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Downgrade the ‘biggest issue to affect SA Jewry in modern times’

NICOLA MILTZ

The Jewish community has been shaken to its core by Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Lindiwe Sisulu’s announcement last week that all relations with Israel were being severed. She also categorically stated that the downgrade of the South African Embassy in Israel was already in progress.

“This is the single biggest issue to affect South African Jewry in modern times,” Zev Krengel, the vice-president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

Asked why an embassy downgrade in Israel and possibly in South Africa was such a big issue for the community, Krengel responded by saying it was emotional.

“We’ve had an Israeli representative in South Africa and Israel since 1950. It is a little piece of Israel sitting in our country. We are a proud Zionist community, we love South Africa, we love Israel, and it gives us a biblical link to our Jewish state. It will be a devastating blow if Israel recalls its ambassador. We live at a time where there is a Jewish state, so to live without diplomatic relations is like going to shul and not having a Torah in the ark.”

The *SA Jewish Report* revealed last week that in her address to foreign dignitaries and media at the South African Institute of International Affairs, Sisulu responded to a question by saying, “We are putting together a programme of downgrading our relations with Israel in line with the resolutions that were taken by the ANC [African National Congress].”

However, she skipped over her prepared statement on this issue which went further, saying that “stage one [of the downgrade] has been completed”.

The written speech went on, “Our ambassador is back in South Africa, and we will not be replacing him. Our liaison office in Tel Aviv will have no political mandate, no trade mandate, and no development co-operation mandate. It will not be responsible for trade and commercial activities. The focus of the liaison office will be consular, and the facilitation of people-to-people relations.”

A shocked Krengel responded this week by saying, “It has been a rough few days.”

This is not surprising considering that President Cyril Ramaphosa has on a number of occasions assured the community of the government’s desire to continue to play a meaningful and constructive role in peace negotiations in the troubled Middle East region.

Krengel said the announcements came as a surprise last week because, “Our view was always that a certain level of common sense would prevail. You can’t play a diplomatic role in peace negotiations if you have no diplomatic relations.”

He said more and more countries were establishing strong diplomatic and other ties with Israel, not only in Africa but even in the Middle East itself, and within the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) association.

“I think what hurts the most is that Israel is the only country being singled out.”

Said Krengel, “If the downgrade of the South African Embassy in Israel goes ahead, which the minister says it will, it’s the single worst government legislation to affect our community in recent history.”

Over the past week, the SAJBD has been tirelessly meeting with role players at the highest level in a frantic bid to sway impending downgrade decisions. It has reached out to the Presidency, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and the ANC.

Said Krengel, “We have asked Israel not to overreact and recall its ambassador.” As would generally happen, once an ambassador of one country is recalled, the other country would likely do the same. “We have asked the Israeli government not to abandon South Africa and South African Jewry. Israel is helping to uplift the lives of South Africans daily with major projects in the fields of water, technology, and security.”

Sisulu, meanwhile, has received wide-ranging support for her announcement from traditionally anti-Israel organisations such as the ANC, the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions, the South African Communist Party, and other pro-Palestinian lobby groups.

Sara Gon of the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) told the *SA Jewish Report*, “We can be sure that the ANC and some opposition parties want to be seen to punish Israel.”

She said that while they wanted Jewish investment, “a Jewish population of 60 000 is electorally irrelevant”.

“I don’t think the ANC realises how irrelevant South Africa has become globally in the past decade. It won’t affect Israel, which offers the world very much more than we do. It may bolster the ANC’s credentials for a while with itself, BDS [the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement] and Hamas, but it will have absolutely no role to play in resolving the conflict.”

“If the ANC really wanted to do something, it would push the Palestinians to get to the negotiating table soonest. If it did, it would discover that the Palestinians are very unlikely to heed its calls.”

In an article she penned in *The Daily Friend*, the online news platform of the IRR, Gon said, “The position seems to be

Continued on page 8>>



Public Enterprises Minister
Pravin Gordhan has a
moment with Israeli
Ambassador Lior Keinan
at a briefing for Jewish
business leaders.
See page 5

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Benny Gantz assists injured motorcyclist on Election Day

Benny Gantz, the leader of Israel’s Blue and White Party, was the first person on the scene after a motorcyclist was injured in an Election Day crash in southern Israel.

Gantz, who rides a motorcycle himself, called an ambulance, and then assisted the injured motorcyclist until it arrived. He was on his way from Ashdod to Rishon Lezion to gin up votes on Tuesday.

Airbnb to cancel its ban on West Bank settlement listings

In a reversal of a 2018 policy announcement, Airbnb will not remove West Bank settlement listings from its website.

The policy change came in a court settlement on Monday between the vacation rental company and a dozen American Jewish plaintiffs who had sued the company, organised by the Shurat Hadin-Israel Law Center, a pro-Israel law organisation.

Airbnb announced in November that it would remove about 200 rental listings in West Bank settlements because it contended that the settlements “are at the core of the dispute between Israelis and Palestinians”. The movement to boycott Israel saw the decision as a victory.

But Airbnb never actually removed the listings. And, about a week after the decision, Shurat Hadin organised the suit on behalf of a dozen American Jewish families, most of whom own properties in West Bank settlements. The suit was filed under the Fair Housing Act, which was meant to prevent discrimination against minorities in the United States.

In the lawsuit, the plaintiffs claimed that Airbnb was discriminating against them for being Jewish, given that it still allowed listings by Palestinian Muslims and Christians in the West Bank.



New York City orders measles vaccination

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio declared a public health emergency on Tuesday over the measles outbreak in Brooklyn’s haredi Orthodox community. De Blasio ordered unvaccinated people living in four ZIP codes in the Williamsburg neighbourhood to get the vaccine, or pay fines of up to \$1 000 (R13 987)

There have been 285 reported cases of measles in Brooklyn’s Orthodox Jewish community since October, including 246 children, WCBS-TV reported, citing the health department.

“The measles vaccine works. It is safe, it is effective, it is time-tested. The faster everyone heeds the order, the faster we can lift it,” De Blasio said.

Ilhan Omar calls Stephen Miller a white nationalist

Right-wing critics railed against Representative Ilhan Omar for calling White House senior policy adviser Stephen Miller a “white nationalist” amid a string of tweets decrying the Trump administration’s hard-line immigration reform policies.

The detractors accused the Minnesota Democrat of targeting Jews - a claim she has heard several times since joining congress in January.

Omar targeted Miller, who is Jewish, just days after President Donald Trump said the country could not take in any more refugees. “Our country is full, can’t come, I’m sorry,” Trump said during a speech in Las Vegas at the Republican Jewish Coalition’s annual meeting.

Omar has had a strained relationship with the Jewish community since taking office, after employing anti-Semitic tropes about dual loyalty and Jews and money, and the resurfacing of past tweets considered anti-Semitic. Omar’s tweet was accompanied by an article indicating that Miller had convinced Trump to appoint a tougher candidate to lead the Immigration and Customs Enforcement office.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:37	18:26	Johannesburg
18:10	19:00	Cape Town
17:23	18:12	Durban
17:42	18:32	Bloemfontein
17:41	18:32	Port Elizabeth
17:32	18:23	East London

Torah Thought

Achieving greatness with Shabbat Hagadol

This Shabbat bears the title of being Shabbat Hagadol – the Great Shabbat. There are many reasons advanced as to why the Shabbat that precedes the great holiday of Pesach is called Shabbat Hagadol.

It reminds us of the first Pesach in Egypt, when the tenth of Nissan, the day of taking the Paschal lamb, fell on Shabbat. There is also the great Haftorah from the prophet Malachi that speaks of the “great day” at the time of the final redemption. But the truth is that the title is granted to this Shabbat simply because of its association with Pesach.

Greatness is an emotion that comes from self-confidence and self-worth. Great people have always felt the beat of greatness within themselves. Greatness presupposes a feeling of being special, of importance and purpose. The entire message of Pesach is therefore one of greatness. For

it is the story of our salvation from Egyptian bondage that is the basis of all Jewish pride and existence. Our entire national existence is built upon the remembrance of that event that started our history as a nation.

The Peel Commission of 1936 was a British Royal Commission of Inquiry set out to propose changes to the British Mandate for Palestine. One of the people interviewed was David Ben-Gurion. Ben-Gurion turned to the British members of the commission, and asked if the average British child knew about the founders of their nation. He asked the Americans how many children in the United States could relay the momentous voyage more than 300 years ago of the Mayflower that landed at Plymouth Rock? Who was their leader? How many people were involved? What day was it? What did they eat?

He said any Jewish child could tell you that 3 300 years ago, the Jewish people were led out of Egypt to Israel by Moshe their leader, and there were more than 600 000 males over the age of 20. It was a Thursday morning, and they ate matzah. Ben-Gurion ended his presentation by emphasising this unique quality of the Jewish nation, and that we needed to come home.

Pesach instils in our children an awareness of our beginning as a people. When we know where we come from, we will know where we are supposed to be going.

The seder is the time to “passover” to our children loads of Jewish identity and pride, to plant within them and ourselves the seeds of greatness.



Rabbi Danny Sackstein, Sunny Road Kehilla

South African

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King Bibi is here to stay

“This is an unimaginable achievement,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told exuberant supporters in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

Netanyahu was talking at his Likud party headquarters in Tel Aviv, where more than 2 000 well-wishers turned out to wave Israeli flags to the accompaniment of blaring music and decorations falling from the sky. The prime minister stopped every few sentences to take in the applause.

“I am very moved tonight,” he beamed, “a night of tremendous victory. I am very excited that the people of Israel once again trusted me for the fifth time, and with greater confidence.”

In what was widely seen as a referendum on Netanyahu’s leadership, by Wednesday afternoon, with 97% of the votes counted, the premier had mustered 35 Knesset (parliament) seats.

It was his best showing ever, and puts him well on the path to taking office for a fourth consecutive, and fifth overall term. This means, come July, he will become Israel’s longest serving prime minister, overtaking the country’s founder, David Ben-Gurion, who until now held this title.

But while Netanyahu is championing his success, he’ll face competition moving forward. Not least of all from political newcomer, former Israeli Defense Forces chief and head of the Blue and White Party, Benny Gantz. Before the votes of soldiers and Israeli diplomats based outside the country were counted (uncompleted at the time of writing) Gantz had garnered the same 35 mandates as Netanyahu. So, just 13 000 votes separated the two in the prime minister’s favour.

Positioning himself on the centre-left of the Israeli political spectrum, Gantz campaigned under the slogan of change, and rallied many of the country’s disillusioned Netanyahu critics behind him. It’s an excellent achievement for a new party, but it fell short of assuring a majority coalition.

This is what Israeli politics is all about. For a party to govern, it must be able to form a 60-plus majority in the 120 seated Knesset. And this is where Netanyahu has the advantage – regardless of whether or not he beat Gantz in the numbers game.

For weeks prior to the elections – and no doubt also in the weeks to come – Netanyahu has been building his coalition. He’s expected to put together 65 mandates, four more than he held during his previous term in office.

This will allow him to breathe more easily, and be less choked by the demands of his

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier

coalition partners. Having said that, a more united centre and centre-left opposition in the new government will keep him in check.

But the prime minister has his work cut out for him, and it could soon be payback time. His close ally, American president Donald Trump, is due to unveil his so-called Middle East “deal of the century” that will no doubt require Netanyahu to make concessions his right-wing support base presumably won’t be in favour of.

Until now, Trump has only boosted Netanyahu’s standing by recognising Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and moving his embassy there from Tel Aviv. He also recently recognised Israeli sovereignty of the Golan Heights, and on the eve of this week’s elections, announced that he considers Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guards to be a terrorist organisation.

Just what the American president’s demands will be remains to be seen. But, there were

criticising Netanyahu’s settlement building plans. However, it’s unlikely such statements – which would make the creation of a Palestinian state impossible – are in line with the proposed peace plan.

Neither Palestinians nor Israeli Arabs are fans of Netanyahu. The 61% voter turnout among the Arab community is significantly lower than in previous years. This is due in part to division within the community as well as disillusionment over whether Israeli elections bring real change.

Representing about 20% of Israeli society, the United Arab List was the third largest party in the previous parliament. Ahead of the elections, it split into two parties, one of which is not guaranteed to pass the threshold. In the bigger picture, this means a smaller representation of Arab citizens in the Knesset,

and a weakening of the left-centre camp. Netanyahu is also facing legal hurdles that have him in embroiled in five corruption charges. There is nothing in Israeli law that prevents a sitting prime minister from standing trial and remaining in office even while his appeal is being heard.

The process could take years. Interestingly, this was not an important factor listed by voters in the polls before the elections.

As Israelis try to understand the implications of this week’s results, a few things remain clear.

The country’s foreign policy is unlikely to change. Israel will continue to be ruled a by a right-wing coalition. And King Bibi – as he is both affectionately and disparagingly referred to – has once again proven his detractors wrong. He is here to stay.

