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The South African who helped Israel go to the moon

JORDAN MOSHE

“Ten, nine, eight...” Morris Kahn was transfixed by a live-feed broadcast from Cape Canaveral as the Beresheet – the Israel spacecraft – lifted off en route to the moon in the early hours of 21 February. He is the South African behind the Israeli venture to the moon.

The journey to the moon is the culmination of an extraordinary dream for SpaceIL president and co-founder Kahn, who has devoted eight years to a project which will make Israel the fourth country in the world to make this journey. Others that have landed on the moon are Russia, the United States, and China.

“After much energy, much thought, much money, and a lot of anxiety, what we’ve been planning for years has finally happened,” says Kahn. “Whether they were in Israel, Canada, America, South Africa or elsewhere, people watched with bated breath as the launch unfolded. The world press is full of it, and Israel has ignited interest across the globe.”

Kahn watch the launch with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, project donors, and other officials from Israel Aerospace Industries in Lod. This South African-born philanthropist and entrepreneur, both a funder and overseer of the project, felt great pride as a project which had begun as a mere idea rose into the sky, and made memories that would last for years to come.

From the moment he heard about the project, Kahn was hooked. In 2011, three recently-qualified Israeli engineers applied to enter the Google Lunar XPRIZE. This was a competition that offered \$20 million (R277 million) to any privately-funded team to be the first to land a spacecraft on the moon, travel 500m, and transmit images back to earth.

When the trio announced their submission at a lecture at Tel Aviv University, Kahn, who was in attendance, loved the idea.

“I went up to them, and asked if they had any money to fund it,” he recounts. “They said that they had some, but it wasn’t much. I offered them \$100 000 (R1,38 million), no questions asked, and told them to go for it.”

Kahn’s interest was not merely entrepreneurial, but driven by his personal involvement in the Sea Air Space Symposium.

This is an annual event attended by eminent figures in government, industry, and academia dedicated to advancing technology and development in all three areas. Kahn brought knowledge to the project that would enhance and accelerate development.

Although the team had the expertise of the Israeli aircraft industry, it soon became clear that a core of only three engineers was simply not enough. Kahn became actively involved in enhancing the team, setting out to find the best people possible.

“The task was incredibly complex,” he says. “It was apparent that we’d need more than three engineers. With my background in

Kahn also felt it necessary to set a definitive launch date, as this would guarantee that the project had the necessary driving force. “We needed a target,” he says. “You can keep a project going endlessly without one. I offered to pay for the launch, we set a date for 2019, and worked towards it.” In January 2018, a final timetable was confirmed, and the booking for shipping the craft to America was made.

The months that followed were taxing, and there were frequent threats to the project’s success. The 35-day shutdown of the American government from 22 December until 25 January threatened to derail the entire project.

“We had to put in a request for permission

someone who, in a single day, made all the necessary transport arrangements. “I honestly don’t know how he did it,” Kahn says. “According to a former American transport official, the only way such permission could be obtained was if the project was shown to make a direct contribution to the security of the US. I don’t know what my contact did, but he got it done.”

Beresheet was successfully shipped to Cape Canaveral at the end of January, and prepared for launch over three weeks. Kahn visited the launch site himself, eager to watch the testing and assembly of the craft.

“The technology Elon Musk has developed for that site is incredible,” he says. “The rocket was very impressive. It was not ours exclusively. We were one of three customers who were jointly involved in boarding crafts onto the Falcon 9.”

When he witnessed the launch from Israel, the thrill he felt was tangible. “We watched the rocket shoot off into space, and were provided with ongoing verbal commentary as it went. I knew that people across Israel and the world were watching with us. Children who would be going to school in a few hours got up at 02:00 to see it. All of us were holding our breath.”

“I know that the launch aroused a sense of pride in every Israeli that day. Jews around the world, no matter where they were, felt the same thrill of knowing that we were up there with the superpowers who had launched their own crafts to the moon. Every person will remember where they were when this event took place.”

Following the success of the launch, Kahn eagerly awaits the landing, hoping it will be soft and smooth. He explains that the craft will increase its orbit in coming weeks until it comes within the moon’s field of gravity, drawn to the surface of the moon in about six weeks.

“So much will emerge from this,” he says. “Israel has already signed a contract with Germany to plan a similar project in the near future. This launch not only showcases Israeli innovation, but will encourage further technological development and inspire the next generation to lead the charge of innovation. This launch has done for Israel what the Apollo did for the US. It will have a tremendous effect for years to come.”



SpaceIL co-founders Morris Kahn and Yariv Bash and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

the symposium, I involved myself in solving problems as we progressed.”

It also transpired that the Israeli team had grossly underestimated the cost of the project. After initially setting the cost at \$8 million (R110 million), they realised that the project would require \$100 million (R1,38 billion), an issue which Kahn puts down to Israel’s lack of experience in space projects.

“Israel didn’t have the expertise necessary to plan a launch of such complexity. The engineers had no concept of the real cost involved in such a project, particularly because they envisioned a small, light craft.”

to transport the craft to the US,” says Kahn. “Because of the shutdown, we couldn’t contact anyone in government to grant it to us. The lack of permission was a major threat to the whole operation, because we were running on deadline. We had already made several other arrangements to assemble, test, and attach the craft to the Falcon 9 rocket before launch. The plane was booked, but if we couldn’t get permission in time, the project would have been called off.”

In spite of all his contacts in government, Kahn was initially unable to secure permission. By sheer good fortune, he reached out to

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Argentinian Jewry condemn attack on chief rabbi

The chief rabbi of Argentina was brutally assaulted by a gang who broke into his apartment on Monday morning.

Rabbi Gabriel Davidovich was hospitalised with serious injuries, including nine broken ribs, according to Jorge Knoblovits, the President of the Jewish political umbrella organisation, the Delegation of Israelite Associations of Argentina (DAIA).

"We know that you are the AMIA [Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina] rabbi," the assailants shouted before

beating Davidovich.

His wife was home during the attack, which happened at about 02:00 in the Jewish neighbourhood of Once in the Argentine capital. The attackers restrained her, and stole money and belongings from the apartment.

The attack was a "brutal anti-Semitic aggression", the DAIA said on Monday night. The statement, which was signed by Knoblovits, said that the attack was "framed on the anti-Semitic events that are taking place in different European countries, which threaten coexistence and democratic values".

A statement issued by AMIA condemned the attack, but did not specifically call it anti-Semitic.

Davidovich has served as chief rabbi since 2013. The office of the rabbinate is located in the AMIA building in Buenos Aires.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a statement issued on Tuesday morning sent wishes for a quick recovery to the rabbi and his wife.

"We must not let anti-Semitism rear its head. I strongly condemn the recent acts of anti-Semitism, and call on the international community to take action against it," Netanyahu said.

The World Jewish Congress said it was "shocked and incensed by the brutal attack".

"It is not yet clear whether this was a targeted crime of hateful anti-Semitism or a barbaric criminal act, but we trust that the authorities will continue to do everything in their power to determine the motive and bring the perpetrators to justice," Chief Executive Robert Singer said on Monday.

those assigned to a reduced-fat diet," the Bloomberg study stated.

The rest of the top 10, in order, are: Spain, Italy, Iceland, Japan, Switzerland, Sweden, Australia, Singapore, and Norway.

The US placed 64th, largely in part to its high obesity rate. Recent figures from the US Centers for Disease Control estimate about 40% of the country, or more than 93 million citizens, are obese.

Egypt promises synagogues if Jews return

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said his government would build synagogues and provide services for the Jewish community if there was a resurgence of the community in his country.

Sisi made the statement last week during a meeting with a delegation from the US, the *Jerusalem Post* reported.

The delegation was made up of the Anwar Sadat Congressional Gold Medal Commission, which successfully lobbied to grant the Congressional Gold Medal to late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. President Donald Trump signed the bill to grant the highest civilian award bestowed by Congress in December.

The commission members were in Egypt to invite Sisi to attend the ceremony in autumn, when the medal will be presented to Jehan Sadat, the wife of the leader assassinated in 1981.

The commission was founded and led by Ezra Friedlander, an orthodox Jewish consultant and lobbyist from New York.

"President Sisi spoke fondly not only of Egypt's past vibrant Jewish community, but also said that should there be a resurgence of the Jewish community in Egypt, the government would provide every religious

necessity required," Friedlander told the *Post*.

Before Israel declared independence in 1948, about 75 000 Jews lived in Egypt. Only a handful of Jews live in Egypt today.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif resigns

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif has submitted his resignation, reportedly over infighting about Iran's foreign policy and its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, detested by Israel.

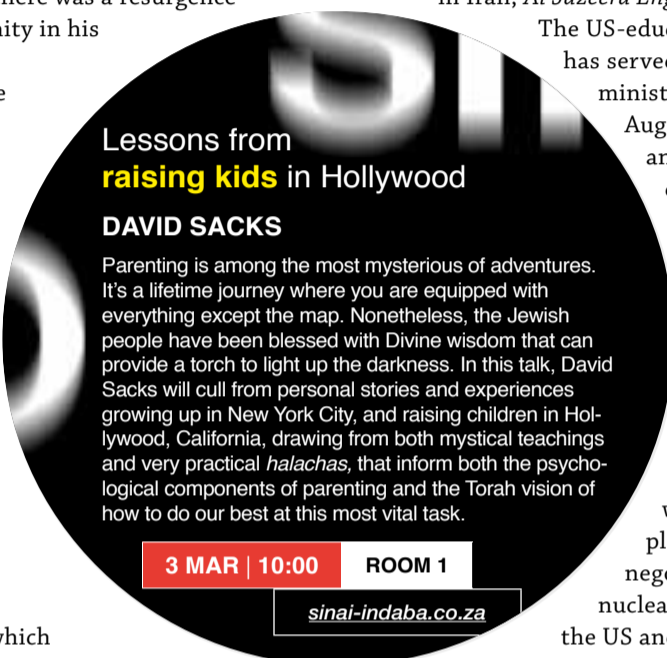
Zarif reportedly submitted his resignation late on Monday evening. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had not replied to the letter by Tuesday afternoon in Iran, *Al Jazeera English* reported.

The US-educated Zarif has served as foreign minister since August 2013, and faced

criticism from hardliners in his country over his attempts to establish better relations with the West. Zarif was a major player in negotiating the nuclear deal with the US and other world powers, trading sanctions relief for Iran in exchange for easing its nuclear-weapons ambitions. The Trump administration pulled out of the agreement, which appears to be collapsing.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo responded to the resignation in a tweet, saying, "We note @JZarif's resignation. We'll see if it sticks. Either way, he and @HassanRouhani are just front men for a corrupt religious mafia. We know @khamenei_ir makes all final decisions. Our policy is unchanged. The regime must behave like a normal country and respect its people."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a vehement opponent of the Iran nuclear deal, tweeted: "Zarif is gone. Good riddance."



Lessons from raising kids in Hollywood

DAVID SACKS

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 and the Torah vision of how to do our best at this most vital task.

3 MAR | 10:00 ROOM 1
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Israel ranked 10th healthiest country in world

Israel is the 10th healthiest country in the world, 54 spots ahead of the United States.

The Bloomberg Healthiest Country Index, published on Sunday, ranked 169 nations based on factors such as life expectancy, access to sanitation, and medical care. Countries were penalised for tobacco use and obesity, among other health risks.

Unsurprisingly, the Mediterranean diet – common in Israel, as well as Spain and Italy, which are numbers one and two on the list – was noted in Bloomberg's analysis.

"Mediterranean diet, supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil or nuts, had a lower rate of major cardiovascular events than

Torah Thought

Mathematics of the Mishkan

Parshat Vayakhel details the construction of the vessels for the Mishkan, and the building of the Mishkan itself.

The Torah often withholds pertinent information from us so that we glean the law from the Oral Torah. However, there are times when the Torah is verbose about "irrelevant" details like the descendants of

Esav, or the repetition of Pharaoh's dream, or the slave, Eliezer's, recounting of events. We do not understand why the Torah does this.

This week's Parsha is one such an example. The Torah describes in great detail the

construction and creation of the Mishkan. The Kli Yakar, with his great brilliance and insight, reveals some very relevant explanation for this.

He looks at the three vessels that had crowns: the ark, the table, and the small golden altar. He explains that these crowns represent none other than the three crowns enumerated by *Pirkei Avot*. The ark which housed the Torah and tablets represents the crown of Torah. The table represents the crown of kingship, and the altar, the crown of priesthood.

But his genius comes to the fore when he analyses the measurements delineated by the Torah. He points out that the ark's measurements are all in fractions, while the altar's are whole numbers. The table has a mixture of fractions and whole numbers.

The Kli Yakar explains that when it comes to the Torah (represented by the ark), one can never

attain completion in one's understanding or mastery of it. This is why the measurements are all in fractions.

When it comes to the table, one should, on the one hand, view one's wealth as complete and be totally satisfied with one's portion. On the other hand, however, one should never strive to fill oneself up, but rather be lacking in some respects.

Finally, the altar, which represents service to Hashem, cannot be fractured at all. One's devotion and commitment has to be total. Therefore the measurements are in whole numbers.

This *vort* (Torah thought) truly shows us the greatness of our Torah and the deep insight of our sages.



Rabbi Ryan Goldstein, West Street Shul

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:09	Johannesburg
19:05	19:56	Cape Town
18:12	19:01	Durban
18:15	19:20	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:28	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:17	East London

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Experts call for South Africa to follow UK in banning Hezbollah

NICOLA MILTZ

As the British government stands on the threshold of banning Hezbollah as a terrorist group, experts in South Africa have called on the South African government to do the same.

Hezbollah has been described by political analysts around the world as one of the most lethal terrorist organisations in history. This week, British Home Secretary Sajid Javid accused the Iran-backed, Lebanon-based organisation of destabilising the Middle East.

A draft order laid in the United Kingdom parliament will ban Hezbollah and two other terror groups. Subject to parliament's approval, the order will go into effect on Friday. Until now, the military wing of Hezbollah has been outlawed in Britain, but not its political arm.

Professor Hussein Solomon, a senior professor of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State, told the SA Jewish Report this week that South Africa should do the same.

"There has been Hezbollah activity in South Africa since the 1990s, both paramilitary and illicit economic activity," he says. "Yes, this is long overdue. We should also declare it a terrorist organisation."

Jasmine Opperman, a director at the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) says Hezbollah's

inclination towards violence against Israel stands in direct opposition

and contrast to South Africa's foreign policy objective and framework of seeking peace through negotiation and dialogue as a constructive solution to end the conflict.

"South Africa must be very careful not to apply double standards, and must not compromise its national values and interests, particularly now that we are on the United Nations Security Council," she says.

"That Hezbollah supports violence as an option against Israel is no secret. Should South Africa ban Hezbollah? Yes! As long as Hezbollah openly supports violence as an option against Israel, this cannot be acceptable to our foreign policy framework."

The Israeli Embassy in South Africa has welcomed the move, saying Hezbollah is an internationally recognised terrorist organisation. "It acts as Iran's proxy in Lebanon, violating UN resolutions in its attempt to attack Israeli civilians using 'terror tunnels'. Israel will continue to act for the worldwide designation of Hezbollah as a terror organisation, including imposing tough sanctions against it, and calls on the UN to ensure the implementation of its resolutions in the region."

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) also welcomed the UK move. Says Ben Swartz, the National Chairman of the SAZF, "We believe that Islamic fundamentalism is a serious threat not just to Israel, but to the entire Middle East, and has in recent years become a serious problem on the African continent.

"We hope that the South African government is taking note of the international community's approach to fundamentalist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas, and that it uses its new mandate on the security council in a responsible manner to curb the spread of terrorism on the continent and around the world," he says.

In December last year, Robert R Singer wrote in the *Jerusalem Post* that under the patronage of Iran, Hezbollah had blazed a worldwide murderous path

with the declared objective of obliterating the state of Israel

and combating "American imperialism".

Today, Hezbollah remains an immediate danger to Western society in general, and to Israel and Jewish communities in particular, he said.

Last year, a disturbing discovery was made of hidden Hezbollah

tunnels, dug beneath the homes of Lebanese civilians, and stretching into sovereign Israeli territory.

Singer, who is the chief executive and executive vice-president of the World Jewish Congress, said, "These tunnels were dug to ferry terrorists, arms, and vehicles with the goal of killing innocent Israelis, and overtaking their communities along the



border. The very location of the tunnels, beneath residential buildings, proves once again that Hezbollah's leaders have no qualms [about] using their own people as human shields and camouflage to murder Israeli civilians and Jews worldwide."

Israel's ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, welcomed the UK decision, calling the separation between the political and armed wings of the group "false and artificial".

"We will continue to lead the struggle for the security council to recognise Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation and mobilise the international community against it as it serves as an arm of Iran to spread Tehran's aggression," Danon said.

In December last year, the security council discussed Hezbollah's tunnelling operations, and confirmed that the tunnels violated international law and infringed upon Israel's sovereignty.

