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## South African in shul during San Diego shul shooting

**TALI FEINBERG**

**A**ubrey Meyerowitz, originally from Johannesburg, was in the Chabad shul of Poway, California, on Saturday when he heard shots ring out. “It was the first aliyah of the Torah, and I heard three shots. I dropped to the floor under the seats, and stayed there.

“The whole thing took only about 30 seconds to a minute but I counted about 15 shots fired. I heard women screaming and men shouting.”

He says there were about 70 or 80 people in shul – way more than were in the Pittsburgh shul when a shooting claimed eleven lives six months earlier.

But, in this instance, more deaths were prevented because the shooter’s gun jammed, and he was confronted by a shul member who had been in the military. “As soon as the shooting stopped, I ran out of an emergency exit, so I never saw the carnage,” says Meyerowitz.

But he knew the woman who was killed in the attack, Lori Gilbert-Kaye. “She was a wonderful, charitable person, and her family was at shul every Shabbos.” The rabbi of the congregation, Yisroel Goldstein, lost two fingers in the attack, but managed to keep calm, and even finish his sermon before being taken to hospital. An Israeli man, Almog Peretz, and his eight-year-old niece, Noya Dahan, were also injured. They had moved to San Diego from Sderot (on the Gaza border) to escape the

constant threat of rockets there. “This is a quiet town, and the shul is in a quiet lane. There was no security because no one ever expected this to happen here,” says Meyerowitz, who had even seen children playing in the reception area of the shul just before the shooting.

now,” he says. “South Africa is usually 20 years behind the United States, but in security at shuls and public places, South Africa is 20 years ahead.”

He says the America of today is a different place to what it was when he arrived 23 years ago, and this kind of terrorism is

living in the area expressed their shock at the shooting. “I heard the news when I got home from shul, and was simply flabbergasted,” says Howard Schachat, originally from Cape Town. “I’ve been to that shul, and sang in the choir for a Barmitzvah there. It’s a lovely community. I was in tears

says, referring to the actions of the current United States administration. “It is a passive or even active consent to allow them to behave in a way they would never have before.

“Ten years ago, I would never have expected something like this to happen in San Diego, but now, with neo-Nazis saying ‘Jews will not replace us’ in Charlottesville, it’s a different paradigm, and Jews will always be the scapegoat.”

Daniel Weiss, also originally from Cape Town, attends the shul, and his children go to Hebrew school there.

It is a ten minute drive from where he lives, “and this definitely hit too close to home”, he says. “It’s a huge shock, but in a way it could also be expected, especially in the US. Until the laws change, it has just become too easy to get a gun,” Weiss says.

He attended a vigil on the night after the shooting, along with hundreds of other people. “The eight-year-old girl who was injured in the attack was there. It wasn’t only a Jewish event, but a San Diego event, with an amazing blend of people, the mayor and a senator.” He says the turnout demonstrated that people were deeply affected by the shooting way beyond the Jewish community.

Claire Ellman, originally from Johannesburg, has known Rabbi Goldstein for 30 years while working on Jewish education projects. More recently, she interacted with him through



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

**Praying for solidarity and unity at Chabad House in Johannesburg on Tuesday night, following attacks on the Chabad of Poway shul**

“The attitude has been ‘no one will worry us, we don’t have a fight with anyone, and we’re a welcoming community’. But obviously that will have to change

becoming an everyday occurrence. It is something he never could have imagined when he made San Diego his home.

Other South African expats

watching the rabbi speak after the shooting.”

“It’s almost like a lid of permission has been opened for white supremacists,” he

Continued on page 5>>>

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AUTO AFRICA

### Third record year for Canadian anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitic incidents in Canada rose to a record high for the third consecutive year, according to an annual audit by B’nai Brith Canada released on Monday.

The audit showed 2 041 anti-Semitic incidents recorded last year in Canada – 16.5% more than the 1 752 incidents in 2017.

“This represents the third straight record-breaking year for anti-Semitism in Canada, reflecting a ‘new normal’ regarding the landscape of anti-Semitism here,” said Ran Ukashi, the director of B’nai Brith Canada’s League for Human Rights.

Eighty percent of the incidents came from online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

### US measles outbreak tops 700

The measles outbreak in the United States, especially prevalent among haredi orthodox Jews, has topped 700 cases – the most in one year since the Center for Disease Control (CDC) declared the disease eliminated in the US in 2000.

The record outbreak of 704 cases reported last week by the CDC includes 400 cases in New York and

its suburbs. The CDC pinned the resurgence on the unvaccinated, and those who brought back measles from other countries.

Prominent rabbis in New York have called on their followers to vaccinate their children.

### French philosopher afraid to appear in public

Alain Finkielkraut, a Jewish philosopher and one of France’s foremost thinkers, said far-left protests against him meant he could no longer show his face on the street.

Finkielkraut made the remark in response to recent protests against him at the Sciences Po university in Paris, where he spoke at a symposium on Europe’s future.

The demonstrators wrote, “We cannot accept Finkielkraut’s ‘modern Europe’ and his islamophobic, racist, sexist and homophobic rhetoric.” Commenting on the protesters, Finkielkraut said, “You are the fascists. You are the 1930s. You are the anti-Semites.”

### Israel issues Sri Lanka travel warning

Israel recently issued a travel warning of a “high and concrete (terror) threat” in Sri Lanka.

The warning was issued by the Israel National Security Council’s Counter-

Terrorism Bureau on Thursday, four days after a terror attack at eight churches and hotels in three cities in Sri Lanka that killed at least 359 people and injured hundreds. It called on Israelis already in Sri Lanka to leave as soon as possible, and for those planning trips to cancel or delay those plans.

### Buenos Aires honours Olympic swimmer

Argentinean Olympic swimmer Damian Blaum, who started his career at a Jewish sports club in Buenos Aires, was honoured by the Buenos Aires City Parliament as an “outstanding sports personality” in recognition of his career.

The Jewish athlete in February 2018 set a new record for swimming from Uruguay to Argentina, crossing the Rio de la Plata river in 9 hours, 6 minutes, a distance of about 26 miles (41.8km).

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:19	18:08	Johannesburg
17:46	18:38	Cape Town
17:02	17:52	Durban
17:22	18:12	Bloemfontein
17:17	18:09	Port Elizabeth
17:09	18:01	East London

### Torah Thought

## Moral is normal

If anyone was bent on convincing us that Torah was old-fashioned, this would be a good Parsha to prove it. Leviticus, Chapter 18, contains the Bible’s Immorality Act. Our moral code, the forbidden relationships, who may marry whom and who may not – all come from this week’s reading.

We read this same chapter every year on Yom Kippur afternoon. And every year in every shul around the world someone asks the very same question. “Why on Yom Kippur, Rabbi? Was there no other section of the Torah to choose besides the one about illicit sex? Is this an appropriate choice to read in shul on the holiest day of the year?”

Fair question. So the Rabbis explain that this is, in fact, the ultimate test of our holiness. The most challenging arena of human conduct, the one that really tests the mettle of our morality, is not how we behave in synagogue but how we behave in our bedrooms. To conduct ourselves appropriately in public is far easier than to be morally consistent in our intimate lives.

Old-fashioned? You bet. In a world of ever-changing, relative morality where absolutely anything and everything goes, the Torah does, indeed, seem rather antiquated.

Man-made laws are forever being amended to suit changing times and circumstances. When a new super-highway is built, traffic officials may decide that it is safe to raise the speed limit. Should there be a fuel shortage, these same officials may decide to lower the speed limit in order to conserve the energy supply.

But G-d’s laws are constant, consistent and eternal. Divine legislation governs moral issues. Values, ethics, right and wrong, these are eternal, never-changing issues. Humankind has been confronting these problems since time immemorial. From cavemen to Attila the Hun to nuclear superpowers, the essential issues really have not changed very much. Questions of moral principle, good and evil, have been there from the very beginning. These questions are timeless.

So we read that adultery was forbidden in Moses’ day, and it still is in ours. So is incest. But it wouldn’t shock me at all if the same forces motivating for new sexual freedoms soon began campaigning for incestuous relationships to become legal. Shocking? Why? If it’s all about consenting adults, why deny siblings? Given the slippery slope of our moral mountains, nothing is unthinkable any more.

Ultimately, morality cannot be decided by referendum. We desperately need a higher authority to guide us in the often confusing dilemmas of life. In Egypt and Canaan, lots of degenerate behaviour was acceptable, even popular. In this week’s Torah reading, G-d tells His people that He expects us to march to a different beat. We are called upon to be a holy nation, distinctively different in this, the most challenging test of our morality. It doesn’t matter what is legal or trendy in Egypt, Canaan, America, or Scandinavia. We have our own moral guide, our own book of books which requires no editing or revised editions for the new age.

When the Torah teaches us to be holy and distinctive, it is reminding us to be normal, not average. Average can be rather mediocre. Just be normal, and retain your Jewish uniqueness. It may not be easy. It may not always be politically correct either. You probably will not win any popularity contests. But you will be faithful to the eternal truths of life. And in the long run, you will be right. And happy.



Rabbi Yossy Goldsmann  
Sydenham Shul

South African

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THEME PARK



# Hearing from the parties prior to elections

The SA Jewish Report attempted to interview all the leaders of the main parties running for election. In this edition, we secured interviews with the African Christian Democratic Party (page 11), African National Congress (on this page), Congress of the People (page 10), Economic Freedom Fighters (page 9), Freedom Front Plus (page 10), Inkatha Freedom Party (page 4), and United Democratic Movement (page 10). Leaders of the Democratic Alliance, and the Capitalist Party of South Africa were interviewed in previous editions.

## Embassy downgrade not yet considered by cabinet, says Ramaphosa

TALI FEINBERG

President Cyril Ramaphosa revealed in a pre-election interview with the *SA Jewish Report* that the decision to downgrade South Africa’s embassy in Tel Aviv had “not been considered yet by cabinet”.

“Once the cabinet has fully engaged and come out with a view on this matter, it will be communicated to the public. In other words, we remain seized with the modalities of downgrading the South African embassy in Israel, and this matter has not been finalised,” he said.

This is direct contradiction to recent comments by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Lindiwe Sisulu, who said that the downgrade had already begun.

“South Africa is playing a constructive role in the Middle East,” the president continued, “and we use every opportunity that avails itself to engage with all states in this region, including the Palestinians and Israelis. We continue to host high-level talks and receive numerous delegations from Israel and Palestine. We hope to intensify this in the future.”

Asked if he still welcomed foreign direct investment by Israel, the president said, “South Africa welcomes investment in our economy from any investor that respects our laws and supports the development of our economy.”

Turning to his own government ahead of next week’s elections, he assured the Jewish community that he continued to root out corruption. “Those who have been accused of corrupt practices must be held to account in terms of the law, without fear, favour, or prejudice. That is why we are establishing an investigating directorate in the NPA [National Prosecuting Authority] and have established a special SIU [Special Investigation Unit] tribunal to fast track the recovery of funds lost to the state from corruption.

“I have no doubt that the law-enforcement agencies will act against those implicated in criminal activity, but must do so through due legal process. If we want to build strong, durable institutions, we must guard against arbitrary actions by those in power,” he said.

As described in this issue of the *SA Jewish Report* (see page 8), many young people are considering leaving South Africa. Discussing why they should stay, the president said, “Despite its challenges, despite its history, South Africa has abundant opportunities. Now, as we make a firm break with the difficulties and mistakes

of the past decade, we stand ready to seize these opportunities. For this, we need policy certainty and consistency, clean and effective government, and a vibrant and innovative business community. Most importantly, we need young, skilled South Africans who are motivated to make a difference.

“Young people need to see an economy that has doubled in size since the advent of democracy, that has created an extra seven million jobs since 1994, and they need to ask themselves what they can do to make our economy grow even faster and create even more jobs.

“It is for this reason that we are focusing effort and resources on improving access to quality

slumped more in the past 12 years than any other nation that is not at war, but the president insists we have begun to turn things around. “We achieved a five-year high in foreign direct investment in the past year, reaching R70.7 billion in 2018, up from R26.8 billion in 2017. Through commissions of inquiry into state capture, SARS [the South African Revenue Service], and the Public Investment Corporation, we are uncovering details of the wrongdoing of the past few years, and taking measures to address them.

“We have made changes at the NPA, at SARS, in the police service, and in state security. We are strengthening those institutions responsible for investigating and prosecuting corruption.

weight to enterprise and supplier development. “Understanding that small businesses struggle to access markets, we are setting aside more government-procurement opportunities for SMMEs [small and medium-sized enterprises]. We are encouraged by efforts from the private sector to do more to source goods and services from small and emerging businesses.

Since taking office, the president has spoken many times about his vision for South Africa, but what is he doing to ensure that this is carried out – with or without him? “It is essential that we build strong institutions that uphold our constitution, promote the rule of law, and advance the interests of South Africans,” he said. “Just as these institutions need to be free from undue influence by any individual or group, they should not be reliant on any one individual. That is why I have spent much of the past year working to rebuild public institutions and mend relations between government, business, labour, and communities.”

Asked how he will keep extremists like the EFF [Economic Freedom Fighters] at bay, the president responded, “South Africa is a strong and robust democracy. Without a popular mandate, no organisation – extremist or not – will be able to exercise influence over the policies and programmes of the state.”

In December 2018, the ANC parliamentary caucus signed a co-operation agreement with Hamas. The *SA Jewish Report* asked the president how the ANC could align itself with such an organisation. Ramaphosa responded that the agreement was still being considered by the ANC as

it had not been seen by all its structures. “I am certain that it does not call for all the things you mention, because this would be against our own constitution and beliefs as a nation.”

Asked what he could say to our community to convince it not to abandon South Africa, he responded, “We are not in denial about the huge challenges we still face, nor about the severe impact that state capture and corruption has had on our economy, public institutions, and general levels of trust within society.

But, “We have the opportunity to turn this around. We have shown in the short space of a year that – as government, business, labour, and other social partners – we are determined to make a clear break with corruption, patronage, policy incoherence, and economic mismanagement. We are not merely saying we are on a path of renewal. Our actions prove it.”



President Cyril Ramaphosa

education – from early childhood to university – and why we have prioritised getting youth into employment. Therein lies the future of the country.”

Regarding our massive crime problem, Ramaphosa said, “Building an inclusive economy and dramatically reducing unemployment are essential to our efforts to overcome crime. As we undertake this work, we are also improving policing by, among other things, moving resources to station level, where the fight against crime is most effective.

He said the police service was building better relations with communities, and “we are strengthening our capacity to tackle gangsterism and organised crime. We have taken steps over the past year to clean up the police service and other law enforcement agencies so that they are focused on the task of promoting safety and security.”

South Africa’s economic performance has

We are rebuilding state institutions, and have put capable boards in place to drive turnaround strategies at state-owned enterprises. Through these and other efforts, we are working to rebuild confidence among investors, business people, and the South African public.”

The president said one of the greatest impediments to the growth of small business was the continued dominance in some markets of established players. “Through interventions like the new Competition Amendment Act, we aim to tackle monopolistic and anti-competitive practices, and create space for new entrants into the economy.

“We are significantly expanding support for small businesses through our business-incubation programme, opening up incubators in townships and rural areas, where there is a great demand for assistance. Through the revisions we made to the BEE [black economic empowerment] codes, we have given additional



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# Poway shooting exposes the fractured state



## OPINION

Andrew Silow-Carroll – JTA

Here’s what we know about the shooter who took the life of a worshipper at a San Diego area Chabad and wounded three others: he was a white, 19-year-old college student who grew up in an Orthodox Presbyterian church, and he may or may not have tried to set fire to a nearby mosque last month, perhaps inspired by the terrorist attacks at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand.

What we didn’t know: why he targeted a synagogue; why he wanted Jews to die; what combination of personal madness and outside

influences drove him to murder and terror.

What we don’t hesitate to do in the absence of hard information: draw our own conclusions; lay blame; wedge the shooter’s scant bio into the political frameworks that we’ve already erected.

The “react” story has long been a staple of ethnic journalism. After a big global or national event, you round up the reactions of, in our case, Jewish organisations. Rarely are these condemnations or celebrations surprising or even very interesting. Sympathy at natural calamities, outrage at man-made ones, thumbs up or thumbs down when the story is political, depending on your ideology.

As to anti-Semitism reactions, how many ways can an organisation express its dismay at acts of anti-

Jewish hatred, except to go to the thesaurus? They’re a “scourge”, a “disease”, a “poison”, a “pathology”.

But that formula has changed, like just about everything else, certainly in the past three years, and perhaps over a decade and more.

Jews can no longer agree on how to regard anti-Semitism. The left focuses on a far right energised by the rise of nationalist populism and politicians whose own nativist views sound awfully familiar to historians of hate. The right sees anti-Israelism as the “new anti-Semitism”, and regards as the biggest threat those whose support for the Palestinians quickly devolves into classic anti-Jewish “tropes”. Centrists are criticised for trying to straddle the line because failing to take sides means they are weak on [insert your enemy here].

# Buthelezi proud to tell truth about Israel

TALI FEINBERG

“The reason the Jewish community should vote for the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) is the same reason any South African should vote for the IFP: we are trustworthy. We have a proven track record of leadership integrity and clean governance. There is nothing our country needs more,” says Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* ahead of the national elections.

“This is the most contested election South Africa has faced. There are 48 options on the ballot paper. But only one option is right for South Africa. The IFP understands that our nation’s future is indivisible. There will be no justice for one community while another still suffers. We either swim together, or sink together,” he says.

As he pointed out at the Jewish community’s celebration of his 90th birthday last year, he has a long history with Jews in South Africa. When he was a student at the University of Fort Hare, he became a member of the National Union of South African Students.

“A number of our leaders were Jewish. As I became more and more involved in the liberation struggle, I met and befriended many more Jewish leaders who were working toward the same goals of political franchise, equality, and social justice in South Africa.

“I was impressed by their sense of patriotism and responsibility. The cause of justice and freedom was so naturally their own cause, even when this was not their fight. Duty, faith, and the knowledge of truth led them to make it their fight.”

