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South African Jewish Report

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Volume 23 - Number 10 ■ 22 March 2019 ■ 15 Adar II 5779

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UCT is one vote away from boycotting Israel

TALI FEINBERG

The University of Cape Town (UCT) senate passed a resolution on 15 March saying that it “would not enter into any formal relationships with Israeli academic institutions operating in the occupied Palestinian territories as well as other Israeli academic institutions enabling gross human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories”.

The only thing standing in the way of this becoming UCT policy is a vote by its council on 30 March. If the council passes it, UCT will become the first university in the world to implement a formal academic boycott against Israel.

“The University of Cape Town will become an outlier if this goes ahead. Despite major efforts, there is no formal boycott of Israeli academic institutions worldwide,” said Sara Gon, a policy fellow at the Institute for Race Relations (IRR) who has written extensively on this topic.

“The irony is that UCT doesn’t have any formal relationships with Israeli universities, but this would ensure they do not enter into any. It would be a highly symbolic gesture, and it might encourage others to do the same. It will have enormous propaganda value, and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement will milk it for all its worth.”

If the resolution is implemented, Gon believes it will create major challenges for UCT. “Jewish support of UCT will virtually disappear,” she said, “and it is already tenuous. They say that when a country loses its Jews, it fails. It’s the same with universities. If you look at the number of South African Nobel Prize winners that went to UCT and were Jewish – that will never happen again.”

Gon added: “It will have a major problematic effect in relationships with universities in America. Boycotts have not succeeded there, despite much more consistent and formal efforts.”

She doesn’t think the University of the Witwatersrand will move to do the same, as it is “desperate to be a postgraduate university”. Neither will Stellenbosch University, “which wants to grow its reputation for business, innovation and technology”. In both cases, said Gon, “cutting relationships with Israel would be cutting off your nose to spite your face. If a university is not prepared to deal with Israel, they will fall behind and their position will be taken by other universities.”

So how did UCT get to this point? In November last year, UCT said its senate had “resolved by majority vote not to support the proposal from the Palestinian Solidarity Forum for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions. UCT values the right to freedom of expression, and the role of the university to create and protect spaces for debate.”

It turns out this motion did not make it to the council’s agenda, and thus was never ratified by the university. “Ultimately, the pro-boycott groups saw it was time to kick it to touch,” said Gon. So it was placed back on the agenda of the senate, and this time, the members voted for the boycott motion: 62 for, 43 against, 10 abstentions, and 1 spoilt ballot.

“It has been bubbling under the surface for years. I believe it would never have happened with Dr Max Price as vice-chancellor, because he always believed in academic freedom, above all else. But since he left... I am not surprised it passed,” said Gon.

During his 10-year tenure, Price repeatedly spoke out against academic boycotts. In 2014, he said that “The day we ban people from speaking on our campus because we do not agree with their politics, is the day we sacrifice our commitment to academic freedom and the ability to protect different, unpopular, and dissident views.”

In 2017 he said his personal position coincides with the position of UCT, but things can change depending on the debate.

“There is a very persistent Palestinian Solidarity Forum, Academic Freedom Committee, and SRC (Students’ Representative Council)” says Gon. “As the years have gone by, the politics of the university have leaned more to the left, and new academics have supported that call. Many know very little of the conflict and are swayed by emotions and pernicious propaganda.”

“The irony is that the very issue of academic freedom should be front and centre of their deliberations. The situation in Israel should be of interest to academics, more than anyone. But generally their knowledge is poor, and they are swayed by left-wing attitudes towards Jews. This is a reflection of extreme leftism, where opinion is heard above fact. Emotion, self-righteous and even anti-Semitism generally come with it.”

Gon does think that those who believe in the future of UCT will fight against the council passing the resolution. However, she points out that the senate vote was kept under wraps until it was passed, so there may have been a lot of careful manoeuvring behind the scenes.

Ironically, this resolution goes against the subtle feelers that the South African government has been putting out about the role it can play in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “Things are not as clear-cut as they were even a year ago. This is counter to the general move away from an ‘absolute position’. Israel does not deserve to be a pariah,” she said.

When contacted by the *SA Jewish Report*, UCT refused to answer questions or release a statement. “We cannot comment on a proposal which may or may not be accepted by council. There are processes to be followed and respected on this matter,” said UCT spokesperson Elijah Moholola.

Rael Kaimowitz, chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies’ Cape council, said: “In voting in favour of boycotting its counterparts in Israel, the UCT senate has betrayed the university’s long and honourable record of upholding the values of academic freedom, even during the difficult years of the apartheid era.

“The senate decision is also grossly discriminatory. Why should UCT have chosen to single out Israeli universities when there are territorial disputes around the world, and countries with appalling human rights records about whom nothing is said?”

“The boycott campaign at UCT has further been characterised by gross procedural unfairness against the South African Union

of Jewish Students (SAUJS), which has strenuously campaigned against the initiative. Time and again, the SAUJS has found itself sidelined, denied an equal opportunity to present its case, left in the dark about crucial upcoming developments, and in general placed at a serious disadvantage vis-à-vis the boycott lobby,” added Kaimowitz.

“We urge the UCT council to reject the emotive, one-sided political posturing of the boycott lobby and instead reaffirm UCT’s long-standing commitment to the values of academic freedom. Our universities belong to all of us. We should not allow them to be hijacked by special-interest lobbies for purposes of conducting one-sided and immoral political vendettas.”

SA professor knighted



See page 5

Anti-Israel bias draws scorn in Geneva

Hundreds of people from cities throughout Europe demonstrated in front of the United Nations (UN) in Geneva, protesting the Human Rights Council's bias against Israel.

The demonstration took place on Monday as the council reached agenda item 7, the only permanent agenda item, which is devoted solely to condemning Israel.

The council discussed seven separate reports alleging Israeli war crimes and other human rights offences, the most against any country. Chief among them was one which found that Israel had committed war crimes and crimes against humanity during the Gaza border protests last year. An independent UN commission released its conclusions last month.

The report called on countries around the world to arrest Israeli soldiers and reservists, and to sanction them with travel bans and asset freezes. The report also noted that the council keeps dossiers on Israeli officials involved in what it considers war crimes.

The pro-Israel watchdog group NGO Monitor said the report ignores the stated goal of Hamas officials to use the demonstrations as camouflage for terror activities, and that it relies on 350 unverifiable and anonymous interviews.

The United States ambassador to Germany, Richard Grenell, told the rally that agenda item 7 "speaks to the fundamental flaws of the Human Rights Council that it singles out Israel on a

permanent basis".

"This is not just a form of bigotry. It is a sign of intellectual and moral decay," he said.

Last year, the US dropped out of the Human Rights Council, citing its treatment of Israel. Israel joined the US in leaving. Neither could speak during Monday's meeting.

UN slams Hamas' use of force against protesters

The United Nations (UN) has condemned Hamas for using force to squelch protests by Gaza Palestinians over new taxes, unemployment, and electricity shortages in the coastal strip.

Hamas, which took control of Gaza in 2007, has arrested dozens of protesters and journalists.

Youth movements and groups that reject the militant group's rule over Gaza have organised the demonstrations.

Nickolay Mladenov, the UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, criticised Hamas's tactics.

"I strongly condemn the campaign of arrests and violence used by Hamas security forces against protesters, including women and children, in Gaza over the past three days," he wrote. "I am particularly alarmed by the brutal beating of journalists and staff from the Independent Commission for Human Rights and the raiding of homes. The long-suffering people of Gaza were protesting the dire economic situation, and demanded an improvement in the quality of life in the Gaza Strip. It is their right to protest without fear of reprisal."

French Jewish students report anti-Semitism

Nearly 90% of French Jewish students say they have experienced anti-Semitic abuse on campus, a poll has found.

Nearly 20% of the 405 respondents in the Ifop survey said they have suffered an anti-Semitic physical assault at least once on campus. Of those, more than half reported suffering violence more than once.

More than half of the students who reported experiencing anti-Semitic incidents on campus said they did nothing about it. Only 8% complained to faculty. Nearly 20% said they did not report the incident or incidents for fear of reprisals, according to the report.

The Ifop survey, which was commissioned by the Union of Jewish Students in France, came on the heels of an earlier Ifop poll conducted last month about anti-Semitism. That survey of 1 008 French adults showed a decrease in the prevalence of anti-Semitic sentiment compared with a similar poll with other respondents in 2016.



Israeli spacecraft one step closer to the moon

The Israeli spacecraft Beresheet successfully conducted its final major manoeuvre as it continues on its journey to the moon. The spacecraft burned its engine for 60 seconds as it moved to an elliptical orbit around the Earth that will intersect the moon's orbit and be captured in it. The rendezvous is scheduled for 4 April at 404 499km from earth, SpaceIL said in a statement.

The lunar lander is expected to land on the moon's surface on 11 April.

The spacecraft continues to communicate

with the Israel Aerospace Industries and SpaceIL control room in Yehud in central Israel.

Hungary opens embassy branch in Jerusalem

Hungary opened a diplomatic trade mission in Jerusalem, which is considered a branch of the Hungarian Embassy located in Tel Aviv.

During a visit to Jerusalem in February, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban had announced that his government would open a trade office with "diplomatic status. So we will have an official presence in Jerusalem as well."

The opening of an official branch of the Hungarian Embassy in Jerusalem puts the country on a path toward recognising the city as Israel's capital, as United States President Donald Trump did in December 2017. The European Union (EU) does not recognise Jerusalem as the capital, and its officials have rejected the US recognition. Hungary is one of only two EU countries to have an official diplomatic mission in Jerusalem. (The Czech Republic opened its culture office there a few weeks ago.)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said three Hungarian diplomats will be assigned to the office for trade purposes.

"That's important for trade, for diplomacy, and for the move that Hungary is leading right now to change the attitude in Europe towards Jerusalem," he said.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
17:59	18:47	Johannesburg
18:38	19:29	Cape Town
17:47	18:36	Durban
18:06	18:55	Bloemfontein
18:09	18:59	Port Elizabeth
18:00	18:50	East London

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May these young women unlearn all the hate

When the month of Adar begins, it is understood that we should increase our joy. Adar is the month in which we celebrate Purim, and it is a time to be filled with much happiness.

Being part of the 30th anniversary of the Women of the Wall (WOW) Rosh Hodesh prayer at the Western Wall (Kotel) on 8 March brought sadness when we were shoved, pinched and abused. Young girls spat at us; the one in front of me told me that it would be better if I were dead. My reply to her was that, rather than spitting in my face, she should serve her country in the Israel Defense Forces, just as I had protected her and

her community in my youth with pride as an officer in the IDF. Here she was in her own youth, being taught to hate and discriminate in the most horrific manner possible. She was hating me simply because I wished to

pray at a wall that has tremendous significance for me and my family, a number of whom had tragically perished simply because they were Jewish.

WOW included women from all over the world: Israelis, Olim from the former Soviet Union, Conservative, Orthodox and Reform women. The Israeli government had voted for and approved a plan in 2016 according to which women would move their services to the southern section of the Western Wall, known also as Robinson's Arch.

The state was to upgrade the platform and allow women to gather in egalitarian prayer, but in 2017, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reneged on his undertaking. No doubt, this came after substantial pressure from the ultra-Orthodox parties in the government. When I walked to the existing prayer plaza, I realised that the promises to renovate it had been broken and nothing was done. It all made sense – the cursing and being prevented from praying – when I arrived back in Johannesburg with bruises and my Tallit torn. I realised how everything had been orchestrated: young girls and boys were taken out of schools

and bussed to the Kotel with one purpose, namely to hate, harass and intimidate. This was more important than to be at school.

Progressive Jews all over the world have historically been huge supporters of Israel over the years. Yet we face continued religious discrimination in Israel in every realm of religious life. We cannot marry or bury our own members, we have limited or no access to holy places, and so the list goes on.

Representatives from all over the world at the Kotel that day were mentally and physically shocked. My prayer is that those who've been taught discrimination from childhood will in time choose a better and more enlightened path. I salute those brave Women of the Wall and, indeed, those that stood side by side with them. We all understand that women have a voice and power, and we are no longer invisible. These women are changing history and are real pioneers. We at the South African Centre for Religious Equality and Diversity (SACRED) stand with you.



Rabbi Julia Margolis, SACRED chairperson

South African Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

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Subscriptions Avusa Publishing (Pty) Ltd. Tel: 0860 525 200 • Board of Directors Howard Sackstein (Chairperson), Herby Rosenberg, Dina Diamond, Herschel Jawitz, Shaun Matisonn, Benjy Porter. Advertisements and editorial copy do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff and board of directors. Tel: 011 430 1980.



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Christchurch massacres: 'A coming of age that nobody wanted'

TALI FEINBERG

While the world is still reeling from the horror of the terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, last Friday, it may seem a little removed for some South Africans.

However, there are a number of ex-Capetonians living in Christchurch for whom the impact was extremely close. "We knew one of the victims – a 14-year-old boy called Sayyad, who attended the same primary school as my kids with his twin sister. He was slaughtered at Al Noor Mosque," says Michael Herman, who moved to New Zealand 16 years ago.

He cannot believe that a gunman mowed down and killed 50 Muslim New Zealanders in two mosques, leaving scores more injured and a country in shock.

"I'm distressed by Sayyad's murder and the suffering his family is obviously experiencing, and my daughters are quite literally devastated by the brutal and unnecessary loss of someone they regarded with deep affection."

Herman knows several of the families who have either lost members or close friends in the attack. He points out that the Al Noor (The Light) mosque is only 1.5km from the Canterbury Hebrew Congregation's shul, Beth-El. Just like the Pittsburgh shul that was attacked in October, Or L'Simcha, this congregation also has a name associated with light. "Given the attitudes expressed in the terrorist's diatribe, this atrocity was separated from Christchurch's Jewish community and Beth-El congregants by a scant degree," he says.

"It was possibly something entirely arbitrary that prompted him to act on his Islamophobia rather than his anti-Semitism, or perhaps because he could slaughter more at the mosques. Whatever his reasons, as the attack five months ago in Pittsburgh showed, the haters will subscribe just as easily to the demonisation of Jews as they will to the demonisation of Muslims," he adds.

"And as the Muslim community in Pittsburgh showed, when these attacks happen, our communities are strongest and most harmonised with our respective fundamental principles when we stand together and support each other."

Herman says his family came to New Zealand "to get away from the craziness and mayhem that had infected most of the rest of the world. We were attracted by New Zealand's egalitarian and progressive values. I never took our way of life here for granted, and have always known that something like this could happen, but it wasn't something I dwelt on."

He says this is "a thoroughly unwelcome

defining moment for Kiwis, a coming of age that nobody wanted, a loss of innocence that is soul shattering. But as the collective response has demonstrated since Friday, Kiwis are standing up for what we value as a country: kindness, caring, and lending a hand where it's needed.

"We're grieving, each in our own way. The people I've spoken to are resolute in protecting what we had before the terrorist attempted to rip the fabric of our society apart. We're thinking about what we can do to help the families and their community, and what we can do in time to heal our country and to enable our Muslim colleagues and friends to live joyful lives free of fear."

Herman says more than R65 million has been raised in the past three days for the massacre victims. "I expect much more still is needed to help fix what's been broken and to provide for the needs of the grieving families, many of whom lost their sole breadwinner."

Marnie Fienberg, whose mother-in-law Joyce Fienberg was among the 11 Jews murdered at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, wrote in a blog appealing for donations: "The universe cracks. That's how you feel when a close family member is violently torn from this world while she or he is at prayer... I know because only six months ago, I was in their shoes."