SA-Israel relations could worsen with continued Netanyahu leadership

TALI FEINBERG

With Benjamin Netanyahu positioned to lead Israel for a fifth term following this week’s election,

an ambassador back to Israel. I see no sign of any such concessions in the near future. South Africa would probably have preferred a Kachol Lavan [centrist party] win, as relations under Likud have been strained,” Gruzds says. “It’s set to be another centre-right coalition, it seems. Until the peace process resumes in earnest, South Africa’s position is unlikely to shift, and may even harden.”

Political analyst Wayne Sussman says, “I don’t think the new government, no matter what the outcome, will change the status quo with South Africa in the short to medium term.”

That’s because he predicts there will be an extremely right-wing coalition government, including the ultra-orthodox parties Shas and United Torah Judaism, the far-right United Right List, and former Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon’s Kulanu party.

To make the South African government happy, Israel would have to be led by a left-wing government. Sussman says it was a “catastrophic night for the left”, and he is not sure if Labour and Meretz can survive until the next election.

Meanwhile, Zev Krengel, the vice-president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, says, “The elections in Israel were free and fair, and indicative of its robust democracy. We congratulate the winning party, and as diaspora Jewry, we look forward to working with whichever government the Israelis have chosen.”

“We are thrilled to have witnessed another successful and peaceful election in the sovereign, democratic Jewish state,” says Rowan Polovin, the chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation Cape Council.



Sara and Benjamin Netanyahu

murmurs of disapproval from Washington over comments Netanyahu made just days before the election.

Last weekend, he pledged to annex huge swathes of the West Bank, where Israeli settlements stand. He said Israel would take not just the big clusters of Jewish settlements, mostly around Jerusalem, but also the settler outposts deep inside the West Bank.

Trump has deliberately held back from

will it have any impact on South Africa’s relationship with the Jewish state?

“I don’t expect the election results to have much effect, whatever the coalition results. South Africa is waiting for major concessions to the Palestinians, which was virtually a non-issue in these elections,” says Steven Gruzds, foreign policy analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs.

“It has made this its condition for sending



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Following Stan & Pete saga, Beth Din tightens up kosher services

NICOLA MILTZ

It is more than a year since the Stan & Pete treif-chicken scandal rocked the community, setting off a multi-pronged investigation and calls for a sweeping revamp of kashrut. Has anything changed? Apparently there are now procedures in place to handle “tip offs” from the community, according to the head of the Beth Din’s Kosher Department, Rabbi Dovi Goldstein. Now, calls are recorded, and information is filed and investigated, he told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

In a report the department released this week, Goldstein said 80% of kosher establishments now have CCTV systems in place, and the department is integrating the camera systems into the kosher supervision system.

“By July, we will have 100% CCTV coverage of our food services,” he says.

These are part of what Goldstein refers to as “significant improvements” cited in the report.

Following the reaction to the Stan & Pete scandal, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein and the Union of Orthodox Synagogues initiated an investigation into Stan & Pete by leading law firm Bowmans. They also invited the Association of Kashrus Organisations (AKO) to review the kashrut-supervision system of the Beth Din, and to make recommendations for improvements. Rabbi Dovi Goldstein was appointed the new managing director of the Kosher Department.

After that, says Goldstein, “We built a new strategy” for the Kosher Department, based on four areas:

- Training new inspectors and introducing training programmes for mashgichim;
- Upskilling staff at the department;
- Improving customer services; and
- Improving efficiencies in the *shechita* (slaughter) system.

Factories, food services, and *shechita* are the three primary focus areas of the kosher organisation, says Goldstein.

A new compliance manager, Rabbi Anton Klein, was appointed to oversee inspections at factories, process overdue product applications, and issue kashrut certificates. He has developed criteria for the qualification and training of five new rabbinic field representatives, three of whom are “on the ground inspecting our factories”. The other two are still undergoing training. The three representatives have had extensive training in industrial kashrut.

Rabbi Dovi Rabin was appointed as a rabbinic co-ordinator (RC) for factories to improve customer services which were “below expectation”, according to the report. The RC appointment was one of AKO’s recommendations. Rabin has since engaged with more than 200 companies.

The department has hired data systems analyst Renata Botma to manage thousands of ingredients, and schedule numerous inspections every year.

It has hired more administrative

staff and, according to Goldstein, has improved the skills of existing staff to “maintain the database and ensure all certification processes run smoothly”.

Rabbi Motti Groner was appointed as the new RC in food services. Inspectors have streamlined inspections using a new digital inspection process as opposed to the outdated, time consuming process of filling out paper forms, according to the report.

Goldstein says the department will soon introduce a new Mehadrin standard at functions “for people who want it”, requiring a “thorough investigation of the menu, and an additional mashgiach present at production and at the function”.

Following the Stan & Pete incident, the spotlight was focused on mashgichim as the gateway to kashrut. Many concerns were raised by mashgichim themselves and members of the community about levels of training, general working conditions, and expectations.

According to the report, two meetings were held eight months ago with the mashgichim to hear their concerns. Three main points

emerged from the feedback, including remuneration, support, and training.

“This conference will address training in new methods, checking for criminality, and identifying



According to Goldstein, the department increased the recommended minimum remuneration rate, and has “engaged extensively” with individuals and groups of mashgichim.

The date for the first mashgiach conference is set for next month.

kosher fish and chicken.”

The department is also developing new training modules for mashgichim, which will be presented to them at the conference.

The training will focus on skills in kashrut, professionalism, and health and safety. Mashgichim will

be required to refresh their training and take examinations biennially.

The Beth Din *shechita* process has also been improved.

There is an upgraded venue for the *shechita* of lamb. The majority of lamb *shechita* is taking place on a separate day to beef *shechita*, which according to Goldstein, “ensures that the *shochtim* are less pressurised in order to comply with the AKO recommendations”.

There is a dedicated *bodek sakinin* (the person that checks the knife after every *shechita*) for both beef and lamb *shechita*, and a dedicated mashgiach as an extra precautionary measure to monitor all labelling.

“The kosher team has put its head down, and there has been a super-human effort,” Goldstein says. “It isn’t humanly possible to put everything into effect in such a short space of time. While there are no quick fixes, I’m confident in saying that we have managed to bring in a new era of kosher for the community. We remain fully committed to implementing all the recommendations by AKO and Bowmans.”

ANCYL calls for UCT Israel boycott to be enforced

TALI FEINBERG

The ANC Youth League (ANCYL) in the Western Cape is demanding that the University of Cape Town (UCT) support the academic boycott of Israeli universities.

This is in spite of the University of Cape Town’s highest governing body, its council, on 30 March sending a motion to boycott Israeli universities back to its senate for further discussion. “An academic boycott is imperative to advance the cause to ensure isolation of what is clearly an apartheid government of Israel,” reads the ANCYL statement.

“Israeli apartheid must come to an end, and our democratic institutions cannot maintain the Israeli façade of a free society and, thereby, support colonialism... The cloak of academic freedom should not be used to shield Israeli institutions from facing the wrath of legitimate democratic and peace seeking societies,” it concluded.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, ANCYL Provincial Chairperson Muhammad Khalid Sayed said that it was imperative that the ANCYL comment on the matter because “the youth league has over the years been consistent in pushing for an academic boycott of Israel, especially in the settlement areas. It is tied in with our policy focus, and our student movement, SASCO [the South African Students Congress], has been pushing this line.”

However, he said the ANCYL did not automatically fall in line with anti-Israel groups like Boycott Divestment Sanctions South Africa (BDS-SA) or the Palestine Solidarity Forum (PSF). For example, it would consider the possibility of calling on universities not to boycott Israeli academics who question their government’s policies.

Sayed said he believed there was space for Zionist Jews on campus and in South Africa. “It’s a democratic country, and they have a right to express themselves. We can have contestation around those ideas, but we have never objected to there being Zionist students.”

To the South African Jewish community, he said, “We as ANCYL have a particular perspective of the Palestinian issue, which is historic. But we are not anti-Semitic and have no issue with the Jewish community. In fact, we appreciate the important role you played in our liberation, and the role you continue to play in uplifting communities. Even if we differ, we recognise the positive role that the

Jewish community plays in this country.”

The statement also targeted UCT academic and council member Michael Cardo, who happens to also be a Minister of Parliament for the Democratic Alliance (DA).

Before the council meeting on the vote, Cardo tweeted, “The motion to boycott Israeli academic institutions is driven by a narrow, factional, BDS-supporting clique. It’s a violation of academic freedom. It will tarnish [UCT’s] reputation, and jeopardise funding. As a UCT council member, I will oppose it completely.”

The ANCYL said, “We strongly recommend that UCT asks Michael Cardo to recuse himself from the decision making process regarding the academic boycott against the state of Israel. It is distasteful in the highest degree that UCT has a member on its council who places narrow interests above the lives of the Palestinian people. Yet, when you juxtapose Michael Cardo’s neoliberal value system and track record of working to erase South Africa’s apartheid institutionalised socioeconomic injustices, it is not surprising that he does not denounce the inhumane and unjust practices of the state of Israel.”

“...we are not anti-Semitic and have no issue with the Jewish community. In fact, we appreciate the important role you played in our liberation, and the role you continue to play in uplifting communities.”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* Cardo, who is not Jewish, said he had no intention of recusing himself from any future council discussions on the boycott motion. “This is all cheap politicking – part of the internal election campaign of the ANC in the Western Cape. There are members of the UCT council who publicly support the boycott, disinvestment, and sanctions campaign against Israel. I don’t see the ANCYL calling on them to recuse themselves. It’s a manifestation of the ANCYL’s hypocrisy and double standards, and I’m treating its grandstanding with the contempt it deserves.” While Cardo dismisses the ANCYL’s comments, he is more worried about International Relations and Cooperation Minister Lindiwe

Sisulu’s comments at a South African Institute of International Affairs gathering last week. She was asked why the government allowed UCT, a partly government-funded institution, to have relations with Israeli universities.

She said the government would eventually deal with the matter of public institutions such as UCT and its relations with Israel.

“Any attempt by the government to interfere with academic freedom, by ‘pulling universities into the party line’ or telling them what political positions to adopt is ludicrous. I hope Higher Education Minister Naledi Pandor doesn’t share these sentiments. Threats to university autonomy sound a very loud alarm bell for me,” Cardo said.

Sayed said the statement attacked Cardo because, “He was the only council member who expressed himself before the council meeting on the matter. This is prejudice and pre-empting the discussion. His view is also inconsistent with South African policy on the matter. The DA is against the boycott and any form of downgrade, and we don’t agree with that approach.”

Emeritus Professor Milton Shain, who has written extensively about the boycott motion, said, “I think Michael Cardo is the target because he has been resolute on social media and in council. This is all part of the ANC’s desperate politics in the Western Cape. It seems the Youth League has nothing better to do while its party crumbles from within.”

Shaun Zagnoev, the chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said, “There is nothing wrong with supporting Palestinian emancipation. However, the ANCYL is doing the Palestinians themselves no favours by adopting the obviously false, not to say absurd, position that Israel is completely responsible, and the Palestinians totally blameless for failure to date to achieve this.

“In order for the conflict to be resolved, both sides need to commit to a process of peaceful dialogue and negotiations, and far from being helpful, one-sided condemnations and boycotts simply hinder that process. We find it disturbing that the ANCYL chooses to vilify anyone who holds a view contrary to its own rather than allowing for the free flow of ideas.”

Rowan Polovin, the chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation Cape Council said, “We reject the ANC Western Cape’s cheap electioneering attempt to win votes by bashing Israel.”

Mashgichim form association to improve working conditions

JORDAN MOSHE

Johannesburg mashgichim came together on Monday evening to form an association to improve their conditions of employment.

The group of about 40 mashgichim insisted the action was necessary after the Johannesburg Kashrut Department reportedly refused to engage with them. Organisers believe that before the week is out, they will have at least 50% of the mashgichim in Gauteng on their books.

The association will fall under the auspices of South Africa's oldest trade union, the UASA (formerly known as the United Association of South Africa).

At the launch, the mashgichim discussed strategies, including a move to formalise contracts of employment and secure their rights as professionals.

“We are the foot soldiers of kashrut on the ground. However, we are treated with a lack of respect and undermined repeatedly. This needs to change.”

With the support and guidance of Dr Ivor Blumenthal, the former chief executive of the Services Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA), the association will also have legal representation, lending further credibility to its standing in the community.

In spite of the crucial role they play in maintaining kashrut standards at kosher establishments and events in our community, mashgichim say that no support is forthcoming from the Kashrut Department, motivating the formation of an association.

“We are the foot soldiers of kashrut on the ground,” said one mashgiach. “However, we are treated with a lack of respect and undermined repeatedly. This needs to change.”

They say the lackadaisical fashion in which they are treated imperils the standards of kashrut in the community. Said one, “When we bring issues regarding kashrut to the attention of the department, we often receive late responses or are ignored.

“It is essential that there is constant communication regarding kashrut, and that the necessary infrastructure for prompt response is built. We have the right to demand answers, but are regarded as a fly on the wall when we share our problems with them.”

According to Blumenthal, attempts by mashgichim to engage with the department to co-ordinate efforts on matters of kashrut have been repeatedly turned down.

Pravin Gordhan calls for active citizenship

STAFF REPORTER

South Africa is in the midst of an extensive process of rebuilding, and all its citizens need to find ways to make a difference rather than watching passively from the sidelines.

