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incised panel
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William Joseph Kentridge,
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South African Israelis take cover in Shabbat of fear

TALI FEINBERG

As about 700 rockets were launched at Israel this past Shabbat, South Africans living in the south of the country raced to find their children, hid in nearby buildings, drove under fire, and stayed in their safe rooms, praying. Four Israelis were killed in the attacks from Hamas in Gaza.

“On Saturday night, we were driving home to Beersheba after a weekend in Eilat, and we could see rockets being fired over our heads. You could see explosions in the sky,” says a woman originally from Johannesburg, who asked to remain anonymous because she doesn’t want to upset her family.

“It’s a big dilemma – should we carry on driving on the open road in the desert and try to find shelter, or should we pull over and take cover? That’s also a risk, so we just turned up the volume as I didn’t want to hear the sirens, and sped home as fast as we could to get into our bomb shelter. When you hear the explosions, it feels like someone’s playing Russian roulette with your life.”

Judith Giesenow, originally from Cape Town, described the scene as the rockets started falling. “Our town, Even Shmuel (southern Israel), is Shomer Shabbat and it is usually full of kids and people on the road, but while I was standing at the window anxiously waiting for my husband and kids to come home, I noticed how deserted everything was. The only people on the road were parents running to find their children and bring them home.

“We went to friends for lunch on Shabbat, and our three girls stayed there to play. We went home and at 15:28, the nightmare began – sirens! I looked at my husband totally confused because we are used to sirens for Yom Hashoah or Yom Hazikaron and test sirens, but this sounded different. We were under attack.”

They ran into their *mamad* (safe room). “As it was Shabbat and we were not prepared, we had no light. As we were standing there in the darkness, all I could say to my husband was, ‘Is this real? We have to get our kids!’ You are supposed to stay in the *mamad* for 10 minutes after a siren, but we couldn’t. After a few minutes, we went out and my husband ran to our friend’s house to get the children.

“The next siren came at 20:28. This time, my children panicked as they realised it was real. I didn’t sleep the whole night – just tossed and turned and got on with some work.

“Who can sleep when you constantly hear ‘boom, boom?’” They were told by the regional council that schools would be closed, shops without shelters were not allowed to open, and transport would be limited. “Your life is put on hold,” Giesenow says.

But besides the fear and harsh reality they have experienced since making aliyah in July 2017, “we also got to see the unity of the Jews and people living in Israel. We had people phoning from all over the country offering accommodation and support. Museums and attractions all over Israel were offering free or reduced entry for residents of the south. Wherever we went, people were trying to make our experience joyful.”

Leanne Manshari, who is originally from Cape Town, lives in Ashkelon, where at least one Israeli was killed. “We keep Shabbos, and it really caught me by surprise. My two older kids were taking the dog for a walk. I went to the safe room and sat there with my six-year-

Uri Gobey, also from Cape Town, was out buying shwarma in Yavne (central Israel, near Rechovot), leaving his wife and son at home, when the sirens started. “I didn’t have enough time to make it all the way home, so I decided to abandon the car and run for the nearest



Photo: Ilan Ossenblyver

Barbara and Geoff Rothschild (SAA Board member and former chair of JSE Limited) arrive at Norwood Primary School to vote on Wednesday

On a mission to vote

old daughter, while my husband ran to find my other two kids. It was one of the scariest experiences, not knowing if the other half of my family was okay.

“You could hear every explosion going off, and we could also hear them bombing Gaza. One of the rockets fell really close to our apartment, about 500m away, which was a major explosion.”

building. Being outside is petrifying during these times,” he says.

“I ran as fast as I could into the nearest building, which was unlocked, thankfully. I got into the bottom of the stairwell and realised that there was no real safe spot for me there due to the foyer having two entrances, and the stairwell not being designed as a shelter. I had

Continued on page 2>>



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Criminal goes to 'federal Jewish heaven'

Michael Cohen, a former attorney and fixer for United States President Donald Trump, is reported to have started his three-year term on Monday at a prison known as "federal Jewish heaven".

Cohen will serve his time at FCI Otisville, a medium-security prison about 70 miles (112km) northwest of New York City, with a reputation as the lockup of choice for Jewish criminals.

The prison serves kosher foods such as matzah-ball soup, gefilte fish and rugelach, in part because of its "proximity to New York's sizable Jewish population". Also, Otisville holds Shabbat dinners and Passover seders, according to Larry Levine, who served an 11-year sentence in 10 prisons before setting up the Wall Street Prison Consultants group.

Cohen was convicted of, among other things, carrying out the president's hush-money payments to two women who say they had affairs with him, violating campaign finance laws in the process.

Other Jewish inmates who have passed through the facility include businessmen Sholam Weiss and Kenneth Ira Starr. Bernie Madoff's lawyer asked that the Ponzi schemer be sent there in 2009, but instead Madoff was funnelled to a prison in North Carolina.

Rivlin visits victims of Gaza rockets

Here's an exchange between Israeli President Reuven Rivlin and the son of an Arab-Israeli man who was killed over the weekend by a Hamas bomb.

"You don't know what it means to me that you came here," the son of Ziad Alhamada reportedly told Rivlin when the president visited his home.

"Why wouldn't I come?" Rivlin replied. "Aren't you an Israeli citizen?"

Alhamada, 49, was among four Israelis killed over the weekend when Hamas launched nearly 700 rockets at Israel, injuring many others. He died when a rocket hit the factory where he worked in Ashkelon.

Rivlin also visited the families of the others killed: Pinchas Menachem Prezuazman, a 21-year-old American Israeli; Moshe Agadi, a 58-year-old father of four who was hit with shrapnel to his chest and stomach in the yard of his Ashkelon home; and 67-year-old Moshe Feder, who was hit by a missile while driving.

As of Monday, 25 Palestinians were reported dead by the Hamas-controlled Gaza health ministry.



US Jews critical of Trump

American Jews are much more likely than their Christian counterparts to criticise President Donald Trump's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, according to a new survey conducted in April.

In a survey published on Monday, the Pew Research Center found that 42% of American Jews said that Trump was favouring the Israelis too much, while a similar share, 47%, said he was striking the right balance between the Israelis and Palestinians. Six percent found that Trump favoured the Palestinians too much.

Among Christians, 59% said the president was striking the right balance between the two sides, and 26% said he favoured the Israelis too much. The level of support for Trump's policies on Israel rose significantly in the evangelical community: 72% agreed with the balance Trump is striking.

"Partisanship also may be a factor when it comes to the views of religiously unaffiliated Americans who, like Jews, largely lean Democratic," Pew explained. According to a Gallup poll released earlier this year, about half of American Jews identified as Democrats.

Jewish man attacked in Brooklyn

A Jewish man was attacked in an apparently anti-Semitic incident in New York over the weekend.

The attack comes days after the New York Police Department reported that more than half of all hate crimes reported in 2018 and so far in 2019 were anti-Jewish.

In the weekend incident, according to the *New York Post*, the unnamed victim, who was visibly Jewish, was punched in the back of the head while walking in the heavily Hasidic Williamsburg section. The attacker was reported to have called the man a "f***ing Jew".

Three precincts with large Hasidic populations, all in Brooklyn and including Williamsburg, reported the most anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2018.

• All briefs supplied by JTA



Torah Thought

Being holy is about being separate

Every day, twice a day, we emulate the angels on high and say *kedusha* (a prayer describing G-d's holiness). We exclaim that Hashem is "*kadosh, kadosh, kadosh* – holy, holy, holy" – powerful stuff, but what does holiness mean?

Should we seclude ourselves from the physical trappings of this world and ascend a mountain in Nepal? Should we be like the monk who sold his Ferrari? Should we divest ourselves of our clothing, sit in a loin cloth, and meditate all day long? As breezy as that sounds, it can't be what Hashem expects from us when in this week's Torah portion, we are commanded, *kedoshim tihiyu* (you shall be holy).

For starters, our *mitzvot* (commandments) are very physical and sometimes expensive exercises. A box of shmura matzah can set you back R700, so can a lulav. Don't even get me started on the prices of *mezuzot* and *tefillin* (phylacteries). And you can sell your car, and maybe you will have

enough money to buy a Torah scroll. *Mitzvot* are expensive. We would not be able to enjoy our peaceful meditation and supposed holiness by chucking our jobs and very physical lifestyles.

So what is holiness, and how do we achieve it?

When we and the angels call out that Hashem is holy, we are actually making a statement about our lack of understanding of the divine. *Kadosh* is better translated as "separate", and we are admitting that not only is Hashem separate from this physical realm, and not only is he separate from the celestial realm, he is also so beyond the conception of the highest and greatest *ofanim, chayot* and *seraphim* (heavenly beings). Hashem is totally transcendent. But in the very next breath, we paradoxically know that despite Hashem being so ineffable, he *melo chol ha'aretz kevodo* (fills up all of existence with his honour). Hashem is not a cold, indifferent universe, he is always close

by. He is immanent, but I digress.

Being holy is really about being separate. Shabbos is only holy if we separate it from the rest of the week with learning, special prayers, and unique food (*cholent!*). Marriage is called *kiddushin*, as it separates the couple from the big pool of available singles.

And when Hashem commands us to be *kadosh*, we are to be different, separate, and unique, especially among non-Jews. We are to make a *kiddush Hashem* (sanctify the name of G-d by being holy). There's that word again. If we truly want to be *kedoshim*, we are to stand separate from the crowd. We don't have to get drunk at the office Christmas party. We don't have to steal the office stationery, and we don't need to sit around enjoying the office gossip. This is hard work, but that is what is required of us to truly be called a holy people.



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16:56	17:48	Durban
17:17	18:08	Bloemfontein
17:11	18:03	Port Elizabeth
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South Africans take cover in Shabbat of fear

>>Continued from page 1

no choice but to put myself in the safest possible position I could find, which was by someone's doorway. If I went into the stairwell, I would be in a much worse situation as the walls are like paper when a rocket hits it."

After a while, he went back to his car: "There is always that unsure moment when you go out again as to whether it's really safe or not." He drove home. "Once I got upstairs, the alarms went off again and we went straight into our bomb shelter. It is my son's first experience of this. We had to show him we were calm and not afraid."

The Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) Johannesburg said that 24 of its institutions, including day care centres, were under attack, affecting 1 760 children. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies and South African Zionist Federation said in a statement that they deplored and condemned these latest acts of violence against the Israeli people, and called on the South African government to "unequivocally condemn rocket attacks on Israel".

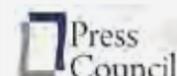
"In order for our country to be a true role player on the world stage, the government needs to speak out clearly in situations when such blatant acts of aggression are perpetrated, whether by the Palestinians or anyone else," the statement read.

Israel's President, Reuven Rivlin, visited the families of Israelis killed in the attacks, including the family of Ziad Alhamada who comes from an unrecognised Bedouin village, and was killed in Ashkelon.

"I came to express identification with all the tribes of Israel," Rivlin told the family. "I came to you, our Bedouin brethren, to express my condolences and the condolences of all the residents of the state of Israel for the loss of a citizen and resident of the state. We came because we are all partners, we are all citizens of this country, and together we will overcome these difficult moments as well."

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At the polls

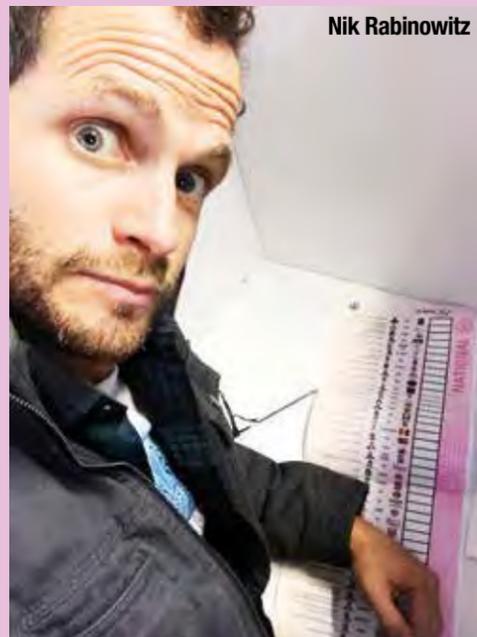
As South Africa went to the polls on Wednesday, the SA Jewish Report's roving photographer, Ilan Ossendryver, captured the Jewish vote around Johannesburg. Those he didn't get to, sent us selfies.



Nik Rabinowitz

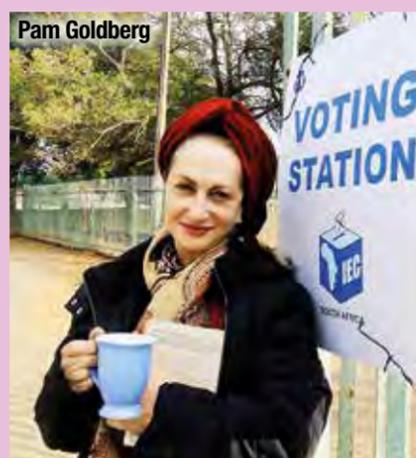
Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein with his wife Gina

ANC stalwart Joy Coplan,

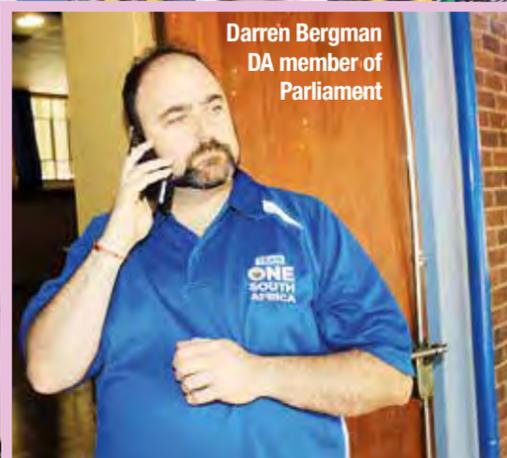


Linda and David Shapiro

Photo: Howard Sackstein



Pam Goldberg



Darren Bergman DA member of Parliament



Jack Bloom DA member of Parliament



Errol and Charisse Zeifert



Lorraine Srage King David High School Linksfield principal



Ari Arenstein puts tefillin on Josh Gerson



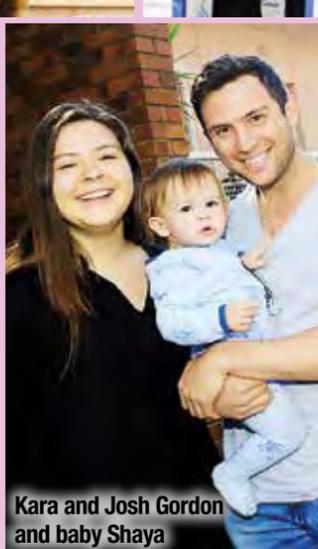
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Suzanne Ackerman-Berman



Kara and Josh Gordon and baby Shaya



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Wendy Kahn and Chaim Kaplan

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Hijacking victim: CAP saved my life

TALI FEINBERG

"I thought I was going to die, and in a way I wished I would, not knowing what would happen," says Stacey Urdang, who was hijacked with her baby son in Johannesburg last week. "They threatened that if I or my son screamed or cried, they would shoot us," she recalls.

In a miraculous chain of events, she was rescued unharmed by Community Active Protection (CAP) Security, to which she says she owes her life. The incident has sent shockwaves around the South African and global Jewish community, because in spite of high crime levels in South Africa, such an incident has become increasingly rare.

Urdang says she wants to share her story to empower herself, to set the record straight about what happened, and mostly to pay tribute to CAP for its heroic efforts.

It all started when she collected her son from crèche. She had just put him in his car seat and was walking to the driver's seat, when she was approached by a man who first greeted her and then held a gun to her head and pushed her into the vehicle. "He said, 'Good afternoon ma'am. This is a hijacking.'"