Rabbi Greg Alexander of the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation wrote in a piece published on the *Daily Maverick* website this week: "This might have happened halfway across the world, but mosque worshippers have been murdered in Cape Town and KwaZulu-Natal last year and we are not doing enough to stop this happening again."

"I say clearly to the Muslim community in Cape Town that when any person is attacked for their belief, all humanity is attacked. We, the Jewish people, are sadly no strangers to prejudice, and we stand with you."

Shai Levin is a Capetonian who moved to Christchurch two years ago to study. "I have friends of friends whose family and co-workers were killed in the attack," he says. "Nothing like this could ever be expected at the far corner of the world, so far from this form of fanaticism. It's crazy to think such a disgusting thing happened just 2km from my home. The day before the attack, I had run past the mosque at exactly the same time (as

the attack), 13:40," he says.

Levin is studying maths at the University of Canterbury and was in a lecture at the time of the shooting. "Messages circulated about what happened, and people started whispering amongst each other. The severity was unclear until we were sent an email declaring lockdown of the university. People were very distressed." He managed to get home before the campus was completely locked down.

He says he is angry that the Muslim community of New Zealand was targeted,

security will be elevated at a national level."

Levin says that since the attack, there has been fear and tension among the people around him. "However, the country as a whole is so united in the support of ethnic minorities, and there is a huge amount of love and support towards the Muslim community of Christchurch. It is a peaceful, multi-cultural city, which is why people are so quick to stand up to the fact that 'they are us'. So many are keen to help out however they can."

Herman agrees: "The unity of humanity and altruistic reciprocity are the foundational principles of Judaism. We can consider these interesting curiosities, or actually live these values. As Jews, this is our time to do what the Muslims of Pittsburgh did, and not only say we stand with Muslims, but be there helping to rebuild trust and to provide cordons of safety, if necessary."

"For those who have never done so before, this is their time to say, 'I stand with Muslims.' I appeal to everyone who is appalled by what happened in Christchurch to immediately donate generously."

Stephen Goodman, president of the New Zealand Jewish Council, says the Jewish community in New Zealand is "feeling deep sympathy towards the Muslim population. We are only too aware that an attack like this could have been directed against Jews, so we also feel quite vulnerable."

"A terrorist attack against one community is an attack against us all," says Goodman. "We appreciate the support of Jews around the world in helping us

help the Muslim community in this most difficult time. Many people felt New Zealand was too far away and too tolerant a society for something like this to happen. This proves we are all vulnerable so must remain alert."

South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) national director Wendy Kahn says: "The SAJBD condemns in the strongest terms the heinous shootings of worshippers. We stand up against hate crimes against all religious communities... we stand in solidarity with the people of Christchurch, and with the Muslim community."

The board of the South African Holocaust and Genocide Foundation said: "All congregations, no matter their faith, should be able to worship in safety."

• Donations can be made at: <https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/christchurch-shooting-victims-fund>



A stone placed among the tributes to the massacre victims at the Christchurch Botanical Gardens

because "they are a hugely peaceful community that are well integrated into society here. I think the news of the attack hit the people of New Zealand very hard, as the country is so far disconnected from any major crimes and terrorism. Personally, I tried to be there for my friends. The motto 'Kia Kaha' comes to mind – a Maori phrase for 'keep calm' or 'keep going'."

Levin thinks it's unlikely that this attack could have happened at a shul, because the attacker was looking for a large group of people to target, and the Jewish community is so small there.

As a past member of the Community Security Organisation, Levin watched the video of the attack from a security standpoint. "This event was completely unwarranted, and security in New Zealand is usually at a minimum. I have no doubt that

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Respected editor angry on finding he was spied on by government

NICOLA MILTZ

Veteran journalist Professor Anton Harber says he was furious when he heard his name was included on a list of people who had been spied on by agents from the State Security Agency (SSA).

His anger comes after the emergence of an explosive affidavit, alleged to have been written by an ex-spy who worked for former president Jacob Zuma's then-minister of state security, David Mahlobo.

In it, he claims that cabinet ministers, heads of non-governmental organisations, trade unions, judges, and other "significant individuals" were spied on between 2015 and 2018.

The ex-spy's sworn statement was released by forensic investigator Paul O'Sullivan's company, Forensics for Justice.

Code-named "Prophet" or "Whiskey", the operative's real name is being kept secret for now to protect him. The affidavit exposes how, under the leadership of Zuma, the SSA subjected private individuals and organisations to unlawful surveillance.

The affidavit names Harber, University of the Witwatersrand journalism professor and former eNCA editor in chief, as one of the 38 people who was spied on. It also names outspoken anti-corruption activist and CEO of Sygnia Group, Magda Wierzycka – whose father and grandparents were Jewish – and the executive director of Freedom under Law, Nicole Fritz. Freedom under Law was the joint winner of the humanitarian award at the 2018 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.

The affidavit was prepared by O'Sullivan in June last year, and came to light days after the recent release of a report by a review panel that investigated the SSA on instruction from President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The panel, which was appointed in June 2018, made some damning findings, including that the SSA was used in the ANC's factional battles. The report confirmed what the public has been suspecting for years: under Zuma's leadership, SSA operatives engaged in widespread spying, corruption, political interference, and abuse of power. It found that intelligence agencies were focused more on internal ANC battles than on the public's safety and security, abused their power and state resources, and infiltrated the media.

According to *BizNews*, after the ex-spy came forward, O'Sullivan handed his affidavit to Ramaphosa. It is understood the information contained in the affidavit would have assisted the high-level investigation into the SSA, the findings of which corroborated much of what the ex-spy exposed.

The affidavit gives a glimpse into the sordid world of espionage involving conspiracy theories, code names, clandestine addresses, spy equipment, Russian accents, bottles of vodka, cyber surveillance, and "honey traps".

Russian President Vladimir Putin is mentioned several times as being closely tied to Mahlobo. The ex-spy apparently financially lost everything when Mahlobo allegedly fobbed

him off. He details an outrageous plot to destabilise the ANC, and includes salacious titbits about certain ministers' sexual preferences, escapades, and extra marital affairs.

Harber, Wierzycka, Fritz, former public protector Advocate Thuli Madonsela, Constitutional Court Justice Edwin Cameron, former home affairs minister Malusi Gigaba, Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng, and Finance Minister Tito Mboweni are a few of the people "Prophet" or "Whiskey" says were spied on.

Harber told the *SA Jewish Report* he is considering his options, and will be seeking legal advice on how to take the matter further. "I am definitely considering doing something about this. We have to stand up to such abuses of power," he said.

"This is the second time in a decade that state security has been spying on me. I have an apology letter from Ronnie Kasrils when he was minister. I accepted that and moved on, only now to discover it might be continuing. It is disgraceful and dangerous. And it means they are probably not watching real threats to our state security.

Harber said he was never aware that he was being watched. "I think it is easy to look back and blame all those dropped calls and bad reception

on spies. But who knows?"

Wierzycka said on Twitter she knew her phone was tapped and "used as a listening device".

"The phone reception deteriorated when SSA was listening. I was also followed. By car and on foot. Exploring legal options."

She told the media the surveillance appeared to drop since Ramaphosa came to power.

"They weren't particularly covert about it," said Wierzycka. "You would see the same guys sitting in the restaurant, and the same guy walking past me in the street. It was also very obvious our telephones were being tapped."

In the affidavit, the ex-spy states: "I was part of a team manning a small communication centre monitoring strategic individuals. My task was to listen to conversation, summarise transcripts into briefs, report immediate real-time locations of subjects under surveillance, write

reports on the recording acquired, warn of impending meetings based on cell phone triangulation, corroborate human intelligence via redacted



Professor Anton Harber

intelligence from operatives on the ground, assign operatives for tasks based on intelligence obtained. "After doing the intercepts, we would sit and transcribe the intercepts and these would be handed to a runner who would come and fetch them to the Minister (sic)." "Whiskey" alleges that Mahlobo had talked of how he was trained

in Russia, China, Angola, Senegal, Brazil, and India before being promoted to minister.

"Mahlobo says that when he was in Russia, Putin spared at least an hour for him every day... and agreed he should be a president of South Africa in the next five to 10 years," states Whiskey.

He further claims that part of the plot to destabilise the ANC would be to subject the former North West and Free State premiers to "fake shootings and bombings", and then blame the "conspiracy" on Ramaphosa and his supporters.

On the Forensics for Justice website, O'Sullivan said: "The sheer audacity of Zuma's accomplices, like Mahlobo, who was also engaged in unlawful wire-taps of ourselves and others, whilst running a criminally secret parallel intelligence structure, is breathtaking."

O'Sullivan said he had opened a case with the Hawks in June, and wanted Mahlobo to be brought before the Zondo commission on state capture.

"I now believe that the intelligence project was in all probability an illegal intelligence operation, and that Mahlobo was running a parallel intelligence structure," he said.

An Israel dialogue against the BDS darkness

MIRAH LANGER

The battle against Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) is frequently thwarted because Israel advocacy gets lost in translation.

This is the key point that Middle East political and diplomacy expert Neil Lazarus made last week in proposing strategies for combatting the narrative of BDS.

"There is an inability (in Israel advocacy) to speak a language that appeals. BDS is brilliant at this... (its rhetoric) enables liberals, or so-called liberals and progressives, to find a cause... They come with calls and passion that they feel the world is unjust and we need to change it."

Yet, when it came to those advocating for Israel, "we come with the fact that Israel invented the cherry tomato and the flash drive", said Lazarus.

Without a suitable retort, BDS – which Lazarus suggested was simply "passive anti-Semitism" – was allowed to liberalise itself.

In a venue lit by solar lanterns and cell phones due to a scheduled load shedding stint, Lazarus offered suggestions for how better to respond to this type of attack on Israel.

He was speaking at an event in Johannesburg hosted by the South African Zionist Federation, the Israel Centre, as well as Yeshiva College and King David Schools.

Born in London, Lazarus studied politics before emigrating to Israel in 1988. He lives in Jerusalem and has served as a consultant to the Israeli government, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the Jewish Agency and various Jewish student groups.

BDS brands itself on its website with the tagline "freedom, justice and equality". It describes itself as a movement that "works to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and pressure Israel to comply with international law". However, Lazarus's interpretation of the organisation's mandate is that it simply seeks "the destruction of the State of Israel".

He said the economic impact of BDS was currently not a key concern. Instead, the damage was in the

emotive power of the narrative it sells about Israel.

"Globally, it attracts people who are critical of the Israeli government into a much more extreme movement."

Lazarus said outreach through dialogue was a key step towards a better understanding between people. "Peace can only come when people are actually talking to each other." Yet, he said, "BDS calls for separation of the two groups (pro- and anti-Israel)".

He said when dialogue was possible, there were key strategies that those advocating for Israel should adopt. For example, the choice of words needed to be particular. When espousing Zionism, it could be defined as the right of an "indigenous population returning to its land". This would be better than simply declaring "Israel was given to us by G-d. That makes you sound like a Jihad Jew," he quipped.



Neil Lazarus

"You have to speak the language of the people that you are trying to convince... It's not what you say; it's what they (BDS supporters) hear."

Humility was also a key quality to adopt when discussing Israel, said Lazarus. "What we always do is automatic answering. (Instead), before we do anything else, we have got to show understanding of the other side."

Lazarus said that the common argument – suggesting that the blame for BDS' surge in popularity lay in the Israeli government's own bad publicity – was counterproductive. Instead, the South African community needed to take responsibility for the work it could do

against BDS. It should adopt a three-fold strategy, he suggested.

First, the community needed to decide a clear "red line" of what it would, or would not, accept going forward in terms of the repercussions of anti-Israel sentiment in public life. "If you don't have an agreed red line, then anything goes... They will keep marching."

Second, the community needed to embrace coalitions with the Christian community that does support Israel. "The reality is we have some very good friends here," said Lazarus.

And third, the focus had to be on the younger generation in the Jewish community, including support for university students who were on the frontline of the struggle against BDS. It was also vital to work closely with schoolchildren who needed to be equipped for their foray into the wider world.

While in South Africa, Lazarus met with the leadership of the South African Union of Jewish Students. He said these students had been absolutely clear about what they wanted: "The basic right to define themselves by their Jewish identity, including in their relationship to Israel."

As such, the rest of the community had to assist them by offering whatever support they needed for this to be their reality.

Lazarus asked a group of Jewish scholars in the audience what they believed to be problems in terms of their role in Israeli advocacy. They suggested they often did not know how to answer back, got too emotional, and sometimes also felt they did not stand their ground because they did not feel entirely clear about their own Jewish identity.

"These are the challenges of the community," stressed Lazarus. The youth needed to be informed about the country's history – most of which was far beyond their frame of reference. They also needed to have personal ties with the homeland. "If you want to build a next generation, make sure that they spend time in Israel... You need to build a relationship."

Ultimately, the rise of BDS was a sign of a much larger problem – that of surging anti-Semitism. Furthermore, its popularity also indicated that the Jewish community was not sufficiently organised in terms of its Israel advocacy.

"BDS is a cancer, and it not going away without the correct treatment," said Lazarus.

Bonita Meyersfeld knighted for work on gender-based violence



Professor Bonita Meyersfeld

TALI FEINBERG

“I was emailed a letter that I was going to be made a Knight of the National Order of Merit by France,” says Professor Bonita Meyersfeld about the recognition she has received for her work addressing gender-based violence in South Africa. “It was surreal... It’s one of the most extraordinary things that has ever happened to me.”

Meyersfeld – winner of the Women in Leadership award at the 2018 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards – is the founder and board chairperson of Lawyers Against Abuse (LvA). This non-profit organisation is based in Diepsloot, north of Johannesburg.



“One of the most contagious things in the world is a smile and act of kindness. It doesn’t need to be big, and we see it in our community all the time.”

LvA has provided legal and psychological support to hundreds of victims of gender-based violence, including assisting them with protection orders, supporting them in pursuing criminal cases, and providing therapy sessions. Just recently, LvA’s work resulted in a life sentence for a perpetrator of rape and sexual violence in the informal settlement.

Meyersfeld received the order of merit on 19 March from the French ambassador to South Africa, Christophe Farnaud, in Pretoria. The knighthood is awarded by the president of France to French citizens and foreign nationals for distinguished achievements such as “acts of devotion, bravery, generosity, or a measurable commitment to serving others”.

Meyersfeld says it has been a long road to this point, from conceptualising LvA about 20 years ago, and writing a thesis and book about her unique model in combating gender-based violence, to implementing it at the centre in Diepsloot. A second centre will be built in the next two years.

She says this model has the potential to be rolled out nationally and globally. “Obviously, it has to take the local context into account, but really, there are no limits.”

LvA’s executive director, Lindsey Henson, agrees. “Our model works. We see meaningful, long-term and successful support to hundreds of women and children, resulting in a level of access to justice that is unprecedented.”

Meyersfeld believes the achievements of

LvA were recognised because “the work we do is very real. I think they saw that the centre makes a real impact for people in need.”

She is thrilled that this order of merit acknowledges both that there is a problem and a possible solution, and the people that are part of it.

“It is wonderful to recognise their commitment to an indescribable problem. [The order of merit] is testimony to the thousands of heroes who survive gender-based violence, to the powerful women who founded LvA, and to the women in our centre who work every day to make LvA the sanctuary and place of justice it is today.”