His Jewish compatriots included Helen Suzman and her husband, Dr Mosie Suzman, “who opened the doors of their home to us when we were in Johannesburg during those [apartheid] days. So did Clive and Irene Menell.” He was also close to Professor Phillip Tobias.

“Arnold Zulman and his beautiful wife, Rosemary, have nurtured our friendship for the past 50 years of my life. We went to shul with them, and attended their children’s Barmitzvahs. Mr Zulman sometimes received calls from anonymous white voices in the dead of the night saying, ‘We know that you have Buthelezi in your home.’ He was unfazed by this kind of intimidation.

“The simple fact is that most of the white South Africans who were at the forefront of our liberation struggle were Jewish. All the white South Africans who were arrested with Nelson Mandela were Jews,” he says. “Maybe the fact that the Jewish people have endured persecution for centuries made them the kind of compassionate people that most of them are.”

Buthelezi says he disagrees with the decision taken by the African National Congress to downgrade South Africa’s Embassy in Israel. “It is short-sighted and regressive. Moreover, it stands in opposition to our country’s role as a

mediator for peace.”

He has visited Israel a number of times and formed close bonds with its leaders, from Shimon Peres to Ariel Sharon to Benjamin Netanyahu. “So, when people denigrate me for supporting Israel, I pity their ignorance. As far as my politics is concerned, I have always supported a two-state solution. I made this clear again in September 2015 when I visited Israel at the kind invitation of the South African Friends of Israel, together with several senior political leaders,” he says.



country in the Middle East that allows freedom of religion, freedom of expression, press freedom, and gender equality.

Rather than cutting ties, South Africa needs to engage with Israel, he says. “The best way to learn is to engage. When we engage, meaningful change becomes possible. The biggest test of true leadership is being able to do or say a difficult thing, as long as it is the right thing to do or say. To be out of step with a battalion is the greatest test of leadership.”

Even in the midst of social crises, he believes education must continue. “Education must be prioritised. No matter what the political circumstances, whether we are fighting for freedom, or fighting for a democracy that overcomes inequality, education remains at the heart of our fight.

“Let us teach our children the truth. Let us speak to the next generation. Let us equip them to look beyond hashtags and populist slogans, beyond propaganda, and reductionist arguments. Let us give them a solid foundation by teaching them what has come before. And then, let us support them as they begin to build the future,” he says.

Buthelezi will be stepping down as party leader after the elections. “I will continue as president of the IFP until our national elective conference, where a new leadership will be elected. Our structures have unanimously nominated Secretary General Mayor Velenkosini Hlabisa to stand for election. I myself will not stand.”

Buthelezi is grieving the loss of his beloved wife, Princess Irene, who passed away in March after a long illness. After the elections, he intends to spend time with his grandchildren and stay involved in serving the country in one way or another. “I have done this for more than 60 years. It is part of who I am.”

# of communal discourse



The dynamic was on display in the hours after the shooting at the Poway Chabad. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), long the community’s compass on anti-anti-Semitism, avoided the blame game.

“It’s heartbreaking to see yet another tragedy on Shabbat, on the last day of Passover, exactly six months after the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh,” which claimed 11 lives, the ADL wrote on Saturday.

But the ADL also didn’t look to include the Poway shooting into some sort of grab bag of anti-Jewish threats on the left and the right, which has become the safe way to talk about anti-Semitism. Instead it compared the shooting only to the recent attacks carried out by white, male lone wolves – Christchurch, Pittsburgh – and to the far-right hate fest at Charlottesville.

Others saw in Poway a reflection of their worst fears and bêtes noires. For a left-wing group like Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, the blame lay squarely on the White House and its current occupant.

“Although it may be hard to accept, the fact that we witnessed yet another act of white nationalist violence is sadly not ‘hard to believe’, as President Trump said in response to the shooting,” Bend the Arc said. “Not when the President and his allies have helped mainstream white nationalism in American politics.”

Compare that to the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, a Canadian affiliate of the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center.

The Friends group was fast out of the gate with a statement saying that, “anti-Semitism and hate at large continues to increase year to year as nationalist white supremacist groups expand globally”, but expanded the camera view to include “extreme leftists [who] unfairly and hypocritically defame Israel and radical Islamists [who] push an anti-Zionist agenda”.

It also included in its statement a condemnation of what normally would have been the most outrageous anti-Semitic act of 28 April 2019: a cartoon that appeared in the *New York Times* international edition depicting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a guide dog (a guide dachshund, actually), leading a blind Trump. The dog’s collar has a Star of David, and Trump is wearing a black yarmulke, pushing the cartoon out of the realm

of political commentary and into *Der Sturmer* territory.

Unlike Bend the Arc, however, the Friends of the Wiesenthal Center statement did not point fingers at the American president or mention the actual Nazis who marched at Charlottesville or ran as Republicans in last year’s midterms. Instead it condemned college students and professors who support the boycott of Israel, and leftist political leaders like the British Labour Party’s Jeremy Corbyn and Republican Ilhan Omar, “who have been accused of promoting anti-Semitism and of trying to create a wedge between their countries and the State of Israel”. It also singled out the United Nations for its “baffling” anti-Israel resolutions.

There was still another approach, which was to find the commonalities among the various brands of contemporary anti-Semitism.

“The anti-Semitic intersection of white nationalism, anti-Zionism, and Islamic Jew-hatred is to render the Jews isolated and powerless,” tweeted Einat Wilf, who served in the Israeli Knesset as a member of the Labor and Independence parties. “Each feeds off the others as evidence that Jews have no allies, and therefore could be bullied, maligned, injured, and killed, with no consequences.”

Unsurprisingly, this common cause approach is rarely the way of Twitter, where the left-right divide is often on full display. Either modern anti-Semitism is Trump’s fault, or the Boycott Israel movement is the greatest danger facing the Jews. That *New York Times* cartoon was the result of vicious anti-Zionism gone mainstream or part of the coarsening of the public discourse led by the “alt-right”.

For many there appears to be a fear that if the focus turns to one side of the political spectrum, we’ll go soft on the anti-Semitism coming from the other side.

The historian Deborah Lipstadt notes this politicisation of anti-anti-Semitism in her new book, *Antisemitism: Here and Now*.

“Don’t see anti-Semitism only on the other side of the political transom from which you are located,” she warned in an interview with the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*. “If you’re only seeing it on the opposite side of the transom, you’re instrumentalising this for political purposes.”



# EFF turns Easter message into anti-Israel diatribe

JORDAN MOSHE

Blending a religious message with a political one, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) recently suggested that Jesus was a Palestinian. Wishing South Africans well over Easter, the party descended into political criticism of Israel and blatant anti-Semitism.

Wishing the public a “happy and revolutionary Easter weekend” is how the message issued on 18 April by EFF spokesperson Mbuyiseni Quinton Ndlozi began. The party then went on to caution people to travel safely and drink responsibly.

Mentioning the last supper, the statement reminded readers to be mindful of the needy, and to “prioritise the poor and less privileged as the best embodiment of Christ today”.

Immediately thereafter, the religious message turned political. Reminding readers that Palestine is “the birth and death place of Jesus Christ”, the EFF urged solidarity with the people of modern-day Palestine, whom it said, “represent the suffering, permanently crucified, disfigured, and humiliated naked body of Christ hanging on the summit for all shame”.

This state of affairs is attributed to Israel, described as being guilty of “racial discrimination, colonisation and apartheid”. The EFF asked the public not only to pray for the oppressed, but “participate in the international isolation of the apartheid state of Israel until they recognise Palestinian rights to equality and return of their land”.

The party’s appropriation of a religious figure for political ends and its suggestion that Jesus was a Palestinian has been widely condemned. According to Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), this appropriation is something the EFF does frequently, even in the face of obvious historical truths.

“Jesus was a Jew from Judea,” says Shulman. “Unfortunately, a statement like this smacks of classic Christian anti-Semitism, because they are trying to separate Jesus

and his Jewish roots just like they try to separate Jewish roots from Israel.”

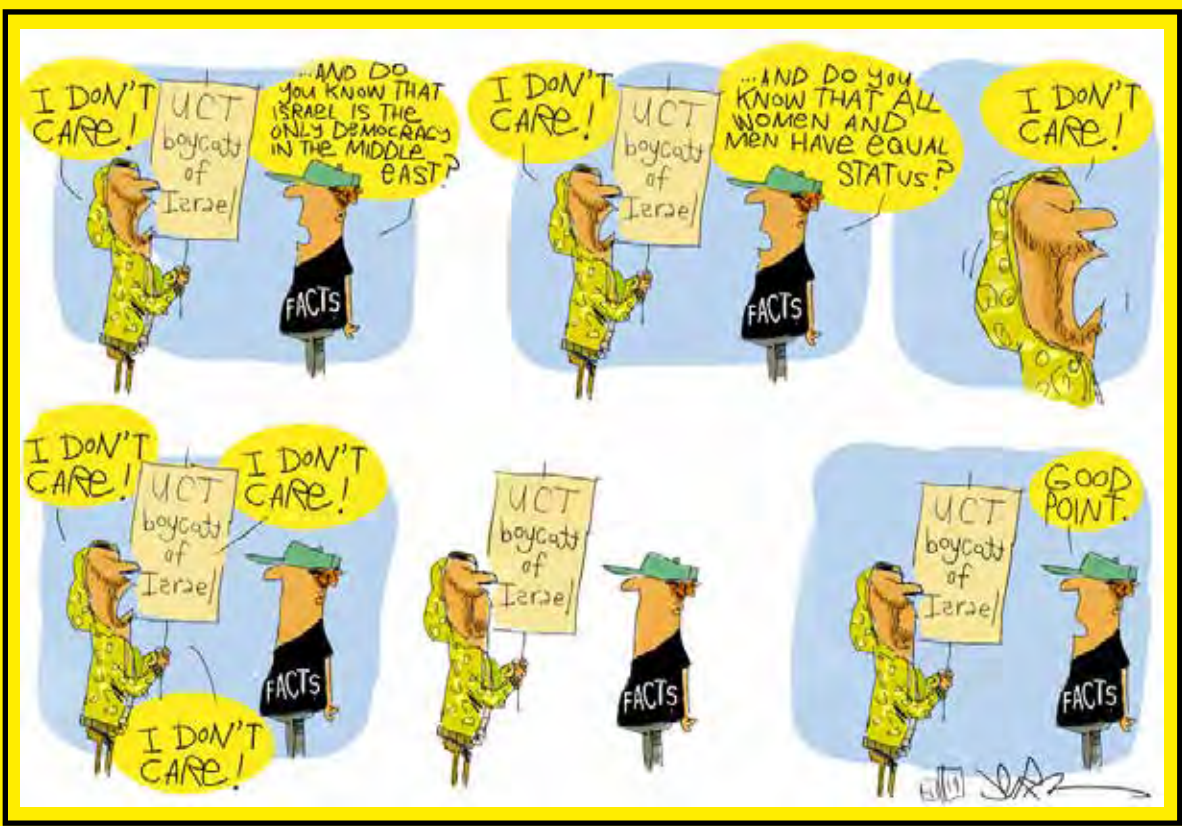
Also expressing outrage is the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) leader, Reverend Kenneth Meshoe, who said that there was absolutely no place for such use of religious figures in the wilful distortion of history. In a responding statement, he said, “The ACDP condemns the unacceptable habit of the EFF of releasing statements during Easter and Passover alleging that Jesus Christ was a Palestinian.

“I appeal to [...] the leadership of the EFF to respect our faith, and stop spreading lies about Jesus Christ. All honest South Africans and people around the world know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, not Palestine. When Jesus was born, the word Palestine was not even coined. The EFF’s political goal of trying to undermine the state of Israel is rejected with the contempt it deserves.”

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) said that Ndlozi’s invocation of the viciously anti-Semitic “Christ-killer” imagery to defame the Jewish state was deplorable, if predictable. According to Associate Director David Saks, this slander against the Jewish people is historically one of the most pernicious, inciting anti-Jewish bigotry and frequently even acts of murderous violence against Jewish communities everywhere.

“Likening the alleged crimes by Israel today with what Jews were supposedly guilty of twenty centuries ago has the obviously intended effect of portraying Jews as being cruel and evil by nature,” he says. “Whereas all mainstream Christian movements have now distanced themselves from such venomous ideologies, the EFF appears to be quite comfortable to fall back on the crudest medieval-era rhetoric and imagery in order to demonise not only Israel but the Jewish people as a whole.

“The SAJBD rejects it with the contempt it deserves, and all decent-minded South Africans will surely do likewise.”



## South African in shul during San Diego shul shooting

>>>Continued from page 1

the Friendship Circle programme she runs out of his shul. She also knew Gilbert-Kaye – “she worked on many *tzedakah* projects including the Friendship Circle”.

Ellman said when she first heard of the shooting, she was shocked. “We had been at another shul for Shabbat morning, last day Pesach and Yizkor with our kids and four grandkids. We left near the end, and a police car pulled up at the very secure entrance to our shul and asked the guard to step up to the van. We thought it was a bit strange, but didn’t think much of it until we got home and a friend called to tell me what had happened. I learnt that Lori had been murdered only later that afternoon.”

She says she never imagined this could happen there, “but we are South Africans and are in Israel a lot, and we see the rise of anti-Semitism all over the world and the dysfunctional individuals who have access to guns in this country. Every week, it’s another shooting. We had one of our mosques burnt just last week by an unknown arsonist. There’s a combination of hate and violence being accepted values, having access to guns, and the now more open acceptance of being anti-Jew and anti-Muslim.”

To the South African Jewish community, she says, “Never be complacent! Keep your eyes open. Continue with the great work of your CSO [Community Security Organisation]. Kids need to meet with other faiths in

structured, facilitated groups to learn how hate breeds hate and love and understanding breeds love.”

Cheryl Horn, originally from Cape Town, says she knew Rabbi Goldstein, and was horrified and shocked. “Today and yesterday there were police cars outside our shul, and

when I dropped off the kids at Hebrew day school this morning, there were cop cars there too.”

Daniela Peiser Levi, who lived in Cape Town for a number of years, knew Gilbert-Kaye through friends and her husband had gone to the Chabad shul several times.

She says people “are on one hand feeling scared, like me. On the other hand, it does unite the community, and there is a beauty in how everyone is coming together to remember Lori and those that were injured and to stand strong against hate.

“We will continue to go to shul as always, but there is definitely a heightened sense of security at the shuls, the schools, and community events. A friend of ours is organising the logistics of the funeral, which is expected to have a large turnout.”

Her first reaction when she heard of the shooting was fear, “as it hit really close to home. Poway is within the San Diego Jewish community, and we are all connected. It could have been any one of us. It just takes one person to create a horror. My reaction was to let those I love know how much they meant to me, and to give my kids extra hugs and kisses. I want to keep them safe.”



Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein and Lori Gilbert-Kaye

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# A step too far, and a paper-thin apology

By now, you have most likely read about the cartoon that the *New York Times* published last week. It depicted a Dachshund with the face of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, wearing a blue dog’s collar and a dangling Star of David necklace – in case one was not clear as to the religious nature of the animal. The dog’s leash, also an Israeli blue, was held by a rather rotund Donald Trump, who wore sunglasses for the visually impaired, and seemed to have had a yarmulke placed on his head. The Jewish dog was clearly leading the “Judised” president.

The work was hardly original. A similar cartoon appeared in Germany in the 1920s. Only then it was Winston Churchill being led by a haredi looking Jew.

It took two days for the *New York Times* to acknowledge that the publication was in poor judgement, and that it contained anti-Semitic tropes. It took another day for it to apologise. Whether it would have done so

if the so-called Jewish symbols of the Star of David and the yarmulke were removed is an interesting question. Then, it might have relied on the defence that it was a comment on Israel and not on Jews. Unfortunately, the clumsiness of the caricature left it very little wiggle room, and it had little option but to admit defeat.

In essence, the publication went a step too far. Especially since on the same day that it decided to acknowledge that the cartoon was anti-Semitic, a 19-year-old walked into a shul outside San Diego with the express intention of killing as many Jews as possible. Its timing couldn’t have been worse.

Worth interrogating is the reaction to this. Whereas almost everyone condemned it, there were a few I came across who failed to be offended by it. One Jewish social-media user (who often expresses disdain for Trump and Netanyahu) saw it more as a comment about the personalities and the characters being depicted than as a metaphor

about Jews leading a lame, blinded America. Whereas he is fully entitled to choose to see it this way, I believe he is mistaken, as most readers will fail to make the distinction. As was the case in Germany with the depiction of Churchill being led.

In the course of my public activity and as a commentator on these types of issues, I am often concerned by our reaction. These events validate our fear and anxiety in the sense that they “prove” what we have been saying all along. So, in the case of the *New York Times*, which has been accused of being no friend to Jews or Israel, the publication of the cartoon is vindication and proof of what we have been feeling all along. It’s confirmation bias in that no matter how many other “balanced” articles might have been published, this one corroborates our thesis.

This is not to suggest that this cartoon was not racist, and it is not to suggest that the *New York Times* doesn’t engage in anti-Israel rhetoric on an ongoing basis, but we do need to temper our response.

In conversation on this issue with David Harris of the Clarion Project (an organisation that monitors global terror), he expressed that

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



as a journalist for some years, the one thing he knew for certain was that a newspaper would not respond well by being lambasted and accused of anti-Semitism. He urged readers to engage (in this case) with the *New York Times*, but not spew hatred and accusation. Correspondence in that vein would just entrench negative or anti-Semitic feelings. And whereas I am not certain that I am comfortable with victim blaming, the adult part of my brain does hear what he is saying.

What is clear is that anti-Semitism has become mainstream. The lines are vague, and we can expect to see more of it as the limits are tested. The “artist” at the *New York Times* produced a piece that fell on the wrong side of acceptability. For now. And so, the paper apologised. This time.

It all reminds me of American Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, who when asked to define the threshold test for obscenity, simply responded that although it was not easy to do, “I know it when I see it.”

## New York Times – ‘cesspool of hostility’

RON KAMPEAS – JTA

The Israeli ambassador to the United States has linked the *New York Times* to the “Jew-hatred of growing parts of the intellectual class”.