She doesn't remember much of the following moments. She doesn't remember screaming, which she later realised was her "one window of opportunity and weapon". She doesn't remember how they got her keys, or when the other two suspects arrived. But after she screamed, school staff realised something was wrong, pressed a panic button, and alerted her emergency contact – her husband Ryan.

He immediately went into action, alerting CAP and using the tracking app, Life360, on her phone to tell them where she was. "This was a game changer, and made CAP's job a lot easier. There are so many 'what ifs'," she says.

But, during the 45 minutes in the hijacked car, Urdang says she was "none the wiser" that staff had heard her scream, that her husband had activated the tracking app, or that CAP was following her. She tried to keep note of landmarks, and she stayed calm, even though she says, "My whole life flashed before me. My only concern was the safety of my baby boy. All focus and attention was on him, holding him, and ensuring he was okay."

She even considered trying to escape with her son. "I was terrified they would drive off with him," she says. Incredibly, the baby smiled and even laughed, not reacting to the drama unfolding around him. At times, the suspects said he was cute, and asked his name and how old he was.

It was only when CAP closed in and a shootout ensued did the little boy cry. Incredibly, the one suspect held Urdang's head down, possibly to protect her. He also shouted, "There's a child in the car!" He was the same suspect who had promised he would drop her off at some point, and Urdang hoped that he would recognise their common humanity in those moments.

The shootout meant that the suspect driving the car was hitting 160km an hour, despite the afternoon traffic. "He drove like it was his job," says Urdang, emphasising that these were experienced hijackers. Even as shots were fired, she didn't know it was a rescue effort. But eventually the car was cornered, and the suspects split up and fled. They have still not been found, but CAP and the Community Security Organisation (CSO) remain on the chase. Urdang made a statement to the South African Police Services, and was given a case number, but has not heard from them since. And so, Urdang and her son were rescued in the middle of Alexandra

township. "Afterwards, the trauma hit, and I just sobbed. The scene was surrounded by red tape, and we sat at the back of a vehicle as they tried to catch these guys." She was taken to CAP head office where she was debriefed, and she is not shy to say she is seeing a trauma counsellor.

"I am forever changed by this, and have a whole new normal ahead of me." Thankfully, her son does not seem to be affected. "It's his first birthday coming up, and that was almost taken away. He is too little to understand, but my husband and I are responsible for whether he views this with fear or resilience. It is now part of his story, and we can't take it away. But we don't need to make him scared."

Urdang wants to pay tribute to CAP. "I shudder to think what would have happened without it. We take [security providers] for granted, but for me and my family, we are deeply grateful and 100% indebted to it for this second chance at life."



She says she is not thinking of leaving South Africa as her support system here is irreplaceable. "I don't think trauma can be overcome by moving away from the people you know and love. This is home. I'm also indebted to my family and friends who helped me regain my footing in the world. I am definitely on high alert, but I want to try and grow from this instead of running away."

While Urdang believes this is a freak incident, she knows these were experienced hijackers. She advises mothers to be extra vigilant, especially when putting children into the car.

Mark van Jaarsveld from CAP agrees. This is "a very rare thing. It's not evolving and is limited to this one incident, but we will keep our eyes on it, and advise the community. Our main message is to be vigilant and aware. These three suspects entered the area on foot off a main road, yet no one reported it. If you see two or more men who are not usually in that environment, report it. Try park inside a secure property and have a tracking app – CAP is releasing one in a few weeks. Crime is generally down, but play your part and continue to be vigilant."

Says Urdang, "I want it to be known that for my family and I, everybody who was involved played a pivotal role in the positive outcome. We are 100% indebted to CAP and the CSO, the community, as well as everyone behind the scenes who managed to reunite me with my family. Please donate to these organisations."

Israel boycott proposal back before UCT senate

TALI FEINBERG

The University of Cape Town (UCT) senate is to meet on 10 May to consider and clarify its proposal for an academic boycott of Israeli universities.

The meeting is at the behest of the UCT's highest governing body, its council, which at the end of March sent a motion proposing that the academic boycott go back to the senate for consideration and clarification.

The motion being considered is as follows: "UCT will not enter into any formal relationships with Israeli academic institutions operating in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as other Israeli academic institutions enabling gross human-rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories."

In a letter to senate members, the university's executive wrote, "Council considered the resolution at its meeting on 30 March 2019 and did not support it. It was the view of council that a number of issues required clarification, including a full assessment of the sustainability impact of the senate resolution." It also said a more consultative process was necessary before the matter could be considered any further.

Sara Gon of the Institute of Race Relations, who has written extensively on the topic, says it is very difficult to tell which way this will go. "It's possible that they might postpone the meeting or defer the decision on the basis that they haven't had the time to go through all the representations properly yet," Gon says.

Her latest article suggests that not only does the previous process "appear to have been sloppy, unprofessionally, and incredibly biased, but that the senate might be unlawfully constituted in terms of UCT's governing statute. If it doesn't look at this, the decision may be *ultra vires* [acting beyond its legal power or authority] for technical reasons."

"Its previous process was a shameful episode for UCT so it should be more careful this time," she says. "A lot also depends on who attends this meeting. Fewer and fewer classically liberal academics are attending because they find the environment so hostile."

A UCT academic who spoke on the condition of anonymity said, "I suspect the vice-chancellor would like the whole thing to go away. She has other priorities, and this is all a distraction that, win or lose, does not help UCT in any way. What is unclear is how council's edict is interpreted, and what the path forward is. I think the boycott effort is all but dead, but it's not clear yet how the body will be buried."

Meanwhile, Progress SA has put together a memo with nine reasons why senate members should reject the academic boycott. The organisation is fighting for academic freedom and against extremism on South Africa's university campuses.

The memo says that such a boycott would violate academic freedom; that it will in principle allow boycotts of other countries' universities; and that the free exchange of ideas plays an important role in influencing society towards a more moral position.

It also explains that adopting a boycott policy against Israel will isolate UCT from the international academic community and damage its institutional reputation; that boycotting Israeli institutions harms Arab scholars and students as well; and that a boycott will limit the ability of UCT staff and students to debate and discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict freely.

By accepting the boycott, "UCT will cease to be a university and instead become an ideological indoctrination chamber", the organisation said. "Academic boycotts are likely to further entrench the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rather than bring it to a resolution, and it is morally undesirable to punish individual

Continued on page 19>>

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south african Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

Are Israeli lives not important to the world?

This week in South Africa, you could be excused for thinking nothing was happening other than our elections. Most news items have been about local politics or related topics.

However, up north in Israel, almost 700 rockets were fired from Gaza. The Iron Dome managed to intercept only about 200 that were likely to have caused the most damage. Imagine how many people would have been killed if there was no Iron Dome?

That was Hamas's intention. There is no other reason to fire so many rockets into a country the size of Israel unless you want to murder many people. The country was terrorised. Each one of those rockets had the potential to kill dozens.

The rockets landed in Ashdod, Ashkelon, Kiryat Gat, and even Rechovot. They hit places that have never been hit before all over the country. Four people were killed, close to 80 were injured, and much property was destroyed.

In our lead story on page 1, you can feel the terror.

Now, I do understand that South African elections take precedence this week, but I haven't heard so much as a peep from the government about Israel.

I did hear on the radio that there was a cross-border skirmish between Israel and Gaza, and 24 Palestinians were killed.

It's true that 24 Palestinians were killed, but they were killed when Israel retaliated after being bombarded by hundreds of Hamas rockets.

Talk about the news being skewed! There was no mention of all the rockets that were fired into Israel, nor the dead and wounded on the Israeli side. What does that mean?

Is it that Israeli lives don't matter here? The fact is that Israel didn't start this, but killed people in retaliation. Was Israel supposed to ignore the 700 rockets? Which country in the world would do that?

And then, when Israel agrees to a ceasefire despite the damage done, again, not a peep.

I am the first person to say that Israel is

not an angel. It is a country with its own problems, like any other country. However, like any country should, it does everything in its power to protect and defend its people. That makes absolute sense to me. How come it doesn't make sense to the United Nations and the South African government or media?

What will it take for people to accept that Israel has a right to defend and protect its people? It is so obviously a case of different rules for different people.

This time is auspicious for us, not just because of the elections. Last Thursday was Yom HaShoah, when we remember the six million Jews who were obliterated by the Nazis and their pals. We dare not forget what happened to them. We dare not forget what hatred can do.

To me, it is irrational for one group of people to hate another for no real reason other than the fact that they were born into a particular religion. Many people find rational reasons to perpetuate this hatred. For example, seeing a country like Israel – the Jewish state – as evil, and everything it does to protect itself as appalling and demonic.

Then, on Tuesday evening, we commemorated Yom Hazikaron, when we remember all the fallen Israeli soldiers and victims of terrorism.

As most of us know, there is hardly a family in Israel who hasn't lost a loved one. Can you imagine what that is like? This is a country of people where everyone has lost a loved one in defending the country, or because they weren't able to keep the enemies out. Knowing this, is it possible to imagine that Israelis don't want peace? And yet there are so many – particularly in this country – who believe that Israel wants to maintain the current situation in Gaza and the West Bank. Really?

The problem is how to get out of this situation. It isn't so simple. When the very people you are meant to discuss peace with are the same people who pay huge pension funds to the families of those who have murdered Jews, it is not an option.

I believe in a two-state solution. I believe in everyone being treated with dignity and the maintenance of human rights. I don't believe anyone is better or worse than anyone else. But, I am not sure how you can sit across a table and talk peace with individuals who are willing to pay for the death of your people. This is a huge thing to get past before there can be peace.

However, this week, after mourning those we have lost, we celebrate what we have. On Wednesday night and Thursday is Yom Ha'atzmaut, and we celebrate 71 years of an independent Jewish state.

In spite of all the hatred towards Israel in the Middle East, in spite of anti-Semitism, and in spite of many around the world seeing Israel as a pariah state, Israel is hugely successful. It is economically sound and is growing constantly. It is the start-up nation, and it is developing at a rate of knots. It is a country we can be proud of.

However, as South African Jews, we have a lot of work to do to get our own government to understand that Israel is a country that has a right to defend itself and its people, just as we do.

By the time you read this newspaper, the elections will be over, and the die will be cast.

I hope and pray that the government that leads us into the next cycle is one that has morals, integrity, and the interests of all the people at heart.

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder

Editor

Netanyahu backs down fast over most brutal attack from Gaza

The timing of the Gaza flareup this past weekend was not co-incidental.

This week and next are busy on the Israeli calendar. They include Yom Hazikaron, Yom Ha'atzmaut, the one year anniversary of the relocation of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and the Palestinian commemoration of Naqba. It all culminates in the Eurovision song festival next week.

The last thing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu needs or wants is to scare off about 20 000 tourists expected to descend on Tel Aviv for the world's largest song contest. Last year, 186 million viewers worldwide watched the show.

International bands have already arrived in the country, rehearsals are taking place, and organisers are at pains to stress that the show will go on. Although there've been no cancellations recorded by tourist agencies so far, there are, of course, concerns that violence could overshadow the merriment. The Israeli foreign ministry has repeatedly insisted the country will be calm and safe.

This year's Eurovision has been clouded with controversy since Israeli singer Netta Barzilai won last year's contest with the hit song *Toy*. The rules of the competition dictate that the next festival be held in the winner's country's capital – in this case Jerusalem. But European officials were reluctant to hold it there for fear it could politicise the event because of the disputed status of the city.

Arab parliamentarians were vocal that, as Joint List MK Yousef Jabareen, said, "the right-wing Israeli government should continue to be punished for its crimes against the Palestinian people and the constant denial of basic rights, in utter contrast to the position of the Europeans and other nations".

Photo: Mahmud Hams/AFP/Getty Images



Smoke and flames rise after an Israeli airstrike on Saturday in Gaza City

Conflicting reports from within Israel also suggested a "lack of venue" in Jerusalem. Talking to Israelis at the time, most insisted that because Jerusalem was the capital it was only right that the contest be held there. But others were ambivalent, saying that it didn't matter where the competition was held, as long as it was in Israel. Four cities vied for hosting rights – Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Eilat.

The contest, first held in 1956, has never been cancelled nor had its location moved prior to the event. Its executive producer, Jon Ola Sand, admits there are always attempts to politicise Eurovision, and the noise around it being held in Israel was to be expected.

Now, with days to go before the gala event opens, the issue is back on the agenda, after more than 700 rockets were fired by Hamas over the course of two days.

Fifty rockets were fired in the space of one minute on Ashdod, Ashkelon, and other cities in the south of the country. Four Israelis were killed, the highest casualty on the Israeli side since the last Gaza war in 2014.

Hamas initiated the flareup on Friday, presumably expecting the Israeli response to be more muted than it turned out to be, precisely because of the reasons stated above. But Netanyahu responded forcibly, hitting hundreds of Hamas and Islamic Jihad sites, including Hamas' military intelligence and general security offices.

Twenty-five Palestinians were killed, including two pregnant women and two toddlers (the Israel Defense Forces claims they were killed by a rocket launcher and not by one of their missiles), and more than 150

**DATELINE:
MIDDLE EAST**

Paula Slier

Palestinians were injured.

Israel resumed its policy of targeted killings by hitting a vehicle in which a high-ranking Hamas fighter responsible for transferring money from Iran to various groups in Gaza was travelling. Tank reinforcements were sent to the border, but at no time was it expected that there would be a ground invasion.

Instead, as anticipated, Netanyahu was quick to end the escalation. He wants to get through the next two weeks with as little drama as possible and then presumably, according to most experts I spoke to, "hit Hamas hard".

But, of course, he's facing the inevitable political fallout.

Blue and White party leader and former IDF Chief Benny Gantz says the truce reportedly agreed to by Israel and Hamas early on Monday morning is a capitulation from the Israelis that will lead to more fighting. Opposition from within Netanyahu's Likud party criticised him for gaining nothing while Palestinian organisations increased their attacks on Israel.

Perhaps the most telling comment is from Sderot Mayor Alon Davidi, who warned that Jerusalem had lost its deterrence in Gaza.

"We are in a serious bind because our values are being confused," he said. "This round began after an IDF officer was shot, not because of rocket launches."

Indeed, the escalation began when two Israeli soldiers were wounded by Gaza gunfire near the border on Friday. A retaliatory Israeli air strike killed two militants from Hamas while two other Palestinians

protesting near the fence were also killed.

That there will be a next round of violence between the sides is a fact. The only question is when.

Hamas is threatening that if Israel does not commit to lifting the siege on Gaza, the next round is only a matter of time. It has also threatened to target Tel Aviv, which is why on Sunday night Tel Aviv, Netanya, Kfar Saba, and other cities in the centre of the country opened their public bomb shelters. It is a certainty that Hamas rockets

can reach that far.

Egyptian mediation efforts for a long-term truce are expected to continue. While the Israeli government has refused to confirm whether it was party to Monday's ceasefire, the IDF announced it was lifting all security restrictions for residents living in southern Israel. The situation has since been calm.

Jerusalem wants to avoid publicly acknowledging it's holding negotiations with Hamas whom it regards as a terrorist organisation. Arabic media, however, reported that Israel had agreed to ease its blockade of Gaza, especially in regard to the electricity, fuel, and fishing situation in the strip.

It's worth mentioning that an interim government is still in place in Israel. Netanyahu continues to hold talks with different party leaders to form a coalition majority.

According to past Supreme Court rulings, an interim government should act "with restraint in using its authority for all matters that are not necessary or have special urgency".

Following the bloodiest weekend on the Israeli side in five years, and with Islamic Jihad vowing to stop Eurovision from going ahead, it certainly seems that the weekend's violence has special urgency. It's thus unlikely that this was the reason Netanyahu stepped back from launching a massive operation in Gaza.

No, rather when the laughs and cheers of Eurovision die down, Israelis might be bracing for a deadly encore. The current situation between Israel and Hamas is untenable, and most Israelis agree that something needs to be done.