She says her Jewish identity has hugely influenced her work: “My grandfather escaped Nazi Germany, and I think, as a people, we know what it is like to be persecuted. At its heart, Judaism is a religion about thinking and being responsive to society. It is very much part of my personal drive and what I do.”

To anyone who wants to change the world, especially young people, she says: “You absolutely can. Every step, every kind word, every act of kindness puts cruelty and harm further into the shadows. It really does add up, both as an individual and a collective.”

“One of the most contagious things in the world is a smile and act of kindness. It doesn’t need to be big, and we see it in our community all the time. The world is led by brave people, even if it is the hardest thing to do. Be angry at injustice, and be brave.”

Global CEOs flock to Mother City

TALI FEINBERG

“The Young Presidents’ Organization (YPO) has 27 000 members who gather every year in a different destination. For us, our conference in Cape Town was not only a defining moment for Cape Town, but also South Africa and the continent,” says Kim Faclier, one of the organisers of the international YPO Leadership Conference earlier this month in the Mother City.

“It’s like the Olympics of business conferences when over 2 500 CEOs from more than 130 countries convene. They were blown away by the showcase, opportunities, and investment that South Africa has to offer.”

Also in attendance was Rwandan President Paul Kagame, while President Cyril Ramaphosa and *The Daily Show* host Trevor Noah were guest speakers.

Both busy men, “they clearly saw the conference as a priority. Noah flew in for 24 hours just to address the participants, and for the president it was a no-brainer to speak to such a large audience of potential investors,” says Faclier.

Ramaphosa told the delegates:

“Africa is the next frontier of global growth. It has vast untapped potential and a huge appetite for investment. We encourage you to explore the opportunities that exist not only in South Africa, but across the continent.”

The day after the conference, Ramaphosa told parliament that the YPO executives “were enthused, saying they wanted to consider investing in South Africa”.

Host city YPO chairperson Paul Berman said the conference offered “a once in a lifetime opportunity to present South Africa to this group of business leaders and to demonstrate, after a period of adverse international publicity, how we are overcoming our challenges. We showed, as our president set out in his state of the nation address in 2018, that we are a nation at one, committed to work, to build, to change and to progress.”



President Cyril Ramaphosa and Paul Berman

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Similarities finding friendship under fire



The date 15 March has historically been an unlucky day. It all started when Roman Emperor Julius Caesar was stabbed to death by his closest allies, who conspired against him. That murder on the Ides of March changed the path of history – and not in a positive way.

This year on that day, a crazy right-wing fanatic with firearms and a camera calmly walked into a mosque in sleepy Christchurch, New Zealand, and opened fire on anyone he could find. He made sure everyone he could find was dead before he walked out and made his way to the next mosque, where he tried to do the same, killing several people outside. One

worshipper stopped the gunman by literally using himself as a human decoy.

The victims in the mosque were so shocked that you hardly heard a sound from them. I know this only because this lunatic filmed his shooting tirade and streamed it on Facebook Live. People have described this video as looking just like a typical video game, with the main character trying to annihilate everything in sight. It appeared as if it was a game to him.

And yet, 50 people who had simply gone to their normal Friday prayers were slaughtered, and 50 others were injured by this white supremacist. And the lives of everyone around them have been altered forever.

This massacre has horrified the world, irrespective of whether one is Muslim, Jewish, or of any other religious persuasion. It is the horror of the warped hatred, the brutality and wholesale murder that has joined people across the world in sadness and shock at this aberration.

It is not lost on anyone just how similar this massacre was to the one that took place across the world at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on 27 October last year. In both cases, it was on the holiest day of our week, as Muslims hold a communal prayer service every Friday afternoon.

“The universe cracks. That’s how you feel when a close family member is violently torn from this world while she or he is at prayer... I know because only six months ago, I was in their shoes.” These words were written this week by an American woman whose mother-in-law was murdered in the Tree of Life massacre.

Our shoes are indeed very similar, despite the Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

And those who have racist issues, particularly white supremacists and their ilk, tar us with the same hateful brush. They see us as “other” and different. And when there is reason to find fault in a racial group, it is often either the Jews or the Muslims who are targeted.

We are often seen as interchangeable by those who hate us.

In the case of the Christchurch madman, I can bet he wasn’t terribly fond of Jews – no white supremacists are. As for the lunatic who opened fire in the Tree of Life Synagogue, he was unlikely to have Muslim friends.

Being quite simplistic here, consider that religious Muslim women also cover their heads. Jewish and Muslim men both wear a form of kippah, particularly when they pray. These are just two of many similarities.

And, as we know, we are born of the same biblical family, what with the Arab nation being the sons and daughters of Ishmael, Abraham’s firstborn. How much closer do we get?

I can’t help but wonder what it would be like if we actually found a way to live side by side in the Middle East?

Nevertheless, earlier this week, a bunch of flowers was dropped off at the mosque in Greenside, Johannesburg. On it was a note that read: “Our thoughts and prayers are with the Muslim world internationally. We are all human beings created in the image of the same G-d.” It was signed simply ‘A Greenside family’.

I don’t know for sure who sent it, but I have a suspicion it was a particular Jewish family I know.

A colleague forwarded a series of tweets to me today. The first one was from an imam, who said: “Whenever I make a post about Muslim achievements, such as: Peace initiatives, successful Muslim female pilots, research etc, most of those liking/sharing those kinds of posts are Jewish/Israeli people. They want us to succeed and advance...”

To this, another Muslim person responded: “True. I noticed that a long time ago. And I always say it: Jewish people don’t have problems with us or anyone else, we ‘sadly’ have problems with them. This has to change.” And so the Twitterverse continued.

I have to say that most Jews and Muslims do live side by side in South Africa. There really aren’t serious issues between us, that is, mostly, as long as we don’t discuss the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

But with the rising radical right-wing and crazy white supremacist gunmen going berserk, there appears more reason for those of us in the Diaspora to stand together, rather than apart.

I, for one, am heartbroken for the loved ones of those whose precious lives were stolen from them by a crazy person so filled with hatred that he couldn’t see past it.

I only wish that, like the murder of Caesar did so many centuries ago, this too changes our history. Only, in this case, I hope it makes us realise we are not that different, and enables us to work closer together against racial hatred.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Jokes aside, rockets fired at Tel Aviv are no laughing matter

One of the ways in which people best cope with stress is humour. So, when two rockets were fired at Tel Aviv last week – one landing in an unpopulated area and the other reportedly disintegrated mid-air – the jokes soon started circulating online.

The city is congested, and Israelis wondered out loud how it was possible that although they could never find a parking spot, Hamas had been able to locate an open area for one of its rockets to land?

Others jokingly appealed to the media to stop reporting that a second missile had exploded in a field, because in no time building contractors would be all over the site.

The municipality of Sderot, an Israeli city less than a mile from Gaza that is constantly under rocket fire, mocked Tel Aviv residents on its official Facebook page. “A little bit of noise and they go crazy,” it wrote, offering Tel Aviv residents the chance to visit shelters in Sderot for “a VIP experience”.

This much is true. The sometimes daily rockets that rain down on Sderot are seldom met with the same kind of heavy-handed retaliation and urgent attention that greeted the ones reaching Tel Aviv last week.

But the biggest joke of all is that as the projectiles were being launched, Hamas’ political leadership was meeting with an Egyptian security delegation to discuss a possible long-term truce with Israel. Sadly, this was not a joke but reality.

Naturally, the Egyptians were furious and soon left the strip, even though Hamas insisted it had not activated the missiles. This, despite the fact that they were fired from a Hamas installation.

Still, it’s unlikely that another militant group in Gaza could have fired them. After Hamas, the Iranian-backed Islamic Jihad is the second largest movement in the coastal enclave, and its leaders vehemently denied responsibility. There are smaller Gaza factions inspired by the Islamic State who also sometimes fire rockets at Israel, but it seems doubtful that they possess projectiles capable of reaching as far as Tel Aviv. Regardless, Israel has always maintained it holds Hamas responsible for what goes on in Gaza.

So, was Hamas’ denial a lie? It does seem ludicrous for the group to suggest that the fired missiles were a mistake. How does one explain that? Could someone just have happened to be leaning against a projectile and triggered it? Or, as some Palestinian sources allege, a new recruit who had not been properly trained accidentally launched them? Could the group’s political wing have no control over its military one? It all seems laughable.

As if that’s not odd enough, on Friday morning the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) supported Hamas’ claim that the rockets were fired in error, raising more than a few eyebrows.

Significantly, the army made this statement after having already attacked more than 100 Hamas targets across Gaza overnight in retaliation. The IDF admitted they had been caught off guard by the initial incident. Although the rockets caused no damage or injuries, it was the first time the city of Tel Aviv had been targeted since the last war between Israel and Hamas in 2014.

The sudden flare-up comes at a sensitive time for both sides. And it is this, more than anything, that might offer insight into the official reactions.

Israeli elections are less than a month away, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is locked in a tight fight for re-election. The last thing he can

**DATELINE:
MIDDLE EAST**

Paula Slier

afford is criticism that he is soft against Hamas, which is why he was quick to convene a security meeting and declare that he viewed the incident with the “utmost gravity”. He ordered the military to respond.

Having said that, it’s the old dilemma for the premier. He doesn’t want to enter Gaza – and certainly not now – but he doesn’t want his political opponents using the incident against him either.

As bizarre as it sounds, the army is sticking to its guns. It insists the attack was a mistake, and this in turn serves Netanyahu well. As it does Hamas. Knowing Israel would retaliate after the Tel Aviv-bound rockets, it ordered all its men to abandon their bases and offices immediately.

Aside from nine more rockets it subsequently fired into Israel – they received little attention because they fell near southern Israeli border communities and no one was injured – Hamas did not initiate a major reaction to the Israeli strikes, and hence staved off an escalation in tensions.

The Hamas Interior Ministry went so far as to say the initial rockets were “against the national



The Israeli military has said at least two rockets were fired towards Tel Aviv, triggering rocket sirens

consensus” and promised to take action against the perpetrators. Just as significantly, for the first time in almost a year, it cancelled weekly Friday demonstrations near the Israeli border.

All of this happened as the group faced rare public criticism from Gaza residents, who hold it responsible for their worsening economy and harsh living conditions. In a rare public show of dissent, demonstrators took to the streets at several locations across the strip in the hours before the Tel Aviv rockets were launched.

Burning tires and blocking roads, the protests continued for three days and were met with brutal repression, including live fire from the Hamas security forces. If you missed seeing the pictures, it’s because Hamas forbade video from being taken. Seventeen Palestinian reporters were arrested, several of whom were badly beaten.

Hamas clearly understands that the protests are a warning sign that its days could be numbered. Is it not plausible then, as many observers are suggesting, that it used the rockets – even though it denies this – to detract attention away from growing internal dissent?

Hamas knows Gaza residents have little desire for another war with Israel, so initiating one won’t help its popularity. But firing rockets at Israel might. As could the shooting of three Israelis in the West Bank last Sunday, two of whom, at the time of writing, had died. The third is in a critical condition. Hamas praised the murders and handed out sweets in celebration.

Ironically, at any other time, such discontent towards Hamas among Gazans would be good news for Israel and Netanyahu. But not on election eve. The last thing the prime minister needs now is a war on his southern border – something that, for a few hours last Thursday, looked very likely.

Creating a different future for Israelis and Palestinians



OPINION

Professor David Bilchitz

As elections approach in Israel, many who care deeply for its future hope for positive change in the status quo. Sadly, in South Africa, the current discussion on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) is caught in a disturbing polarity.

On the one hand, we have a section of our Jewish community who believes Israel can do no wrong. The formal leadership of the South African Jewish community has, for instance, not criticised Israel, even when its actions are clearly wrong and unjust.

By contrast, the United Kingdom Board of Deputies recently condemned both Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's demonisation of the Arab citizens of Israel, and his willingness to form a coalition with those who venerate the murderer of 29 Arabs. Even senior Conservative global Jewish community figures such as Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress, and Sir Mick Davis in the UK have been similarly critical. Why is this important?

While living in Israel last year, I sadly was confronted with persistent violations of human rights in the OPT. I met Palestinians forcibly removed by the Israel military under the pretext of security, who now found themselves working for Jewish settlers on the land they previously had owned. I met a family of hard-working labourers on a date farm whose home was demolished by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) – the family

having done nothing that threatens Israel.

I spoke to Israeli soldiers who told me about “operations of presence”: in the middle of the night, without any suspicion of wrongdoing, the IDF raid the homes of ordinary Palestinians, traumatising families. These actions are not only wrong in themselves, but they create new enmity on a daily basis, and render a resolution of the conflict less and less likely.

On the other side of the South African political spectrum, we have a raucous Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement that seeks to portray Israel as similar in nature to apartheid South Africa. The comparison makes no sense for anyone who considers the different origins of these conflicts.

More insidiously, though, the BDS movement denies a Jewish story around Israel and adopts wholesale a single narrative framework that portrays the Jewish return to Israel simply as a form of colonialism.

The narrative provides cover to those who claim justification for raining rockets on Israel or committing terrorist outrages. Entrenching polarisation and demonisation, rather than understanding and reconciliation, sustains the conflict instead of assisting in its resolution.

Seeking resolution requires each nation to hear and acknowledge the other's narratives. Zionism was never an attempt to colonise another people. Jews came to Israel not as agents of European colonialism, but, in many cases, as refugees from oppressive regimes seeking a safe haven in a hostile world. Many of our parents and grandparents were those refugees. Denying these realities is not only deeply hurtful, it is a denial of an important

truth.

Denial, however, works both ways. The pain and suffering Jews experienced blinds many of them to the cost that the conflict has inflicted on Palestinian inhabitants. Whatever the multiple historical causes, the creation of Israel resulted in the displacement of nearly 700 000 Palestinian people from their homes.

Connecting with like-minded groups internationally, we embrace an optimistic vision of two peoples with their own states living together in peace and cooperation.

Many lived out the rest of their lives in refugee camps, and subsequent generations remain in squalid, precarious conditions in the OPT and neighbouring states. We need to listen to, acknowledge and engage with Palestinian narratives and their pain and suffering, as they must with ours.

Mutual recognition opens a space in which relationships can be built. What has been sorely missing in Israel, as well as in the South African discourse, are voices of moderation that understand this conflict is not written in stone.

A sizeable portion of the Jewish community in South Africa and globally – perhaps a vast majority – are keen to see a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is not because we are against Israel. Quite the contrary. It is because we believe such a resolution will not only be right from a moral point of view, but allow Israel fully to achieve the *hatikvah*

(hope) that lies at its heart.

That hope is not simply a state that is economically successful. It is, rather, one that is faithful to the basic Jewish and democratic values enshrined in its Declaration of Independence. While the right-wing government in Israel continually undermines this original vision, many of us both in Israel and outside remain deeply invested in these ideals.

Many of us are thus setting up a movement in South Africa – the Jewish Democratic Initiative (JDI) – which seeks to reinvigorate this vision of Israel in this country. Connecting with like-minded groups internationally, we embrace an optimistic vision of two peoples with their own states living together in peace and cooperation.

The way to achieve this, we believe, cannot be through polarising rhetoric and demonisation. Rather, the focus must be on building trust, connections and understanding.

We are inspired by our own South African story of a negotiated settlement after centuries of oppression and conflict. We glimpsed the possibilities for Israel and Palestine, too, during the 1990s. Yet, both sides have allowed peace to recede from their vision.

I invite members of our community to join the JDI and other Jews around the world, who are reaching out to our Israeli and Palestinian brothers and sisters in order to make peace a reality in this generation.