As South Africa took up its seat on the security council in January, Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, said that the country would use its tenure on the council to "promote the maintenance of international peace and security through advocating for the peaceful settlement of disputes and inclusive dialogue".

While it is not an everyday occurrence to see a Hezbollah flag being flown in South Africa, there have been occasions – disturbing as they may be – where it has occurred.

Anti-Israel supporters flew a Hezbollah flag with fake red blood stains during a protest at the #YallaYebo photo exhibition in Rosebank, Johannesburg, in May last year. During the 2017 Israel Apartheid Week, the Hezbollah flag was prominently displayed by anti-Israel activists during a standoff with pro-Israel students at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The UK government said Hezbollah continued to amass weapons in contravention of UN security council resolutions, while its support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had prolonged "the conflict and the regime's brutal and violent repression of the Syrian people".

The move to ban the organisation comes against the backdrop of a push by the Trump administration to isolate Iran, which backs Hezbollah. Last week, the US said Hezbollah's growing role in the new Lebanese cabinet posed a threat to the country's stability. Hezbollah was the most popular single political party in the country's parliamentary elections in 2018, and subsequently negotiated for three cabinet seats. The US is increasing its pressure on Hezbollah, placing several sets of sanctions on the group and Iran.

Today, Hezbollah remains an immediate danger to Western society in general, and to Israel and Jewish communities in particular.

The UK ban requires endorsement by MPs, probably as early as Friday, potentially posing a dilemma for the Labour leadership, which has in the past advocated dialogue with Hezbollah's so-called political wing.

The Labour Party has demanded that the British home secretary provide more evidence that Hezbollah is a terrorist organisation. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who has been accused of blatant anti-Semitism, has given party members permission to skip the parliamentary vote.

It remains to be seen which countries follow the UK's example.

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

MAJOR GENERAL YAAKOV AMIDROR

Dramatic changes are sweeping the Middle East. Alliances are shifting and what were once sworn enemies are becoming crucial allies. 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 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 offers a no-holds-barred look into Israel's military, security and strategic affairs.

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Israeli doctors bring expertise to Africa

TALI FEINBERG

Ori and Britta Shwarzman are Israeli doctors who have lived, worked, and raised their children in the rainforests of Ghana, while establishing a mobile clinic that has changed the nature of healthcare in that region.

They are just two of the many Israeli healthcare professionals that have been working for decades in Africa to improve healthcare, train doctors, perform life-saving surgeries, and bring in much-needed equipment. Pioneers in their field, they are all passionate about conquering the overwhelming health challenges on our continent.

Just this week, the United Nations honoured a group of Israeli doctors who operated on thousands of children with heart disease. Save a Child's heart accepted the UN Population Award on Tuesday for saving young lives, especially in war-torn and developing countries.

This commitment from doctors can be traced back to former Prime Minister Golda Meir's visit to a number of African countries in 1958, where she pledged Israeli help to find solutions for severe challenges. Since then, the Israeli government, private Israeli companies, individuals, and non-profit organisations have all contributed their expertise.

The Shwarzmans work in the rainforests of the Ashanti region. Ori and his German-born wife, Britta, met in Ghana and fell in love with the

“Ghanaians are always very happy to meet Jews, the chosen people, and to hear that Jerusalem is not in heaven, but real.”

country. In 1999 they returned with their two-year-old daughter, Amarell, to work voluntarily for two years as general practitioners.

The couple realised that although primary care was available, there were no specialists to deal with specific ailments. This led them to the idea of establishing a professional mobile clinic.

“When we started the mobile clinic, there were only four practicing psychiatrists, and one paediatric surgeon in Ghana to support a country of 25 million inhabitants,” they say. After training in Israel, they returned to Ghana in 2007 and their Gye Nyame specialist mobile clinic was born.

By this time, the Shwarzmans had three children, with whom they lived in one of the small villages without running water or electricity. “We learned the language, Twi. Ghanaians are always very happy to meet Jews, the chosen people, and to hear that Jerusalem is not in heaven, but real.”

The pair are passionate about their work because it is so challenging and rewarding.

“We work exclusively in remote areas, where people cannot afford to see a specialist. The moment you realise that you can treat a psychotic patient with simple medication in the

rainforests, or you succeed in saving a baby with a simple operation in a remote missionary hospital, then yes, we love what we are doing.”

Four years on, the Gye Nyame mobile clinic has become self-sufficient enough to function on a daily basis without them. Management has been handed over to the now experienced local team, but both doctors return every month to renew medicines and equipment, supervise the clinic and perform surgical operations, run seminars and workshops, and manage fundraising.

“Our dream would be to be able to work and live in Ghana full time once again, not needing to worry about how we will survive the next year. We would like to establish a new mobile clinic in the even poorer north of Ghana, connect with a missionary hospital, and start teaching teams of local professionals. We would like to enter more West African countries, like Sierra Leone and Liberia,” they say.

Professor Zvi Bentwich is the President and founder of the Nala Foundation, which works to eradicate curable diseases and break the poverty cycle. He founded the first AIDS centre in Israel in the mid '80s.

Bentwich's ground breaking research uncovered the link between neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) – particularly intestinal worms – and immune issues. He realised that if intestinal parasites were eradicated, the likelihood of HIV/AIDS infection would drop dramatically as well.

“Quite early on, it became clear to me that these diseases are so common and widespread that it is almost impossible to overcome them against



Dr Morris Hartstein examining a child's eyes in Ethiopia

a background of poverty and neglect,” he says. “The policy at that time was mass drug administration, but if you don't change the environment, people just get re-infected. I thought I could make a difference by addressing behaviour change through intensive health education and community engagement.”

He believes that in order to have a successful and sustainable programme, the community itself must lead the way. “We work with community partners to identify blocks for community health and to target the different layers within a community that can collaborate to work towards complete elimination of these diseases.”

This approach has had startling success, with populations keeping these diseases under control, and

Bentwich's model of intervention now being adopted nationwide in Ethiopia.

Dr Morris Hartstein is Director of Oculoplastic Surgery at Yitzhak Shamir Medical Center. While visiting Ethiopia on holiday, he started treating eye ailments. He now travels there regularly to run clinics during which time he sees up to 500 patients. He also brings with him hundreds of pairs of donated eyeglasses, and large quantities of eye drops and medications.

“So far, I have personally examined almost 3 000 people there. I arrange cataract surgery, and treat kids with sight threatening eye infections. I have done lots of complex surgery under tough conditions,” he says.

Hartstein has brought 13

doctors to Israel for training, and is currently training someone in his specialty, oculoplastics. “He will be only the third trained person in Ethiopia for 110 million people. I have also helped to start a programme that provides one meal a day for nearly 500 malnourished Jewish children in Gondar [a city in northern Ethiopia].”

He said that while at a conference in Addis Ababa with President Reuven Rivlin last May, he was shocked to see hundreds of Israeli organisations, both companies and NGOs, all working in Africa. “Many have been doing it for years. Israelis are doing so many revolutionary things, from medicine, to infrastructure, to agriculture – and all with little fanfare, they just do it,” Hartstein says.



RON KAMPEAS – JTA

A recently declassified United States State Department report reveals that a United Nations (UN) agency determined that there was anti-Israel and other bias in Palestinian textbooks. It also faulted a previous State Department report for claiming that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) had taken steps to address the situation.

The April 2018 State Department report was declassified this week at the request of two Republican congressmen, Scott Perry of Pennsylvania and Lee Zeldin of New York. It covers the 2015-2017 period, and cites a review by UNRWA, the UN agency that delivers relief and education to Palestinian refugees.

UNRWA operates schools within the Palestinian Authority (PA) school system, and for the most part uses PA textbooks. The UNRWA review of Palestinian textbooks identified 203 issues covering a total of 229 pages (or 3.1%) out of 7 498 pages reviewed. The issues are examples of material that did not comport with UN values of tolerance, neutrality, equality, and non-discrimination, and human rights relating to race, gender language, and religion.

An annex detailing the problematic passages did not appear in the report posted by Zeldin

and Perry, but the report said that “more than half of the neutrality/bias issues it found” were related to maps, the status of Jerusalem, and other cities, “for example, regional maps that exclude Israel, and refer to Israeli cities as Palestinian”. Other neutrality issues had to do with gender.

The UNRWA review did not find any cases of incitement, the report said.

The recent State Department report faults UNRWA and a previous State Department report for saying that the refugee agency had successfully disseminated complementary materials, and had completed teacher training aimed at countering the bias.

UNRWA, whose duties include running a school system, developed alternate materials and training to counter the biased material, but it was not extensively used, in part because of Palestinian objections to the UNRWA corrective measures.

Palestinian teachers also refused to attend training sessions during a strike because of teacher-union reactions to the material, and the Palestinian Authority suspending ties with UNRWA over its issuance of the complementary materials. The report did not say what the objections were by the Palestinian Authority and the teacher unions.

IMPACT-se, an Israeli nongovernmental organisation that monitors alleged radicalisation

in Palestinian education, played up the report's criticism of claims that UNRWA had taken steps to counter the bias.

“The release of this report puts to rest the myth that UNRWA is teaching an alternative, less radical curriculum to the children in its care,” IMPACT-se Chief Executive Marcus Sheff said. “The report clearly states that while UNRWA may have created complementary materials in an attempt to cover up some of the hate in the PA curriculum, these materials never saw the light of day. They were not distributed, nor were teachers instructed in their use.”

The Trump administration last year ended US assistance to UNRWA, saying the agency's perpetuation of refugee status for Palestinians and their descendants was an obstacle to peace. The \$364 million (R4.9 billion) that the US had contributed was nearly 30% of its overall budget, and UNRWA officials said the cuts could precipitate a crisis in the region.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu backed the cessation of funding, although Israeli security officials are concerned that it could destabilise the West Bank and Gaza.

The Palestinian Authority provides all but English textbooks to the UNRWA schools, part of its contribution to the agency. UNRWA spends less than 1% of its education expenditure on textbooks.

South Africa bidding for greater role in Mid-East negotiations

NICOLA MILTZ

The South African government appears to be shifting its stance in the Israeli Palestinian situation towards taking a role in the Middle East peace process.

This can be derived mostly from the words uttered about the Middle East in public statements. Since January, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) has been quietly putting its hand up again in a bid to make itself more visible and heard.

There are even behind-the-scenes rumours of plans for an oversight trip to the region to gain a more nuanced view of the conflict.

This week, the South African Deputy Minister of DIRCO, Luwellyn Landers, spoke before a high-level session at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, stressing that South Africa is committed to a peaceful resolution of the Middle East conflict.

“The South African government, guided by the values of our constitution, has over the past 25 years, built a diplomatic practice that is reflective of a government and a people committed to building peace, human security, and equality within and between countries,” he said. “The principles of our constitution were guided by a commitment to build a society that transcends a history of discrimination and violence based on race, sex, gender, religion, origin, and sexual orientation.”

He said that the country’s approach to human rights “is coupled with a principled belief that peace and dialogue and not recourse to violence are the best ways to resolve conflicts and build peaceful societies”.

Last week, South Africa’s Ambassador to the United Nations, Jerry Matjila, maintained that “peace in Palestine remains elusive”. However, he insisted that any move towards peace needed “leadership that believes that peace is possible through negotiation, and an international community willing to support both sides in finding a resolution”.

Matjila, who is the permanent representative of South Africa to the United Nations, had been responding to a briefing on the Middle East by Nikolay Mladenov, Special Co-ordinator for the Middle East peace process.

In the same week, Lindiwe Sisulu, the Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation, also went out on a limb, saying that “there is no economic ban on Israel whatsoever”.

This all appears to be in contrast to the government recalling its ambassador to Israel, Sisa Ngombane, in May last year. According to analysts, this seemed indicative of a country that was cutting itself off from playing any meaningful role in peace negotiations.

Coupled with the African National Congress resolving to downgrade the South African embassy in Tel Aviv, South Africa was effectively cast into the diplomatic wilderness as far as participation in the resolution of the conflict was concerned.

The new discourse is also in sharp contrast to rabid anti-Israel rhetoric that characterised the events following the flare-up of violence on the Gaza border with Israel in May. During that tumultuous time, Sisulu called for South African Jewry to add its voice to condemnation of the Israeli Defence Force’s actions in the Gaza Strip.

The new attitude seems to be in line with what President Cyril Ramaphosa said at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies Gauteng Council conference last year.

“Does South Africa have a role to play in various parts of the world, but particularly in the Middle East? Our view is that we do have a role to play, and our foreign policy is going to be directed towards doing precisely that,” he said. He made the point of saying that this was especially important now that the country had taken its seat as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. South

Africa’s presence on the security council would “count for something”, Ramaphosa said.

Is this a shift in attitude towards Israel, or is this diplomacy at its best?

Some analysts suggest that different voices are being used for different audiences. Being on the security council might necessitate a more moderate position, while domestically there were still calls for the downgrade of the embassy.

Local analysts are not swayed by the “rhetoric”, saying that with no South African ambassador in Israel, and no plans yet to replace him, there doesn’t appear to be any significant shift in attitude.

South Africa has consistently called for a two-state solution, but has also been strongly

behind the Palestinian cause, said one analyst who didn’t want to be identified. There may be a tempered voice in diplomatic circles, but it is unlikely that there has been a major shift in attitude.

Zev Krengel of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies put any possible change in attitude down to changing geopolitical realities.

“My view is that the world’s attitude towards Israel is changing. The BRICS nations [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] are moving closer towards Israel, Africa is opening up, the Gulf states are making overtures. I’m not so sure South Africa is maturing in its stance towards Israel. I think it is the reality of changing world geopolitics. And we are the last ones left.”

“In reality Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and the Boycott Divestment Sanctions organisation, are the last four Israel-haters of the world. Everyone is realising that you need to start recognising the Jewish state.

“We have a new president who is actively seeking foreign direct investment, and there has been a very subtle, tiny shift from the DIRCO of six months ago to the DIRCO of today.

“There are fundamental issues that will never change, but there is a big difference in being pro-Palestine and being anti-Israel. Rabid anti-Israel rhetoric is being heard less – we were fast getting on the wrong side of history. It’s a process. No high-level delegation has gone to visit Israel yet, but it is just a matter of time.”


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South African Jewish Report

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Pay back the money!



Waking up last Sunday morning to headlines in the *Sunday Times* about R139 billion being stolen from Eskom coffers was enough to spoil any weekend breakfast.

In our edition last week, we had an insightful opinion piece by psychologist Judith Ancer about being realistic about load shedding and not overreacting. However, it is one thing to come to terms with blackouts,

and another to accept that there were people in government literally opening state coffers to thieves, allowing for what the *Sunday Times* has called an “orgy of looting” of this ridiculous amount. In fact, fingers are pointed at just 11 contractors... This beggars belief!

The figure is astonishing. Let me break it down, possibly more for my benefit than yours. Let’s say the cost of an upmarket house is R5 million. Imagine that R139 billion will buy you 27 800 such fabulous houses. At a guess, that’s about 50 suburbs.... Perhaps even a large city.

Now you get the picture. That money is yours and mine, and comes directly from our taxes or the hard-earned money we spent on electricity.

Right now, South Africans – most of us – are poorer than we were last year. Our expenses have skyrocketed, but our earnings have not. Everyday life is tougher, and what we were able to buy with what we earned last year, we can’t buy this year. It hurts when the petrol price goes up, but it increases anyway, and there is little we can do about it.

When the electricity and water bills keep going up, it hurts even more. The pain is made much worse in as much as we are probably paying these huge sums because of state capture and the wholesale theft of our money. What’s more, we still have power problems. In fact, they are worse than ever. It’s sickening!

Now, I’m quite open about the fact that I believe that President Cyril Ramaphosa is the best president we could have right now. As a journalist over the years, I have found Ramaphosa – long before he became president – to be a man of integrity and honesty.

However, I would not have his job for any money in the world. How do you deal with a situation in which state coffers have been fleeced like this? How do you regain trust in a party that has allowed the country to be plundered?

I do not believe we – as citizens – should accept this any longer.

I, for one, want to know what is going to be done to replace that money. I would like to see those who stole the money punished and in jail. However, much more than that, I demand that they pay back the money.

We must not have to foot the bill. We shouldn’t have to deal with the interest that would have to be paid to the international community to bail us out.

No, much of that money is probably sitting in Swiss or other bank accounts. There must be a way of getting it back, and returning it to our economy.

For once, I have found allegiance with Julius Malema in demanding that the crooks “pay back the money”.

Most of us in this country just want to live in peace and harmony, have a good job, earn a decent salary, and educate our children to become contributing members of society. This desire cuts across all sectors, race, religion, age, and economic standing.

It shouldn’t be too much to expect. It would ultimately mean that we would have all hands on deck to create the best possible economy. Sounds wonderful! However, when we are faced with R139 billion stolen from Eskom, it’s hard to be positive about achieving this South African dream.

But then, with little over two months until the elections, as a country, we have the opportunity to have our say. Let’s make it clear that we do not accept a government that steals from us, and that we expect those thieves who were in government to pay back what they took.