Seventy-one is the 'new thirty' for Israel



OPINION

Zvika "Biko" Arran

Four Israelis were killed this week as about 700 rockets were fired from Gaza. These victims represent the mosaic of the different tribes of Israeli society today: haredi, religious, and secular Jews, and a Bedouin Arab.

That's the way President Reuven Rivlin painted the picture of Israeli society a few years ago, and its current challenge.

The confrontation this week reminds us of another part of the updated Israeli story: the Iron Dome (*Kípat Barzel*). This anti-missile technological breakthrough saved the lives of so many innocent civilians in the past week, and over the past few years.

That's the essence of the Israeli story today: one country, different tribes, unity that emerges from threats and, of course, a great *Yiddische kop* (Jewish brain) that is able to come up with brilliant inventions.

Israel is now a grown up, mature country. Seventy-one is a young adult – it is the "new 30" of countries. Israel may be tiny, but it is a superpower in cyber and water technology, and it is the start-up nation. It leads international lists for quality of life, happiness, growth, research, development and investment, birth rate, life expectancy, and of course, the number of lawyers per capita.

So, we should feel proud at the 71st anniversary of the state of Israel. We are all shareholders, whether we bought stocks or not. We're all partners, investors, and observers of this miracle. Israel is indeed a miracle of our time.

We have realised the dream of generations – the return of Jews to Zion. This small, threatened community struggled, fought and, from the ashes of the Shoah, succeeded in swiftly building an advanced country.

However, those charts, statistics, and rankings are of minor importance. Israel is first and foremost a safe homeland to raise one's kids. Israel is a spectacular land to travel and hike. Israel is full of vibrant people, streets, and sites to experience, and provides an open landscape to invent and initiate.

However, the dreams of Theodor Herzl and other Zionists weren't completely fulfilled. Sometimes it is better to dream and in so doing yearn for Jerusalem when you pray three times a day than it is to argue about cleaning the city's dirty streets.

After 71 years of independence, the Israeli photo album is far from portraying a perfect family.

In short, especially on this festive Yom Ha'atzmaut, it's important to point out some concerns and worries.

Israel has "regular" country issues, like red-tape, infrastructure concerns, corruption, and education problems, to name a few. Naturally, the public expectation regarding these topics is high.

Israel also has some special issues. Its borders are not yet stable. It is also still under constant threat of violence. It has no constitution, and the rules of its democracy are not yet consolidated.

Being the only Jewish nation-state around the world conflicts sometimes with democratic values. But give Israel the breadth of about 200 years of independence – as old democracies like France, Canada, and the United States have had – and I believe it will overcome and fix these unique problems.

Then, there are the challenges that are

particular to Israel alone. If we believe Israel should be *orr lagoyim* (a light unto the nations) in terms of taking on extra responsibility, not superiority; if we feel that the meaning of *am segula* (the chosen people) is added duty, not added value; then we still have a long walk to freedom and fulfilment.



Israel must be a model society (*chevrat mofet*), not an average country. Israel cannot lead in poverty and social gaps. It must be an example to all of a just and equal community. Israel cannot lag behind in education, which is a core Jewish value. Israel cannot be Jewish mainly in the less-important things, and not Jewish at all in the most important things.

Proper (ethical) behaviour precedes the Torah. Israel cannot "...wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus, 22, 20-21). We have to be above reproach!

Rivlin made condolence calls to all the families of the rocket attacks this week. He visited the family of Ziad Alhamada in a Bedouin village. Where others skipped or disregarded the Arab victim, the president once again reminded us of what is expected of us and our challenges.

Because of our huge success as a strong

economy, military power, and ancient civilization, we must be more courageous, bold, and daring. We must let go of our Holocaust victimhood. We must get rid of the David versus Goliath state of mind.

Recognising that we are no longer a small, weak country, Israel should be more self-confident, open to self-criticism, and *Gemara*-type thinking. We cannot be afraid of disputes, but rather seek out arguments in order to improve ourselves. We need to build a society based on inclusion, open discourse, positive, and constructive approaches, not terror.

Out of our prosperity and success, we must have more compassion and solidarity. Out of innovation and being the start-up nation, we need to ensure sustainability over the long-term. Out of security in our homeland as Jews, we have to be more accepting, tolerant, and flexible.

Israel can deal with the regular and special obstacles. We need to focus on how to create a Jewish sovereignty, and run it without internal strife and *milchemet achim* (a war between brethren).

In the coming decade, Israel will reach 80 years of independence. It's up to us to move from the desert and settlement generation that inherited the land to a new generation of independence. And we will.

• Zvika "Biko" Arran is an Israeli social entrepreneur, lawyer, policy advisor, and ex-journalist. He was the founding chief executive of Tanakh 929, Midot, a rating service of Israeli charities and other organisations. He recently moved to Johannesburg with his wife, Liat, and his four sons. Liat is the new director of the Israel Centre.

KosherWorld



TRULY KOSHER

YOM HA'ATZMAUT

יום העצמאות

שמח

71

Wishing all our mothers
a Happy Mothers Day
12th May

LOTS OF
SPECIALS
IN-STORE THIS
MOTHER'S
DAY

Freedom Fighter Paul Trehwela looks back on the struggle

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Paul Trehwela, an important member of the Jewish left-wing during apartheid, believes South African politics is “dictatorial”. Visiting South Africa recently, he told the *SA Jewish Report* this was because instead of being accountable to citizens, MPs “are accountable to party headquarters”.

Trehwela was an underground journalist and political activist, and served time as a political prisoner. Now living in the United Kingdom, he reflected on his role in the struggle.

Born to a Jewish mother and a Christian father, Trehwela was brought up with no religion. “I had a very mild, generous, and kind upbringing,” he says.

Before starting university, Trehwela became “an honorary game ranger” at Sabi Sands in 1959. “I had a wonderful time, but I also learnt about South Africa’s social conditions,” he recalls. “At the age of 17, I’d been given a revolver and live ammunition and put in charge of adult African men because the young white game ranger wanted to go on holiday – an extraordinary experience for a 17-year-old. I went to university asking, ‘What’s going on in the country?’ This question of power.”

A keen wildlife artist, he initially wanted to study zoology, but soon switched to English and political science.

“In March 1960, came the Sharpeville Massacre, and politically everything changed across the country,” he recalls. “The old non-violent methods of struggle suddenly seemed quite inadequate. Elected as the Eastern Province secretary of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), Trehwela established a connection with Fort Hare University. It was at a meeting there in 1961 that he met people who would become very senior members of the African National Congress (ANC) and uMkhonto weSizwe (MK).

In 1961, Trehwela began his first job as a cub journalist at *The Star*. Sent to Cape Town for the journalist’s training course, Trehwela and his colleague, Terry Bell, attended a meeting of the Congress of Democrats. “It was addressed by Denis Goldberg, and I became friendly with Denis and his wife. I was arrested and put on trial twice for handing out congress leaflets. Afterwards, I was sacked by *The Star*. The director asked me, ‘When the revolution comes, which side are you going to be on?’ I hummed and hawed, but he wasn’t fooled.”

Trehwela moved to the *Rand Daily Mail* in 1962. “It was extraordinary being in companionship with very fine journalists including Benjamin Pogrand and Ray Louw at a time of great drama in the country,” he says.

While working for the *Mail*, Trehwela began living a double life. “I made contact with Ruth First at the *New Age* [newspaper’s] office just before it was banned, and worked as an underground journalist. I stayed at the *Mail* for a year, and became very uncomfortable as we knew we were likely to be arrested, and I didn’t want it to have an impact on the *Mail*.” Luckily he was offered the post of Africa editor at *Newsweek*, the only news magazine in South Africa at the time.

Trehwela attended Nelson Mandela’s trial in Pretoria in 1962 at First’s request. Together with Phillipa Levy who was driving First’s car, he was a victim of what he believes was an assassination attempt en route back home from the trial. “On our way back home in rush hour traffic, we were rammed from behind. Due to the angle [of impact], we shot across the road at great speed in front of oncoming traffic, and landed in a ditch on the other side. Fortunately, we weren’t hit. There was no enquiry. The question has always remained: who did it and why? I think, it’s very possible it was the security police.”

In the early 1960s, Trehwela was recruited into the then underground South African Communist Party (SACP) by Joe Slovo. “A

few months after the arrests in Rivonia in July 1963, and following her own 117 days in solitary confinement, Ruth came to see me at my flat in Hillbrow. She looked awful – absolutely ashen-faced,” he recalls. “She said that her and Joe’s children were going to be able to leave South Africa shortly, but that someone would get in touch with me a little later.”

Trehwela was later contacted by Hilda Bernstein, the wife of Rusty Bernstein, who was

information on many people from him.

“While in solitary confinement, we were able to communicate with each other quite well. I remembered a little code from a book I’d read, and we were able to tap messages to each other through the walls or flash messages using shaving mirrors.”

Standing torture and sleep deprivation was used against the prisoners. “We were finally convicted

and killed. That, of course, was endorsed by the SACP, even though it had a strong Jewish presence. The SACP was the only non-racial political organisation in this country for decades, but this endorsement was problematic.”

Moving to Aylesbury, north of London with his family, Trehwela contacted South African friends from the past including Goldberg, and

through him, re-established contact with fellow prisoner Baruch Hirson. They decided to form an exile magazine, titled *Searchlight South Africa*. Between 1988 and 1995, they published 12 issues. For *Searchlight*, Trehwela interviewed Panduleni and Ndamona Kali, the twin sisters from Namibia who had been held in prison pits set up by Namibia’s governing party, the South West African People’s Organisation (SWAPO) in southern Angola, and uncovered information about the history of MK in that country.

“I got first-hand documentation [about]

human-rights abuses in the Quatro prison camp that led to the mutiny in MK in Angola in 1984. We published it in our July 1990 issue. It was banned in South Africa, but we got copies in, which meant a lot of information became available about the bad side of the ANC and the SACP in exile. This was important for human rights.

“So, the problem relating to elections and the accountability of politicians goes back to the time of the ANC in exile,” he concludes. “A long struggle took place for democratic accountability among ANC members in exile, in MK especially. The issues are present with us to this day.”



Paul Trehwela with his wife Florence and author/journalist Hugh Lewin

on trial with Mandela, Goldberg, and many others. “She asked me to be editor of the illegal news sheet for MK during the Rivonia Trial. We worked out a title for it – *Freedom Fighter*. Four issues came out. I never saw one, which was a good thing because when I was eventually arrested myself, there were no tell-tale traces.”

Trehwela and his SACP colleagues were arrested in July 1964. “We were put in solitary confinement under the 90-day detention law. In our cell was an undercover operative of the security police called Gerard Ludi. Ludi had been in a relationship with the daughter of the Bernsteins. The security police gathered

and sentenced in April 1965 after a long trial. I was sentenced to an effective two years in prison.” So too was fellow struggle activist Florence Duncan – who Trehwela reconnected with and married more than 40 years later.

After his release in 1967, Trehwela took up British citizenship, and left the SACP. “The SACP never criticised a single episode in the history of the Soviet Union. It endorsed everything including all the crimes. After World War II, Stalin supported the setting up of the state of Israel, but his policy soon shifted to a very strong anti-Semitic one.

“Anybody who was a Jew could be arrested

Elderly queue to vote, but see it as a privilege

JORDAN MOSHE

Amid a maelstrom of mobility scooters and walking sticks, residents of Sandringham Gardens converged upon the home’s auditorium in their numbers to vote on Monday this week.

They were taking part in a special vote, by means of which the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) ensures that those who can’t get to a voting station on election day still have the ability to vote.

In this case, the IEC came to Sandringham Gardens, allowing residents to vote in the convenience and comfort of the home.

Though many of the elderly queued for hours, all were determined to cast their ballots and exercise their democratic right, as they have always done.

While many were heard grumbling at the inconvenience and chaos that queuing caused, they were all adamant it was essential to vote. “What a *balagan* it was,” says resident Rita Baron. “We stood there for hours and hours, and finally got to vote. But you have to persevere.

“The privilege of voting is one which is so easy to overlook,” she says. “I heard that hundreds of young people say they won’t vote because it doesn’t make a difference. As frustrating as it may be, we all have to make a point of voting as South Africans and as Jews. It’s vital.”

Those who spent the morning grumbling are among those who overlook the privilege, says fellow resident Julie Bersohn. “We have a voting station right here for us,” she says. “People have no excuse not to vote, and even if they have to wait in a queue, they can just walk to the auditorium and vote. It’s so convenient. We need to make use of it and the right it affords us.”

Another resident, Shabsy Mayers, recounted how he had joined the queue that morning immediately after breakfast, numbering third from the front. Because of delays by the IEC in getting voting going, he ended up waiting almost three hours. Still, he says, he wouldn’t have it any other way.

“In some countries, people don’t even get the chance to vote for their leaders,” he says. “Here, we have the gift of the vote, and have to put it

to use. You just have to listen to the scary things the Economic Freedom Fighters say to recognise how important it really is.”

Mayers recounted how he voted for the first time 1953 at the age of 18, and has made an effort to vote at every opportunity since then. In the first democratic election of 1994, he queued for eight hours, never for one moment wavering in his civil duty.

“We as Jews have had it fairly good in South Africa, but it hasn’t come easy. We’ve made a tremendous commitment and worked hard towards what we’ve achieved. The right to vote as Jews is so important and meaningful. We must use it.”

He says that although we may not see immediate change after we vote, it does make a difference. “If every individual decided that his vote wouldn’t make a difference, no one would actually vote. It’s our duty to go to the poll and vote at every opportunity, no matter the odds. Make your voice heard.”



Sandringham Gardens resident Ruth Bloom casting her vote

Photo: Jordan Moshe

How Venezuela's remaining Jews are hanging on amid the crisis



Students argue with police officers during a rally in support of opposition leader Juan Guaido and against Nicolas Maduro at Universidad Central de Venezuela in Caracas, Venezuela, 2 May 2019

BEN SALES – JTA

One night years ago, when a Jewish man was driving to his parents' house in Caracas, Venezuela, two cars blocked off the street he was on and held him up at gunpoint.

He got into their car and began answering questions: who he was, where he lived, and how much money he could give them for his release. After three hours of this interrogation, the kidnappers drove to his house, got \$10 000 (R144 734) from his wife through the front door, and let him go. Although he was wearing a kippah, he doesn't recall the kidnappers being anti-Semitic.

Such "express kidnappings", where victims are held for quick ransoms for a few hours, used to be an occasional hazard for affluent residents of Caracas, the capital. But not anymore, the Jewish man said.

"Kidnapping in Venezuela, the business is not so good because there is not cash on the street," said the man, who is involved in the Jewish community but wished to remain anonymous because he feared repercussions amid the current unrest in Venezuela. "It was a way to make money fast."

Kidnapping is one of many facets of Venezuelan society that has collapsed over the past few years, as a once-wealthy country has descended into destitution, authoritarianism, and chaos. This week has seen the president of the national assembly, Juan Guaido, call for the military to endorse his movement to replace the country's current strongman president, Nicolas Maduro. So far, and despite widespread unrest, the move appears to be fizzling.

The United States, Israel, and a range of other countries have recognised Guaido as the country's legitimate president.

The crisis has also furthered the depletion of Venezuela's Jewish community. From a height of 25 000 members in the 1990s, it's down to about 6 000 now and shrinking, the rest having fled to the US, Israel or elsewhere. Most who remain live in Caracas. Those who have held on are depending on each other to survive in an increasingly dire situation.

Widespread crime means people don't eat out anymore, so people frequently host weeknight dinners at their homes, according to people with knowledge of their situation. Inflation has gone crazy, so people pay for everything – and get paid – in US dollars.