• David Bilchitz is a professor of fundamental rights at the University of Johannesburg. If you are interested in connecting with the JDI, please write to jdimovement@gmail.com

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Judgment insists church must accept gay marriages

JORDAN MOSHE

The Dutch Reformed Church's policy opposing the recognition of same-sex marriages was outlawed this month in a judgment handed down in the North Gauteng High Court.

The court ruled that the exclusion of certain members by preventing them from enjoying the full and equal rights the church offers to others is unconstitutional.

This has potential ramifications for all religions, not least of all Judaism.

individuals on grounds of sexual orientation."

He emphasises that the refusal to allow an individual to become a minister – or a rabbi – because they are involved in a same-sex relationship is naked discrimination.

Although the decision formally only applies to the Dutch Reformed Church at present, Bilchitz says the principles affirmed in this decision also have important implications for all religious institutions, including Orthodox Judaism.

"If the Orthodox Jewish community wishes to conform with the values of dignity and

equality underpinning the South African Constitution, it thus needs to consider its attitudes and behaviours towards gay and lesbian people.

"The South African courts have made a clear statement that the sacred is forced into the secular when there is prejudice to basic rights contained in the Bill of Rights.

"All South African Jews who believe in equality and human rights should demand that fairness and justice for lesbian and gay people be advanced by the Orthodox Jewish community."

However, Stuart Woolman, a law professor from the University of

the Witwatersrand, disagrees. He says that unless associations (such as Orthodox Judaism) that have rules on membership don't appear to violate constitutional norms, or actually maintain a category of second-class members, those who find the discrimination abhorrent can seek justice elsewhere. "They can leave and set up an association more to their liking," he says.

But this may not always be the case, he adds. "Such voluntary exit is not always possible. Under such circumstances, the state and the association have an obligation to enable people to find and create a community that meets their needs.

"Associations are where we secure our meaning in life. Do you want a state that, on the back of the basic law, can interfere in the daily affairs of fragile associations? I think not. If you can't change the views of a community even when challenged, then your right response is to leave. Should you have difficulty with exit, then state and association have obligations to make you equal citizens elsewhere."

When asked for his view, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein said: "I am studying this lengthy and complex judgment to understand it properly."

"When should a court choose the right to equality, and when should it choose the right to freedom of religion?"

"The judgment provides an important recognition that religious groupings are bound by the Constitution, and have a duty not to discriminate against and to uphold the dignity of lesbian and gay people," says David Bilchitz, professor of fundamental rights and constitutional law at the University of Johannesburg.

In 2015, the church decided to accept same-sex marriages, and scrapped a rule that gay ministers of the church had to be celibate. But it changed its mind in 2016, saying these relationships do not meet Christian guidelines.

Last year, Reverend Laurie Gaum, his father Dr Frits Gaum, and eight other members of the Dutch Reformed Church launched their application to have the 2016 decision set aside and declared unconstitutional.

Pierre de Vos, a professor of constitutional law at the University of Cape Town, writes in his blog, Constitutionally Speaking: "This part of the case presented the court with a choice between enforcing the right not to be discriminated against guaranteed in the Bill of Rights... on the one hand, and the right to freedom of religion ... on the other. When should a court choose the right to equality, and when should it choose the right to freedom of religion?"

Although he points out that the court rejected this idea and said that there was "no balancing of rights required" in this case, he believes the court got this wrong.

However, he says only time will tell how courts will approach the issue in the future, balancing between the need to protect individuals, and the rights of religious institutions to engage in their practices.

Bilchitz maintains: "The court recognises that religious communities also contain minorities who must be treated decently. It takes a very strong position that religious freedom cannot provide a blank cheque to discriminate unfairly against

Parent reveals paedophile's modus operandi

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

"One in 10 children in South Africa will be abused before the age of 18." This was the message from Rozanne Sack, the co-founder of Koleinu SA, a support service for victims of abuse in the Jewish community. Together with Shalom Bayit, Koleinu SA hosted a talk on the hidden nature of the grooming process at the HOD last week.

"Historically, as a society, we find it difficult to believe allegations or acknowledge the signs that child sexual abuse is happening," said Sack.

Abusers aren't the monster in the dark alley, she explained. They're master manipulators, nice guys – the philanthropist, community hero, beloved teacher or coach. "They gain children's trust through their ability to connect emotionally with them, and they groom a child's family to trust them implicitly. Over 93% of the time, the abuser is someone known and trusted by the child."

This was the case at Parktown Boys High in Johannesburg, where boys were systematically sexually abused by Collan Rex, assistant water polo coach and hostel master. Now a convicted paedophile, Rex was recently sentenced to an effective 23 years in prison.

Nicky, a parent and former Parktown Boys High board member whose surname is withheld to protect her child, together with a matron and another board member, investigated and blew the whistle on the abuse at the school. She revealed how the boys and parents were groomed.

"This was a paedophile operating within a system that had groomed a whole group of boys," said Nicky. "Our journey started when we enrolled our kid at the school. At an introductory tea, they say to the parents that it's time to give your children into their care – they will turn your son into a gentleman. The underlying message is that a mother's influence is not welcome anymore; you'll sissify your boy. Already, you're groomed to back off, leave your son to the school, and let him man up. That in itself puts you in a mindset where you're already minimising whatever complaint your child may have."

After their first few days at school, new boys get put on a bus and taken to an initiation camp, explained Nicky. "Here, they're brutally assaulted, physically and verbally, by the matric boys. The teachers go and leave them to the matrics. They put the fear of G-d into these children about what will happen if they snitch... this brotherhood is set up and this code of silence wired into them. This protects more than just a paedophile – it protects teachers, who often shirked their duties."

As a Parktown old boy, Rex knew this system was in place, explained Nicky. "Under the code of silence and protection that the adults had, the paedophile came back into the school and took full advantage.

"During school hours, he got into the swimming pool with the boys while they were practising water polo, and he began grooming them. He started touching boys under the guise that this was normal water polo training: if your opponents do this to you, which he said is a normal thing, he's got you

ready for it. He started seeing who would accept his touch and finding out which boys were vulnerable. He carved relationships with boys who had a single dad or mom, for example," said Nicky.

"He also had more access to boys living in the hostel. He'd isolate these boys when he had them alone, and he started introducing them to drugs and pornography. Once he'd enticed them to commit a taboo act, like taking drugs or doing something sexual in front of him, he'd have these boys enslaved. Because the threat was 'if you tell on me, I'll tell on you'. Then he'd take it further from there."

Eventually, CCTV cameras were placed in common areas by new hostel management, and the abuse was uncovered by accident. "What was so disturbing about the finding was that the boys were

system. So, they go to another school and get hold of another group of kids. Adults around children need to be held accountable. This could reduce child abuse dramatically.

"Parents must ask whether teachers have been adequately trained, not just in the subject, but also in child development," Nicky continued. "Do they understand the child's mind and how to deal with certain situations? A lot of our educators today don't, and that's a problem. Parents also have a lot to do with the grooming of their child. They learn to look the other way and tolerate these things so their child gets into first team or provincial team sport, for example. They're often groomed themselves.

"As parents, we need to be examining where we're putting our kids in school," added Nicky.



so relaxed about it," said Nicky. "They were in a common room, he was molesting the child in front of all the others, and they just carried on playing on their phones. As we started unpacking it, the length of time that it had been going on for was even more shocking – that in this environment, with so many people seeing it, nobody would say a word."

After the video came to light, the boys in it would not speak out for several days. "They said, 'He's our friend, we love him, and he loves us.' Such was the extent to which they'd been groomed."

Nicky shared some observations she and the people investigating the abuse uncovered. "Paedophiles never operate in isolation," she said. "There's always a group of adults around them who've enabled it. As parents, we need to know who the school's employees are. We saw that many teachers who are being employed as educators aren't registered with the South African Council for Educators, which means it's difficult to sanction them.

"This is especially true of sports coaches with no educational training. Employees' backgrounds are not checked, and schools aren't checking the sex offenders list. Often, abusers just resign and aren't reported to the council or the criminal justice

"If your child says to you 'it's ok, mom', you can't actually always believe them."

Nicky said there were signs that something was wrong with her son, although he told her nothing. He became silent and withdrawn, and he slept a lot. "But unless you have context to those signs, you won't get it."

The boys have now started their long-term healing process. Said another Parktown Boys High mother: "For kids to see that Rex went to jail, that it was a proper crime, that what he did was very wrong, helped with closure. We can see the change in them."

Concluding the evening, Sack brought the issue closer to home. "None of us can say that this would never happen to us. It is happening in our community; it has happened in our schools. As parents, the greatest gift you can give your children is to be educated yourself, and to ensure they get the education they need. Let's make a call to action for our schools, our shuls, our camp movements, for any organisational institution where children are potentially at risk. Let's ensure that institutions have vetted every single member of staff, that there's education and policies in place, and that reporting happens."

ZAKA volunteers after their experience in Ethiopia

JORDAN MOSHE

The South African volunteers of rescue and recovery organisation ZAKA, which was among the first aid groups at the crash site of the downed Ethiopian Airlines flight 302, are home after an experience they will never forget.

When they originally arrived at the site in Bishoftu in rural Ethiopia, they encountered a roughly 20m-deep hole in the ground. “We arrived at a pile of rubble,” says Netanel Azizollahoff, when he and the South African group spoke to the SA Jewish Report this week. “It was like walking down a mine shaft. There were dozens of airline safety cards scattered everywhere. You’d see a pair of trousers without anyone in them anymore. We could only imagine the force to which these people had been exposed. There was litter everywhere, and the smell was appalling.”

These images will remain with them long after their intensive search efforts.

They are still trying to catch up on lost sleep after returning last Thursday, but their daily lives have resumed with all the attendant demands this entails. Although they admit that their initial goals at the site changed over the course of the search, they are confident in their mission being a success.

“We may not have been 100% successful, based on what we envisioned in our heads when we left, but our mission changed when we

Boarding a Boeing 737 Max 8 (the same model that crashed and was subsequently grounded), they flew to Addis Ababa. There they met the four volunteers from ZAKA Israel, the Chabad emissary in Ethiopia, Rabbi Eliyahu Chaviv, and a representative from the Israeli consulate. Says Green: “We immediately felt a sense of camaraderie. They all knew we’d come at a moment’s notice, and immediately the Israelis started sharing their food with us. We felt a sense of shared purpose.”

Although they had been prepared to sleep at the crash site, or on the floor of Chabad House, the volunteers were taken to a hotel to unpack and then whisked off to the House for a meal. Green explains: “Within minutes of our arrival, the rabbi and rebbetzin served a full Israeli breakfast. Rugellach (pastries), milk, coffee, homemade bread – all from their own stash. They even gave us money and SIM cards. For them, there was no question – they gave it all to us. None of what we did could have been done without them.”

As ZAKA was the first foreign delegation to arrive following the crash, the volunteers spent their first day getting the necessary permission to visit the site. “We couldn’t simply step in and assist,” they explain. “Ethiopians are very proud and wanted to handle the disaster on their own.” Green adds that because the crash wasn’t a major disaster that brought the country to halt, but an incident that took place in a remote



The ZAKA volunteers arriving back from Ethiopia

On the site, the team donned protective equipment and, working in a grid search formation, covered sections of the site looking for human remains, or any debris of interest. “We went with the aim of collecting materials and identifying bodies. You look for whatever you can find that may be of interest,” they explain. “Personal belongings like tefillin, even clothing – anything to prove who was on the flight and allow you to honour the dead. We were there to assist everyone, not just the Israelis. Had we found them on day one, we would have stayed to look for others.”

Although the intensity of their surroundings is difficult to comprehend, the volunteers say they made a continuous effort to remain focused on the task at hand.

Says Ilan Dubb: “Two dimensions operate at the same time: one is the crash site you see, the other consists of thinking that these were once people. When you do the task, you must separate the two. That’s an essential skill in this kind of work.”

He adds that in order to maintain this separation, volunteers shared the emotional and physical load as a team, and that emotions were expressed

place, the authorities were reluctant to accept outside help immediately. “We did what we could to get in and do the job.”

After securing the necessary permission, the ZAKA team prepared to visit the site. When they had been given their initial brief, they were shown a picture that was doing the rounds online. “What we saw was a plane on a dry a field with its middle blown out,” says Green. “In our minds, we were going to a fairly straightforward mission, involving walking down the fuselage of the plane and checking seats, as we went to find the Israeli passengers. This is what we and the community thought we were going into.” Although the bodies might have been disfigured or burned, it was thought they would be readily identifiable and ready to be sent to Israel for burial.

in the appropriate spaces only, such as when the team stopped to recite the memorial prayer, *Kel Maleh Rachamim*. “When a volunteer recognised he was taking emotional strain, someone would move in to take his place. It was fluid and focus on the mission was always maintained. We separate the fact that we have a job to do from the people that were living only hours before, but we do the job with utmost sensitivity and respect.”

The volunteers say Ethiopian civilians were grateful to them for their help. “People wanted to take photos with us, and our driver said that we were angels. From the moment we arrived to the day we left, they treated us with gratitude and kindness. They did what they could under the circumstances.”

While some remains are still at

the site, the search is officially over, and DNA analysis of the remains is set to begin soon. Despite previous reports that the bodies of the Israeli passengers had been identified, only the results of these tests will prove whether it is them.

The crater was filled last Friday, and bottles of earth from the site were given to the families of those who perished in an effort to achieve some form of closure.

The volunteers say that the

memories of their experience will remain with them for some time. Says Green: “When we stood at the crater, we saw things scattered in all directions, including novels, clothing, and even cell phones. We found items that the families of those who died can only wish to see. When you see things that you can never ‘unsee’, they stay with you, and you create a lasting bond with the people you see them with.”

Netanel and Taryn Azizollahoff



arrived, and we came out successful by the end,” says Josh Green. “After much negotiation, we successfully arranged access to the area, enabling subsequent volunteers to access and visit the site.”

It all started when the four were briefed at Beyachad in Johannesburg on Monday 11 March, and given 45 minutes to pack and say goodbye to their families. Thanks to the careful coordination of the ZAKA ground crew, everything was prepared ahead of them, including air tickets and provisions for the trip. Says Green: “Yaakov Lazarus of Moishes Butchery opened his fridges, grabbed whatever he thought would last for a few days, and gave it to us. People made sure we had everything we needed. None of what we did could’ve been done without the logistical team in South Africa.”

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A High-Tech Way For Getting A Green Card

A different alternative than the fluctuating real estate market for investing in the EB-5 program

The recent, dramatic shifts in immigration policy have resulted in a reduction of H1B visas, and in rejections of H4 EADs. The timeline to receive Green Cards now may be over 15 years. Because of all these changes, there is a desperate need for alternative solutions for those seeking permanent residency/Green Cards.

The EB-5 program has long been used by real estate developers to build Manhattan skyscrapers and hotels around the US, while allowing investors and their families to get Green Cards. The EB-5 program has not been looked at as a source of traditional funding for high-tech or medical device companies... until now.

Dr Jay Yadav, an Atlanta based serial entrepreneur and world-renowned interventional cardiologist who has also created and sold three different leading-edge healthcare companies exceeding US\$1 billion, is now in his newest venture to build an innovative and high-tech Spine and Orthopaedic company as the Founder and CEO of MiRus. MiRus is founded with strong technology platforms with \$80 million in R&D and holds more than 140 patents. It is introducing disruptive technologies in Spine, Orthopaedics, Dental, and CMF with a long-term view of creating a multi-billion dollar global company.