Call me naïve, but I expect the government to serve the people, not rob us blind. I expect it to honour its promises to look after us, and improve the economy.

Let’s make our voice heard in our vote. The government cannot let this lie. It needs to find a way forward that doesn’t take more money from us, but still puts it back into our fiscus.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Who is sticking their nose into Israeli politics?

Do Jewish lobby groups outside of Israel have the right to influence Israeli politics? This is one of many debates currently taking place in the country, following criticism by two leading American Jewish groups, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

Both spoke out against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s recent announcement that he was forging an alliance with the extremist Jewish Power party, a descendant of the late American-born Rabbi Meir Kahane’s outlawed Kach party.

AIPAC said it had a “long-standing policy not to meet with members of this racist and reprehensible party” while the AJC also called its views “reprehensible”.

But talking to Israelis – regardless of whether or not they support Netanyahu or his outreach to this extremist party – most insist that it’s not for people outside of Israel to dictate internal politics.

“Come live in Israel, go to the army, pay taxes, face the same kind of daily terror we do, and then you can vote, and say what should or should not be done here,” is a common refrain I hear.

And until now, American Jewish leaders seemed in agreement. Their policy was not to criticise Israel publicly or its politics. But the radical platform of this minority party seems to have thrown that policy into disarray.

The Jewish Power party promotes racist legislation against all non-Jews, calls for the forced removal of Palestinians, and bans intermarriage between Israelis and Arabs. Ironically, it’s not the first time a party advocating such views could enter the Knesset (parliament).

Kahane himself served one term in the 1980s as head of the Kach party before his movement was banned in Israel because of its racist mandate. He was later assassinated in New York by an Egyptian-born American.

So why would Netanyahu court such a controversial party? The answer is simple – for his political survival. Even before his closest competitors, Yair Lapid of Yesh Atid and Benny Gantz of Israel Resilience, announced last week they were merging their parties, Netanyahu had already stated he was joining forces with Jewish Power.

No sooner had he made this announcement, than Lapid and Gantz confirmed they were uniting under the banner of the Blue and White party. They said they were motivated by “national responsibility”, and that their unity arrangement would effect a rotation leadership in which Gantz would serve as prime minister for two and a half years, followed by Lapid.

The latest polls expect the Blue and White party to win 36 seats in the 120-seat Knesset compared to Netanyahu’s Likud winning 31. No wonder then that the prime minister is not taking any chances, and is forging as many alliances as he can. His invitation to bring on board Jewish Power needs to be understood in this context. As long as the party is legal – and it is – it is entitled to exist and compete in a democratic country regardless of how reprehensible its views are to most people.

After all, this is the argument upheld by those who praise the fact that at the opposite end of the Israeli political spectrum – on the extreme left – are Arab and Islamist parties. In spite of supporting Israel’s enemies and opposing the country’s existence, their presence is quoted as proof of Israel’s democracy and freedom of speech.

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier



What’s noteworthy is that AJC and AIPAC have never meted out any criticism of these Arab parties. Surely this smacks of double standards? Let’s be fair and criticise both extremes when they push the envelope too far. Or let’s keep mum on both. You cannot criticise the extreme right, and support the existence of the extreme left.

I am no fan of Kahane’s politics, but where was the condemnation from these American groups when Arab Knesset member Hanin Zoabi joined the 2010 Gaza flotilla, called Israeli soldiers “murderers”, praised Palestinians who carried out deadly attacks on Israelis, and met their families in solidarity?

Where was the condemnation when another Arab parliamentarian, Dr Bassel Ghattas, smuggled cell phones and sim cards to convicted Palestinians in prison? Or when Azmi Bishara, also a Knesset member at the time, was caught giving Hezbollah information about where its rockets were falling during the 2006 war between the sides?

Even the most liberal Scandinavian democracies would not allow political parties to call for the destruction of the country which they (supposedly) serve.

Come 9 April, once the ballots are in, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin is mandated to ask the party with the



most votes to form the next government. Unless Gantz and Lapid’s Blue and White party can garner a parliamentary majority of 61 seats, it will fail to do so. Its immediate choice of partners is nothing special – a broken-up left-wing, confused centre, and largely anti-Zionist Arab list.

This means that either the Gantz-Lapid camp will have to shift right and merge with Likud and/or other right-wing parties, or Netanyahu might still be tasked with forming the next government even if he doesn’t win first place in the polls.

Gantz and Lapid insist that if the attorney general announces that he intends to indict Netanyahu for corruption, they will not join a government he heads. That said, it’s still early days, and a lot can change.

In the last elections, Jewish Power was only a few thousand votes short of passing the threshold to enter the Knesset. This time around, it looks like it will succeed. And while every democratic country is going to have parties one doesn’t necessarily like, it’s up to the people of Israel and not those living outside her borders to decide who they want sitting in their parliament.

How parties pile up on Israel policy



OPINION

Steven Gruzd

As election day approaches on 8 May, what do the three major South African political parties say about foreign policy in the Middle East, and could it have an impact on our vote? Or, should South Africa's Jewish voters rather support smaller, more pro-Israel parties?

The ruling African National Congress (ANC) is widely tipped to win between 50% and 60% of votes cast. The ANC has squarely supported the Palestinians for decades, moving ever closer to the positions of terrorist group Hamas, and the radical anti-Israel (and frequently anti-Semitic) lobby group Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions South Africa.

Lest we forget, its 54th national conference at Nasrec in December 2017 resolved that "in order to give our practical expression of support to the oppressed people of Palestine; the ANC has unanimously resolved to direct the South African government to immediately and unconditionally downgrade the South African Embassy in Israel to a liaison office".

Although the Department of International Relations and Cooperation has dragged its heels on the downgrade, South Africa has not had an ambassador in Tel Aviv since May 2018, when incumbent Sisa Ngombane was recalled for consultations in Pretoria. His term expired in December, and he has not been replaced. The "downgrade-not-downgrade" verbal gymnastics reminds me of the "coup-not-coup" that ousted Robert Mugabe – a coup in everything but name.

The cynic in me wonders if the downgrade might happen in April, in a Hail Mary pass (one in American Football thrown in desperation by the quarterback) to woo Muslim voters away from the Democratic Alliance (DA) in the Western Cape. This could backfire, with 87.8% of the province's residents being Christian, compared to just 5.3% who are Muslim.

Interestingly though, the ANC's 2019 election manifesto, "Let's Grow South Africa Together", does not even mention the Middle East. Many pressing issues from poverty and unemployment to safety, corruption and poor growth crowd out the Palestinians. Foreign policy matters mentioned include a

focus on southern Africa, resolving conflict in South Sudan, combatting climate change, United Nations reform, and implementing the long-term vision for Africa, "Agenda 2063".

Perhaps Israel is irrelevant, or an unnecessary landmine to plant in this document. Or is this a softening of the ANC's stance?

I agree with Stephen Grootes in the *Daily Maverick*, "With its manifesto, the ANC has stabbed its flag into the middle ground of our politics, attempting once more to be a party for everyone, with policies which speak to most people. That is always a difficult political feat to achieve, especially in a country as polarised as South Africa is these days."

The DA, the second largest party in Parliament (89 out of 400 seats, to the ANC's 249), launched its manifesto on 23 February. It echoes the ANC's in substance if not in style. It also does not refer to Israel, the Palestinians or the Middle East.

One trait the DA consistently demonstrates is inconsistency. Party leader Mmusi Maimane drew flak for visiting Israel in January 2017 – where he met Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu but not Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas – but harshly criticised Israel over the Gaza border violence in May 2018.

The DA's support for Palestinians (or Israel) is at best sporadic. It opposed the downgrade (calling for a parliamentary ratification), clings to a two-state solution, and South Africa as a Mid-East mediator.

But it suspended DA Johannesburg mayoral committee member for health, Dr Mpho Phalatse, for saying that she and the city were "friends of Israel".

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), led by firebrand "commander-in-chief" Julius Malema, makes no bones about where it stands in its 2019 manifesto.

"The EFF government will implement incremental boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against the apartheid state of Israel as a concrete form of solidarity with the Palestinians to end the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel."

Not much nuance there, exhibiting typical inflammatory and populist slogans.

The EFF manifesto usurps the ANC's usual laundry list of foreign policy issues with a more populist ring. Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Western Sahara (occupied by Morocco) get a mention.

The manifesto says, "The EFF government will protect Zimbabwe from imperialist threats and sanctions". It adds, "The EFF government will lead a progressive programme to reject the foreign, particularly Western, domination of African economies as well as so-called neoliberal globalisation."

Several smaller parties, however, support Israel.

The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) called Phalatse's suspension "baseless and cowardly", adding "Christians across all the denominations understand that their faith is non-existent without Israel. It is for this reason that no true Christian can take up arms against Israel. The ACDP also notes that in Syria, just across the border from Israel, hundreds of thousands are being massacred, but South Africa's ambassador hasn't been recalled. There is no noise about Damascus. Why Israel?" It has consistently gone into bat for the Jewish state.

At the event by the Jewish community to honour his 90th birthday in October last year, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leader Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi called the embassy downgrade "short-sighted and regressive", and boldly stated "I cannot, and will not, hide the fact that I have had a long friendship with Jews in both South Africa and Israel... so when people denigrate me for supporting Israel, I pity their ignorance."

Buthelezi went to Israel in September 2015, along with party leaders of the ACDP, Congress of the People, and Freedom Front Plus at the invitation of the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI).

Buthelezi said, "I have no shame in telling the truth about Israel or about my friendship with the Jewish community. Indeed, I am proud."

Manifestos may be ultimately irrelevant in the psychology of voting, but smaller parties that defend Israel consistently may be a more prudent place for you to place your cross.

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

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Peace talks prospects almost nil, says Israeli security specialist

Major General Yaakov Amidror is former national security advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. During his time in office, Amidror participated in high-level talks with United States officials over the Iranian nuclear programme, and led efforts to restore relations with Turkey following the Gaza flotilla incident. **Simon Apfel** asks him about Israel's current security situation shortly after he arrived in South Africa for Sinai Indaba.

Is the two-state solution viable? Behind closed doors, is it still being seriously considered?

Personally, I believe this should be the solution to the conflict. So do many others, perhaps most others. Currently, however, the level of disagreement and distrust between the two sides is so high, the chances of bringing them both to the table are almost nil. But who knows what will happen in the future, or what the new peace plan the Americans are putting together will bring about?

How might the so-called "deal of the century" that America is cooking up be different to previous peace plans?

I don't know – no one knows much about the plan outside President Trump's inner circle. But, from snippets of information that have been relayed, I understand the new plan will give other Arab Middle Eastern countries a bigger share

in implementation. More importantly, they will have a bigger role in convincing Palestinians to come to the negotiating table. They will also have a role in convincing Israel that an agreement will have implications not just for relations with Palestinians, but for relations with other countries in the region.

In some sense, Trump is clearly pro-Israel. Do you think he is good for Israel?

It doesn't matter what I think. He is the president of US, and Israel needs to work with him. I didn't like it when Israelis criticised Barack Obama when he was president, and I don't like it when they criticise Trump now.

How do you break the cycle of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Obviously we have an imperfect partner for peace on other side, but is there anything Israel can do, unilaterally, to arrest the current trend? Today we

have real conflict only with Gaza. There are sporadic terrorist attacks in the West Bank, but it's generally calm. Will it remain that way? I don't know. Gaza is out of Israel's control. We fully retreated in 2005. It's a foreign, hostile territory that we have to deal with as we would deal with any other hostile country.

Every few years, there seems to be a war breaking out between Israel and Gaza. Is there any way to stop this?

I wouldn't call these wars. The other side doesn't have tanks, helicopters, artillery, and so on. These are operations. They are big operations, and from time to time, they are needed. I hope the duration between the operations will be longer in the future. But we don't have a good solution to Gaza. Within 400 square kilometres, there are almost two million people, and they can't leave the country. They don't have industry, they don't have any good economic prospects, even the greenhouses that were

left behind when Israel pulled out were destroyed. It's a bad place to live, but it's not our responsibility any more.

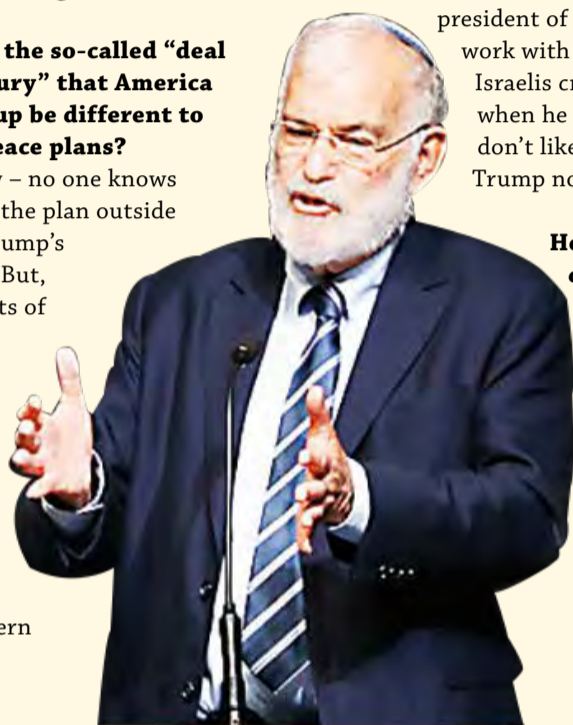
Removing the blockade would help stimulate the economy, but would it come at a security risk?

If Gaza wasn't controlled by Hamas – whose primary focus is to build its military capabilities rather than protect its people's well-being – it would be a different story. It's important to know that the Israeli blockade was put in place only after Hamas came to power and made its intentions towards Israel known publicly loudly and clearly – that it aims to destroy Israel. We are doing what is needed to limit Hamas's ability to do this.

What is the biggest threat to Israel's national security?

No question, it's Iran, and its attempts to build nuclear capability. This is something Israel won't allow to happen.

Continued on page 9>>



Major General Yaakov Amidror

How to be happy at a funeral

DEVON MOGG

Disconsolation. Despondency. Hopelessness. A notable absence of *joie de vivre* (enjoyment of life). Modern society seems permeated with a sense of overwhelming dissatisfaction. Often this dissatisfaction tips over into full-blown depression. We are likely all too familiar with the surge in people taking prescription medication for depression. Over the past decade, spending on these pharmaceuticals has increased more than 60%.

Yet, we are also privileged to live in a time of unprecedented wealth, unparalleled medical advances, and extraordinary advances in technology that are making our lives easier by the day. So why are we also the most depressed and unfulfilled generation in history? Why are we so desperately unhappy?

Dr David Pelcovitz, Professor of Psychology at Yeshiva University and the author of several best-selling books on emotional well-being, has a few answers.

It begins with what he considers a huge, society-wide misconception of the meaning of "happiness".

"An inherent problem we have with our conceptualisation of happiness is the word itself," says Pelcovitz. "Happiness, etymologically, is related to the term 'hap', as in 'happenstance', 'mishap', and so on. In other words, luck."

The entire foundation of the way that we think about happiness, explains Pelcovitz, at least in the English-speaking world,

leads us to believe that true happiness is sheer, dumb luck.

"In this paradigm, the only way to be happy is to have all our external circumstances align in just the right fashion. It is out of our control. We say, 'he is lucky to have his health', 'she has been blessed with good fortune', 'they were just in the right place at the right time'."

We are unhappy, says Pelcovitz, because our notion of happiness is rooted in a notion of self-gratification born of external factors that we have no control over.

So how should we think about happiness?

Pelcovitz draws out a definition of happiness from the Hebrew word, *simcha*.

"*Simcha* can be broken down into two words, *sham-moach* – literally, where your brain is."

According to this definition, with its echoes of the more modern concept of "mindfulness", happiness is about presence of mind, a sense of being in the moment. With this in mind, we can understand why



At Sinai Indaba Cape Town last weekend, Rabbi Osher Deren helped Cyril Swiel lay tefillin

being wealthy doesn't equate to being happy. "Once basic needs are met, there is no correlation between wealth and happiness," says Pelcovitz. "In fact, many wealthy people

It goes without saying that one does not feel joy at a funeral but one can feel a sense of purpose and even fulfilment – a state of sham-moach.

are distinctly unhappy. Since being truly happy is really more about a state of mindfulness."

Are there any specific states of mind that lend themselves to happiness? Pelcovitz talks at length about what he calls "the three Fs" – family, friends, and faith.

"When we are present, living in the moment, with the people we love and the people that love us, we are at our happiest. Psychological research bears this out."

In terms of the third "F" – faith – Pelcovitz says that intellectual recognition of G-d's existence as the omnipotent and benevolent creator is a source of profound joy.

"The great Chazon Ish put it succinctly: 'For he who knows

the light of truth there is no sadness in the world'."

But in a more general way, he explains, being happy, *sameach, sham-moach*, is about living in the present while maintaining a serene, non-judgemental outlook.