Jewish community members, who tend to be economically comfortable, travel with a driver and sometimes a bulletproof car, and often have security at home. When power went out across the country in March, the Jewish community organised to make sure every community member in Caracas was safe.

People are staying, the community member said, because Venezuela has been their families' home for generations. Much of the community came after the Holocaust or after many Moroccan Jews emigrated following the 1967 Six-Day War. The community member described Venezuelan Jewry as warm, tight-knit, and supportive. Because there are so few people left, much of the community knows each other by

name.

"You have the community, you know everyone," he said. "You have weather that is marvellous, wonderful. You have doctors and institutions that you know."

But staying is still the exception to the rule. People – Jewish and not – have left less because of the possible coup, Venezuelan Jews say, and more because of economic instability.

"There's no prospect of being a professional in Venezuela," said Sammy Eppel, 71, a Jewish journalist and businessman who emigrated to Miami three and a half years ago. "You don't have a path to prosperity anymore. I think Jews in Venezuela are in the same boat as everyone else in Venezuela. We haven't been particularly targeted."

But political persecution does sometimes play a role. Eppel's writing in *El Universal*, a major Venezuelan newspaper, often criticised Venezuela's socialist governments. He also owned a call centre with clients such as Microsoft and Motorola, and more than a decade ago, the government shut off his phone lines, forcing him to close. After that, he said that groups of people would show up at his apartment building posing as tax collectors, ask his doorman to call him down, and then disappear.

When the men threatened the doorman with a gun, he decided it was time to leave the country.

"In the eyes of the regime, I was an enemy," he said, recalling that the men approached his doorman, "pulled a gun on him, pointed it at his head, and said, 'Don't lie to us. We know he's in there.'"

The government has also long been staunchly anti-Israel. Maduro, and his predecessor, Hugo Chavez, made nice with Israeli adversaries like Iran. Israel and Venezuela do not have diplomatic relations. And in 2004 and 2009, government forces raided, respectively, a Jewish school and Jewish community centre.

"When Chavez severed relations with Israel, it sent a message to a lot of Jews that they were not welcome there," said Dina Siegel Vann, the director of the American Jewish Committee's Belfer Institute for Latino and Latin American Affairs. "I think many of them stayed because they thought things would get better."

Things have not got better. But something that isn't present, she said, is anti-Semitism. Times of crisis, in other places, have proved fertile grounds for the spread of Jew-hatred. But Siegel Vann said that most significant anti-Semitism in Venezuela has come from the government, not the grassroots. Now that the government is in disarray, anti-Semitism has faded.

"Venezuelans are not anti-Semitic," she said. "In Europe, you have historical baggage. In Venezuela, you don't have that. It was promoted from the top."

As the Jewish community copes with the crisis, the anonymous community member said, its official representatives have been careful not to take sides. It remains in contact with Maduro, who still holds power, and criticises his anti-Israel stances.

But he, too, wants to emigrate to Israel. When will he leave?

"As soon as Maduro kicks me out," he laughs.



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Sandringham
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Baron Shinkwin: lord of just causes

JORDAN MOSHE

Baron Kevin Shinkwin is not Jewish, but he dedicates his time to fight for the rights of the disabled, and to combat anti-Semitism, using his position as a member of the House of Lords to fight for both causes.

Shinkwin spent much of his youth either in hospital or in plaster, so living with and fighting adversity is normal for him. His medical difficulties are, in fact, what led him to forge a unique connection with the Jewish people, and brought him to our shores.

“When you face challenges and fight for your survival, you develop traits which eventually allow you to succeed,” he says. Shinkwin was in South Africa at the invitation of Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD). “As difficult and traumatic as they may be, your circumstances enable you to develop the skills you will use to achieve.”

Today a British Conservative politician, Shinkwin has for years suffered from osteogenesis imperfecta, or brittle bone disease. Although he and his parents managed the condition effectively throughout his youth, he experienced major complications at the age of 24 which

placed his very survival at risk.

“In 24 hours, I couldn’t breathe or swallow, let alone talk,” says Shinkwin. “I required life-saving neurosurgery, and it still took me three years to learn to talk again. After that I was traumatised, and diagnosed with PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder].

“People look at a disabled person and think that they must be used to their disability. I will never get used to it. At 24, I realised that I was really disabled. Medical professionals around me told me that I should get used to not talking because their expectations were lower for me as a disabled person.”

It was his condition which brought him into contact with a man who would have a profound impact on him for the rest of his life, namely Hanuš Weisl, a Holocaust survivor. A respected orthopaedic and trauma surgeon, Weisl escaped Nazi-occupied Prague as part of the Kindertransport bound for Britain, meeting Shinkwin 32 years later.

Shinkwin would learn about his doctor’s past and Jewish affiliation only when the doctor retired in 1992. The significance of their connection became apparent immediately. “Our lives are made up of multiple dots,” he says. “The connections between them become clear only much later.

Here was a Jew who had treated a disabled boy. Both of us would have been deemed *untersch* [inferior] by the Nazis, and put to death immediately upon disembarking at any death camp.”

“Despite his loss and suffering, Hanuš devoted his life to alleviating the suffering of others and optimising their chances. This is a rare combination in doctors, who are usually trained to correct anomalies, but nothing more. He was ahead of his time in recognising that, like a survivor, a patient can make a treatment work or not.”

The two maintained their connection, such that when Shinkwin was appointed a lord in 2015, he devoted himself to championing both causes. The disabled and Jewish people, he felt, were united in their struggle against tremendous difficulties.

From the moment he received a call from then British Prime Minister David Cameron until today, Shinkwin

remains astounded that he was invited to join the House of Lords.

“Every day am I surrounded by people who are at the top of their fields: generals, lawyers, professional athletes, politicians. Then there’s me. This is a privilege, but also a considerable onus, as it puts a huge responsibility on me to do significant things. Still, it proves that truly incredible things can happen to anyone in life.”

Baron Kevin Shinkwin



Photo: Julian Pokroy

Future and past collide in hologram testimony

TALI FEINBERG

Have you ever talked to a holographic image of a real person? It’s a strange thought, but one that is already being put into action – in this case, to talk to Holocaust survivors. Using cutting-edge artificial intelligence, this technology is being pioneered by the USC Shoah Foundation in Los Angeles, and it was brought to South Africa for a demonstration this week.

At the 20th anniversary celebration of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre (CTHGC), audience members had a chance to speak to survivor Pinchas Gutter, who responded in kind. The questions ranged from “Tell us about your liberation.” to “How did your children respond to you being a Holocaust survivor?”

But Gutter wasn’t there in person. A holographic image of him answered instead. Ultimately, it was a chance to look into the future, and how we will interact with survivors long after they have passed away.

The executive director of the USC Shoah Foundation and keynote speaker, Dr Stephen Smith, played a key role in the birth of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre (as it was called then) in 1999, and now 20 years later, he returned to the Cape to look back at what has been achieved, and what could be possible in the future.

“We have 55 000 testimonies at the USC Shoah Foundation, and if we listened to them without stopping, it would take us 13 and a half years. It is a treasure of history and humanity, but it doesn’t necessarily answer our questions,” said Smith. “That’s why we’ve developed this project called ‘New Dimensions in Testimony’ which allows almost any audience to ask almost any question to a Holocaust survivor, even if they are no longer alive.”

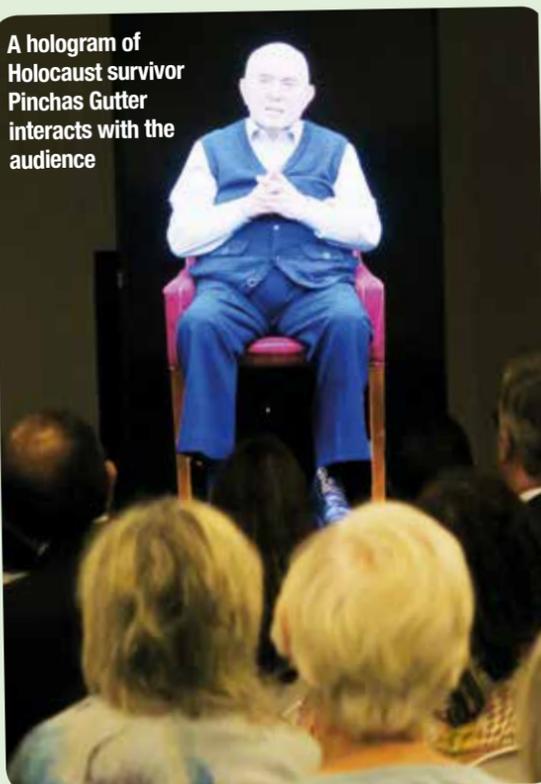
Smith met Gutter when he interviewed him in South Africa, and the two formed a close connection. “He was the only person I could think of who would trust me with this process, which entailed answering 1 000 questions for 25 hours over five days, with 116 cameras, and 85 LED lights around him. At 85 years old, after all he has been through, this was no easy feat.”

But Gutter, who now lives in Canada, was up to the task. It was physically draining and mentally exhausting, but no question was too simple or off-limits. And so, the world now has a way of asking him

almost anything.

In the demonstration, Smith asked Gutter if he believed in G-d, if he wanted revenge, and why the Jews “went like lambs to the slaughter”, all questions that a school child or adult might want to ask in the future. Gutter gave rich and eloquent answers, showing a full range of emotions, and it was hard to believe he was not really there in the room.

A hologram of Holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter interacts with the audience



Since this groundbreaking interview, the USC Shoah Foundation has captured the testimony of 20 more Holocaust survivors this way. “Survivors have always used media to share their stories,” said Smith, referring to a woman in Bergen-Belsen talking to a camera after the camp had been liberated, with corpses piled behind her.

“It was probably the first audiovisual recording of a Holocaust survivor,” he says, adding that the woman who was recorded was terrified she would be shot by former SS guards nearby. “She said she thought she was going to die, but it would be worth it. Because giving testimony comes at a cost, but it is a risk one must take. Giving testimony is an act of resistance

against the Nazis’ aim of wiping out all memory that Jews existed.”

Turning back to the holographic interviews, Smith pointed out that this was not just “technology for technology’s sake”, but a very practical response to that urgent question of how we will talk to eyewitnesses of the Holocaust in the future.

He explained that while the technology looks effortless, it is important to remember that it is both artificial and “not always very intelligent!” For example, Gutter’s hologram got confused about a question about apartheid, as he had never been asked it before.

Back at the USC Shoah Foundation, each answer is rated, and if it is not perfect, it is worked on. He explained that the computer accesses text of Gutter’s 25 hours of testimony, then works out what the best response would be based on keywords, but sometimes it gets it wrong.

Smith has worked with Gutter on a number of projects using new technology. When the survivor told Smith that he could not remember his twin sister who was killed in the camps, they travelled there to help him to recall her.

At the Majdanek death camp, they re-created the moment where Gutter lost contact with his father. This was turned into virtual reality, so that people who visit these places will be able to experience moments like these in real time. These projects are a work in progress, but offer a glimpse into what is possible.

Smith also paid tribute to the work of the CTHGC over the past 20 years. Founded by the visionary Myra Osrin, it was the first Holocaust Centre founded on the African continent at a time when the country was going through the post-apartheid reconciliation process.

“I wasn’t sure if it was the right time, but after speaking to people across the country, it was clear that it was needed then. And now, with so much violence in the world, these educational institutions are needed even more urgently.”

With 119 991 school pupils having gone through their exhibition and education programme over the last 20 years, 25 000 local and international visitors per annum, and thousands of teachers trained around the country, it really is just the beginning of what this vital institution can do, now and into the future.

Inspired by his connection with Weisl, Shinkwin went on the March of the Living in Poland in 2018, driven by the duty to ensure that mankind never sinks to such levels again. “The descent into depravity happens so fast,” he says. “Even today, society can sink into extremism so rapidly. We always have to be on our guard, even in 2019.

“We have a duty to remember, but we also have a duty to hope and to push back. The Jewish community has taught me this. We all have the capacity for good, but we also have the capacity for harm. It’s up to us to push for what’s right.”

Shinkwin applies this perspective in his campaigns. “Where disabled people are not impaired intellectually, please do not have lower expectations,” he implores us. “They have a right to excel, realise their potential, and reach the top of any profession. We need to emulate the successes of all minorities by championing their rights too.”

In the case of anti-Semitism, we must stand together – Jews and non-Jews – on the basis of shared values and common humanity to build a better world. “The Jewish community around the world is strong in social justice and charity,” he says. “As varied as the spectrum of its religiosity may be, Jews everywhere have common values. If we adopt the same approach between Jews and non-Jews, we can achieve great things.”

Shinkwin is also committed to the state of Israel, saying that while it exists, Jews everywhere can live with a sense of security. “Had Israel existed earlier, the Shoah could not have happened. The subtext of BDS [the Boycott Divest Sanctions movement] is the same as that of the Arab League in 1945 – to ensure that Israel does not exist.”

He says rocket attacks and suicide bombings against Israel are unacceptable, and though there are issues that need to be addressed in the region, such tactics are unjust and cannot be endorsed.

“I dearly want to see a lasting solution put in place, and I am encouraged by Israel’s new regional alliances. It’s not all about the West Bank or Gaza, but about how the region as a whole can mitigate the effects of the ongoing conflict,” he says.



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Real-life heroes bring Yom Hazikaron home for Cape community

TALI FEINBERG

As Cape Town community members entered the Yom Hazikaron ceremony at Herzlia High School Hall on Tuesday evening, they walked through an exhibition that brought home the reality of soldiers lost in Israel's wars.

They saw a room with a football shirt on the bed, an Israel Defense Forces uniform on a rail, and posters on the walls – a bedroom waiting for a soldier even though he was never coming home.

Bnei Akiva Shaliach Lavi Wolff brought home this reality by sharing how he lost a friend just last year. "I met Aviv in my first period of combat training in the army. I immediately spotted a guy with a big smile and a great heart – that kind of guy that always greets you with a 'Good morning!'."

"After eight months, we were commanders in the same company. Aviv was definitely a hero. A man with a personal goal

to protect his nation. But behind that hero, Aviv was a down-to-earth guy. He liked surfing, partying, and spending time with family at the beach. I remember him giving up his free weekend so that his fellow commander could go home for a family occasion."

But this youthful, vibrant young man was lost in combat. He was wounded badly in the chest, hit by a sniper while on guard duty on the Gaza border. "Aviv fell on 20 July 2018 at the age of 21. His parents were on a family vacation in Italy when they got the call. He was buried on the Fast of Tish'a B'Av."

The moving ceremony at Herzlia included captivating performances from the youth, including the Herzlia vocal ensemble and the Bein Ha'shmashot choir from Israel, some of whom sang with tears in their eyes.

Candles were lit by the youth movements, and Albert Shorkend, a veteran of the 1948 War of Independence. A harrowing film showed the loss, bewilderment,

and love of a family that lost two sons in battle.

"Yom Hazikaron for Israel's fallen soldiers and victims of terror is a day to mourn the dead and appreciate their sacrifice in order for us to have a strong, flourishing state," said Community and Aliyah Shlichah Michal Ilan.

"Yom Hazikaron is personal and collective. We mourn our dead, the ones we knew. And we do so as a collective. This is our day to stop, to pause. Everything stops: the streets are empty, the shopping malls are closed, there is nothing on television or radio that is not related to the topic. The only places that are full are the cemeteries and homes of bereaved families," she said.

"On Yom Hazikaron we mourn what could have been. The potential pianist, writer, lawyer, mother, father, and friend. On other days, we might be divided, split into tribes. But on Yom Hazikaron, we are one united



Bnei Akiva Shaliach Lavi Wolff shares memories of his friend Aviv, who was killed last year at the age of 21 while serving in the IDF

family. Religious, secular, Druze, Bedouin, men, women ... death doesn't differentiate. As a nation, we are responsible for making sure their sacrifice was not in vain.