Dr Yadav, an immigrant himself, has been very involved in the Atlanta community to create high-tech jobs and provide an opportunity to expand the international relationships with the business community. While he has had tremendous interest from investors globally in his new project through traditional funding methods, Dr Yadav and his team incorporated the EB-5 program to create alternate funding mechanisms for MiRus while addressing the needs of the immigrant community for Green Cards.

MiRus' strategy is to create hundreds of high-tech medical device jobs in Atlanta and has been scoped by the EB-5 program to create 2 400 jobs.

For many Indian investors who work very hard to save



money, investing in fluctuating real estate might be more risk than they can afford to take. Investing in an operating medical device company that is already generating revenues, provides confidence in not only receiving Green Cards for the investors and their families but also in getting the \$500,000 original investment back in four to five years, along with receiving a nominal interest payment annually.

The EB-5 program through MiRus has already received multiple investors who have transferred \$500,000 to receive green cards for them and their families. The families can move to the US on a conditional Green Card with the responsibility on MiRus to create 10 direct and indirect jobs per investor.

MiRus has received significant interest in the EB-5 program investment from surgeons, physicians, Wall Street investment bankers, high-tech H1B employees, management consultants, and Silicon Valley professionals, all of whom are in the US on a temporary visa.

Parents and families can also gift the amount to the individuals seeking a Green Card, which allows for many students on an F1 visa to apply for the MiRus EB-5 program, provided that there is full compliance with the source of funds of the giftor. The source of funds can be a mix of cash, loan against property, gift from families. Recognizing that high-tech employees and physicians on an H1-B visa will be unable to come up with the required investment, we are working with non-traditional lenders who can help bridge that gap.



The EB-5 program at MiRus is being implemented by Noah Roth, Chief Operating Officer. Please visit MiRus at www.mirusmed.com and email nroth@mirusmed.com or call 732-809-7995 with additional questions.



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The Catholic priest who is 'brother' to Holocaust victims

MIRAH LANGER

Father Patrick Desbois, a French Roman Catholic priest, has uncovered many of the secrets of mass killings perpetuated by the *Einsatzgruppen*, Nazi paramilitary death squads, in Eastern Europe during World War II. He has located many unmarked graves and the sites of these mass shootings, sometimes referred to as the "Holocaust by Bullets".

Using metal detectors, he has unearthed the physical remnants of lives lost: the *Magen Davids* that Jewish prisoners tore from their necks to prevent Nazis obtaining them. In one instance, he found pieces of a harmonica played by a Nazi while waiting for prisoners to dig their own graves.

For a man whose life's work has been uncovering some of the darkest and most brutal dimensions of human nature, in person, Desbois exudes warmth, gentleness, and humility. He spoke to the *SA Jewish Report* while he was in South Africa as a guest of honour at the opening of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre's permanent exhibition last week.

Desbois is the founder of *Yahad In Unum* (YIU), which means "together in one". Since 2004, this non-profit organisation has tasked itself with discovering the truth about these mass executions. YIU has collected testimony from about 5 700 witnesses, and tracked down and mapped more than 2 700 sites, mostly kept secret until now. Of the 2.2 million Jews killed in the region between 1941 and 1944, the organisation has managed to confirm the fate of 1.5 million. Desbois remains determined to identify the remaining 750 000 as well. Over time, the organisation has also expanded its scope, recently working with survivors of the Yazidi massacre in Iraq, which was perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Desbois tells how perhaps the most chilling artefacts he has collected are the photographs sent by Nazi officials travelling through Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, to their loved ones back home. The subject matter? Scenes of the mass murder of Jews, Roma, and others deemed undesirable and thus deserving to die.

"What was strange was that the Germans sent these photographs back to their wives or lovers. We have found 400 pictures of the shootings," says Desbois. "They wanted a souvenir. Even if they were not the shooters, they wanted to pose in the middle (of the graves and corpses), like you do when you kill an elephant."

Desbois paraphrases the typical captions found on the back of the photographs: "They would write: 'My lover, you see what we do with the Jewish children; we throw them like balloons and we shoot. Imagine, my lover, if we didn't do that, what then the Jews would do in Germany...'"

"The Nazis were very proud of it," explains Desbois.

Born in 1955 in a small village in France, to a family who ran a shop selling chicken and cheese, Desbois has travelled an extraordinary path. "I am from a simple family and we

try to do what we have to do," says Desbois, describing himself. He decided to become a priest as a young adult. At this time, he says, he began asking what G-d had planned for him. "I asked him, 'What do you want? Show me what you want.'"

He had little clue at the time that, in fact, part of the answer lay hidden in his own history. His grandfather, a French soldier, had been denounced during the war for being "anti-German", taken as a prisoner of war, and deported to the village of Rava-Ruska in Ukraine. Desbois says although he was always very close to his grandfather, this part of his life was never discussed. "It was a taboo."

In fact, for most of his youth, Desbois knew nothing at all about the Holocaust. There was no mention of it on the news, or at school. The first time he encountered it was at age 15. "I found a book with pictures of the camp. I remember I closed the book and said to myself, 'I understand', and then left." Now, he realises, he was in complete shock.

Years later, Desbois was organising a pilgrimage in Ukraine when he got lost. Soon he realised that the village he inadvertently had entered was Rava-Ruska. "In one night, I realised my life had changed."



Father Desbois speaks at the dedication ceremony for the mass grave site in Rava Ruska, Ukraine

So began a journey of discovery for Desbois. On repeat trips back, he began to uncover more about the history of the village during the war, particularly the murder of 18 000 Jews.

"One day, the mayor brought me to the forest with 50 farmers who had been present at the killing of the last 1 500 Jews in the village. All these farmers were very old, very poor, and had been

waiting for hours. They gathered in a circle around the mass grave and they explained what they saw."

For Desbois, the encounter was a revelation: "I realised the killings were public; I realised people wanted to speak; I realised we could find the mass graves."

With the mayor's help, Desbois began what he terms his "war of memory" to discover the fate of these forgotten victims. His work has been aided by Soviet cultural values, as opposed to Western ideas about guilt and shame. "We (YIU) benefit from a Russian proverb that says 'The war is finished when we bury the last victim'. So for them (the local witnesses), we come to finish the war."

Desbois has been able to piece together the Nazis' precise methodology of murder. This includes details such as how the shooting sites would always be located in the direction of a train station – to give credence to the ruse that the Jews were en route to being deported to what was then Palestine. Moreover, there were always two shooters and three pushers at the killings.

Continued on page 19>>

Behind the creation of a permanent Holocaust exhibition

JORDAN MOSHE

Although the Holocaust claimed the lives of millions, humanity has yet to learn the significance of the expression "never again". Less than 50 years after the Nazis committed unspeakable atrocities in Europe, the Rwandan genocide left nearly 800 000 people dead, and ethnic cleansing continues today in different forms.

We need to learn from history and ensure that it is never repeated, and the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) has committed itself to making sure that "never again" means just that.

Speaking at the centre's official opening on 14 March, director and founder Tali Nates stressed the role of education to which the centre is committed. "Never again has happened again and again, and we need to stop it," she said. "This is the core of our goal here. Human beings committed these atrocious acts, and human beings are the ones who should stop it from happening again."

Leading a tour of the centre's new permanent exhibition, Nates welcomed special guests Veronica Phillips and Sylvestre Sendacyeye, survivors of the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide, respectively, as well as the international human rights activist Father Patrick Desbois. Also present were the curators of the exhibition, Lauren Segal and Clive van den Berg, two specialists who helped to make Nates' vision of a world-class exhibition a reality.

Nates, the daughter of Holocaust survivor Moses Turner, explained that the centre is no museum, but a space for reflection and learning from the past.

"I did not want to create a museum," she said. "You visit a museum, leave it and maybe tell someone to go there, but you don't interact. I wanted a space for dialogue, education and memory. We need to talk about other issues, beyond our context, as our entry point to talk about our own history, learning from those histories for ourselves."

Nates stressed that the JHGC, unlike most similar centres, uses a multi-level approach to tackle this task. Instead of sharing only the testimonies of victims, the centre also includes those of the perpetrators to gain an understanding of what causes genocide. This could aid, hopefully, in preventing its recurrence.

The centre is also unique in its movement away from dark, intimate spaces, and puts light to effective use for educational purposes. "Usually, museums of genocide are in darkness," said Nates. "We use large windows and harness the natural light throughout to show that genocide doesn't happen in darkness but in broad daylight, while the

neighbours are watching.

"We invite visitors to reflect on what is going on today, to apply what they learn here to other crimes being committed out there right now."

Spanning across more than 420m² floor space, the exhibition explores the history of genocide through the 20th century, beginning with the coining of the term in 1944 in relation to the Holocaust, and moving through to the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

Using 13 thematic spaces reflected in interconnecting displays, the exhibition showcases

to tell stories of lives, not just the experience of a victim. There are connections throughout."

Starting at World War II, the exhibition wends its way through the 20th century across various geographical locations. From Lithuania to Johannesburg, every locale and its part in the narrative is featured, and the lives of those who lived there made tangible. The historical development of the Holocaust leads visitors through to the onset of the Rwandan genocide in 1994 in a similarly unique display, concluding with the Garden of Reflection in which one can



Tali Nates, Lauren Segal and Clive van den Berg conducting the tour of the permanent exhibition

extensive research, tireless effort, and exceptional architectural planning. The tragic history of the phenomenon is traced in detail, and its story told using multi-layered displays that include interactive panels, artefacts, testimonies, films, photographs and even art.

"There is always a relation between the content you see immediately and the background behind it," said Van den Berg. "You never see something here in isolation. As the exhibition unfolds, one can see that we have calculated the viewer experience to see one thing, and then another and more behind it. There is an implication of time in the way we have chosen to represent the past."

Moving through the exhibition, Nates explained that a driving perspective throughout the exhibition is to see the events that unfolded not for victims, but for human beings. "We wanted people to see these people from before they become victims. They were poor, rich, educated, or illiterate. They were a part of humanity. Through photographs, testimonies and artefacts we want

absorb the experience and make it relevant to everyday life beyond the centre's walls.

"We want visitors to think about how they relate to objects around them," said Van den Berg. "Do you bend down to see something, or do you look up? There is a reason things have been presented the way they have. The world that was, the past and then the present, are all made real and engaged with at different levels at every point here. We can foster a special connection within the space, one that will have a special impact."

Although it already receives about 14 000 visitors per year, the centre is certainly set to welcome hundreds more. Fully funded by donations, it charges no admission fee.

The centre also offers a full programme of events, films, plays, lectures and more, and offers training to schools, educators, corporates and non-governmental organisations in grappling with the issues it highlights.

Keeping 'Fame' in the family

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

In 2003, celebrated local performer Lisa Melman lit up the South African State Theatre stage playing dance teacher Miss Bell in *Fame*. Melman had to relinquish the role when she was diagnosed with the cancer that ultimately took her life.

Now, seven years after her passing, Melman's young cousin and biggest fan, Erin Midzuk, will play Miss Bell in the King David High School Victory Park (KDVP) production of *Fame*.

"As a child, I remember going to watch one of Lisa's productions," recalls Erin, 16. "After the show we went backstage to see the cast. I was just amazed to see my cousin – someone I knew and who knew and loved me – be the person on the stage. I felt so proud. I think that kickstarted my passion for arts and culture."

"Lisa used her loud, energetic personality and her talent to help and inspire others. Through her, I saw that there's something for everyone. I wasn't the most academic person, so when I discovered my passion for performing, I felt I'd found my thing."

Although she was just nine years old when Melman passed away, Erin has beautiful memories of her cousin. "She connected with us on a different level," she says, reflecting on the time she and her siblings spent with Melman. "It's all very well to play with kids, but I really felt that she deeply cared for us. She always inspired me."

It was Melman's unwavering optimism that really set her apart, says Erin. "At that age I couldn't really understand what being sick was, but whenever we'd ask her what was wrong, she'd explain it to us in the most positive way possible. I was just amazed by how positive and energetic she was all the time, no matter her situation."

Erin came to KDVP, Melman's alma mater, expressly because of the school's strong arts and culture offering. She has since acted in all its major annual productions, playing the lead in last year's Holocaust play, which went to the prestigious Festival of Excellence in Dramatic Arts for high schools.

"Often when I perform, I feel Lisa's presence," says Erin. "For me, drama is very much about the reason behind your performance, rather than about getting caught up in fame and how other people see you. Lisa used her



Lisa Melman



Photo: Trevor Sachs

Erin Midzuk

passion and talent for performing to bring joy to others and to inspire them. I try to take on the same mindset."

Erin didn't expressly audition for the role of Miss Bell, and her teachers were unaware she was related to Lisa. "I'd always wanted to play the role, because obviously I have a connection to it, but it wasn't a specific goal of mine. Once I got it, I thought there must be some connection here, though."

"If I can play Miss Bell in the best possible way, embodying Lisa, then I think I'll be honouring her. She was in the middle of playing Miss Bell when she fell ill and she had to stop performing, so it's like I'm carrying her legacy – finishing the shows she didn't manage to do."

The head of drama, arts and culture at KDVP, Renos Spanoudes, is directing *Fame*. "While she was at

the school before my time there, I knew Lisa and worked with her after she matriculated," he says. "I took the school's drama students to see her play Miss Bell in *Fame* – I think it was her last performance of the production. She even had a little Q&A with the kids afterwards."

"Lisa was a powerhouse, one of the very few that this country has seen in terms of voice and presence on stage. She was just something phenomenal, and the industry embraced that."

Spanoudes was unaware of Erin's connection to Melman until she mentioned it a few weeks ago. "It's wonderful on a spiritual level. If Lisa's soul could see or feel what Erin was doing, she would be so thrilled, because it's a legacy. It's great that Erin is doing this because she's talented – it's in the DNA of the broader family."

Theatre legend Hazel Feldman, who produced the production of *Fame* in which Melman starred, says: "It's kind of weird that Lisa has a family member reprising that role, but it's kind of wonderful as well. I always felt that Lisa was probably one of the finest singers and most talented performers in this country."

"She was 110% professional with a sense of humour, but also with a sense of purpose. There are not many of those people around like that these days, sadly. Lisa was a special performer and she'll always have a very special place in my heart."

Barbara Wolf, a former KDVP

deputy principal, remembers Melman as a smart, creative student who strove for perfection in all she did. "She always sang in the presentations organised for the various Jewish festivals, but we did very few musicals in the years that she was at the school. The only one I remember very clearly was her leading role in *The Fantasticks*. I remember her so clearly singing that wonderful, haunting song, *Try to Remember*."

"Her debut in musical theatre was on the stage at KDVP, but it was only after she left school that she grew into the outstanding musical theatre actor that she became a powerhouse of talent with the most amazing voice," said Wolf. "It was then,

too, that she grew in confidence – something she didn't always have at school. She never forgot her days at the school, though, and when I asked her to sing at Jeffrey Wolf's farewell dinner (when he retired as headmaster in 1998), she readily agreed to do so and came straight from the theatre to sing."

Melman's brother, Mark remembers how his sister's energy infused those around her. "I think Erin was just inspired. Lisa opened a lot of energy for everybody, both old and young. She had a voice and the ability to get people motivated in ways in which they never thought they would be. Through the guiding light of what she did, she brought young people visions of being a star."

