this will lead to a meeting with the kibbutz movement.

“The problem is that young people are paying the price for politics,” says Julian Resnick, an educator and the former *mazkir* of Habonim Dror Olami. “The creation of urban kibbutzim has opened up an avenue for young people to find a framework that

allocations bodies face the same question.”

How does this affect Habonim Dror Southern Africa? “It has an impact mainly on the relationships the movement here has with our *olim*,” says Sussman. “Structurally speaking, of all the English-speaking Habonim centres, we will be the least affected. We are not educationally or structurally dependent on Dror

ignore the voice of the youth movement and its graduates in Israel.”

Schwartz points out that “The leadership of Habonim SA is busy planning an exciting year for the movement, and is now having to spend time fighting to



Paul Mirbach

will ensure that the deep and meaningful connections between Habonim Dror and its graduates continue, while simultaneously teaching and leading the next generation of inspiring movement members. The youth will always make its voice heard – that’s what’s so incredibly special about them.”

Says Sussman, “Our biggest disappointment in these negotiations is that the leaders of the different Habonim Dror countries around the world have not been consulted. A key principle of all youth movements is youth autonomy. It is the youth of Habonim South Africa who own HDSA. We are the ones who decide which partnerships we choose to have. Not the kibbutz movement, and not Dror Yisrael.”



These photographs are scenes from Habonim machaneh in South Africa

Yisrael. We enjoy a partnership with Dror Yisrael, and we work with it on what it is very good at doing such as tours of Sderot or *peulot* (activities) on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. It is more about the emotional connection... because if this ‘deal’ goes ahead, our graduates who made aliyah will no longer be able to formally work with us.”

Indeed, David Schwartz, who moved to Israel last year, says, “The thing which is most upsetting is that Habonim Dror *madrachim* who have made aliyah to live out the movement’s values are being prevented from having ties with Habonim Dror members all over the world.” Those who have made Aliya might have to sign a contract to say that they will not work formally with or independently contact Habonim.

“The leadership of Habonim South Africa, which is so strong and is going to lead the movement to new heights this year, is having its decisions and desires



It leads education programmes around the country, manages Hanoar Haoved Vehalomed’s finances, and assists its graduates to live and work together to improve Israeli society.

It has also sent *shlichim* to English-speaking Habonim countries around the world. Many Habonim *olim* from around the globe have joined Dror Yisrael’s urban kibbutzim, in which members live together and work on education and outreach programmes.

“For two decades, the kibbutz movement was involved largely with itself and its own survival. Now, it is experiencing a resurgence, and it wants to take back the role it essentially abandoned. And, believing it is its deserved right, it expects those who filled the void [Dror Yisrael], to move aside. When Dror Yisrael expressed reluctance to do so, things got ugly,” says Paul Mirbach, who made aliyah with Habonim Dror from South Africa in the 1980s.

Essentially, in closed-door meetings between the kibbutz movement, Dror Yisrael, and Hanoar Haoved Vehalomed at the beginning of this year, it was tabled that Dror Yisrael would

suits their ideology, and it is a good first step into life in Israel. It’s a win-win, because we want young people to go to Israel and build a progressive society.

“This is a struggle over both direction and budget. The kibbutz movement is saying that if it continues to invest money, it



needs to dictate direction. But it shouldn’t be ‘on condition,’” says Resnick.

“We need to allow the youth to choose their own particular tools to enact their ideology, and we have to have trust in young people. Across the board, all

totally ignored by the kibbutz movement,” he says. “I care deeply about and support the kibbutz movement, and want to be its partner in bettering Israeli society for the Jewish people, which is why it’s hard to believe that [the kibbutz movement] is willing to

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Cutting off your nose to spite your face

Do you know the expression, “Don’t cut off your nose to spite your face?” It is a warning against pursuing revenge in a way that will damage you more than the object of your anger. Well, it seems quite clear that Boycott Divestment Sanctions South Africa (BDS-SA) is determined to do just that.

Consider this: Israel is willing to invest most of R4.8 billion in a South African company – Clover to be exact. It would be a huge injection of desperately needed cash into our economy. The company is 100% legitimate, and understands the industry as it has developed a similar type of business in Israel. It is a hugely successful international business, the kind of partner we need and want.

President Cyril Ramaphosa is going all out to bring foreign investment into the country, having just said so in his State of the Nation Address. And here, under our noses, is this incredible deal. It would provide and safeguard so many jobs. It would secure the South African company and the industry. I could – but won’t – carry on about all the plusses, which are fairly obvious.

However BDS couldn’t care two hoots about what this deal will do for the country quite simply because it is an Israeli company that is planning to invest. It is as simple as that. It is willing to destroy this deal and lose this investment because when Israel has anything positive to do with South Africa, it will do anything – no matter what that means – to make sure it doesn’t happen. Even if the deal will significantly benefit South Africa and its people.

It does not care about this. All it cares about is making sure that Israel does not succeed in anything to do with South Africa. In fact, if it had its way, Israel would not succeed in anything ever, except in handing over its land.

Too bad for BDS! Israel is a massively successful and innovative country that is succeeding beyond belief economically, socially, and in so many other areas.

It’s funny how those who are anti-Israel still carry cell phones and laptops with Israeli parts in them. Somehow, they conveniently ignore the fact that the parts come from Israel.

In this particular deal with Clover, however, it becomes so very clear that BDS has a blind spot. It simply will not see that it is destroying something so worthwhile for our country because of its determination to destroy Israel.

Perhaps it can see, but simply doesn’t care about what happens in this country or what benefits South Africans. In fact, for the first time I can recall, the government is able to see that BDS-SA does not have the interests of South Africans at heart.

I never hear BDS talking about finding a peaceful solution to the Middle East situation, only about making sure that Israel doesn’t succeed. So, should this deal go through, BDS-SA has threatened to “actively initiate, support and/or join the call for direct action and a militant but peaceful campaign”. Sorry, what is a “militant but peaceful campaign” without any soldiers? Sounds to me like a contradiction in terms.

And, its *pièce de résistance* – quoted by anti-Israel lobbyists and anti-Israel media – is that leading academic and political analyst Steven Friedman has condemned the deal. He is quoted as saying, “It will create the ground for something I have been advocating for quite a while – a concerted consumer boycott.

“This is ideal. It is very easy for people to show solidarity by buying their dairy products from another supplier, and so this could become a very popular boycott campaign. Obviously, it is better to stop it happening, but all is not lost if that fails.”

Who, exactly, would benefit from that? I am not a political analyst, nor an academic, but just who would benefit? Would it really be to the benefit of South Africa, or would it be to its detriment? What impact would it have on the South Africans employed by Clover? What would the impact be on other large-scale foreign investors considering investing in South Africa? What impact would it have on Israel?

I don’t think it’s rocket science to understand that South Africans will be the only ones who will suffer if the deal doesn’t go through. And, if it does go through and boycotts begin, many South Africans will find themselves jobless. Also, other investors will shy away from dealing with this country. Wouldn’t you as an investor if you thought that this could happen to you?

As for Israel, it will continue as it does, developing, growing, and getting on with innovation as the “start-up capital”. Will this harm it? Not really. Will it harm us? You bet.

Clearly that doesn’t seem to worry those who support BDS-SA. Isn’t it time the country recognised just who these people are, and whose interests they have at heart?

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



True relevance of the anniversary of the Islamic revolution

This week, 40 years ago, Iran’s military stood down, guaranteeing the Islamic Revolution’s success.

After months of unrest and protests in cities across the country, a secular monarchy headed by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, colloquially known as the Shah, was overthrown.

This dramatic turn-of-events would reshape the Middle East for decades to come, introducing a string of events, the implications of which are still being felt today.

Before the 1979 revolution, the Shah used much of the country’s oil and gas money to modernise the capital, Tehran. He largely ignored those living in the countryside, and came under increasing criticism for being out of touch with citizens, and serving as a puppet of Western governments.

It was a recipe bound for failure. The devout and the clergy became increasingly frustrated with his changes, and the expectations of the burgeoning middle class, especially students, could never be completely fulfilled.

In spite of the many reforms the Shah introduced, he could not stem the nationwide protests. In response, government forces killed thousands of demonstrators.

Although the unrest was initiated by radical student groups, religious fundamentalists gradually gained the upper hand. They rallied around the Shah’s primary critic, Islamic cleric Ruhollah Khomeini, who stood for everything the Shah did not. Khomeini envisaged an Iranian government founded on the principles of Islam, which was deeply opposed to the West. When he returned to Tehran from exile on 1 February 1979, he received a rapturous welcome.

Understanding what led to the revolution and the changes the country has undergone since is important in trying to map out future relations between Iran and Israel.

In a recent interview, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said, “We think of Iran as a state with an ideology, but actually Iran really is an ideology with a state.”

The cornerstone of the Iranian revolution, and one of its most important goals was the exportation of Shia Islam outside the country’s borders. Becoming a regional powerhouse remains one of the Islamic Republic’s overriding priorities. Even today, in spite of the country’s massive economic problems, in an effort to gain regional hegemony, it continues to prop up its proxies in Lebanon via Hezbollah (which it created), and in Gaza via Hamas.

This is also the most opportune way to attack Israel, a country Khomeini described in 1971 as having “penetrated all the economic, military, and political affairs” of Iran and turning it into “a military base for Israel”. The Iranian regime is relentlessly devoted to the destruction of the Jewish state.

It’s a far cry from pre-revolution days. Like the United States, Israel was closely allied to the Shah and before February 1979, the countries shared diplomatic and even some national security relations. Khomeini used this relationship to his advantage, arguing that Israel was a Western intrusion, and he was freeing the region from “imperialist” Israeli oppression. One of the first things he did after assuming power was

**DATELINE:
MIDDLE EAST**

Paula Slier



abruptly to sever diplomatic ties with Jerusalem.

This past Monday, hundreds of thousands of Iranians poured into the country’s streets to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the revolution. They chanted “Death to America” and “Death to Israel”, while burning US and Israeli flags. A commander from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps threatened to “raze Tel Aviv and Haifa to the ground” in the event of an American attack on the country.

Quick to respond, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that this would be Iran’s last anniversary of the revolution if it attacked any Israeli cities.

This trading of barbs is nothing new. The question, of course, is whether either side is willing to make true on its threats.

Some experts say Iran is willing to risk its own destruction to fight Israel. Others believe Tehran would never go that far and would rather continue to pour money into its proxy armies.

These experts back up their arguments by pointing out that in spite of the recent humiliations Tehran has suffered in Syria from Israeli airstrikes, it has avoided



“We think of Iran as a state with an ideology, but actually Iran really is an ideology with a state.”

any major confrontation with the Jewish state.

In its heyday, the relationship with Iran formed part of Israel’s founding Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion’s, vision of cultivating relations with the non-Arab, mostly Muslim, enemies of its enemies.

Known as the “periphery doctrine”, chief among these Israeli partners were Turkey and pre-revolution Iran.

Nowadays Israel has a “reverse periphery doctrine”, forging alliances with major Arab countries like Egypt, Jordan, and to a lesser degree Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. The logic is the same – but in reverse. These countries share a common enemy in Iran.

But, it doesn’t alleviate the very real threat Tehran continues to pose. The country is developing longer range and more sophisticated missiles that can reach American and Israeli targets. It is building weapons factories in Syria in the hope of establishing a permanent military presence near Israel’s northern border. Like the revolution that heralded the current leadership four decades ago, Iran’s rulers are intent on sponsoring their proxies, and destroying Israel.



Protesters in Iran during the Islamic Revolution of 1979

Looking back at Ethiopia as more countrymen arrive in Israel



OPINION

Danny Adeno Abebe

I often ponder about my simple life in Ethiopia. Sometimes I miss the uncomplicated life that we once had. I miss the days of being a shepherd boy. I miss the daily chores of collecting water and searching for food. Each and every one of us has a strong link to our past and a longing for what was.

As Jews, it is engraved deep within us to reminisce and reflect on our past. This is what makes us rich in culture and tradition.

Last week, I was fortunate enough to visit my country of birth, Ethiopia. I stood at the entrance to my family home, my heart full of emotion. I remember so clearly the sounds of chattering, barefoot children, the cows, sheep, and most importantly, the smell of my mother's cooking.

This is not the first time I have returned home as a visitor, but each time I visit, the experience is unique. Interestingly enough, each time I return, I feel more Israeli and Jewish than the time before.

After living in Israel for the past 34 years, I have dealt with my past. I have even written an autobiography detailing my journey from Ethiopia to Sudan, and finally returning home to Israel.

Writing my story was an emotional experience. It took me back to the struggle, the obstacles, and finally the relief of freedom. During my visit to Ethiopia, I met my parents' neighbours, who expressed how much they missed us all. The connection I felt with them is something I cannot put into words.

I continued my visit to Gonder, the camp which has been set up for the Falash Mura community to settle until they make aliyah. The Falash Mura are members of the Beta Israel community in Ethiopia who converted to Christianity in the 19th and 20th centuries, even before. They have since reverted back to Judaism, but they are not eligible to make aliyah under the Israeli Law of Return.

About two years ago, a group of 1 300 Falash Mura arrived in Israel, and an additional 82 are expected to arrive on Monday on a flight funded in part by the Jewish Agency.

I don't believe that this aliyah is legitimate, as the majority of those waiting to make aliyah are not Jewish. They chose to give up their Judaism, and once they had done so, many of them turned against us Jews in Ethiopia. They persecuted us for being Jewish.

I don't have a problem with people leaving our religion, but then don't say that you are Jewish because it means that you will have a better life. That is what these people are doing.

Their aliyah is not about wanting to live in the Jewish homeland, it is simply being made for economic reasons. It's really hard for those of us who know what these people are like to watch our government accept them with open arms. It's wrong!

However, if the Israeli government has decided to assist them, it should act immediately. Giving hope without taking any action is not the correct route.

In conclusion, I have since arrived in South Africa, and found a second home... Pick n Pay!

I spend many hours there. That's what happens when you have four children. My children shout in Hebrew, like quintessential Israelis. The locals ask me what language my children are speaking. It does not sound like Xhosa, Zulu, or Sotho. I explain that my

children speak Hebrew, and they are surprised. The response is, "What? There are black children in Israel. Are you Jewish?" When I reply that we are, they laugh in disbelief!