We are responsible for working together to make Israel better. We must strive to learn to live better together – not just when we meet in military cemeteries."

Anti-Semitic attacks – the canary in the coalmine

MIRAH LANGER

The recent attack at Chabad Poway in San Diego is, like all other anti-Semitic attacks, a warning to the rest of the world of the spread of wide-ranging hate, said Chabad South Africa's Rabbi Ari Kievman during a Holocaust commemoration ceremony in Sandton, Johannesburg.

"What happens to the Jewish community is like the canary in the mines. It [violent animosity against a group] spreads, and happens to other communities. We saw what happened in New Zealand and the mosques, and we saw what happened in Sri Lanka at the churches," he said.

"We see it spreading like wildfire because hatred knows no bounds."

Kievman was speaking at the "Faith Under Fire" event at Chabad's Goodness and Kindness Centre, which he runs along with his wife, Batya.

He said that as an example of anti-Semitism, the enormity of the Holocaust was startling. "When I think of Yom HaShoah, I think about the moment of silence in Israel. Everyone stops for two minutes, 120 seconds. That is 50 000 victims to remember per second. The number is mind boggling."

Yet, when it came to the murder of Lori Gilbert-Kaye in Poway during a terrorist shooting, so too was the loss immense. "We are taught that to save one life is to save the whole world; so to think that if it is the loss of even one life, or if it is the lives of six million, that we are remembering ... [ultimately] one life is a whole world... one whole universe."

There is a distinction to be made in times of loss, depending on the context. "When it comes to G-d's behaviour, we don't have answers, but when it comes to man's behaviour, I think we have to stand up and speak up. We have to say: 'Never again'."

"At this time, it is important that we don't allow the terrorists to prevail."

Kievman said that in response to the desire of terrorists to intimidate Jewish people from practicing their faith and culture, "we have to stand strong and tall".

He illustrated his point by relating the story of a rabbi who, while visiting Yad Vashem, had come upon an Israeli soldier weeping in front of video testimony of an elderly man.

When the rabbi asked her if she was alright, she said she was fine, explaining that the video she was watching was her grandfather, who time and time again had told her this very same story of his Holocaust experience.

Kievman said that the rabbi had offered an interesting perspective to the soldier, telling her, "It's the same story, but it's a different ending... We know what happened then, but you are the continuation, the next chapter in our story."

Just as the soldier, in defending Israel, had become part of rebuilding the homeland after the Holocaust, so too is the lesson for all of us to write the story forward.

"As we commemorate Yom HaShoah and we remember Lori Gilbert-Kaye who was murdered in cold blood last week, and we think of all the other recent terror attacks in the world, we are not alone, and we have to do something about it."

Yom Hazikaron takes on new significance following attacks

JORDAN MOSHE

"Were our sacrifices for ourselves alone, I'm not sure they would have been worthwhile. If our sacrifices are for the sake of the whole Jewish people, then I believe that the price is worthwhile."

These are the words of late former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir in response to a soldier who had suffered multiple losses. She was quoted by Joshua Winer, the chairperson of the Zionist Youth Council, at the Yom Hazikaron ceremony at Yeshiva College in Johannesburg on Tuesday evening.

Gathering in their numbers, the Johannesburg community paid tribute to those who gave their lives in defence of Israel.

This year's ceremony took on additional significance in light of the approximately 700 rockets fired from Gaza into Israel this week. "This evening, we come together to remember and honour those who paid the ultimate price to ensure our beloved Israel continues to thrive and survive," said Winer.

"Sadly, the sirens that sound in Israel calling all to attention on Yom HaShoah and Yom Hazikaron are not the only ones [that have been] heard in recent days. Again, sirens are propelling Jews to shelters. Again, Jews are running for their lives. Pittsburgh, Poway, Ashdod, Sderot – Jews are dying simply because they are Jewish. Tonight not only serves to honour the fallen, but serves to build solidarity against those who seek to destroy us."

Explaining why those who have fallen are seen as holy, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein said that holiness is about the capacity to give unconditionally. "G-d created human beings as an act of kindness only to give," he said. "When we are called upon to be holy, we are to give of ourselves, to dedicate our lives to giving to the world and others selflessly."

"These souls who gave everything are indeed the holiest of us all. They gave of themselves to the point of sacrifice so that the Jewish people could continue to live in pride and dignity. That is holiness," Goldstein said.

Goldstein asked how it was that thousands of soldiers gave their lives for Israel and its people, particularly since self-sacrifice doesn't come naturally.

"A limited person has only himself in mind, but a greater person includes in his definition of self the other people around him," he said. "A truly great person includes the entire Jewish people and all of humanity in himself. Holiness is a sense of expansion of self. For these soldiers, their sense of self was every Jew and Jewish destiny."

Israeli ambassador Lior Keinan said that the number

of losses continued to grow because of the commitment to Israel. "When I sat down to prepare my speech, the number of fallen soldiers and terror victims stood at 23 471. When I finished it, the number had gone up by four after we were attacked by hundreds of rockets fired by terrorists with only one purpose: to kill as many citizens of Israel as possible. That is the essence of the story, and destiny of the state of Israel."

Keinan said that no nation in history had had to go through a struggle or journey like that of the Jews to establish a country. "Our journey was longer than any other, and did not end with the establishment of Israel. In our 71 years, we have learned that the existence of Israel is a daily battle."

"In South Africa, from the moment the struggle ended 25 years ago, its citizens have faced no external threat and could focus on rebuilding their country. No one wanted to drive them into the sea, no one wanted to shower them with rockets. Israel, however, hasn't had a single day of peace since the moment it was recognised."



Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan lights the Zikaron flame

Keinan concluded by expressing the hope that if our fallen were with us today, they would be proud of us. "Israel isn't perfect," he said, "but think about what it has accomplished in such a short time. The Jewish community here pays a price for its unwavering support, and I hope that you feel as proud of them as I believe they would be of us."

In spite of the threats and anti-Semitism we face in South Africa for our support of Israel, our history of prevailing against the odds gives us the strength needed to persevere, said Ben Swartz, the national chairman of the South African Zionist Federation.

"We have and will continue to prevail. We have never ceased in our aspiration to take control of our destiny. Until the moment of peace arrives, we have a responsibility to protect ourselves against the hatred of who we are."

Instagram story set in the Holocaust causes controversy

JOSEFIN DOLSTEN – JTA

Eva Heyman is an energetic 13-year-old Jewish girl with a bright smile. Go to her Instagram page, and you'll see selfies of the brown-haired teen with her best friends, videos she filmed while bored at school, and her gushing about her crush, a classmate named Pista.

But the girl on the Instagram page, which now has 1.3 million followers, isn't really Eva.

Eva Heyman was killed in 1944 in Auschwitz, and she is being portrayed by an actress as part of a project by an Israeli tech executive and his daughter. For 24 hours on Yom HaShoah, Mati and Maya Kochavi put up a dramatised version of Eva's life on the social media site called Eva.Stories. The stories are based on a diary kept by Eva prior to her deportation and death.

The Kochavis hoped their initiative would help spread awareness about Eva's life and the Holocaust. Their effort, however, sparked controversy.

Yuval Mendelson, a civics teacher and musician, called it "a display of bad taste" in a column for *Haaretz* prior to the project's launch.

"[A] fictitious Instagram account of a girl murdered in the Holocaust is not and cannot be a legitimate way" to educate young people about the Shoah, he wrote.

The initiative speaks to a larger conversation in the Jewish community and beyond on the future of Holocaust testimony. With most survivors now in their 80s and 90s, Holocaust remembrance organisations are seeking new ways to tell the story to future generations that will never meet those personally impacted by the Shoah. Last year, the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center became the first to permanently showcase a new exhibit that allows visitors to interact with holograms of survivors.

"We have to think of more creative and stronger ways to convey the horrors of the Holocaust to the newer generation that won't have the chance to speak to a survivor," Maya, 27, told CNN.

In real life, Eva Heyman was the only child of a Hungarian Jewish couple, according to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and after their divorce, was raised largely by her grandparents. In 1944, she and her grandparents were forced into the Jewish ghetto in Oradea. Eva was deported to Auschwitz that June, and died there on 17 October that year.

When I first learned about Eva.Stories, I was sceptical. I found the first few episodes strangely lighthearted for a project on the Holocaust, with the main character dancing, smiling, and posting emoji-filled selfies. The actors' accents also aren't consistent, and the conceit that social media existed 80 years ago threatens to undermine the veracity of the real-life story.

But as the story continued, I found myself warming to it. The project not only educates about the history, but affectingly shows how events would have felt for a 13-year-old. As the Nazis march through the city, we see Eva running to her frightened mother, the camera shaking. When her mother tells Eva that she has to wear a yellow star on her coat, the teen at first refuses. She doesn't want to look different, and worries that people will make fun of her.

At the end of the story, as Eva is loaded onto a train cart to Auschwitz, we see the young girl panicking and on the verge of a breakdown. I struggled to hold back the tears.

At 27, however, I may be a bit older than the target audience, so I spoke to a few teenagers and early 20-somethings.

Gavi Altman, a 14-year-old living in Israel, told me the project was a hit among her friends.

"In our class, everybody was hyped up about when it was going to come out," she said.

Altman, who asked that her exact location not be used, said the project helped her feel connected to the Holocaust in a way she never

had through lessons in school.

"They're trying to make it so that our generation can relate somehow," she said. "When somebody just tells you the story, then you're just thinking 'Oh, it's from such a long time ago, it has nothing to do with me.' I feel like this makes you feel more connected to it."

Eliana Silver, a 19-year-old student at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland, also found the stories compelling.

"It's a very real way of seeing," she said, "because obviously, when we watch pictures and videos from those times, you kind of just see it as an outsider. But now it's like you're there with the characters. It gave me chills."

Others had qualms.

Rachel Fadem, an 18-year-old living in Chicago, thinks the project could serve as a way to engage those who otherwise may not be interested in learning about the Holocaust.

But she worries how viewers who aren't knowledgeable about the Holocaust may see it.

Screenshot from Eva.Stories on Instagram



"I'm just a bit wary of how some people might take it lightly," she said.

Aliza Nussbaum Cohen, 20, a freshman at Clark University at Worcester, Massachusetts, also has trepidation about the project.

"The fact that it's on social media, side by side with such nonsense, and such unnecessary and meaningless content, I feel like that can lead to this also being meaningless in some way," she said.

Nussbaum Cohen, the daughter of JTA contributor Debra Nussbaum Cohen, also questioned whether Eva.Stories would actually have an impact.

"To know that they put so much money into something that could've been spent on Holocaust education in schools or something like that, that's what hurts me the most about it," she said.

Eva.Stories is a dramatised version of the life of Eva Heyman, a 13-year-old Jewish girl killed in Auschwitz

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Anti-Semitism survives but Israel thrives, says ambassador

MIRAH LANGER

The hatred of Jews that fuelled the Holocaust, even slavery in Egypt, has taken new forms, Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan warned at this year's Yom HaShoah ceremony at Westpark Cemetery in Johannesburg on 2 May.

Yet, the difference is that Israel will fight to ensure it serves as the homeland of all the Jewish people.

openly supporting BDS. What I see when I zoom out is that this is happening in only one country that is not Muslim or Arab, and that there are more than one hundred countries that are acting differently.

"What you see around you is a country that may downgrade its relations with Israel; what I see when I zoom out, is that there are so many countries that are looking only to upgrade their relationship with Israel," he said.

"Furthermore, Israel had thrived in spite of BDS.

"BDS has called for an economic boycott of Israel for 18 years. What I see is the simple fact that in the past 18 years, while this so-called successful boycott takes place, the economy of Israel has grown 65%."

The ceremony's keynote address was delivered by Baron Kevin Shinkwin, a peer at the British House of Lords.

Shinkwin emphasised that the duty to remember was a retort against the

Nazis' aim to break down the bonds of humanity.

"Surely [the Holocaust] was a war against humanity's memory, based on the astoundingly arrogant assumption that evil would triumph to such an extent that humanity's memory would be erased."

Shinkwin said that, as a non-Jew, when he first began trying to understand the Holocaust, the overarching question had always been how the Nazis could have done what they did to the Jews.

Later, the question changed and became, "How could we have done this to ourselves?"

The audience also heard the first-hand account of Holocaust survivor Irene Fainman.

Fainman detailed her internment as a little girl of six, first at Westerbork Transit Camp and later at Ravensbrück Concentration Camp. While her mother and brother survived along with her, her father did not.

Recalling the first time she entered the barracks at Ravensbrück, she detailed how the smell of "unwashed human bodies, urine, faeces, and above all else, fear," hit her.

"There were three-tiered bunks with three or four women per bunk. They were emaciated. They had sunken cheeks, bulging eyes, and shaven heads. Some of them tried to touch my hair and face... I just screamed and screamed."

It is an experience, said Fainman, which still causes nightmares.

'No place for hate' – a crucial message in a world gone mad

TALI FEINBERG

"When Auschwitz was liberated on 27 January 1945, I was on a death march from there to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. I was liberated only six months later," recalled Holocaust survivor Miriam Lichterman at the Cape Town Yom HaShoah Ve'Hagevurah ceremony on 2 May.

On an icy Cape Town morning at the Pinelands Jewish cemetery, every member of the audience was spellbound by her harrowing tale of survival, as she recalled the death march and the "snowy, blood-soaked, body-filled road", where if you fell, you were shot. She says it was only the hand of G-d that helped her to keep walking.

She remembered how in Auschwitz, she asked her friend, "Who will survive this hell to tell the world? And if we survive, will the world believe us?" More than seventy years later, she has shared her story with schoolchildren, communities, professionals, and people from all walks of life in the hope that it will be heard in a world engulfed by hate.

This, too, was the message of Cape Board Chairperson Rael Kaimowitz. "Since the horrors of the Shoah, world leaders have proclaimed loudly that the 'crime without a name', as Winston Churchill referred to it, must never be allowed

to happen again. But these are just empty words. How else do we explain a world gone mad as hate explodes all around us?" he asked.

"Although we know that there is a unique, horrific depth and scale to the Holocaust that is unprecedented, when you hear the names of Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, Syria, you know full well that the world has failed dismally. Not only failed to act, but essentially

failed to give a damn," he stated. "In the past six months, we have seen [the shootings in] Pittsburgh, Christchurch, Sri Lanka, and in Poway, California.

"As the world turned its back on the Jews in the 1930s, and again in those genocide massacres I mentioned, it is our job to shine a light into the darkness. As the second, third, and fourth generations after the Holocaust, we dare not turn our backs on the suffering of others," he said.

"There is no place for anti-Semitism in the world today, but let's also stand up and say there is no place for Islamophobia, or for the senseless murder of more than 300 Christian worshippers in Sri Lanka.

"There is no place for the baseless hatred of Jews. But let's also stand



Photo: Alon Cohen from Photography by Alon

Holocaust survivor Mordechai Perlov lights a memorial lamp
"If anti-Semitism has survived these thousands of years and keeps rearing its head, time and time again, as we see in Pittsburgh and San Diego, or in Wellington cemetery in Cape Town, then it is my unfortunate conclusion that is here to stay."

The close proximity of Pesach and Yom HaShoah is a reminder of our ongoing persecution as a people, Keinan said. Yet, the equally close proximity of Yom Ha'atzmaut, the date that marks the establishment of the modern state of Israel, is also key.

"These three events mark the continuous manifestation of anti-Semitism, and the only possible response to it is a strong and independent Israel to which any Jew can choose to come."

Keinan said the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement was one of the most recent and vitriolic forms of anti-Semitism.

"Modern anti-Semites, mostly in BDS, understand perfectly that in a world where Jews have a safe haven, a Holocaust will not occur again. That is why they are aiming their obsession towards undermining the global legitimacy of the state of Israel."