Ron Dermer was speaking on Monday in the US Capitol at the annual Holocaust Days of Remembrance organised by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

It was an unusually political attack on a day and at an event organised by an institution that generally focuses on the historical meaning of the Holocaust.

Dermer listed recent lethal attacks against Jews, including Saturday’s deadly shooting at the Chabad of Poway, a suburb of San Diego.

He attributed the California attack, which killed one congregant and injured three, and the October massacre at a Pittsburgh synagogue that killed 11 worshippers, to white supremacists. But Dermer added that “we have also seen anti-Semitism increasingly poison minds in the political classes of what once proudly called itself the West”.

Describing what he termed “the Jew-hatred of growing parts of the intellectual class”, Dermer referred to anti-Semitism plaguing Britain’s Labour Party and rising anti-Israel activity on campuses.

“We have also seen one of the world’s most prestigious newspapers become a cesspool of hostility towards Israel that goes well beyond any legitimate criticism of a fellow, imperfect democracy,” Dermer said.

“The same *New York Times* that a century ago

mostly hid from their readers the Holocaust of the Jewish people has today made its pages a safe space for those who hate the Jewish state. Through biased coverage, slanderous columns, and anti-Semitic cartoons, its editors shamefully choose week after week to cast the Jewish state as a force for evil.”

Over the weekend, the *Times* apologised for including in its international print edition a cartoon depicting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a guide dog wearing a Star of David collar and leading a yarmulke-clad President Donald Trump.

The cartoon led to intense criticism of the newspaper, including by some of its op-ed page columnists who are consistently pro-Israel. Among them is Bret Stephens, who wrote a column about the cartoon excoriating his newspaper for “an astonishing act of ignorance of anti-Semitism”, coming from a news outlet “that is otherwise hyper-alert to nearly every conceivable expression of prejudice, from mansplaining to racial microaggressions to transphobia”. Stephens said the paper should apologise to Netanyahu.

However, Stephens, a former editor in chief of the *Jerusalem Post*, added, “I have now been with the Times for two years and I’m certain that the charge that the institution is in any way anti-Semitic is a calumny.”

Dermer in his Holocaust remembrance speech also alluded to a recent controversy surrounding freshman Democrat, Representative Ilhan Omar, who has been accused of invoking anti-Semitic slanders in some of her statements critical of Israel. She has apologised for some, but not all.



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# What do our youth feel about voting?

TALI FEINBERG

“The youth are feeling excited about the experience of voting, possibly for the first time, but I think few are invested in this country. The majority of us have started to look at leaving, as we feel it will ensure a better future for us and our children,” says a 20-year-old Jewish student from Johannesburg ahead of the national elections on 8 May.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, she said, “It’s a hard decision to leave home and what you know, but most of us feel change is no longer possible in our lifetime, and leaving and ‘abandoning’ South Africa is our only option. Almost all of my peers talk about leaving or emigrating. You’re almost seen as crazy if you’re not looking at your options to leave.”

This attitude was shared by most of the young people who spoke to the *SA Jewish Report* ahead of the national elections.

The anonymous 20-year-old says she completed her first year of a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), “but felt the environment was too politically charged and disruptive”. She left, and is taking a gap year doing various courses.

This is her first time as a voter, and “while the idea is exciting, I can’t help but feel a bit despondent and that I’m too much of a minority to see the differences I’d want in my country. I will be voting for the Democratic Alliance (DA) as I feel it is the least corrupt. I believe the members are well-educated and diplomatic, and are passionate about ensuring our country reaches its potential – a difficult task.”

Regarding the current political climate, she believes the youth are “starting to feel that this country is in too much economic turmoil to help build a successful future. The environment is racially charged. Many white youth feel that they are not wanted or valued in the country. The fear is that as white people, even those born into democracy, we will

always have to pay for the decisions previous generations made.”

She says there is a clear divide amongst her peers about who they will be voting for. “My non-white friends feel the only party that has and will be there for them is the ANC [African National Congress], while my white Jewish peers feel this way about the DA, and are tired of corruption and being hated for their white privilege.

“We all feel racism goes both ways, and this is not always acknowledged in our country. Major parties often express anti-white views. There are also many young whites who don’t want to vote as they see it as futile, and are set on leaving South Africa eventually anyway.”

She doesn’t see a future in South Africa anymore, “and this breaks my heart. My year at Wits, surrounded by South African youth of all backgrounds, unfortunately showed me that we haven’t moved past racial prejudices and injustices as much I had previously thought. I feel I will never have a fair say in my country because of my experiences as a white person.”

But her final message is relatively positive: “This country is special – rich in history and resources. It has, however, been managed poorly. It is for this reason that I encourage everyone who can to vote. There is less chance of achieving change if we don’t try.”

Others are more hopeful. A matric pupil at King David Linksfield, who will turn 18 just before the elections, is happy that she will be able to take part. Though unsure for a while, she thinks she will vote DA, because she wants a strong opposition.

She believes the youth are feeling “frustrated”, and in regard to her Jewish peers, she says, “We live in an isolated society as white Jewish youth. Because of that, we don’t get the richness, heritage, and culture, and are therefore not invested in South Africa.”

For this reason, she believes young Jews are choosing to leave, and also because they fear economic collapse. However, she sees a lot of



Liat Dayan

opportunity. “I see a future here – I love South Africa, the people, and the culture. If we engage in society, we will see it is a remarkably rich country. It’s not something I would like to miss out on.”

Russel Cowan is 24, but this will be the first time he will vote as he says there wasn’t a party that represented his views in the past. This election, he will vote for the ZACP (the Capitalist Party of South Africa) nationally, and for COPE (the Congress of the People) locally.

Cowan believes both parties have strong stances on property rights and “less government interference. Socialism has failed, and the only way we are going to prosper is to

create the right environment for people to lift themselves up.”. Ownership of land is a key to growing the economy, he says, and if the government goes ahead with land expropriation without compensation, he would probably leave South Africa. But he hopes to stay.

He feels the ZACP is the only party that welcomes diversity of opinion and uncomfortable conversations. He thinks the DA changes its message depending on which audience it is addressing.

Cowan says his views and vote are different to his peers and parents – his father was an ANC councillor, and his peers talk about voting for the DA. However, he has convinced many to vote for the ZACP. He says the youth are “not excited or invested in this election, as the parties are just not appealing well to youth”. He worries that, in general, South African youth will be drawn to the EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters).

Liat Dayan is 18 years old, and at King David Linksfield. This is her first time as a voter, and she is excited. “I feel like I will finally be able to make an impact on my country, even if it’s a small one. I’m also nervous because I don’t know what to expect, and it’s a huge responsibility.”

She’ll be voting for the DA, as “I don’t have faith in the ANC. It has continuously failed this country, and I believe that the DA could bring about a lot of positive change. Through governing the Western Cape, the DA has shown that it has the ability to govern effectively. It has created many jobs, which I believe is the only way to reverse the cycle of poverty in our country.” She, too, thinks a lot of her peers have

lost faith in South Africa, and don’t see a future for themselves here.

Dayan plans to leave to study marine biology, as “I can’t see myself studying here. There are too many interruptions at the universities for me to get the education I want. However, I do feel a responsibility to South Africa to make a difference, and after my studies, I would like to work with ocean conservation in



Kanthan Pillay (ZACP) and Russel Cowan

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South Africa.”

Jaiden Bank, an 18-year-old at King David Linksfield, is excited to be a first-time voter. “As a citizen of this country, every vote and opinion is important. Change can come about from each individual vote.”

He will be voting for the DA, as he thinks it has “the best interests of the country at heart. It is the party that can help to attain the goals we set out for ourselves and our country.”

He believes his vote will be similar to that of his peers and parents. However, while he remains optimistic about the future, he believes this sentiment is not shared by many other young people. “They are pessimistic, and see the country as being in a state of disrepair. They think the country is too ‘far gone’.”

Bank, on the other hand, thinks that South Africa is a “goldmine”, but “the only way this country can become great is through correct leadership”.

“Everyone voting needs to vote for change and against corruption and injustice. This election is pivotal for our future,” he says. “It’s part of our civic duty or moral obligation to vote for who we believe is best for South Africa and our community. We need to be the ones who stand up and advocate for justice, equality, fairness, and the best possible future.”



# 'You can vote for EFF if you don't support Israel'

MIRAH LANGER

Everyone is welcome to support the EFF unless they support Israel, Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) election spokesperson Veronica Mente told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

"Anyone in South Africa who is here and keen to advance the plight of the poor and also advocate for what the EFF advocates for, we do not have a problem... Unless people have beliefs that are against humanity; unless people have beliefs like the Israeli people."

Israelis, said Mente, were those who "just occupy other people's land and kill other people, and think that it's funny. We have no relations with such people."

Asked what the EFF's stance was on the downgrading of the South African embassy in Israel, Mente said the move was a "good thing", but needed to go further. "The Israeli embassy in South Africa must be removed, not just downgraded.

"We cannot have an embassy in South Africa of people that is perpetuating genocide on other people. How do you have a government that just occupies other people's space and makes them subjects, not just makes them subjects – we are going back

to the slavery era.

"It [Israel] is killing them. It is killing children. It is killing babies. Those people [Palestinians] must now seek refuge in the mountain with animals, without food, without water. They are dying. [Israel] is killing them with weapons and everything. Those Israeli people, they are just the worst of people."

Asked what her definition of genocide was, Mente said it was "when people are unleashing unnecessary violence on others and the violence that is influenced by you gaining power over them and an imperialist system that seeks to take over the economy". [sic]

Mente suggested that if the International Criminal Court was "of any activeness for our globe" it should start by dealing with Israel.

She said South Africa needed to be more vocal about "the Palestine genocide" at international forums like the United Nations or the Pan-African Parliament, and that if the EFF came to power, it would take up the cause immediately.



Mente said people who wanted to support the work of the EFF and contribute to South Africa must believe in complete equality.

In addition, "they should be open to the sharing of the land [and] they should be open to paying salaries that are not less than R4 500. Especially the Jewish community, most of them... [are] owning businesses. Their contribution first and foremost should be to pay their workers not less than R4 500, which will be a minimum wage

under the EFF government."

She said the Jewish community could also support the EFF by assisting the underprivileged, especially schoolchildren, with shelter, clothes, and school fees.

"They must do that. We won't have a problem with them."

Asked what the EFF's response was to young Jewish South Africans who were considering leaving the country as they felt uncertain if they had a space in it, Mente said, "If they don't feel comfortable being among black

people who are poor in South Africa, they can go, no problem. They can leave the country, no problem. We won't beg them to stay. If they don't want to live with people in South Africa, as they feel that their equality to black people hampers their space, then they can leave. Because us, as black Africans in particular, we don't have anywhere else to go. This is where we were born. This is where our ancestors were born.

"At least Jewish people have somewhere to go. They can go back to where they came from; they have other countries where the Jewish people are living."

Mente said her party's election campaign was going well. The EFF has only one goal, namely winning government.

"The only thing that we hope for, and that we are working towards, is the winning of government. We are not working to be kingmaker. We are not working towards being an opposition. We must get 51% and above [of the national vote]. That is our target."



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# The lone Jewish candidate of the Freedom Front Plus

JORDAN MOSHE

Among the numerous Afrikaans names which appear on the Freedom Front Plus (FFP) list of election candidates, the lone Jewish name of Sidney Anolik stands out immediately.

Anolik is an ardent activist, a proud Jew, and a staunch defender of the state of Israel who has found a platform for securing the rights of the Jewish minority in South Africa. This platform is one most would find odd, that of the FFP.

“If you told me twenty years ago that I would go into politics, I’d have laughed at you,” says Anolik. “I never once dreamed I’d become a politician. While it has its restraints, politics enables me to take up the fight for our rights as Jews in South Africa.”

Describing himself as a typical Jewish man of Johannesburg, Anolik’s involvement with politics was for years limited to supporting the Democratic Alliance (DA). “I supported the DA like my family did,” he says. “My parents had supported and been friendly with Helen Suzman and left-wing parties who had fought apartheid.”

It was when then DA leader Tony Leon entered into a deal with the National Party (NP) that Anolik became disillusioned with the party. “They are parties at two opposite poles,” he says. “One represented apartheid and the other completely opposed apartheid. Oil and water don’t mix. They did it to gain votes, but you can’t break principles and defy who you are.”

In 2013, he decided to leave the DA completely in the wake of an African National Congress (ANC) subcommittee motion to send then Israeli ambassador Arthur Lenk back to Israel. Although he sought repeatedly to get the DA to address the issue, he says he was met with a complete lack of interest.

“I phoned up the DA, and no one would take my calls. Not even my councillor would speak to me. No one would listen to me, and address the issue of the ambassador. I just left the DA, and resigned as a member.”

However, after being invited to meet Congress of the People (COPE) leader Mosiuoa Lekota a few months later, he found himself being drawn into the realm of politics. “Lekota phoned me up and asked if I’d meet him,” Anolik says. “He had heard from a mutual friend about my activism and invited me to be a part of his party.

“I couldn’t see myself doing it. I told him that I was no politician, just a simple Jewish man who fought for our Jewish community and Israel. Still, I decided to join, and became part of COPE that year.”

He became the head of the party’s Gauteng disciplinary committee. However, Anolik says that he not only frequently encountered anti-Semitism in the ranks, but also an indifferent leadership that would do nothing about it.

“I’d spent my life defending Jews, and here I found myself working for a party whose members often made anti-Semitic remarks. Even when I reported the incidents to national level, they did nothing about it, and it kept happening.”

After spending three years with the party, Anolik met the FFP’s Franco De Lange in November 2015, finding a party that would take his concern for the Jewish minority seriously. Despite his initial apprehension and belief that the party was racist, Anolik discovered that the centre-right FFP featured a significant coloured and Khoi representation, and was built on a belief that all minorities deserve the same treatment as the majority.

“The party was said to be racist, predominantly white, and Afrikaans,” he says. “I did my research, spoke to people, and discovered that this was not the case. In fact, I found that its championing of minority rights aligned with my activism for the Jewish minority. So I accepted an invitation to join the party.”

As he became better acquainted with this conservative party, Anolik discovered how much the FFP actually had in common with the Jewish community, and how it supported him as a Jew. “When I attended my first meeting, De Lange insisted that I wear my kippa. I was



Sidney Anolik

welcomed with immediate warmth.”

He says he soon realised how connected the Afrikaner and Jewish histories actually are. “I became familiar with their history,” he says. “When I learned that about 27 000 to 30 000 women and children had died in concentration camps at the hands of the British during the Boer

War, something struck a chord.

“While the Holocaust was very different, I felt that there was a similarity, that our histories were intertwined. Jews have also engaged with Afrikaners for decades in different industries, from farming to commerce. We are more alike than we think.”

Anolik explains that beyond taking anti-Semitism very seriously, the FFP frequently leads the charge on matters concerning Israel as well. This includes previously challenging the ANC’s decision to rename Sandton Drive in honour of Palestinian freedom fighter Leila Khaled, and opposing the instalment of a statue of Mandela in Ramallah.

Anolik’s role as the FFP’s co-ordinator for South African Jewry and matters concerning Israel resulted in him visiting the Knesset

in December last year, meeting members of various parties to foster positive relationships.

“People think the FFP does nothing,” he says. “The truth is that we work behind the scenes. I don’t jump and scream and protest, but choose to act quietly in the background for the sake of my people and Israel. We want all minorities to be treated like the majority while maintaining their individual identity, be they Jews or otherwise.”

While other parties which express support for Israel such as COPE and the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) are invited to engage with Jewish leadership, Anolik says that the same opportunities are not extended to the FFP. “The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) turned us down in spite of the fact that we support the Jewish community and Israel,” he says.

“The Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement needs to be taken to court, and we’ve offered the board the services of advocate Anton Alberts to take BDS on, but it has refused. The FFP can fight for the community as Jews and supporters of Israel, but it doesn’t get the chance.”

## Jewish community plays key role in building SA – COPE

MIRAH LANGER

Congress of the People (COPE) National Spokesman Dennis Bloem used a Jewish anti-apartheid icon to explain the impact small parties could have in driving big changes.

“Look at what Helen Suzman did in the dark days of apartheid. When she was in parliament, she was a lone voice against many. But she was [speaking out] about the conditions of Nelson Mandela and the other political prisoners on Robben Island, and things changed on Robben Island because of her.”

In fact, Bloem said during a telephonic interview, COPE was a party that truly appreciated the Jewish community’s contribution to South Africa. “We know the role that some of the leading figures of the Jewish community have played towards our struggle for freedom. We will never forget the role that they have played and [what they did] to assist us financially and legally.”

As such, promised Bloem, “we [COPE] will always be there to protect [the South African Jewish community]”.

Asked what COPE needed to protect the community from, Bloem answered that there was a “negative attitude from some quarters” in South Africa. “The Jewish community mustn’t be discouraged in keeping what it stands for, because just a minority don’t value its contribution and our relationship. They [the South African Jewish community] must always think of the majority that value the relationship.”

Like the United Democratic Movement, Bloem felt one of COPE’s greatest strengths was its consistency. “The Congress of the People is consistent in what it stands for. We stand for a South Africa that is free of discrimination, and a South Africa that will prosper. We are going to protect the rights of everybody inside the country and outside



the country that will come to South Africa.”

Asked about the downgrade of the South African embassy in Israel, Bloem said COPE had made it clear that it completely disagreed with the decision. “We believe in a two-state solution to the problems of the

people of Israel. We have been straightforward and clear about this matter. “If we were in government, we could have used the same methods used in South Africa to bring both sides together around one table to sort out their differences, like at Codesa [the Convention for a Democratic South Africa].”

Bloem said that the South African Jewish community continued to play a key role in building South Africa. Any “financial or economic help” it could offer would also be appreciated. He invited the community to engage further with his political party going forward.

Bloom said COPE expected to do much better in these elections than previously. In 2014, “it was a little bit negative, but now it is very positive”, he proclaimed.

• Dennis Bloem spoke to the SA Jewish Report on behalf of party leader Mosiuoa Lekota, who took ill this week.