This was one of the key messages conveyed by Minister of Public Enterprises Pravin Gordhan at a briefing for Jewish business leaders held in Johannesburg on Tuesday evening.

A range of leaders – including the chief executives of public companies – attended the event, which was organised by the South Africa Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) as part of its #MakeUsCount pre-election awareness campaign.

Gordhan acknowledged that the rebuilding

“We approached it and asked if it would work with us to address the problem,” he said. “It rejected any proposals of co-ordinated engagement. It said we would need a union to get what we wanted, and we’ve now met its criteria. We are not going to war, but are pressing for the rights of people who serve the community.

“The formation of this association achieves two things. First, it establishes labour standards that must be adhered to in employing a mashgiach, regularising employment. Second, it will implement standards of engagement, and ensure that issues can be addressed effectively.”

Blumenthal says that while some mashgichim have worked in the field for more than 20 years, the department refuses to recognise them as employees, and continues to treat them as casual labour.

“You are collectively regarded as *passé*, *rachmonis* (pity) cases,” he said to those present. “The department considers you replaceable with its own employees. You will be targeted, and need to ask yourselves if you are prepared to form a collective to take responsibility for one another and protect your livelihood.”

He went on to say: “A mashgiach is an auditor deployed on behalf of the community. The community and its rabbis know how important this role is. The Kashrut Department acts as an intermediary between mashgichim and the community, and as it is immature about the issue, we won’t deal with it but with the community directly.

“The resistance of the Kashrut Department has been broken because we have met its union criteria. It is time to for things to change.”

The association said it had approached various rabbis to garner support for its cause, among them Yossi Chaikin. They are supportive, with some saying that it is only right that they should be satisfied with their working conditions.

Although he would not comment on the alliance with a trade union, Chaikin, the chairperson of the Rabbinical Association of South Africa, said that he supported the mashgichim.

“The mashgichim of our community need to be happy and well treated,” he said. “We need to recognise that they are at the forefront of kashrut issues in our community. They are at the coalface of kashrut, and do important work.”

The managing director of the Beth Din’s Kosher Department, Rabbi Dovi Goldstein, said the Beth Din had engaged extensively with individuals and groups of mashgichim, as stated in its report released this week. (See story on page 4)

“The Beth Din Kosher Department is committed to working closely with and listening to our mashgichim who are such a core part of the kosher system,” he said.

process would take a long time, but assured his audience that every effort was being made to implement good governance and infrastructure development through the public service in order to get South Africa working again.

He commended prominent Jewish community members who had come forward in response to President Cyril Ramaphosa’s “Thuma Mina” call, one of whom now lives in London but had been coming through on a regular basis to assist in getting Eskom back on its feet.

On presenting the minister with a chanukiah at the conclusion of the evening, SAJBD Vice-President Zev Krengel quipped that it symbolised the hope that the lights would continue to burn in South Africa as well.

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STAFFWISE

FACILITATING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The week that went horribly wrong

Last week came so close to ending on a high note for South African Jewry after Israel Apartheid Week (IAW) almost seemed to pass us by without any distress.

But it all changed so quickly after it dawned on us what Lindiwe Sisulu, the South African Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation, had meant to say (but didn't) at her briefing late last Wednesday night.

She basically declared that the South African embassy in Israel was history, and the downgrade was already in progress. It was on its way to being a mere liaison office, with “no political mandate, no trade mandate, and no development co-operation mandate”. It would be for “consular and the facilitation of people-to-people relations only”.

Suddenly the fear we had of the downgrade became a reality.

Then, Sketchy Bongo, the musician who happily performed at Wits on behalf of the South African Union of Jewish Students during the IAW #NoPlaceForHateCampaign, apologised “deeply” for performing. While he denied being threatened and cajoled, it was evident on social media that was not the case.

In his apology, he clearly alerted the following organisations: the Progressive Youth Alliance – which includes the ANC Youth League and Muslim Student Association, the Palestine Solidarity Committee, and the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund. Why on earth would he do that if he had not been read the riot act by them? Come on!

Turning tail, he tweeted that he had been “educated by your messages this evening”, which then led him to do “further research”. After that, he wrote that he felt “terrible about accepting money for this show I didn't fully understand”. He then promised never to make this mistake again.

What on earth did they threaten him with? Sounds a whole lot like what happened to celebrity Shashi Naidoo, who was pulled into the fold of the Boycott Divestment Sanctions organisation after she succumbed to threats. This is upsetting, least of all because it was a #NoPlaceForHateCampaign, and was about building bridges, not breaking them down.

It astonishes me how easily people who are ignorant about the situation in the Middle East can be fed a whole lot of hatred.

Going back to the far more important issue of the minister and her declarations, you may wonder why I am questioning what she says.

First, I am curious to know why she didn't actually make these declarations when she delivered her speech, but left them be found online. Perhaps she had decided against saying it. Is that a possibility? If so, why?

Second, it feels like we have been blindsided by this declaration, in spite of it having been in the ether since the ANC Electoral Conference in December 2017. Then, the decision to downgrade the embassy was made by the ruling party, not government.

And yes, there have been many public mutterings about it, but it has never been a *fait accompli*.

Besides, it was only very recently that the minister herself was talking about wanting South Africa to get involved in the negotiation process between Palestinians and Israel. So did President Cyril Ramaphosa on a number of occasions. In some of those instances, it was directed at our community, but in others, the declarations were made to the broader public.

There is simply no way South Africa can participate in negotiations for peace if it has cut ties with one side. So, why say this if you are going ahead with severing links and downgrading the embassy in Israel? It doesn't make sense.

Also, the minister spoke about how the former ambassador, Sisa Ngombane, was recalled to South Africa in May last year. This was true. However, he went back at the end of September last year ostensibly to resume his duties, according to an embassy letter that was put out.

Then, after the anti-Israel lobby became hysterical, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation backpedalled, saying Ngombane had gone back to Israel for personal reasons, and would return.

However, I have it on good authority that he did not come home again until he had completed his term, which was in December last year.

So much secrecy and mixed messages.

Is our embassy in Israel really in the throes of a full downgrade?

I ask this because we are in election season, and it brings many promises that will never be fulfilled. It also often results in politicians saying things they believe the electorate wants to hear. This is normal.

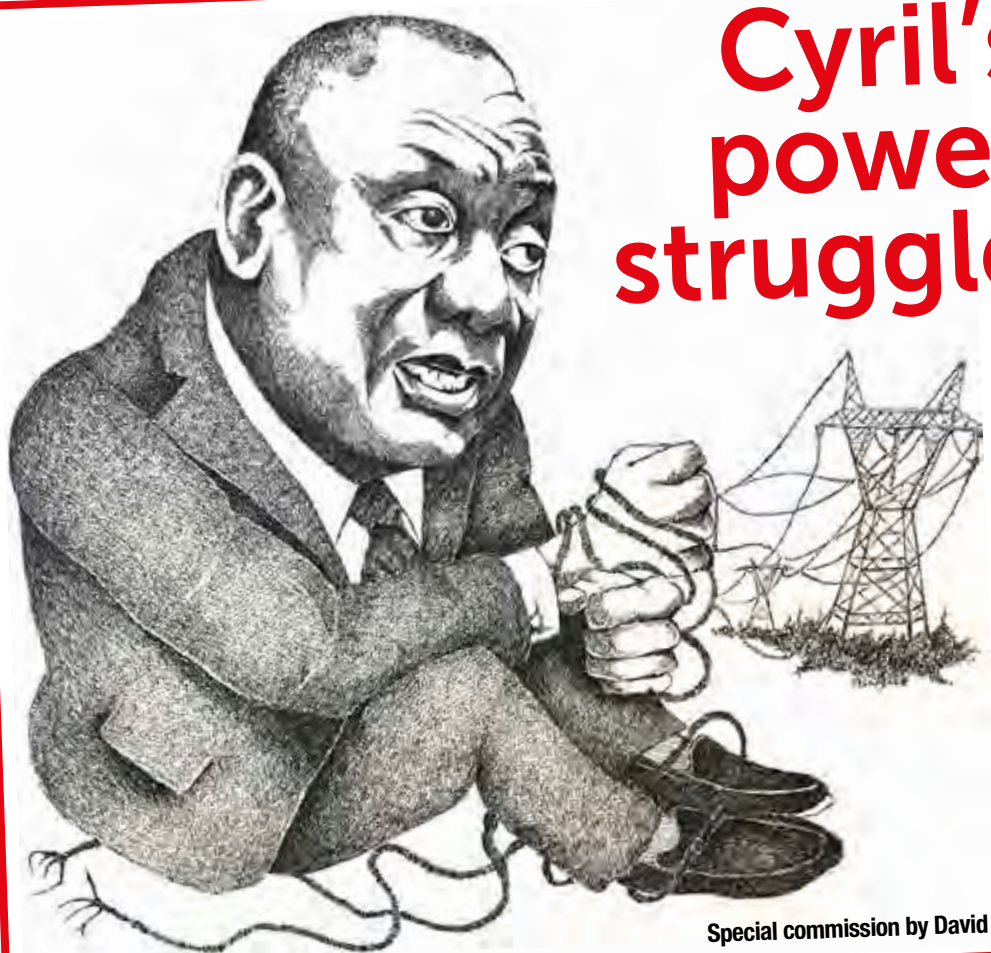
For sure, the Jewish electorate doesn't want to hear what Sisulu said, and we will fight tooth and nail to prevent it.

But, perhaps the minister and her government is under the impression that those they want to vote for them do want the embassy to be downgraded.

I believe there are people who do want this, but research has shown that though they are a very vocal, loud, and bombastic group, they are certainly not the majority of South Africans, nor that big a group. They just believe they are right, and will do whatever they can to destroy Israel.

I can only hope that somehow this is more electioneering, and less a *fait accompli*, as our community will feel it the most.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Cyril's power struggle

Special commission by David Shapiro

Israeli election day dishes up some hard choices

CNAAN LIPSHIZ - JTA

Even by Israeli standards, the country's latest general elections have been exceptionally dirty, rife with personal attacks between candidates, and fake news.

But in an arid country where the blossoms and mild temperatures of spring are gone within a few weeks, the vote's timing was impeccable.

That's because in Israel, voting day is a holiday. And this year, Israelis certainly appreciated how the early election fell serendipitously in the middle of a week, during the lazy work period that separates Purim from Passover.

Sunbirds like Ela Shnaider, a 27-year-old accountant and Likud voter, cleared their morning on Tuesday in favour of the beach. (Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu leads the Likud party.)

"It's such a great preparation for the summer," Shnaider said, lying on a yellow towel on the unfortunately named Metztzim Beach in northern Tel Aviv. It means "peeping Toms beach", named after a 1970s cult movie.

"Plus, it's a way of getting a detox from this election campaign," she said, noting that she wasn't happy when activists for the Blue and White party of Benny Gantz and Yair Lapid called Netanyahu a traitor.

Netanyahu's campaign, in turn, attempted to portray Gantz, a former military chief of staff, as having mental issues, capitalising on reports that he required psychological therapy years ago.

With growing awareness of the damages of summertime exposure to the harsh Middle Eastern sun, many beachgoers her age limit sunbathing to early April, when companies expect employees "to put in an effort ahead of Passover", she also said. "And this year: Voila! Elections."

Unlike the United States, Israeli voters have no real way of knowing when elections will take place. The country's multiparty system makes government coalitions so unstable, they fall apart on average every 2.5 years, forcing elections that may take place at any point during the year. The last Israeli coalition that completed its mandated term dates back to 1988.

The policy of making elections a holiday began in 1958, presumably as a means of either helping voters turn out, celebrating democracy, or both. The law declaring the holiday does not explain the decision.

"The Americans have Thanksgiving as their way

of expressing gratitude for the benefits of their way of life. We have elections day!" said Shlomi Elba, a 47-year-old lawyer and avid player of matkot, the beach pingpong game whose pops and clicks, produced by a ball hitting a wooden bat, result in the cacophony that many Israelis associate with holiday on the beach.

Yet, in spite of the temptation to play hooky and the absence of mandatory voting in Israel, its citizens have one of the world's highest turnout rates at an average of about 70% (higher in some estimates). That surpasses the US by nearly 20 points, and trails only countries such as Belgium, where voting is mandatory, and the Netherlands, which has had rates as high as 80%.

Some Israeli families plan parties to fall especially on Election Day, right after elections are announced.

"It's just perfect because this way, it doesn't eat up your weekend," said Alon Samo, a 39-year-old illustrator from Tel Aviv. "I was done with my cousin's Batmitzvah by 16:00, with plenty of time to make my way back home and vote."

Samo, who voted for Blue and White, said he considered "playing hooky and not voting at all". But,



Israelis and tourists enjoy the beach in Tel Aviv on 7 April

Photo: Gershon Elinson/Flash90

"in the end, it felt too guilty. I was given a free day, so the least I can do is show up."

Some voters took a more entrepreneurial approach to voting day than that of Samo or Shnaider.

Gili Ronen, a high-tech executive from Hod Hasharon, gathered his childhood friends to go what he calls "orchid hunting" near Haifa, about 70 miles (112km) to the north of his home.