"The leaders of Iran say it straight out, by demanding that Israel will be erased from the map. BDS wants the same thing, but is just phrasing it in a more polite way."

Yet, said Keinan, it was also important to "zoom out" and look at the bigger picture. "What you see [in South Africa] is so many elements in your country



Photo: Shawn Benjamin

Photo: Shawn Benjamin

Holocaust survivor Ella Blumenthal lights a candle of remembrance

up and say there is no place for hatred of the LGBTIQI [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] community, or for the Bahai or the Hindu community.

"Let's not only pay lip service when we say 'no place for hate'. Let's call it out when we hear it, when we see it. Be it around our own Shabbat tables, in the staff canteen, on Clifton beach, or in the gym. Let's take a personal stand. Let us commit to telling our parents and grandparents, our friends and our colleagues that hate in any form is just not acceptable.

Zola Shulman, the daughter of two Lithuanian survivors, performed a Yiddish song written by her uncle, poet and songwriter Leyb Rosenthal, in the Vilna Ghetto. Leyb died tragically in a labour camp two days before liberation.

Herzlia Head Student Zac Bagraim shared the fact that two thirds of American millennials do not recognise the word 'Auschwitz', and there has been an upsurge of hateful rhetoric around the world, as well as anti-Semitic graffiti, vandalism, arson, harassment, and murder. "This should never be accepted as normal, and that is the power of remembrance – which is our duty as members of this community," he said.

Marching with a new set of eyes

NOAH TRADONSKY

I had the privilege of representing South Africa at the inaugural March of the Living Emerging Leaders Conference aimed at aiding and motivating young leaders to fight anti-Semitism.

The conference was held on 1 May in Krakow, Poland, on the 31st anniversary of the International March of the Living. I was one of a group of 21 young adults who came from around the world to Poland with the purpose of getting together and working against anti-Semitism.

Given the increase in anti-Semitism around the world over the past few years, the March of the Living International organisation realised that although it had 300 000 alumni (people who have done the march over the past 31 years), it had never effectively made use of their numbers. Many of its alumni would be willing to do their part in fighting anti-Semitism. As such, it could use its programme as the start of an initiative to create a network of people around the world committed to fighting anti-Semitism.

The 21 were selected through nomination by youth delegation and interviews.

We spent three days discussing the state of anti-Semitism in the countries represented by conference participants, including the United States, Canada, England, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Panama, and of course South



Noah Tradonsky

Africa. We committed to combating anti-Semitism, racism, and intolerance, and drafted the declaration of March of the Living Conference for Emerging Leaders.

Given the general similarities yet detailed, nuanced differences of our respective communities, the declaration was general enough to be relevant to all of world Jewry, yet particular enough to demand

Continued on page 15>>

South African Jews pivotal to Israel's early survival

JORDAN MOSHE

The state of Israel might not have existed had it not been for the contribution of South African volunteers. Heeding the call to defend the fledgling state, Jewish people came from every corner of the globe, including 804 from South Africa.

These South Africans, who are recognised for their invaluable role in the War of Independence, number among those whose selfless commitment we recognise on Yom Hazikaron.

They share their experiences in *804: South African volunteers in Israel's War of Independence*, a recently produced documentary that tells the story of how a relatively small group of South Africans played an absolutely pivotal part in Israel's early survival.



A scene from *804: South African Volunteers in Israel's War of Independence*

Screened at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre on 7 May, the documentary is a fitting tribute to Yom Hazikaron this year. It is a crucial reminder of South African Jews' unique connection to Israel that dates back to its birth.

When Israel was established in May 1948, the surrounding Arab countries declared war on the state almost immediately. With no military, navy, or air force of its own, Israel faced devastating odds with the world almost certain that the state would fade from existence as quickly as it had been declared. Its desperate plight drew hundreds of volunteers – known in Hebrew as machalniks. Jews and non-Jews from numerous countries put their arms and expertise at its disposal.

Driven by religious, Zionist, ideological, or humanitarian motives, hundreds of those who volunteered came from South Africa. Because about 5% of the general population volunteered to fight in World War II, the expertise that these volunteers contributed was significant.

"The establishment of Israel was like an electric current that went through people everywhere," says Ruth Stern, who served as a nurse in the medical corps. "It was a privilege to take part in something that we had waited 2 000 years for."

Others were determined to avenge the six-million souls who had perished at the hands of the Nazis. The fact that survivors of the concentration camps were taking up arms and heading for Israel inspired many from South Africans to do the same. No matter their motives, all agreed it was time to give the Jews a home.

Subjecting themselves to an arduous journey that took

four to five days, and often involved detours through African countries, South African machalniks travelled clandestinely to Israel as swiftly as they could. Often boarding ships alongside war refugees, they recall how surreal it felt to arrive at the port in Tel Aviv as night descended. "These survivors told us about what they had experienced in Europe along the way," says Mendel Cohen. "When we arrived and saw the Carmel, they began singing Hatikvah immediately."

As committed as they were, the situation they entered upon arrival was far from encouraging. With little to no military expertise, arms, or equipment, the Israelis were in dire straits and grateful for whatever they could get. One South African recalls how even his military training proved insufficient when he was sent to the front within hours of arriving. "We went from being boys to being men within one to two hours," he says.

There was no single, organised army until 1948. The Israeli armed forces were made up of the Palmach, Irgun, and Lechi until that point – three individual groups, each with its own ideology and priorities. Though they all fought for the same cause, they didn't see eye to eye on many issues, causing further tension in an already fraught reality. Fortunately, David Ben-Gurion stepped in and consolidated them all under one umbrella, merging

skills and arms into a single body that would become the Israeli Defense Forces.

Nevertheless, the volunteers still faced a lack of supplies and experience. "We were complete idiots," relates an air force volunteer. "I loaded four bombs into a plane, but pushed the wrong button over the target and dropped the wrong bomb. Because I hadn't set it properly, it didn't even go off."

The biggest contribution made by South Africans was in medical expertise, radar, and air force experience. South African ingenuity was responsible for the creation of Israel's first radar station, powered by an old lawnmower and rotated using the pedals of a bicycle. Fifty-one South African volunteers were qualified to administer medical assistance in some capacity, fighting for life in a different theatre of war.

Eighty of the 425 aircrew volunteers were South African, and because Israelis had virtually no flying experience, they were heavily relied upon to assist. Not only was the first aircraft flown into Israel from the diaspora provided by a South African, but Afrikaans was used as a form of communication between personnel before codes and ciphers were developed.

Many South African volunteers feel that the role played by machalniks is overlooked today. "If you asked the general staff in Israel today who the machal was, I'm sure they wouldn't know a thing", says air force volunteer, Smoky Simon. Others maintain that the legacy of machal lives on, and continues to be recognised and appreciated.

Whatever they feel, they all agree on one point: *ein breira* (there was no alternative).

Marching with a new set of eyes

>>Continued from page 14

an active response from Jewish youth. It was no easy task.

Yet, at 02:00 the morning of 2 May, we accomplished the feat. It was a testament to the potential of individuals – no matter how different our backgrounds or future aspirations – who came together to fight for a common goal.

I had the privilege of presenting part of the declaration in front of more than 10 000 fellow marchers.

As I looked up before speaking, the black, rusted train tracks – drenched with blood and hate – lead directly from my feet to the centre of the brown-brick building at the entrance to Birkenau 2.

And as I breathed in, I realised the tremendous responsibility that we as Jewish youth have to shorten that seemingly-endless gap between the podium from which I was speaking and the freedom represented by the open steel gates.

Behind me lay the rubble of four blown up gas chambers which, combined, killed close to one million

people in less than three years. Some way before me lay the freedom of the outside world.

Both liberties and responsibilities beyond that steel gate ought to be endowed to all men and women, irrespective of race, religion, or gender.

Though the Auschwitz grass in early May is green, it is drenched deep red in the blood of intolerance and hate. It is intoxicated by the tears of the oppressed, and the souls of the oppressors.

It is twisted and entangled by the indifference expressed by citizens who are law-abiding community members, but who don't concern themselves with the dire inequality that exists beyond their comfort zone.

It is that gap – that life-long, committed effort not to label entire groups of people because of certain bad traits of individuals, to judge each man favourably and give all citizens, friend and foe, the benefit of the doubt – that separated the death behind me from the destiny that lay before me.

It is that gap that we must strive to close.

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The book that predicted Nazi terror

JORDAN MOSHE

The fate awaiting Europe's Jews was made public knowledge as early as 1933.

This fact was made clear by a book published in Paris in August 1933, before the war started. *The Brown Book of the Reichstag Fire and the Hitler Terror* catalogues the numerous dangers posed by fascist Germany. It remains a chilling harbinger of the events which would befall "enemies" of the Reich, foreshadowing the Holocaust before it happened.

The author of the book was Otto Katz, a German-speaking Czech Jew.

"*The Brown Book* [...] was more than a book," says Anson Rabinbach, professor of history at Princeton University. It caused great consternation at the time. "It was the centre of an international campaign that convinced much of the world that the Nazis had conspired to burn the Reichstag as a pretext to establishing a

dictatorship."

The Brown Book provided some of the first details of the approaching Nazi terror, including the concentration camps and the persecution of Jews.

The book's frightening details stunned audiences. Its list of the camps and its descriptions of the conditions, rations, torture, and murders actually provoked the Nazi regime to acknowledge the existence of the camps. The Nazis did provide a public justification for the camps in the *Anti-Brown Book*, saying that they were for political prisoners.

Though it denied being anti-Semitic, the goal of the Nazi leadership was made clear by the book, namely the persecution of the Jews. In a statement which appears in the book, the Chief Rabbi of France writes that, "Statements regarding the atrocities are absolutely correct. [...] The incidents are not cases of simple abuse, but cruel persecutions which have

created victims and martyrs."

According to Rabinbach, *The Brown Book* created the prism through which most of the world saw Nazism for more than a generation. "It was a compelling tale of ruthless and diabolical Nazis bent on eliminating all their political rivals," he says. It suggests that they "used the fire as a pretext to eliminate the communists and terrorise the population".

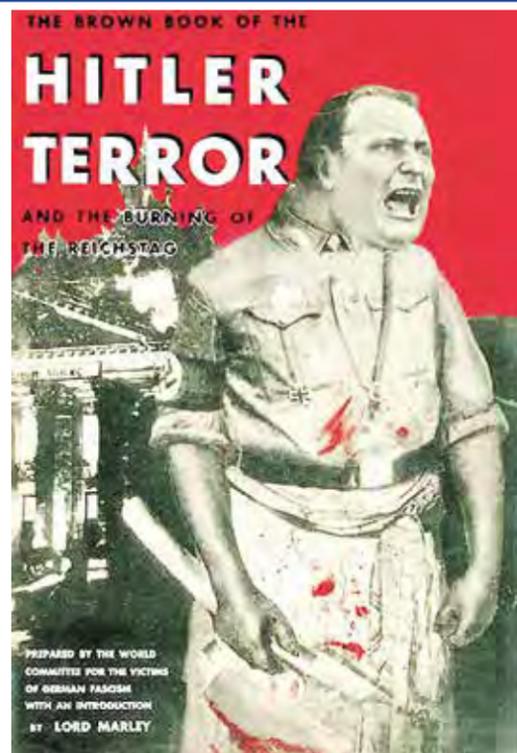
Although the book exposes Nazi threats and intentions, the text primarily focuses on the theory that the infamous burning of the German parliament, the Reichstag, was plotted by the Nazi leadership as part of its scheme to assume power from the previous ruling party.

When the building burned down under suspicious circumstances on 27 February 1933, the Nazi leadership and its coalition partners used the fire to claim that communists were planning a violent uprising. Claiming that emergency legislation was needed to prevent

this, they prepared and passed what was commonly known as the Reichstag Fire Decree, abolishing a number of constitutional protections, and paving way for eventual Nazi dictatorship.

Although the Nazis arrested and charged a disaffected Dutch council communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, for the fire, *The Brown Book* became a best seller and its theories were taken fairly seriously.

Translated into 24 languages, with more than 55 published editions, its circulation was considerable. Rabinbach's research suggests that there were also five illegal editions, various



"camouflaged" and "miniature" ones, and even versions hidden in copies of plays and poems such as Friedrich Schiller's *Wallenstein* and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* for smuggling into Germany. Even the American department store Gimbels New York featured the book in its advertising.

However, Rabinbach says the book is not entirely unimpeachable. Several scholars have claimed that some of its testimonies are false and sources fabricated. "It demonstrates the innate power of conspiracy theory, and its ability to influence public opinion and historical memory, despite a palpable absence of logic and truth," says Rabinbach.

Moreover, the book conceptualised the Germans as victims of political terror, while today, the accepted reality is that the Nazis came to power through popular support, not the Reichstag fire. "Certain erroneous information presented in *The Brown Book* became dangerously influential both inside and outside Germany," says Rabinbach. "It shaped the way the world viewed Nazism for more than thirty years."

Dubious though some of its political content may be, the sad truth is that its account of what was befalling Jews in Germany, and its suggestion of what lay in store for them, would prove frighteningly accurate. With the declaration of war in 1939, the Nazis stepped up their legislated persecution of Jews, and carried out the brutal acts of which *The Brown Book* warns. Phrases such as "living targets", "the classification of sub-men", and "liquidation of the Jewish question" in the text would all come to pass in the horrific nightmare of the Holocaust.

Whether we take seriously the conspiracy theories of the book's creator, Willi Munzenberg and Katz, their work clearly suggests that their concern about the fate of Europe's Jews was founded. As frightening as it may be to consider, the reality is that the events which would unfold after 1933 were effectively foretold, raising serious questions about how many people knew about what would happen in Nazi Germany before it came to pass.

'It's happening again', say children of Holocaust survivors



OPINION

Illana Hitner Klevansky

I belong to a Facebook group called Children of Holocaust Survivors. This is quite a select group, but not one which I would have chosen to join for the purpose of enjoying dazzling wit or sparkling repartee. Rather, we are a group who commiserate together, swapping distressing stories of fractured childhoods, absent relatives, and broken parents.

We grew up in homes with dark corners of secrets. We acquired shards of information; osmotic whispers; shadows of something terrible that had transpired in the lives of our mothers and fathers. Unanswered questions by queuing sons and daughters, searching for questionable answers.

"Where is your mommy and daddy? Why don't we have a granny or grandpa? What do you mean, 'They were killed in the war'? Why were they killed in the war? What is war?"

Some of our parents were able to speak. Some were so traumatised, they were paralyzed into silence, rendered inarticulate and inconsolable. Some carried the brutality of their enslavement across the threshold of their doors, inflicting grave physical assaults on their own offspring. Some sank into blank landscapes of deep depression, emotionally ill-equipped to protect their children from growing up anxious, fearful, and forever psychologically damaged.

Some of us got lucky. We were gifted with parents who managed somehow, with superhuman powers, to overcome their horrendous past, determined to face living again. Empty eyes. Bleak souls. Shattered hearts. Trying to reconcile an impossible past with the possibility of a positive future. Emotionally bereft, these half-dead skeletons who crawled out of Nazi concentration lagers with only their names and tattooed numbers, survivors of death marches and slave labour camps.

Their crime? They were born Jewish.

Our conversations are littered with accounts of unspeakable brutality. We hold epigenetic memories of burning flesh in our nostrils, see children hanging off electric fences in our dreams, hear the echoing screams of our terrified grandparents as the fumes of Zyklon B suffocated them, and tremble with midnight shakes as we weep for what was, what was lost, and the embedded effect on successive generations.

The perpetrators who participated in this insane barbarism were dutiful citizens who murdered Jews in ghettos and concentration camps during the day,

returning to their warm homes at night to oversee homework and chat over family dinners.