## Ensure the country is being driven sober, says UDM

MIRAH LANGER

A vote for the United Democratic Movement (UDM) would be a sign of support for the fight against corruption and in favour of the party’s call for legislation promoting transparency on party funding, says UDM leader Bantu Holomisa.

“[The UDM] is the only party battling on a wicket to promote ethics and anti-corruption right through,” he said in a telephonic interview.

Holomisa said there was still great hope for the nation. “South Africa is still a great country. All we need to do is make sure is that the driver that is driving it is sober.

In fact, said Holomisa, South Africa and its handling of diversity could serve as an example for how to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “Countries like Israel and Palestine, they can learn a lot from South Africa. Here we tolerate religion.

“If one is to see how your [the South African Jewish] community is enjoying themselves in this country, that is the kind of democracy which Mandela hoped would be in Israel.”

Holomisa said he believed the government’s decision to downgrade the South African embassy in Israel was a “pity” as South Africa could serve as an example of successful negotiation. In the past, he had visited the region several times, including meeting Palestinian Liberation Organisation Chairman Yasser Arafat, who has since died.

For peace to succeed, Israel must stop perpetuating violence. “We have to be sensitive to the clarion call by the world that Israel stops bombing innocent kids and women. If you fight with soldiers, fight with soldiers, but how do you justify bombing houses where there are kids? It’s just not acceptable,” said Holomisa, citing the UDM’s position.

“Everyone has seen how Israel is using its military might, and it’s not good when you see that destruction of property, kids killed. It’s inhuman, finished and *klaar*. Don’t even talk about the rest. The simplest thing needed [is that] they must sit down. Do it as we did here in South Africa. They will easily find each other.”



Bantu Holomisa

Continued on page 11>>



# The ACDP ‘is a friend to Jews and Israel’

MIRAH LANGER

“Besides the ACDP, there is no political party that supports Israel as a state, its right to self-defence, and its right to live within secure borders. In South Africa, we are concerned about the safety of Jews. We speak about that openly and loudly. They have the right to live securely, and they should not have to worry about anti-Semitism.”

This invitation of friendship was extended by African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) leader Reverend Kenneth Meshoe to potential voters in the Jewish community during a sit-down interview at Balfour Park in Johannesburg.

“The day will come soon when South Africa will be a haven from anti-Semitism for Jews. They need to know that in the ACDP, they have a friend who cares for them.”

He said the connection he felt with the Jewish people stemmed from the Bible and his studies of scripture. “True Christians know that we cannot separate ourselves from the Jews.”

As such, the friendship between the groups was a “permanent one”, he affirmed.

“I can be disappointed by one Jew, but I will never paint the whole nation with the same brush.”

Meshoe described the government’s decision to downgrade the South African embassy in Israel as “foolish”, especially because of Israel’s expertise in various fields that could assist South Africa.

“Israel has the means to help South Africa. For our government to do that [the downgrade] to people who can help! And then

[it] embraces Hamas, who can’t do anything. That’s foolishness. How do you embrace a person whose specialty is killing: making suicide bombs, making rockets? You embrace that person, and you reject the person who can help solve your water crisis and many other problems? To me, that’s stupid.”

Meshoe said that his party was not entirely sure about the candour of the Palestinian side in making peace. “The Palestinians, I don’t think that they sincerely want a state; they want all of Israel.” He believed the Palestinians had an underlying agenda, namely, “The annihilation of Israel is the bottom line; they don’t want it to exist.”

Meshoe said that if the ACDP was in government, it would make sure that this issue was addressed upfront before negotiations between the two sides began. “My starting point would be for Palestinians to accept in writing the right of Israel to exist. Secondly, [negotiations would also have] to consider historical facts. These prove that Israel lived in the land even before the word ‘Palestine’ was coined. Whatever negotiations take place, that must be considered.”

Negotiations must also ensure that the security of Israel was guaranteed, he said. Meshoe said his defence of Israel was based on core ethical values. “I would defend

any group or tribe that is threatened with annihilation. Whenever anyone is threatened, I will automatically take their side. Because no one has a right to deny a nation, group, or tribe the right to exist. G-d has made all tribes on earth.”

He said that in regard to his political career, his best time had been during the era of former President Nelson Mandela. Meshoe hoped that after the elections, the political landscape would return to this kind of reconciliatory engagement.

“Mr Mandela would call leaders of the opposition parties. He would call me to ask me for my opinion. In those days, we [the ACDP] were the only two members of parliament. He [valued] us. I felt I had something to contribute.”

Meshoe said he believed President Cyril Ramaphosa lacked the requisite qualities needed to build the nation successfully.

“The ruling party can never be rehabilitated, as it is more concerned about the party than the country. Cyril Ramaphosa, who I know very well, has disappointed me terribly.

“I have known him not to have a very strong backbone. He wants to be loved and accepted by everybody, which I think is a negative as a politician. Ramaphosa is brilliant, but he doesn’t have the character to sustain that brilliance.”

Asked what the ACDP hoped the outcome of the elections would be, Meshoe said that he believed the party would get a percentage of the vote that was in the “two digits. Our voice will be stronger.”

He said his dream for South African politics was “to have more g-dly people in politics; people who are healed from the pain of the past, people who have listening capacity.”

## Ensure the country is being driven sober, says UDM

>>Continued from page 10

However, when the Israeli and Palestinian sides do engage, it has to be without “foreign influence” from countries who often had “vested interests”, he said. He specifically mentioned the role of the United States, saying that it had consistently used its power to veto resolutions taken against Israel at global forums.

“If Palestinians and Israelis are going to rely on foreigners to solve their problems, they must kiss and say goodbye to peace.”

The UDM’s hope for the upcoming election was to “do well and increase our seats. We had four seats; we need more”.

Holomisa said that the South African Jewish community could play a key mentoring role in the country. “The Jewish community has been privileged in terms of being in the economic sphere. What it should do is get some of the young kids who have just graduated or who want to be entrepreneurs and [mentor them] to obtain skills.”

He also encouraged the community to help with projects like building schools and shelters.

Holomisa dismissed the idea of a vote for smaller parties being a wasted vote. “Cyril Ramaphosa would not be the president today had it not been for the smaller parties.” This occurred, he said, after smaller parties called for the removal of former President Jacob Zuma, and spent millions in the Constitutional Court to bring about various anti-corruption cases.

Rehabilitation of the African National Congress is not a prospect he entertains. “This ANC is the one which was saying that Zuma must not pay... It’s the same party that believed a swimming pool can be turned into a fire pool. Sorry!”

## Most Jews of Polish, Lithuanian & Latvian origin are entitled to EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT

A common misconception is that South African Jews of Ashkenazi heritage are of Polish, Lithuanian & Latvian descent, and that only those who are able to prove their eligibility for Polish, Lithuanian & Latvian citizenship are able to obtain a European passport. The fact is that most South African Jews do qualify for European

European citizenship which will result in them obtaining a EU passport. **Ashkenazi:** It is important to understand that until 1918, all of Eastern Europe was divided between three empires: Russia, Prussia, the Austro-Hungarian empire. Neither Poland nor Lithuania and Latvia existed until 1918.

changed, resulting in cities changing nationality. The resultant effect for descendants of Jews who were born in Vilnius, for example, is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined, but an application for a Polish passport may very well be successful.

**Sephardi:** the descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are most likely eligible for a Portuguese passport. If applicable, Horesh is able to obtain an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which an application for European citizenship can be made and will most likely be successful. Portuguese citizenship enables one to enter the Unites States without the need to apply for a visa.

In addition, Horesh is filing many applications for descendants of Sephardi origin who arrived in South Africa from Greece, Turkey, and North Africa. Descendents from other countries in the Middle East – even Holland – are also potentially eligible.

Horesh resides in Israel, but has spent seven



years in Poland, and is recognised as a leading lawyer in the field of European citizenship, with a full understanding of local immigration laws.

Living in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – offers him quick and easy access to Poland, Latvian and Lithuania. Accordingly, he is able to work closely with local professionals who assist him in tracing the documentation required for successful applications for European citizenship.

In addition, and as a result of his close ties with Portuguese authorities, to date he has had a 100% success rate with applications for Portuguese citizenship.

**Horesh is available to discuss your specific details. He is often in South Africa, and can meet you in person to discuss your specific needs.**



Destroyed Warsaw, January 1945

At the end of the WWI, the territory was divided, and countries like Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and others were born/ reborn. Only then did residents became citizens of these countries. As a result, people who, for example, were born in Riga (nowadays Latvia) could actually be Polish, Lithuanian or Latvian.

Horesh advises that eligibility for a Lithuanian Latvian or Polish passport depends on the city from which your grandparents (or their parents) hailed.

Horesh says many South African Ashkenazi Jews of Lithuanian origin have been refused Lithuanian citizenship because their heritage is actually Polish. They would, accordingly, be entitled to Polish citizenship and a EU passport.

After World War II, the borders in Europe



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# Why more South Africans are making aliyah

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

“Israel is the only country in the world that welcomes us, wants us, and offers so many opportunities,” says Sally Leibowitz, who plans to make aliyah this year.

The aliyah figures are testament to this way of thinking, with 70 South Africans making aliyah between January and February 2019, 20% more than the same period last year.

While Liat Amar Arran, the director of the Israel Centre South Africa says that aliyah figures have stayed relatively steady over the past three years, at about 350, this year seems to be different.

“There are diverse reasons for this,” she says. “Often older people have kids who’ve made aliyah already, and they wish to join them and be with the grandchildren. Sometimes couples have kids who have just finished matric, and they feel it’s time to make this choice.

“People here love Israel. This is a very Zionist community, and people feel connected to Israel. Big South African communities are also already living in Israel, and help with the absorption process.”

Immigrating to be with children and grandchildren is certainly a motivating factor for Leibowitz. “My daughter and son-in-law are moving, so we’re going too,” she says. “I’ve always been keen on moving. Basically, I don’t think there’s a future here for [my] grandchildren. My step granddaughter was told she couldn’t get a job at Investec because she’s white, even though she’s currently one of the top chartered accountancy students. My grandchildren are eight and five, and there’s very little chance of them getting anything here in the future.”

Leibowitz is unsure whether things will come right. In the meantime, the cost of living is prohibitive. “It’s just becoming increasingly expensive to live. You have to pay for private medical aid, private security, private schools, private everything. You’re not getting anything for your tax money.

“What happened with Zuma and co is an absolute disaster politically, and I feel that the DA [Democratic Alliance] lost the plot too. There’s no real leadership in the country. Cyril’s great, but his hands are tied so I can’t see anything coming together, definitely not

in the short-term.

“Both my daughter and son-in-law have a masters in chemical engineering. He’s a systems engineer, she’s chemical, and there’s no industry in South Africa for her. She’d really like to get back into engineering and make a difference. She can find jobs in Israel that will allow her to do that. There are so many more opportunities there. Things are happening, there’s a buzz. It’s a hard life, but anywhere else you go will be hard. You don’t have all the help that you have here, but working towards making a difference makes it worthwhile.

“I don’t think it’ll be hard to leave what we’ve built here, as we’re basically taking whatever we’ve got with us,” she says. “I downsized a few years ago when we moved up to Joburg from Durban, and now I’m downsizing even more. It’s actually quite cathartic to get rid of the things hanging around you.”

Michelle\* is less enthusiastic about leaving South Africa, but feels that Israel has a lot to offer. “I know the grass won’t be greener on the other side, but there’s a different kind of freedom in Israel,” she says. While she feels a bit pressurised to leave by her husband – and by her two children who are already living and studying in Israel – she points out that things aren’t great in South Africa. “I’m increasingly seeing the red tape in this country, the ‘I couldn’t care less attitude’,” she says. “If you want something from a government or municipal department, you just sit and wait. We’re still waiting for our unabridged marriage certificate from Home Affairs.”

Her husband, Cyril, is filled with excitement about their impending move. “I just love Israel,” he says. “I got it from my dad, who lived on a kibbutz when he was in Israel. It’s not just holy, it’s exciting, it’s interesting, it’s special. It doesn’t matter how difficult things are, there’s no other country like it. I’ve always wanted to go. We were supposed to have gone about five times already, and something always got in the way. At last, it’s happening.”

Cyril looks forward to further exploring

Israel’s sights and history, and to immersing himself in technological development where his passion lies. “I’ll also study more Hebrew and Torah,” he says. “I want to build up the country, and do good for Jews in Israel.”

Reuben Moss\* and his wife are newly married, and are planning to move to Israel in June. Reuben will continue to run his South African business remotely, and isn’t sure if the move will be forever. Yet, he feels a strong call to Israel.

“Feeling like you’re part of something is a big motivator for me,” he says. “In South

is a more meaningful immigration destination than other countries. There’s something special about Israel that other places just don’t capture. The location also makes the rest of the world more accessible. It’s an eclectic melting pot, and we want to be part of that. I think South Africa used to feel a lot like that, but now it feels like the ‘rainbow nation’ was more of an idea than a reality.”

Moss says he’s concerned about leaving behind family and laughter. “I think South Africans laugh quite a lot – the sense of humour is really good here. But there’s just an



Africa, I feel like a cog in a big machine. I don’t know if Israel will feel different, but just being Jewish and being in that kind of setup is exciting. There’s so much going on, the economy’s booming, the tech world is growing, which is the way of the future. I want to future proof my skills there, and to network in the tech field.”

Moss is also a strong Zionist. “My great grandmother came from Tzvat, and she always wanted to go back. My mom also briefly lived in Israel as a child in the 60s. There’s always been a draw towards Israel for me, to somehow contribute to building the country. Please G-d, when my wife and I have kids, they’ll be Israeli citizens, which gives them options beyond South Africa. For a Jew, Israel

energy in Israel. It would be foolish as a Jew not to take the chance to experience that.”

With recent changes to the Israel Centre, making aliyah is now a more streamlined process, says Amar Arran. “Half of the process is now online, which means people can do it from home. Only once all the questionnaires have been completed and relevant documents uploaded do candidates meet with us at the centre. It is now completely focused on customer service and on personalisation. Everyone should get the best service, especially through this huge transition. I’m here to help. Israel belongs to all of us.”

*\*Names have been changed.*

## Pesach seder brings home the experience of African refugees

JORDAN MOSHE

Who better to understand the real significance of the story of Pesach than modern-day refugees and asylum seekers?

“After all I’ve been through, it was wonderful to sit in a space where I was made to feel welcome,” says a Zimbabwean refugee who was one of the guests at the special symbolic Pesach seder held at the Temple Israel Heritage Centre (TIHC) last Saturday.

Having escaped the harsh realities of various African countries, two dozen African refugees and asylum seekers in Johannesburg were provided with this unique platform to tell their stories. They highlighted the plight shared by millions in our country and around the world.

“Xenophobia is a global problem affecting people anywhere,” says the chairperson of TIHC, Reeva Forman. “We are talking about decent human beings who struggle to stay alive. It is for us to help them establish who they are, what they do now that they are free, and what they do in the future. The Pesach story is about this exactly.”

TIHC organised the event in partnership

with the Outreach Foundation of the Lutheran Church in Hillbrow. The Pesach story was recounted, including an explanation of the festival. It was interspersed with singing by the Bet David choir from Sandton. Guests from the Congo, Zimbabwe, Burundi, and Somalia, as well as Jewish and non-Jewish South Africans enjoyed a four-course meal.



One of the refugees sharing his story

They also sampled the items on the seder plate, learning about their significance.

During the meal, the guests were invited to share their stories. Forman, Rabbi Adrian Schell of Bet David and Rabbi David Benjamin – a partner of TIHC visiting from Israel – pointed to the experience of the people of Israel as refugees escaping slavery and

oppression in Egypt. They spoke of how the Jews subsequently wandered in the wilderness for forty years before reaching the promised land.

Asking not to be named for fear of reprisal, the Zimbabwean refugee and another from Congo said the seder was a place where they felt at home and were made to feel welcome in a hostile place that didn’t want them.

“When you make a journey like we have done to a place that promises a better life, you want to find a place that welcomes you,” said the Zimbabwean. “Because of the xenophobia I faced when I arrived, I asked whether it had all been worth it.

“We refugees have lost friends and family on these journeys. I asked myself many times, ‘Why did I leave my country to be persecuted again in a country that is supposed to be a democracy?’ But to find myself in a space where I can share my journey and feel immediately welcome makes me very thankful that I made the journey after all.”

The Congolese refugee agreed, saying that it was particularly significant that they were welcomed at a Pesach seder. “Passover is such a meaningful time,” she said. “It affords a space for different people who have had

their share of pain and suffering to open up and identify with each other. We need a good space to open our hearts, express ourselves, and be listened to, and the seder gave us exactly that.”

Hearing stories such as theirs is crucial, says Marion Bubly, the vice-chairperson of Temple Israel. “It was a very emotional experience. Most of us have no idea of the hardships these people go through, leaving family and friends to journey to a new and unknown country, facing all the hardships of xenophobia and other struggles.

“We don’t realise their upheaval in moving somewhere unknown. To hear their stories is important. People must hear them, and understand the reason for their exodus, to end xenophobia.”

Johan Robyn, Chief Operating Officer of the Outreach Foundation, says, “Migration is about movement. The Passover seder is itself a symbol of journeying and movement. It gives us a space to see that the same way the Jewish people undertook a difficult journey, others are engaged in the same today, and like them, they are vulnerable people looking for a better life.

“Those three hours we spent at the seder celebrate our movement forward, the journeys of all people, and the power of an interfaith initiative to bring together people from diverse backgrounds for one purpose.”



# Mexem: a game changer for South African investors

What do you do if you want to invest your hard-earned savings in stocks? Many South Africans will simply tell you to open a trading account with your bank, and start trading. But have you stopped to ask yourself if opening an account with a bank is the best solution? And do you know how much your bank charges you to trade? One last question: do you know if you are being overcharged?

The lack of competition between trading platforms in South Africa has meant that up until now, most people would answer the above questions with a simple, resounding “no”.

This is where Mexem comes in. Mexem is disrupting the South African investing industry by bringing one of the largest online trading platforms in the world – Interactive Brokers – to the South African market.