Sometimes I feel like I am one person with three very real problems: I am Jewish, I am black, and I am Israeli!

I feel very fortunate to have experienced my past, and to live in my present. I cannot wait to see what my future holds.

• *Danny Adeno Abebe is the Habonim Dror Olami and World Zionist Organisation shaliach to South Africa. He was one of the approximately 8 000 Ethiopian Jews who were brought to Israel with Operation Moses in 1984.*

Danny Abebe during his recent trip to Ethiopia




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Israeli television series take centre stage

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Thousands of television series grace our small screens, but these days the ones people are talking about are made by and about Israelis.

They deal with everything from the frontline of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the psychological repercussions of war. They even dabble in the life in Israeli orthodox communities.

Israeli series like *Fauda*, *When Heroes Fly*, and *Shtisel* provide a refreshing alternative to the predominantly American and British shows to which we've become accustomed.

And, with the advent of subscription-based media streaming networks like Netflix and Amazon Prime, more and more Israeli TV series have become available to global audiences.

But it's not just their intriguing subject matter that sets them apart, it's also their compelling scripts, cinematography, and stellar acting, directing, and production.

What makes such a small country such a significant player in the global television arena?

"In recent years, the tiny country has produced a remarkable number of international television hits, on par with the United States and United Kingdom," writes Eliana Lachter on global travel, media, and entertainment site, *theculturetrip.com*.

"The burgeoning TV industry and rapid production of quality television content has increasingly caught the attention of a global audience. Israel can now boast a string of successes in exporting its home-grown shows to international streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime."

Good quality shows were already there, streaming services just made them more accessible to wider audiences, says Gus Silber, a social commentator and journalist.

"The fantastic thing about Netflix is that you can discover works that are beyond the Hollywood machine, and Israeli series are among the best," Silber told the *SA Jewish Report*. "Israelis have a really active movie and TV industry. It's an Israeli characteristic that life goes on, technologically and creatively, even amid the tense conditions that they've always lived under. Israelis are incredibly creative. That comes across not only in their technological acumen, but also in their ability to produce amazing television. The TV series on Netflix and Amazon Prime are very much a mirror of the absurdities and tensions of Israeli life."

In an article published in Israeli online news magazine *ISRAEL21c*, Abigail Klein Leichman examines the reasons behind the global popularity of Israeli series. She says the Israeli TV industry is not afraid to take risks as it is relatively free of the tight constraints that govern which shows get made in the US.

"Just as Israelis, in general, comfortably embrace risk-taking and uncertainty, the Israeli TV-format industry doesn't hesitate to take a chance on innovative and unusual ideas," writes Klein Leichman. "This is in contrast to traditionally conservative production industries elsewhere that are more likely to reject a new idea that's not a sure bet."

Enter the Netflix-helmed political thriller, *Fauda*. When it comes to fast-paced, edge-of-your-seat action, very few shows rival *Fauda* – the Arabic word for chaos. Named by the *New York Times* as the best international show of 2017, *Fauda* follows the fate of an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) counter terrorism unit, *Mista'aravim*, known for going undercover and assuming the identity of Palestinians. It's loosely based on the experience of its co-creators, Lior Raz (who also stars as Doron), and Avi Issacharoff, both of whom served in the IDF's Duvdevan unit.

"Israeli series come at certain situations from an alternative angle," says *Chai FM* entertainment reporter and newsreader, Sasha Star. "Take *Fauda*, for example. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is portrayed so much in the media. This view is all that the public is generally exposed to. *Fauda* gives us a behind-the-scenes look. The fact that it's written by two former IDF soldiers who served in the Duvdevan unit also gives it a sense of authenticity."

Fauda is also known for its unflinching assessment of both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. No-one has the upper hand when it comes to heartbreak. "*Fauda* gets to grips with the political and military tensions of Israeli life, uniquely, and the fact that it also presents the Palestinian side of the equation is quite bold and broad-minded," says Silber.

"Israelis are equally good at broad comedy," he says. "Israeli



Fauda



The Good Cop

sitcom *Hashoter Hatov* (*The Good Cop*) is funny, raunchy, and socially bold. What's so good about these Israeli series is that they're not afraid to tackle the controversial aspects of living in Israel. This is something other countries often shy away from. For example, *The Good Cop* is a comedy series, but it touches on the experiences of an Arab Israeli cop, and the discrimination he encounters."

Israeli TV trends also show a fascination with ultra-orthodox communities. "The hottest TV shows in Israel right now are about the insular *Haredim*, or ultra-orthodox Jewish communities, whose everyday dramas – albeit fictionalised – are Israeli TV's latest obsession," writes Miriam Berger in the *GlobalPost*. Indeed, it's the insight into a largely unknown community that viewers find so appealing.

The series, in fact, attracted the attention of *Friends* co-creator Marta Kauffman, who is adapting the show for American audiences. Her version, *Emmis*, follows an ultra-orthodox family living in Brooklyn. Speaking to the press about what attracted her to *Shtisel*, Kauffman said, "It's a show ... where you have to take some time to humanise what is unknown. And that's the thing I really thought would speak to an American audience."

Israeli shows have long been fodder for American TV producers looking for alternative subject matter. Perhaps the most famous Israeli TV export is the multi-award-winning *Homeland*, starring Claire Danes and Mandy Patinkin. The deal for the US version was struck before the Israeli original was ever filmed. *Homeland* was adapted from Israeli series *Prisoners of War*

(*Chatufim*) whose creator Gideon Raff is an executive producer on *Homeland*. "You might not be Jewish, understand Hebrew, or have been to Israel, but the stories are globally relevant," says Silber. "With *Shtisel*, for instance, a small community that isolates itself and has arranged marriages will resonate with orthodox Greek and Muslims communities. The shows also have a good ability to tap into the lighter as well as darker side of life, as is the case with *Shtisel* and *Fauda*. Israeli shows feel universal."

There's a concerted drive to market Israeli shows internationally. "Aside from creating characters anyone can relate to, Israeli producers [like Israeli high-tech entrepreneurs] think internationally in their business models due to Israel's small domestic market," writes Klein Leichman. "One example is Keshet, Israel's biggest production house, which has opened branches in Los Angeles, London, Hong Kong, and Mexico City to sell shows, help create foreign adaptations, and produce original programming overseas." "Israel's tiny, so Netflix is allowing these Israeli production companies to promote their content to an international audience directly without it having to go through the Hollywood machine, says Silber. "You no longer have to wait for someone to take a story like *Prisoners of War* and turn it into *Homeland*. The power of Netflix is completely changing the rules of the game. With the internet, everything is accessible. It's a bit of a revolution."

Shtisel converts ultra-orthodox from the 'other' into 'a bit like us'



REVIEW

Jordan Moshe

Among both religious and secular Jews, the ultra-orthodox community is an object of simultaneous fascination and aversion. Men garbed in unvarying black suits and white shirts with curled *payot* (sidelocks) dangling beside their ears are synonymous with a way of life that many of us find impenetrable.

Hit-Israeli drama *Shtisel* offers viewers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, a fresh perspective that not only humanises, but injects dynamism into a group of hitherto faceless individuals.

Originally produced and aired by Israeli network YES in 2013, *Shtisel* has risen to the height of popularity since it recently became available on Netflix.

Centred on a Charedi family living in Jerusalem, the series presents incarnations of the real-life charedi figures we see on the streets of ultra-orthodox neighbourhoods like Geula and Meah Shearim. These are people to whom we seldom pay even a moment's attention.

The production follows the story of recently widowed Shulem Shtisel, a religious teacher at a local all-boys *cheder* (ultra-orthodox primary

school), whose loss and responsibilities threaten to overwhelm him.

In addition to supporting his many married children, his youngest son, Akiva, still lives with him at home. The two frequently clash over *shidduch* (arranged marriage) offers (which Akiva constantly turns down), and his son's artistic inclinations, which the father considers a waste of time.

The ultra-orthodox are too often depicted in films with a disturbing storyline, and painted as a repressive, backward society. Not so here, with these and other personalities at last being

familial, and relating to daily life – that are commonplace in all walks of life. The personal struggles and challenges that come with the cloistered lifestyle of a religious corner of Jerusalem are not limited to their locale, but could be the stuff of anyone's life.

The fact that the characters speak in a blend of Yiddish and Hebrew doesn't change the universal message this Israeli series seeks to transmit.

In scenes which feature food, tea, and cigarettes aplenty, we watch Shulem's aged mother, Bubby Malcha, marvel at the

ingenuity of television, and add the names of the programme's characters to her *tehillim* (psalms) list. We share in Akiva's sister, Giti's, struggle to support her children when her husband leaves her. We also feel the awkwardness which pervades Akiva's *shidduch* dates with women he hasn't met before.

What *Shtisel* effectively gives us is not a screen, but a mirror, one in which we see reflected our own lives, be they secular or orthodox. The lives of people too often maligned are presented with all their challenges, family conflicts, and the ceaseless

efforts to find meaning in the everyday.

We see people who could easily be playing out the struggles of our own lives, and realise that we're perhaps more alike than we previously thought.



Members of the *Shtisel* cast

given the opportunity to laugh, cry, mourn, and celebrate in ways to which any person can relate.

While they may lead Charedi lifestyles, each of the characters face conflicts – emotional,

Talking about disability in communities

TALI FEINBERG

Disabled people make up 19% of the United States' population and are therefore the largest minority group in the US, according to the website of the Invisible Disabilities Association. Yet, in spite of their numbers, the disabled are largely invisible, according to Professor Leslie Swartz.

Swartz was speaking at a panel discussion on disability and sexuality at the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, linked to its current exhibition "Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race", which explores the Nazi regime's 'science' of race and eugenics, and its implications for medical ethics and responsibility today.

In addition, February is Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month, and this is being marked with a number of events worldwide.

"Ultimately, the discussion and the exhibition asks, 'Who counts as a person?'" said Swartz. Indeed, the mass murder of the disabled under the Nazi regime was the leap it took to dehumanising and murdering others, including Jews.

Swartz is one of South Africa's leading academics in disability research. He recently launched his memoir, *Able Bodied*, which explores the complexities of being the son of a disabled father.

He was joined on the panel by Dr Xanthe Hunt, who is leading a group of researchers at Stellenbosch University exploring disability and sexuality in South Africa; Jenna-Lee Procter, a clinical psychologist who has worked closely with mentally and physically disabled people about their sexual identities; Bongani Mapumulo, the manager of the newly-created special-needs portfolio of the Stellenbosch University SRC; and Cleone Jordan, a disability researcher and activist.

Both Mapumulo and Jordan are disabled. In deeply personal accounts, they shared how they battled to access their sexuality as disabled people, especially because society did not view them as sexual beings. Jordan recounted how she became quadriplegic in a car accident, and one of her first questions to herself and her husband was, "Is there sex after disability?"

In spite of the challenges, Jordan became pregnant, but throughout her journey, she was confronted by doctors and people around her who refused to see disability aligning with a sexual identity, pregnancy, birth, or motherhood.

Mapumulo shared how he became disabled at the age of four, and was sent to boarding school at the age of five. One of five brothers, he battled to reconcile being disabled with being masculine – a strong part of his Zulu culture.

He also struggled to interact with able-bodied young people because he was at a special-needs boarding school. He emphasised that young people of different abilities need to interact regularly with each other. It is only now, as a proudly disabled adult working with students on this topic, that he has been able to reclaim his sexual identity.

Procter described working with an intellectually disabled teenager who had been raped and was exploring her sexual identity. "She is someone on the margins of the margins. Her story demonstrates the need for communities to talk about these issues, and create safe spaces for disabled teens to explore their sexuality," she said.

Hunt said that she was researching the sexual lives of disabled South Africans and society's response to it. Following an unprecedented 2 000 responses to a survey she conducted, she gathered that most South Africans assumed that disabled people were asexual, and that they were less likely to get married and have children.

Disabled people responded that they did not have access to family planning services, and were seen as not allowed to be sexual or have children. Furthermore, they were seen as disabled first, male or female second.

"Our interviews explored many of these assumptions," said Hunt. Ultimately, she hopes this research will serve as an alert to able-bodied society to view disabled people as whole beings, with all the needs, dignity, and rights

people deserve.

"Religious communities have the power to exclude people or take the lead regarding inclusion," said Swartz. "Yes, religion, sex, and disability are all difficult topics, but they need to be discussed."

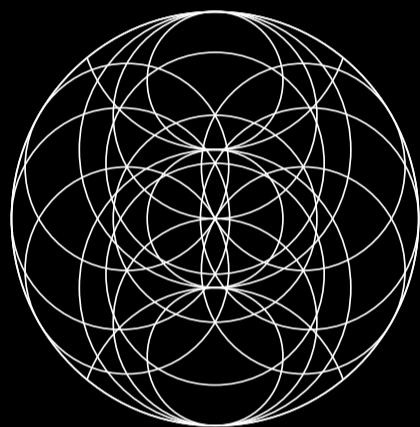
He pointed out that it is heartening that many of the Jewish schools are inclusive schools. This is one step closer to teaching our children that people of all abilities are welcome in every way.



Bongani Mapumulo, Professor Leslie Swartz, Dr Xanthe Hunt, Jenna-Lee Procter, and Cleone Jordan

Photo: Tali Feinberg

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Making vows on the road less travelled

TALI FEINBERG

The day two people publicly promise “to love, honour, and respect” each other is said to be the most romantic day in their life.

In the spirit of the month of love, we sought couples who have taken their vows in off-the-beaten-track places, and without breaking the bank.

From a beach to a house, a campsite to a train station, they show that a wedding is possible wherever you want it to be, and that it’s not the flowers, décor, or food that are most important, but the marriage itself.

CARLA AND JARED STEIN: BAREFOOT ON THE BEACH

“One of the main reasons we wanted a small wedding was that we had both lost someone we loved. Jared had lost his mom, and I had lost my sister. The thought of a huge wedding was overwhelming,” says Carla. She and Jared have a daughter, and live in Cape Town.