Israel, he noted, has about 30 species of orchids, "and they all bloom for about three weeks between March and April". Ronen's seven friends all voted at 07:00, when Israel's 10 720 ballot boxes opened on Tuesday.

"Then, we all met at the rallying point, and the hunting expedition was out," he told the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* in Haifa. They spotted only seven species, "but unlike the candidates, the flowers were all beautiful".

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Sketchy Bongo’s sketchy story about IAW apology

NICOLA MILTZ

Well known music producer and DJ, Sketchy Bongo, claimed this week he wasn’t put under pressure by anti-Israel lobbyists into apologising for his performance at a peace and unity concert organised by Jewish students during Israel Apartheid Week (IAW). However, the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) finds that hard to believe.

The popular DJ, whose real name is Yuvir Pillay, put on a lunch time musical concert arranged by SAUJS during its IAW #NoPlaceForHate campaign at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) last Thursday (5 April). The aim of the concert was to promote peace and unity, according to SAUJS.

SAUJS said the concert was well attended by students on campus, many of whom danced and waved the South African flag. Things turned ugly when members of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) arrived in protest, allegedly confronting the artist after his show.

According to witnesses, they jeered and heckled spectators during the final stages of the performance, and afterwards verbally attacked members and representatives of the Israel advocacy group StandWithUs.

An online video shows an intense and angry altercation between one of the members of the PSC, Rashaad Yusuf Dadoo, and visiting Ethiopian-Israeli, Ashager Araro, from StandWithUs. It is believed that campus security intervened as the protestors’ verbal abuse escalated out of control.

A visibly shocked Sketchy Bongo watched as members of the PSC screamed their support for the terrorist organisation Hamas, completely disrupting the atmosphere at the peaceful unity concert.

Sketchy Bongo, known for his signature ski mask, was criticised for his performance by anti-Israel lobbyists on campus and on social media.

At 22:47 that night, the artist tweeted an apology. “I do not support any apartheid state. I want to apologise deeply for performing at Wits today. I didn’t think and do my research. I have been educated by your messages this evening, and have done further research. I feel terrible about accepting money for this show I didn’t fully understand, and I will never make this mistake again.”

He then pledged to donate money to the

Palestine Children’s Relief Fund.

Liora Katzew, the chairperson of SAUJS at Wits, told the *SA Jewish Report* this week that the artist had been put under pressure.

“We are used to these bullying tactics used by the PSC, which puts pressure on artists to follow its one-sided narrative. The SAUJS peace and unity concert had no reference to politics or Israel. Sketchy Bongo was here to bring peace and unity through his music.”

She said his performance attracted large crowds of students, who “danced with South African flags” and the “vibe was incredible”.

“People were having a great time until members of the PSC arrived and started heckling spectators, taking photographs, and spewing hate and intimidatory threats. The altercation was really divisive and unconstructive.”

Sketchy Bongo told the *SA Jewish Report*, “I was booked to play at a peace and love concert at Wits. It was supposed to bring people together, but it did the opposite. It was during Israel Apartheid Week. It was seen as me supporting Israeli policy, as the people that booked me brought down an Israeli soldier and other Israeli people. The set went well, but sparked a huge protest.

“I didn’t expect this as I thought it was something that was about peace and love, but it was clearly the group that booked me pushing a pro-Israeli policy which others did not agree with. After the set, I did my own research online as I was not completely aware of the details of the conflict.”

He claims he “came across” the Nation State Law, which prompted him to reconsider his actions.

“To me this is clearly a divisive law that encourages separation of people and does not promote love and understanding.”

The popular DJ insists he was not bullied into apologising.

“I was not under any pressure to apologise, nor was anyone aggressive towards me. The concert was not about unity. It was pushing a pro-Israeli policy agenda. I cannot support the Israel Nation State Law, nor be seen to support it.”

Stressing that, “I am not affiliated to or will be part of any organisation,” he said, “I am not in politics. I am about love, peace, and positive energy. I want my shows and music to be about that and nothing else. I will be doing much more research before accepting any shows in the future.”

It is understood that the PSC was angered by Araro’s presence at IAW, claiming she was a member of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Araro describes herself on Twitter as, “#Israel, Ethiopian #Jew, #Zionist. #IDF Lieutenant in reserves. Writer. International Presenter. Interested in Government Diplomacy & Middle East conflict.”

As an Israeli citizen, she last served



Sketchy Bongo

actively in the IDF in 2012, according to SAUJS this week. This was explained to Wits management.

Sketchy Bongo’s apology released a flurry of responses on Twitter representing both sides of the debate. He was praised and lauded by anti-Israel lobbyists for his “honesty”, “maturity”, and for “taking a stand”, and seemingly forgiven; while pro-Israel lobbyists expressed their disappointment at him for being so easily swayed by pressure and intimidation from the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement.

One Tweet by Aharon Chemel said, “Research on such a complicated topic doesn’t take one afternoon, really disappointing reaction. You did a concert promoting peace BTW, nothing to be ashamed of. Regardless of what side you on.”

Mordechai said, “#Israel is not an #Apartheid state. Your apology for performing is the result of bullying and hate speech for the @WitsPSC and others. Don’t give in to those who hate! Stand strong with love and unity.”

SAUJS’ Katzew told the *SA Jewish Report* that SAUJS would meet the artist to discuss the matter.

Downgrade the ‘biggest issue to affect SA Jewry in modern times’

>>Continued from page 1

that on the one hand, the ANC is going to sever all and any relationships with Israel, and has no desire to play a conciliatory role in the Middle East conflict. On the other, the ANC wants Israeli and South African Jewish money, and Ramaphosa will flatter the community to deceive. The ANC is nothing if not pragmatic – Jews can contribute economically, but they have nothing to offer electorally.”

Darren Bergman, the Democratic Alliance (DA) Shadow Minister of International Relations, said South Africa was using international relations to canvas for elections.

“Israel and South Africa, in contradiction to the minister’s statement, enjoy major bilateral trade, and South Africa absorbs a lot of the technology emanating from Israel,” said Bergman. “To boycott Israel from a South African perspective would harm South Africa more than it would Israel.

Bergman said that while the DA shared the concerns of the government about the attacks and deaths on both Israeli and Palestinian sides, it continued to push for “sincere attempts at finding peace in a diplomatic manner” as the best way to achieve resolution.

DA member of the national assembly, Michael Bagraim, who sits on the portfolio committee on labour told the *SA Jewish Report* that Sisulu was “trying her luck.”

“The minister is on a frolic of her own,” he said. “This is partly for political reasons. She is trying to hoodwink the Muslim community to get it to align itself with the ANC. I don’t think it’s a community that is easily hoodwinked.”

Krengel said he stood by Ramaphosa, and did not feel betrayed by the president.

“He has many balls in the air. He needs breathing space. He is literally trying to keep the lights on, and keep the ship afloat. We just hope our issue doesn’t go the wrong way.”

Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan said he was not in a position to comment. However, a response from Israel is expected soon.



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A refusenik’s harrowing journey to freedom

JORDAN MOSHE

When Marina Furman was 19 years old, the KGB arrived at her apartment, escorted her to a nearby park, and beat her to within an inch of her life. Her only crime was that she had asked to leave Russia for Israel.

Furman was a staunch opponent of the Soviet regime’s limitation of the right of Jews to emigrate. Hers was a harrowing journey that eventually brought her, her husband, and baby daughter to Israel. It was the fulfilment of a dream.

“I wanted to go to Israel from an early age,” says Furman, who was a guest of the Jewish Women’s Benevolent Society (JWBS). She shared her life story with a JWBS audience at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre last Thursday evening.

Born in Kiev in 1959, Furman was refused permission to leave Russia for Israel when she applied in 1978. She, her mother and grandfather became known as refuseniks. This was a term applied to Soviet Jews who were denied permission to emigrate by the Soviet authorities.

“No one knew how the authorities decided to let you leave or not. It was completely random and unpredictable. We thought we stood a chance – of what value were two women and an old man to the government? However, they refused us for no apparent reason, and I still don’t know why.”

Furman says that although she loved Russian literature and culture, she never felt connected to the country or its people. Life for Russians was difficult, but faced with the added prejudice and discrimination, Jews were particularly disadvantaged. This position was made far worse by attempting to leave and failing.

“Anyone who thought about leaving was considered a traitor,” says Furman. “If you were denied permission, you lost your job, your income, your few friends.

“Ninety percent of Jews who became refuseniks just accepted it, and tried to move on, constantly telling the 10% who wanted to protest not to make life even more difficult for them.”

Furman was relentless in her drive to take her family to Israel. Although world Jewry was lobbying tirelessly for the release of fellow Jews from Russia, the protest movement was not something refuseniks could easily take part in behind the Iron Curtain. Furman embarked on a solitary protest, coming to the attention of the KGB and law enforcement with whom she had frequent run-ins.

“I had no access to the Jewish lobby fighting for us to leave,” she says. “I was on my own. The KGB would beat me, and often threatened to rape and kill me. They kept suggesting that I make an official apology, to say that I was young and stupid. Other Jews told me to be quiet, to avoid drawing attention. Still, I kept at it.”

After months of protesting, Furman and her mother realised that if they remained in Kiev, the KGB would soon silence them for good. They left Kiev to settle in a more liberal region of Russia. This enabled Furman to finally connect with the liberation movement in the early 1980s. While living in Leningrad in 1986, she met Lev Furman, an underground Hebrew teacher and fellow refusenik. Within three days of meeting, Lev proposed, and they were engaged four days later.

“Lev was very involved in the [Hebrew] *ulpan*

at the time,” says Furman. “He was a zealot of the refusenik movement, willing to pay any price for the freedom of his family and that of his people. His anti-government behaviour made him hated by the KGB, and he was soon arrested for his activity. Because only a first-degree relative could appeal a prisoner’s case, he asked me to marry him so that I could keep pressure on the government to release him. I agreed, and we married. We fell in love only later on, but we established a connection very quickly.”

The months which followed were tumultuous. When the KGB learned that Furman was pregnant, a KGB officer told her that they would make sure that neither she nor the child would survive delivery if she and her husband

continued to protest. “They said that I just had to apologise, and we’d be safe. I refused, and so when I went into hospital to give birth, they made sure I was as isolated as possible and therefore an easy target.

“The doctors overdosed me with sedatives, and I was close to cardiac arrest. Thanks to one good doctor who stopped them, I survived, and was able to give birth to my daughter, Aliyah.”

Even after the birth of her daughter, the authorities continued to threaten her life, and remained adamant that they could not leave the Soviet Union. Finally, on Israel’s 40th birthday, 15 May 1988, Furman, her husband, 13-month-old daughter, mother, and father-in-law were granted permission, and left the Soviet Union for Israel. “We landed in a Tel-Aviv which was celebrating Israel’s day of independence,” says Furman. “There were fireworks all around us, and Lev’s father said that they were in celebration of our arrival.”

After initially living at an absorption centre in Mevasseret Zion, the family was adopted by Ra’anana as part of a new absorption programme. Although life was far from easy, Furman says she felt at home in the Jewish state. Armed with very simple Hebrew, she worked to help new immigrants settle in Israel. She also travelled extensively to raise money to aid their absorption.

In 1998, she was offered the role of *shlichah* (Israel emissary) at the Jewish National Fund (JNF) in the United States, to which she, her husband and two daughters relocated for a four-year term.

Furman was offered the option of continuing to work at the JNF, and she and her family decided to remain in the US, where they still live. Today executive director of the JNF in Philadelphia, Furman visits Russia and Israel often, and considers herself a fortunate wife, mother, and grandmother.

“I’m safe, free, and blessed,” she says. “Life is my gift, and it cannot be taken for granted. While I recognise the cruelty I suffered, I don’t think there’s anything to gain from being a victim.”

She says her journey has taught her that as Jews, we must recognise our achievements. “The refuseniks defeated one of the cruellest systems in the world,” she says. “We freed 1.5 million people. The Jewish people have done unbelievable things, and we need to stop for a moment at times, pinch ourselves, and appreciate what we have done in a very short space of time.

“We are strong, and we can only get stronger. We believed we’d triumph over the Soviets, and we did it. If we believe we can triumph over anti-Semitism, we can do that, too.”



Marina Furman



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The purple cow in South African politics

PETA KROST MAUNDER

What do you do when events take place that make you realise there isn't a political party that you want to vote for?

Well, if you are Kanthan Pillay, you start your own party so that those who feel the same way, can put their tick next to the purple cow (the ZACP logo).

Pillay – a media business expert – launched the ZACP, the Capitalist Party of South Africa, in March, and is going all out to get 10 MPs into the next national assembly. None of them are politicians. Mostly, they are out-of-the box, technology-sussed business people, and like him, they are sick of the way politics works in South Africa.

For Pillay, when protesters flung faeces on the statue of Rhodes on the campus of the University of Cape Town, almost coinciding with the

55th anniversary of Sharpeville in 2015, something was triggered in him. "I kept asking myself how we got here from the rainbow nation," he says.

Then, in March 2018, when a five-year-old girl drowned inside a pit latrine at a school in the Eastern Cape, Pillay saw the "abject failure of the nation" in the horrific death of this bright, hopeful child.