Interactive Brokers was founded more than 40 years ago by a Jewish Hungarian American, Thomas Petterfy. Petterfy has grown Interactive Brokers to become the largest electronic brokerage firm in the United States, and at the same time has grown to be the 22nd wealthiest person in America according to Forbes.

Interactive Brokers has proven itself time and time again to be the leader in its field, and today is one of the most revered online platforms for trading in stocks, bonds, foreign currency, and a variety of other products, executing more than 800 000 trades a day. However, as a US firm, it hasn't been all that accessible to South African investors until now.

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# A new way of looking at Holocaust resistance

TALI FEINBERG

We think of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust in terms of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising or acts of sabotage in the camps, or even the Oneg Shabbat archive in Poland, but Professor Arthur Shostak says there is one area we may be overlooking: “stealth altruism”.

“Stealth altruism is a new concept I have developed to highlight non-militant acts of sustained, secret care given by victims to other victims, both strangers and kin alike, knowingly undertaken at risk of limb and life,” he said following talks at the Cape Town and Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centres.

“Another new concept of mine is the ‘help story’, of which stealth altruism is a prime component. I contrast it with the ‘horror story’ which tells what perpetrators did to victims. The ‘help story’ tells what victims did for one another.”

Examples of acts of stealth altruism include the high-risk sharing of scarce clothing and food among starving camp prisoners, the taking on by stronger prisoners of some of the workload of weaker prisoners, and the “adoption” by women prisoners of the suddenly orphaned children whose parents had been sent to the gas chambers.

The professor began researching this issue after 43 years as an applied sociologist. Having recently retired, he asked himself what his next project would be. “In short order, I discovered a costly deficiency in the conventional Holocaust narrative, one I have since devoted my life to correcting.”

He noticed that in most Holocaust education and museums there was nothing that adequately captured what he read as stealth altruism in survivor memoirs. “So, as I had done in 33 earlier books of mine, I developed new concepts. Once I started my research, I became engrossed with bringing overdue attention to the matter.”

Professor Shostak says that stealth altruism and “the help story” applied both to Jews and non-Jews during the Holocaust. “They apply to all human beings, and have over history significantly aided the survival and ascendancy of our species. In my book, I devote an all-too-brief chapter to non-Jews who dared to provide stealth altruistic help to captive Jews.”

One survivor Shostak interviewed said that she thought most survivors had moments or turning points when someone helped them in this way. If not, they wouldn’t have survived. According to the professor, “in more than 200 survivor memoirs I’ve read, the writer tells of giving or getting secret high-risk altruistic care. According to the field of positive psychology, we are hard-wired to help one another, even in concentration and slave-labour camps operated by deniers of this humanistic truth.”

So why has this aspect of resistance been left out of many Holocaust narratives? “Since the war’s end in 1945, the focus in Holocaust memorialisation has been on the horrific criminality of the Third Reich and its collaborators in 24 captive

countries. Holocaust centres have been ‘horror-focused’ as they thought this the best way to assure ‘never again,’” he says.

“All such horrific events, however, contain both the perpetrators’ behaviour, and the victim’s fierce struggle to retain their humanity and improve their chances of survival. Captivity in a Nazi concentration or slave labour camp included both a ‘horror story’ and a ‘help story’ - even if 43 of 48 Holocaust centres studied by me for my 2017 book do not honour this.”

The professor notes, however, that the South African Holocaust & Genocide centres do have this narrative. “The centres admirably salute Jewish [and gentile] upstanders who risked all to help others survive. The centres are compact, and yet thorough; selective, and yet authoritative; unsparing, and yet not ghoulish; artful, and yet also realistic.

“Staff at the centres show a deep understanding of and keen appreciation of the ‘help story’. They cover the components of compassion, militant resistance, and collaboration under death threats, and model how to achieve a still finer Holocaust narrative,” he says. “The Cape Town Centre, in particular, pioneers a creative approach in how it uses volunteer docents that merits close attention in all such institutions.”

For parents and educators who want to incorporate stealth altruism into teaching about the Holocaust, he suggests looking at his website or his 2017 book on the topic [the royalties of which go to the Children’s Holocaust Museum in Israel]. This has about 100 specific examples to draw on.

“An unlimited number are still to be extracted and employed from over 10 000 memoirs in English. Likewise, almost every day’s news media has accounts of stealth altruism and

“Survivors need to have their pain witnessed. There are those who are too traumatised to speak. When they are prepared to give testimony, their stories need to be heard and their survival needs to be honoured,” says Tracey Farber, referring to her recent doctoral study on the experience of trauma, resilience, and despair in elderly child Holocaust survivors.

“One can so often feel extremely helpless in the face of hearing trauma. However, when one



Tracey Farber

difficult questions about their experiences out of fear of upsetting them. Conversely, the survivors had been afraid of inflicting their trauma on loved ones by talking about their pain. For years, they never spoke, carrying their pain alone, leading to an “existential sense of being both alone in the world and lonely”.

Thus, when they were able to speak openly to Farber, it was cathartic, a finding consistent with other research in the field.

Farber began the process of interviewing the survivors in 2006 for her PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). She was stringent in ensuring that her study adhered to stringent ethical standards. The sensitivities of her work were carefully monitored through university supervision. She also formulated her core questions with the help of survivor Don Krausz. This year, Farber was awarded a doctorate for her study.

She found that all the survivors in her study – both resilient and depressed – suffered from ongoing “catastrophic grief” regarding the loss of their family during the Holocaust. She coined this term as it described the grief experienced by child Holocaust survivors. Also, the word “*shoah*” in Hebrew means “catastrophe”, and this was mirrored by the intensity and extent of the grief that followed child survivors into old age.

“In a normal traumatic bereavement, you might lose a parent. These survivors experienced multiple losses. Some lost their mother, father, brother, sister, friends, and extended family – a whole community.

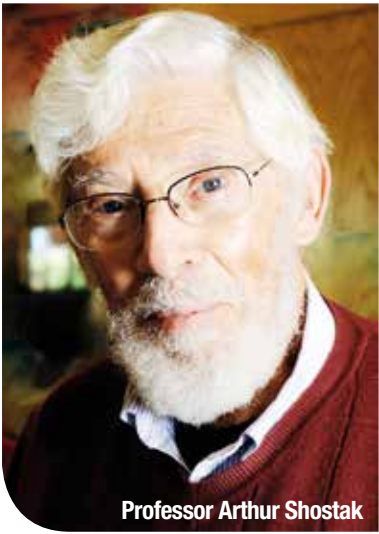
“I had a sub group of resilient survivors and depressed survivors. The resilient survivors have very good coping skills and the other sub group suffered from PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] and depression. Ongoing PTSD and depression meant that many were burdened with constant traumatic memories and flashbacks that kept them captive in their Holocaust experience. Even the resilient survivors had PTSD symptoms.”

The key mechanism that resilient survivors employed was an ability to compartmentalise their grief and trauma.

“While the more traumatised survivors were just completely overwhelmed, others were able to move their experience of trauma out of the way as they were faced with the challenges of survival.”

Yet, although “there is a big difference between the two groups, when they started to speak, it became clear that they were all suffering from catastrophic grief. Towards their older years, it left them with a sense of ongoing grief that lead to despair.”

Farber said that during some of the interviews, when the elderly survivors told their story, they regressed and wept as though they were children at



Professor Arthur Shostak

The professor’s research has had a negative response in some quarters. “Certain Holocaust educators insist my approach ‘muddies the water,’ diminishes the significance of the ‘horror story’, and exaggerates the significance of the ‘help story’. They champion instead time-honoured ‘horror centrism’. Certain Holocaust centre administrators and curators concur, as do also some elderly wealthy benefactors, or so I am told.”

But, he has also received a positive response “from certain young Holocaust scholars, progressive Holocaust centre administrators, and open-minded members of audiences I have addressed, along with many survivors long ago exasperated with horror centrism. I get particular encouragement from young adult Jews who want a view of the Holocaust that goes beyond the horror to note the inspiring care-sharing aspect.”

the age they lost their family members. Others told their story with a level of emotional disconnection, a defence that helped them to live with their overwhelming grief and trauma. “It is never too late to grieve. It was also an opportunity for them to speak about the love that they received from their beloved families and describe their heart-breaking memories.”

She said that there was pain and hope in these experiences.

On the one hand, such catastrophic grief had stayed with the survivors and did not dissipate in intensity over the seven decades that had since passed. On the other hand, their resilience and capacity to love their families was remarkable.

All the survivors had married, and many had children after the war. They told Farber that these roles as parent and spouse had given them a significant sense of meaning, fulfilment, and connection.

In particular, said Farber, the survivors were able to draw depth from these relationships because their own childhoods had, before the disruption of the war, been characterised by meaningful family connections.

Research like hers has shown that as long as a person has formed a “good-enough attachment” in childhood before trauma hits, they are able to find resilience in the aftermath.

The survivors were “able to keep their capacity for attachment intact, and this had a regenerative power in helping them to build good relationships despite their trauma”.

Farber said that writing up the hours of testimony proved to be very difficult and traumatic, and she was supported by her two Wits supervisors, Professors Cora Smith and Gill Eagle.

The original roots of Farber’s study lie partially in her own family’s connection to the Holocaust. She lost three great-grandparents and a great-uncle during this time. Two of them were murdered in the Dvinsk Ghetto, and the other two were shot in a Lithuanian forest during a mass killing.

“I grew up with two very traumatised grandfathers. The one spoke about it and cried a lot, and the other did not speak at all. He was too traumatised.”

“I was their eldest grandchild, and I felt deep empathy for what they had been through. I carried their stories.”

Her doctorate now opens with a dedication to those family members who were victims of the Shoah.

“It feels very important to me that their names are in the PhD because their bones lie in some forest somewhere and they don’t have a grave; they don’t have a name and I feel that they have now been memorialised... As a Jew, completing this work has been a very powerful experience.”

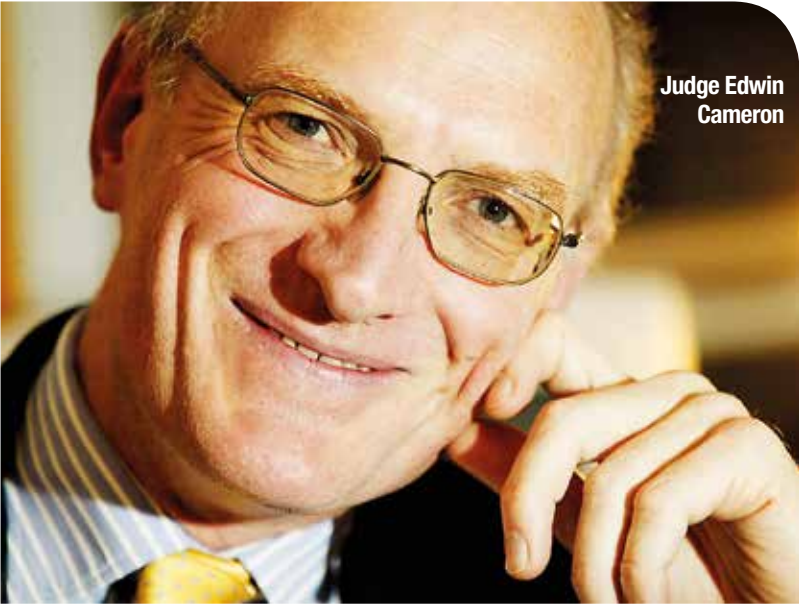


# Protect the constitution at all costs, Judge Cameron urges

NIA MAGOULIANITI-MCGREGOR

Protect the constitution. That was Constitutional Court Judge Edwin Cameron’s overriding message to a captivated audience at the Union of Jewish Women’s Houghton headquarters. They were there for his talk, “South African Democracy at 25: Where to Now?”.

Before them stood a defender of human rights saluted by former President Nelson Mandela as “one of South Africa’s new heroes”; a gay rights activist; the epitome of a principled, learned man; a Rhodes scholar; and a legal celebrity of sorts, but also, a charming, funny narrator who had the crowd eating out of the palm of his hands.



Judge Edwin Cameron

“I want to tell you a story,” said Cameron. “In Harare in November 2017, a monstrous dictator called Robert Mugabe resigned. Why? Because there were tanks on his front lawn. There were soldiers throughout Harare. His resignation statement was dictated to him. It was accepted as the military removal of the power of an autocrat.”

Fast forward to South Africa about 10 weeks later, said Cameron. “It’s 15 February 2018, and South African President Jacob Zuma resigns. Where are the tanks? Where are the soldiers? Is there any talk of tanks or soldiers? No.”

He resigned, Cameron told the audience, for “a complex mix of factors” including the fact that his favoured candidate, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, was not elected six weeks before at the African National Congress’ elective conference at Nasrec.

But also, said Cameron, because “certain legal impediments had been placed very squarely in his path”. He named four cases specifically.

### Strike 1

The first case, he said, concerned the “extraordinary” report of then Public Protector, Advocate Thuli Madonsela, released just before the elections five years ago. In this report, she found that Zuma had “misappropriated” money to upgrade his private homestead at Nkandla.

“The Democratic Alliance sent out an SMS within days of Madonsela’s report being released saying the ‘public protector report shows how Zuma stole your money to build his private home at Nkandla’. The ANC quickly sought an interdict claiming that Madonsela never actually used the word ‘stole’.

“The interdict was granted, but was brought to us by the DA on appeal. We reversed that judgement, saying that the public protector had found misappropriation, and attributed it to President Zuma. The dictionary meaning of misappropriation is to take unlawfully, and another way of saying that is to say ‘steal’.”

Cameron, along with a few of his colleagues, wrote a joint judgement saying that freedom of speech, especially before an election, was paramount, and what the DA had reported in its SMS was well within permissible parameters.

### Strike 2

The next legal challenge, said Cameron, came after Zuma refused to repay any “misappropriated” money as instructed to by the public protector, saying, “The public protector is not a court. I’m not paying.” A special parliamentary committee also resolved that Zuma did not have to repay the Nkandla money.

“The case was then taken to the Constitutional Court,” said Cameron. “These were the issues: does the public protector have serious powers and, if so, must Mr Zuma obey the order to repay part of the money?”

He said that on 31 March 2016, Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng gave a unanimous, “extraordinary” judgement on behalf of the whole court which was televised on all major TV networks. “Mogoeng ruled that the public protector report was binding, and unless it was set aside, it must be obeyed. Zuma had to pay part of the money. Which he did.

“Chief Justice Mogoeng’s judgement was a vital lecture on constitutionalism, about civic responsibility, about honesty, integrity and leadership, and it resonated with the country so much that everyone thought Mr Zuma was going to resign,” said Cameron.

“Of course, he didn’t resign.”

### Strike 3

“Six days later,” said Cameron, “DA leader Mmusi Maimane declared that President Zuma had been found to have committed a violation of the constitution, and wanted to have him removed under Section 89 of the Constitution. Speaker Baleka Mbete agreed. The vote was overwhelmingly in favour of Zuma.’

Impeachment under Section 89 of the constitution had been rejected, Cameron said, so Maimane then asked to bring an ordinary motion of no confidence against the president. The caveat: it must be via a secret ballot. “Mbete made some good arguments about why the ballot could not be secret, but the matter went before the Constitutional Court.”

It led to another unanimous judgement: The speaker *did* have the power to hold a secret ballot if she chose to do so.

The speaker allowed a secret ballot, and Zuma survived, said Cameron, but this time, instead of an overwhelming victory, 30 members of his party voted to remove him.

### Strike 4

In November 2017, said Cameron, a few opposition parties approached the Constitutional Court asserting that the speaker “did not deal properly with the impeachment under Section 89”.

Impeachment is different to a no-confidence vote, said Cameron. “It’s a solemn act of removal and based on objectively verifiable grounds.”

He said the opposition also claimed that parliament had failed to hold Zuma to account over the Nkandla matter, and that Mbete had a constitutional obligation to put measures in place to ensure that parliament held Zuma accountable.

“On 29 December 2017, shortly after the Nasrec conference, we delivered our judgement: the impeachment undertaking required a process including possible cross examination of the president.” Cameron said within a week of the judgement, parliament set about convening a committee to set up a process to hold Zuma accountable.

Zuma, “a highly intelligent politician – underestimate him at your peril”, realised his options were severely limited by these four court judgements, and resigned on Thursday, 15 February 2018.

“It is this that distinguishes us from Zimbabwe,” said Cameron. “The constitution is supreme. Parliament is not supreme. The president is not supreme.”

Describing President Cyril Ramaphosa as a “man of purpose and integrity, and enormously accomplished, also not to be underestimated”, Cameron, nevertheless, said changing the constitution with regards to the expropriation of land without compensation was an area of grave uncertainty.

“But,” he said, “the issue of land isn’t only a

practical or functional issue, it’s an emotional issue and I think when President Ramaphosa supported expropriation without compensation, he was acknowledging the emotional potency of the issue.”

So, how to protect this “extraordinary” constitution? “By involvement in civil society organisations, activist organisations, or by donating small amounts of money to them. Get involved in political rallies, create an activist organisation of your own. Vote. We have no excuse for passivity,” Cameron said.

“The stronger civil society is – remember the marches to the Union Buildings – the easier it becomes to defend our constitution.

“Protect the constitution, it’s precious,” reiterated Cameron. He didn’t say, “... and it will protect you,” but his meaning was clear.

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# SA-Israeli journalist honoured for anti-apartheid work

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

“I became a journalist and wanted to change the world.” So said veteran journalist and author Benjamin Pogrund on being awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in silver by President Cyril Ramaphosa at the Sefako Makgatho Presidential Guest House in Pretoria on 25 April.

The Order of Ikhamanga is a national award for achievements in arts, culture, literature, music, journalism, and sport. It is the highest honour the president of the country can bestow on a citizen and members of the international community. It recognises those who have made a meaningful contribution towards a South Africa that is free, democratic, successful, and united in its diversity.

“You have shown that as South Africans, we can render service to the republic in many different ways. I wish to congratulate you. You have done your duty. You have made your country proud,” Ramaphosa said to Pogrund at the ceremony.

Pogrund was honoured for his excellent contribution to the field of journalism, and for his scholarship on the liberation struggle. “His informative writing shone a light on our country during some of the darkest days in our history. He defied those who deceived the world,” said the president.