“I always wanted to get married barefoot. I wanted to be with nature and feel relaxed, so we chose Bakoven beach. I had grown up there, so it had great memories for me – and the beach is free!”

After getting the go-ahead from the neighbourhood, the wedding

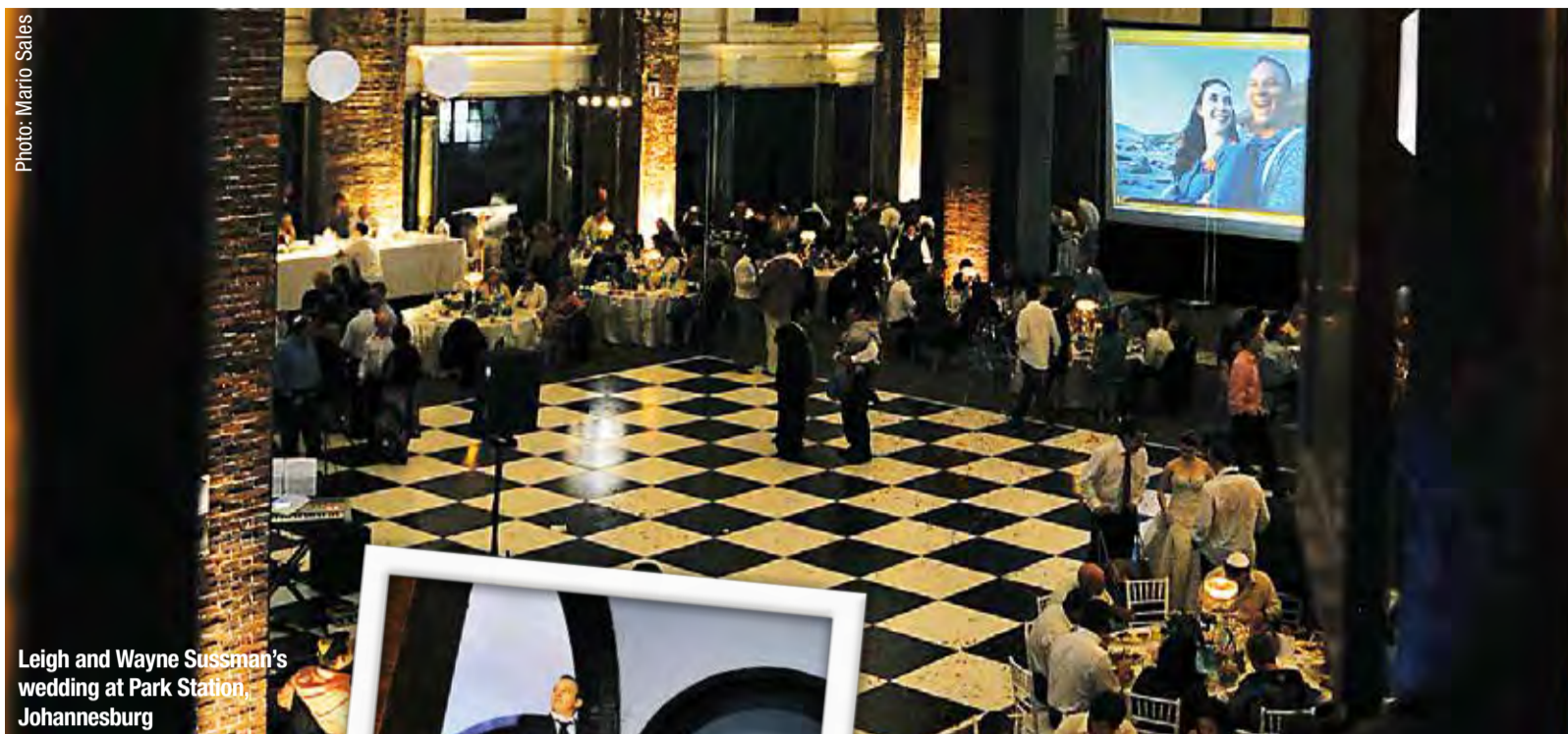
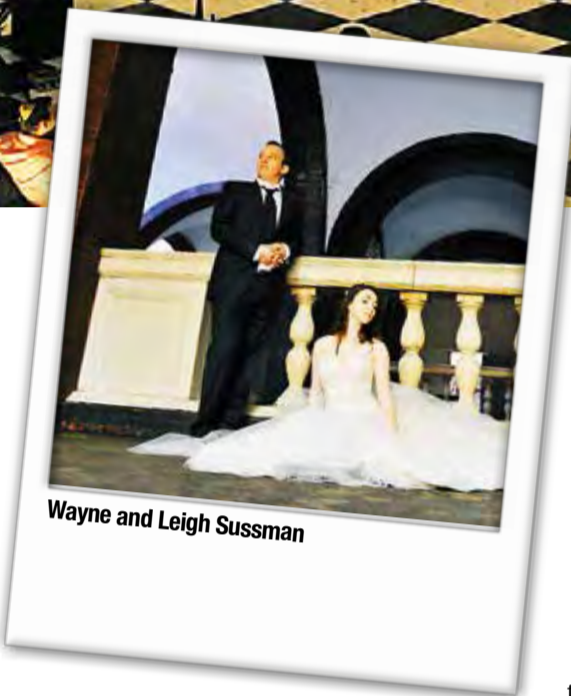


Photo: Mario Sales

Leigh and Wayne Sussman's wedding at Park Station, Johannesburg



Wayne and Leigh Sussman

“sandy toes, salty kisses” sign was made by her dad. Her wedding dress was a kaftan that she had bought in Spain on holiday. A hairstylist by profession, Carla did her own hair and make-up.

ALEXANDRA AND THOMAS BIESS MURPHY: HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

“I had always dreamed of a small wedding at

went all out, making seven wedding cakes ranging in size.

“We didn’t have flowers, and just used greenery from the garden, but we did spend more on what was important to us, like the photographer and videographer,” says Alexandra.

She and her sisters have a tradition of making each other’s chuppahs which they then keep as a family

KELLI AND BENJY LUNSKY: GOING BACK TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

“Our romance began in December 2002 on the hallowed turf of the Habonim campsite in Onrust. So for us, getting married at the campsite was a ‘no-brainer’. It is the soil where our roots are buried, and from where we have grown. The paths and trails of this beautiful place are imprinted on us,” says Kelli, who is married to Benjy. They have two children.

“There were so many things that made our campsite wedding



...it’s not the flowers, décor, or food that are most important, but the marriage itself.

Carla and Jared Stein's wedding on Bakoven beach



Carla and Jared Stein flanked by wedding guests

my parents’ house, and we realised this dream,” says Alexandra, who lives in Cape Town with her husband, Thomas. They are expecting their first child.

“Instead of seated tables, we had white tables and couches spread all around the house

and garden. Our aisle was created by the guests, so I could walk out of my mom’s bedroom to the chuppah. We didn’t have the space to do Israeli dancing, so we decided to do that in the street, and it was the absolute highlight. The whole neighbourhood came

out to watch and were dancing along!

Waiters walked around serving finger food, which saved on costs and space. The family owns a local bakery, so it was here that they

heirloom – the perfect touch to a wedding that has home at its heart.

Kelli and Benjy Lunsky's wedding on the Habonim Dror campsite in Onrust



Kelli and Benjy Lunsky

was a simple chuppah on the beach, then tea and champagne at a friend’s house nearby. “We were lucky we had good weather. We told everyone to dress for the beach.”

The cake was made by a friend of Carla’s late sister, and the

extraordinary. Our ceremony was handcrafted and officiated by the best man. Every member of the ‘team’ – the photographer, DJ, and person who sang while we walked down the aisle – were part of our Habonim journey in some way. We said our own vows, and seven special people wrote their own *brachot* (blessings), which were our *sheva brachot* (seven blessings).”

They selected, bought, and created every tiny detail of décor themselves, including making the invitations by hand. The caterer came up from Cape Town, and the main meal was a braai and salads, because they wanted a relaxed vibe and it was cost effective.

“We worked on a tight budget, so we made sure our love was what shone rather than fancy décor. We went to the campsite two days before, and set everything up ourselves. Most guests slept over in cabins, and some chose to sleep under the stars.

“How many people get to stand under the chuppah in their most precious, sacred place, with all of their loved ones surrounding them?” asks Kelli. “It was our most meaningful *peulah* (activity) at the campsite to date!”

“**Every member of the ‘team’ – the photographer, DJ, and person who sang while we walked down the aisle – were part of our Habonim journey in some way.**”

LEIGH AND WAYNE SUSSMAN: MAKING TRACKS LESS TRAVELLED

“We had our wedding at the Grand Concourse at Park Station in Johannesburg. There has never been a wedding in the venue before or since,” says Leigh, who lives in Johannesburg with her husband Wayne and their two children.

“For us, the venue was meaningful. Wayne and I did a lot of exploring of Joburg during our courtship. One of things we did was attend the Night of 1 000 Drawings at the Grand Concourse [an inner city art exhibition]. I thought to myself on that night – and this was way before any discussion about marriage – that this was where I want to get married.”

Both have an interest in Joburg’s inner-city heritage and culture. “Our wedding at this venue was part of exploring and sharing a hidden inner-city gem,” says Leigh.

Unlike the other weddings

Israeli dancing in the street at Alexandra and Thomas Biess Murphy’s wedding

Photo: Tabitha Mee (Illuminate Photography)



Alexandra, Thomas Biess Murphy and wedding guests

featured in this story, this wedding was “oversized” in every way. “The *horahs* (Israeli dancing) were insane. The speeches were epic. The food was lavish. I played the saxophone in my wedding dress,” remembers Leigh. “The venue was the catalyst for this gargantuan vibe. Because the space is so big, it pushed everybody, including the guests, to do

more and go bigger.

“What was really important to us is that many of our guests, who were a combination of Jewish Joburgers and out-of-towners, were forced to take ownership of the city,” says Leigh.

“We all witnessed this neglected, gigantic inner-city space transform into something really beautiful, and could all then value it as a place with so much history and grace. I

feel really proud that we managed to push people out of their comfort zones.”

Indeed, the venue was the cheapest part of their wedding. “But the costs rose because we had to bring in absolutely everything, including two generators. We had nearly 500 people at our wedding, and everything had to be big because of this monster-sized space.”

Is hummus healthy, or just a ‘pita’ dream?

JORDAN MOSHE

For many of us, few meals are considered complete if a dish of hummus is not on the table. Whether it is spooned generously into a falafel or spread thick on a slice of challah, its virtually indispensable.

Popular though it may be, does the fact that its primary ingredient is chickpeas make it a healthy meal choice? Just how nutritious is this famed spread, and how much of it should we be eating?

Traditionally served on a large plate, drizzled with olive oil and herbs, and accompanied by fresh pita and salad, hummus is claimed by several Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries as their own.

In truth, hummus has been made across these regions for hundreds of years, with the only major difference amongst all the variations being the quantity of ingredients used.

On one point, however, all seem to agree: hummus is almost always the holy union of chickpeas, sesame, lemon juice, and garlic.

Hummus has become widely available across the globe in various iterations, but with the rise in health-conscious eating in recent years, many have stopped to ask whether its taste is proportional to its nutritional value. Should people who are watching their figures or who are determined to eat healthy food be reaching for the hummus dish?

“Hummus can be considered a healthy or a healthier alternative to dips and spreads,” says registered dietitian Toni Brien. “Hummus on its own is good, but some of the foods we eat hummus with may not be as healthy when eaten in large volumes such as flat breads, pita, wraps, and other high-starch foods.”

According to nutrition-guidance website Healthline, the chickpeas in hummus are a great source of plant-based protein, providing 7.9g per serving. This makes it an excellent option for people on a vegetarian or vegan diet. Brien agrees, adding that chickpeas are also moderate

in calories, and a good source of fibre. “Chickpeas contain eight of the nine essential amino acids,” she says. “Also, the garlic and olive oil have their own health benefits, which include improving cholesterol levels.”

Indeed, the health benefits of the dish are many, and all seem to be confirmed by medical practitioners. According to Holistic Health Coach Jillian Levy, hummus has been shown to be an anti-inflammatory. Given that inflammation is the root cause of many chronic disease, it could assist in addressing these as well.



The world record holder for the largest dish of hummus prepared by Lebanese chefs in 2010

Writes Levy, “Diets which frequently include hummus and other often-used ingredients like beans, lemon, and garlic can help lower cholesterol and triglycerides levels, reduce symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, and lessen the chance of developing Alzheimer’s disease, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.”

If these benefits are to be harnessed, however, it is essential that the right hummus is eaten with the right accompanying dishes. While hummus is undeniably good for you, that is only the case when you’re not eating hummus that’s packed with extra ingredients like sugar and unhealthy oils.

Experts agree that it is essential to check the

ingredients, and make sure the product is as simple and natural as possible, especially in the case of shop-bought varieties. Low-fat options are best avoided, as all the fat contained in a traditional hummus is good, polyunsaturated fat that need not be reduced or lowered.

As for portion sizes, a healthy dose of hummus is about two to four tablespoons a day, but this must be considered alongside the rest of your diet. Moreover, much to the chagrin of many Israelis, hummus alone does not constitute a meal.

“Although hummus is a good protein source, on its own it cannot be considered a complete meal,” says Brien. “It is lacking in many vitamins including the B vitamins and vitamin C and A.” It is therefore best eaten along with a more satisfying and healthier accompaniment, including plain pita or vegetables for dipping such as sliced cucumber, zucchini, carrots, or asparagus spears.

So, whether you believe it comes from Israel or Istanbul, the bottom line is that hummus is a good choice for your health. Just be sure to eat the right type, at the right time, with the right accompanying foods, and you will enjoy it as much as the most serious of Sabras.

South African story told through the grapevine

MIRAH LANGER

The famous Latin saying, *In vino veritas* (In wine there is truth), takes on even more significance when considered in relation to a recently-launched book, *The Colour of Wine*. This book tells the story of the South African wine industry as a microcosm of the larger tale of an ever-changing country.

The SA Jewish Report spoke to the editor of the book, Harriet Perlman, ahead of its recent launch at Montecasino in Johannesburg.