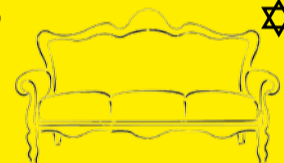
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A milestone of precious loans



Rambam trustees Barry Levitt, Mike Miller and Alec Levy with Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein (second from the right)

The Rambam Charitable Trust recently reached a milestone, having loaned a total of more than R150 million to members of the Jewish community. The trust, a free-loan society and lender of last resort for members of the South African Jewish community who require financial assistance, has been in existence since 1995. It aims to ensure that the funds provided uplift the recipient and do not become a burden. To celebrate the occasion, the trust presented a large cheque to Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein at the HOD this week.

Injured IDF soldiers find healing in South Africa

NICOLA MILTZ

Motti Grubin, an injured Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldier, burst into tears when he spotted the tattooed numbers on Mascha Schainberg's forearm.

Grubin was attending a tea party for injured soldiers and Holocaust survivors in Johannesburg. He had been in the country as part of a delegation of former elite IDF soldiers who were all injured on active duty.

The Auschwitz concentration camp survivor, now wheelchair-bound, shifted something deep down in Grubin's soul, and somehow just seeing her helped to make sense of the past few years of pain and suffering.

Grubin was stabbed in the neck in 2015 during riots. He, together with a group of injured IDF soldiers from an organisation called Brothers for Life (BFL), visited the country last month as part of an annual travel programme aimed at helping them heal.

"There are no words to describe the look on their faces when they saw each other," said Mark Kadish, who has been involved with BFL for several years.

"These soldiers sacrifice everything for the sake of world Jewry, for the State of Israel, and to make sure there will never be another Holocaust. They do it without thought to loss of limb and life."

Each year, the soldiers arrive here broken, both physically and mentally, but when they leave the country, after a week of being feted by caring host families, they feel like heroes and have a new lease on life.

"They arrive here as strangers; they go back as family," said local organiser Mark Gordon, a board member of BFL who has been involved with the organisation for the past nine years.

The non-profit organisation is known as Achim L'Chaim in Israel, which literally means "brothers for life". It is run by Israeli officers from elite units who have been injured during service. These combat soldiers are empowered to help recently injured soldiers to reclaim their lives and fulfil their dreams.

Johannesburg and Cape Town are two host cities involved in the programme. Host families "adopt" soldiers for a week, often forming lifelong friendships.

"They go home changed men who have hope for their future," said Gordon.

Gordon and his wife Bendeta, together with 13 host families from Johannesburg, help to arrange the annual visits to the country. The Gordons decided to become involved in BFL to encourage their three sons to see the world through different eyes. "We wanted our boys to give something back and do something meaningful with their lives. This has opened their eyes," said Gordon.

The host families dedicate a week of their lives to these injured men and "make them feel like absolute heroes for the sacrifices they have made", he added.

Hayley Nathan, one of the Johannesburg hosts, told the SA Jewish Report: "When the soldiers arrive, there is this dark, heavy energy, and by the time they leave, not only have they made friends and a family for life, there is a lightness of being which is so tangible."

The host families keep in touch with every soldier through WhatsApp groups, making regular contact each Shabbos, and on birthdays and special events in their lives.

From the moment the soldiers arrive to the minute they go home, they are kept busy, constantly interacting with different members of the community, and sharing their stories with young and old.

This year, 14 soldiers arrived on 14 February and left on 21 February. They went to the Lion & Safari Park near Magaliesburg, spent three days at a private game farm, attended a Havdalah concert, and enjoyed some nightclubbing, among other activities.

BFL aims to help the soldiers "put their lives back together", said Gordon. There is a house in Israel called Beit Achim, (House of Brothers), where they are welcome to stay and attend various educational and support programmes. BFL support starts at



the soldiers' bedside in hospital and continues until they are back on their feet, and leading a productive life. BFL members are there to listen to the soldiers' stories, and often introduce them to a community of

other injured soldiers.

Gordon recalled the time Shay Greenshtein visited South Africa.

Greenshtein had suffered a severe head injury during an explosion in Gaza, ending his

dream of serving his country in active combat. It left him a broken man. When he arrived in South Africa in 2012 as part of a BFL tour, he weighed 120kg and was a lost soul. His visit to the country and the ongoing support from BFL has turned his life around.

"Today, Shay is a triathlete, and he is married with kids. There are so many success stories. South African Jewry is on another level – these soldiers are made to feel like heroes. They come here as broken men and they go back new souls," said Gordon.

After last year's visit, one of the soldiers posted a letter of thanks to the Johannesburg Jewish community on the BFL website. He said: "We just finished our annual delegation to Johannesburg, and it was one of the most powerful, life-changing delegations in our history. Literally thousands of lives were touched, from young people to Holocaust survivors, to our BFL brothers, who saw with their own eyes both the impact they can make on Jewish people as well as the appreciation and love of the Johannesburg Jewish community... They treated us like heroes, and it gave our brothers the opportunity to see themselves through different eyes, which is the greatest kind of healing."

As easy as Pi

JORDAN MOSHE

Under the supervision of four watchful judges, a blindfolded Michael Abrahamson put his mental prowess to the test last week. His goal: to recall as many digits of Pi as possible in five minutes. Exceeding his own expectation and breaking the South African record, he recalled the first 1 500 digits in an astonishing time of 4 minutes 7 seconds – 53 seconds faster than his target, and without a single error.

Says Abrahamson: "This was one of the hardest memory challenges I've ever attempted. It's hard enough to recall the numbers without error, but to do it at breakneck speed for this duration of time is truly a feat I'm very proud of."

On International Mathematical Pi Day on 14 March, Abrahamson broken the South African record of Marno Hermann, who recalled 1 200 digits in 10 minutes 15 seconds in 2018. Recalling 300 digits more, 6 minutes faster, Abrahamson now awaits official ratification of his record.

A mathematical constant, the number Pi was originally defined as the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. But it now has various equivalent definitions, and appears in several scientific formulas.

As for the yearly challenge, it is popular among people with a penchant for numbers and, more importantly, those eager to join the ranks of the best memorisers in the world.

With a background in actuarial sciences and a flair for mentalism, Abrahamson's passion for numbers and mental dexterity certainly equipped him for this unique challenge. Fascinated by the capabilities of the brain from a young age, he became the first professional mentalist in South Africa in the 1990s. Alongside a career in sports broadcasting, Abrahamson has also dedicated himself to helping others to unlock the power of the mind, giving lectures and lessons over the past 20 years on how to maximise the brain's potential.

When a student mentioned the Pi Day challenge to him two years ago, Abrahamson was intrigued. "I'd never heard about it before. When I investigated it and found out that the record is for 7 000 digits recalled, I felt it might be boring as hell to sit and do the same. I wanted it to be shorter and more significant, so I decided to focus not on digits, but on speed."

Determined to show that the skills he teaches have practical uses, Abrahamson set about the task of memorising digits. He endeavoured to harness the abilities of different parts of the brain through the use of various learning methods,



Judges Ian Atteridge and André Hermanus follow Abrahamson's progress as he recites the digits of Pi

memorising 100 digits at a time. "The difficulty wasn't the learning, but the ability to recite them at a certain speed," he says. "I used different skills to improve my speed. I typed, wrote, listened to recordings, and even recited in my car."

After his initial decision to commit the numbers to memory for use in his shows or lectures, Abrahamson decided three months ago to take the task seriously, and attempt to break the record for speed. When he reached out to local radio stations and found them reluctant to air the recitation (they said listeners would find it dull), he chose instead to record the event at his home in the presence of independent judges.

"I contacted four people with backgrounds in mathematics, including a maths teacher and an

applied engineer. On Pi Day, we met at my house, and I gave them each a set of sheets with all the digits printed out. After demonstrating how I'd be doing it, I put on a blindfold and we started."

Abrahamson successfully recalled 1 500 digits at a rate of 6.073 digits per second. Less than five minutes later, he emerged exhausted but triumphant. "I was mentally drained, relieved, and felt like I was in a different world," he says. "The sense of achievement was astonishing. All the time, energy, and effort had paid off."

Abrahamson received several messages of congratulations throughout the day, and he was overwhelmed by the interest people had in his undertaking. "I'd been in a bubble while preparing," he says. "When it was all over, I realised how significant it actually was. People realised just what the human brain can do and what power it has."

Although he is already considering doubling his record in the coming year, Abrahamson is looking forward to using this achievement in his teaching and mentalism practices. "This is not something I want to use for showing off," he says. "My record can be used practically to prove to people that they can do anything they put their minds to, using their own brains. They can improve their own abilities, and I look forward to proving how much they can really achieve."

Walking in the footsteps of Jesus – Christian tourists flock to Israel

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Henry Lochoff made aliya from Johannesburg with his wife, Lynn, in 1977. A chartered accountant, he changed careers to marketing pharmaceuticals, then went into tour guiding eight years ago.

"I always had a great love of history," he says. "We'd reached the stage where our kids were settled, and I could now pursue my dream. It's lived up to all my expectations. I'm paid to do something I love."

In addition to his work in general tourism, Lochoff specialises in Christian tourism, having completed an intensive course in Christianity for the purpose. He points out that in 2018, a record year for Israeli tourism, a mere 22% of visitors were Jewish.

"I have a certain affinity with Christian groups, especially from South Africa," he says. "We left South Africa at the height of apartheid. Now I see South African church groups coming to Israel. They comprise blacks, whites, coloureds, and Indians. There is the most phenomenal relationship between these people, all cemented together by their love of their church and Jesus Christ."

As to the motivation of these tourists for visiting Israel, Lochoff was told by one participant, "We come here to absorb the spirit of Jesus having walked in these areas."

In Lochoff's experience, the groups that visit are mostly not Catholic, in the main comprising Protestants, the Dutch Reformed Church, Apostolic Church, and evangelical churches. His tours focus on sites that are part of the Christian world, although others are included.

He believes that the phenomenon of Christians visiting Israel is growing. "We have this huge backing today of evangelical

Christians in the United States, which is a whole different ball game.

"The common denominator is that everybody comes here really clued up." As for the Holy Land's politics, Lochoff says it "never, ever" comes up.

with one another," he reflects.

Mark Hyman is co-chairman of the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI), which creates opportunities for interaction and relationship building with Israel across a broader base than just the Jewish community. It reaches out to the

various church groups that visit Israel. "I try to ensure that they see the saving of lives there," he says.

"I ensure that they visit MDA stations, particularly in Jerusalem, and actually see that it is a non-racial, non-political organisation. It adds a dimension to their trip that is unique."

MDA has 187 first-aid stations across Israel, of which South Africa has built a number. "When you go to the huge first-aid station in Jerusalem, which was built by South Africa, it has an enormous emotional effect on people who say, 'Wow! They're helping Arabs, Palestinians, and Jews, and they travel throughout the world when there's a disaster.'"

The Christian community in this country supports Israel because it believes that without Jews and Israel, it wouldn't have its religion, says Hyman. Interestingly, the church groups are big donors to the MDA.

"They see that saving lives in Israel is, to a large extent, meeting a mandate of Genesis 12:3 which says

G-d will bless those who bless Israel, and G-d will curse those who curse Israel," he says.

"One of the churches gave us over R1 million rand for an ambulance, and then went to Israel to do a dedication ceremony. We're busy investing in two more ambulances at the moment for church groups. It makes them feel part of the land."

Pastor Mukhuba of the Unity Fellowship Church of Soweto does a trip every year with about 1 000 people from her charismatic community of 500 000, and is one of the big donors to the MDA, Hyman says.

The bottom line is that these groups see Israel as the home of their religion. "They want to visit the home of their religion. The Temple Mount is where Jesus delivered his sermons," he says.



Visiting Save a Child's Heart on a joint Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs – SAFI tour for Christian political leaders from South Africa.

"In fact, I put a lot of effort into keeping away from politics," he says, for fear of igniting "civil war" in the group.

Lochoff says he even prepares material to read in Afrikaans at some of the sites. "I also have a very marked South African accent, which makes it much easier for these people to understand my English."

When Lochoff and his family celebrated his 70th birthday in South Africa in 2017, they attended a reunion in Worcester with a group he had guided. "My son, David, said to Lynn, 'These people think Daddy's Jesus Christ!'"

"It's made a phenomenal impression on me that South Africa could have reached the situation where all these people love each other so much, and are so amazingly communicative

Christian community, which has an affinity and a love for the land of Israel.

From South Africa, evangelical and charismatic churches visit Israel on a far more organised and managed basis than other groups, he says. "There might not be organised pilgrimages by Catholics from South Africa, but the individual Catholic definitely does visit the holy sites."

"They all want to visit where Jesus was born, where he walked. They all want to go to the Galilee," famous for its biblical associations. While Hyman is unable to quantify exactly how many go every year, he says it runs into the thousands.

Through his chairmanship of Magen David Adom (MDA) SA, Hyman has relationships with



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Shake off the sugar this Shabbat



**ON
NOURISHING
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Hilit Milner

Put away your sugar-coated *challah* (bread), pumpkin pie and *kichel* (sweet cookie) and get ready to dish up a low-carbohydrate (low-carb) Shabbat meal.

Everybody from the neighbour's uncle to his cousin seems to be on a low-carb diet, and Shabbat can be the hardest time of the week to stick to its rules. But do you really understand the ins and outs of a low-carb diet? And is it really the right way of eating for you?

Let's go back to basics to understand carbs. They form one of the three main sources of fuel used by the body, together with proteins and fats. They come in various forms and complexities, namely simple sugar, starch and fibre. Excess sugars are stored as glycogen (glucose reserves) in the liver and muscles, and when those stores are full the remainder gets stored as fat, resulting in weight gain and high cholesterol.

Additionally, carbs have the greatest impact on your blood sugar level. This, however, depends on the quantity and quality of the carbs that you're eating. The more processed the carbs (think of sugar, sweets and white bread), the faster the glucose gets absorbed into the blood, resulting in blood sugar spikes and drops. More complex whole-grain starches, such as oats, low-GI bread and legumes, get digested more slowly, resulting in better blood sugar, energy and appetite control.

Carbs are also found in foods such as *challah*, cereals, confectionaries, crackers, grains, legumes, pasta, starchy vegetables (beetroot, butternut, carrots, corn, parsnips, potato and pumpkin), sugary drinks, marinades, dressings, sweets, and even dairy products (lactose) and fruit (fructose).

Low-carb, gluten-free *challah*

Making a *challah* that is free of carbohydrates can be a bit pricey and tricky as the flours can be expensive, and the consistency is tough to work with. Remember, though, there is always the option of considerably reducing the normal carb load of your *challah* by using 50% whole-grain flour and 50% almond flour, and replacing the recipe's required sugar with one or two tablespoons honey. This will still proof the yeast. Although this isn't completely carb-free, it will reduce the carb content significantly.

For those who want a completely carb-free *challah*, here goes – and it's gluten-free too.

Ingredients (makes one *challah*)

- 1 sachet yeast
- ½ cup lukewarm water
- 1½ tablespoons raw honey (to proof yeast)
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 5 eggs, plus 1 for brushing over the *challah*
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- ¼ cup flaxseed flour
- 3½ cups almond flour
- ½ cup coconut flour
- 2 tablespoons psyllium husk
- 1 teaspoon xanthan or guar gum
- ½ tablespoon salt



Ideally, your daily carb intake should be low enough to start burning fat stores for fuel, rather than using your glucose (this process is known as ketosis). Reducing your total carb intake can have a variety of benefits, including weight loss, insulin, blood sugar and cholesterol control, and reduced inflammation. That said, the lack of whole-grain, fibre-filled starches can result in gut complications, and the lack of variety in fruit and vegetables can reduce your

vitamin and mineral intake.