Pogrund said (in an interview

prior to the event), “I was fortunate because of the brave and wonderful people I dealt with. I trusted them to tell me the truth. More importantly, they trusted me with information and thoughts even at risk of their own liberty.

“It’s important to remember that whatever I did as a reporter to expose and denounce apartheid was possible only because of the support and protection of my esteemed editor, the late Laurence Gandar, who transformed journalism in this country, and his successor Raymond Louw,” he said of his former colleagues at the anti-apartheid newspaper the *Rand Daily Mail*, where he held the position of journalist and later deputy editor.

Pogrund was a reporter at the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960. He was the author of a 1965 series on beating and torture of black inmates and the maltreatment of white political prisoners based on a series of interviews with anti-apartheid activist Harold Strachan. During his career in South Africa, he was put on trial several times, put in prison once, had his passport revoked, and was investigated as a threat to the state by security police.

In the interview, Pogrund cited Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, Harold Strachan, Ernie Wentzel, and Robert Sobukwe, who became close

Now living in Israel, Pogrund said he was forced to leave South Africa after the closure of the *Rand Daily Mail* in 1985, for being “too fiercely

the United States for a while. Finally, I came to live in Israel.”

He now lives in Jerusalem, where he founded Yakar’s Centre for Social Concern. According to its website, Yakar is a place for spiritual quest, authentic learning, and connection between people around a deep exploration of Judaism.

Pogrund was a member of the Israeli delegation to the United Nations World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001, and is co-editor of a book on Palestinian-Israeli dialogue titled, *Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue*. He is also the author of a more recent book about Israel and apartheid, titled *Drawing Fire: Investigating the Accusations of Apartheid in Israel*.

Arthur Lenk, the former Israeli ambassador to South Africa, congratulated Pogrund on Twitter. “Mazel tov to my good friend, Israeli-South African journalist Benjy Pogrund on receiving this well-deserved honour today,” he said. “His life story is a perfect message of all our two peoples have to share together.”



Benjamin Pogrund receives the Order of the Ikhamanga from President Cyril Ramaphosa

friends, “and innumerable others who were committed to freedom without any thought of reward”. He authored a biography of Sobukwe published in 2006, titled *How Can A Man Die Better: The Life of Robert Sobukwe*.

anti-apartheid for the nationalist government and business interests at the time”. Following the newspaper’s closure he became “unemployable”, and had little choice but to leave. “Britain gave me sanctuary. I lived in

## Western Europe’s rap scene has an anti-Semitism problem

CNAAN LIPSHIZ – JTA

On a warm summer day in Oslo last year, Kaveh Kholardi heartily greeted spectators at a city-organised concert celebrating diversity.

Kholardi, a popular Norwegian rapper of Iranian descent, wished his fellow Muslims “Eid Mubarak”, a greeting in Arabic for the Eid al-Fitr holiday that marked the end of Ramadan.

He asked whether there were any Christians present, smiling upon hearing cheers. Then, he asked if there were any Jews.

“F\*\*\*ing Jews,” he said after a short silence, adding “Just kidding.”

In Norway, the incident generated an uproar, and again last month, when the Scandinavian country’s attorney general cleared the 24-year-old musician of hate-speech charges, opining that his slur may have been directed at Israel.

It was a tenuous interpretation considering how Kholardi never mentioned the Jewish state on stage, and five days earlier tweeted, “F\*\*\*ing Jews are so corrupt.”

From a broader European perspective, the incident demonstrates how the continent’s rap scene has become a haven and major avenue for the kinds of hate speech that governments are increasingly determined to curb online and on the street.

That’s a problem because “rap is a catastrophic vector, propagating anti-Semitism to the population most susceptible to it”, Philipp Schmidt, the vice-president of France’s International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism, or LICRA, told the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*.

In France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and elsewhere, rappers have dabbled in Holocaust denial, anti-Jewish conspiracy theories, grotesque Holocaust analogies, and threats against “Zionists”.

As a subculture with distinctly anti-establishment characteristics, the European rap scene has helped lift taboos on anti-Semitic rhetoric while escaping the scrutiny applied to hate speech in mainstream forums, said Joel Rubinfeld, the president of the Belgian League Against Anti-Semitism, or LBCA.

Denigrating rhetoric, including about Jews, is common in the rap scene worldwide, including in its native United States, Rubinfeld said.

But whereas rap anti-Semitism in the US tends to revolve around classic stereotypes about Jewish money and power, in Europe it has been augmented by “the

utilisation of the Arab-Israeli conflict to inflame internal conflict”, Rubinfeld said.

This corresponds to how “rap’s base in the United States is black, and in Europe it’s Muslims from poor suburbs, where anti-Semitism is rife”.

Ben Salomo, a German-Jewish rapper, noted the trend in an interview with the Arte television channel in 2017. The Palestinian issue is gaining traction in Germany’s rap scene, he said, along with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

Approaching the Israeli-Arab conflict “legitimises in their mind hate speech against Jews”, Salomo said of some of his fellow rappers.



Photo: Helene Wiesenhaan/Getty Images

But the problem goes deeper than the rap scene itself.

“Rap reflects society. If this rhetoric didn’t correspond to what people really think, rappers wouldn’t say it because they are above all demagogues and populists writing about popular themes to sell albums,” Salomo said.

Unlike in the US, Rubinfeld said, rap in Europe is becoming an

intersection point for the far right, far left, and Muslim anti-Semites.

In parallel to the so-called new anti-Semitism, in which Jews are targeted over Israel, the European rap scene is rich with Holocaust jokes and classic Jew hatred.

Last year’s Echo Awards ceremony – the German equivalent of the Grammys – was mired in controversy when the rap duo Kollegah and Farid Bang were honoured for an album featuring a joke about their bodies being more “sculpted than an Auschwitz prisoner’s” among other Holocaust references.

Some activists against racism have started working with European rap artists precisely because of the scene’s anti-Semitism problem.

“There’s no other music being consumed in vulnerable neighbourhoods,” said Serfaty, the rabbi from France. “It needs to be a tool for introducing content in favour of tolerance, in favour of France.

“There is beautiful poetry and messages of unity in the genre,” Serfati said. “We need to encourage it, help it grow, not overnight but over time.”

## Dr D awarded for training and inspiration

Clinical psychologist Dorianne Weil (known to many as “Dr D”) was inducted into the Southern African Educators Hall of Fame (SAEHoF) by The Professional Speakers Association (PSA) of South Africa on 13 April.

Weil’s induction into the SAEHoF, conferred by a panel of nine judges, is a lifetime achievement award for excellence in training, coaching, facilitation, and associated professions.

The award acknowledges presenters who, as educators, have reached diverse groups with deep content over many years in a training, facilitation, or one-on-one format.

Dr D has more than 30 years’ experience in hospital, private, and corporate practice. She is an internationally respected speaker, an expert in personal development and human relations, and has addressed more than 100 000 people and facilitated workshops in 56 countries.

“This is a huge award for excellence,” says PSA Business Manager Chris Vermeulen. He points out that award winners need to glean 85% of their income from training, which is not an easy task to do and requires extensive reputational influence.

The PSA is a national organisation with 125 members and is affiliated to the Global Speakers Federation.

Weil thanked the judges for bestowing the award, saying, “I have benefited immeasurably by

the privilege of trust associated with facilitation, mediation, mentoring, training and coaching diverse cultures, groups and individuals in 56 countries.

“In addition to working with leadership group dynamics and communication skills, to be invited into personal sacred space for a short while and witness ‘leaving differently’ as a result of new insights and awareness is beyond words.



I have questioned the meaning of success, the determination and resilience of the human spirit, the healing power of support, and the power of hope.”

Living by the words of Nelson Mandela, who once thanked her for the inspiration she offered and the difference she made to so many lives, Dr D has received other awards over the years for her contribution to the betterment of South African society.



# Waiting around the world for the Jewish vote

TALI FEINBERG

The South African Consulate in Southern California was waiting last Saturday night at 23:00 for Paul Wayburne to come and cast his vote in the national elections after specially extending its voting hours for observant South African Jews abroad.

“As far as I know, I am the only person in the Southern California area that they are keeping the consulate open for so that I can vote after Shabbat,” said Wayburne prior to voting. “I still can’t believe they are keeping the consulate open until 23:00, just for me!”

Wayburne said he would drive to Los Angeles from his home in Irvine, Southern California, as soon as Shabbat ended to cast his vote.

This arrangement was worked out by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) to allow South African Jews living overseas to vote in the upcoming national elections.

The day reserved for overseas voters to cast their ballot was this past Saturday, 27 April. However it was Shabbat, and the last day of Pesach, so observant Jews would not have been able to participate.

After engaging with Jewish voters abroad, the SAJBD asked the commission if the four foreign

missions could stay open after Shabbat and the *chag*. The IEC confirmed the extension of voting hours at South African missions in London, Tel Aviv, New York, and Los Angeles.

Wayburne emigrated to the United States three years ago. His wife is American, and the couple wanted to offer their children the opportunity of living in the US. “I don’t trash South Africa, and I want the best for it, which is why I want to vote in these elections,” he says.

He was looking forward to interacting with South Africans at the consulate. “When you meet South Africans overseas, there are no divisions. There is a kind of kinship and silent solidarity.”

He feels that what the SAJBD is doing for South African Jewish expats is truly exceptional. “South African Jewish institutions are amazing. Because it is a smaller community, there is no insignificant Jew. In America, you are more or less on your own. In South Africa, there is always community support.”

Meanwhile in New York, Beth Ginsberg shared her experience. “Straight after Havdalah, ignoring the urge to binge on *chametz*, we drove for an hour to the New York consulate so that I could vote. We decided to bring our children with us, to teach them that voting is a right, privilege, and responsibility worthy of considerable effort.

“It is significant that election day



fell on both Pesach and Freedom Day, and the extension of voting hours is a testament to the freedom of religion that South Africa espouses. The efforts of thousands of individuals – from the SAJBD and the IEC to the security personnel working overtime at South African missions abroad – deserve huge appreciation,” she said.

In London, Eli Lewenstein shared that, “It is an incredible honour and a privilege to be able to vote in another country. Being away from home, missing the official election day, and the vote being held on a Saturday here abroad in London, I thought I wouldn’t have the opportunity to make my mark, but thanks to the Jewish Board of Deputies for negotiating extended voting hours so we were able to cast our vote.”

He voted at the South African High Commission in Trafalgar Square. “Voting after Shabbat came out which is 21:14 here, there were no queues, and voting took me five minutes. I even met former Springbok rugby player Schalk Burger who also came to cast his vote.”

In Israel, Yoni Isaacson said, “When your country of birth opens its embassy until 23:30 for a handful of Shabbos-observant Jewish expatriates to vote, it’s worth the hour’s drive from Beit Shemesh to exercise that right. The right to vote should never be taken for granted, particularly by us Jews. Although my family and I have made our permanent home here in the holy

land, our connections to South Africa remain strong through friends, community, business, and care for the wonderful people.”

Carole Pincus also voted in Israel. “We went by bus after Shabbat from Tel Aviv to Ramat Gan. The spirit in the room was wonderful. It felt really good that we had done our part. Thanks to all who helped to organise this,” she said.

Sy Mamabolo, the Chief Electoral Officer of the IEC, told the SA *Jewish Report* that in order to allow observant Jews to vote after Shabbat, “We had invoked internal consultations processes including discussions with the National Party Liaison Committee on the matter. Once internal discussions were concluded, discussions had to be had with DIRCO since the staff at the affected missions is under its employ. However there was general willingness across the board to assist Jewish compatriots.”

He said it was important to the IEC that voting hours be extended for observant Jews because “the electoral commission is acutely aware of the critical importance of providing opportunities for all citizens to vote, as this is intertwined with their right of citizenship. Voting is thus expressing one’s political choice on the one hand, and expressing one’s right to citizenship on the other. Ultimately the exercise was about asserting our common humanity as South Africans.”

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# Israeli engineers tackle real-life problems in African villages

BEN HARTMAN – JTA

It’s a new, African version of the old adage about teaching a man to fish so you can feed him for a lifetime.

Except in Ethiopia, it’s about teaching him – or her – to use cow manure to generate biofuel to power a clean-burning stove in their home.

In this case, Israeli engineering students are using technology to help rural villages become not just more environmentally sustainable, but to reduce the labour and ill health effects that come with traditional, wood-based fuel for cooking.

Mark Talesnick, the Israeli professor behind the project, describes the cow-manure initiative as “shit for change”.

The biofuel oven is one of a variety of projects being spearheaded by the Israeli chapter of Engineers Without Borders, an international nongovernmental organisation that seeks to harness the skills of engineers to help the world’s underserved populations. The only Israeli chapter of the group is at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, where about 70 students work on projects under the oversight of Talesnick, a professor of civil and environmental engineering.

The programme is part of the technion’s Center for Global Engineering, whose mission is to create long-term, sustainable engineering solutions in communities that lack access to basic needs.

“About 10 years ago, I decided I was going to leave a mark. I was going to try to find a way that my students would light the path to positive impact,” Talesnick said in a November 2013 TED talk in Israel describing the impetus for the programme.

“It wasn’t simple. I had to think about what we were missing, what were we giving our students while they were studying, and what it meant when they left to go into the real world.”

The moral imperative that guides the work, Talesnick says, is to help the world’s “have-nots” while avoiding the cataclysmic environmental damage being wrought by the world’s “haves”. He also hopes to spur among students “a social conscience about how their work could change the world”, while giving them the skills and hands-on experience to do so.

Working in five groups, their efforts range from a programme to improve drinking water quality and reduce indoor air pollution in the Ethiopian cities of Lalibela and Mekelle, to installing turbine and solar-powered heaters in Israel’s Negev Desert. The technion’s Engineers Without Borders chapter has also constructed dozens of “biogas reactors” in rural Nepal, launched a renewable energy project in eastern Jerusalem, and developed a programme to create better public spaces in the Neve Paz neighbourhood of Haifa, an impoverished area with a large immigrant population.

The first student-led project Talesnick spearheaded a decade ago sent technion students to Nepal to develop the biogas reactors, which



Photo courtesy of the Technion’s Center for Global Engineering

use natural animal and human waste to generate methane gas for cooking. In the reactors, organic waste such as animal excrement and vegetable scraps are kept in a pit while they decompose, eventually producing a slurry that can be used as fertiliser and biogas, an efficient fuel. The technion students were able to produce the reactors using a much less labour-intensive process than traditional methods by developing a reusable bamboo mat to construct them.

Improving indoor cooking methods remains a major area of interest for the Israeli engineers. In many parts of the developing world, rural households use traditional wood and dung-burning ovens, burning “dirty” fuel in mud-and-straw homes with poor ventilation, and investing hours of backbreaking labour to harvest wood. The carcinogenic smoke from these ovens causes major respiratory, vision, and health problems – especially for mothers and their children, who spend a lot of time in the house.

This summer, a group of about 30 engineering students from Israel, Ethiopia, and York University in Toronto will spend a month in Mekelle as part of a programme run by the technion’s Center for Global Engineering to develop chimneys and efficient fuel-burning stoves.

Tigabu Zegeye, a 21-year-old computer science and engineering student at the Mekelle Institute of Technology, participated in one of the summer programmes two years ago, and will be going back this summer. A big part of the challenge, he said, was to reach out to local community members who might be resistant to change. The students going this summer will build a stove in a single household, and then work with the local municipality to install it more widely.

“Sometimes people can be convinced if you show them some practical ideas. They get tired of the chimney blowing smoke back into the house,” said Zegeye, who grew up in a small village in rural Ethiopia about 100 miles (160km) from Mekelle.

Tamar Fradkin, 27, an architecture student at the technion, did a summer course in the programme in 2016. “It gave me one of the strongest tools I’ve received in my education – human perspective on our work, an understanding of who we’re designing for,” Fradkin said. “In academia, often you’re studying books rather than learning and meeting real people in the field. This

is one of the most important and practical things I’ve done. You feel that you’re doing something.”

Ari van der Merwe, a 24-year-old technion student from Jerusalem,

Israeli engineers are trying to replace traditional ovens used in rural Ethiopia with biofuel-powered stoves

spent his summer in 2017 working on an Engineers Without Borders project much closer to home, in Haifa. His mission was to develop a project to help the local underserved population. Locals repeatedly said that what they needed was green, open space, something that was lacking in their community since a park in the neighbourhood fell into disrepair years earlier.

While not a traditional engineering project, it required students to develop problem-solving and community outreach skills that are part of the Center for Global Engineering’s mandate.

“I was looking for something closer and really on the ground, where you can be there every week, and you’re making a difference where you live,” Van der Merwe said.

“For these communities, a little change makes a huge difference to their quality of life,” said Dr Avigail Dolev, the director of the Center for Global Engineering. Meanwhile, the students get hands-on experience using their education and skills to develop solutions to real-life problems.

“It’s a win-win situation,” Dolev said.

## Jewish female authors on literary award list

PETA KROST MAUNDER

Three talented South African Jewish authors stumbled onto the fact that their books had made it onto the *Sunday Times* Literary Awards list while they were perusing social media.

“I woke up on Sunday morning to find a lot of Facebook messages and alerts saying that *The Season of Glass* had been longlisted,” says Rahla Xenopoulos, who recently emigrated to the United States. “I was sad not to be in Cape Town, but my brother and sister-in-law were staying at us for Pesach and it was nice to be together.”

Says Nechama Brodie, “I saw someone post about it on Twitter. They included a picture, and I saw

top literary award.

As to how they feel about having their book on this list, Xenopoulos says, “This is the first really ‘Jewish’ book I’ve ever written. I wrote it because I wanted to learn more about the diversity, history, and spirituality of Judaism. I think that given the rising horror of anti-Semitism in South Africa and the world, it is particularly meaningful for me that this book, being unashamedly Jewish, is accepted and recognised.”

Wiener and Brodie have had books on the list before, but says Wiener, “It’s always great to have your work recognised, and to be on a list such as this one is a lovely accolade. I’m very fortunate to have had two of my three previous

egg-and-spoon race at school. I’m super surprised that it is on the list, but really, I’m not expecting much more.”