Perlman said that the roots of the project dated back to 2015. This was when two of her long-time collaborators, film director Akin Omotoso and producer Rethabile Molatela Mothobi, were approached by the Kalipha Foundation. The organisation's Directors, Sithembiso Mthethwa and Manana Nhlanhla, had a somewhat unusual proposal.

"They were wine enthusiasts, and they wanted us to tell a story of South Africa's transition to democracy through the lens of the world of wine, and the personal journey of black winemakers."

Omotoso and Mothobi invited Perlman, who has worked in film, television, and print media for more than 30 years, to join them on the project. At the time, the plan was to produce a documentary only.

So began a period of extensive research, visiting wine farms, archives, and interviewing more than 40 key players across the wine sector.

“...the history of wine has its own ugly apartheid past, and that trying to transform that is complicated and difficult.”

The filmmakers decided to focus on four black winemakers. They were Dumisani Mathonsi, who had made the journey from rural northern KwaZulu-Natal to become the acclaimed white-wine maker at Adam Tas Cellars; Carmen Stevens who, growing up in Kraaifontein in the Cape Flats, had fought virulent racism to start her own label in the industry; Unathi Mantshongo, who shared her story of leaving Mthatha in the Eastern Cape for the chance to study at Stellenbosch University, ultimately becoming a viticulturist; and finally, Ntsiki Biyela, who growing up with her grandmother, Aslina, in a KwaZulu-Natal village, would later name her first wine brand after this beloved figure in her life.

"We wanted to hook the film around their personal journeys, and then weave in other stories about wine makers, wine in the black community, and experts' [reflections]," said Perlman.

The documentary project did so well, the Kalipha Foundation asked Perlman to compile a book on the subject. "That was fantastic," said Perlman, because it allowed her to deal with the material gathered for the documentary in more depth.

The original four winemakers remain at the core of the book. However, their stories are now

Dumisani Mathonsi



enhanced by the evocative photographs of Mark Lewis.

Lewis travelled with each of them to their childhood homes. He then created a visual diary for each that captures their journey across starkly different South African realities.

Besides an extended number of interviews, and these photographs, Perlman has added into the book a number of new sources including historical essays, personal reflections – even recipes.

Yet, for Perlman, the individual stories of the winemakers remains the most moving aspect.

"Personal stories are still what matters most as we grapple with going forward. If you understand how people have navigated change and opportunities, then you can build a society," muses the born-and-bred Johannesburger.

The stories of the black winemakers share two key threads. The first is the racism they faced in trying to pioneer

change in a largely untransformed industry.

"Their stories reveal that the history of wine has its own ugly apartheid past, and that trying to transform that is complicated and difficult," Perlman said.

The other thread is that, somewhere along the way, each of the four did connect with mentors and teachers who helped them harvest hope for the future.

For Perlman, the power of these relationships was one of the most surprising take-away insights.

"Teachers matter! There are so many big challenges and problems and questions. But actually doing your bit and being a caring, respectful, nurturing teacher matters."

Speaking at the launch of the book were two of its main protagonists, Biyela and Mantshongo. Both entered the wine industry after taking up full bursaries at Stellenbosch University. However, they admit that before



Unathi Mantshongo, Harriet Perlman, Michael Fridjhon and Ntsiki Biyela

they arrived, they knew nothing about wine, and certainly nothing about speaking Afrikaans!

"Winemaking? I had no idea what they were talking about. It could have been anything. All I could see was an opportunity to change my life," said Biyela.

As she began to face the reality of being in a completely alien environment, Biyela confesses that "there were a lot of tears and crying all the time, but then at the same time, there was perseverance. I told myself that there is no other option."

Coming to Stellenbosch was a similar culture shock for Mantshongo:

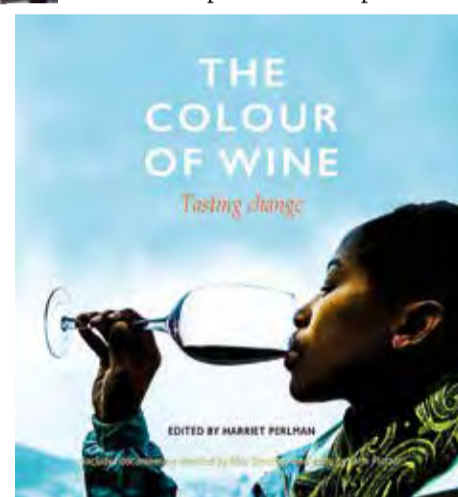
"You are like a ghost. Nothing is designed for you. When you go to [the student] residence to pick your meals, you have never heard of the food on the menu. When there is a vergadering (a meeting), you have no

idea [why the people are gathering]. You think there is a fire, and you grab your ID."

However, it did eventually get better for both of them.

Also speaking at the launch was wine expert Michael Fridjhon. He said that since the turn of the 20th century, alcohol had been used as a means to drive people into the cash economy.

The height of this social manipulation was during apartheid – not just through the infamous "dop" system (paying labourers with cheap wine) – but also in how the government positioned itself as "the bootlegger... [supplying] alcohol in the townships to fund the apartheid



machine".

These historical realities and the personal hardships those like Mantshongo and Biyela experienced were not just "deep, dark history", said Fridjhon.

Instead, they were issues that needed to be addressed in contemporary society in order to free South Africa to be able to enjoy a relationship with alcohol without elements of abuse.

Birzai memorial only third in Lithuanian killing fields to name the victims

TALI FEINBERG

More than 90% of the Jews in Lithuania were murdered and buried in forests during the Holocaust. Throughout the country there are memorials – some imposing, some more modest. However, they record only approximate numbers of victims, and do not have any names.

In 2011, a wall of names at the site of the mass graves was erected in the town of Plunge/Plungyan. This was followed shortly after by a memorial with names at the mass grave in Kedaniai/Keidan.

Now, a group of Jews of Birzai descent are working on a third memorial, listing the known names of the 2 400 Jews of Birzh/Birzai who were murdered there on 8 August 1941. They are also assisting in establishing a tolerance centre at the town's high school to educate about the history of the Jews of the town, their lives, and their deaths, and they are helping to create a permanent exhibit for students and visitors at the local museum.

"It all started three years ago, when Abel Levitt told me about how he had done this work in Plunge (Plungyan), says Ben Rabinowitz.

"My family came from Birzai, and I told him I wanted the same thing there."

The two men are now leading the project, and have roped in the support of a team from around the world. This includes architect Dr Joseph Rabie from France, who has designed a magnificent memorial bridge listing the names of those who perished.

But it has taken months of painstaking efforts to get permission to build the memorial, followed by extensive research and fundraising. A large part of the project has been to find the names of those killed there during the Shoah.

"The aim of this project is to ensure that the world doesn't forget them, or forget what happened there," says Rabinowitz. "This is especially urgent when a recent study shows that 5% of adults in the United Kingdom do not believe the Holocaust took place, and one in 12 believes its scale has been exaggerated. Anti-Semitic stereotypes are alive and well in Europe. I hope this project will be replicated across Lithuania, with South African Jews leading the way, seeing as so many of our families

came from there."

The project, which will cost R3.2 million, is underway. It has already secured some financial backing, but project leaders are still contacting potential donors.

The memorial will be unveiled and dedicated at a ceremony on Sunday 16 June, attended by local and national dignitaries. The

unveiling forms part of a tour to Vilnius, Birzh, with the option of two extra days including Plungyan. The tour will include guided visits to museums and historical sites, presentations, and interactions with local schoolchildren. Shabbat will be celebrated in Birzh with the Israeli Ambassador to Lithuania, Amir Maimon.



Ben Rabinowitz and Abel Levitt hard at work planning the memorial in Birzh/Birzai, Lithuania

On having an adult Batmitzvah



MY STORY

Hedi Lampert

I've mastered several languages in my time, but getting to grips with the Torah and Haftorah tropes and their unique code of arrows, squiggles, and wishbone-shaped symbols, is one of the most mentally challenging pursuits I've ever taken on.

Why did I do it? Because it's a requirement for a Batmitzvah girl. Okay, that's pushing it – I was approaching 57 – but let's start at the beginning.

My father, a traditional orthodox Jew who immigrated to South Africa from Riga in 1930 at age nine, found the concept of Batmitzvah all too modern. I was, however, the only girl out of my year at King David School who did not partake in the communal, orthodox, Batmitzvah ceremony at the Great Synagogue in Wolmarans Street, and at the time, I sulked, but briefly.

It was, in the grand scheme of things, a non-event both practically and emotionally, since just a year before, my 14-year-old brother had died. Meningitis had destroyed him in three days. It felt like a bomb had exploded in the heart of our home, and we survivors could do little else except gather up the shattered pieces, regroup around the raw and gaping gash that had been left, and limp on with it forever in our midst.

At that point, I didn't really know what to do with my father, and I certainly didn't know what to do about G-d either. All I knew was that I was angry and heartbroken.

Grief-stricken as he was, my father clung to his principles, one of which was immortalised on a page in his will, headed, "My daughter's marriage". It stated that my marriage to a non-Jew, or to a man who had converted to Judaism through the reform synagogue, would instantly render me, for all intents and purposes of the will, to have died without children.

Chilling words indeed, but did they serve to keep me on the straight and narrow? Hell, no! I married out of the faith, and yes, he remained true to his word – I was disinherited. Did that make me less Jewish? No, but it probably wasn't the ideal way of keeping me on a true path either. I never turned my back on my Jewish identity, but I performed the bare basics. I celebrated high holy days in that I cooked up a fabulous feast and shared it with my friends, the majority of whom were not Jewish, and most years, I fasted on Yom Kippur.

I confess there were seminal moments when I had to acknowledge my Judaism as something way bigger than myself. There was no question in my mind, for instance, that my son would have both a Bris and a Barmitzvah. Similarly non negotiable was giving my mother a Jewish burial, and saying kaddish for her. However, it's not easy to bury a Jewish person without a Jewish community, and frankly I could barely scrape together a minyan. For many years, I'd been wandering in a wilderness of my own making, from time to time doing Judaism on my own terms. The irony was strikingly biblical in that it had been 40 years since I'd requested and been denied a Batmitzvah.

I joined the Progressive Jewish Community of Temple Israel in Cape Town, and was relieved and grateful to deliver a eulogy at my mother's burial – to my distress, this had been denied me at my grandmother's orthodox funeral. Among other things, I quoted Mizuta Masahide when I said, "Now that my house has burned down, I own a better view of the moon." Silver linings, you see. Having braved a long illness, my mother's death had come as a merciful release, and she had died peacefully. I felt this had been her blessing to me.

The true blessing, though, was only beginning to unfold. Having sensed that Temple Israel was a sanctuary in which I could be my very unorthodox self, I started attending services. I felt a profound peace among the congregation,

and was inspired by the leadership of Rabbis Greg Alexander, Malcolm Mattitiani, and Richard Newman.

And then there was the music of Shabbat. Temple Israel presents it in a way I had never experienced in any other shul. It drew me back time and again. I joined in, and sang along, often moved to tears by the strains of the stirring melodies, some as ancient as the DNA I had inherited, others more modern, but wistful and lovely. I soon joined the musicians leading the services.

It is through the music that I have come closest to approaching a congruence of my Jewish identity, my faith, and my heritage. It dawned upon me gently, a little more every week, that the strength of my faith was in fact growing, and then, it happened. I realised I'd finally let go of my anger. I was moving forward, even if it was with the scars incurred during my 40-year-long night of the soul. And that's when the Torah offered, as it often does, a *parsha* that could not have



Hedi Lampert

been more apt had I written the sacred text myself.

On the day of my Batmitzvah, one week before my 57th birthday, I read from *Vayishlach*, in which Jacob spends the night wrestling with a man, perhaps an angel, or possibly the manifestation of his own

conscience. Had I not been wrestling all these years? With my conscience, with my faith, with the greater questions of where, what, and who is G-d? And why does G-d allow such devastation to occur?

Jacob refuses to let go until the being blesses him. Perhaps the blessing is the knowledge that he has finally earned the right to his destiny through his own endeavours, not via a birthright, or in his case, the paternal "blessing", which he had wrongfully acquired.

Now, I don't know that I needed to earn my Jewish birthright by studying for my Batmitzvah, I was simply aware of a desire to learn more, and hopefully reach a deeper understanding. What I am sure of is that I feel blessed by a sense of gratitude for having finally reached a place of "letting go".

Is the shul choir passé, or paramount?



Waverley Shul Choir, 2016

JORDAN MOSHE

After the rabbi's sermon, the choir is the most frequently critiqued and commented on feature of the shul service.

Raising their voices from either the bima or the choir loft, the shul choir has defined the Yom Tov memories of South African Jews, young and old, for decades.

Today, the shul choir is considered by some to be old-fashioned and unnecessary. However, if done away with, the rich musical heritage which has shaped the very fabric of the South African Jewish experience will be lost.

The roots of Jewish choral music can be traced back to the early days of Jewish history. "People tend to treat tradition as one homogeneous thing," says Adam Golding, the conductor of the Great Park Synagogue choir. "The reality is that it consists of multiple segments of development, trends, and influences. Shifts in musical movement and popular culture mean it is a dynamic musical tradition."

He explains further, "Instrumental and vocal music were provided by the Levites in the days of the temple. From there, the tradition developed through the centuries as Jews went into the diaspora, coming into contact with German, Austrian, English, and Italian music cultures. Seventeenth century Italian Jewish composer Salamone Rossi was among the first to bring such music into the shul and introduce Hebrew words to musical notation. Choral music as we know it developed in 19th century Germany."

The constant motion which defined Jewish life is equally indicative of the dynamism which characterises Jewish musical tradition, says Russel Lurie, the Chairperson of the Johannesburg Jewish Male Choir (JJMC).

"The drama of Jewish life has always been represented through its music," he says. "Any significant event – be it historical or religious – would define the musical expression of the time, and capture the spirit of the people who lived then. If Jews were celebrating a simcha or suffering at the hands of an oppressor, they sang songs which reflected their circumstances and conveyed their emotions."