The last straw was in June last year, when the leader of the Democratic Alliance, Mmusi Maimane, used his own wife as an example of white privilege. "I immediately registered the domain for a party, and put up a dummy website," says Pillay.

"I want to live in a country that works, and I cannot leave that to politicians."

Instead of doing what he sees other parties do, which is mostly to promise job creation, Pillay wants his party to be based on principles not outcomes.

And, even if his party only gets one

person into parliament, he says, it is amazing what one person can do.

"You only have to recall how effective Helen Suzman was as the lone voice of reason for 13 years in parliament. She singlehandedly created change, and kept the world informed.

"If I get 10 competent people into parliament, we can do much more as that is where most of the work is done... and where most of the crookery has happened."

Pillay – whose daughter is Jewish by virtue of the fact that his ex-wife is Jewish – is well acquainted with the Jewish community. "My life has coincidentally been intertwined with Jewish people on a constant basis. I guess we understand each other. Both Hindu [his religious background] and Jewish communities have an emphasis on education and family."

Pillay, who was integral to the launch of eTV (or eNCA today) and YFM, was asked by Johnny Copelyn to help guide the launch of ChaiFM,

and even did Chai's first promos.

The Capitalist Party calls its members "co-conspirators", and they do things in a disruptive, innovative, and audacious manner. But, at the end of the day, says Pillay, "I am going to ensure that people no longer misspend our money. It is for purely selfish reasons – I want a better country."

Pillay spent R200 000 from his own pocket to contest the elections, and sought out the right nine other people as potential MPs who fitted with his belief system. "We are treating our country like a startup. When you begin any business, you



have to put equity in it," he says. "If we get a single seat, we get our money back."

He first approached Roman Cabanac, whom he met when he was his guest on *The Renegade Report*, a podcast that discusses politics, global affairs, and political ideology.

The second candidate was Neo Kuaho, a successful serial entrepreneur and the founder of YDIDI (Youth Development through Investigation and Dissemination of Information). "When I started YFM, Neo asked me to put his information about scholarships and internships out on air. I gave him an early morning Saturday slot, and he has really helped people."

DA leader woos the Jews

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Mmusi Maimane called for a reform of South Africa's foreign policy, particularly in regard to Israel and the wider Middle East conflict.

Maimane told community members at the Sandton Shul on 7 April that it was "unthinkable" that South Africa had removed its ambassador from Israel and was downgrading its embassy in the country to a liaison office. This, he said, was not the way to contribute towards a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine, which was what the DA believes is the way forward.

He pinpointed South Africa's "new friends", such as Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, and Sudanese

colonial rule and African national liberation from apartheid. He insisted that to continue on this path simply wasn't good enough. "We need to break the cycles of national liberation towards a country of individuals fighting for their rights," Maimane said, calling for political reform and "an end to the politics of populism and division".

"After race division comes religious division," Maimane said, "after that comes tribal, cultural and language division. When your rights are taken away, my rights are removed. So long as you have a green passport and so long as G-d has given me air, I will continue to fight for your rights as citizens and as Jews."

The DA's policy of "one SA for all" goes against that tide, according to Maimane. He pointed to "giants" of

things. "Change is tough, but it's better than a criminal syndicate running the country."

Maimane also called for economic reform, pointing out that four out of every 10 adults are unemployed, and South Africa has the highest percentage of youth unemployment in the world. "We can't live with an economy that leaves out so many," he said.

"I am animated by the dream of putting a job in every home," he said, pointing to his own modest background. His father was a factory worker and his mother, a cashier, was frequently unemployed. Growing up, income was insecure.

Key to reforming the economy is the need to move away from the "dogma of state-owned enterprises". Maimane questioned the need for South African Airways, or Eskom in its current form.



President Omar al-Bashir, saying this shows how our foreign policy is typical of liberation movements. These movements tend to be archaic and backward looking, and value historic ties rather than looking to the future.

South Africa's foreign policy should be based on human rights and trade, he said. It should be outward looking, and accept that countries all over the world have solutions which can help us with problems such as business creation and water management.

The theme of moving away from a liberation-era, dominant-party, "centrist" mentality to a coalition government that fosters individuality, enterprise, and progress was threaded throughout Maimane's speech.

He hit out at the African National Congress (ANC's) "racially aligned voting" and the party's "need to keep convincing people that they need to be liberated".

He said that South Africa had experienced many liberation cycles, including Afrikaner liberation from

the past such as Helen Suzman, who for many years stood as a lone voice against apartheid, and proudly fought for people who did not look and sound like her.

He also praised the wider Jewish community for its "immense contribution" to the country's enterprise development and charitable ventures, saying that the "DA needs to partner with people like [Discovery founder and Chief Executive] Adrian Gore".

Maimane called for voters to undermine the ANC's majority at the polls rather than support President Cyril Ramaphosa's "reform" programme.

He asked what "new dawn" existed in a party in which men like David Mabuza and Ace Magashule still ran the ANC, saying, "If we reward the current party, we are telling it that it is OK to steal from us."

Voting for the DA "would force the ANC into a coalition, and a non-racial, constitutional rule of law". This, he said, would result in a more capable state and the eradication of corruption, among other

"Keeping the lights on" is an election platform of the DA. The party is pushing for the diversification of power supply to independent power producers, and the ability for municipalities to source energy directly from such producers. It's an approach that puts cities, not the state, at the centre of enterprise, tourism, and revenue generation.

"The state doesn't need to be at the centre of development. We need to allow our cities to play at the centre," he said. "Our cities are beautiful, and attract tourists. We need electronic visas and less cumbersome regulation. We need tax cuts for manufacturers and exporters, and a fund for enterprise development."

On this theme, Maimane turned to Johannesburg and Tshwane, cities in which the DA recently came to power. He berated the corruption and infrastructure backlogs the party had inherited from years of ANC government.

"I'm a resident of Johannesburg," he said. "I know about the lights. Johannesburg inherited an infrastructure deficit of R170 billion, and has been able to stop R18 billion-worth of corruption. More than 90% of its bridges are unsafe to drive on. It will take 17 years to catch up."

He described the suburb of Alexandra as facing an infrastructure backlog of more than 20 years, a situation that "can't be fixed instantly". Tshwane, which was R2 billion in the red, now has a budget surplus.

Though it was "a long walk, we will get there," Maimane said, calling for stronger police and intelligence and a provincial, not national-level police force to deal with crime.

In conclusion, Maimane called on the community to do two things: first, keep contributing to the country, help to get it going, and don't lose hope and emigrate. Second, Jewish South Africans should vote – preferably for the DA and its vision for a non-racial future, where their rights will be protected.

His search for the right people for the party took him around the country. This belief in taking things one step at time plays out in how he plans to fix the country.

"We are going to use the 'eating the elephant' strategy. One mouthful at a time," he says. There are 10 plans based on research by the Institute of Race Relations into what South Africans' priorities are.

"Did you know that while the first priority is unemployment, the second is drug abuse. Nobody talks about the latter. However, they are always going on about racism and land reform, which amounts to less than 2% of people's priorities," he says.

"As a nation, we are a caring people. I travel extensively, and I see that our race relations are far better than anywhere. After our history, we actually go out of our way to avoid a resurgence of racial hatred."

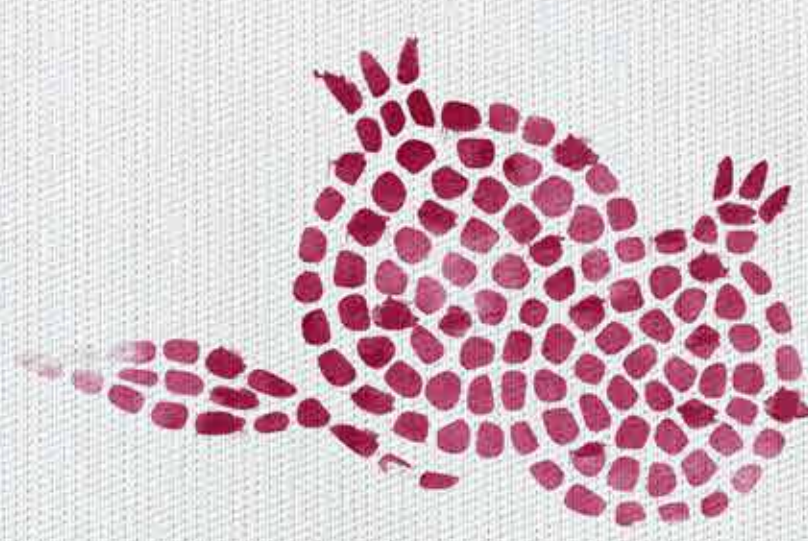

As the things on their list get sorted out, they will fall off the list so that they can focus on the next item. It is all very practical. In terms of drugs, instead of jailing drug abusers, they will send them to rehabilitation, treating them as patients rather than criminals, focusing on getting the dealers behind bars, not the addicts.

As for the issues close to many Jewish people's hearts – Israel and anti-Semitism – Pillay believes we shouldn't conflate the issues.

"Freedom of religion and association are and must be sacrosanct. It is the right of every individual," he says. He speaks of how anti-Semitism so often begins in a belief of unearned reward, or an offhand comment that fuels hatred. "It is unacceptable."

As for South Africa's relationship with Israel, "it has to be based on enlightened self-interest. If the best source of oil is Iran, then we should buy from Iran, and if the best source of agritech is Israel, then we buy from Israel," he says. "The Cape Town drought could have been alleviated if we had allowed Israel to help with desalination. It is absurd how we go about putting this veneer of sanctimoniousness on what we do."

Time will tell how the party does in the upcoming elections.



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ChevrahKadisha

Behold the burning bush

GUS SILBER

It’s a crop that has been a feature of Jewish life and culture since Biblical times, but are attitudes towards the now-legal use of marijuana shifting in South African circles? It’s Shabbat dinner, and between the lighting of the candles and the clearing of the plates the conversation turns, as it often does, to matters of Biblical interpretation. Specifically, that incident of the burning bush in the Book of Exodus. Remember? Moses gazes into the flames, and in a blinding glow of heavenly light he sees a vision of his calling: to go forth and liberate a people. So, it is written, and so, unto the generations, has it been understood. But tonight, the young tech entrepreneur at the table – let’s call him Dov – is making a case for a different take on the age-old tale. What if the bush wasn’t just a random bed of mountain bramble, he suggests. What if it was a special plant, a sacramental plant, a plant whose

essence holds the power to heal, to soothe, to anoint, to open the mind and enlighten? He presses a thumb and forefinger to his lips and mimes the act of inhaling. What if Moses was actually a bit of a stoner? Once, not too long ago, to even raise such a proposition in a traditional Jewish household might have been to incite shock, scandal, perhaps even outrage. Now, in his home community of Sea Point, Dov is finding that, Shabbat after Shabbat, the topic is high on the agenda of casual discussion and people are only too happy to venture an opinion on the benefits, or otherwise, of the recreational use of marijuana. Dov has been a regular user for 15 years, since his early 20s, and even if his early experiences were furtive and clumsy – he recalls dropping a joint in a jacuzzi when a friend’s mother barged in to investigate that tell-tale sweet smell – he feels now as if a weight has been lifted from his shoulders. “There is still a bit of a fear that

people may be judgemental if they find out that you smoke weed,” he says, “but for me, the big meaning of the change is that I feel less stigmatised.” The change, of course, is the recent Constitutional Court judgement, based on the

right-to-privacy provision, that it should no longer be a criminal offence for an adult individual to grow, cultivate, possess and use marijuana in private. The judgement has yet to be ratified in South African law, or put to the test to determine precisely where the line should be drawn between private and public. But for even the most moderate occasional user, gone are the days of worrying about winding up in a holding cell, as happened, when he was still a teen, to a Johannesburg creative-agency owner who we’ll call Marcus. “That got me into trouble with my parents,” he says. But it didn’t stop him from smoking. He’s 38 now, with an easy-going nature that belies the stresses and intensity of his job.