“I would love to win it this time around,” says Wiener. “But there are other fantastic authors and books on the longlist this year, so it will be a real challenge. I do think that awards are so subjective. It depends what the panel’s criteria is, so it’s all relative. Still holding thumbs though!”

Says Brodie, “I think it would be great to see genre fiction take the prize. South African writers are writing some excellent, unusual stories that touch on sci-fi, fantasy... and we’re the perfect location for a detective thriller. I need to catch up on reading more of the long list – I



my book cover there.”

And Mandy Wiener says, “I found out on Twitter like I find out about most things, to be honest. I know it was printed in the *Sunday Times*, but I generally look at the headlines on social media and see what’s trending before I get a chance to go through the newspapers on a Sunday. Funnily enough, I actually saw Nechama’s post on Twitter, and that’s how I knew about it.”

Xenopoulos’s book *The Season of Glass*, Brodie’s novel *Knucklebone*, and Wiener’s *Ministry of Crime: An Underworld Explored* were celebrated in this newspaper when they launched a year ago. Now, all three are in the running for South Africa’s

books shortlisted for the Alan Paton [Award] and I’m grateful to be in the running again.”

Says Brodie, “Being on the *Sunday Times* list is great. Two of my non-fiction books, *The Joburg Book* and *Rule of Law* with Glynnis Breytenbach, have been longlisted for the Alan Paton [non-fiction] before, but this is the first time I have been included as a fiction writer, which is a wonderful thing.”

Just what would it mean to win the award?

Says Xenopoulos, “It’s funny, my husband walks out the front door, and someone somewhere throws an award at him. He’s that guy. Myself, not so much. I never even won the

have Imraan [Coovadia] and Sue [Grant-Marshall’s] books – before I can tell you who I think should win. But it’s lovely to see such a rich mix of fiction being produced here.”

But, they would all agree with Xenopoulos in that the joy is in the writing. “It’s lovely to have something like this recognised, but writing is about being on a journey to learn more, to explore foreign lands and people,” she says. “To listen to and to tell stories. I fiercely believe in the process of writing. Lists and launches are fun, but they’re not what will get me through the arduous hours of writing.”



# Don Albert: the jazzy wandering Jew

PETER FELDMAN

Don Albert, one of South Africa’s most prominent jazz journalists, musicians, and jazz historians, has passed away after a short illness at the age of 88 in Johannesburg.

I had the pleasure of working with this amazing human being on *The Star Tonight*. I covered pop music, and he was the jazz fundi. We worked together for close to three decades, and his knowledge of the subject was unsurpassed. Even top overseas jazz critics and musicians recognised his abilities.

His mind was like an encyclopaedia, and if I wanted to know anything about a musician, or band, Don was the man to go to. He never disappointed.

Don, who was first and foremost a formidable saxophonist with his own band, came to the attention of the late Percy Baneshik, the editor of the arts and entertainment section at *The Star* where I was working.

Percy was impressed with Don’s jazz background and asked him to write about it for the newspaper as we had nobody to cover that beat.

Before long, when the *Tonight* supplement was launched in 1976, Don became a permanent member of the team. He was also asked to cover the TV beat, which he did very well.

Over the years, Don and I worked harmoniously together. He was forthright in his criticism, and was spot on in identifying good and bad musicianship. We sometimes argued good naturedly over our respective music beats. He didn’t think too much of the music I covered, but I respected his point of view.

“

He was ruthlessly honest in his dealings with people, and had a wicked sense of humour which often had people in stitches, especially when he had a few whiskeys under his belt.

When he first started at *The Star*, he didn’t have a permanent desk, and he kept muttering that he was like a wandering Jew.

Don spent a great deal of his time overseas, visiting clubs, attending jazz festivals all over the world, winning awards in his field, and mixing with some of the jazz greats. He had so many stories to tell, and his jazz collection was unsurpassed.

He wrote for a number of newspapers and magazines in South Africa, and was a correspondent for several prestigious international jazz journals, including *Downbeat* (United States) and *Jazz Journal International* (United Kingdom). He was one of the few people who was featured on radio, television (he had his own shows), and in print media – a journalist’s dream.

For five years, he hosted the weekly *Jazz Studio* on SABC TV and his talent was heard on other major stations,

including 702.

In 1981, he started a campaign to change the law that prevented black musicians from performing in “white” licensed premises. The law was rescinded in 1985. At the time, his house was being watched by the police because the authorities thought he had Communist tendencies. It is believed he was close to being arrested.

But this didn’t deter him. He was always the life and soul of any party, with an armoury of risqué jokes that cracked up a party.

Don’s cousin, Selwyn Miller, is an ex-Capetonian in the music business in New Orleans, where he relocated many years ago and operates a thriving music agency. Miller, who knew many great artists personally, often travelled with Don to attend concerts and music festivals.

On his Facebook page, Miller wrote a moving tribute to his late cousin. “He will certainly be missed by the jazz community throughout the world. He was head and shoulders the



most knowledgeable jazz historian ever to come out of South Africa. Don had an incredible sense of humour.

We had so many laughs together, and watched so much brilliant music together when he visited and stayed

with me in America.

“As kids in music in Cape Town, we were the black sheep of our family. In Sea Point, Jewish parents wanted you to be a doctor or in some profession. We were interested in only one thing – music. I’ll miss our long talks about music. There was always a strong mutual respect. Maybe you can do that jam with your friend Charlie Parker, as your late mother used to say.”

Don was not religiously observant, but was a proud Jew.

Radio DJ Brian Oxley wrote on Facebook, “Jazz flowed through his veins 24/7. An incredibly knowledgeable journalist and musician. Loved our times together on 5FM.”

Singer and actress Anne Power added, “What a beautiful man.”

All those who knew him will be saddened by his loss. He leaves a son, Blake. His wife and daughter passed away many years ago.

Don Albert’s life was “all about jazz”, and he truly lived it.

## Microscopic study, macroscopic findings for Nobel laureate

JORDAN MOSHE

When Sydney Brenner set out to research the tiny nematode, little did he know that his discoveries would have an enormous impact on the field of biology. A pioneering molecular biologist and Nobel Prize laureate, the South African-born Brenner passed away in Singapore on 5 April at the age of 92, leaving a rich legacy of insights into human disease.

Brenner devoted himself to studying the genetics, development, and behaviour of a tiny nematode worm. What he gleaned would enable him to make a great contribution to our understanding of human disease, and would be recognised in 2002 with a share in the Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine.

“Sydney Brenner was a hero in the field of modern biology,” says Howard Horvitz, an American biologist with whom Brenner and John Sulston shared the Nobel Prize. “His contribution to our understanding of genetics – what makes a child more similar to its parents than to a redwood tree or a whale – are unparalleled.”

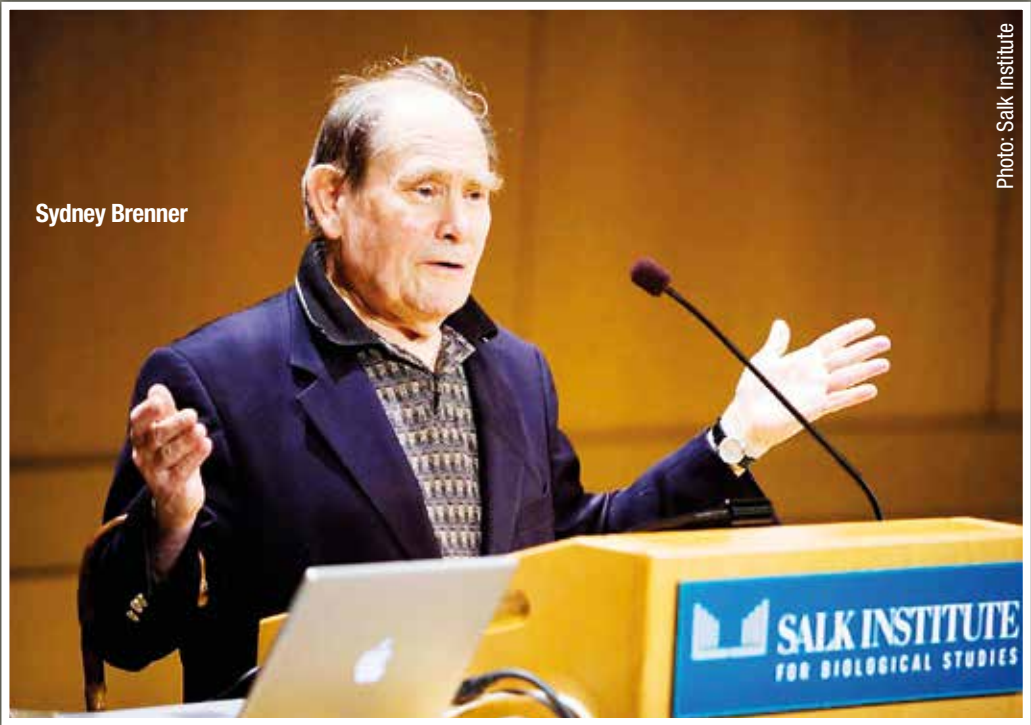
Born in Germiston to a Lithuanian father and Latvian mother in 1927, Brenner grew up in a home at the back of his father’s cobbler shop. He was said to be insatiably inquisitive, and he progressed so rapidly through school that he obtained a bursary to pursue medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand at 15. Because he would be too young to qualify for medicine at the conclusion of his six-year course, he was allowed to complete a Bachelor of Science degree in anatomy and physiology.

After doing an honours degree and then an MSc, he went on to receive another scholarship which enabled him to complete a Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Oxford as a postgraduate student of Exeter College.

It was while at Oxford that Brenner set himself upon his life’s path. Together with a handful of others, he was one of the first people in April 1953 to see Francis Crick and James Watson’s model of the structure of DNA, a watershed in his scientific life.

“I just knew that this was the beginning of molecular biology,” he wrote later. “This was it... the curtain had been lifted, and everything was now clear as to what to do.”

Brenner would not only go on to work with Crick for 20 years at Cambridge’s



molecular biology research unit, but would draw inspiration from him to develop his own research. After working extensively on DNA research and the makeup of amino acids, Brenner leapt from molecules to whole animals, choosing a microscopic worm to establish how genes-controlled development and behaviour.

In 1966, Brenner recruited a team of researchers, among them Sulston and Horvitz, who mapped and sequenced the worm genome. Their work would eventually be recognised as a major contribution to their field, and awarded the Nobel Prize in 2002.

“His contribution to our understanding of genetics – what makes a child more similar to its parents than to a redwood tree or a whale – are unparalleled.”

His work made a sizeable contribution across the globe. In the mid-1990s, Brenner crossed the Atlantic to establish the Molecular Sciences Institute in Berkeley, California, and in 2000, he became a distinguished professor at the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California.

He was director of the Medical Research Council’s prestigious Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, and maintained a close connection with Singapore, where he was an honorary citizen, and whose medical-research capacity he enhanced over 35 years. He was also the recipient of numerous awards for his work.

Beyond his scientific prowess, Brenner was admired by his colleagues for his sharp sense of humour and wit. For seven years, he wrote a sardonic monthly opinion column for the science journal, *Current Biology*, under the alias “Uncle Syd”. He once wrote, “Elderly, white, male, column writer, seven years’ experience, self-employed scientist, explorer, adventurer, inventor, and entrepreneur seeks young, naïve, preferably female editor of newly formed scientific journal with a view to obtaining unrefereed access to as wide an audience as possible.”

Says Horvitz, “His brilliance, wit, and the twinkle of his eye reflecting a sense of always enjoying life, and provided insights and lessons to all who had the privilege of being close to him. I have no idea what my life would be had I not had Sydney in my life for so many years. I miss him, and always will.”

Married to fellow South African May Balkind until her death in 2010, Brenner leaves behind three children, Stefan, Belinda, and Carla.



# Dreaming of integration, one country at a time

RABBI CRAIG KACEV

The Galilee Dreamers, a group of eight Grade 11 Arab and Jewish school children from Israel, recently visited King David schools in Johannesburg. They brought with them a message of social harmony.

They are out to break stereotypes and change the way we think. It is their dream to get their fellow citizens to live in harmony and, if they can achieve that, maybe share those lessons with French and English-speaking Canadians, inner city African Americans and their neighbours in the suburbs – or even ordinary South Africans – Jews, Muslims, blacks, and whites.

They spent a day at King David Linksfield and Victory Park High Schools, joining lessons and discussing co-existence in Israel. Questions led to open, flowing conversations, which allowed for the sharing of ideas and thoughts about life in Israel for all its inhabitants.

In a global world, teenagers share a lot of similarities, and within a short time, they found that they had a lot in common, breaking down barriers and prejudices and leading to laughter and friendship.

This is the Dreamers’ fourth year of existence, and the first time they have visited South Africa. The initiative is the brainchild of South African born psychiatrist, Desmond Kaplan, who emigrated to Israel from Cape Town before moving to Baltimore in the United States.

Kaplan was motivated by his own children’s experience. Each year, his children’s school would send pupils to Israel, but they would never ever meet any Arabs. One year, Kaplan went himself. He met and befriended an Arab teacher whom he invited back to the US the following year. The teacher, Mamoun Assadi, promptly offered to host a group of visiting American pupils at his village the following year.

Their experience was an epiphany for Kaplan.

“The Jewish kids came back,” he says, “and it was the highlight of their entire trip, more than a visit to the Kotel (the Western Wall) in Jerusalem, or anything else.”

From there, the seed flourished. “Israel

is a world leader in so many aspects,” Kaplan says, “from cyber security to diamonds, technology, agriculture, even the movie industry, but it is not known for its co-existence.

“There’s a lack of social contact between Jewish and Arab Israelis. I never had any contact with Arab Israelis in the 12 years I lived in Israel. We want children to get new perspectives of each other, and break down stereotypes. We want to make Israel a world leader in co-existence, just as it is in so many other fields,” he says.

He and Rabbi Paul Schneider, then the principal of the Baltimore Jewish Day Schools, needed an Israeli partner with the same vision to champion the project. They chose Oranim Academic College of Education, the largest and leading institution of its kind in northern Israel, teaming up with Dr Roberta Bell-Kligler, the director of the college’s international school.

Bell-Kligler oversees the process of selecting the schools who participate in Galilee Dreamers, the pupils, the teachers, and the teachers in training who accompany them. The Dreamers started with two Jewish pupils and two Arab pupils from two schools in Galilee who went to the US. This year, four schools participated in the programme, with two contingents going out to the world; one to north America for the fourth year in a row – including Canada – and a second contingent to South Africa for the first time.

For teachers Evelyn Kadosh, a teacher from Misgav High School (which serves the Jewish population) in the Galilee, and Arafat Osman, a teacher from Al Bian High School (a private Arabic-language school), the success of the project can be measured in the response from the teachers, pupils, and invitations from outside Israel.

Competition to get on the programme is tough, says Kadosh. “We take only four out of a total of 400 students in Grade 11,” says Osman. “They have to write essays, attend



Students from the Galilee Dreamers engage with students from King David Victory Park in a matric Hebrew lesson

selection panels, group-dynamics workshops, and participate in a series of preparatory meetings.”

Osman believes taking the pupils out of Israel is an incredibly beneficial experience for them.

“There’s so much tension in Israel,” he says, “coming to America or South Africa is more neutral, allowing the children to feel Israeli rather than Arab or Jew. This is a brave project. It’s unusual, especially at a time when people are becoming more radical.”

It’s also about exposing teachers to other worlds, and enabling them to teach Israelis, irrespective of their culture,” says Bell-Kligler.

“Our vision is to break down barriers between these two very distinct cultural groups. It’s been amazing to see how principals have bought into the project.”

In fact, demand is growing each year, with schools particularly in the US, which might have been lukewarm to hostile at the prospect, now demanding to host after hearing about other schools’ experiences. The Dreamers have now been invited to add Europe to their itinerary for 2020, with a trip to Vienna already on the cards.

Often the schools the groups visit are inspired to send their pupils on reciprocal visits to the Galilee. On a recent trip to Baltimore this year, the Dreamers were so moved by the reception they received from the mostly African American pupils they interacted with and their life experiences, that they invited them to visit Galilee next year.

The Dreamers isn’t a government-funded operation, but raises the money for its outreach work at home and in

the host countries’ Jewish communities. No member of the contingent is briefed on what to say when they leave Israel.

Says Dreamer Yiftach Rinat, a Grade 11 pupil at Misgav High School, “We’re showing that we can co-exist in Galilee.” It’s a sentiment Grade 11 pupil Noor Darweesh of Al Bian agrees with. “I want to reach for peace. South Africa is very similar to Israel,” Darweesh says. “There are a lot of different cultures and a lot of conflict here and in Israel. This programme can help to change this.”

• Rabbi Craig Kacev is the general director King David Schools.

A large group of students and adults are posing for a group photo on the steps of a building with a colorful mosaic facade. The caption identifies them as Galilee Dreamers and King David students outside Constitutional Hill.

Galilee Dreamers and King David students outside Constitutional Hill

Saturday (4 May)	Thursday (9 May)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bet David’s monthly <i>Mind, Body and Spirit</i> Yoga service from 10:30 to 12:00. Bring a yoga mat, if you have, and a small blanket. Venue: Bet David, 3 Middle Road, Morningside. All are welcome – free for members. Suggested donation of R50 for non-members. Enquiries 011 783 7117 or admin1@betdavid.org.za</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Johannesburg Holocaust &amp; Genocide Centre (JHGC) hosts a screening of <i>Never Again: Forging a Convention for Crimes Against Humanity</i> with an address by keynote speaker Dr Stephen Smith (USC Shoah Foundation). Time: 19:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. RSVP to dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100. Free admission, donations welcome.</li><li>Yom Ha’atzmaut with Women’s International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) Johannesburg: a morning of celebration with delicious Israeli food, entertainment by Harry Sideropoulos and Mommy Ezerzer. Time: 10:00. Venue: The Munro Hotel, 63 St Patrick Road, Houghton Estate. Cost: R220. Seating is limited. Booking essential. No payment at venue. Contact: Lauren 011 645 2515 wizojhb@beyachad.co.za</li><li>Join WIZO every Thursday for a <i>Lunch &amp; Learn</i> shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz. Time: 13:00 at Beyachad. Contact: WIZO office: 011 645 2515.</li></ul>
Sunday (5 May)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Second Innings hosts Dr Maurice Goodman, Chief Medical Officer Discovery, on <i>Major healthcare trends and the national health insurance</i>. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, 2nd Floor, Golden Acres, 85 George Avenue, Sandringham. Cost: R20 for Second Innings members; R40 for visitors (includes tea/coffee and refreshments).</li></ul>	
Monday (6 May)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Union of Jewish Women hosts expert in the management of trees, Anton Möller on <i>Will the Greatest Urban Forest in the World Survive? – Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer Beetle</i>. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053.</li></ul>	

## Letters

### ISRAEL'S OPPONENTS INSPIRED BY EMOTION, NOT FACTS

Once again we are confronted with the false accusation that Israel is an apartheid state.