Whether they were rejoicing or mourning, Jewish people imbued their culture and daily lives with song. Besides its impact on Yiddish theatre, this would give rise to *chazzanut* (leaders) of choral music in shuls. "Like the Levites, *chazzanim* put psalms and prayers to music," says Evelyn Green, an accomplished pianist and Director of the JJMC. "Alongside choirs, they developed a musical culture for shuls, and they were expected to innovate and improvise while singing rather than merely repeat notes."

Even in South Africa, this tradition of music not only took root but flourished with the arrival of Jews in the 19th century. The first shul to be opened was the Gardens Congregation in the 1840s, and although the first Rosh Hashanah service held in Johannesburg was conducted in the Rand Club in 1887, the first shuls in the city featured not only a choir, but a mixed one at that.

"The mixed choir was still prevalent at that point in time, even in orthodox shuls," says Golding. "Just like shuls in London and elsewhere in Europe, South African shuls allowed women in their choirs."

Although guided by the traditions of Britain and the continent, Jewish music innovators in South Africa made an effort to make the music their own. "South Africa was a bastion of Jewish music," says Green. "*Chazzanim* like Gluck, Bagley, Alter, Stern, and others gave definition to *chazzanut*, and set a unique path for South African Jewry. Zimelman and Klein followed in their footsteps, and trailblazed across the latter half of the 20th century. We certainly made a name for ourselves."

Golding agrees. "The rearranging of certain traditions by innovators in South Africa gave us the four-voice male choir we know today. At one point in its history, the Gardens Shul had 30 boy sopranos. The Berea Shul choir was once so popular, it would perform at 10 weddings in a single day, a train of simchas passing through the shul in rapid succession. South African Jewish choirs and musicians became prominent in the world of Jewish music, so much so that until today, one struggles to find a shul choir in the Commonwealth that doesn't have a South African in it."

Given the clearly innovative nature of Jewish musical personalities in South Africa, the decline

in popularity of *chazzanut* and Jewish choirs is both perplexing and sad. "You often hear people say that they don't like shul choirs because they don't innovate or include enough variety," says Golding. "This is simply not true. Jewish composers worked tirelessly to devise new material for choral performance, and their drive to innovate continues."

Green says that the problem is certainly not a new one, but exists for a different reason today. "People have always wanted something new and different. In the past, if *chazzanim* didn't improvise or embellish the music, people would complain, and youngsters would feel that they were back in the previous century. The very same thing happens today," she says.

"However, the problem today is that the choir and chazzan are racing against the clock, trying to please everyone. Moreover, children are not encouraged to develop a cultural appreciation for this type of music. Antagonism towards what is seen as 'old' is extremely pervasive, to the point of losing our rich heritage as Jews."

Lurie, Golding, and Green agree that the introduction of certain modern tunes to pieces of Jewish music may help, though they need to be balanced with more traditional ones as well. "Popular tunes like those of Lloyd-Webber and Leonard Cohen are common today in Jewish music," says Golding, "but they need to be appropriately inserted. The meaning of the prayer can so easily be lost if partnered with a certain tune. Singing to the bride as she comes down the aisle to the tune of *Time to say Goodbye* is counterintuitive, and makes no sense. Additionally, using any popular tune with well-known lyrics must inherently detract from the prayer."

Jewish choral music finds itself at a crossroads, and the need for a lasting solution is more pressing than ever. Says Lurie, "We need a colloquium to sit down and discuss the way forward. Everyone involved in choirs laments the decline, but does nothing. Rabbis, choir masters, and choristers need to meet and devise a plan of action. People need to be encouraged to see just how much choirs give the community, and keep our Jewish heritage alive."

Frum fashion – it's a calling and a business

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Inspired by religion or individual preference, the “frum”, “tznius” or modest fashion industry is growing internationally, and South African entrepreneurs are joining the catwalk.

American business magazine *Fast Company* estimates the market for modest clothing is at \$254 billion (R3,48 trillion). Even big-name brands like Dolce & Gabbana recently jumped on the bandwagon by launching limited lines. A few bloggers – mostly Muslim – are showing that women can be appropriately covered and fashion forward, and they have millions of followers online.

It's a trend that hasn't bypassed the local Jewish community, where savvy entrepreneurs are building businesses that enable women to be *tznius* (modest) and beautiful. For local fashionistas Susan Frankel and Sarah Feldman, modesty is as much a way of life as it is a business. Both dress this way themselves because they are religious, and because they believe it is empowering.

Frankel didn't grow up religious. The owner of Kerry's Fashions, a thriving business in Johannesburg which makes and supplies modest women's clothing, she is a *baal teshuva* who became religious nine years ago.

Marrying a religious man required her to give up her entire wardrobe, a supreme sacrifice for this fashion-conscious person, who grew up making her own clothes. “Pants, tank tops, I had to get rid of them all,” she says. “I kept one pair of jeans, which I couldn't part with. I plan to make it into a handbag.”

Dressing modestly is as much a state of mind and demeanour as it

is a principle, she says, pointing out that each individual's level of modesty is personal. But, she subscribes to the dictum of “the less you show, the more attractive you are”.

Hence, Kerry's Fashions doesn't prescribe what women should wear, but the business, which employs 11 fulltime seamstresses, does keep broadly within the dictates of making sure that clothing is past the knee, past the elbow, and necklines are as high as the collarbone. Nevertheless, if a customer wants something else, say sleeves up to the elbow, or a higher, Chinese collar for the more orthodox, it can be done.

This is the strength of her business model. Within a highly niche market, Kerry's Fashions caters for specific customer needs by making, copying, and adapting bespoke items, plus Frankel prides herself on knowing each customer and being acutely sensitive to market trends.

Sarah Feldman, who has been in the modest fashion business for two years, goes by the social media handle “rabbis_wife” – appropriate for the *rebbetzin* of Gardens Shul in Cape Town. She designs and sells clothing through her online store, and through agents in Joburg and London.

Feldman is clear that *frum* fashion must conform with the modesty requirements of Jewish law, but like Frankel, she defines modesty widely, saying that it is the responsibility of men and women, and is expressed in everything we do, not just in how we dress.

Feldman came to her business through a lifestyle blog she started a few years ago, which included fashion. “I found that a lot of people were asking my advice, and needed help when it came to shopping and buying modest clothing. I felt there was a gap in the market.”

Indeed, the market for modest fashion is almost a foregone conclusion, because most “high-street” fashion isn't suitable for religious customers, who need to adapt the clothing they buy. It's not just a “Jewish issue”.

As much as 5% of Frankel's client base is Muslim, and 3% are black. Feldman says she has clients from all faiths and communities. An initiative she started, called #unitingthroughfashion, which aims to promote peace and respect through fashion, has encouraged intercultural partnerships. In fact, a Sarah Feldman dress was recently featured on the site of Muslim fashion blogger Aqeelah Harron Ally in her “10 modest fashion ideas for summer”.

Modest fashion doesn't only encapsulate skirts, dresses, pants (for Muslim women), and undergarments. It extends to headscarves and swimming costumes – even uniforms. Kerry's currently supplies uniforms for choirs and two clinics.

Having a “tailor-made” customer base doesn't make customers any less demanding. Frankel talks about the challenges of sourcing fabric in a particular colour for a Batmitzvah, to customers who have been waiting a year for a particular type of denim for their dresses, or even the demand for a range of under and over garments from those who like to layer, and all-in-one pieces from those who “just want to wear one thing”.

Religious constraints also don't mean a lack of fashion sense. Both women are

obsessed with fashion, and get their cues overseas. “While there is a big modest fashion market in the United States and Israel, many of the fashion trends, including modest fashion, follow the trends coming from the fashion centres in Europe,” Feldman says. Frankel's clothing line closely follows trends set by religious Jewish communities in New York and Israel – but sometimes she and her staff simply get their ideas online.

Like many small businesses, one of their biggest challenges is accessing quality supplies – fabrics in this case – in small amounts and in time. Fabric is almost uniformly sourced overseas. Frankel points out that wholesale prices for good fabrics went up 37.2% this year, making it a challenge to keep prices down. Fabrics also change with the seasons – each season brings a new swatch card from suppliers – resulting in colours going in and out of stock.

“Ultimately, fashion is all about fabric. Sometimes I keep a piece of fabric just for myself... People say, ‘I haven't seen that in your shop,’ and I say, ‘and you won't see it...’,” she says with a mischievous grin.

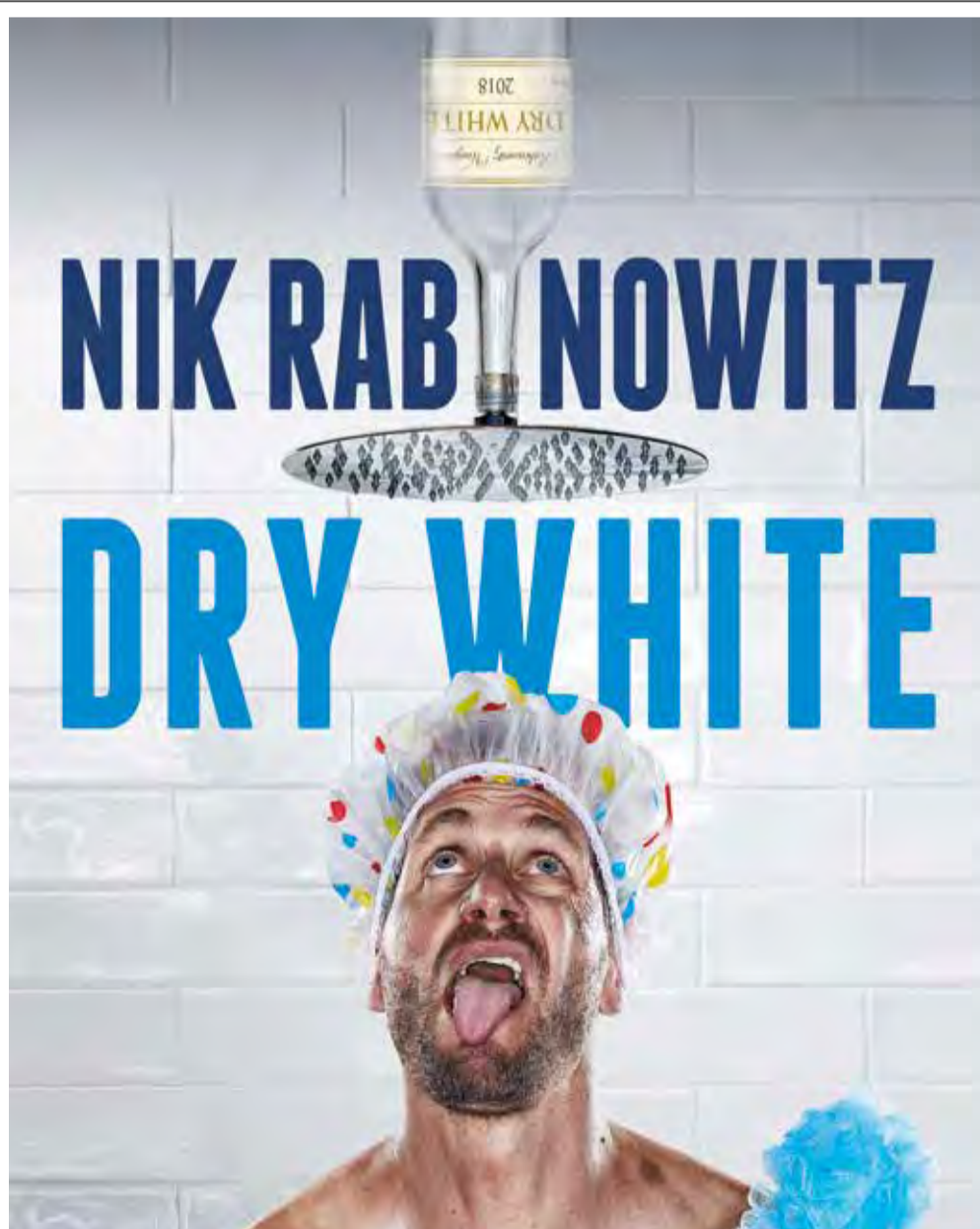
For both women, it's not just a business, it's a passion and a calling. Says Feldman, “There is definitely demand and potential for

growth. We have just celebrated our second anniversary. We hope to continue growing and expanding, offering a wider and more diverse range of styles so that, please G-d, more and more women can experience the empowering radiance and beauty of modest fashion.”



Sarah Feldman

Fashion photographs courtesy Sarah Feldman



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Lincoln's fight for equality had direct impact on the Jews

STEVEN J. KESSLER – JTA

During Black History Month in the United States, we recognise the historical importance of President Abraham Lincoln as the foremost figure in the battle to abolish slavery. But even as Lincoln, whose 210th birthday we mark on 12 February, is widely known for his role fighting for equality, he may still be underappreciated. In fact, as a moral compass and a role model for liberty, his influence extends far beyond the specific events for which he is most well-known.

In Lincoln's time, like today, the issue of equality was relevant to many minority groups. While Jews had been living in America for centuries by the time of Lincoln's presidency, anti-Semitism was widespread, even among the abolitionists.

While the Civil War raged in late 1862, Union General Ulysses S Grant wanted to stop the trade of southern cotton. A number of Jews were involved in the cotton trade, including some in black-market activity. On 17 December, Grant issued a shocking order calling for the expulsion of all Jews from a wide swathe of the south.

Fortunately, the order had little impact because of faulty army communications – and President Lincoln. When Lincoln heard that Grant was attempting to banish Jews, he quickly reversed the order.

"To condemn a class is, to say the least, to wrong the good with the bad," Lincoln said. "I do not like to hear a class or nationality condemned on account of a few sinners."

To Lincoln, prejudice was abhorrent, and expelling one minority while fighting for the rights of another was unthinkable. It's noteworthy that Grant, who made the order banishing Jews from the area he commanded, regretted his actions later in life. In fact, when he served as president, Grant actively worked to promote Jewish interests in the US and abroad, bringing Jews into the federal government at an unprecedented rate. Grant later indicated that he had issued the order without fully thinking it through, but his pro-Jewish actions later in life can perhaps be attributed in part to the moral leadership Lincoln displayed in rejecting the order.

On a deeper level, Lincoln can also be seen as the man who truly deserves credit for upholding the idea that "all men are created equal". While Thomas Jefferson first expressed the sentiment in the Declaration of Independence in 1776, for about 90 years, the principle was selectively applied at best. But Lincoln didn't just talk about this value, he practiced it.