Whether they lived in Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Austria, Holland, Hungary, France, Czechoslovakia, or for that matter, anywhere else in Europe, not many of them subsequently admitted to knowing what was happening to Jews on their blood-soaked continent. Denying both accountability and culpability. Eschewing their complicity and collaboration, whether active or passive, in the wholesale slaughter of six million Jews.

Our group discusses our inheritance; our travel talk covers geographical signposts of hellish place names. A map of killing grounds mulched with the ashes and bones of Jews, through periods of crusades, inquisitions, expulsions, pogroms, gas chambers, and death camps. Auschwitz. Belsen. Buchenwald. Dachau. Mauthausen. Ravensbrück. Sobibor. Stutthof. Theresienstadt. Treblinka.

We the children are now senior citizens ourselves and every week or so, someone in the group sombrely announces the passing of their mother or father. And so, collectively, we of shared histories, mourn collectively. We respond to these familiar strangers, most of whom we'll never meet face-to-face but with whom we share a universal sorrow, with our traditional words of condolence, "Wishing you long life."

And, of course, we discuss the noxious waves of anti-Semitism; a rising tide around the world, relentlessly lapping at the bulwarks of our fragile fortifications. We watch with mounting horror while the drumbeats of anti-Semitism thrum louder, as extremist fanatics try to legitimise their illegitimate agenda. Age-old hatreds, centuries in the proliferation thereof, covert through some historical epochs, overtly festering in this millennium. Again.

In the face of Holocaust deniers, who lyingly assert that the gas chambers and crematoria were a myth, we pledge to keep reiterating the testamental truths that are our legacy.

Spread by social networks, endorsed by mainstream media, cynically radicalised by self-serving politicians, and funded by shady alt-right/left-'luvvy' groups, we despair at the sly vitriol promulgated by disgraceful academics across educational institutions. Add to that, the conspiracy theorists and tinpot zealots, and we realise that the scourge of anti-Semitism is upon us. Again.

Imams incite their brainwashed followers to "stab the Jewish infidels". Pious prelates proclaim their affiliation to the abhorrent Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement by divesting their well-heeled pension funds from Jewish businesses. And political poltroons rail at the effrontery of other governments relocating to Israel's eternal capital, Jerusalem.

Jewish academics are boycotted from speaking on campuses. Jewish students are under physical threat at some of these same institutions. And across Europe, it's too dangerous to identify as a Jew by wearing a *yarmulke* or placing a *mezuzah* on the front doors of homes. Incitement and provocation are the catch calls of current rhetoric from those who are determined to marginalise, some even positing aloud, to eliminate Jews. Again.

Here's why we worry: our own grandchildren, the great-grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, now go to Jewish schools and *cheders* under armed guard. In fact, every single Jewish organisation around the world, whether synagogues, schools, museums, community centres, hospitals et al, every day, for every function utilised, requires security protection. A frightening reality for us and a terrifying portent of what could lie ahead. We keep repeating "Never again!", yet this seems a hollow phrase as we stare into the swampy abyss of endless anti-Semitism.

As I was growing up, my beloved mother, herself a survivor of the Kovno ghetto and Stutthof Konzentrationslager, having grieved for the murders of her mother Irla, father Tevye, and brother Hessel, would often admonish my siblings and myself. She warned us that although the post-Holocaust world seemed slightly more favoured towards Jews as a result of its combined guilt, the anti-Semitism spectre constantly hovered in the background. She would say, in Yiddish, "*Kinder, es is kumendik*

(Children it is coming).

We, the children of Holocaust survivors, now confirm our parents' most dreaded fears. *Es ist doh*. (It is here).

• Illana Klevansky is an ex-South African freelance writer residing in Australia. She is the author of 'The Kugel Book', as well as being a sometime guest editor of 'The Maccabean', which is Perth's weekly Jewish newspaper.



Illana's mother, Henny Kagan Hitner 1924-2010

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Pride in our team, pride in our democracy

At the time of writing, we are less than a day away from South Africa's sixth national and provincial elections since the transition to democracy, which means that by the time this week's issue comes out, vote counting will already be taking place.

Whatever the result, it will be a victory for democracy in our country, one of the few on the African continent where free and fair elections regularly take place. Hopefully, it will mark the beginning of a positive new era for South Africa as a new government gets down to the nitty-gritty of addressing the many pressing issues confronting it.

Election Day will be the culmination of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD's) #MakeUsCount pre-election awareness and education campaign. Our interfaith and multinational observer team is monitoring

proceedings at polling stations throughout the country, including in the rural areas.

This time round, the team consists of a record 230 volunteers, again representing a broad spectrum of different faith groups and nationalities. In addition to observing the voting to ensure that everything is above board, it is tasked with assisting the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in such ways as supervising the delivery of ballot boxes and opening the polls, helping to resolve problems at polling stations, and ensuring that counting begins on time.

We are delighted by the continued success of our team initiative, and proud of how it shows our relatively small community taking the lead in this example of participatory democracy. Looking ahead, we need to find ways to involve ourselves in



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



our country's political culture, political affairs, just as many members of our community have done in bygone years. In this way, we empower ourselves while following in the footsteps of the many Jews who have contributed to our political culture over generations.

More Gaza violence

Whereas this year marks a quarter of a century since South Africa negotiated a peaceful transition from repressive minority rule to all-inclusive democracy, a negotiated settlement between Israel and its neighbours seems as far away as ever.

Over the weekend, Hamas unleashed yet another deadly missile barrage, bringing the region to the brink of war once again. In a joint statement, the board and South African Zionist Federation called on the South African government to condemn rocket attacks on Israel unequivocally.

In order for our country to be a true role player on the world stage, we said, the government needs to speak out clearly in situations when such blatant acts of aggression are perpetrated, whether by Palestinians or anyone else. So long as Hamas is rewarded with a propaganda victory every time it instigates conflict, it will persist in this perverted policy. Hence, those who genuinely have the interests of Palestinians at heart should lay the blame for the ongoing suffering and destruction at the door of those truly responsible.

• 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

Having an opinion

An accurate barometer of our collective mood is the communication that I receive. When we are in a more positive and less anxious space, I either hear little from readers or might get a few positive words of encouragement.

Given some of the messages I have received, I am increasingly concerned that we are functioning at an extremely high level of stress.

Although this might be understandable, given Poway, Gaza, and the South African elections, what I am seeing is a concerning trend of shutting out opinions that we find uncomfortable.

Any email that begins with, "I am totally and utterly disgusted at what Howard said on Friday, 3 May," is clearly not going to be fan mail. Nor is an SMS from a listener stating, "Your opinion is your own. We are not necessarily interested therein."

That said, both are way better and more pleasant than an email that begins with, "This afternoon, I had the unpleasant experience of reading your opinion piece on the matter surrounding the South African flag," ending with, "My message to you is go and sit in a dark corner and fast under sack cloth and ashes, and never raise your arrogant, ignorant head again, or open your mouth to talk."

That one was particularly hurtful, as anyone who knows me is aware that I find fasting extremely difficult. I also have no idea if we can still access sack cloth anywhere. But I suppose that is easy enough to find out.

All these messages were received from different people over the past few days. All dealt with different subjects on which I had expressed an opposing point of view that clearly they were uncomfortable with.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



In none of these situations did I go out of my way to be contrary. On the contrary, I gave my thoughts in an honest and hopefully balanced way. I accept that there is not really such a thing, but I do try and look at all sides of any particular situation. What it indicates is an intolerance and nervousness about alternate views.

That people disagree is not a concern for me. It would be terrible if they didn't disagree – at least from time to time. I see little value in adding more layers to an already well thought out and expressed view, and therefore generally try and engage on subjects that need some discussion and debate.

But I am concerned that we are becoming increasingly unnerved by opinions we don't share. I am becoming increasingly worried about our levels of anxiety, and why we need to react so strongly to opinion that differs from ours. A different view might not be pleasant, but it is unlikely that it is going to kill us.

The messages that I have received are not all from the Jewish community. It is clear to me that this is a broader problem, and South Africans in general are fearful that anything might tip us over the edge.

Unless it is hate speech, it won't. And we need to take it down a notch. Or a few notches.

In the meantime, I will continue to do what I do, and I greatly look forward to hearing from you.

Does nothing shock us anymore?



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

What has the power to shock us so deeply today that we sit up and take notice? Could it be the increase of right-wing demagoguery and nationalism in America that has peaked under United States President Donald Trump's reign? Neo-Nazis, fascists, anti-migrant and anti-Semitic groups are on the rise in countries all over the world.

Or closer to home, could it be the rise of right-wing and left-wing populism in South Africa that shocks us? The elections that have just been completed this week will raise many questions about this.

Talking about being shocked, let's go back 50 years to a time when the world was profoundly stunned by a man called Charles Manson. Everyone knows the name, and views it with horror.

Manson signifies the depravity that can emerge from a seemingly benign mass movement when people stop thinking for themselves, such as the hippie counter-culture of the 1960s. He led a cult in California. With his long hair, charisma, and the ability to charm a crowd with guitar playing, he looked like a peaceful hippie filled with love and human fellowship.

He manipulated his followers into committing the most grisly murders: Sharon Tate, the pregnant wife of filmmaker Roman Polanski, was slashed 16 times with knives by Manson's acolytes. His highly publicised 1970 trial irrevocably tarnished the hippie image, appalling the world. He was sentenced to death, but was saved from execution when California's Supreme Court outlawed the death penalty in 1972.

Why, 50 years later, do we remember Manson? It's because at that time, the world was so astonished by his crime that it felt as

though society had shifted on its moral axis. Nothing like this had been done before. People weren't sure how to exist in a world where such a crime was perpetrated. And, thus, the hippie movement ended.

In the 1960s, news was received in a measured way via newspapers, radio, and television. There was a time lapse between the event and its coverage. Today, news goes via the internet – the instant communication of social media into which gigabyte upon gigabyte of information and sinister ideas are poured, bludgeoning people into confusion about almost anything.

We can't react rationally anymore to killings and catastrophes reported from around the world every day, whether they are true or not. We don't have the ability to be shocked anymore the way people were at what Manson did. It's just too much, so we scroll down. There were similar items yesterday, and there will be more tomorrow. Yet we can't switch off the internet because so much of our lives depends on it.

The dangers of our times are many; we hear about them via the internet. One of the biggest, which we have hardly begun to address amidst the others, is destruction of our planet's ecosystem, through which human life could be obliterated. Climate-change activists are the equivalent of the 1960s counter-culture. Hopefully there won't be a Charles Manson among them.

For readers of this paper today, a never-ending burden is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which fills our Twitter and Facebook pages. Here too, people struggle to make sense of it. The news is so unrelentingly bad, many stop reading, and scroll down. The exchange of fire this week between Israel and Hamas in Gaza is the most recent example.

Truth be told, all these things are scrollable on our devices. But no matter how much Twitter and Facebook shakes us up, we can't switch off the internet. We have to find other ways of looking each other in the eye.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

National Executive Director South African Zionist Federation

The South African Zionist Federation provides the bridge between the Jewish community in South Africa and Israel and is an umbrella organisation for all Zionist organisations in the community.

The SAZF also acts as a point of contact for stakeholders through Israel and South Africa interested in furthering the Israel – South Africa relationship.

The National Executive Director is the key management leader of the South African Zionist Federation. The Executive Director is responsible for overseeing the administration, programs and strategic plan of the organization. Other key duties include fundraising, marketing, and community outreach.

Professional attributes:

- ◆ A min of a bachelor's degree
- ◆ Five or more year's organizational management experience
- ◆ Budget management skills, including budget preparation, analysis, decision-making and reporting
- ◆ Strong organizational abilities including planning, delegating, program development and task facilitation
- ◆ Knowledge of fundraising strategies and donor relations unique to non-profit sector
- ◆ Strong public speaking ability
- ◆ A passion to promote the cause of Zionism and Israel
- ◆ An interest in/knowledge of the Jewish community



Email resumes to: nicci@sazf.org by 31st May.

Only successful applicants will be shortlisted and contacted for an interview.

Note: This is a full-time position working from Beyachad in Johannesburg.

Chabad shatters fundraising target for new home

Chabad of Greenstone managed to raise more than R1 million in 24 hours to renovate its new home.

The organisation is building a new permanent community centre, having outgrown its original space in the home of Rabbi Pini and Rochie Pink's home since its inception in August 2016.

It plans to create sufficient space for children to learn and discover, for families to connect, and for men and women to pray, study, and celebrate the joy of being Jewish.

While brimming with potential, the new premises requires renovation and improvement. Using the international crowdfunding platform Charidy, Chabad of Greenstone embarked on an ambitious all or nothing campaign to raise R1 million in 24 hours to renovate the new property.

On Wednesday, 1 May, any donation



Manning the phones at Chabad of Greenstone's fundraiser

made was matched by three generous donors, meaning a contribution of R100 equalled R300. With the backing of the Greenstone and the broader community, the organisation shattered the goal and raised R1.16 million.

Phase one of the renovation is scheduled to be completed in time to host Rosh Hashanah services in the new Chabad House.

• For more information, or to find out how you can join this project, contact Rabbi Pink, 082 341 7485.

Klerksdorp Yom Hashoah celebrates courage and resilience

Members of the Klerksdorp community



In a moving ceremony, Klerksdorp community members commemorated Yom HaShoah on 1 May with readings about dehumanisation, and candle lighting in remembrance of the victims.

The occasion also celebrated Jewish resilience, rebirth and survival, and remembered the courage of heroes like Irena Sendler, who in the 1940s, was head

of the children's section of Zegota, the Polish Council to Aid Jews, and was active in rescuing Jews, particularly by smuggling children out of the Warsaw Ghetto.

One of the younger community members read a quote from the diary of a Holocaust victim. *El Maleh Rachamim* (the Prayer for the Departed) was recited, and national anthems were sung.

WIZO honours survivors and rescuers

WIZO Johannesburg honoured Madeleine Heitner, who passed away recently at the age of 100, among other survivors and righteous individuals at its Yom HaShoah commemoration at Beyachad in Johannesburg on 29 April.

Madeleine, the mother of the late Rene Heitner (a well-known paediatrician), was an amazing woman by all accounts, as well as a survivor of the Holocaust.

According to WIZO (the Women's International Zionist Organisation), Yom HaShoah is the opportunity to reflect on the systematic murder of six million European Jews, the modern paradigm of man's inhumanity to man.

Guest speaker for the morning, Willie Criveano, was born in Romania and grew

up in Israel, graduating from Ben-Gurion University as an electrical engineer. Criveano, who has lived in South Africa since 1976, showed videos of the ceremony at Yad Vashem where he was presented with a certificate and medal honouring his late father, Theodor Criveano, who was named one of the righteous among the nations.

The righteous, honoured by Yad Vashem, are non-Jews who took great risks to save Jews during the Holocaust. Rescue took many forms, and they came from different nations, religions, and walks of life. What they had in common was that they protected their Jewish neighbours at a time when hostility and indifference prevailed.

According to WIZO, they stood in stark contrast to the mainstream of indifference and hostility that prevailed during the Holocaust, showing extraordinary courage in upholding human values.

Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation.



Raya Ravid and Willie Criveano

Black and white about Israel

In the lead-up to Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israeli Deputy Ambassador Ayellet Black visited Emmarentia Shul to talk about the latest Gaza rocket attacks on Israel.

Black, who was hosted by the Johannesburg shul on 5 May, also talked about Israel's strong international diplomatic ties, the country's experience in South Africa, the challenges of dealing with the local media, and her experience of being a religious Jew in the diplomatic corps.



Israeli Deputy Ambassador addresses members of Emmarentia Shul

Torah Academy shines at international mitzvot quiz

Three Torah Academy Primary School pupils, Shmueli Goldschmit, Tanni Cohen and Kayla Kay, won medals for obtaining more than 90% in the annual Chabad Lubavitch Mitzvot Chidon (quiz) finals in New York last month.