On 31 October 2011, Richard Goldstone, a former justice of the South African Constitutional Court, submitted an article to the *New York Times* headed, “Israel and the apartheid slander”. In it he stated the following, “I know all too well the cruelty of South Africa’s abhorrent apartheid system,” before describing what apartheid entailed.

He continued, “In Israel there is no apartheid. Nothing there comes close to the definition of apartheid under the 1998 Rome Statute. Israeli Arabs – 20% of Israel’s population – vote, have political parties, and representatives in the Knesset, [Israel’s parliament], and occupy positions of acclaim, including on its Supreme Court. Arab patients lie alongside Jewish patients in Israeli hospitals, receiving identical treatment. The charge that Israel is an apartheid state is a false and malicious one that precludes rather than promotes peace and harmony.”

A judge of the Constitutional Court is one of the highest legal positions in the land. Acclaimed journalist Shaun Johnson

stated the following about Goldstone, “This is no tame judge, and no political lackey. [He] is perhaps the most important lifeline to credibility the [SA] government has. In a land of villains, Judge Goldstone is a South African hero.”

As a young man, I lived in Israel for more than four years. My friends and I toured the country extensively. Our social life included girls from Yemen and Egypt – brown – and also from Ethiopia – black. I saw none of the racial brutality that I had witnessed in South Africa.

Which brings us to Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu.

Tutu is on record as saying that apartheid in Israel is worse than it was in South Africa, contradicting Goldstone. Yet, both these men are prominent figures of that period. From what I know of Tutu, he is not an anti-Semite, so racial hatred can be ruled out. However, he may prefer Palestinians to Israelis. Being an archbishop means that he must be an intelligent man. Unfortunately, as the past century has shown, emotion often overrides intellect.

– Don Krausz, Johannesburg



# Has freedom failed in SA?



## TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

Freedom is intoxicating. When Freedom Day was established in 1994 as an annual holiday for post-apartheid South Africa, it was amidst the euphoria of the victory of the struggle. Optimism abounded; the country seemed to be headed towards a non-racial, prosperous future. In retrospect, such ideals were naïve, given the scale and complexity of the problems. What have we done with our freedom? There are some successes; lots of failures. South Africa is still one of the most unequal countries in the world. Half of its population lives in poverty; 40% of its youth are unemployed and will probably never work; and a tiny, wealthy elite lives comfortably. Many people who can afford to leave are doing so. In this season of holidays and memorials, including the elections on 8 May, the tendency to look at the past with nostalgia is epitomised by a new South African-made film called *An Act of Defiance*. It was made in 2017, and released here a day before Freedom Day this year. It is about the 1964 Rivonia Trial. It tells the story of Bram Fischer, the lawyer who put his life at risk to defend Nelson Mandela and his black and Jewish comrades in apartheid South Africa. This led to life imprisonment for Mandela on charges of sabotage. The film’s Jewish thread is clearly articulated. Aside from the Jewish defendants, the state prosecutor, Percy Yutar, was also Jewish. Joel Joffe, later Lord Joffe, the instructing solicitor for Mandela’s defence team, was

Jewish. He played a key role in helping the future South African president and his compatriots avoid the death penalty. The film’s director, Jean van de Velde, is at pains to represent the texture of South Africa in the early 1960s. But when you leave the movie house, you realise that today’s dire reality is not that different to how it was back then. Mirrored in seemingly innocuous scenarios, some things remain as they were during apartheid, when whites were bosses and blacks were servants. Today, in a lush park in a fancy neighbourhood near Rosebank Mall, Johannesburg, there’s a black beggar whose sole activity is to pick up the dog poo left there by mainly white people who come to walk their pedigreed dogs on weekends. He calls himself Shepherd. Take a step back from this: in Paris, you can be fined for letting your dog mess on the pavement. In South Africa, the wealthy don’t think it strange to have a black man, a spade and plastic bag in hand, waiting behind their crouching poodle. For Shepherd, last Saturday was just another day in the park, in spite of it being Freedom Day. Does South Africa as a society still have the will to change, as it fiercely believed it could, on 27 April 1994? At that time too, there were the proverbial ‘shepherds’, but also the hope that apartheid’s devils could be defanged. South Africans are confused and uneasy. Tribalism and racism are rising; national pride is falling. In this condition, some countries turn to an autocrat who promises to sort things out. But autocrats who start off as benevolent, generally turn into harsh rulers who won’t leave. A glance north to Mugabe and Zimbabwe is a warning. South Africa faces a rough ride to get back on track.

## A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies What special voting says about South Africa



## ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

Last Shabbat, appropriately enough on Freedom Day, South Africans living abroad cast their votes at 121 South African foreign missions around the world. When the day ended, most of those embassies closed, but four – in Tel Aviv, London, New York, and Los Angeles – remained open for a few hours longer. This was to enable *shomer Shabbat* (Shabbat observant) Jewish citizens to vote after Shabbat was out. On learning that special voting for citizens abroad would be taking place on Shabbat, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) met the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to discuss how Jewish voters might be accommodated. We were assured that Saturday had been chosen simply because it was the day when the greatest number of people would be able to vote. While that date could not be changed, it was agreed that voting hours would be extended at stations where there was a Jewish community, and the board was asked to assist by establishing who wished to vote, and where. It wasn’t an easy task, especially at such short notice, but we were able to compile the necessary information, and arrangements were eventually made for the four embassies listed above. On the night, everything went smoothly thanks to embassy staff who, in spite of having to work extra hours, could not have been more friendly and co-operative. The way in which everyone worked together to resolve the problem, in spite of the relatively small number of people affected, is much to our country’s

credit. One of the enduring achievements of South African society post-1994 is how the religious rights and practices of all citizens have been respected and upheld. Through this, the SAJBD, as the representative voice of the Jewish community, has been able to work successfully with relevant bodies to ensure that members of our community are not disadvantaged because of their religious commitments. This has occurred primarily in the area of university exams falling on Shabbat or Yom Tov, but also in other meaningful ways, such as in the case described above. For all the formidable challenges currently facing our society, it is something to bear in mind and be grateful for.

**Yom Hashoah 2019**  
As I write, preparations are being finalised for this year’s Yom Hashoah commemorative ceremonies in all the main Jewish centres around the country. As in the past, ceremonies will be held in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Bloemfontein, East London, Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town. We are honoured to have Lord Shinkwin as our keynote speaker. Shinkwin is a distinguished British human-rights activist who, amongst other activities, has become one of the most committed non-Jewish advocates of Holocaust education and remembrance. We will also be fortunate to have survivors of that unspeakable tragedy participate in the various ceremonies as speakers or lighters of the memorial candles. The time will soon come, however, when those who are able to testify first hand will no longer be with us. It is incumbent on our own, and future generations, to ensure that their story is not forgotten.  
• *Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Jewish Board Talk, 101.9 ChaiFM every Friday from 12:00 to 13:00.*

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

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# Succession a weighty issue in powerlifting family

LUKE ALFRED

Two of the 200-odd participants at the National Powerlifting Championships in Potchefstroom in March were the father-and-son duo of Ian and Justin Furman. Ian, now nudging just beyond 50, is the father, while Justin, a 6’4, 112km young giant, is his son.

Next month, Justin, aged 18, is off to the World Powerlifting Championships in Sweden, with Ian in a coaching role closely in tow. These world championships will be Justin’s first, and he’ll be greeting them with all the dry-mouth anxiety of taking a girl he fancies out on a date.

In Sweden, he’ll be closing a circle, Ian having participated in his first world championships in 2001 after taking up the sport the previous year.

He did so almost by chance. After a conversation in his local gym, where his impressive bench-pressing started attracting attention, he started powerlifting seriously. The next year was the first of many world championships, as Ian started to lift his way to numerous national, Commonwealth, and continental titles.

Now it’s time for a passing of the weights, if you like, as his lifting recedes into the background and Justin, currently in matric at King David Victory Park, takes centre stage. “It’s time for me to focus more on his lifting than my own lifting right now,” says Ian, with a note of paternal tenderness.

Ian was a trailblazer for the sport in this country. He probably hit his straps about 10 to 12 years ago strength-wise, but his path was littered with some heavy obstacles and precious few clear lines of sight.

There was no great tradition of powerlifting

when he started, and his learnings were piecemeal and hard-won. The Russians and the Americans were way ahead of the chasing pack, both in terms of power and technique, and Ian had to train incredibly hard just to feel that he was keeping in touch.

All that carefully-accumulated experience

weightlifting disciplines are the clean and jerk, and the snatch, while powerlifting consists of the squat, the bench press, and the deadlift.

Powerlifting, says Ian, is more about pure explosive strength than weightlifting, which is a combination of strength and technique. That said, technique and



is now being put to good use as Ian passes the baton to Justin. Ian will be standing by his side in Sweden, there to advise, counsel, calm, and make the careful strategic decisions about how much weight to add to the bar as he hits the business end of the competition. “At that stage, you don’t want to be worrying about those sorts of things,” says Ian. “You want to remain calm and concentrate on your lifting. That’s where an experienced coach comes in.”

Weightlifting and powerlifting are similar but not quite the same. The premier

timing play their part, and whether you’re a weight or power lifter, you still find yourself in a wilderness of pain after workouts and competitions. “Genetics comes into it, sure, but coaching comes into it too. You are always sore,” says Ian.

Although the bond between father and son is close, as Justin, still a junior, works his way up the powerlifting ladder, Ian says that there’s no competition between them.

There is no hint that Justin is trying to depose the old man off his kingly throne, he’s simply happy to look and listen, sponging

up the wisdom that took 20 years for Ian to stockpile.

“I remember once at the Carousel sitting down with some Russian coaches and talking to them about their techniques and training programmes,” says Ian. “Some of them spoke English, but there was also a Ukrainian guy who was acting as a translator. That was useful.”

The sport is lifting off in South Africa. The turnout of 200 in Potchefstroom a couple of months ago might not seem large, but according to Ian, the numbers are hugely impressive. “The sport is growing at an alarming rate in this country,” he says, a note of pride in his voice.

Such growth makes for intense competition as the fraternity try to out-lift and out-press each other, keeping careful tabs on who is doing what and where. “Powerlifting isn’t going to make Justin any money,” says Ian, “all our trips are self-funded, so I’m looking for him to do a business management degree when he goes to university next year. The trip to Sweden is quick, we’re only there for five days, and he’s writing an exam the day after we get back.”

In the weeks leading up to the world championships, the routine in the Furman household remains very much the same. Training for Ian and Justin “three or four times a week, with two or three days for recovery”.

Mealtimes are protein-rich, with chicken and salad or chicken and vegetables a dinner-time staple. Alcohol is frowned-upon, and so are sugar and carbs. Conversation, you rather fancy, is muted, with the topics up for discussion returning time and time again to matters which are, well, naturally weighty.

## Most South African Jews of Sephardi origin are entitled to EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT

A common misconception is that South African Jews of Ashkenazi heritage are of Lithuanian descent, and that only those who are able to prove their eligibility for Lithuanian citizenship are able to obtain a European passport. The fact is that most South African Jews do qualify for European citizenship, whether they can prove their Lithuanian lineage or not, and most South African Jews of Sephardic heritage are also eligible for European passports.



Adv. Avi Horesh has in-depth knowledge of the applicable legislation and in his experience, the majority of South African Jews have ancestors who were illegally deprived of citizenship. As their descendants, these Jews are eligible for European citizenship which will result in them obtaining a EU passport.

**Ashkenazi:** It is important to understand that until 1918, all of Eastern Europe was divided between three

empires: Russia, Prussia, the Austro-Hungarian empire. Neither Poland nor Lithuania existed until 1918.

At the end of the WWI, the territory was divided, and countries like Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and others were born/reborn. Only then did residents became citizens of these countries. As a result, people who, for example, were born in Riga (nowadays Latvia) could actually be Lithuanian or Polish.

Horesh advises that eligibility for a Lithuanian or Polish passport depends on the city from which your grandparents (or their parents) hailed.

Horesh says many South African Ashkenazi Jews of Lithuanian origin have been refused Lithuanian citizenship because their heritage is actually Polish. They would, accordingly, be entitled to Polish citizenship and a EU passport.

After World War II, the borders in Europe changed, resulting in cities changing nationality. The resultant effect for descendants of Jews who were born in Vilnius, for example, is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined, but an application for a Polish passport may very well be successful.

**Sephardi:** the descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago)



are most likely eligible for a Portuguese passport. If applicable, Horesh is able to obtain an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which an application for European citizenship can be made and will most likely be successful. Portuguese citizenship enables one to enter the Unites States without the need to apply for a visa.

In addition, Horesh is filing many applications for descendants of Sephardi origin who arrived in South Africa from Greece, Turkey, and North Africa. Descendents from other countries in the Middle East – even Holland – are also potentially eligible.

Horesh resides in Israel, but has spent seven years in Poland, and is recognised as a leading lawyer in the

field of European citizenship, with a full understanding of local immigration laws.

Living in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – offers him quick and easy access to Poland and Lithuania. Accordingly, he is able to work closely with local professionals who assist him in tracing the documentation required for successful applications for European citizenship.

In addition, and as a result of his close ties with Portuguese authorities, to date he has had a 100% success rate with applications for Portuguese citizenship.

**Horesh is available to discuss your specific details. He is often in South Africa, and can meet you in person to discuss your specific needs.**

I will be in Johannesburg from June 13th till June 19th, and then in Cape Town till June 24th  
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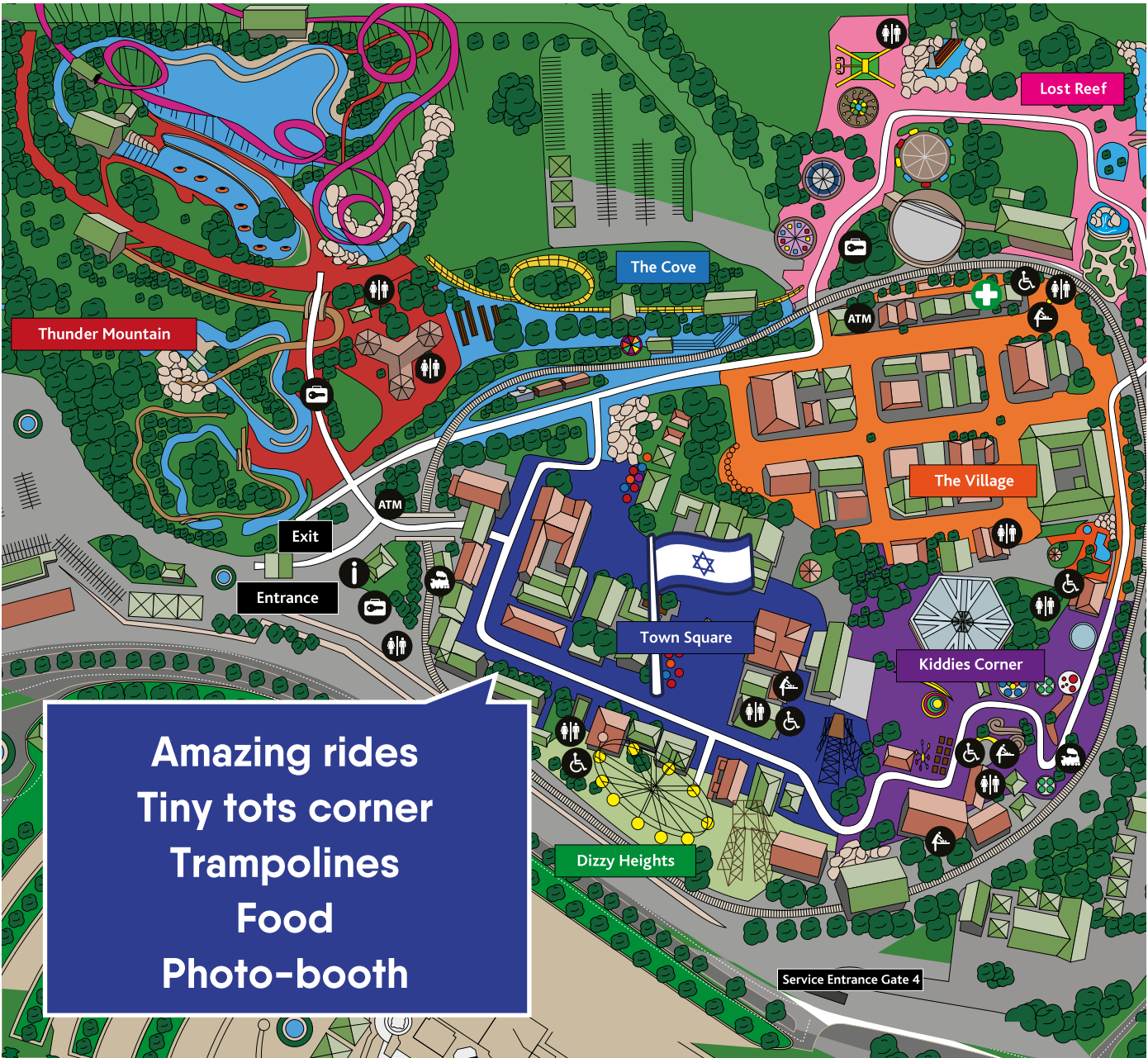


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