In the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, Lincoln emphasised how applying exceptions to the phrase "all men are created equal" is a logical fallacy.

The message of equality that Lincoln fought for was instrumental in abolishing slavery. But it was also a major factor in shaping America into a country that held freedom as a value worth fighting for.

And, over the following decades, generations of Americans absorbed the values that Lincoln championed and Grant came to appreciate: that oppression against minorities was intolerable, regardless of the minority.

The fight to defeat the Axis powers in World War II is often called "the good war" because of the atrocities committed by the Nazis, and the widespread understanding that the war was a battle for justice. While it's true that the America of the 1940s was far from reaching true equality, the underlying values Lincoln stood for were embedded in the hearts of American soldiers.

Take the story of Leon Bass, an African-

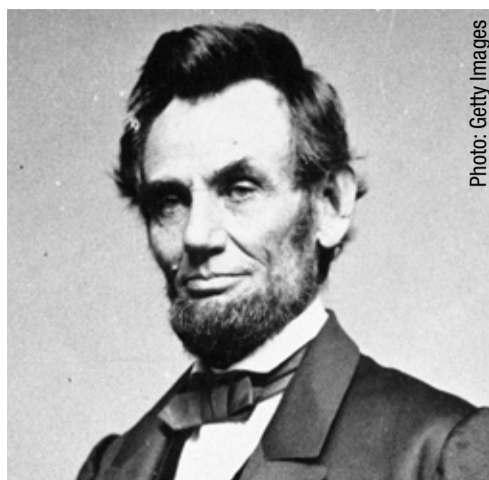


Photo: Getty Images

President Abraham Lincoln

American native of Philadelphia, who served in a segregated unit during World War II. He was conflicted about being asked to risk his life for a country where he held only second-class status. But when Bass liberated the Buchenwald concentration camp with the American troops, he felt compassion for the prisoners he encountered.

"I began to realise," Bass later said, "that human suffering is not relegated just to me and mine. Human suffering touches everybody."

When the Horwitz-Wasserman Holocaust Memorial Plaza – a new public plaza devoted to Holocaust remembrance – opened in Philadelphia several months ago, Bass's story was included on its six pillars, which contrast

themes of the Holocaust with American constitutional protections and values.

Just one foot (0.3m) away from the pillar devoted to Leon Bass and "liberation" stands another pillar, which is inscribed with the Declaration of Independence's powerful statement that "all men are created equal". In the 1850s and 1860s, President Lincoln served as a bridge between the declaration and Americans who fought the Nazis in the 1940s.

While many Holocaust survivors may not have heard of President Lincoln when the war ended in 1945, there is no doubt that they benefited from the great strides he took in the cause for liberty.



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RENOVO
HOMES TO LOVE

Learned helplessness



INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman

South Africans do not need to be told that they are not happy. The only question is just how miserable they are. Luckily there is a way to determine just how bad this feeling is. At first glance, it is worse than one might have thought.

The Misery Index is an economic measure that looks at the relationship between unemployment and inflation. South Africa, sadly, hovers between fifth and second place as one of the world's most miserable nations. Venezuela has beat us for the past few years, and it would seem that it has secured the top spot for the foreseeable future. The war in Yemen, and the conflict and instability of the Democratic Republic of Congo, also help to keep us from achieving this dishonourable position.

But it's not through lack of trying.

It hasn't been easy to achieve this accolade.

Not with South Africa's infrastructure, natural resources, beautiful country, and mild climate.

One had to get up very early (like 05:00) each morning for nine years in order to achieve the "success" of taking the country down the path of destruction. South Africa is not an easy country to destroy – it took real commitment to take us down that path.

I am certain that we hardly needed a misery measure to tell us what South Africans are feeling. The anxiety, stress, and general despondency caused by corruption is hard to understate. Rising costs and diminishing liquidity is a challenge for most. Add the Eskom debacle to the mix, and what results is a lethal combination of helplessness and hopelessness.

But all the latest studies prove to us that helplessness is learned. This means that it can be unlearned.

Consider the following:

- The latest Eskom power shutdown followed suspiciously closely on President Cyril Ramaphosa's announcement that he intended unbundling the state utility; and
- It took only three days for the parastatal to implement Stage 4 load shedding. This is something that South Africans have not encountered or had to endure to date.

As unpleasant as this might be to live through, it is also the most tangible sign of a push back against Ramaphosa and his drive to rid the organisation of corrupt elements.

We need to recall that the pro-Jacob Zuma forces of a few years ago were intent on proving that the country needed to secure a Russian nuclear deal. As a strategy, they "proved" that they could not meet demand, and they (Eskom) could not cope with production of electricity in the country.

Power outages were used back then to "display" how important this deal was. It is highly possible that this tactic is being deployed once again. Only this time, it is a push back against Ramaphosa, and to show him that he and Pravin Gordhan will not be able to accomplish what they need to.



South Africa, sadly, hovers between fifth and second place as one of the world's most miserable nations.

It might be resistance to change (always hard). It might be about protection of dubious access to funds, or simply about ego. But there is little doubt that the Gordhan-Ramaphosa combination does not sit well with many in the organisation.

We should consider this as something positive. We should consider the fact that Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address (SONA) was about the economy and business and about practical solutions, and that he didn't giggle his way through the numbers. It is positive that SONA wasn't about Israel and Palestine, and that it focused on South Africa Inc. It is positive that the opposition parties recognised what the country needed to hear, and that they, too, listened.

We have come a long way on the journey. We just need to ride out the turbulence.

The Misery Index speaks to reported numbers. It is a reflection of how seriously the government takes the pressing issues of employment and inflation. We need to hold it to account. Call it out when we can. But we also need to keep perspective, try and be positive, and then support the change.

Looming elections: can the centre hold?



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

Two elections coming up will provoke serious arguments about values around South African Jewish dinner tables.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rightist Likud party, which has been in power since 1977, alternating with Labour, has declared a snap election for 9 April. He leads a confident country at the pinnacle of its economic and political power.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa heads the African National Congress, and presides over a depressed country in desperate economic and political crisis which wants him to save it from going over the cliff. Elections will be on 8 May.

Every democratic society has radicals on the extremes and a centre holding it together. It is instructive to compare the two countries. Centrist South Africans fret over Economic Freedom Fighters leader Julius Malema, who claims to be on the left, but behaves like a fascist thug in a red overall, playing to the masses' grossest emotions, like Hitler once did.

Israel has radicals who would throw all the Palestinians out of their land, but has a powerful centre skilled at knowing where the red lines are, and what would lead to war.

Netanyahu's motives for calling the election are not so much about policies, but personal: his concern about criminal charges against him for bribery, which the police have already recommended. If it were possible, he would probably have held elections sooner, so he would be doing so as the leader of a popular, recently re-elected party. The Likud will almost definitely win. It's a sad development. Israel's previous great leaders, such as Menachem Begin, lived in small apartments, and would never have flirted with corruption.

Netanyahu is a man accustomed to

the trappings of power, but with his tail between his legs. According to polls, more than 50% of Israelis want him out. And, his fight with the radicals, whether settlers or the ultra-orthodox, constantly threatens to bring his government crashing down.

Ramaphosa represents the moderate left in his country. He is a resolute firefighter with a clean record, aiming to douse the meltdown from the failure for nine years of disgraced former President Jacob Zuma to govern effectively. But he has powerful political and tribal enemies. Will he have sufficient time in office to do it?

The left in Israel is in disarray, both moderate left and radicals. It won't recover anytime soon. But the centrist and extreme right has risen dramatically.

Bezael Smotrich, for example, is the leader of Israel's furthest-right faction, the National Union party, and part of what he calls the "strong backbone" of the tent of the right. He could be called the Israeli equivalent of the racist, anti-white Malema. The media call him the "blue-eyed, bearded settler", the youthful face of unashamed political and religious extremism. A second-generation settler, he was born in the Golan Heights, and grew up in Beit El.

He is criticised as racist, homophobic, messianic, and undemocratic – serious charges in Israel's democracy. In 2005, the Shin Bet arrested him on suspicion of organising violent protests against the Gaza disengagement. He has declared himself a "proud homophobe", and organised an anti-gay "beast parade" in Jerusalem to protest against a gay pride parade, featuring goats and donkeys to ridicule the celebration of so-called "deviant acts".

To South Africans and the vast majority of ordinary Israelis, this comes across as bizarre. Smotrich would be unwelcome in South African politics. His views would be declared unconstitutional and branded as hate speech.

What attitude should Jews adopt towards the Malemas and Smotriches of this world? We vote in South Africa, but think hard about Israel. Everyone must straddle the line between distaste and support.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Keep anti-Semitism in perspective

At the start of the new millennium, there was a widespread belief in global Jewish circles that anti-Semitism was a diminishing problem, and that it was likely to diminish further as the world moved into a hopeful new era of burgeoning democracy.

Two key factors influencing this general mood of positivity was the collapse of the Soviet Union, prior to that the foremost propagator of anti-Semitism on the international stage; and the apparent progress being made in the Oslo peace process.

All of this changed abruptly in September 2000, when the then Palestinian leadership jettisoned the peace process, and launched a sustained campaign of terrorist violence that continues, if at a lower level, to this day. One of the results of this has been an alarming resurgence of anti-Semitism worldwide. Throughout the diaspora, we have seen ever-rising levels of anti-Semitic behaviour, including multiple acts of violence, and damage and desecration to Jewish property. The revolution in electronic communications has further facilitated the spread of hatred against Jews.

Dealing with this new threat is perhaps the most urgent issue that global Jewry – thankfully with growing participation of the international community – has to deal with today.

Though we need to take this seriously, we must

nevertheless be careful not to overstate the problem, such as by invoking comparisons with previous eras in which Jews were vulnerable to serious persecution. A century ago, a large majority of Jews lived in authoritarian countries where the very laws of their society discriminated against them. Today, nearly all live in democratic countries where they enjoy full equality and protection under the law. In these countries, anti-Semitic manifestations within the broader population, while widespread, at least are not sanctioned, indeed they are strongly condemned by the governments of the day.

In South Africa, we recorded a fairly steep rise in anti-Semitic incidents in 2018 compared with the previous two years. While this is naturally a cause for concern, it nevertheless remains true that even with the increased figure, anti-Semitism in this country continues to manifest at a strikingly lower level than in other major diaspora centres.

We continue to measure annual incident totals in terms of a few score, whereas our counterparts in the United Kingdom (UK), United States, Canada, Australia, France,



Above Board
Shaun Zagnoev

and elsewhere do so in the hundreds and sometimes even in the thousands. The nature of the kind of incidents actually recorded is also significant. Here, most anti-Semitic acts take the form of verbal or written rather than physical abuse, with serious cases of assault and vandalism occurring very rarely. In 2018, only one case of each was reported to us, compared with figures in the UK for the same period of 123 and 78. The situation in France, which experienced a 74% increase in attacks, was at least as bad.

The lesson we should take from all of this is that while anti-Semitism exists in South Africa and requires constant vigilance, the extent to which it poses a threat to our community remains thankfully fairly limited. We need to be able to deal with it as it arises while at the same time keeping the problem in perspective and resisting the tendency, all too prevalent in these uncertain times, to yield to pessimism and despondency.

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

Remembering Phyllis Spira, exceptional dancer and human being

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Moving to London at the age of 15 to join the Royal Ballet School, the late prima ballerina assoluta, Phyllis Spira, was always destined for greatness. In a touching presentation recently, her husband, Philip Boyd, the founder and patron of Dance for All, reflected on the life of one of the best ballerinas South Africa has ever produced.

From dancing on international stages to setting the South African dance world alight, Spira was a born ballerina. Visibly emotional when speaking about his late wife, Boyd delved into the beginnings of Spira's career, their life together, and her tragic death in 2008 at the age of 64.

Spira attended her first ballet class on her fourth birthday, after her aunt spotted her potential.

At the age of 15, she was offered the chance to attend the Royal Ballet School in London.

"Coming from South Africa, I was very innocent and young. In the end, I stayed in a bedsitting room in High Street Kensington. It was terribly lonely. Often I'd cry at night because I missed my home and family. I didn't know anybody in London, but eventually I made friends at the company which was very important."

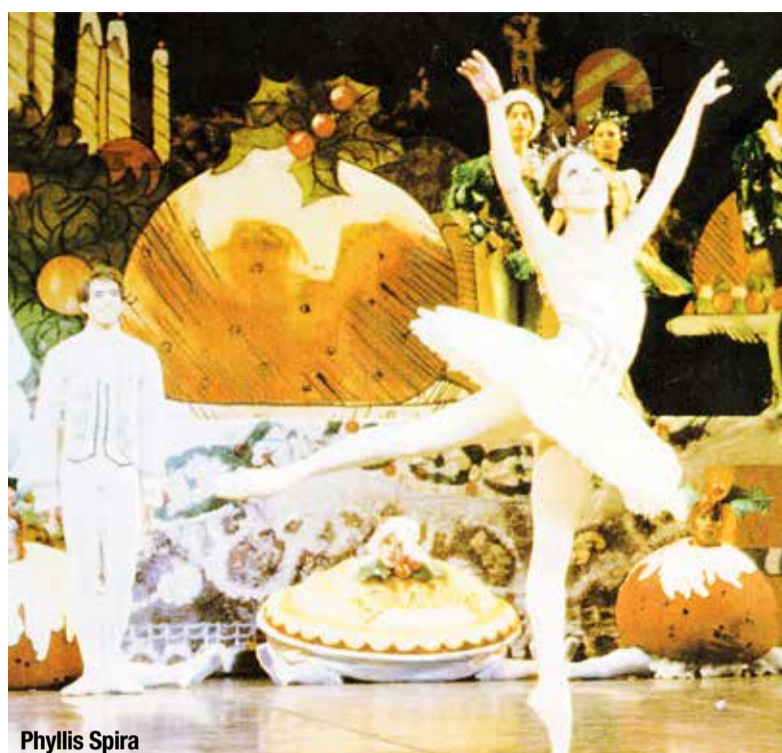
Her older brother, veteran business journalist John Spira,

told the *SA Jewish Report* that her Jewish identity sometimes presented challenges, especially when it came to performing overseas, he recalls.