The success of any dietary approach also depends on factors such as your specific total dietary intake, lifestyle, and medical history. Any changes made should always be part of a holistic assessment. So, although it's beneficial to cut down on those carb-heavy meals, it's important to do it with professional guidance. And remember, the success of any long-term weight loss or health goal is about incorporating

Method

- Preheat the oven to 180 degrees centigrade.
- In a large mixing bowl, combine the yeast with the lukewarm water and honey, and let it stand for five minutes, allowing the yeast to bubble and proof.
- Add the eggs, coconut oil and apple cider vinegar to the yeast mixture and combine.
- In a separate bowl, mix the flaxseed flour, almond flour, coconut flour, psyllium husk, xanthan gum and salt.
- Pour the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients and mix well until combined. Remember, you do not need to knead the batter as there is no gluten to develop. The consistency will be much wetter than normal *challah* dough, but you should still be able to roll it gently into a ball.
- Place the ball of dough on a dry surface and sprinkle with a bit of almond or coconut flour. Cut it into three even pieces and gently start rolling it into long, thick pieces. Note that it's slightly tricky to roll and can easily break, so be gentle. Wetting your hands slightly may help.
- On a piece of baking paper, very gently braid the pieces together, patting it down and smoothing it out with a bit of water on your fingertips wherever cracks form (this is normal for a batter without gluten).
- Place the *challah* gently on a baking tray, brush with some egg wash and sprinkle some salt on top.
- Bake for 25-30 minutes until golden brown.

strategies you can maintain.

Here are some helpful tips for your low-carb Shabbat menu:

- Snack on homemade eggplant crisps or nuts;
- *Challah* is the door to carb heaven. How about baking your own low-carb bread using almond, coconut or flaxseed flour? Another tip is to halve or quarter the amount of sugar quoted in a recipe – it's just too much. You can also use limited amounts of sugar alternatives like stevia or xylitol;
- Cold drinks, cordials, fruit juices and beers are loaded with sugar. Flavour sparkling or still water with a variety of herbs and fruits;
- Replace your potato and pea soup with spinach, courgette and leek soup, or refreshing cucumber gazpacho;
- Ditch the sugary chopped herring starter and replace it with an artichoke dip, smoked trout asparagus parcels, *haraima* (spicy Moroccan fish pieces), and roasted mini eggplants with a tahina drizzle;
- Watch out for the hidden sources of carbs found in many salad dressings and marinades. Flavour your food with fresh herbs, spices and a herb-based vinaigrette;
- Fill your plate with low-carb vegetables like cabbage and spinach-based salads, caraway-spiced roast leeks, charred brussels sprouts, and sautéed lemon green beans with toasted almonds. The large vegetable variety keeps your fibre, bioactive and nutrient intake up;
- Rice, potatoes and pastas can be swapped for turmeric-spiced cauliflower rice, zucchini noodles, quinoa-based *cholent*, and small amounts of roast carrots;
- Nothing is complete without dessert. Focus on fruits that are low in sugar. Make an almond-flour apple crumble, an avocado and cocoa chocolate mousse, or a berry coconut ice-cream.

A low-carb Shabbat meal is not impossible or out of reach. And, if you are going out for dinner, it's about being mindful of your food choices and portion sizes.

Nourish yourself!

• Hilit Milner is a registered clinical dietician 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.

A cinematic ode to South Africa's traditional second mom

JORDAN MOSHE

When Talia Smith, 23, decided to pay tribute to the woman who helped raise her, the method she chose was unconventional. A final year film student at New York University (NYU), her ode took the form of a film script inspired by her life experience.

Umama was one of only a select few scripts NYU chose for production. It is poised to become the university's first South African-based undergraduate film, bringing local stories and talent to international audiences.

Slated for shooting between 6 and 17 June and expected to be ready by December, it will be submitted to international film festivals such as the Cannes Film Festival, the Student Academy Awards at the Oscars, and the First Run Film Festival.

"This is an ode to the woman who helped raise my siblings and me," says Smith. "Susan Sentsho started working for my family when I was two years old, and she has been present at every milestone in my life. We share a very special bond."

The decision to celebrate this bond cinematically was a natural one. An alumnus of King David Linkfield (KDL), Smith grew up in a creative family and was keenly involved in the dramatic arts from a young age. "My parents encouraged us to be creative – every Shabbos included a different play put on by us children," says Smith. "When I was eight years old, I wanted to be an actress and study acting in New York. After I got the main role on a commercial, I realised I wanted to be behind the camera telling the story."

After her directing debut, co-writing and

directing her school's Purim play, Smith went on to create videos advertising KDL events and promotional videos for Bnei Akiva under the mentorship of her father, who edits commercials. Her dream was to enrol at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and in 2015 she began her studies.

In September last year, Smith took up the university's advanced narrative course, a fiercely competitive programme in which students pitch comprehensive outlines of a film of their own creation as well as motivation for its production. Despite initial doubts, Smith decided to submit her script.

"At first, I wanted to write the script as an ode to Susan – to show her my appreciation of

all she gave up for us," says Smith. "I knew that losing a son and having to take care of children that aren't hers must have been so hard, but she never wavered in the love she gave us, and I wanted to make this to show her how grateful I am to have the love she has given us."

After requesting permission from Sentsho and her family to feature them in her film, Smith submitted her script. Despite her concerns, it was not only selected for production, but

awarded the esteemed producers' grant, which is given to only two films. Says Smith: "When I heard that it had been accepted, I was immediately very happy and then also very stressed. I was very worried about the script and didn't know if it would get chosen because it is such a challenge to produce."

The film will be shot locally, and location scouting has been conducted in Kliptown. With casting already under way, Smith is assembling an impressive ensemble of talent, including *Rhythm City* and *Black Panther* star Connie Chiume, and South African actress Shelley Meskin. The team also includes a crew of about 30 volunteers from the United States and South Africa, all of whom need to be provided for, and then there is money needed for equipment hire too. It all amounts to a sizeable sum, so Smith has created an online portal through which the public can make

donations to the project.

Smith believes film is a tool of education, and she is determined to share the uniquely South African and Jewish experience with audiences in the US. "I think the core of the story is universal, and its strongest theme is relatable to all audiences," she says. "This story explores South Africa's integrated culture, the legacy of apartheid, the importance of education, class gaps, and crime, but above all else, the loving nature of South Africans."



Talia Smith

Don't immigrate in the dark

There are few experiences that encourage immigration quite like load shedding does. The dark is depressing, frustrating, infuriating and disempowering, all at once. It forces us to assess whether it is worth staying here, and whether we truly believe that things will get better.

There is hardly a South African of basic financial means who has not considered immigration. The consideration is not unreasonable. Each circumstance is different, and each person has different factors to consider.

That said, I, as someone who has lived in three countries, believe that very often we don't take all the considerations into account before making a move that will have significant and life-altering effects on us and our families. Some things that I believe are worth noting:

- Living in South Africa, we might be forced to seek alternative power supplies, but when the electricity comes back on, we have people with whom to sit in the light. It is important not to take our extended family, grandparents and parents for granted. We lived in New York City, and it is hard to describe the level of loneliness one can experience without parents, siblings, cousins, and old friends who know you in context.
- The electrical grid is complicated, but we have other networks that count. These include business associates, doctors, lawyers and plumbers – and all are just a phone call away. It takes years to re-establish these networks in another country.
- Do not think for a moment that we are depriving our children of education in South Africa. Our Jewish schools and private institutions are some of the finest, and so are our universities. We produce quality, driven successful individuals.
- And if sometimes the university experience is uncomfortable, ugly and scary, maybe that is not a bad thing. Maybe that's exactly what our children



INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman

should be experiencing as they leave the sheltered world in which we have raised them. I have seen the alternative, where children are brought up without seeing or facing challenges and troubles, and believe me, it is not what you want.

- It is infinitely better to be a big fish in a small pond than the other way round.

All this does not mean we need to accept corruption and mismanagement, or live in denial. On the contrary, we need to pressure the government. Those who are guilty need to go to jail. Electricity supply needs to be opened to other suppliers, and we need to demand change. And we need to recognise all this without succumbing to the destructive negativity that might accompany such thoughts.

The answer is to make our lives more comfortable – to get what we need to make us happy. It doesn't have to cost a lot. For me it was an online purchase of R475 that provides me with cell phone connectivity during a power outage.

I am also not suggesting that there is no reason to be concerned, and I am not discouraging people from leaving South Africa. What I am suggesting is that we take the time to understand what awaits us if we leave. There might not be a lack of electricity, but there will be a lack of something else, perhaps even many things. And if we are not aware of what they might be, then we will not be making an informed decision.

More importantly, and more critically; whatever we do, we cannot allow ourselves to make emotional decisions in the dark.

Youth as leaders

When a teenager smashed an egg over the head of Australian Senator Fraser Anning last week, it was a potent act of protest which will rightly be spoken about, and probably imitated, for many years to come.

It follows the tradition of an audience throwing eggs at an unpopular politician pontificating in a hall. This particular politician greatly deserved it.

The senator had done what white supremacists everywhere do – attack immigrant Muslim and other migrant communities, as they have done to Jews in the past. It followed last week's grisly killing of 50 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand, by a man described as a white supremacist. The senator did not exactly justify the killings, but clearly considered Muslim immigrants not welcome.

The senator will forever be the butt of jokes among supporters and foes alike, notwithstanding his aggressive response and slapping of the youngster, and subsequent wrestling of the boy to the ground by his thugs.

But, for sure, he and his thuggish ilk will not disappear. Sadly, they will be back on the wave of increasing racism and nationalism in the world, not just in New Zealand and Australia, but in Europe too.

This wave is exacerbated by unsavoury comments against ethnic minorities from the leader of the world's most powerful country, President Donald Trump of the United States. Trump promises to "Make America great again", but his underlying message is racist. Swastikas are appearing in unlikely domestic and public places from Canada to Hungary. The world needs to move, lest we return to the poisonous racism of the 1930s.

The difference between this egg-in-your-face protest and other, more conventional forms is that it was done by such a young person, a teenager too youthful to have had much political exposure. It shows the depth of unhappiness and sense of embattlement

TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin



of Muslims. His means of protest was so unorthodox and theatrical that it brought an immediate smile to most people, even those who disagreed with the message. The video went viral worldwide.

There is a South African precedent: four young women took everyone by surprise when they stood in front of the audience at an Independent Electoral Commission results announcement ceremony in Pretoria in August 2016, as former president Jacob Zuma addressed the crowd. They held five signs saying "I am 1 in 3", "#", "10 years later", "Khangas" and "Remember Khwezi". The posters referred to the woman Zuma was accused of raping 10 years previously.

They stood there, unmoving, in black dresses, holding their placards in front of the podium, their backs to Zuma. Nobody listened to him; he was unaware of what was on the posters and overshadowed by the four women, who were then violently removed by security officers. But the crowd was drawn to the young protesters and the words on their posters, rather than to Zuma. They stole the show in the same way the Australian boy stole it from the racist senator.

It's as if the world's youth are on the move and won't take adults' hypocrisy anymore.

At January's World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old Swedish climate change activist, all but stole the show with a howl to the comfortable global elite that "the house is on fire". She condemned the record number of flights by carbon-spewing private jets that ferried rich corporate bigwigs to the event. She was nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

Grown-ups are being taught by the children in this topsy-turvy world.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

#MakeUsCount set to deliver great debates



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



Last week, two further events were held under the auspices of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) as part of our #MakeUsCount election awareness campaign. On Tuesday, together with national director Wendy Kahn, I joined the SAJBD KZN council in honouring Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and former ANC treasurer Zweli Mkhize for his many years of support for the board and the Jewish community. It was indicative of this warm friendship that Mkhize attended despite the recent passing of his brother.

This was followed by an event in Sandton, where Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Mmusi Maimane addressed the leadership of the main Jewish organisations in Gauteng. The questions put to Maimane were intelligent and to the point, and he reciprocated by providing detailed, considered answers. Conducted throughout in an excellent spirit, the exchange was lively and constructive, reminiscent of the kind of "town hall" political meetings that used to take place in times when democracy was a far more hands-on affair than tends to be the case today.

Coming up next are our "Great Debates", where members of our community and anyone else interested will have the opportunity to hear first-hand what the major political parties contesting the elections have to say, and put questions to them. The Johannesburg event will take place on 11 April at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre, and Cape Town's will be held three days later, with the venue to be confirmed. Details for booking can be found on

our website (www.sajbd.org) and social media pages. For the first time, the Johannesburg debate will be broadcast live on ChaiFM, from 19:00. The first half hour will be hosted by our head of communications, Charisse Zeifert, who will be familiar to many ChaiFM listeners through her weekly *Board Talk* show. She will give the rundown on the participating parties and their representatives, after which the crossover to the debate will take place. Participating parties in the Johannesburg event are the African National Congress, DA, African Christian Democratic Party, Inkatha Freedom Party, and Congress of the People. The debate will be moderated by Mandy Wiener, the well-known journalist, news editor, and author.

Lessons from the Christchurch tragedy

The massacre of worshippers in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, has understandably dominated the news this week. An atrocity of this scale would have caused shockwaves wherever it occurred, but it was exacerbated by the fact that it took place in New Zealand, one of the world's most stable, peaceful and tolerant countries. It underlined yet again that global terrorism knows no boundaries, and that no country anywhere can be considered a safe haven. The board issued a statement condemning the attacks, which was widely picked up in the local media. Among the crucial lessons our community should take from this tragedy is that the dissemination of hatred, whether in social media or through any other platforms, cannot be tolerated, and those guilty of such practices need, accordingly, to be shamed and shunned until they desist. Another is that maintaining the highest possible levels of vigilance outside our own installations is not something we dare to compromise.

- 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

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Impressive debut for Crawford College Sandton at golf championship

Grade 11 pupil Adam Abro from Crawford College Sandton represented his school at the prestigious National College Golf Championship, held at Dainfern Country Club. This is a recognised tournament for ranking players in the National League and featured a number of players who are in the top 10 in South Africa.



Adam Abro

Adam played phenomenal rounds during round 1, scoring 3 over par for the day, which placed him 16th in a field of 78 players. Unfortunately, day two proved extremely challenging for Crawford College Sandton's players, resulting in the team dropping out of the top 3. But on the third day, Adam and his fellow players placed third with a combined score of 3 over par.

The final day saw the team having an outstanding round and ending in sixth position in the Team Section.

Crawford College Sandton congratulates Adam on an outstanding result in the school's debut in this tournament, in which

36 teams from 20 schools took part.

Charles Smith, head of sport at Crawford College Sandton, said he believes in the late golfing legend Arnold Palmer's words: 'Success in this game depends less on strength of body than strength of mind and character.'

Little hands make a big difference



The Grade Rs with their *mishloach manot*

The Grade R class at King David Rosabelle Klein Nursery School in Waverley joined their schoolmates in donating and packing 165 *mishloach manot* (Purim baskets) for the elderly in their community.

Every child created a special card for each gift, and their delight and pride in the completed packages was tangible.

Mini councillors elected

Benjamin Ginsburg of King David Primary School Sandton was last week elected mini mayor of the Johannesburg Mini Council for 2019. Liana Wes, also from the school, was appointed vice chair of special projects for the mini council.

This is huge kudos for King David Sandton because Ginsburg will be overseeing over 80 junior councillors from 40 different schools from the greater Johannesburg. He will lead the five committees in charge of different aspects of helping communities. The Special Projects

Committee, being one of them, is involved in creating all new out-of-the-box ideas for the council to implement.