"You need to feel that you are in a place of flow with the inner essence of yourself. This should be done without judgement, and in a way that you are not harried by the constant rush of life."

Pelcovitz explains that achieving this state of *sham-moach* is really dependant on acknowledging that you are doing exactly what you are supposed to be doing in any given moment.

A fascinating outcome of this approach to happiness is that one can actually be in a state of *simcha* even during some of life's most tragic or sombre occasions – a funeral, for example. A funeral might be precisely where you need to be at some given moment.

Going back to the "3 Fs" – comforting friends and family who have just experienced a tragedy, and having faith that there is a purely benevolent creator of the universe who oversees everything and has everyone's best interests at heart, can lead one to a state of deep *simcha*.

It goes without saying that one does not feel joy at a funeral but one can feel a sense of purpose and even fulfilment – a state of *sham-moach*.

• Catch Dr David Pelcovitz at Sinai Indaba (2-3 March) at the Sandton Convention Centre, where he will be presenting talks on "Dealing with anxiety" and "Parenting in the age of pornography".



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein and Dr David Pelcovitz

>>Continued from page 8

Are you for or against the Iran nuclear deal?

I think it's a bad deal. I believe the Americans had the opportunity to make a better deal, only history will determine why they didn't succeed.

Is no deal better than a bad deal?

No question – the deal gave Iran something it can't get for itself – legitimacy. The deal gives it the legitimacy to continue its long-range missile programme, and to develop the next generation of centrifuges. When the deal expires, it gives it the legitimacy to continue its nuclear project.

Former Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot and other prominent members of Israel's intelligence and national security establishment came out in support of the agreement. They argued that, in the absence of a renewed deal, in 10 years' time, Iran can restart the nuclear programme, but in the meantime, Israel can focus on other hostile fronts – Hezbollah for example.

My view is different. The deal should have curbed the missile programme and centrifuges. You must realise that once these centrifuges are developed, Iran will be able to enrich uranium 20 times faster.

Why do you think Iran hates Israel? What's at the root of this antagonism?

It's a combination of ideology. First, it's a religious belief that Jews shouldn't have an independent state in the Middle East. Second, it's a strategic calculation that Israel is the only country strong enough to contain Iran's hegemonic ambitions in the region. By the way, because of the Iranian threat, Arab Sunni countries understand more and

more that Israel is an ally, not an enemy.

Would those reasons apply equally to Saudi Arabia, with whom Israel has (albeit unofficial) burgeoning diplomatic ties and various backchannel agreements?

Saudis aren't trying to be the superpower in the Middle East, to take control of other countries. If you look at the status quo, the current arms race in the region, it was initiated by Iran. The Saudis are trying to buy friends in the region, but this is more of a defensive stance in response to Iran.

Thank you for not making me a man (women only)

RABBANIT YEMIMA MIZRACHI

As they have done throughout Jewish history, women join together and fight for the integrity of the home. Worldwide, women's networks are springing up, as women everywhere come together to fight for love and for life. Strong, passionate, supportive women are holding things together. In this heartfelt talk, Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi, the most popular female Jewish educator in Israel and recently voted one of its most influential women, explores the awe-inspiring power of femininity.

3 MAR | 11:00

ROOM 2

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Is Hezbollah Israel's most dangerous enemy at the moment?

Hezbollah is an extension of Iran, and with 130 000 rockets and missiles stationed right on Israel's border, it constitutes an enormous threat. Iran is also seeking to build an independent war machine in Syria. Israel is doing whatever it takes to stop this from materialising.

The ancient book that answers modern dilemmas

DEVON MOGG

Adusty book on a dusty shelf. This is the way so many perceive the Torah. Why should a 3 000-year-old document dictate moral standards and the way you live your life? Surely the Torah cannot answer contemporary moral quandaries which could not have been conceptualised until modern times?

Why has the Torah not simply been relegated to the doldrums of history along with other outdated moral codes and objectionable religious texts like the *Code of Hammurabi*? Why is it not simply a mere literary curiosity aka *The Iliad*?

Why does the Torah continue to inspire millions, perhaps billions, and why (if at all) should we consider it relevant to our 21st century lives?

Rabbi Dr Akiva Tatz, who is in South Africa for Sinai Indaba, has a simple and forthright answer.

"The Torah is still relevant because it is a timeless document, given for all time. The principles are contained in the Torah, but not the applications. As time goes by, the same principles apply to different applications."

This idea finds expression in Tatz's own field of expertise: medicine. "As time goes by, new treatments, new details, new technologies are discovered, but the principles of medicine remain the same; the human body remains the same, even though it moves through new circumstances. Similarly, when you come across a new situation, a new technology, a new ethical or moral dilemma, though the Torah may not speak about the details, it does contain the principles."

Applying the Torah is thus a living, dynamic process, as epitomised by the Oral Torah. "The point of the oral tradition is to keep us involved and alive and dynamically defining the Torah. If all the answers were contained in an envelope you could open, or something written down and carved in stone, then we would be irrelevant."

In other words, applying the Torah requires us to be personally involved, not just blindly follow a dusty book on the shelf. "We are partners in Torah, and in creation itself. The whole beauty of the process is that as new issues arise, we do not have an answer we can unwrap or look up. We apply the principles and methodology that have been passed down from Sinai and come up with the answer ourselves, and thereby become equal partners in the creation of Torah through history."

The Torah's applicability comes into particularly

sharp relief when it comes to dealing with moral dilemmas. "How do you respond when there are two or more options which appear right. In medical school they teach you the technicalities, the plumbing. But they don't tell you what's right and wrong. For that you need Torah."

Tatz emphasises that while there is always an answer in the Torah, we are not always able to fathom it. "The Talmud itself sometimes comes to a conclusion of

teku – basically, we

don't know what

to do here.

Sometimes we

are not on the

level to resolve

the dilemma,

and we have

to admit that

we don't know.

However, it is

very important

to know that

even though

we don't have



Rabbi Dr Akiva Tatz

the right answer, we still know what to do – there are specific Torah principles we apply in handling situations of doubt."

A classic moral dilemma many are grappling with today is whether eating meat is morally justified, given the cruel way in which animals are industrially farmed.

"I'm not sure there is a moral justification," says Tatz. "First of all, there is an explicit Torah prohibition against causing harm to an animal. There is no question about that. It's also important to bear in mind that in the original perfect world that G-d created [before the flood], people were not allowed to kill animals and eat them. It's a brutal thing to do."

So how can we eat meat at all?

Tatz calls it a "concession to the fallen nature of the world".

"It is very much a non-ideal state," he says. "In the Messianic age, we will no longer eat meat. Some vegetarians sense this spiritual truth. You need to be a wise person to eat meat. There is a Chassidic idea that when you eat the meat, you elevate it. In turn, the animal you are eating elevates the plant world that it consumed, and the plant world elevates the inanimate world, and so you're elevating the whole system, and incorporating it into your being. But that's only if you're eating meat and using the energy you get from it to do good in the world. If you eat a chicken, then do something bad, you just destroyed the chicken."

• Catch Rabbi Dr Tatz at Sinai Indaba (2-3 March) at the Sandton Convention Centre, where he will be talking about moral dilemmas in everyday life, and the new genetics.

At Sinai Indaba Cape Town last weekend, Rebbetzin Sara Bayla Wineberg and Rabbi David Aaron gave a special batmitzvah shiur



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Nida Degutiene is a top expert in the field of citizenship reinstatement. Having lived in Israel for 5 years and frequently visiting South Africa for 10 years, Nida has acquired the highest level of credibility among the Jewish community. Besides an MA degree in law, Nida holds a Global MBA from IDC Herzliya in Israel. Nida is passionate about Jewish traditions, history and cuisine, she is the world-renowned author of the book: *A Taste of Israel*.

Feeding frum families on a budget

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

The cost of living is a struggle we all face – and more now than ever in South Africa. But how do big families who keep kosher manage to keep their grocery costs down? We ask two bargain-hunting moms of five.

“It is possible to keep costs down even when you’re keeping a kosher home,” says Adrienne Bogatie. As the owner and blogger of *Kashering Your Life*, Bogatie helps families manage their grocery expenditure.

“Not only kosher people are struggling, everyone is,” she says. “But my budget for kosher families is slightly higher than for non-kosher ones.

“Including toiletries, I budget a maximum grocery spend of R2 500 to R3 000 per person per month for kosher families. But, you can get away with R1 200 per person if you’re really frugal or getting assistance.”

Personally overseeing the food costs of a strictly kosher family of seven – her husband, herself, and five children – Bogatie is all too familiar with the costs of kosher living.

“About 15 years ago, we just weren’t making ends meet,” she recalls. “The business my husband was in went insolvent, I was pregnant, and we had no money. It started from there – just having to make do. I learned to make soup from the peels of the vegetables I was serving.”

Bogatie began following American blogs about bargain hunting, but struggled to find information that applied to the South African market. “So I started looking at coupons available in South Africa,” she says. “If you know how to use loyalty points, apps, and online shopping, you can reduce your budget hugely.”

She recommends two apps, SMARTnSAVE, which allows you to get cash back on your till slips at all major retailers, and Wuhu Deals, which offers mobile coupons and rewards. “You can use these apps in conjunction with rewards programmes specific to particular stores,” she says.

Bogatie also advocates envelope budgeting. “Once your big bills are covered, only use cash – put cards away. You draw a certain amount of cash every month, and put it into different envelopes to cover different costs. That way there’s no impulse buying because you can’t.”

“Buying in bulk in South Africa is not always cheaper,” she says. “The South African pricing market seems to trend more towards the popularity of a product. For example, in terms of sugar, 2.5kg is actually cheaper per kilogram than a 5kg pack.”

If you’re buying fruit and vegetables in bulk where you can sometimes save, make sure you use everything before it goes bad, otherwise consider splitting purchases with friends or family.

“Black Friday is also a big thing,” she says. “This is when I take my three eldest kids, and we all buy dry goods in bulk.”

When going shopping, Bogatie stresses the importance of timing and of sticking to a shopping list. “The worst time to go is when you’re in a hurry or feeling hungry because you buy on impulse, and that costs a lot

extra.

“Don’t drive around too much either, go somewhere where they have most of your stores, both for convenience and to save on petrol. Going into a store costs a fortune. It’s much cheaper to shop online.”

Meal planning also cuts your budget, she says. You’re able to narrow down your shopping list, and even plan meals around specials. “Also, remember that toiletries are standard, so it pays to buy from places that offer discounts.”

Bogatie is skilled at making meals go further. “Fill your kids up on food that goes a long way by using low GI foods. Mash beans and lentils into food so fussy kids can’t see them, and you’ll bulk food up with healthier options that keep them fuller for longer.

“Look at foods that aren’t high in sugar, as sugary foods make kids hungrier, earlier. It’s about using less to make more. We drink only water at the dinner table, which is also healthier, and my kids know that cold drinks and treats are apportioned on Shabbos.”

Also strictly kosher, Dinah

Unterslak has always been money conscious. Now that she and her husband have five kids aged between three and 14, her saving savvy is more vital than ever.

“I shop by special,” she says. “I’m a huge bargain hunter, so I buy top non-perishable brands in bulk when they’re on special, regardless of whether it’s at a store I usually go to. Our kids aren’t in nappies anymore, but you can get a R50 to R60 discrepancy on nappies, so you really have to find specials there.”

Unterslak also loves rewards programmes. “For example, at the end of the month, I’ll have about R350 on my Dis-Chem points.”

And, she is proactive about cutting costs. “I created a WhatsApp price busters group. There are probably more than 100 women on it who just post specials. There’s 100 eyes and ears on everything from a special at Food Lover’s Market to a Lou Harvey sale.”

Unterslak also advocates meal

planning and minimal shopping sprees. I try do a big monthly shop, and then I place a six-week meat order for dinners from Monday to Thursday. I’ve got three freezers,” she

weakness in terms of spending on fruit and vegetables.

Unterslak also hosts Shabbos meals almost every week. “Yomtov and Shabbos entertaining is massively expensive, it’s a different animal,” she says. “Just a roast is R250, and that’s just a brisket. I’ll buy a brisket as opposed to a flap though, and you can buy a reasonable whole frozen chicken as opposed to buying braai packs. I find that fish is just as expensive as meat.”

Aside from kosher grocery bills, big families also have to contend with the costs of private school fees for multiple children. “School is stiflingly expensive,” says Unterslak. “Jewish schools are very open to subsidies if you can’t afford it, though. On top of that, you need basic medical aid. So, before you start the month, you’re on R40 000!” she says.

“That’s why I’m such a big bargain hunter.”

Marriage: the secret

RABBI SIMON JACOBSON

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.

3 MAR | 12:00

ROOM 2

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laughs.

“We also keep Chalav Yisrael, which is an additional cost. On Sundays, I do a Woolworths shop. That’s my one

The guardian angel at Victoria Falls

TALI FEINBERG

When the Israeli Embassy in South Africa heard that a young Israeli had died at Victoria Falls two weeks ago, they immediately called Gail van Jaarsveldt, who has since been dubbed “the guardian angel of Victoria Falls”.

She took charge of ensuring that adventurous Israeli Ofer Cohen’s body made it back to his family in Israel, and that Jewish law and tradition were followed while doing so.

“It all started when a different Israeli passed away suddenly at Victoria Falls Airport in December 2018. Gail lives in the area, and happened to be there. She made a promise to his distraught widow that she would do everything in her power to get her husband’s body back to Israel as soon as possible with all Halacha observed,” says Rabbi Eitan Ash of Zaka (a voluntary community emergency response team in Israel). “This she did, dedicating every waking moment to making it happen.”

“When we heard there was the possibility that another Israeli had died at Victoria Falls, the first person we contacted was Gail,” says Ash. “From the second we contacted her, she went into action. We and the Israeli Embassy were very much in the background supporting her while she made things happen. It wasn’t about fitting it into her day, it became her day. She worked on it non-stop until Ofer’s body was repatriated, purely out of the goodness of her heart.”

“I was interested as to why Gail, a total stranger who incidentally was not Jewish, spent 24 hours each day from time of death until repatriation, ensuring that the deceased was afforded the correct treatment of *kibud hameis* (honouring the deceased),” wrote David Weber of the Chevrah Kadisha.

As it turns out, “Many years ago, a young Israeli was killed at Victoria Falls. Gail recalls how her Israeli son-in-law spent the days after death

ensuring that the deceased was treated with care and respect, and that all efforts were made to ensure that repatriation was not delayed. Gail had such clear memories of the previous death, she even accessed the Chabad website to ensure that her actions and behaviour were acceptable.”

Although she does not do this as a profession, (she owns retail outlets and a jewellery studio), Van Jaarsveldt dedicated three full days in both instances to get the Israelis’ bodies back to Israel as soon as possible.

“She ensured every form was signed, every stamp was issued, and every loop was closed. She went back and forth from the police station to the mortuary, even to court, ensuring that autopsies or cremations were prevented. She also paid what was needed out of her own pocket,” says Ash.

Meanwhile, when the young Israeli’s family heard about his death, his mother was due to fly to Zimbabwe. “But when Gail contacted us and



Gail van Jaarsveldt

assured us she had everything under control, we realised that my mother-in-law did not need to go to Zimbabwe,” says Inbar Cohen, Ofer’s brother-in-law. “She saved us that trip, and if it wasn’t for her, it would have taken a lot longer to bring Ofer’s body back to Israel.”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Zimbabwe, Van Jaarsveldt says that she had never met Ofer, but feels inextricably tied to him. “The last communication I had with his mother was that ‘from this moment on, I am family’, an incredible privilege and honour,” she says. “I know most of Ofer’s young friends here in Victoria Falls, and he seems to have made more friends in the short two months he was here than I have.

“My involvement came about when I received a call from [Deputy Ambassador] Ayellet Black at the Israeli Embassy in Pretoria. I then spent the next few days at the police station, assisting with

the body recovery [which in itself was a major exercise] going through all the documentation for the repatriation of the body, the waiver for the autopsy, ensuring that Jewish tradition and beliefs were followed as much as possible under the circumstances, confirming facts surrounding this incident, and Ofer’s time in Zimbabwe, speaking to various people, meeting his friends, and generally liaising with all concerned.”

Van Jaarsveldt says it is difficult to convey “the raw emotions and shock that shook this small community with Ofer’s death. The local community, whilst not knowing Ofer, were very sympathetic. Everyone involved was aware of Jewish traditions and beliefs, and did whatever was possible to assist and observe them.”

For example, “When Ofer’s body was loaded on Ethiopian Airlines, and the doors were shut, there was a technical problem with the plane. It was touch and go as to whether the plane was able to leave and eventually, the engineers sorted the problem out. The whole airport [airlines and ground crews] were abuzz about this. Everyone was saying that Ofer’s spirit wanted to stay in Vic Falls! It was very emotional when the aircraft took off, knowing that Ofer was taking his last flight in the skies he loved so much.”