"As part of the Royal Ballet touring company, she travelled all over the world. But she had a problem because they also went to Middle Eastern countries including Syria, Egypt, and Jordan. You couldn't be Jewish there at all, so she had to change her religion on her travel documents. That's how she became Church of England for a short while," he laughs.

Spira was not one to deny her heritage. Boyd recalled her telling him of a confrontation she had in the face of her early success. "She was standing with the other Royal Ballet students at the notice board looking at their results, and saw that she'd been promoted to the graduate class. Then, a dancer behind her said, 'What do you expect from a rich South African Jew?' Phyllis, who was very shy but completely shocked at this comment, turned around and said, 'Firstly I am not rich, and secondly I am not a Jew, I am a Jewess.'

"After four years of touring with the Royal Ballet, Phyllis was slowly being groomed to become an international star with the Royal Ballet," said Boyd. Yet, when she was on the cusp of being promoted to principal dancer, she decided to return to South Africa.



Phyllis Spira

"Phyllis began to hate the English weather, and was missing her family and home. With the company being so large, she realised that she wouldn't dance as much as she'd done before." So, in 1964, when the South African Performing Arts Councils were being established, Spira returned home and joined PACT (Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal) Ballet company for one year as principal dancer. There she danced with PACT Ballet Master Gary Burne. Together, they joined the CAPAB (Cape Performing Arts Board) Ballet in Cape Town in 1965.

"In 1984, Phyllis was named South Africa's first prima ballerina assoluta by CAPAB Ballet Company Artistic Director Professor David Poole," said Boyd. "Prima ballerina assoluta is a rare honour, traditionally reserved only for the most exceptional dancers of the generation."

In 1974, Boyd entered the scene. "Our relationship was unusual. She was this legendary ballerina, she was a Jewess, and she was older," recalled Boyd. "I was a Catholic, and a much younger dancer about to embark on a professional career. We

immediately fell in love, and became the best of friends."

After 35 years of dedicating her life and talent to what became known as Cape Town City Ballet, Spira decided to leave the company. She then devoted herself to teaching and coaching underprivileged children and youth with the organisation Boyd established, Dance for All.

After breaking her toe on a 2007 trip to London to see some of the organisation's dancers who'd been selected to perform at the Royal Albert Hall, Spira's health deteriorated. Back in South Africa, a surgeon found that the arteries in both her legs were completely blocked. She then had a bypass operation.

"The left leg healed immediately, but the right leg where this injury was, didn't heal. She had to have a series of painful skin graft operations on her right ankle," said Boyd. "After all these operations Phyllis's little body just did not survive all this pain – her right leg never healed," said Boyd.

"Tragically, in March 2008, Phyllis passed away at the young age of 64.

Boyd has since set up The Phyllis Spira Trust in honour and in memory of Spira. "It enables talented Dance for All students to further their dance training at a reputable dance institution," he said.

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ORT SA Youth Club opens doors

The ORT SA group to Argentina 2018



Following the World ORT/Scholas Occurrentes Youth Summit in Argentina in November 2018, the 13 teenage participants from schools across Joburg are seeking to pass on their experience by setting up an ORT SA Youth Club.

Described as the experience of a lifetime, the 13 teenagers spent a week in Buenos Aires with 400 youth across the globe under the auspices of Pope Francis. The ORT SA Youth Club was launched at the recent Friday assemblies of both King David Linkfield and King David Victory Park high schools,

where all 13 were inaugurated as ORT SA Youth Ambassadors.

The club, open to all high school students, aims to introduce students to global ORT opportunities; people through virtual and face-to-face meetings; talks and workshops (such as ORT SA career guidance); and provides access to top mentors for work shadowing and opportunities to volunteer for community service hours.

The club's formation is the result of the 2018 affiliation agreement signed between the South African Board of Jewish Education and World ORT.

Yeshiva-Selwyn Segal soccer match embodies team spirit



The Yeshiva and Selwyn Segal soccer teams

The annual exhibition soccer match between Yeshiva College's first team and the Selwyn Segal Eagles at Yeshiva College last week has been described as "the most important of human and educational experiences for our children". Every person on the field, including the special guests, was actively involved either in cheering, coaching, playing, or supporting. Rabbi

Bernstein ensured that the staff were represented with a cameo appearance for the Selwyn Segal Eagles. After a great game of football, the Yeshiva boys lost 3-1.

The match was driven entirely by Yeshiva's Boys' High School committees, and it was truly a wonderful experience to see the boys play with such Yeshiva College spirit.

Letters

WOMEN MUST SPEAK OUT AGAINST ABUSE

I applaud the editor for her recent editorial, "How Jewish is Jewish enough", (*SA Jewish Report*, vol 23, 1 February).

The more people are aware of this notion of tolerance, the more goodness and kindness there can be.

It brings me to another serious matter – woman abuse. Let me make it perfectly clear from the outset, that while I'm writing this as a Jewish person, I know full well that what I have to say is in no way confined to Jewish people. I know how much of it is going on in religious homes (not all of them), where the women are too afraid to make their voices heard, and the men are seen as "menschen", but in the meantime, they are so abusive, no-one would believe it!

My question is whether it is written anywhere that a man who dons a *kippa*, *tzitzit*, and *davens* (prays) three times a day, keeping Shabbat with *ayshers chayil* (women of valour), being *Shomrei Shabbat*, kosher, and all else, has the right to behave bullishly, cruelly, and heartlessly, and even worse, not see anything wrong with what he is doing? I re-iterate that I am not referring to all – or only – religious homes.

Our community, whether religious or secular, needs to take notice, action, and put an end to the scourge of abusive behaviour. How, I don't know. Perhaps women need to stand up and talk, yes, talk – not *lashon hara* (negative gossip) – but the facts.

Enough is enough! – **Anonymous**

These letters are published anonymously at the request of the writers. The SA Jewish Report is aware of the identity of the authors.

WILL FOOT AND MOUTH AFFECT KOSHER MEAT PRICES?

Thank you for your informative and great journalism.

I read in *City Press* on 16 January that the price of beef is expected to drop due to foot and mouth disease.

Do you think the price of kosher meat will drop in line with market prices? – **Anonymous**

Saturday (16 February)

- The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) hosts, under the patronage of the Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia and the auspices of the Consulate General of Italy in Johannesburg, a lecture on *Italian Day of Remembrance: the tragedy of the eastern territories at the end of World War II*. Time: 20:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. RSVP dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100. Free admission, donations welcome.

- The Jewish Women's Benevolent Society is hosting Nik Rabinowitz's *Dry White* comedy show at Theatre on the Square on 16 and 23 February. Both shows are sold out. All proceeds go to enhancing the lives of indigent, isolated, lonely, and elderly people in our community. Contact 011 485 5232 or jwbs@icon.co.za

Sunday (17 February)

- Second Innings hosts Irene Klaas, a Holocaust survivor, and Tali Nates, the Director of The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre on *The first-hand experience of a Holocaust survivor*. Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting at 10:30. Venue: Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors, includes tea and light refreshments. Contact Linda Fleishman 011 532 9701.

The Sydenham Pre-Primary School Grade Rs



Adar joy at Sydenham

Last week was Rosh Chodesh Adar. Adar is the official "happy month", as it is written, "As soon as Adar begins, increase in joy!" What better way to celebrate than with funky crowns and smiling faces at Sydenham Pre-Primary School.

Letters

VAN HEERDEN PLAYS FAST AND LOOSE WITH THE FACTS

In the article in the *SA Jewish Report*, vol 23, 1 February, which reported on the article in *Daily Maverick* by Oscar van Heerden titled "We owe Palestinians our support", Van Heerden shows a level of obtuseness that defines his entire article and conflicts with his academic status. He plays fast and loose with the facts when it comes to Palestinian terror and Israel's response.

What kind of twisted logic would allow untruths to be dredged up as facts?

Institutionalised racism is found in Palestinian territories, from where fleeing Christians seek safety in Israel, while Mahmoud Abbas, the true apartheid maven, has always asserted that a future Palestinian state must be "Judenrein".

Abbas routinely vilifies Israel while systematically violating virtually every article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A recently published report by the Action Group for Palestinians in Syria documented 5 522 cases of Palestinians among the more than 500 000 Syrian deaths caused by Syrian forces since the onset of the civil war in 2011. These deaths ranged from artillery shelling, to shootings, to poison gas, to torture. About this Van Heerden is silent.

When Palestinians are killed by other Arabs, evidently no one except Israel cares – not the Arab world, not Van Heerden, and not even the Palestinians themselves. Everyone is silent. One can't escape the conclusion that these hypocrites care nothing for the lives and status of Palestinians, they concern themselves only with delegitimising and defaming Israel, and in doing so, will resort to the most egregious falsehoods.

Freedom House, an independent research organisation that evaluates countries throughout the world and apportions a percentage score in accordance with each country's human-rights performance, reveals that Israel, at 79% in spite of facing unrelenting terrorism, ranks above every country in the Middle East, with Syria scoring a low of minus -1%, and Jordan a high of 37%. Israel's record is better than South Africa's (78%), and is just behind the United States (86%).

Israel is one of the smallest nations in the world, yet it has a massive positive impact on global health, food, and water security, disaster relief, and the economies of developing and developed countries. Every day, Israel's doctors save the lives of scores of Palestinians who flood there for medical care and help.

Oh, and for Van Heerden's elucidation, hatred, unlike in Abbas' world, is not taught to Israeli children. – **Rodney Mazinter, Cape Town**

Tuesday (19 February)

- The Hebrew Order of David International is proud to present politician, advocate, businessman, and honorary professor at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, Dr Roelof Petrus "Roelf" Meyer in *South Africa, 25 years into democracy*. Time: 20:00. Venue: HOD Centre, Orchards. Cost: R80 per person. Contact 011 640 3017 or info@hodavid.org. Proceeds go to charity. Refreshments included.

Wednesday (20 February)

- Second Innings hosts a movie morning at The Museum of Military History, Broadway – a Jewish Legacy. Time: 09:30 for 10:00. Venue: 22 Erlswold Way, Saxonwold. Cost: R110, includes movie, tea, and refreshments. Please note, advance booking and payment is essential. Contact Ros Berman 011 880 6864, Fay Smaller 072 546 2573, and Laura Sher 082 322 3816.
- Jewish Learning Institute course with Rabbi Ari Kievman discussing *Clean slate: how do criminals make amends?* Time: 09:45 to 11:15 at Chabad House, 27 Aintree Avenue, Savoy, or 19:15 to 20:45 at Sandton Central Shul, 8 Stella Street, Sandton, opposite the Gautrain. Contact www.jli.org.za, 011 440 6600, or jli@chabad.org.za.



- Chairman Bancroft presents *Davening for Beginners*, a step by step guide in how to pray in shul and what the prayers actually mean. Time: 12:30 at Chabad House, 27 Aintree Avenue, Savoy. Contact 011 440 6600.

Thursday (21 February)

- The JHGC opens the travelling exhibition, *Letters of stone: the fate of a Jewish family in Berlin* with guest speaker Steven Robins. Time: 19:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. Free admission, donations welcome. RSVP dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100.

- Sandton Seniors Club. Time: 10:15. Venue: Chabad Riverclub, 33 Marico Road, Ballyclare. Contact Rabbi Ari Kievman, rak@chabad.org.za, 011 440 6600.
- Pine Street Shul hosts its General Knowledge Quiz Night. Time: 19:30. Venue: Pine Street Shul, Louis Road, Orchards. Cost: R200 per person, including supper. RSVP Sue, admin@pineshul.co.za

Monday through Friday

- Chabad Seniors Club. Includes memory enhancement, dynamic shiurim, transport, a delicious lunch, tech tutors, and more. Time 09:00 to 13:00. Venue: Chabad House, 27 Aintree Avenue, Savoy. Contact Rabbi Ari Kievman, 011 440 6600, rak@chabad.org.za

Disruptive and female: Israeli authors tell a different story

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Though early Israeli society was largely egalitarian in nature, that didn't really apply to women and female authors. So said Dr Tamara Levine when she spoke about, *Extraordinary Women: Three Israeli Authors* at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre in Johannesburg on 7 February.

The dominant narrative in Israeli literature was masculine right up until the 1980s, Levine said, by which time greater receptivity to the female voice had developed.

Levine, an expert on literature, including Hebrew literature and modern Israeli culture, brought the audience's attention to the works of three "innovative, iconoclastic" female authors:

Orly Castel Bloom, Dorit Rabinyan, and Ayelet Gundar-Goshen. They have all published fairly

recently, and their books have been translated into numerous languages, including English and Arabic.

These women are creating a new self-awareness in Israel. They are challenging the hegemony of male thought, and the appropriate story to tell, transforming "history" to "herstory", Levine said.



Ayelet Gundar-Goshen

Castel Bloom's first book, *Dolly City*, (published in 1992), interrogates society's views of motherhood, and criticises expectations of selflessness. The book is so disturbing, Levine said, she knew of a reader who "threw it out of her apartment window".

Her latest book, *Textile*, (2008) once again looks at the agony of motherhood, this time of a soldier's mother who is waiting for news of her son. The mother submits herself to numerous plastic surgeries – the last of which is shoulder-blade implants – to anaesthetise herself from the anxiety.



Orly Castel Bloom

The book reveals deep psychic agony without any secure borders. The male characters, one of whom is a narcissist, are pretty absent in this book, which focuses on three generations of women. It reflects on what freedom, accomplishment, and purity mean, among other things.

Dorit Rabinyan's first book, *Persian Brides*, (2000), is set in Iran, where Rabinyan's family comes from. Revealing the rich tapestry of Sephardi life, it is appealing for being a nostalgic look at a

society no longer in existence, Levine said.

Her latest book, *All the Rivers*, (2014), is a memoir of her "passionate but untenable" relationship with a Palestinian artist, told through fictionalised characters. The book attained fame in 2015, when it was banned by the Israeli education minister from the high school education curriculum for promoting intermarriage.

Rabinyan is a consummate storyteller, Levine said, whose brave story integrates

the personal and political.