Lighting up in Israel: a South African’s trip

GUY LIEBERMAN

Considering the proliferation of the marijuana plant in our country of birth, it is no surprise that South African entrepreneurs are involved in medical cannabis in Israel. South African-born Saul Kaye is the founder of CannaTech, a series of global cannabis conferences that bring industry players together to gather knowledge and nurture this blossoming ecosystem. Kaye is an entrepreneur and a chemist with a small, bustling pharmacy in Beit Shemesh. “This is not actually a new industry for Israel,” Kaye says. “It started as legitimate research way back in the early 60s with Professor Raphael Mechoulam’s request to the police to secure permission to explore the medicinal properties of the plant.” The 89-year-old Israel Prize-winner is an organic chemist, considered the bona-fide godfather of medical cannabis. “Now, medical cannabis is booming around the globe, and the attention is returning to Israel because we’ve been doing it for such a long time,” Kaye says.

stronger psychoactives like LCD, mushrooms, and MDMA, grass was celebrated as a key to liberation from the industrialised, capitalist system. “For some reason, over the past 100 years, being happy, high, or drunk, has been associated with badness,” Kaye says. “Cannabis has been part of our diet for thousands of years, as was beer, as was olive oil. Those ingredients – hops, olive, and hemp, all contain cannabinoids, and these are healthy for you. They are part of our DNA, and should never have been taken from our diet.” So, how have the Israelis navigated the counter-cultural emphasis on the psychoactive experience? “One of the things Israel did well with its medical programmes was that it wasn’t about the high. There are different cannabinoids found in the plant, with THC being the psychoactive component and CBD being the element that doesn’t get you stoned. Both have proven medicinal value, but the quotients of either depend on the needs of the patient. Currently we’re focused on CBD, but next will be CBG, CBC, CBN... there are 300 molecules in the plant, each with their own medical uses, and we’ve identified 140 of them! That’s wellness, that’s cosmetics, pain creams, and salves, entirely new categories are going to be created.” As the CannaTech brand has grown, so has Kaye’s influence. This year, he lead a delegation to the exclusive World Economic Forum for the first-ever CannaTech Davos. To give a sense of the altitude of people now getting involved in the sector, Ehud Barak travelled with him as one of the major sponsors of the Davos delegation. Along with molecular research into cannabis is an equally meticulous set of technological advancements in hardware design. To learn more, I met angel investor Brian Cooper from Syqe Medical, also a former South African. “Marijuana? No thanks! That was the gateway drug to a world of addiction,” he says. “I never touched the stuff!” Cooper remained emphatic about this view of cannabis for most of his life, until he met Perry Davidson, his daughter’s

boyfriend at the time. Perry showed Cooper the first iteration of what is now Syqe Medical’s impressive world-first: a selective-dose, highly personalised, pharmaceutical grade inhaler. As our straight-laced businessman who’s never smoked a joint in his life explains it, “The best way for cannabis to enter the body is through the lungs.” This may seem obvious to almost anyone, but he clarifies. “Don’t misunderstand, any kind of smoke is terrible for the lungs, but what we’re doing is vaporising the raw plant. While medical marijuana joints are working on quantums of 30g, we’re providing the essential THC or CBD requirements using as little as 3g.” It’s now becoming clear that the medical cannabis industry is a game-changer globally. Considering that Syqe Medical just raised \$50 million (R703 million) in Series B finance for an inhaler, with an agreement with Teva Pharmaceuticals to take it to market, one gets the sense that cannabis is now entering the mainstream. We may as well take a deep breath, and settle in for the ride.

The weed helps him cope, but he never lights up in the workplace – only at home, and only after dark. His habit may now be legally acceptable, but that strain of discretion lingers, although he disputes the common assertion that smoking marijuana makes you paranoid. “The paranoia comes from the fear that you’re doing something illegal,” he says, “so that doesn’t apply anymore.” For Dov, whose field of work is driven by change, innovation and out-of-the-box thinking, there can be no doubt that marijuana helps to stir up the creative juices. But there is an important caveat. “I get a fire hose of ideas when I smoke,” he says, “but very often I’ll review those ideas later, and some of them will make no sense to me.” A bigger benefit, he believes, is that a little marijuana helps him to see his challenges and problems in a whole new light. “My favourite saying,” says Dov, “is that you can’t see the label from inside the bottle. You’ve got to be able to shift your perspective.” Which brings us to the big question, from a Jewish point of view: Is the label kosher? Marcus believes that it is. “I’ve heard that weed is kosher for Pesach, even,” he says. The official view is a bit more, well, nuanced. In a famous ruling in 1973, when asked to respond to a group of Israeli yeshiva students who wanted to use hashish, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein decreed, in short: no. The rabbi’s chief concern was that illegal drug use could lead to a precipitous moral decline, but he worried also that young people would be encouraged to defy parental wishes, and contravene the injunction in Leviticus that calls on us not to indulge excessively in bodily pleasures. By 2013, however, new research and attitudes were beginning to prevail, leading Rabbi Efraim Zalmanovich to declare that cannabis was kosher, albeit for medicinal rather than recreational purposes. Around the Shabbat table, Marcus has identified three common attitudes towards marijuana, in the light of its legalisation. There are those, typically older and more traditional, who are staunchly opposed to it; there are those who are curious and intrigued and would like to give it a try sometime; and there are those, the majority, who don’t and won’t smoke, but are non-judgemental and tolerant. But the choice is yours. Whether that burning bush is a clump of bramble, or a crop of the variety that people have been growing, cultivating and using since Biblical days, you’re free, in private, to make that informed decision on your own.



Saul Kaye, Anthony Scaramucci and Ehud Barak

“A few years ago, there were two approaches to promoting cannabis. One was the Green Party, which was about ‘freeing’ the plant, everyone having the right to do whatever they want. That argument didn’t work. The other approach which was taking place simultaneously was medical inquiry [into cannabis], and a focus on research. There was no hubbub, no buzz around it, but it was credible. Effectively, we took the conversation with the Green Party, and shone a light towards medical research and all that this new industry would bring – sustainability, job creation, tax revenue. That’s a different language, one that many people could understand.” This distinctive Israeli approach of taking a concept or idea and developing it into a new trade, with all that revolves around it – research, innovation, strategy, investment, marketing, and distribution – is by now a scenario we’ve become accustomed to. What’s unique in this particular case, however, is the baggage cannabis brings with it – the negative perception of the plant in the mainstream. Mary Jane was the poster drug for the hippie movement, with the promise that it would help free one from the shackles of one’s desk and the control so tightly held by “The Man”. Along with

• A longer version of this article was first commissioned and published in Telfed magazine.

Friedman brooch is queen’s jewellery

TALI FEINBERG

Twelve years ago, South African jeweller Kevin Friedman was asked by the Botswana government to make a brooch for a statesman. He was never told who the person was, and he was not allowed to share any details of what he had made. He thought about that brooch over the years, but could never have imagined who it was really given to.

“I often wonder about several of my creations, and if they are bringing joy, which is the only reason for existing,” he says. So, when he saw Her Majesty, the Queen of England wearing an attractive, unusual brooch a few weeks ago, it piqued his interest.

Describing the moment, he says, “I thought, ‘That’s pretty! It’s not something that she usually wears; that looks like something I would make. Hold on, it has my signature line... no I’m just imagining it, move on.’ So I started reading the article, and I was like, ‘Yikes, that’s mine!’”

Friedman was in such shock, he put it out on his personal Instagram and Facebook pages, which are only available to friends. “But before I knew it, my friends were all so excited to share my joy!” Since then, he has been interviewed by multiple media outlets clamouring to share this good-news story.

So how did Friedman get to this point? “I am a seventh-generation jeweller, and was inspired by my father and grandfather,” he explains. “I did my apprenticeship in their factory, and I studied the history of jewellery at Sotheby’s Institute of Art in London. I continued my education by both attending and lecturing at international jewellery conferences.”

At the time of making the queen’s brooch, Friedman “had just completed a high profile commission of setting the Ponahalo diamond with an essential African flavour, so I was approached to take on the commission of designing a brooch representing Botswana”.

The process of making such a piece includes the initial concept, translating it into a drawing and interpreting the sketch into a three dimensional sculpture, and then making the individual frame for each of the stones.

“Brooches are one of my favourite jewellery items, so I dived straight in,” he recalls. “The national products of Botswana are cattle, millet, and diamonds. I thought it through, and just drew a ripe grain head on its leaves. I used recycled gold, and the diamonds were all custom cut to fit the drawing in exact proportions. The design process took a few days, but then I was given three weeks to manufacture the piece once it was approved.”

Friedman says this is a “dream-come-true moment” because “Her Majesty the Queen wears jewellery extremely well, and it’s one of those unattainable goals to see her wearing one of my treasures. Each and every person that wears my treasures with pride and joy is my dream. So the smile when I unveil a new creation that was individually designed for a client is really my motivation!”

Friedman says the value of the piece comes from its provenance. “The reality is that provenance really is the true value of a piece of jewellery. The history of this piece as a presentation from the heart of Botswana to the queen and her family would increase the value of the item more than 100 to 300 times.”

Other clients of his include Jerry Hall, Joan Collins, and Charlize Theron, and he has collaborated with people like Carolyn Steyn, a Zulu queen, and Elana Afrika.

He says his Jewish identity has definitely influenced his life. “Growing up in a traditional orthodox environment filled with unique rituals and ceremonies, one can’t deny the underlying influence in everything I do, the same way that living in Africa has a strong resonance in my creations.”

To young people wanting to get into this field, he says, “Creating a piece of jewellery from original design to completion is a hugely satisfying process and a jeweller’s sole purpose is to give pleasure to the wearer and the viewer. There are so many entrance opportunities in this field. Working in a retail store and having the opportunity to handle precious items daily, or going to a jewellery school or college to get a technical training gives a great foundation.”

Friedman says that the field is constantly changing, with discoveries of new gemstones



Kevin Friedman

or new uses for old gemstones.

“With the international increase in crime, a whole new category of ‘safe Johannesburg jewellery’ has emerged, which opens opportunities for design.”

He is grateful for the support of the South African Jewish community, “both in encouragement and exceptional special commissions, like the amazing opportunity to create three sets of uniquely South African beaded Klei Torah for Temple Israel in Hillbrow”.



Queen Elizabeth wearing the brooch

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The ups and downs of shopping for Pesachdik food

JORDAN MOSHE

With Pesach starting next week, the Johannesburg Jewish community is stocking up on Pesachdik goods, though the large variation in prices makes it worth shopping around. Every store with a regular Jewish clientele has Pesach items in stock, and designated aisles are filled with kosher le pesach products, featuring everything from matzah to flavoured coffee creamer.



However, the range of prices and products this year definitely make it worth considering where you buy what. The *SA Jewish Report* took note of essential items only in comparing offerings at prominent kosher retailers KosherWorld, Norwood Pick n Pay, Sandringham Spar, and Checkers Balfour Park. It is interesting to note that few stores carry the same brand of products like matzah and grape juice. Rakusen’s, Aviv, and Jerusalem brand matzot seem to appear almost exclusively at certain stores. And, although Mosmarks matzah can be found at KosherWorld, Checkers and Spar, the prices vary considerably.

This exclusivity appears to hold true for other products as well. Where some of the stores feature a sizable selection of products, others seem to have reduced their Pesach offering this year. Take sauces for example. Checkers seems to have opted not to stock any, while the once standard Glen’s Awesome dressing can be found at Pick n Pay and Spar only. New on the Pesach scene are imported Haddar Italian dressing and local Bon Appetit vinaigrette, and while the former seems to carry a standard price, the latter is considerably cheaper at Pick n Pay.

The range of brands seems to apply to products like dried mango as well, with no retailer carrying the same brand as any other. Where KosherWorld stocks Montagu at R39.99 for 100g, only 50g more will cost you almost R70 at Pick n Pay for the Selwyn Segal produce. Then, you have the brand stocked by Spar costing R59.99 for 250g, making the bulk purchase more cost effective.

On the whole, Pick n Pay appears to undercut the prices of its competition quite significantly. Where Osem chicken soup costs almost R100 at both Spar and KosherWorld, the comparatively appealing price of R73.99 at Pick n Pay makes a significant difference to those with more limited budgets. The same is true for a luxury item like a bottle of wine, which is a full R27 less at Pick n Pay. The retailer also seems to be the only large store to carry bottled horseradish this year.

Still, when it comes to selection and the convenience of doing your shopping in a single store, it still seems to pay to visit KosherWorld for most products. Its variety of imported items is significant, and there are four brands of a staple product like matzah-ball mix – Osem, Manischewitz, Jerusalem, and Telma. Some previously unseen items, such as Nu Tree’s flavoured waters, also make a visit worthwhile.

• *All prices and stock were recorded on the same day, and correct at the time of going to print.*

PRODUCT	SS	PNP H	KW	CBP
MATZAH Rakusen's	-	R29.99	-	-
MATZAH Mosmarks	R28.99	-	R36.99	R42.99
MATZAH Jerusalem	-	-	R28.99	-
EGG MATZAH Aviv	-	R103.99	-	R89.99
EGG MATZAH Mosmarks	R86.99	-	R78.99	-
GRAPE JUICE Rashi	R85.99	-	-	-
GRAPE JUICE Kedem	R89.99	-	-	-
GRAPE JUICE Farbrenge	-	R60.99	-	R79.99
WINE Unorthodox	-	R85.00	R101.99	-
SOUP Osem	R89.99	R73.99	R95.99	-
STOCK CUBES Telma	-	R11.99	R14.99	-
SOUP MIX Manischewitz Matzah and Soup Mix	-	R52.99	R57.59	-
SOUP MIX Jerusalem Matzah Ball Mix	R54.99	-	R31.99	-
TOMATO SAUCE Glen's	R64.99	R58.99	-	-
SALAD DRESSING Glen's French	-	R45.99	-	-
SALAD DRESSING Bon Appetit Vinaigrette	R48.99	R40.99	R48.99	-
SALAD DRESSING Haddar Italian	R72.99	R71.99	R71.99	-
CHRAIN Selwyn Segal	-	R54.99	-	-
KICHEL Selwyn Segal	R74.99	R57.99	R76.99	-
SUPERMARKET KEY: SS: Spar Sandringham PNP H: Pick n Pay Hypermarket Norwood KW: KosherWorld CBP: Checkers Balfour Park				

A tribute to the ‘Queen of Cleveland’

TALI FEINBERG

Rebbetzin Shula Shifra Kazen was born in Stalinist Russia to a poor Jewish family that lived hand to mouth on the freezing streets, clinging to their yiddishkeit in any way they could.