Van Jaarsveldt worked closely with others even after the body was repatriated. “Ofer’s close friends Ralph and Mutsa were on hand to take stock of all Ofer’s belongings to get them back to his family. We put out a request through the Chevrah Kadisha in Harare for assistance in this regard, and within an hour there were volunteers to carry Ofer’s belongings back to Israel.

“I don’t think there is a single person in the town or townships of Victoria Falls who did not know about Ofer’s untimely death. In the days following his repatriation, I have had phone calls and messages from the head of our regional police, the registrar who completed part of the repatriation paperwork, the rescue team, the funeral home, many of his friends, and Jewish families living in the region. Everyone wanted to know if Ofer’s body had arrived back in Israel, and if his family were able to lay him to rest in his homeland. He may be gone, but he certainly will never be forgotten!

“I don’t know many people, Jewish or not, who would put their lives on hold for someone they didn’t even know,” says Ash. “She really was our soldier on the ground. It renews my belief in humankind.”

Israel's lax attitude to lice

JUDITH SUDILOVSKY

Debbie, a mother of two girls from South Africa who moved to Israel more than a decade ago, is willing to talk about lice. But only on the condition that her real name not be used. With family in South Africa, she doesn't want the stigma of lice attached to her name.

In Israel, lice is just another part of life with children. So, Debbie can easily compare notes with friends and parents about the trial, tribulation, and treatment for getting lice out of her daughters' long hair.

"I only have one memory of lice growing up. I was sitting out in our garden, and my mother was combing out my hair in the sunlight. When we had lice, [people reacted in] horror, and we all stayed home from school," says Debbie, 40. "But here, that is not the case. My kids get lice almost every week. I have to look for them all the time. It is very lax here. My kids talk about it. One of my daughters just told me how she pulled a louse out of her friend's hair. She took a tissue and killed it."

While that anecdote may seem gross to South Africans, in Israel, people are not judgemental about such things.

"In South Africa, there is definitely a stigma. Here, it is expected, and you are not judged," says Debbie, admitting that is still difficult for her not to be judgemental. "Logically, I know my kids are not doing anything [wrong] to catch lice. It's nobody's fault. I try not to show them how disgusted I am."

By law, teachers in Israel are forbidden to call parents or to tell children they have lice. The norm in most schools is that a notice goes out every month or so noting an outbreak of lice and asking parents to please do a lice treatment on their children. But nobody checks that it has been done.

"I find it depressing when I clean my daughters' hair, and then the next day, they go to school and do the same thing with the same kids, and get lice all over again," says Debbie. "When I see they have lice, I kiss my evening goodbye. I put on my girls' favourite TV show, and let them watch all they want while I comb out their hair."

In South Africa, the United States, and Canada, schools enforce a no-lice policy, and children found to have lice are not permitted back in school without a letter confirming that they are lice-free. In Israel, children with lice are just part of the everyday reality at school.

"My kids would never stay home because of lice. It really bugs me when I try to be a responsible parent and others don't. It's not a part [of living in Israel] that I particularly like, much like [losing my] Sundays. I didn't particularly choose that, but it's part of being here," says Debbie.

Irit Livne, the Supervisor of Health and Health Education at the Ministry of Education, says that prohibiting children with lice from going to school punishes them for something they have no control over.

"In Israel, we have the law of universal education which guarantees education for every child. The child can't be faulted for having lice. You are punishing the child and not the parent if you don't allow the child to come to school," she says. "It's the parent's responsibility to treat their child for lice. We try to educate about personal hygiene and cleanliness, but we are forbidden to offend or insult anyone."

A teacher does have the discretion, however, says Livne, to involve a regional social worker if she sees an extreme case of lice infestation to determine if there is child-negligence involved. A teacher can also take a parent aside diplomatically and suggest that they check their child for lice, as long as it is done with tact and sensitivity and not publicly.

"It's a problem, but it's the parents' responsibility to take care of it," Livne says. "It's

an issue of mutual respect and responsibility."

Amy Kolinsky-Dover, 46, originally from Canada and the mother of four boys, says it took her a while to overcome her Canadian sensitivity to lice.

"Where I come from, there is more of a stigma to having lice, but I've become more relaxed about it with my four boys. I got used to the culture. It was a process."

While most Israeli parents take care of their children's lice on their own, lice-treatment salons have opened up in Israel.

Most parents from English-speaking countries get into a tizzy when they find that their children have lice, and immediately treat them to get rid of the nits, says Devorah Ashkenazi, 31, the

mother of three young children, who moved to Israel from New York nine years ago. She owns Lice Busters treatment salon in Jerusalem. The majority of her clients are English-speaking immigrants.

"Israelis are more laid back, and ask what the point of treatment is if the kids will just get it again. But it won't go away if you don't treat it. People here kind of give up, and feel like there is no end to it," she says. "For us [Anglos], we are willing to spend money to clear the lice up. For Israelis, it is a luxury to clean it up professionally."

In Tel Aviv, native-born Keren Friedman, 49, recalls that when she was in school, there were regular lice-checks conducted by the school nurse,

and a note was sent to the parents of any student who had lice. But then the school nurses were done away with, and so were the lice-checks.

"Now, if a kindergarten teacher sees that a child has lice, the most she can do is write a general email or WhatsApp. There are some parents who are very alert to treat the lice, and others who let their kids walk around with lice," says Friedman, who in 2012 opened up her lice-treatment salon Wish and Wash. "It crosses all borders, lice has no connection to any socio-economic, ethnic, or religious group."

Her own clients range in age from babies to grandparents, and though there are many immigrants, native Israelis – Jewish and Arab – are also starting to come to her salon.



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Community members come out fighting for Rav Silberhaft

TALI FEINBERG

On reading that the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) is closing down its country communities department and bringing Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft's tenure to an end in December, scores of community members expressed a need for answers.

"This cannot happen. He is one of our greatest assets... our leaders must come up with a plan to retain Moshe," said Benzie Joffe. "The work Rabbi Silberhaft does is even more important at this time in South Africa than in earlier years," said Dave Apter. Johnny Amoils wrote, "One needs to live in a country community to truly understand the significance and importance of having someone such as Rabbi Silberhaft to turn to whenever he is needed. It's a very complex and often difficult task to keep our doors open."

Ida Horwitz said that Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, "has worked for years to keep the lights on in shuls across the country. To negate his importance and the importance of Jewish communities outside of the bounds of Glenhazel and Sea Point is not okay. Please G-d, those without an appreciation of what he does will decide to consult those who do."

Said David Shill, "The board should have put a process in place which would allow all stakeholders, especially country community residents, to give their input. It makes me wonder if this decision somehow has been affected by the state of the trust funds that were turned over by the communities, the purpose of which was to ensure that cemeteries and congregant needs were looked after in perpetuity. Even if this is financial, removing the position of Rabbi Silberhaft, in no way, shape, or form solves the real issue, which is to have a dedicated human being that lives a life of service to his congregants."

Jason Shapiro said that Silberhaft united people, and supported individuals in believing that they were included in the global Jewish community. "He is the voice of the silent, and the keeper of the forgotten," he said.

Others questioned what had happened, and was going to happen, to country community funds, and demanded answers from the SAJBD. Ivor Blumenthal was just one of the people who called for "solid and accountable forensic work to be done here".

Silberhaft encouraged community members not to panic, saying that he had faith that the board would find a solution.

Shaun Zagnoev, the National Chairperson of the SAJBD, said that "certain misconceptions had arisen". He wants to "allay concerns that community members have expressed about the future of country communities".

Zagnoev stressed that the SAJBD did not intend to abandon Jewish community members still living in the smaller towns and rural areas of South Africa. "We are committed to

ensuring that the services provided by the country communities department continue to be performed under whatever new system is ultimately put in place."



"He is the voice of the silent, and the keeper of the forgotten."

Rabbi Silberhaft was involved in the planning and discussion process, Zagnoev said. "It is more than likely that whatever new system is put in place, he will be intrinsically involved in it."

Zagnoev said that an important part of the department's work was to assist individual communities to safeguard their residual assets through the establishment of trust funds in the name of the defunct congregation.

"These trusts are administered

by Beyachad [an independent organisation] on behalf of the defunct congregation, and some of them are regularly audited. While individual trusts may differ from one another in certain details, the basis of the arrangement is that the capital base of each remains untouched, save for the annual increments necessary to keep up with inflation.

"In accordance with each trust deed, the accruing interest is used to maintain the cemetery of that particular town, helping to fund the work of the department in general, and sometimes assisting former members of the congregation still living in those areas, or supporting other Jewish communal bodies."

Aside from the country communities department, he said the SAJBD received no portion whatsoever of the funds. "In terms of how the trusts operate, Beyachad provides an administrative service and the SAJBD plays a facilitating

role, but the actual core business of each trust is the responsibility of the trustees themselves. To date this year, meetings have been held for ten of the twelve trusts that the board oversees, and meetings for the two remaining will be taking place shortly.

"All trustees participated in these meetings, and decisions were taken regarding disbursement for the upcoming year. We are satisfied that the trusts are being run in full compliance with the terms of the various trust deeds. The relevant documentation is available for inspection by those, such as present and former congregants, who have a genuine interest in the matter."

Zagnoev said that the restructuring process would entail consultation with country communities. He said regional boards were fully involved in the process.

Zagnoev said that the possibility of the department becoming a separate, financially self-sustaining

body was also being considered.

"We are exploring a range of possible options, among them having the needs of country Jewry dealt with on a regional rather than a national basis. This structure already exists, and runs to a large extent independently for certain country communities in the Western Cape. This might serve as a possible model for other regions.

"Certain of the country communities have historically fallen under the jurisdiction of the Cape Board. These communities are an important and unique part of the tapestry and history that make-up the South African Jewish community," said Cape Board Chairperson Rael Kaimowitz.

"The work the Cape Board does in maintaining the cemeteries of these communities and reaching out and including them in our activities wherever possible will continue, and is likely to be unaffected by any developments nationally," he said.

Yiddish alive and well amongst international Jewry

TALI FEINBERG

Since the end of the Holocaust, Yiddish has been classified as a dying, dead, or endangered language. But around the world there are many people who claim the opposite is true.

Jennifer Young of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research argues that we should not be talking about a rebirth of Yiddish, but a living language. "Let's get one thing straight, Yiddish is not a dying language. While UNESCO [the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation] officially classifies Yiddish as an 'endangered' language in Europe, its status in New York is hardly in doubt," she writes.

"According to some estimates, Yiddish is the fifth most commonly spoken language in Brooklyn, behind English, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese. In the Brooklyn neighbourhoods of Williamsburg and Borough Park alone, the number of Chassidic Jews for whom Yiddish is the primary language is well over 150 000. While census data on Yiddish is notoriously skewed [census numbers do not include speakers under five years of age, a major Chassidic demographic], the numbers indicate that Yiddish is here to stay. Even UNESCO recently held a conference titled, 'The Permanence of Yiddish'.

"While Yiddish is no longer the language of secular mass culture, its current 'post-vernacular' status among non-Chassidic Jews means that the people who engage with Yiddish do so not as passive consumers, but as active builders of their own communities," she says.

Indeed, in New York, the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* has just hit Broadway. In Massachusetts, the National Yiddish Book Center has a repository of more than a million volumes and national membership of about 30 000 people. In Chicago, at a screening of Yiddish film *Leah, Teddy & the Mandolin* last year, one viewer's response was, "Yiddish is our collective soul."

In Cape Town, an archive of Yiddish music is stored at Stellenbosch University, a Yiddish Song Festival played to acclaim for ten years, and a Yiddish language course has added another workshop to its calendar as the thirst for learning the language continues unabated. It appears that interest in the "lost" language of Yiddish is growing around the world – but why?

Aaron Lansky, the founder of the National Yiddish Book Center, told *Harvard Review* that interest in the language – for scholarly reasons, nostalgia, ethnic pride, or connection



to a half-forgotten past – is greater than ever. As evidence, he points to the enthusiasm for Klezmer music, Yiddish theatre, and vintage films, in addition to his own enterprise.

The *Guardian* reports that beyond the very religious, Yiddish has been undergoing a marked revival, especially among young people, for more than 20 years. There are reportedly more than 100 colleges and universities around the world teaching Yiddish.

"The main driver of this revival is the fact that as Jewish populations become more diverse and Jewish identity less connected to religion and more to ethnicity, Jews are increasingly looking for alternative ways to be Jewish," writes Antony Lerman.

"It's common now to flesh out an alternative Jewish identity with a passion for Klezmer, an interest in Yiddish theatre, novels, poetry, and films exploring aspects of the European Jewish past, and through participation in cultural festivals in which Yiddish song and performance are major components," he says.

In fact, learning Yiddish is one way to build Jewish continuity. "The majority of American Jews are descendants of Yiddish-speaking immigrants. Engagement with Eastern European Jewish culture links young people to previous generations as well as to Jewish communities around the world," writes Rokhl Kafirissen in the *Forward*.

"The Jewish institutional world is absolutely obsessed with physical continuity while seemingly oblivious to the cultural continuity exemplified by the current era of Yiddish creativity. I challenge a Jewish foundation to sponsor a study of young people active in Yiddish culture. The next step in supporting Jewish continuity may just be learning to recognise it," she says.

Others suggest looking at Yiddish the same way that we look at Jewish food. Take the Jewish delis in New York – most are kosher-style. Post-vernacular Yiddish is perhaps a Yiddish-style language which evokes rather than strictly follows the prescribed rules. "It needs to be more easily available; it needs to come in accessible packages," says Philip Todres, the organiser of the Cape Town Yiddish language course, Ot Azey.

In fact, the demand is so great that the Cape Jewish Seniors Association (CJSA) has added an extra course for March this year to coincide with Purim. "It is a Yiddish mikveh, because you will immerse yourself in Yiddish!" says Todres. Everyone is welcome, from beginners to experts.

Eddy Portnoy, the academic advisor to the YIVO Institute, a six-week summer programme in New York hosted by Columbia University, has remarked that while people have been proclaiming the death of Yiddish for more than 200 years, the builders and *kulturtuers* (cultural workers) of modern Yiddish culture have been blithely continuing with their work.

Linguist Max Weinreich wrote, "Yiddish is the language of the Jewish unconscious in which every modern Jew will eventually dream. When that Yiddish dream comes to them, they will need interpreters. These interpreters embrace Yiddish as self-expression, for its hard-to-describe delights, for the rage it brings to injustice, for its wonderful weight on the tongue, for the spectacular arc it forms between poles of Jewish identity."

Adds Young of the YIVO Institute, "As a global community of people who care about Yiddish, and within our own Jewish institutions, we need to take control of framing the narrative of Yiddish as an integral, dynamic, and healthy part of Jewish life."

Vigilance ‘the best weapon against human trafficking’

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

“Human trafficking is the second most profitable organised crime in the world next to drug trafficking. The profit margins for human trafficking can be up to \$257 billion – about R3.7 trillion – a year.” So said human rights commissioner Angie Makwetla at an event hosted by the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa this week.

Makwetla, who promotes, protects, and monitors the rights of children at the South African Human Rights Commission, presented the terrifying reality of “the business” of child trafficking in South Africa.

“There are about 27 million people enslaved in the world today, and approximately a third of these are children,” she said. “In Africa, more than two million people are trafficked annually. Of this number, an estimated 30 000 children as young as four-years-old are being prostituted in this country.

“In South Africa, human trafficking includes sex trafficking, child labour, domestic slavery, organ smuggling, child brides, illegal child adoptions, forced surrogacy, and many others. South Africa remains a primary source, a destination, and a transit country for human trafficking.”

“We not only face trafficking to



Ruth Ancer

departments, law enforcement units, and border crossing patrols hinders initiatives to prevent trafficking, authorities are making efforts towards dealing with that.

“Part of our mandate within the commission is to monitor what government does,” Makwetla said.

“Parents, teachers, and guardians must be informed and vigilant. If children know how to identify

traffickers and their antics, they’ll know what to do in situations of trouble. Tell your children to avoid sharing personal information with strangers.

“As children become teenagers, they feel they’re entitled to privacy, but it’s still up to us to protect them. Many children that fall prey are lured into trafficking by strangers they encounter on social media. Teach your children about internet safety, and not to fall for money bait or free travel as it always comes at a

price. The better informed we are as parents, the easier it will be to protect our children, to identify human traffickers, and report them to the police.”

Turning to a less sinister but no more positive side of social media, clinical psychologist Ruth Ancer spoke of the nature of Facebook friendships, and how social media sites contribute to feelings of loneliness in spite of the many connections they supposedly cultivate.

“Real friendships take time and effort. Our most important friendships aren’t forged through social media gestures but through years of long-suffering emotional labour on one another’s behalf,” she said. “People can grow up to be very different, living different lives elsewhere in the world, yet they remain immutably your friend because of the love and effort you both gave and received. You cannot replicate that on Facebook, no matter how many times you click ‘like.’”