Only one in 10 of the original 15 000 quiz

participants from more than 150 schools qualified for the finals, including 18 from Torah Academy. Seven of those travelled to the United States and were joined by 1 200 other nine to 13-year-olds from around the world.

Organised by Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, the educational arm of the Chabad Lubavitch movement, together with Tzivos Hashem, its children's division, the Chidon had the children using every free moment to study the *mitzvot* (commandments).

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M Schneerson, encouraged children to study all the 613 Torah commandments as enumerated and elucidated by Maimonides in his *Sefer HaMitzvot*.

The Chidon is a result of this, challenging children to study large volumes of detailed texts delving into the intricacies of each *mitzvah* and competing for trophies, medals, and prizes.

Torah Academy pupils Tzvi Stern, Tzvi Bronstein, and Shmueli Goldschmit with Rabbi Shimmy Weinbaum, director of Tzivos Hashem International in New York, and Shimon Goldschmit, Shmueli's father



Letters

ACTS OF KINDNESS HELP BRIDGE THE DIVIDE

We often focus on the negative. Nevertheless, I would like to share two positive experiences that my mother, a white woman in her eighties, experienced over the past few months. Both happened while driving.

In the first, her car broke down on the highway. She was able to pull over onto the side of the road. There was a black man parked nearby in a bakkie. He brought out some tools, and was able to repair her car quickly. Fortunately he also had a bucket of water in the back which was needed to re-fill the radiator.

In the second, she got lost while driving in an unfamiliar place. Again, an unknown African man escorted her to where she needed to go.

Recently I had the opportunity to pay it forward when I escorted a lost delivery man to

his destination. By doing things like this, we can reduce racial tension and introduce a better spirit into the world around us. Although I don't wear a *yarmulke*, those who do can reduce negative stereotypes about Jews being stingy when they do similar kind acts. Doing these things would be a *kiddush Hashem* [sanctification of the name of G-d by being holy], which is the highest *mitzvah* possible.

Although there is much talk about racial tension, most black and white people work and interact with each other in a relaxed and friendly way.

There is a lot of goodwill in this great land. South Africans are known for their warmth and friendliness. Overseas visitors often comment favourably about this. – Martin Zagnoev, Johannesburg

'CHUETA' AN INSULT TO JEWS

The 19 April edition of the *SA Jewish Report* contained an article on the island of Majorca and gave an overview of inhabitants who were of Jewish ancestry and who are referred to in the article as *chuetas*.

This is a deeply offensive term, as is the word *marrano*, in referring to people of Jewish descent whose history is anchored in the Iberian Peninsula and, in the case at hand, on the Balearic Isles. The repetitive use of such terms through ignorance or habit does not strip such words of their historic stench and their denigration of the Jewish people.

As a multilingual sworn translator/interpreter who has studied Spanish and has visited Spain on several occasions, I noticed immediately in the said article that nowhere is the offensiveness of the word *chueta* elucidated. Ignorance is no defence.

Chueta is how a speaker of Castilian Spanish would pronounce *xueta* in the Majorcan variety of Spanish, which is rooted in the Catalan language of north-eastern Spain. Some etymologists believe this is derived from the Catalan word *jueu/juetó*, meaning "little Jew", or "Jew boy". Most specialists in the derivation of *xueta*, however, link it to the Majorcan Spanish word *xulla/xuia* or *xuya*, meaning "salted pork".

It doesn't take a doctorate in linguistics to know that the allusion is meant to denigrate, demean, and insult all those Jews on Majorca who were forced

to convert to Christianity or who converted on the surface as a mechanism of survival. This is the same vicious mindset that gave the world the word *marrano*, meaning "swine", "pig", something dirty or, as any reputable bilingual Spanish dictionary will prove, a converted Jew. I even find the term "new Christian" in Spanish Inquisition literature revolting.

The correct way to refer to those generations of Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity during the most shameful period in Spanish history is to use the word *anusim*. This is derived from the Talmudic phrase *averah b'ones*, referring to a forced transgression. One can also use the expression crypto-Jews – those forced to practice Judaism in secrecy. The word *converso*, referring to forced converts, is also acceptable use in this domain.

Words are potent. We become the way we think and speak. By accepting the use of objectionable terms concerning the Jewish people, we are programming our brains to go into neutral mode and not strike back to guard our dignity and demand respect. We have a duty with no expiry date to revere the memory of numerous Jews who were slaughtered on Majorca, and whose descendants suffered discrimination and verbal abuse right into the latter half of the 20th century.

Enough! – Fiona Claire Capstick, Pretoria

'Until I can't stand, I will be playing the game', says Dimant

LUKE ALFRED

Simon Dimant, a life-long “table-tennis addict” as he describes himself, speaks English with a quaint flourish. This is because he is of Latvian descent and English is his third language behind Russian and Latvian itself. He arrived in Johannesburg from Latvia – he still remembers the day, on 19 February 1991 – unable to speak a word of English, but slowly, his vocabulary expanded, and he began to understand the rules of English grammar.

After being wined, dined, and shown off to his Johannesburg relatives in 1991, he began to chafe. It took him two weeks to become uncomfortable before he found the Wanderers Club, where they were still playing table-tennis at the time.

Soon, he was playing in the leagues, and it wasn't long before he was asked to umpire. He had found a home away from home. “I've got the table-tennis virus,” says Dimant. “It's an addiction like you wouldn't believe.”

Dimant, who will be representing South Africa at the European Maccabi Games in Budapest in July, was crazy about sport as a boy. “There wasn't so much to do,” he says about growing up in Jūrmala the Latvian resort town facing the Gulf of Riga where Communist Party worthies used to have summer houses, “so we played sport – volleyball, football, ice-hockey. Even basketball I tried once when I was holidaying in Canada with relatives there.”

He fell in love with the sport at summer camp in Latvia as an 11-year-old, and discovered a talent he didn't know he had, working his way into the final. “There was a table at camp and in the final, I lost,” he said. “After that, I became mad for the game. I've been mad for table-tennis for 58 years. Until I can't stand, I will be playing the game.”

Finding and buying equipment in the post-World War II USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) wasn't easy. “To buy rubber in the

USSR was a story,”

he says, but Dimant and his friends made do. They'd bribe those lucky enough to travel overseas to bring back paddles and nets, and they loved following the exploits of Andrzej Grubba, a champion Polish player who, they felt, represented them informally because he was Jewish. “He was such a player,” says Dimant. “He could play both left and right hand. We would watch videos when we could.”

“But he didn't maintain. He was a smoker. He died of lung cancer. If he had maintained he could have played until he was in his forties – even more.”

Dimant wouldn't have been able to keep up with Grubba as a player, but in honour of his hero has named a bat in his vast collection of more than 100 after him. “Yes,” says Dimant with a chuckle, “that one I call ‘Butterfly Andrzej Grubba all-round plus’! It's a good bat!”

“What I've discovered is that you have to settle on a bat. That's a failing of mine, because I have quite a collection – I'm an equipment junkie – and, really, you have to settle on a few bats not to make it so difficult for yourself.”

Dimant played in the last of his South African championships in the over-60 category in 2017, and won the veterans' section in his group in those self-same championships in 2013. He thinks he's playing some of the best table-tennis of his career, and challenges the younger bucks



Simon Dimant

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

to do something,” says the 69-year-old electrical engineer who has made a career for himself in trade-utilities management. “Otherwise you have no self-respect. It's important for confidence.”

“For me that something was table-tennis.”

Not a member of a Johannesburg club, Dimant is a wanderer, restlessly heading off in pursuit of a game

to see what he's made of.

He's an awkward customer, he says, combining defence and attack in an unusual way. “It's a combination,” he says. “I deal with an opponent's attack with the backhand and, then, when I go to attack, I use the forehand.”

It will be lonely going to Budapest as the only member of the South African Maccabi table-tennis team, but Dimant has the ability to make friends wherever he goes. Table-tennis has anchored him, and given him meaning. He talks about it as others would an elixir of youth, as something vital and life-giving. “It's important

two or three times a week. He bemoans the “schlepp” into Westdene from his home in the northern suburbs, but says that he feels that there's an element of hollow moaning in the complaint. “Whenever I am down in the Western Cape, I make my way to the coloured area where I have friends,” he says. “They are the best table-tennis players in the country. They are only too happy to see me and we play.”

“Table-tennis has made me friends. Opened doors. Anywhere I see a table I am happy. Now I'm in the paper, I will get phone calls from my friends and they will tease me.”

Israel boycott proposal back before UCT senate

>>Continued from page 4

academics for the shortcomings of their governments.”

Says Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, “This resolution would have a severely detrimental effect on the university, including its reputation with other international universities and also its credibility as a globally recognised university. We believe academic freedom is paramount to the foundation of any reputable and serious institute of higher learning.

“Furthermore, the singling out of the Jewish state as the only country for this kind of sanction is blatantly anti-Semitic. It is our hope that the university will endorse and uphold the principles of academic freedom in the upcoming senate deliberations. Any resolutions should reconfirm the university's ethos and commitment to fairness, justice, and non-racism.”

The South African Zionist Federation retweeted a recently published open letter by Harris Zvi Green in the *Times of Israel*. Green graduated from UCT in 1968, and lives in Israel, where he has been chief financial officer of a number of Israel based hi-tech companies.

He wrote, “The university's senate and its student leadership body have become radicalised to the extreme... hijacked by anarchists to serve a warped, anti-Semitic agenda in complete contrast to the principles of academic freedom. Appeasement and an insatiable desire to be perceived as politically correct has replaced any structured decision and coherent policy making process.” Green said if the boycott was approved, he would publicly renounce the academic degree awarded to him by the university.



Sunday (12 May)

- The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) in partnership with the Polish embassy hosts a screening of the film *Birds Are Singing in Kigali* followed by discussion with director and screenwriter, Joanna Kos-Krauze. Time: 15:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. RSVP to 011 640 3100 or dow@jhbholocaust.co.za. Free admission, donations welcome.
- Second Innings hosts Fiona Capstick, sworn translator in the high court and expert on Jewish history in *The Sarajevo Haggadah: An Odyssey of Faith*. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, second floor, Golden Acres, 85 George Avenue, Sandringham. Cost: R20 for Second Innings Members; R40 for visitors (includes tea/coffee and refreshments).
- The Big Band Music Appreciation Society hosts a programme by Ron Cowley. Audio: *big band leaders or performers who celebrate an anniversary this year*. Movie: *Harry James with Helen Forrest & Dick Haymes*. Time: 14:15. Venue: Beit Emanuel Slome Auditorium, 38 Oxford Road, Parktown (entrance in Third

Avenue). Contact: Marilyn 072 243 7436 or Jack 082 450 7622.

Tuesday (14 May)

- ORT Jet's Business Plan Workshop with Amanda Blankfield-Koseff. Time: 18:00. Venue: ORT SA Academy, 44 Central Street, corner 10th Avenue, Houghton. No cost. Booking: samantha@ortjet.org.za

Thursday (16 May)

- ORT2Talk presents entrepreneur Bruce Msimanga on self-mastery and leadership principles. *How to grow self-understanding and confidence*. Time: 18:00. Venue: ORT SA Academy, 44 Central Street, corner 10th Avenue, Houghton. Donation: R100. Booking: samantha@ortjet.org.za
- Join the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) every Thursday for a *Lunch & Learn* shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz. Time: 13:00 at Beyachod, 2 Elray Street, Roedene. Contact: WIZO office 011 645 2515.



Dream of a New Dawn for Israel

MEET THE ACTIVISTS FIGHTING FOR ISRAEL'S DEMOCRATIC FUTURE

Sunday 12 May Cape Town
Monday 13 May Johannesburg

The Jewish Democratic Initiative presents:
Sharon Abraham-Weiss – Executive Director,
Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI)
Mossi Raz – Member of Knesset, Meretz

CT: Sunday 12 May 17h30
Nelson Mandela Auditorium, Jewish Community Centre

JHB: Monday 13 May 19h30

Killarney Country Club

RSVP: JDImovement@gmail.com



Natalie, 28

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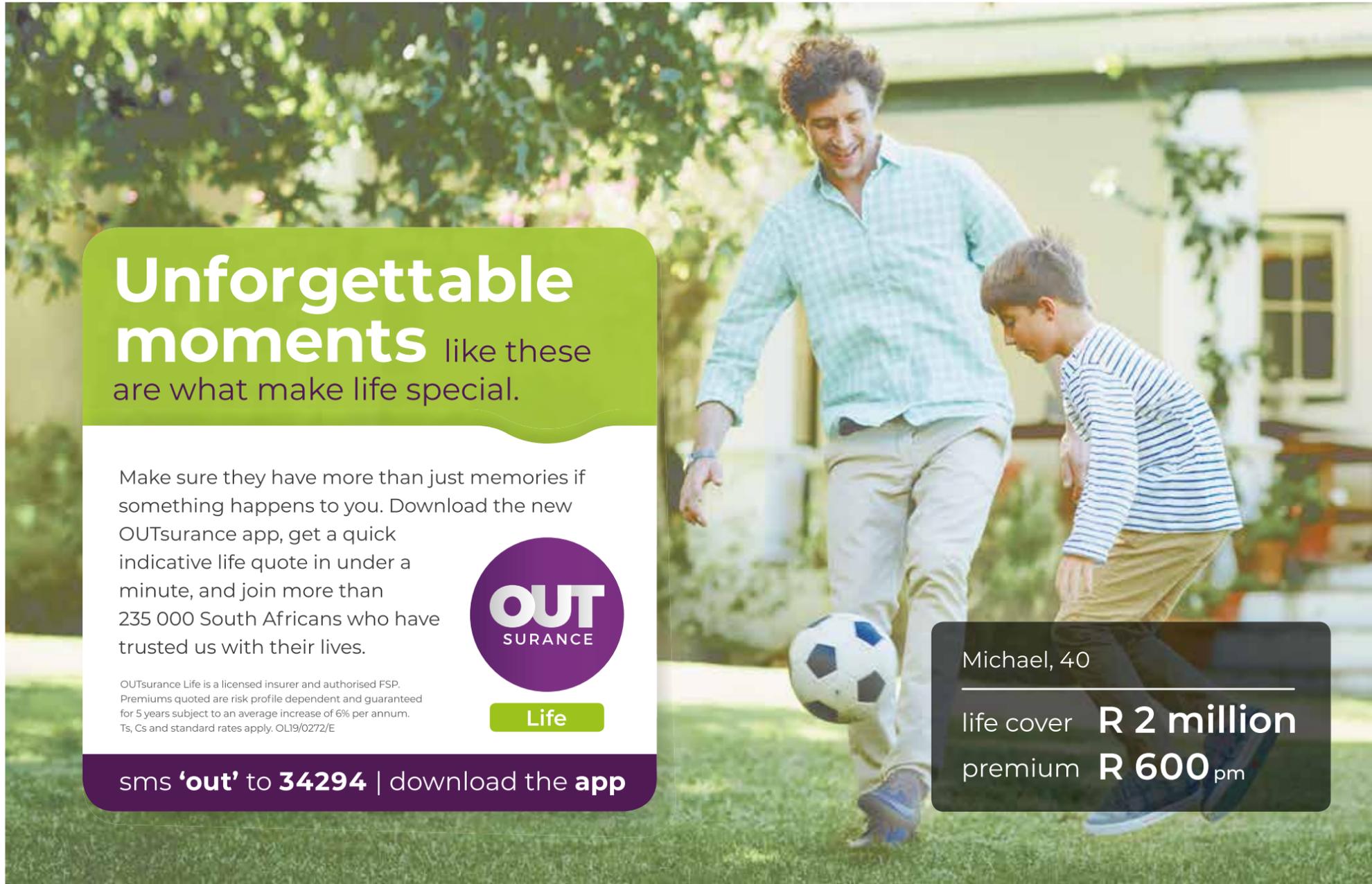
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