It is a world away from sunny South Africa, where her daughter would eventually settle, bringing the elder woman’s legacy of service, fortitude, and family to the Jewish community of this country.

Kazen passed away last week in New York at the age of 96. “The shiva was attended by thousands of people, some of whom flew in simply to pay their respects,” says her son in law, Rabbi Yossy Goldman of Sydenham Shul in Johannesburg.

Known as “the Queen of Cleveland”, the rebbetzin’s life reads like the history of the Jews in the 20th century, and ends with a dynasty that stretches to every continent. With more than 500 descendants, that story has even reached us in South Africa. Kazen’s daughter, Rebbetzin Rochel Goldman and grandchildren Rabbi Nissen Goldman, Rebbetzin Sarah Feldman, Rebbetzin Zeesy Deren, and Choni Goldman (aka Choni G) all work in our Jewish communities in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

So, how did a story that started in Russia end here? Rebbetzen Kazen was born in Gomel, Belarus, then part of the newly-created Soviet Union. The eldest of seven children born to Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan and Maryasha (Garelik) Shagalov, her life began in difficult circumstances. Russia had been devastated by the terrible civil war that birthed the Bolshevik revolution, and thousands were dying of starvation, according to *Chabad.org* (the website that would eventually be started by her late son, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Kazen).

“She had a very tough childhood in Russia, and it steeled her for life”, says Rabbi Yossy Goldman. Her father was arrested for practicing Judaism illegally and for being a mohel. He was killed, although his fate was unknown to his family for decades. “As the oldest child, she became like a mother to her siblings at age 12,” he says.

Terrible times followed, including going into hiding and working in factories in Moscow. Shortly after she turned 18, Kazen was introduced to her future husband, Zalman Katzenelenbogen (later shortened to Kazen).

The couple got married in an illegal Jewish wedding, and they

settled in Leningrad. They fled in 1941, and eventually landed up in France. “Some of their children were born in Russia, and some in France,” says Rebbetzin Goldman, one of their six daughters. Four months after she was born, the family headed to America.

With the assistance of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, they arrived in New York, where they hoped to settle near the Rebbe. But he asked them to go to Cleveland, Ohio, where there was no Chabad Jewish community to speak of. They had their work cut out for them, and they gladly accepted.



It was here that Kazen would thrive in her role in building the Jewish community from the ground up. “She would make everyone part of her family,” remembers her daughter, recalling how they would host Russian immigrant families in their home for months at a time.

“She changed the direction of people’s lives. For example, she met a young man on a bus who was going to India to ‘find himself’. She convinced him rather to go to yeshiva, and he is now the head of a large frum family. She changed the course of

his life,” says her daughter.

Kazen also had a deep love of Israel, and raised funds for a vocational school and the Barmitzvahs of orphan boys there.

She would go on to assist, house, and feed thousands of Russian Jewish immigrants in Cleveland. She ensured their children went to Jewish schools, ran a food bank, helped the elderly get to shul, and made sure everything was kosher.

She even became an expert in arranging brit milah for boys and men of all ages who had never been brissed in Russia. “She would go in her white coat to Mount Sinai hospital, working with doctors to ensure a bris was done correctly. In all, she arranged about 500 of these brisses,” says her daughter.

On top of this, she was the mother of seven children. They all went on to serve as Chabad shlichim around the world. “My mother was so happy when we came to South Africa, even though everyone was leaving when we got here in 1976. It was not easy, but the Rebbe told us that everything would be fine here. Now this community is the envy of the world,” says Rebbetzin Goldman.

The tenacity and commitment she inherited from her mother has certainly become part of the Chabad community in South Africa.

But there was also tragedy. Kazen’s eldest and youngest children passed away in their primes. Her daughter, Esther Alpern, changed the face of Jewry in Brazil; while her son, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Kazen, was a pioneer of Judaism on the internet, and the founder of *Chabad.org*.

“When her husband Zalman passed away about eight years ago, the local newspaper called him ‘Cleveland’s kindest man,’” says Rabbi Goldman. He describes his mother-in-law as “a legend, with a total commitment to Judaism, come what may. She really created a dynasty.”

Kazen is survived by her sisters, Rosa Marosov and Rochel Levin, both of Brooklyn and her children, Devorah Alevsky, Cleveland; Henya Laine, Brooklyn; Blumah Wineberg, Kansas City; Rivka Kotlarsky, Brooklyn; Rochel Goldman, Johannesburg; and hundreds of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren across the world.

“She now continues on her soul journey,” says Rebbetzin Goldman. “But her legacy will continue. Just this week, someone who she helped many years ago named their new daughter after her.”

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Chunky
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each



Nescafé
Classic
Kosher Coffee
(excl. Decaf)
200 g

59⁹⁹



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Sugar, 2.5kg

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Guava, Mango, Pineapple
Papaya, Peach or Pear
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Israeli cancer patients have the time of their lives in South Africa

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Alavish breakfast fit for a king in the warmth of a magnificent Glenhazel home. A band of rumbling Harley Davidsons parked outside. Music and joy. And a bus of 20 Israeli boys between the ages of six and 21, all suffering from cancer, descending on it all.

The event was just one example of the unbelievable hospitality enjoyed by kids on the annual Chaiyanu Hope Tour to South Africa. Involving an 11-day trip to South Africa, the tour is packed with once-in-a-lifetime experiences and the chance for young Israelis to connect with the South African Jewish community.

Volunteer families here host some of the kids for Shabbat, and cater for lively breakfasts and dinners. “Every meal is a party. We’ve had drum circles, laser tag, and now motorbikes,” says Elad Maimon, the chief executive of Chaiyanu. “This is the best trip because of the people here. The Jewish community in South Africa is the most amazing Jewish community in the world, there’s no question about it.”

Currently in its ninth year, the Chaiyanu Hope Tour runs separate trips for boys and girls on alternate years. It’s just one programme Israeli organisation Chaiyanu offers as part of its daily initiatives to support kids facing cancer.

“The doctors always say that when the kids come back from these trips, everything’s changed,” says Maimon. “They have a reason to carry on with life, and they fight harder. It affects everything for them.”

The boys on the Hope Tour this year have

been to Cape Town, sailed on yachts, travelled up Table Mountain, and travelled in sports cars before coming to Johannesburg. “Someone even gave R2 500 to each boy to go shopping,” says Maimon, “they went crazy!” The *SA Jewish Report* waved the boys off as they left for their last stop on the tour – Zebula Game Lodge.

South African Liran Assness, who together with his wife Tamara hosted the Harley Davidson breakfast, described how he got involved in Chaiyanu. “A few years ago, when the Chaiyanu group spent a Shabbat at our shul, we hosted a few kids. One boy stayed at us for Shabbat, and we formed a bond.”

Visibly emotional, Assness spoke of how the boy passed away last year. “He taught me about strength, and to really appreciate what you’ve got. He was so positive. So, every year, we do something for Chaiyanu. We have a connection with it. It’s so important to have something like this, which brings joy to kids’ lives.”

Ronnie and Alan Kaplan, the directors of

Chaiyanu South Africa, explain how important organisations like Chaiyanu are.

“The Hope Tour helps the children get their mind off their illness,” says Alan. “Coming to South Africa and enjoying all the amazing things the people put out for them changes their perception of their world.”

“I’ve also spoken to the doctors, and they understand that if you take them out of their daily environment for ten days, it can change everything. From a hospital bed to this! Nothing can beat it,” says Ronnie.

Speaking to some of the boys, it becomes clear just how beneficial the Hope Tour is. A 21-year-old boy, who prefers not to be named, expresses how excited he is to be on the trip.

“I almost couldn’t come as my doctors wouldn’t allow me, but on the last day, they gave me the go ahead. It was amazing. This trip has given me power, energy, and hope.

“The only thing I knew about South Africa before I came was the Soccer World Cup, and it’s

just been amazing – the community, the place, and the experiences.”

For 15-year-old Ne’orai from Tzfat, riding a jet ski on the Vaal River was a definite highlight. “Everyone being together, and the community here has made the trip so special,” he smiles. Asked what keeps him going through his illness, he simply says, “I know it’s all from Hashem.”

Chaim, a 21-year-old suffering from bowel lymphoma, says the trip has had a massive impact on him. “I can’t explain how this tour has helped me, it’s something very special,” he says. “It’s my first trip overseas. After all the treatment and the hospitals, and being in that depressing place, to suddenly go out and enjoy life and see that my body can work as it’s supposed to has helped so much. And all the amazing, good people here have helped too.”

Chaim’s not just battling an illness, he’s also moved away from his parents and the Haredi community in which he grew up. “In South Africa, the people are Haredi too and, in the beginning, I was worried because I didn’t know how it would be,” he says. “I have to say though that they’ve all been such good people. In Israel there aren’t communities like this. Everyone here just accepts you for who you are, they open their homes and their hearts. They welcome you in, and make you feel like you’re worth something.

“Being with kids going through the same thing as I am is great,” says 12-year-old Gilad. “They understand you like others can’t [understand you]. I’ve made good friends here, and we’ll keep in touch. When I get home, I’m going to be happier. It’s definitely going to help me.”



Photo: Yossi Rozenboim

Eliyahu Shmueli at the Lion Park

Appreciate each step towards the ballot box

It’s Tuesday, 9 April 2019, and as I write this, Israelis are casting their vote. They have from 07:00 this morning until 22:00 this evening to do so. Already, my social media feeds are flooded with photos of families celebrating the right to choose the future direction of the country.

You will read this armed with more knowledge than me about the outcome, and yet for my purposes, the result hardly matters. What is of significance is that for the 21st time since 1948 (more accurately 1949), a free and fair election is taking place in Israel.

Many of us (myself included) were born after Israel’s declaration. We have no real understanding of what it means to live in a world without the presence of a Jewish state and all that it represents. My father remembers it well, and often describes a time that was lonely and frightening. This is no surprise, given the historical events and context of that period.

The run-up to any election is never pleasant. Honest people make promises that they have no intention of keeping, and every sentence uttered by an opponent is deconstructed to expose the cracks. Friends and colleagues stand on the opposite end of a fictitious spectrum. With all the noise and mudslinging, it’s easy to forget the essence of what it means to have the privilege of voting.

On my radio show this morning, I read a first-hand account of Rabbi Moshe Alpert, voter number 1, in 1949. He describes how they woke up early, donned their Shabbat clothes, and walked with reverence to the voting station. There was a mystical quality to his narrative, and I couldn’t

help but get drawn into the significance of the event.

It reminded me of the way in which South Africans describe 1994.

South Africa, too, is headed for an election, and will go to the polls next month. Although the countries are separated by the length of a continent, the parallels are significant. Both are young democracies, with South Africa enjoying only its sixth democratic election. Both countries have citizens who know and understand what it means to be disenfranchised, what it means to be vulnerable, and many will recall the first experience of voting as a nation.

South Africa, too, has a lot of noise ahead of us. The cacophony of accusations and blame, of promises and lies, will increase, before the country makes a decision about its future. There is no doubt that the next few weeks ahead of the May election will be filled with political antics and irresponsible behaviour. We are seeing it already, and the intensity will only increase. We can ask and hope for responsible electioneering, but the experience of almost every country in the world indicates that it will not be any different.

What is important is that we continue to remind ourselves what it means to be able to

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



have a say in the future of the country. It is vital to remind ourselves that the right to vote is not a given, and to remind ourselves about what it meant to live without the ability to be heard.

When it comes time for South Africans to cast their ballot, we need to take a leaf out of Rabbi Alpert’s book, don our clothes with religious reverence, and appreciate each step that we have taken, and each step that we will take towards the ballot box.

Cry the beloved SA Jewry

The African National Congress (ANC)-led government does not kowtow to Jewish interests nearly as much as South African governments once did, particularly in relation to Israel.

Jews remember nostalgically when former South African President Nelson Mandela visited Israel in 1999 after retiring as the first democratically elected president, and called out to Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris at his hotel in Jerusalem: “My rabbi is here, now I feel at home in Jerusalem!”

Could President Cyril Ramaphosa do the same? With his slim hold on power, it would be impossible in today’s anti-Israel climate among South Africa’s body politic. That is, even if he has a good relationship with the Jewish community and might otherwise be willing, other factions in the ANC, and more radical parties would immediately make political capital out of it to use against him.

Mandela was already out of office, but nevertheless had the clout to visit Israel, in spite of the politics. Jerusalem carries huge significance for Jews, particularly the Kotel. But to Muslims, Jewish control of it is anathema.

Nothing in politics is fixed forever, there are too many variables. In South Africa, minority groups such as the Jewish community, which once held major sway in government and elsewhere, are experiencing significant contractions in how they are perceived and treated. This is in spite of the fact

that Jews still wield economic influence through business and major corporates.