Yet, technology is here to stay. “Experts agree that social media is not intrinsically healthy or unhealthy,” said Ancer. “It depends on how we use it. Social media also

doesn’t affect all people the same way, some may be more susceptible to negative aspects than others. If we use it to stalk exes or frenemies, use of the site can lead to feelings of envy and depression. On the other hand, in a world of ever-increasing financial pressure and associated increasing work demands, we have limited time and emotional energy, and Facebook is a way to make sure that we don’t lose anyone.

“Just because Facebook friendships aren’t close, it doesn’t mean they don’t have value,” said Ancer. “Even passively consuming someone’s posts has been linked to feeling closer to that person.” Sometimes our close friends don’t have the information or resources we need, so we turn to our Facebook networks, who usually come through.

“The answer to countering loneliness is not to deactivate our Facebook accounts, but to use them to do more things that increase our connection to other people,” she said. “Meet people, see them, talk to them, interact with them, and be truly present. Make a conscious choice not to let social media take you down the path of passive engagement and superficial communication.”

A reminder of South Africa’s vital role in the war against Germany

JORDAN MOSHE

The role played by the South African forces who took up arms against the Germans is often overlooked even though this was extremely significant.

Author David Brock Katz brings to light the full extent of South Africa’s involvement in the fight against Nazi Germany in his recently published book. It is the untold story of the desert war, and its importance in our history.

“My book tries to explain the military disasters faced by the Allies in Africa, and how the South African forces managed to turn it all around eventually,” he said. “We had our part in a few of the victories of the Allied forces.”

Addressing a large audience at BluBird Shopping Centre last Thursday, Katz, a veteran of the South African Defence Forces, launched *South Africans versus Rommel*, a study based on his master’s thesis. Arranged by bookstore chain Book Dealers, the launch featured an interview with the author conducted by Howard Feldman.

Said Katz, “Up against the rampant German general Rommel, who succeeded in whatever he did, the South Africans were deeply worried. Morale became extremely low as time went on, but the South African forces took a stand at El Alamein, and made it the turning point of the war in the desert. Our forces played a tremendous part in this success, and didn’t know until much later just how effective they had been in breaking the back of one for the elite German divisions.”

Katz stressed the difficulty of achieving this success. “General Dan Pienaar was told by one of the British generals that if he retreated from El Alamein, he would be solely responsible for the demise of the British Empire.”

He continued, “We faced many problems in battle. [We] employed manoeuvre warfare. Our forces were trained to be mobile, and move swiftly across the battlefield, retreating if necessary. The British, however, fought in a completely different way, employing static warfare techniques that meant they hardly moved at all. The South Africans were totally ill-prepared.”

Unfortunately, the decisive role played by South Africa was and continues to be a point of contention, Katz says. “Looking back to 1939, there was a massive contest between Afrikaners and English [over whether to] join the war,” he said. “It was very close, and we almost remained neutral. When the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, it did everything

it could to forget about this history. There’s a total hiatus from 1948 to 1990, because this was not the history the Nationalists wanted to propagate.

“Tragically, the situation remains the same today, albeit for different reasons. Post-1994, we’re finding more information



South African servicemen setting up defences in Egypt

Photo courtesy of Ditsong: National Museum of Military History

about the sacrifices made in the war by all South Africans who fought, white and black,” he said. “Fifty percent of the 300 000 people who fought were black, Indian or coloured. This is sadly something that the government today still doesn’t want to remember. To them, it’s part of the imperialist past, and is therefore not commemorated.”

Katz explained that while race divisions might have had an effect on certain aspects of the conflict, the South Africans who fought were united in their goal. “The men who joined the Union Defence Force did so for one common reason. Whether you were black, Asian, coloured, or white, Afrikaner or Englishman, you wanted a better South Africa. Whether out of economic or social interest, you volunteered so that the country you were coming home to would be better than it was. A common cause united us, personal though our intentions were,” he said.

It is for this reason that there is a need to conduct further research into our country’s role in the war. “There’s been a total hiatus in writing about the war from the South African perspective,” said Katz. “Nothing has happened really in terms of furthering research into our role in the war since 1968. I was not a lover of South African military history at the outset of the project, but I was introduced to this aspect of our past, and gradually became one with it. It’s about drilling down into the archives as far as we can to find out more about our history, and bringing new things to light.”

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From *e'Lollipop* to education, and everything in between

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Filmmaker Ashley Lazarus produced a memorable movie in South Africa in the 1970s at the height of apartheid. Titled *e'Lollipop*, it was about the friendship between a black and a white boy. The film managed to beat the censors to become one of the country's highest grossing films.

Now living in Israel, Lazarus is clear that he will not be making the *e'Lollipop* of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is because he believes that unlike South Africa, where there was "some common ground and people didn't want to hate each other", Arab and Israeli protagonists have nothing in common.

Lazarus believes that the most pertinent issue facing Israelis is, in fact, the conflict between religious and secular. Like South Africans during apartheid, he believes Israelis aren't really so divided. Hence, once again, he is working on a movie which talks through the naïve eyes of a child. This time it's about finding – or rediscovering – G-d.

Lazarus should know. Through a life of many twists and turns, he has travelled the journey from secular to religious himself. It required levels of introspection and investigation that come naturally to a creative at the top of his game, and has given rise to the observation that "you don't control your life, you merely steer it in the right direction".

Over the past 50 years, Lazarus has gone from being a high-budget advertising executive to a cult feature filmmaker, to the developer of early childhood education materials. He has been based in South Africa, New York, and Israel, and has crisscrossed the globe more than 100 times. Spiritually, he has gone from being a "naïve Jewish boy from Zululand", to a hard



Ashley Lazarus

bitten New-York sophisticate, to an orthodox Jew.

It's a life story in the truest sense. And, Lazarus is a master story teller.

E'Lollipop was a groundbreaking movie in its time. It has been hailed by South African politicians as a seminal influence in preparing the ground for talks between Nelson Mandela and FW De Klerk for the good of South Africa.

At the time, however, Lazarus simply intended to rise above the negative status quo of apartheid – and the *verkrampte* (highly conservative) censor board – by showing life through the eyes of children. He wanted to communicate a human message without delving into the swamp of ideology.

Behind Lazarus's filmmaking is a successful career making big-budget commercials for large corporate customers like British American Tobacco, Coca-Cola, General Motors, Mattel, Mobil, and Disney. He was approached to do *e'Lollipop* because of work done for tobacco

tycoon Anton Rupert creating Peter Stuyvesant adverts for the big screen.

Productions like these cost in the region of half a million to a million US dollars (R6.9 million) for 30 seconds, requiring a high level of skill and a certain amount of ruthlessness and cynicism. It was to this world that he left South Africa to go to the United States in 1985.

Though he excelled at making adverts, and had a wonderful life living in mid-town Manhattan for 20 years, he increasingly began to question his spirituality, and started investigating what it meant to be Jewish.

Lazarus has always been open to the mystical. Even in his early *e'Lollipop* days, he took advice from famous Zulu sangoma Credo Mutwa, and his mother, "had every Taoist and Buddhist in our home". But it was an encounter and a spiritual epiphany with Sioux holy man Frank Fools Crow while working on a feature film about Native Americans that brought it all to a head.

"Frank, a wonderful, wisened man with white hair tied in a pony tail, looked at me and said, 'Aren't you Jewish?' I said, 'Sure, of a kind. Why are you asking me this?'" Lazarus recalls. "You know, you're 40, you've been successful, you get into a false sense of security that you are OK. But I knew that I didn't know. Fools Crow said, 'Look into who you are. Your source is one of the highest spiritualities that exists. You don't have to continue to find out what spirituality is.'"

His search for meaning brought him in contact with notable New York Chassidic teachers, including famous Chassidic singer Mordechai Ben David, and the teachings of the Ribnitzer Rebbe. It also led to a filmmaking project in collaboration with Rabbi Berel Wein to bring Wein's Jewish history tapes to the screen.

This project started with a serendipitous meeting with Wein through a mutual friend,

Dr Robert Cohen, while visiting his sister in Atlanta in 1996. "I was thinking: why am I trained? I can't find another story like *e'Lollipop*. I'm not interested in making films like *Star Wars* or *Tomb Raider*. Rabbi Wein had amazing history tapes which had been hugely successful, particularly in American jails. He was looking for a filmmaker to take it from audiotape to film," Lazarus recalls.

The two have since created 11 films which are now available in 400 Jewish schools across the world including South Africa.

Lazarus, by this time an orthodox Jew, moved to Israel in 2005, where he now resides in Beit Shemesh. He continues to work in film and advertising, but his most recent enterprise is quite different – and similar – at the same time.

"I love children, and a lot of my life's work has been about education," he says. Through his work for

Disney and Mattel, and following a meeting with a pious rabbi in Los Angeles who was deeply involved early childhood education in the US, Lazarus came upon a new idea. This was to produce education materials that were entertaining and interactive, as opposed to passively entertaining.

Called TJ & Pals, it is now a fully-fledged, downloadable, two-year curriculum of education materials for pre-schoolers, available on any device. The programme has numerous South African partners, including ORT, and is being localised for the South African market.

After Lazarus embarked on the project using his own money, it turned out that the original Dr Cohen who introduced him to Rabbi Wein had also made aliyah, and was living close to him. Cohen wrote him a cheque, and they eventually raised more than \$1 million (R13,9 million) to start the project. It just goes to show, you don't control your life... you merely steer it in the right direction.

The high cost of living as a Jew

GARY TORGOW

The Jewish world is being challenged. There are the age-old existential ordeals of assimilation and anti-Semitism, but a new issue has reared its head in recent years – the high cost of Jewish living. Individuals are feeling the pinch, but so are shuls, welfare institutions and various other communal organisations. Is there a way out? Gary Torgow, who, in addition to being on the board of some of Detroit's biggest firms, has devoted much of his life to Jewish community volunteer work and philanthropy, has a few ideas.

3 MAR | 11:00 ROOM 3

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Pulitzer's principles relevant to our time

TOM TUGEND – JTA

It's a story that would not sound too out of place in 2019: New York's leading newspaper accuses the president of the United States of corruption and the latter sues the paper's publisher for libel. Striking back, the publisher declares in an editorial that his newspaper "cannot be muzzled".

That confrontation actually happened in the first decade of the 20th century, pitting President Theodore Roosevelt against Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian Jewish immigrant who had lifted *The World* to the rank of most influential newspaper in New York and the broader United States.

In one of his numerous crusades, Pulitzer charged Roosevelt with orchestrating a \$40 million (R554 million) cover-up of corrupt practices in the building of the Panama Canal. Roosevelt retaliated by demanding, in an address to Congress, that the government perform its "high national duty to bring to justice the vilifier of the American people". Not cowed, Pulitzer proclaimed, "Our republic and its press shall rise or fall together."

“He founded newspaper journalism's most prestigious prize, and stood up to the most powerful forces in the country.”

After three years of legal battles, the United States Supreme Court ruled for Pulitzer, arguing that even the president was not above the law.

The encounter between the one-time penniless immigrant and the most powerful man in America is but one footnote in the film *Joseph Pulitzer: Voice of the People*, which opens on 1 March in New York. The documentary on the life of the man

who founded newspaper journalism's most prestigious prize and stood up to the most powerful forces in the country could not come at a more relevant time.

The movie is the latest of about 20 films, mostly documentaries, by Oren Rudavsky.

Pulitzer used the clout of his newspaper to bring the Statue of Liberty to New York Harbour; to defeat a proposal to charge pedestrians for walking across the newly opened Brooklyn Bridge; and to acculturate the waves of new Jewish and other immigrants to the new country. As a permanent legacy, he endowed the Columbia University School of Journalism and the Pulitzer Prize.

Funny girls

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

When it comes to comedy, Jews have long taken centre stage. Yet, it's often the male comedians who are recognised while the women wait in the wings. Now, proving that talent has no gender, women are increasingly taking back the spotlight.

A fabulous case in point is *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel*, the web television series that has taken the world by storm. Miriam "Midge" Maisel was planning the ultimate breaking-of-the-fast feast, her husband's rocking the comedy scene, and her rich parents are always on hand to watch the kids. But suddenly, her husband leaves her, the feast is cancelled, and her parents are horrified. What's more, it turns out that her husband's not so funny after all... she is. She's a born comedienne, but she must fight for her right to perform. The American show may be fictional and set in the 1950s, but for South African Jewish comedienne, Claudine Ullman and Gilli Apter, it's as relevant as ever.

"The show just feels so resonant, we've all experienced this," says Apter, a comedienne, writer, and director. "Even though it's set in another time, very little has changed in terms of the experience for a woman on stage. It should be so different, but it isn't." For Apter, tackling the stand-up scene was something that she resisted for a while. Having written comedy for TV shows and for comedians including Nik Rabinowitz, she knew she was funny, she just didn't know if she could handle the spotlight.

"I think for anybody, being on the frontline is always exposing, scary, and difficult," she says. "I wanted to do stand-up for a very long time. I was too scared, but I collected ideas over time. I've had a lot of encouragement from Nik and other people, and eventually just took the dive in 2015. It was about overcoming the fear. I went to local comedy clubs a lot and I saw enough people doing it that I thought, maybe I can also do this."

Speaking of gender disparities when it comes to performing comedy, Apter says, "I don't know that it's harder for a woman to stand on a stage than it is for a man. Men get away with a lot with their confidence. It's good armour. We struggle with that, which is probably why we don't see a lot of women in comedy. You have to ride on confidence until you get good."

Yet, she believes that women are better able to handle the moments of rejection that inevitably occur when you're performing stand-up. "Our egos aren't so front and centre. When

we're disappointed and rejected by an audience, I don't think we take it as badly as men. But, I also think that, to a large degree, that's what forces men to succeed quickly because they can't bear the rejection."

Ullman says it's much harder to break into the local comedy scene as a woman. "There's one and a half of us!" she jokes. "That can be an advantage, or that can work against us because you've got producers, and 90% of the South African population who aren't really comedy forward. We're maybe 50 or 60 years behind New York, with people saying, 'women aren't funny'. Because there's no human-resources body in comedy, there's also a lot of sexual

The metaphysics of anti-Semitism

RABBI ZEV LEFF

Judaism assigns all nations of the world a share in the World to Come and a unique purpose to fulfil in this world. But there's an emphasis on unique. As Jews, we are meant to celebrate our uniqueness and draw nourishment from it. And when we don't – when we seek to blend in with everyone else – anti-Semitism starts to take root. In this deep exploration of the metaphysics of anti-Semitism, Rabbi Zev Leff argues that to keep it at bay, we need to insulate ourselves, rather than isolate ourselves, protecting and preserving our precious heritage.

3 MAR | 11:00 ROOM 3

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harassment that goes down.

"Because there are so few of us, it means there's a huge pressure on us. Every time we go out, we're representing all the female comics – we're even mistaken for each other quite often. It's about winning every single time, so that our talent becomes undeniable." For Ullman, when her jokes fall flat, it's an opportunity rather than a tragedy. "Dying onstage is actually so important in terms of growth. When you first start off, you see dying as a signal that you're a complete failure, but later you see it as a chance to get better."

Ullman has always wanted to perform. "I've loved to make people laugh ever since I was little." After studying

performance and physical theatre at the University of the Witwatersrand, she travelled to the United States and studied at some of the country's top improvisation and comedy institutions. She returned to South Africa and brought improv comedy to the corporate training space, a trend she observed in the US.

While Ullman loves training, it's onstage where she feels most alive. "Everybody told me I needed to try stand-up, and I was actually *poep* (dead) scared to be honest. But over two years ago, I decided just to book it. Since my first five minutes on stage, I've been absolutely hooked. It's moved from nervousness to total joy and excitement, and it just feeds my soul." Ullman recently performed her first one-woman show in Johannesburg, and plans to take it around the country and the world.

There's a living to be made in comedy in South Africa, says Ullman but generally not purely from stand-up.

In terms of her style, Ullman excels at character comedy, and has some hilarious Jewish personalities on her playbill. There's

Dazza Mofsowitz: "I'm like the head boy, the *beltas* at school they love me!" There's also Jenna, who's devastated at how "shocking" the weather was during her December Caribbean holiday, and then there's the old yenta sex therapist Shirley Rubenstein, who's "just lovely". "I've got some purer stand-up in there as well," says Ullman, "it's all really making fun of myself, of being white, female, Jewish, and chubby, and what that means to people."

Apter's style is more observational. "It's mostly about me and my life, seeing things from my perspective which is Jewish, female, and a person in their 30s."

For Apter comedy is a calling. "I feel very purposeful doing stand-up. I was talking to Rabbi [David] Masinter once, and he said, 'It's your duty to do what you do. If you have a talent

and that talent is to write or to make people laugh, then it's your duty to do that and to do it well." It's something given to me, and it's my job to nurture it."

Together with another top local comedienne, Nina Hastie, Apter and Ullman have a three-part female stand-up comedy show called *Thunderbirds*, which they're taking around the country. "We're having the time of our lives waiting to get noticed and building an audience," says Ullman.