The induction ceremony was held at Holy Rosary Convent on 12 March. It was an exciting moment when Ginsburg's name was announced. There were loud cheers from his co-councillors who had all voted for him, and the whole hall rose as one to give him a standing ovation.



Benjamin Ginsburg and Liana Wes

It all went swimmingly



The KDVP swimming team

King David High School Victory Park (KDVP) swimmers won the second division A League Inter-High gala, with Samuel Lissos taking home two medals.

King David hosted the gala at Delville Pool in Germiston recently and, following a nail-biting set of

relays between eight top swimming schools, KDVP came up trumps.

Lissos won a silver for the opens 50m breaststroke with a time of 31,72 seconds and a bronze for the open 50m freestyle with a time of 25,75 seconds.

KDL pupil is the fairest on stage

Jemma Cohen, a 10-year-old pupil at King David Linksfield, is fulfilling her dream of becoming an actress. She plays the leading role of *Snow White* in a production of this popular story by the Pretoria Youth Theatre, which runs until 30 March.

The show should warm audiences' hearts with its modern take on this fairy tale, featuring a witty script and lots of singing and dancing.

"The character of *Snow White* has taught me to remain positive and trusting, keep a positive attitude, and live life to the fullest, no matter what," says Jemma.



Jemma Cohen

KDL creates 'Morning Mayhem' with ChaiFM

King David High School Linksfield (KDL) celebrated Rosh Chodesh Adar II in true style. The school hosted ChaiFM, whose *Morning Mayhem* team interviewed all the heads of committees, as well as the head student leaders and their deputies. Teachers and principal Lorraine Srage spoke about the different aspects that make the school unique.

ChaiFM's visit was a great way to show the community what KDL is all about, and illustrate the many activities the pupils takes part in every day.



Friday (22 March)

- You are warmly invited to join Beit HaShira Progressive Congregation in Johannesburg for our Purim Shabbat dress-up service, followed by a bring-and-share vegetarian dinner. Time: 18:30. Venue: Willows Estate clubhouse, 3 Pitsani Avenue, Kelland. Contact: 083 301 2181.

Sunday (24 March)

- Second Innings hosts violinist Kristel Birkholtz and guitarist Rory Gaddin in Cherry Pill – *Kristel & Rory Perform on Violin and Guitar*. Time: Tea at 10:00, meeting at 10:30. Venue: Gerald Horwitz lounge, Golden Acres. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors (includes tea and light refreshments). Contact: Linda Fleishman 011 532 9701.

Monday (25 March)

- The Union of Jewish Women hosts Chett Goldin, nutritionist and dietician, on *Healing with cannabis*. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053.

Wednesday (27 March)

- Second Innings hosts its annual visit to the student garden exhibition at Lifestyle Garden Centre. Time: Bus departs at 09:00 from the parking below Golden Acres. Cost: R150 per person (includes the bus and the visit). Please note advance booking and payment are essential. Enquiries and

Young and old celebrate Purim



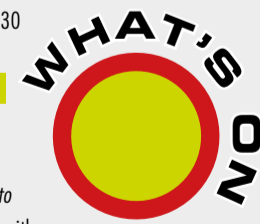
Betty Jankelowitz is with Tali Rumbak and Temima Tobias

Torah Academy Primary School's Grade 2 girls brought the message of Purim to the residents of Our Parents Home in Norwood. Accompanied by their teacher, Tanya Michal (pictured), they sang special Purim and Shabbat songs.

bookings: Naomi Boroda 011 346 2230 and Gloria Hillowitz 072 688 0104.

Thursday (28 March)

- The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre hosts a screening of the film *My Dear Children: The Quest to Unravel a Family Mystery*, and a Q&A with filmmakers LeeAnn Dance and Judy Favish. Time: 19:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. RSVP to dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100. Free admission, donations welcome.
- ORT South Africa hosts *Social media and digital marketing for the 21st century* with Mike Said. Time: 18:00. Venue: ORT SA Academy, 44 Central Street, corner 10th Avenue, Houghton. Cost: R200 for ORT Jet members, R400 for non-members. Contact: samantha@ortjet.org.za
- Hebrew speakers meet at 10:30 at Beyachad building, 2 Eray Street, Raedene.
- Join WIZO every Thursday for a *Lunch and Learn* shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz. Time: 13:00 at Beyachad building. Contact: WIZO office on 011 645 2515.



Still a respected career woman at 100

Alice Weil took some time off her job as a journalist and expert in fine watches and jewellery to celebrate her 100th birthday on 14 March.

Weil may be a century old, but she still works and lives on her own in her own home, without a caregiver. Although she does have a car and a driver who work on a part-time basis, she cooks her own meals, manages her own affairs, and is, as she has always been, fiercely independent.

Her great-grandchildren call her the “Google Granny”, because she is fully computer literate, and writes all her stories in Word.

Her birthday celebrations included a lunch in her honour, organised and sponsored by Rolex, a family dinner on her actual birthday, a family Shabbos at granddaughter Sarah Berger’s home, and a high tea at a Sandton location on Sunday afternoon.

All her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were there, hailing from South Africa, Australia and England, including her youngest great-grandson Isaac, who is 17 months old.

Weil was born on 14 March 1919 in Cape Town. She was the oldest child of Elias and Ella Stern. Elias went on to found a brush manufacturing company, which is still in the family and produces the Addis range of housewares.

Weil matriculated at 16 and attended the University of Cape Town, graduating from the Michaelis School of Fine Art with a degree in fine art.

In 1942, she was visiting a friend in Johannesburg



Alice Weil

when she was invited to a tennis party, where she noticed a young man who arrived late.

His name was Aubrey Levy, and six months later, in 1943, they were married in the Gardens shul. Her oldest child, Andrew David, was born on her birthday in 1947.

After Levy passed away in 1959, Weil met her future husband, Alan Weil, whom she married in 1963. Together they became a family of five, with her son Andrew – now a top labour lawyer – and Alan’s two children, Pat and David.

Weil had always been a competent writer, and in the 1970s authored numerous radio scripts. At the same time, she worked as a personal assistant to David Gevisser of the wholesalers Moshal Gevisser, and in Engelhard Industries, when Gevisser became its CEO.

She “retired” at 60 and, through a chance conversation at the hairdresser, was offered a job on the then *Diamond News* and *SA Jeweller*, which later became the *SA Jewellery News*. Forty years later, she is still writing for the publication, having developed expertise in fine watches and jewellery.

Weil has become an icon in the industry, and she has a wide network of friends both in South Africa and abroad, resulting from her regular attendance of the trade shows in Italy and Switzerland.

“She is a truly amazing woman of courage, independence, dedication and ability,” says Andrew Levy. “In looking back at her life, she can be regarded as a truly modern and liberated woman, in an age when women were far less likely to have careers than they are today.”

Letters

WHITES DON'T LACK EMPATHY, THEY LACK CAPACITY

Danny K has missed the empathy boat, as most whites today definitely have empathy with what blacks experienced during apartheid. South Africa has 12 blacks to every one white. The ANC government has, since 1994, tried its best to have 12 fully trained, skilled black workers for every one fully trained white worker. Rather than increase the numbers of schools, universities, technical training colleges, and work opportunities in the economy, the government chose to

encourage whites to restrict their numbers in these places and in the South African economy. White parents and families cannot “pay it forward” to blacks, as they generally only have sufficient funds to support their own families or themselves. The Jewish community has, as always in the main, innovated to ensure the family will continue to survive. The community also contributes as much as possible to uplift black communities.

– **Louis Mielke, Johannesburg**

EXPOSE THE CLICHÉ FOR WHAT IT IS

Recently at a carnival in Brussels, there was a float showing Jews perched on bags of money. This shocking display was like a blast from the past, when such displays were widespread.

What is the origin of this stereotype?

First of all, the psychology of a miser is a fear of losing everything, and wanting to hoard in order to survive. There have been times in our history when we faced expulsions, persecutions, grinding poverty, and exclusions from adequate means of earning a living. This influenced many of our people to feel the need to carefully safeguard their money. There were times when Christians were banned from acting as moneylenders, whereas it was one of the few professions open to Jews, who were forced into it in order to survive. Even though they often charged lower interest rates than their non-Jewish counterparts and provided a much-needed service, they were resented. They were among the first bankers. They were also forced to act as tax collectors, which was another unpopular field. Although we have been forced into these unpopular positions, we have then been demonised for being in them. Often, those who point fingers at Jews are themselves the biggest misers. Psychologists

call this projection: when we see in others what we hate about ourselves.

Originally, the Hebrew nation lived in Israel and was not interested in finance. Lives revolved around farming and spiritual service at the great temple in Jerusalem. It was only during the long exile in Europe that some became rich. Yet the vast majority lived in grinding poverty much of the time. Those who were rich were richer than the wealthy gentiles, and those who were poor were poorer than them. In spite of this, there is a stereotype that we are all wealthy, although many are dependent on charity and not interested in business. Jews tend to be a charitable people and are always in the forefront of fighting for the underdog, even if some are embittered by the past. If we are embittered, it is our challenge to rise above that burden and act as a light unto others. Jews were at the forefront of the anti-apartheid struggle and the American civil rights movement.

Many of the leading rabbis have been extremely generous. The Satmar Rebbe once gave all his money to a poor man. Upon hearing that he had been ripped off, he immediately said: “Baruch Hashem! He is not so poor.” – **Martin Zagonev, Johannesburg**

The Catholic priest who is ‘brother’ to Holocaust victims

>>Continued from page 12

When the pushers saw a weak person, they could just throw them straight into the grave to be buried alive, thus saving bullets.

According to this script of slaughter, the Germans would always frame the killings to the locals as the execution of a legal death penalty. Thus, “the Nazi officials transformed the killing of Jews into a carnival”, says Desbois. He notes the complexity of the psychology behind mass killings being presented as a public spectacle. “When there is a death penalty, people want to watch... It’s difficult to admit, but (for bystanders) when you know you’re safe, that you’re not a Jew or gypsy, not gay, and not communist – then you know that you have been chosen for life. For these people, there is a kind of enjoyment to be alive and see the bad people

die.”

Furthermore, adds Desbois, in many cases during World War II, the incentive for locals to witness the killings was material: “They knew they would take the Jews’ houses the next day.”

Desbois has written several acclaimed books reflecting on his work. He is a professor at Georgetown University in Washington DC, and in 2016 established the first Holocaust museum in Central America, located in Guatemala. He has received accolades from Pope Francis, and received the Légion d’honneur from French President Emmanuel Macron. He remains deeply involved in nurturing Judeo-Catholic relations, and committed to highlighting the horrors of all hate crime: “It’s a distortion of democracy if we don’t care about the victims.”

SAFI offers bursaries to Christian community

The South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) recently granted bursaries to a variety of Christian communities to improve skills and uplift communities.

The bursaries, donated by various accredited university campuses across southern Africa, and facilitated by SAFI, are intended to provide training for prominent members of these communities in business and marketing skills, with a view to empowering their communities.

Said one of the beneficiaries, “Allow me to give thanks to you [the South African Friends of Israel] for giving me this precious opportunity to study at a prestigious campus. It was my desire and dream, but now it has been fulfilled. I hope and promise to do my best, and not to waste this great opportunity. I am excited to begin.”

“It is exciting for us to be able to help our friends improve their church administration, and we are confident that these six beneficiaries will do well, and pay it forward by volunteering and sharing their knowledge” said SAFI Director Gavi Sacks.

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'In Silicon Valley, work comes to a standstill when India are playing'

LUKE ALFRED

Cricket fans of a certain age will remember Lawrence Seeff, the chunky Western Province opening batsman. Everyone had a signature in those days, whether it be Transvaal captain David Dyer's shell necklace, or all-rounder Clive Rice's preoccupied rolling-up of his sleeve as he stomped back to his bowling mark. Amid the tics and idiosyncrasies, the dignified Seeff offered only the broadness of his bat.

It seemed, well, just a little wider than regulations allowed.

Although he and his family have lived in Palo Alto, California, for many years (Seeff is an angel investor, providing seed capital for small start-ups and entrepreneurs), the cricket bug has not let go. He still follows the game, discusses it, and occasionally allows himself to ramble down memory lane, reflecting on a career that fell slap bang in the isolation years of the early 1980s.



"It looks like we have depth in the fast bowling department, but urgently need to rebuild our top six batting line up."

"In Silicon Valley, where many Indian entrepreneurs and software engineers live, work comes to a standstill when India are playing in a Test," says Seeff, "and it's not unusual to see a 'pick-up' match in a park in Palo Alto or Sunnyvale.

"Funnily enough, the CEO of Google, Sundar Pichai, is a big cricket fanatic, and the two of us have spent time discussing and watching cricket together."

Looking back on his career, Seeff's greatest achievements seem intimately twinned with his sharpest disappointments. In 1983, he played for South Africa in the unofficial Tests and ODIs against an Arosa Sri Lanka XI, scoring 188 and 145 in the Test and ODI, respectively.

He acknowledges that the visiting rebel squad probably weren't of the standard they should have been, but still takes pride in his run-scoring that summer. He also takes great personal satisfaction, he says, from the fact that he captained Western Province, although the shadow cast over it all was the fact that he never played official international cricket. "My career fell right in the middle of the apartheid ban period," he says with a shrug.

Seeff is married to Maya Adam, the director of health education outreach at Stanford University's Center for Health Education. She pioneered an outreach programme at a clinic in Khayelitsha called Philani, which gave the family the opportunity to spend a year back in Cape Town. It was a chance Seeff grabbed. "We enrolled our three kids at Herzlia Highlands, my alma mater, and they had a blast – so much so that we might do it again next year," he says.

Seeff follows the national side keenly, although he is careful to point out that it's not as if he keeps tabs on every Proteas run chase. He says he's a huge fan of Faf du Plessis and Aiden Markram, and was impressed with the

pace barrage the South Africans handed out to the Pakistanis earlier this summer. He felt less so, however, about the "loss of concentration" in the twin Tests against Sri Lanka. "It looks like

and allows the team to play with more freedom." Punditry aside, it's the worst-kept secret in sport that Cricket South Africa (CSA) are financially overextended, with sponsorship revenues down and the mother body butting heads with their former allies, SuperSport.

With this in mind, how would Seeff guide South African cricket back to health? "That's a tough question, but I understand that CSA haven't been profitable for some years. I would address that situation – a loss-making entity can't provide support to the game. So, I would analyse what does and doesn't make financial sense, and adjust playing schedules and expenditures accordingly.

"You need a system that produces the best cricketers in the world, as the national team's success is crucial to attracting talent and money. So, a lot of what needs to be done will have that goal in mind – making the national team the number one team in the world in all forms. If you achieve this objective, and are able to sustain the number one position, it would mean, de facto, that you have implemented a system that is successful."

On a slightly less sober note, Seeff not only remembers some of the achievements, but also the challenges, answering as follows to a question about

the best over he ever faced. "It was Transvaal versus Western Province at the Wanderers, and I was facing Vince van der Bijl," he says. "I remember not being able to get bat to ball during a number of overs before, again, I played and missed only to realise that the ball had clipped the top of my off stump!"

Those were the days.



Lawrence Seeff

we have depth in the fast bowling department," he says, "but urgently need to rebuild our top six batting line up."

How, then, does he think we'll do in the World Cup? "That's always a hard one to predict as we have the talent, but haven't been able to get across the line. We're definitely not favourites. So maybe that reduces the pressure

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