Growing Muslim interests are becoming more important to the South African government than they were before. As the shrinking South African Jewish community loses its influence and its confidence, it’s a painful reality for Jews to accept. However, they need to guard against too much pessimism.

It’s better to look this scenario straight in the eye, and re-format the community’s understanding of itself. It’s worthwhile to consider where the community’s strengths lie, and its new place in this evolving new country. This would be better than denying it, and hankering after the “good old days”.

Even if some of the best of the Jewish community in all fields – business, the arts, and others – have left for safer shores, the basis on which they grew up here is strong enough to re-invigorate itself.

It will not be easy. The Jewish presence in South African society is sparser than ever. Many South Africans, such as those in rural schools, grow up and live without ever encountering a Jew. They are left only with stereotypes that they hear or read about.

The latest blow to this Zionist community – which indicates political realignment – is the government’s decision to recall the South African

TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin



ambassador, Sisa Ngombane, permanently from Israel. The ambassador was withdrawn in May 2018, in line with an ANC resolution at its 2017 elective conference, following the killings of protesting Palestinians by the Israeli army in Gaza. International Relations and Cooperation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu declared last week that the ambassador “will not be replaced”.

The decision is simple-minded. And coming just before the elections, it smells of cheap electioneering by the ANC to appease the dogs snapping at its heels. Even many Israelis and Jews who object to the policies of the Israeli government feel this way.

It has a sadder tone for South Africa than Israel. Many South Africans still bask in the glory of the Mandela years.

It’s a bitter pill to swallow that those years are gone, as this country drowns in bad government and has difficulty keeping the lights on.

For most world citizens, South Africa is just a dot on the map. As politics shifts, South African Jews and the ANC need to be more agile to balance. It would be better to increase interaction with Israel rather than reduce it.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

How IAW travesty became ‘Israel Awareness Week’

Jewish students are at the coalface of defending Israel, particularly during the infamous Israel Apartheid Week (IAW).

Confronted by a barrage of manipulative and mendacious propaganda, and in spite of often being subjected to vicious abuse, they have consistently responded with dignity and restraint. While IAW supporters aggressively shut down dialogue, the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) scrupulously promotes it. While the other side routinely resorts to threats and crude insults, not infrequently crossing over into overt anti-Semitism and physical disruption, SAUJS has been disciplined and law-abiding. Whereas IAW is about fostering hatred and anger, SAUJS has promoted the values of dialogue and education.

At this time, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and the South African Zionist Federation work closely with SAUJS, and assist where required, such as in liaising with the universities to ensure that all abide by the relevant codes of conduct. Barring one or two exceptions, this year was largely free of the kind of ugly confrontations that IAW proponents have engineered in the past.

SAUJS’s approach is clearly bearing fruit. Whereas initially, it struggled to make itself heard amidst all the rhetoric and intimidation, over time, it has increasingly been able to hold its own and eventually reduce IAW events to something of a sideshow. The average uncommitted student appears more responsive to an approach that emphasises civilized dialogue and education as opposed to lack of debate with the sole purpose of demonising and delegitimising the other side.



ABOVE
BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

Something new during IAW this year was the Congress of South African Trade Union’s picket outside the SAJBD’s Cape offices on the grounds that South African Jewry must be pressurised into ceasing support for Israel. The demonstration itself was a non-event, with fewer than thirty protestors taking part, although it is a concern that our community should have been targeted in the first place.

For our part, we denounced this crude attempt to treat local Jewry as

if it is collectively answerable for the alleged actions of a foreign country.

Delusions over downgrade

In regard to the long-running embassy downgrade saga, last week’s events were less positive. Speaking to the South African Institute of International Affairs, Lindiwe Sisulu, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, declared inter alia, that the downgrade was now being implemented, and the South African ambassador to Israel would not be replaced.

We are following up with the government to obtain more clarity, noting that such statements roundly contradict President Cyril Ramaphosa’s recent assurances to our community that government was looking to “play a constructive role [in the Middle East] that will bring all parties together”.

Our press release reiterated our core arguments against a downgrade, while pointing out that such policy changes cannot simply be declared by a minister, but first have to be discussed by Parliament and then ratified by Cabinet.

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

‘Star and Crescent’ sheds light on ancient co-existence

From the early 600s CE, Jews and Muslims have co-existed, at times peacefully and at other times contentiously. Historical perspective is important to understand what we have in common and what sets us apart. It helps us to minimise conflict and forge closer ties.



STEVEN GRUZD

the florence melton school of adult jewish learning

Through the ages, from the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula and Israel, to vibrant life in ancient Baghdad, medieval southern Spain, the mighty Ottoman Empire, and modern Paris, New York, and Johannesburg, these two communities have always had complex, fluid, and intricate relations. The religions share values such as charity, ethical conduct, and monotheism, and practices such as circumcision, dietary laws, and regular prayer.

But, what impact has the status of Jews as *Dhimmi*, or “people of the book” had on Jewish and Muslim communities? How has the formation of the state of Israel affected these societies? Why is positive communal interaction – such as the relations forged in Cape Town between the Open Mosque and the Progressive Synagogues, where they now visit each other’s houses of worship to celebrate key festivals

together – the exception rather than the norm? A 10-week course run by the Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning and developed by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem helps us to explore this fascinating history. Titled “The Star and the Crescent: The Long Relationship between Judaism and Islam”, the course, held in Saxonwold, Johannesburg, emphasises participation, inclusivity, and multiple perspectives, through extensive text-based learning. It traverses this history from Abraham in biblical times right up to today, encouraging students to view contemporary Jewish-Muslim ties through a longer historical lens.

- “Star and Crescent” will be held in Saxonwold on Mondays from 29 April to 27 May 2019, and then on Tuesdays from 4 June to 2 July 2019, from 19:00 to 20:30. It will be facilitated once again by Steven Gruzd, a political analyst and freelance journalist for the SA Jewish Report. Contact Ariella Milner on 082 804 6113 or meltonjhb@gmail.com to enrol, and for subsidies, students’ and couples’ discounts.

This column is paid for by The Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning

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Pupils vote in mock Israeli elections

Jewish schools King David Linksfield High School and Herzlia Middle and High School held mock Israeli elections on 4 and 8 April to educate pupils about Israeli politics and the democratic process.

Herzlia Middle School



King David Linksfield’s project was spearheaded by *Shinshin* (Israeli educator) Michal Benstein, who worked with *Habonim’s Sganit Mazkir Klali* Eden Plein and other madrichim.

Preparations for the King David event began a week earlier, when each of the school committees was given information about one Israeli political party competing in the elections. They created political posters and slogans, which were displayed around the school for a week. Each committee chose a Grade 11 representative to speak for them when the school gathered for the special assembly earlier this week.

On the day, each representative explained the aims and ideologies of their political party. Students heard about the United

Torah Judaism party, Likud, the Blue and White party, the Labor Party, and several others on the ballot.

Afterwards, they were divided into grades to cast their votes in specifically allocated voting areas.

Likewise, at Herzlia Middle and High School, pupils were exposed to the array of political parties running for election by student representatives, who delivered party manifestos, election promises, and showed party political videos.

Likud, the Democratic Progressive Party, Labor Party, United Torah

Judaism, New Right Party, Meretz Party, and Blue and White Party were represented at the event, which was hosted by Tzachi Cohen, the head of the school’s Israel programme, and the Middle and High School Zionism Committee.

Following the presentations, ballot boxes were set up along with monitors, and pupils were given the chance to vote for the party of their choice.



Samuel Maron from King David Linksfield High School

Moses Moyo honoured

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) asked ChaiFM Chief Executive Kathy Kaler to plant a tree in one of the Jewish National Fund forests to honour late social

activist and pro-Israel lobbyist Moses Moyo. Kaler did so when she was in Israel to run the Jerusalem Marathon.

She planted the tree in the Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (KKL) Tzora forest in the Ella Valley near Bet Shemesh in central Israel. It is one of two KKL tree planting sites that are available all year round for visitors wishing to plant a tree to contribute towards make Israel green. The second site is located in the north of Israel, near the Golani Junction.



Kathy Kaler

Mina Lopato goes to town

Mina Lopato Nursery School in Greenside held its fun day, carnival, and Pesach market recently to huge success, with current families and alumni enjoying the excitement, socialising, and shopping.



Mina Lopato kids enjoying their fun day

Waiter donates tip to Jewish charity

Regular patrons at Frangelicas restaurant in Glenhazel arranged with their waiter, Vladimir Ropi, that they would give him a large annual tip instead of tipping him each time they visited. Ropi – a third-year law student who has worked at Frangelicas for three years – was happy with that.

“But,” remarked Simon Godley, who owns Frangelicas together with Elana Godley, “after years of being part of the Frangelicas family and being exposed to the warmth and generosity of the community, when Ropi received his tip of R760, he decided to donate the money to Jewish charity Selwyn Segal instead of



Vladimir Ropi

keeping it. His customers were so touched by this unexpected generosity, they decided to match his donation, and the Godleys did the same. That’s how #ProjectVLAD was launched. Inspired by Ropi’s extraordinary initiative, many other customers jumped on board with their own matching contributions for Selwyn Segal residents.

- To join the initiative, donate to: www.jhbchev.co.za (click on once-off donation and select Selwyn Segal) or Standard Bank Norwood, Account 001 846 078, Branch 004105, Society for the Jewish Handicapped, Reference VLAD and your full name).

Help make Pesach special for old souls

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, members of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) assisted Meals on Wheels, which was being run by a church in Yeoville. They discovered that there were Jewish recipients who felt forced to accept non-kosher food as there was nowhere they could get kosher food. Most of them were house bound and lonely.

In 1972 Kosher Mobile Meals was born. The old-aged home in Sandringham provided food that was delivered by kombi to the elderly.

The Kosher Mobile Meal’s kombi was driven to Berea, Hillbrow, Joubert Park, and the city centre.

There were many incidents – some sad and some happy – but over the past 46 years, Kosher Mobile Meals has ensured that elderly and frail individuals are visited and given nourishing food. The service now caters for about 150 recipients.

This year, the UJW invites you to assist it in making Pesach special for its recipients. By making a donation as small as R100, you will be entered into a draw to win one



Kosher Mobile Meals operations manager Glenda Goldberg packing hampers with volunteers

of 11 fabulous prizes, including a return ticket to Israel on Ethiopian Airlines, jewellery, vouchers, a food warming hostess, and other incredible prizes. To make a donation, call 011 648 1053, or email info@ujw.co.za.

Torah Institute shows gratitude at gala dinner

Rabbi Shmuel Moffson cited the importance of Torah study at the Johannesburg Torah Institute’s (JTI’s) first gala dinner at its learning centre in Oaklands, Johannesburg, on Wednesday night.

Moffson spoke to the 120 assembled guests about the transformative, enriching effect of Torah study on Jewish life. He was joined by advocate Jonathan Hoffman, who shared his personal experience of growth through commitment to Torah study.

Since opening its doors, the JTI has offered courses in Talmud, Chumash, Parsha, Jewish law, Jewish history and philosophy, Hebrew reading, as well as international JLI (Jewish Learning Institute) courses.



Guests at the JTI gala dinner

Sports Quiz raises roof for charity

With 36 teams and five sporting categories, the annual Bidvest Sports Quiz is a highly competitive event, but the greatest winner of the night was the Selwyn Segal Society, which received a donation of R400 000.

The quiz, held on 3 April at the Wanderers Club in Johannesburg, has been in existence since 2001. It is a night of competitive fun in which sports stars gather, business people mingle, and money is raised, says Barney Girnun, event owner and joint managing director of MSCSports.

“Congratulations to the overall winning team who just happened to be the Bidvest Services team, captained by Bidvest Services Head Alan Fainman,” Girnun says.

The generous donation for Selwyn



A table of participants at the Bidvest Sports Quiz

Segal was raised through table sales, the auction of sports memorabilia and TAG Heuer watches, as well sports greats such as Schalk Brits, Jesse Kriel, and Vernon Philander, who were required to participate in the quiz itself.

Coupled with other sports celebrities such as Gavin Hunt, Jean de Villiers, Schalk Brits, and Dean Furman, the night was one to be remembered.

Kids pack for Pesach

Yad Aharon & Michael held its annual community Pesach packing day on 7 April, filling food boxes for 650 families in need. More than 100 volunteers came to assist, including children from Habonim, and Bnei Akiva, as well as those on Barmitzvah and Batmitzvah programmes.



Zevi Slutzkin displays chesed (compassion) from a young age

SUV 2019 Nissan X-Trail
1.6 DCi Visia 7s

59-year-old male
PREMIUM
R625^{pm}
OUTBONUS **R2 384**



SUV

2019 Toyota Fortuner 2.8 GD-6 R/B A/T

SUV

2019 Toyota Land Cruiser 200 V8 4.5D VX-R A/T

SUV

2019 Mazda CX-5 2.0 Active



48-year-old female
PREMIUM
R727^{pm}
OUTBONUS **R2 776**



51-year-old male
PREMIUM
R1 164^{pm}
OUTBONUS **R4 446**



44-year-old female
PREMIUM
R691^{pm}
OUTBONUS **R2 639**



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43-year-old male
PREMIUM
R745^{pm}
OUTBONUS **R2 845**