Gilli Apter

Capturing the unique life stories of Sandringham Gardens residents

JORDAN MOSHE

When Evelyn Sarrat-Rosenbaum wasn't steering a yacht, she was piloting a plane through impenetrable clouds. In spite of being told that he'd never be a bodybuilder, Milton Daitz became Mr South Africa at 41. After serving in the Israeli Defence Forces as a paratrooper, David Friedlander recorded six top-hit singles.

What do these personalities have in common? They are just some of the remarkable individuals Harry Mirels has discovered at perhaps the least-expected location: Sandringham Gardens.

Far from being just elderly pensioners, the residents of any old age home all have unique stories to tell. It is for this reason that Mirels set out to record as many of these accounts as he could in 2014. He planned to write a book about the residents' lives before they took up residence at Sandringham Gardens.

"A close friend of mine was admitted to the home a few years ago," he says. "Whenever I visited him, I saw so many people there, each of whom possessed a unique story which so few people knew about."

"Many people don't take much interest in the elderly or their past, although many of them have lived fascinating lives. There's more to them than we see at first glance. These are not just old people, but unique personalities with stories to tell. I felt that I had a responsibility to share these unique stories with the community before they were lost."

After working for years as a refrigerator technician and subsequently an appliance retailer, Mirels is today a semi-retired manufacturer of specialised steel kitchen units. Although he is 85 years old himself, Mirels applied himself with vigour to his book-writing mission, determined to set aside the necessary time to gather his information.

"Although I am older than most of the people I've interviewed, I don't see myself as old," he laughs. "Whenever I spoke to someone about their story, I could relate to it as an older person, but felt as fascinated as a youngster would be in my position. My view of myself enabled me to learn so much."

After making enquiries about which residents were suitable and willing to share their life stories, Mirels began conducting interviews in November 2014. While not every story fitted in with the book he envisioned, the accounts he heard were frequently nothing short of extraordinary.

"Some of them achieved remarkable things in their lives," he says. "Others lived seemingly ordinary lives, but struggled against the most challenging circumstances. No matter who they were or what they had done, each of them was unique."

Among them is David Friedlander, who volunteered to serve as a paratrooper in the Israeli army in 1959. "David also had a prolific career as a singer," says Mirels. "He made a name for himself in entertainment. He toured extensively, composed his own songs, gave concerts in England, and even appeared on television." Today 77, Friedlander continues to perform at Sandringham Gardens, singing at concerts for residents and visitors.

Equally unusual is thrill-seeker Evelyn Sarrat-Rosenbaum, who spent many years flying, steering yachts, and even skin diving with Zambezi sharks. Says Mirels, "She took an interest in planes at a young age, and attended flying lessons in secret because her parents would never have allowed it. In spite of heavy cloud cover, she once landed her plane after a near miss with a mountain. She was so talented, she was asked to fly commercially, but she turned down the offer." An equally adept swimmer, she is certainly not your typical personality.

Mirels engaged with several other unique personalities over his four years of research. Whether they had survived abuse, achieved local renown, or established careers of note, they were all people worth celebrating. "Just because they've retired doesn't mean that they're lost to the world," he says. "We're failing to ask them what they did with their lives because we mistakenly think that they're outdated and irrelevant. They have life experiences from which anyone can benefit and anyone can relate to."

"Perhaps we are afraid to engage with them because we are scared of ageing and becoming like them. However, if we interact with them, we can give additional levels of meaning to our own lives now and in the future. Whether you're young or old, you can benefit tremendously from speaking to these people."

Although the interviews he conducted did not yield enough information for a book, Mirels maintains his belief in the project's importance, and considers the time he devoted to it well-spent. "We're so absorbed in our own lives that we forget that we can be enhanced by the lives of others," he says. "If we invest our time in other people, they invest something special in us. They've lived through incredible things, and the least we can do is listen to them."



Claudine Ullman

A Shabbos to fit your genes



ON NOURISHING NOSH

Hilit Milner

Chatter chatter and *koch* (gossip) are not the only conversation to be had around the Shabbos table. I'm talking about the ability of the food you eat to have an all-important conversation with your genes.

While we all look forward to a delicious Shabbat meal, we tend to eat the same traditional dishes. Are we eating the foods which will contribute to our well-being – the right foods for us?

Today, there is great interest in DNA testing and the interconnection between food, genes, health and longevity.

Each of us has a unique physiology and chemistry which is determined by our genes. Even though 99.9% of our DNA sequences are identical, it is the 0.1% of DNA variations that are responsible for our differences.

While there are many factors that can influence how our genes behave, food is one of the most influential.

Today, there is clear shift towards more personalised and preventative nutrition. Your genes have a unique impact on your digestion of certain nutrients, susceptibility to certain diseases, and weight management.

Understanding your genes is like having an important piece of the puzzle to your personalised health blueprint. The practice of understanding how your DNA interacts with the food you eat is nutritional genomics!

Don't *plutz* (freak out)! Even though you may not have taken a DNA test, you can still ensure your Shabbos meal contains the right ingredients needed to optimise the conversation between food and genes. The secret "recipe" lies in which foods you choose to have on your table, and how you prepare them, enabling the food information carried in nutrients and bioactives to be delivered to your genes in a format they understand.

Bioactives are components found in food which have the power to influence the way in which our genes behave. They act like biological switch masters, "switching on" genetic pathways that optimise health like detoxification and blood-sugar control, while "switching off" others that don't serve us, like those that cause inflammation. Different ingredients have different bioactives and nutrients, resulting in varying food-gene interactions.

Luckily, many of these nutrients and bioactives are already on your Shabbos table!

Our bobbas weren't joking when they said, "eat your greens", as the bioactive sulforaphane, found in cruciferous and green leafy vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, brussel sprouts, cauliflower, and spinach, activates our detoxification system.

Lycopene, the anti-oxidant stimulator, is found in foods like cooked tomatoes, grapefruit, and watermelon. Turmeric-spiced food and drinks aren't just the latest craze. They contain the bioactive curcumin,

involved in "switching off" the disease-causing inflammatory pathways in the body.

The power of foods like capers, apples, radishes, herbs, onion, garlic, and leeks, is that they all contain the bioactive quercetin which "switches on" the master anti-oxidant regulator.

Beetroots contain nitric oxide and the bioactive betaine, which improve cardiovascular health and anti-oxidant defence mechanisms.

Having berries for dessert? You too are tapping into your anti-oxidant pathways with the bioactive resveratrol.

No single ingredient can prevent disease and enhance health, and there are many more bioactives than those already mentioned. The important thing

is to include a variety of bioactives and nutrients in a well-balanced daily routine – and in your Shabbos meal.

Just as there is a secret to making the best chicken soup, here are some tips to ensure that you maximise the nutritional potential of your Shabbos meals.

Preparation methods are key, as not all food items

contain bioactives in their active form.

- To start your meal, instead of saying the brocha on the usual white challah, have an anti-oxidant stimulating, cardiac

protecting beetroot wholegrain challah;

- To activate the lycopene in tomatoes they must be cooked; roast tomato soup anyone?
- Curcumin, in turmeric, needs a fat to enhance its absorption. Turmeric tahina is a winning combination;
- Cruciferous vegetables are the star of the show. Always try and include at least one in your meal. A simple example is swapping the ineffectual lettuce in your salad with greens like baby spinach or rocket, increasing your sulforaphane intake. Note, sulforaphane is heat sensitive, so replace your over-cooked greens with crunchy, lightly sautéed broccoli and brussels sprouts;
- Always put the dressing on your salad after the kiddush. The acid found in vinaigrettes deactivates bioactives, and can affect vitamin integrity too. Kale

pesto and herb-based dressings are delicious options;

- The secret is to always have a mixture of cooked and raw foods on your plate by sprinkling fresh herbs onto your roast or dishing up a side of fresh slaw;
- Lastly, ditch the parev ice-cream for an anti-oxidant-rich berry sorbet with cocoa drizzle.

Just like that, we have transformed your indulgent Shabbos meal into a genetically activating spread. And remember, try to dish up one portion instead of two! Then you will really fit into your jeans!

Hilit Milner is a registered clinical dietitian who runs a private practice, works in a top private hospital, and has founded a wellness blog called 'Sunrise by HM'. She views health holistically, starting from a cellular level and working her way out.

Rockstar rabbi: A life story

ALEX CLARE

You've heard his voice, now hear his story. A multifaceted, multifaceted man, Alex Clare shares his narrative of staying true to Torah values in the world of rock 'n roll superstardom. Clare's story has evolved since we heard him last. After leaving London with his wife and two children, Clare settled in Jerusalem, where he began learning at some of the top institutions in Israel, aiming for *smicha*. At the same time, he was writing music for international artists and DJs – and even doing world tours. Clare now divides his time between the *beis midrash* and the recording studio. A tale of epic proportions, hold onto your seat for this rollercoaster ride.

3 MAR | 16:00

ROOM 1

sinai-indaba.co.za

The ultimate Shabbos salad with a turmeric tahina dressing

(Serves 8-10 as part of a meal)

Ingredients (main bioactives):

Salad

- 1 packet baby spinach, 200g (sulforaphane)
- 1 cauliflower head or packet cauliflower florets, 300g (sulforaphane)
- 4 beetroots (betaine)
- 1 packet brussels sprouts, 300g (sulforaphane)
- 1 packet tender-stem broccoli, 230g (sulforaphane)
- 4 radishes (quercetin)
- 3 tablespoons pomegranate kernels (punicalagins)
- 1 large handful fresh mint (rosmarinic acid, apigenin)
- 2½ teaspoons turmeric (curcumin)
- 3½ teaspoons za'atar spice (quercetin, gallic acid)
- ½ teaspoon honey (caffeic acid)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil (luteolin, polyphenols)
- 1 teaspoon water
- Salt and pepper

Turmeric tahina dressing:

- 3 tablespoons tahina paste (lignans, tocopherol)
- ½ tablespoon olive oil (luteolin, polyphenols)



- 2½ tablespoons lemon juice (rutin, myricetin)
- 2 teaspoons ground turmeric (curcumin)
- ½ teaspoon honey (caffeic acid)
- 5 tablespoons water
- ½ teaspoon salt

Method

Salad

- Heat the oven to 180 degrees centigrade.
- Mix the turmeric, a dash of salt, and 1½ teaspoons of olive oil to form a paste. Break the cauliflower into florets, placing them on a roasting tray. Rub the turmeric paste, using your hands, over the cauliflower, coating all the florets. Pop them into the oven for 35-40 minutes to crisp.
- Peel the beetroots. Cut them into quarters, then place them on a roasting tray. Drizzle a teaspoon of olive oil over them with a sprinkle of salt. Pop them in the oven to roast for 50 minutes.
- Wash the brussels sprouts and broccoli in a strainer, and allow the excess water to drip off.
- Cut the brussels sprouts lengthways in half, and cut the broccoli stems into smaller bite-sized pieces. Place them in a large mixing bowl.
- In a small dish, mix the za'atar spice with the water, honey, and two tablespoons

of olive oil. Once all the ingredients are mixed together, pour the za'atar mixture over the brussels sprouts and broccoli, evenly coating them.

- In a pan on medium heat, place the brussels sprouts and broccoli stems, and pour over the za'atar dressing. Sauté the vegetables for about four minutes, then remove from the heat. They must still be crunchy and green.
- Place the baby spinach onto a large salad dish, forming the base for the salad. Once the broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, and beetroot have cooled down slightly, scatter them onto the baby spinach.
- Wash and thinly slice the radishes, then disperse them around the salad.
- Wash and roughly chop the mint leaves. Scatter them, together with the pomegranate kernels, across the top of the salad.

Turmeric tahina dressing

- In a tall glass bowl, add the tahina paste, water, olive oil, lemon juice, turmeric, salt, and honey.
- Using a fork or a whisk, mix all the ingredients together until a smooth dressing is formed.
- Drizzle the turmeric tahina evenly over the salad, just before serving.

Trying to understand Angelo Agrizzi



INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman

One of my favourite books, *But – He Was Good To His Mother* by Robert A Rockaway, details the “life and crimes” of Jewish mobsters in the 1920s to 1940s in the United States. Moral contradictions abound, and it is almost impossible to settle into a singular understanding of some of the greatest hooligans that country has produced. They were ruthless in their “business practices”, but when it came to their families, in some cases to community and to Israel, they were devoted and supportive. Model citizens.

This was my expectation when I met Angelo Agrizzi earlier in the week. The state capture inquiry had made him, in some sense, a “loveable rogue”. Until his admission of racism, social media seemed to love him even if he could not escape his involvement with Bosasa.

The fact that he was prepared to give evidence of corruption and details of bribery redeemed him in some way, even if his motives were – and still are – a little unclear.

Agrizzi consented to give one radio interview, and he chose to do so with Chad Thomas of ChaiFM. Chad is an investigator. He is deeply knowledgeable and was an excellent choice in that he is not someone who grand stands. He gives his interviewee the space to say what they need to, but is not afraid to ask tough questions. I resolved to stay away from the studio until my



Angelo Agrizzi and Chad Thomas at the ChaiFM studio

need to understand the man got the better of me. I wanted to observe his body language and shake his hand.

I am pleased that I did so, but following the interview, I was no clearer about who he is than I was after reading the book on Jewish gangsters.

There were a number of moments that stood out for me in the interview. The first was that Agrizzi claimed to be able to sleep very well at night. He seemed to be genuinely relieved to have been a whistleblower, and that no matter what will follow, he is happy that he did it. His frame of mind is better than it was. I didn't doubt the truth in this.

What confused me, however, was that he seemed to disassociate himself from the corruption, and made a comment even after the interview was over that he never paid bribes. It was important for him that we heard that, and that we understood it.

Agrizzi sees himself, to some extent, as a victim. When asked why it took so long to come

forward, his answer was to compare the situation of an abused spouse who suffers for years until they have the courage to leave.

This choice of metaphor is an interesting one, as it assumes no guilt on his part, and

suggests that just as we would never blame the victim of abuse, so we should hesitate and consider carefully before blaming him.

It is also interesting to note that the other metaphor Agrizzi used was to compare Bosasa to a cult. He portrayed Gavin Watson as a hands-on, almost fixated leader, and suggested that the religious devotion ahead of each day reinforced his status. Again, victimhood.

Another comment Agrizzi made, one that no doubt speaks to the environment he was in, was that, “Even the pope would have been corrupted”. Whereas I certainly can't speak for the pope, present or past, I wonder if this is not a reflection on those who worked at Bosasa and the government representatives who associated with them, rather than a reflection of humanity as a whole.

It is perhaps my own naivety that makes me believe that not everyone is open to this level of unrestrained corruption.

Agrizzi had lines he would not cross. He would not go to Nkandla, and he made it clear that he

Brave new world: The new genetics

RABBI DR AKIVA TATZ

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.

3 MAR | 10:00

ROOM 2

sinai-indaba.co.za

did not like [former President Jacob] Zuma. That said, he confirmed again that Zuma received R300 000 in cash each month through [Dudu] Myeni.

The mind boggles.

Agrizzi is on a few missions. Not only does he want to ensure that he is not seen as the person responsible for the corruption at Bosasa, he wants to encourage others to come forward.

The latter is the correct approach. The more whistleblowers who come forward, the quicker the corruption will be exposed, and the quicker the healing can take place.

No matter what we think, Agrizzi has to be commended for what he has chosen to do. He should be acknowledged for placing himself in the public eye, and in the eye of the authorities. We might find his past unpalatable, but we need to appreciate that he has made a sacrifice that not many of us would. Not even the pope.

In the ORT boardroom with Allon Raiz



Allon Raiz and David Zidel

The road to becoming a successful entrepreneur is not easy, but it's a road that Allon Raiz, the Chief Executive of Raizcorp, is well acquainted with.

Raiz – whose company supports more than 500 businesses and is, according to the *Economist*, the only genuine incubator in Africa – addressed ORT Jet mentors at a recent event. The mentors assist many small ORT Jet businesses overcome their challenges in order to grow. His talk was facilitated by David Zidel, business lecturer, coach, and author.

Raiz, who was recognised by the World Economic Forum as a young global leader in 2008, shared his journey from being a youngster in his family's business in Durban to running the most successful business incubator in Africa.

To be a successful entrepreneur, he said, you should have the following traits:

1. Crisis versus opportunity. Do you see an opportunity when faced with a crisis? Do big problems paralyze or motivate you?
2. Tolerance for pain. Can you handle the pain of rejection? Can you handle being told “no” again and again, but still push forward?
3. Tolerance for risk. Can you handle uncertainty, and the chance that you will lose not only money but much more?
4. Ability to muster resources. Do you believe in your ability to find what you need, when you need it? Do you believe that you can source what is required, even when you do not currently possess those resources?
5. Learn and iterate. Do you learn from failure? Do you have the ability to change continuously the way you do things, so that each iteration is more successful than the previous one?