Interestingly, in this book, the third protagonist is the city – New York – as it is only in a foreign city that this relationship can play out.

It combines strangeness and intimacy, and conveys the loyalty and pride of the families on both sides. There is the sense of the power of having a secret Arab lover, together with a sense that it is ephemeral.

The youngest of the three writers, Ayelet Gundar-Goshen's book, *Waking Lions*, (2017)

was the winner of the Jewish Quarterly Wingate Prize. It is a riveting, dramatic book that makes us confront our social prejudices, said Levine.

In the book, the protagonist mistakenly kills an Eritrean immigrant, and leaves the scene of the crime, only to be confronted by the dead man's wife – with surprising consequences. It focuses on how we deal with undesired life changing events, Levine said, and interrogates issues of bias, guilt, illegal immigrants, and the

social underbelly.

Central to the book is the juxtaposition of two strong and courageous women, the wives of protagonist and victim.

A good story shows us what makes us human, Levine said. It gives us insight into what makes us do what we do. Good literature should make us ask questions. These three female authors show different ways of exploring the prohibitions and panorama of contemporary Israeli society, its evolution, and changing moral fabric.



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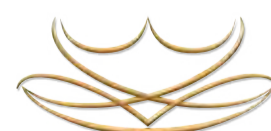
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Is Julian Edelman the best Jewish football player ever?

GABE FRIEDMAN – JTA

After the New England Patriots beat the favoured Kansas City Chiefs to reach their third straight Super Bowl – their amazing ninth in less than 20 years – CBS sports analyst Boomer Esiason made an intriguing statement, namely that Patriots wide receiver Julian Edelman belongs in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

“Is Julian Edelman not a Hall of Famer?” Esiason, a former NFL (National Football League) quarterback, asked on a Boston radio show last week. “The guy is clutch in the biggest of games. I don’t know what else to tell you. He is, in my eyes, truly the definition of a Hall of Famer: make the play when the play needs to be made in the biggest games to win the game.”

Edelman, one of only a few Jewish players in the league, is certainly the most successful, through his role as star quarterback Tom Brady’s favourite target. The Brady-to-Edelman connection has been a major part of the Patriots’ dominance in recent years, and the pair have won two Super Bowls together.

Edelman, 32, is also the most outwardly Jewish NFL player, embracing that side of his identity over time. He has a Jewish father, but was not raised in the religion,



Julian Edelman

and through the Patriot’s front office often would defer on questions about his religion.

His is the quintessential surprise story: undersized at 5-10, and less than 200 pounds, without blazing speed and coming from Kent State – not exactly Alabama – Edelman was picked toward the end of the last round of the 2009 draft. He didn’t establish himself as a standout player until the 2013 season. Coincidentally or not, it was during his breakout year that Edelman identified as Jewish in an interview with the *NFL Network*.

Since then, he has shown his Jewish pride on a number of occasions. In a 2014 game, for instance, he wore a pin featuring the Israeli flag. He has tweeted about Jewish holidays. He even went on a Birthright-style trip to Israel, and has written a children’s book that references modern-day Zionism founder Theodor Herzl. After the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting in the autumn that killed 11, he wore special cleats with Hebrew on them to honour the victims.

As Esiason noted, Edelman has become renown in large

part because of his clutch performances in the playoffs. He has made a series of memorable catches, including one in the 2017 Super Bowl that ranks among the wildest in championship games. Edelman also has the second most post-season receptions of all time. But getting into the Hall of Fame in any sport isn’t just about playoff performance. Regular season statistics are an even bigger part of the equation. While Edelman has three seasons of more than 90 receptions and two seasons of more than 1 000 receiving yards – more than

respectable stats – he just doesn’t have the numbers to make it to the Hall (regardless of how Boston-area sports writers have been spinning the story).

Still, could Edelman be the best Jewish professional football player ever? Jews certainly don’t have a long or illustrious football lineage.

On paper, it looks like Sid Luckman, a Chicago Bears quarterback born to German Jewish immigrants in Brooklyn, owns that distinction. Luckman, who played for the Bears from 1939 to 1950, boasts an array of impressive statistics. He led the Monsters of the Midway to four championships, was the league’s most valuable player in 1943, led the league in passing yards and touchdowns in three seasons, and holds the record for most touchdown passes in a single game with seven.

In 2016, the American Jewish Historical Society released a list of who it deemed to be the 10 best Jewish football players of all time. Luckman placed first, while Edelman was fourth behind two other Hall of Famers – offensive lineman Ron Mix and quarterback Benny Friedman.

Of course, Luckman played in a very different era. For now, Edelman remains the only modern Jewish player you can count on to appear in a Super Bowl – just about every year.

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Sinai Encore full programme and speaker bios inside

AMIDROR

MAJOR GENERAL YAAKOV AMIDROR

Major General Yaakov Amidror, former national security advisor to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, returns to our Sinai stage as a master on all matters of Israel's national security. This is an opportunity to listen to the man who was the head of the Research Department of Israeli military intelligence, played a central role in high-level talks with US officials over the Iranian nuclear programme, led efforts to restore relations with Turkey following the Gaza flotilla incident, and presided over Operation Pillar of Defence – an IDF operation aimed at halting rocket attacks from Gaza. Today, he is the Anne and Greg Rosshandler Senior Fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategic Studies, a leading security think tank. Amidror offers a no-holds-barred look into Israel's military, security and strategic affairs.

■

JACOBSON

RABBI SIMON JACOBSON

New to Sinai and most well-known for his best-selling book, *Toward a Meaningful Life*, his Meaningful Life Center has been described as the spiritual Starbucks by the *New York Times*. Rabbi Simon Jacobson is easily considered one of the most outstanding speakers in the Jewish world today. His books have sold over 300 000 copies and have been translated into Hebrew, French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, German, Hungarian, Polish, Czech and Georgian. Clearly no stranger to the media, Rabbi Jacobson has been interviewed on over 300 radio and TV shows, including *CNN with Larry King* and the *Charlie Rose Show*. His sought-after talks have captured the hearts of thousands of participants on six continents and in 40 states, with a strong, spiritual message and unique insight into the human condition. Rabbi Jacobson is truly a master in applying Jewish thought to contemporary life and possesses the unique ability to express the timeless teachings of the Torah in a modern and relevant way.

■

PELCOVITZ

DR DAVID PELCOVITZ

The world authority on marriage, parenting, and child and adolescent behaviour is back. Professor of psychology at Yeshiva University, Dr David Pelcovitz intertwines his psychological expertise with Torah values and insights. For over two decades, he has held many prestigious positions, including director of psychology at the North Shore University Hospital and at NYU School of Medicine, where he was clinical professor of psychology. He has also published several books, including *Balanced Parenting: Love and Limits in Raising Children* (which he co-authored with his father) and *Breaking the Silence*, dealing with child abuse in the Jewish community. He received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania and specialises in family violence and child mental health. He has consulted extensively with families in the US, Europe and Israel on a wide range of issues facing children and adults.

■

LEFF

RABBI ZEV LEFF

Rabbi Zev Leff, one of the most colourful and creative Torah thinkers of our time, is back. Rav and communal leader of Moshav Matityahu, Rabbi Leff is known for his exceptional ability to weave together seemingly different narrative strands to create dazzling illuminations on Torah themes and interludes. Rabbi Leff also oversees the 20-member *kollel* on the *moshav*, and his recorded lectures – characterised by his sharp wit and analytical brilliance – are distributed worldwide. He teaches in many seminaries and *yeshivas* in Israel, as well as rabbinical training programmes. Rabbi Leff is the author of *Outlooks and Insights* (Artsroll) on the weekly Torah portion; *Festivals of Life* (Targum) on the various holidays; *Shemoneh Esrei* (Menuchah) on the weekday *Amidah*; and *Shemoneh Esrei of Shabbos* (Menuchah) on the *Amidah* for Shabbos. He is a featured speaker for many organisations and conventions worldwide, and his written articles appear in various English language newspapers and magazines.

■

SACKS

DAVID SACKS

Known as one of the funniest and deepest speakers at Sinai Indaba to date, David Sacks is back. Beginning his comedy writing career as editor of Harvard's satirical magazine, *The Harvard Lampoon*, Sacks went on to become a writer and producer on *The Simpsons*, one of the most acclaimed, well-loved and enduring television series of all time. After winning an Emmy Award for his work on the sitcom's landmark fifth and sixth seasons, he began writing and producing for another TV cult classic, *3rd Rock from the Sun*, for which he received a Golden Globe award. His other noteworthy credits include *Malcolm in the Middle*, *The Tick*, *Regular Show* on Cartoon Network, and *Murphy Brown*. Currently, he is executive producing *Final Space*, an animated space opera available on Netflix. An expert on new age spiritualism, combined with deep Kabbalistic/Chassidic ideas, Sacks produces a weekly podcast, *Spiritual Tools for an Outrageous World*, available on iTunes and Stitcher. He is co-founder of and senior lecturer at The Happy Minyan of Los Angeles.

■

RAZEL

YONATAN RAZEL

Stamp your feet and clap your hands, because Yonatan Razel is lighting up our Sinai stage again. Razel is one of the most talented and exciting musicians in Israel today, receiving awards for 'Singer of the Year' and 'Song of the Year'. He also composed the music of *Vehi she'amda*, sung as a duet with Yaakov Shwekey and which was given the award 'Song of the Decade' by Kol Chai radio station. Razel served as the musical director of the Ra'anana Symphonette and composed and conducted classical works for the Israel Chamber Orchestra. He has directed concerts in Lincoln Park, New York and with the Russian Philharmonic in Moscow, and has worked with various popular Israeli artists. He divides his day between being a father, Torah learning and his career. Razel has bridged deep divides within society with his incredibly moving and meaningful music.

■

AARON

RABBI DAVID AARON

A leading educator of Jewish spirituality and Kabbalah for over 35 years, Rabbi David Aaron returns to the Sinai stage to challenge his audience to look at their deepest fears and assumptions about their beliefs, and ultimately discover that a new view of G-d and themselves will grant them access to a power they have never experienced before. Rabbi Aaron is a best-selling author and a compelling speaker. He has written eight books, including *The Secret Life of G-d*, *Inviting G-d In* and *Love is My Religion*, which have attracted substantial media attention, from *Larry King Live* to *E! Entertainment*. Using gentle humour and deep insights, Rabbi Aaron urges us to change the way in which we look at G-d, ourselves and our purpose in the world.

■

JUNGREIS-WOLFF

SLOVIE JUNGREIS-WOLFF

She's powerful and compassionate, she's soulful and worldly, she's insistent and understanding, and she's back. Slovie Jungreis-Wolff is an acclaimed relationships and parenting instructor. Her groundbreaking book, *Raising a Child with Soul*, has been a source of guidance and support to countless parents around the world, providing them with the keys to raising children with gratitude, respect, compassion and healthy priorities. For over 20 years, Jungreis-Wolff has taught young couples and parents at Hineni International, the pioneering Jewish outreach organisation founded by her mother, Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis. She also writes prolifically on marriage, parenting, spiritual growth and psychological well-being.

■

TATZ

RABBI DR AKIVA TATZ

You know him, you love him, and now he's back with more of his magic. Rabbi Dr Akiva Tatz, a graduate of Wits Medical School, was born and raised in Johannesburg. An acclaimed author and lecturer on Jewish thought, philosophy and medical ethics, he teaches internationally and at the Jewish Learning Exchange, in London, where thousands flock to hear his words of wisdom. Recordings of his lectures are widely loved and distributed. Rabbi Tatz is the founder and director of the Jerusalem Medical Ethics Forum, which teaches and promotes knowledge of Jewish medical ethics around the world. He has written several books, and has truly mastered the art of engaging and inspiring his audience wherever he goes.

■

CLARE

ALEX CLARE

Our bona fide British rock star Alex Clare brings back both his evolving story and his guitar to inspire, uplift and ignite. In the mid-2000s, Clare decided to change his life and became religious, and lost a record deal due to his observance. However, nothing could stop him from becoming the superstar he was born to be. He has hit number four on the UK Singles Chart and number seven on the US Billboard Hot 100. He has been nominated for five World Music Awards and counts Beyoncé and Adele among his fans. Clare is one of the few people in the world who successfully juggles a religious lifestyle while maintaining a truly booming music career.

■

TORGOW

GARY TORGOW

New Sinai speaker Gary Torgow is an inspirational communal and business leader, founder and volunteer. Torgow is the chairman of Chemical Financial Corporation, the holding company for Chemical Bank (the largest bank headquartered in Michigan). He is also the founder and chairman of the Sterling Group, a Michigan-based real estate, development and investment company. He currently serves on the board of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, and is an executive board member of Business Leaders of Michigan and a trustee and board member of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan. He is on the Foundation Boards of Wayne State University and Henry Ford Hospital, and is a member of the Beaumont Health Trustees. Torgow serves as a trustee on the board of Touro College, is on the executive board of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, he's a senior VP of the Orthodox Union and is the board president of Detroit's largest Jewish day school, the Yeshiva Beth Yehudah. He is a board member of the Mesorah Heritage Foundation and has served as a volunteer on numerous civic and communal boards, including the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation and the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, both of which he served as chairman.

■

COUZENS

NILI COUZENS

She has enriched the lives of thousands of women from every corner of the Jewish world through the Jewish Women's Renaissance Project (JWRP). And now, Nili Couzens returns, armed with her practical Torah wisdom, sense of humour and relatable, down-to-earth ways. A true representation of women in leadership and sisterhood, this wife and mother uses her remarkable wit, pragmatic manner and deep understanding of life and its potential to reach out, connect and inspire women across the globe, at every stage of their Jewish journey.

■

MIZRACHI

RABBANIT YEMIMA MIZRACHI

Recently voted one of Israel's most influential women, Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi is gracing our stage once again to speak straight to the hearts of women in a way only she knows how. Known for her phenomenal energy and wisdom, Rabbanit Mizrachi draws hundreds of people to her talks every week, representing the full gamut of Israeli society. A mother, a qualified lawyer and the granddaughter of the former Chief Rabbi of Morocco, Rabbanit Mizrachi is a brilliant and creative Torah scholar in her own right.

■



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