Jkids connects youngsters to joys of Shabbat

Beit Emanuel's Jkids team hosts Shabbat services for youngsters at shul every week. Children aged two to 12 get involved in a fun craft activity or a special Shabbat service.



Community member Steve Hanauer and his sons Simon and Daniel

Sunday (3 March)

- Second Innings hosts David Bilchitz, Professor of Constitutional Law, University of Johannesburg, on *What are our obligations towards animals at the dinner table*. Time: Tea at 10:00. Meeting starts at 10:30. Venue: Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Sandringham. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors, includes tea and light refreshments. Contact: Linda Fleishman 011 532 9701.

- Second Innings hosts a theatre outing: Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*. Time: 15:00. Venue: Pieter Toerien Theatre, 1 Montecasino Boulevard, Magaliesig. Cost: R150 for the best seats. Please note booking and payment is essential. Enquiries: Ros Berman

011 880 6864, Fay Smaller
072 546 2573 and Laura
Sher 082 322 3816.

Monday (4 March)

- The Union of Jewish Women hosts David Bilchitz, Professor of Constitutional Law, University of Johannesburg, on *Possible global consequences of the political turmoil in Europe*. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053.



THE TORAH ACADEMY JOHANNESBURG

JOB OPPORTUNITY MANAGING DIRECTOR

TORAH ACADEMY IS LOOKING TO HIRE A MANAGING DIRECTOR

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Must have strong leadership, administration and management skills.

Important for the candidate to have excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

Responsibilities will include full management on all financial aspects, facilities and operational areas of the school.

Please send CVs to admin@bstorm.co.za

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted

The Knesset: is it open to racists?



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

A democracy cannot be judged by the nature of every party in its government. Its power is its ability to encompass widely different viewpoints. Even in extreme cases such as apartheid South Africa, where democracy existed only among whites, every white South African could not be classified as racist. Now it is Israel's turn to be tested.

For power's sake, politicians do foolish things that can be exploited against them. In the Western world, the most potent accusation that can be hurled against a society today is that it is racist. Political leaders need to tread very carefully in this territory; whether true or not, the stain of the accusation remains.

Black populist politicians in South Africa who hate Israel would be delighted to get a story from reputable sources questioning whether Israelis are racist. Boycott Divestment Sanctions South Africa, which has lost a lot of its punch recently, would revel in this and blow it sky-high.

Last week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave it some of this weaponry in deciding to merge two right-wing parties for the upcoming Israeli elections. The one is completely acceptable, but the other is so militantly extreme and racist, it has provoked massive reaction among Jews worldwide, particularly Americans.

Netanyahu couldn't have predicted the virulence of the reaction, both for and against his move. Eminent rabbis in America and Israel are at each other's throats. His opponents have said, "Shame on you!" for joining hands with despicable people.

Where do South African Jews stand? Must they take a position? As this country tries to heal its racial wounds, which easily provoke volatile reactions, this Zionist community is moderately right-wing in Jewish affairs.

Jewish leaders say forcefully that they want to live in harmony with others, including Arabs if they make peace with Israel, and declare support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But when Israel's most fervent proponents are arguing so intensely about its nature, which way should they turn?

According to Netanyahu's plan, Israeli national religious party, The Jewish Home, will merge with the extremist party, Jewish Power, which embraces the ideology of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, the head of the Jewish Defence League founded in 1968. Kahane's party, Kach, was designated a terrorist group by Israel and the United States in 1994 for its violent, racially motivated actions. Its blunt platform was to expel all Arabs brutally from Israel in a way that makes people in the Western world recoil.

It perpetrated violent acts in different countries, and Kahane received jail sentences in America and Israel. His spectre has hung over Jewish affairs ever since, influencing modern Jewish far-right groups and promoting further violence, including in July 2003, when the Shin Bet said "the threat to the life of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had grown", and "there was a threat from several dozen Kahanist extremists".

Although Netanyahu's motives were politically legitimate – to strengthen the right-wing bloc in the Knesset, rather than directly supporting Kach – it will not be judged this way by the world. Netanyahu feared that without the Kahanists joining it, The Jewish Home might not reach the electoral threshold to form a right-wing majority bloc.

An urgent statement by South African Jews on this issue would be important, even just to deflect the accusation here that they support the Kahanists. Militant racism is part of South Africa's history. It is dangerous for that genie to be let out of its bottle. Not only Israel must take great care in this regard, the ball is also in the court of Jewish leaders in South Africa and elsewhere.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Taking an active role in our democracy



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

When the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) first introduced a pre-election education and awareness campaign for the Jewish community back in 2009, the name we chose for the initiative was Make Us Count. The underlying message was that in a democracy, citizens should not be passive onlookers, but should strive to be an active, identifying part of the democratic process. The name has been retained for all subsequent pre-election campaigns, including the present one.

The latest Make Us Count initiative commenced with a voter-registration drive, together with the distribution of the board's input into the election manifestos of the main parties. Since then, we have begun to meet political leaders across the spectrum, and to plan the now traditional "great debates" between representatives of the main political parties that will be taking place in Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town. These events are primarily aimed at our own community, but they are open to everyone, and as in the past, we will bring the media on board as much as we can.

We have had an excellent response to our call for volunteers for the interfaith election observer team we are organising to assist the Independent Electoral Commission on polling day. This year's team will be the largest yet.

The SAJBD and the Hate Crimes Bill

Active involvement in the country's democratic culture goes beyond simply casting one's vote.

The post-apartheid dispensation offers a range of important mechanism through which civil society bodies, even individual citizens, can provide input into new legislation prior to it being tabled and debated in Parliament. From the outset, the board has availed itself of these opportunities, making submissions, written and oral, to a range of proposed new measures, particularly those relating to the prohibition of hate speech.

Earlier this month, we put in a submission on the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill, a far-reaching new measure that has been the subject of much debate since it was first released for public comment in 2016. We have also been involved in drafting the submission of the Hate Crimes Working Group, where we are represented on the steering committee.

Among the recommendations we made is that the new law be framed so as to make it possible to implement it practically. Indeed, and as we illustrated by drawing on examples from our own experience, we have found the real problem not to be that existing legislation is inadequate, but that the institutions set up to deal with these issues are insufficiently resourced.

We also submitted representations on the problems of racism and hate speech on social media, and the ways in which these might be addressed. This being a submission on behalf of the Jewish community, a substantial section was devoted to unpacking the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, describing the different forms it takes, and pointing out some of the features that in many ways make it a unique form of prejudice, historically, and in our own time.

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

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

Letters

MALAN'S NATIONALISTS ACOLYTES OF HITLER AND HERRENVOLK

It may be of interest to reflect on the earlier vicissitudes of anti-Semitism in South Africa, as reflected about the time of World War II. Richard Steyn's recent biography on Jan Smuts is mainly commentary, but Bernard Friedman's *Smuts: A Reappraisal* (1975) less so.

When Malan came to power, he introduced a different nationalism to Hertzog's, which was all embracing. Malan's version was called purified nationalism, excluding British, Jews, and Afrikaners who followed Smuts, on the principle of "een land, een taal, een volk" (one land, one language, one people).

With the rise of Hitler, Malan and his followers became acolytes of the *herrenvolk* doctrine: the Germans were destined to be the masters of other nations. What impressed the Nationalists was that "anti-Semitism... was the spearhead of his [Hitler's]

advance to power". This may be putting it too simplistically.

The Afrikaners, especially in rural areas, were on good terms with the Jews, who they saw as friendly store keepers and who helped them with their affairs. They regarded them with respect, as custodians of the book.

The purified nationalists taught that the Afrikaners, being of Nordic stock, must be above even the chosen people. The Dutch Reform Church synod, through its commissions report, found that the Jews were not G-d's chosen people, and therefore anti-Semitism could not incur G-d's displeasure!

Unfortunately, Smuts did not champion the cause of the Jews. This was left to the great JH Hofmeyr, who opposed any restrictions on the Jewish community. – **Peter Onesta, Johannesburg**

VICTIMS MUST FIND STRENGTH TO CHALLENGE ABUSERS

In response to the letter on women abuse in the 15 February 2019 *SA Jewish Report*, I wish to point out that people can be bullies. People can be abusive, but the victim must find the strength to set boundaries and draw the line. He/she must change his/her own behaviour, because we can't change other people; we can only change ourselves. Then, maybe, the response to us will be different. Then, there is hope that the abusive behaviour will not continue. The community must foster support for this.

Speaking to the abused, look inside yourself. You know this is not resonating with the person you were meant to be. We are all created in G-d's image; we are his children. He loves each of us. We are not meant to be abused and put down. The abusive

situation is restricting you. It's damaging you. It's chipping away at your essence.

Take a step towards change. Challenge your abuser – if not for yourself, then for your children, present or future – so that they can see that there is a standard according to which people, especially married people, are meant to treat each other. Otherwise, they are likely to fall victim to similar hurtful, unfulfilling relationships. Abusive relationships. You wouldn't want that for them.

Seek out the help of organisations that are tasked with helping abused women. Take self-defence classes to empower yourself.

Take the step. Seek help. Empower yourself.

Because, as the letter writer concluded, "Enough is Enough!" – **Michele Engelberg, Johannesburg**

DISTURBING DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN ISRAELI BODY POLITIC

This letter is written on behalf of the Jewish Democratic Initiative (JDI) – a movement which strives for an inclusive and tolerant South African Jewish community that is committed to social justice. We advocate for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Last week, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, brokered a deal to merge two political parties. A religious settler party, Habayit Hayehudi, is to merge with Otzma Yehudit, an explicitly racist grouping whose extremist anti-Palestinian platform was previously banned from the Knesset.

In order to encourage the merger, Netanyahu promised two cabinet positions to the merged grouping in a future governing coalition (provided Netanyahu wins the 9 April election).

Said Michael Koplow, the Policy Director of the Israel Policy Forum, "Netanyahu's frenzied actions designed to boost a racist, neo-fascist party made up of anti-Arab activists whose previous political vehicle was banned by Israel's Supreme Court and is internationally designated as a terrorist organisation – and to explicitly promise that it will be part of any government he forms after the election – damages Israel on every front..."

Through this move, Netanyahu has demonstrated his lack of commitment to any form of peaceful, equitable accommodation with Palestinians. This

alignment encourages ruptures within Israeli society, and runs counter to any efforts towards a peaceful and just resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

Condemnation of Netanyahu's legitimisation of Otzma Yehudit's policies has reverberated around the Jewish world. Sharp denunciation from across a wide spectrum of Jewish factions followed the move. An unusual consensus comprising religious groupings, policy institutions, Israel advocacy organisations, nongovernmental organisations, and individual rabbis all concluded that this is an indefensible move.

Typically, Netanyahu rejected these criticisms, citing the "hypocrisy and double standards of the left".

As South African Jews who are acutely aware of how racism can insidiously become a powerful legislative force leading to legalised and systemic oppression, we join Jews from around the world in condemning these developments.

The JDI calls on the South African Jewish community and all official South African Jewish community structures to publicly and prominently condemn this development.

We cannot align ourselves in any way with racists. Silence is not an option. – **David Bilchitz, Barbara Miller, Neville Sweijd, and Basil Dubb on behalf of the JDI Steering Committee**

Yeshiva College expands leadership programme

Yeshiva College has launched a new leadership programme at the school, part of the school's overall focus on Torah values. The school has extended its Grade 6 leadership opportunities from captains of sport to leaders of all of the school's activities and values.

Traditionally, the school's leadership positions were only in sport, resulting in activity being limited to house captains at the annual swimming gala and athletics day.

Now, the school aims to take that sense of *ruach* created at these events, belonging, and pride, and extend it to all of its core values and activities. At the same time, the school will expand the range of those activities. It will do this by creating unique leadership opportunities for every

Grade 6 pupil in their specific houses.

The following leadership positions have been created for Grade 6s:

- Sports, arts and culture, promoting *derech erez* (respect);
 - Torah and *mitzvot*, promoting Talmud Torah and *Halacha*;
 - Israel and Zionism, promoting love of Israel;
 - *Chesed* and outreach, promoting *gemillut chassadim* (performance of loving kindness); and
 - Media and marketing, promoting *ahavat Hashem* (love of Hashem).
- Digital transformation expert Akiva Beebe spoke at the launch of the school's leadership programme. Beebe, a regular keynote speaker and writer, is an expert on the development of leadership practice in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.



Digital transformation expert Akiva Beebe at the school's leadership programme launch

Torah Academy masters mitzvot

Eighteen students from Torah Academy Primary School recently took part in the international Chidon Sefer Hamitzvos competition, which encourages children to master the 613 mitzvot over five years from Grade 4 to Grade 8.

The programme, implemented by schools across the globe, uses the acclaimed Yahadus curriculum created by

the Living Lessons Foundation, a series of textbooks explaining each mitzvah, its source in the Torah, and its details.

Students who achieve a 70% overall average for their tests are awarded with a shabbaton in New York. Last year, five Torah Academy students attended the shabbaton, two of which represented the school on stage at a public game show.



Tzvi Bronstein, Dovid Medalie, Menny Schochet, Oshy Lavine, Avraham Dovid Fox, Shmueli Goldschmidt, and Avi Rosin

Grade 2 pupils receive their first siddurs



Tyler Maron receives his siddur from Rabbi David Shaw

A siddur is not just any book. If used correctly it can be the ladder to the heavens. King David Sandton Grade 2 students received their first siddurim at the school's Matan Siddur ceremony recently, helping them to reach the first rung of the ladder, with the blessing of guest speaker Rabbi David Shaw.

Israeli war veterans visit KDVP

King David High School Victory Park was privileged to have special operations veterans Yuval Appel and Yogev Mor tell their story to pupils at a recent school assembly. Both survivors of injury during combat, Appel and Mor are members of the organisation *Achim L' Chaim* (Brothers for Life). *Achim L' Chaim* is a non-profit organisation run by injured Israeli combat soldiers which assists in the physical, mental, and emotional rehabilitation of fighters. Founded in 2008, it introduces wounded soldiers to a community of other injured soldiers who have faced similar challenges, creating lasting and supportive relationships, and helping veterans to return to productive and meaningful lives.



Yuval Appel and Yogev Mor

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Israel takes home an Oscar for film against racism

JORDAN MOSHE

Israeli director Guy Nattiv this week took the Oscar for the best live action short film at the Academy Awards in Los Angeles. Recognised for his film *Skin*, Nattiv's victory is a rare coup for an Israeli director at the acclaimed event.

"I moved here five years ago from Israel," he said in his acceptance speech, before adding in Hebrew, "Good night, Israel."

In spite of the fact that Hollywood's biggest night still lacks a host, celebrities assembled on the red carpet this past Sunday night for the 91st Academy Awards ceremony. A few hours into the night, Israel scooped its Oscar.

Nattiv and his wife, actress Jaime Ray

Newman, were wreathed in smiles as they walked on stage to accept the award for their movie.

A depiction of race-based conflict, *Skin* is an English-language bio-drama set in the United States. It is about a neo-Nazi skinhead who becomes enraged when he learns that his son is being treated kindly by a black man.

Citing the personal experiences of his family in the Holocaust, Nattiv said that the film was driven by the pressing need to learn about and address racism. "My grandparents are

Holocaust survivors," he said. "The bigotry that they experienced in the Holocaust, we see that everywhere today, in America, in Europe. This film is about education." He concluded by expressing the hope that the film could show people how to teach their kids a better way.

The film was written by Nattiv with screenwriter Sharon Maymon, and was produced by Newman. She told the audience of celebrities that she and her

husband "dedicate this to our five-month-old baby who's sitting at home with my parents watching this. We hope that you grow up in a world where these things don't happen, because people learn to love and accept each other". They wished everyone in Israel *layla tov*, before heading off the stage.

In an interview with Israeli broadcaster KAN after his acceptance speech, Nattiv said his win was one for Israelis. "Israel – this is for you," he said. "This film was made by Israelis, and its message is for Israel, and also for the United States, against racism." Newman chimed in, "It's for the whole world."

Several other Jewish stars were up for nominations in various categories. These included Rachel Weisz, for supporting actress for her work in *The Favourite*; Marc Shaiman for his musical score in *Mary Poppins Returns*, the sequel to the classic Disney film; and *Black Panther* composer Ludwig Goransson. Goransson took the Best Original Score award.

While Shaiman's song, *The Place Where Lost Things Go* from the *Poppins* movie didn't take the award for Best Original Song, the winning team which won the award for the song *Shallow* from *A Star Is Born* featured Jewish songwriter Marc Ronson.



Photo: Kevin Winter/Getty Images

Jaime Ray Newman and Guy Nattiv accept the Best Live Action Short Film award for *Skin*

Anxiety

DR DAVID PELCOVITZ

Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in prevalence rates of anxiety, and anxiety disorders have become the most common reason for referral to mental health professionals. In this practical and essential talk by one of the most knowledgeable psychologists in the world, we will examine some of the powerful forces shaping this epidemic. Practical recommendations will be made on approaches to anxiety management, with a focus on coping with stress and anxiety at home and work.

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