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'Our voice has been heard,' says SAJBD

NICOLA MILTZ

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) this week came out strongly in defence of its right to express critical views of the country's political leadership.

"Our voice has been heard," said Zev Krengel, the vice-president of SAJBD.

Last week, Krengel told the *SA Jewish Report* that International Relations and Cooperation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu, was the "single biggest enemy in government" to South African Jewry.

This stirred a political hornet's nest, and was met with scathing attacks by those who galloped to defend the minister. Sisulu's army of supporters, which included the African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party, and Boycott Divestment Sanctions South Africa (BDS-SA), the Congress of South African Trade Unions, rushed to her defence. So, too, did her full-time advisor, Zane Dangor, who wrote a blistering opinion piece in the *Independent Online* criticising Krengel and Israel.

Local media picked up on the story, with *Daily Maverick* pointing out that Sisulu's coveted position at the department of international affairs and cooperation (Dirco) hung in the balance following her controversial handling of the downgrade of the South African embassy in Israel.

Sisulu has steadfastly maintained that her utterances on the downgrading of the SA embassy in Israel follow a resolution passed at the ANC's 54th national conference in December 2017, where the controversial decision to downgrade was taken. She says she is merely acting on the resolution.

However, there have been inconsistencies – some have called them blatant contradictions – in what she has said publicly on the matter, and with President Cyril Ramaphosa's repeated assurances that South Africa will continue to play a meaningful role in negotiations aimed at achieving a lasting peace agreement in the Middle East.

In April she announced that the downgrade was in progress, and suggested/implied that Israel would no longer have an ambassador in South Africa. In May, however, it was made clear that the cabinet had not yet approved the downgrade.

"In a genuinely democratic society, all citizens and organisations have an indisputable right to express their views, including views that might be strongly critical of the political leadership of the day," the SAJBD said. "Accordingly, the SAJBD reaffirms the right of its elected leaders to criticise and where necessary condemn outright statements and actions of members of our government that we believe are problematic," it said.

According to several insiders, Sisulu and most likely her advisors are too focused on the Israeli/Palestinian issue.

It has been a torrid time for local Jewry since

the minister took office in February last year. During this short tenure, she recalled the South African Ambassador to Israel, Sisa Ngombane, following an outbreak of violence on the Gaza border, and she was instrumental behind the scenes when the ANC resolved at its policy conference to downgrade the SA embassy in Tel Aviv to a liaison office.

There was concern in the community when Sisulu took office after it emerged that she had met members of BDS-SA and other anti-Israel lobby groups on several occasions to discuss the matter.

One of the most telling stories about Sisulu was reported in the *SA Jewish Report* more than a year ago, shortly after her appointment as international-relations minister.

It emerged that Sisulu had undertaken shortly before Nasrec that she would help ensure that the "embassy of Israel packs up and goes to the Dead Sea". She made these undertakings to a BDS-linked Muslim organisation called the Social Compact for Peace and Justice.

Sisulu was later invited by the same group to report back on the role she had played. A video of this gathering has been seen by the *SA Jewish Report*. In it, Sisulu addresses members of this organisation, along with the top leadership of BDS-SA and other members of the Muslim community, at the Jiswa Centre in Lenasia.

She discussed the dinner she had with Social Compact members before the conference took place at Nasrec.

"Two requests were made: first, there must

be a downgrading of the embassy, and second, please make sure that tomorrow, the embassy of Israel packs up and goes to the Dead Sea. Am I correct?" she said to applause. "Fortunately, [the message] fell on very fertile soil."

She said she thought it important "to come back and say thank you for making that very strong suggestion. It was taken up and today, you can say you were part of a very important decision that was taken by the ANC at the conference."

"Unfortunately, the embassy of Israel is not in the Dead Sea. It's very much in Pretoria, and we still have to work very hard to make sure the final request that was made is carried through."

There were several prominent speakers at the Lenasia event, including South Africa's ambassador to Palestine, AY Suliman; the co-founder and director of BDS-SA, Muhammed Desai (currently embroiled in sexual-harassment allegations); and South Africa's former ambassador to Libya, Syria and Saudi Arabia, Mohamed Dangor (the brother of Zane Dangor). Professor Farid Esack, the chairperson of BDS-SA, and members of the SA Council of Churches were also present.

Desai said at that gathering that when the embassy was downgraded, "we're going to have a welcome party, comrade Sisulu, and we want you to be part of it".

Darren Bergman, the Democratic Alliance's (DA) shadow deputy minister of international relations and cooperation, told the *SA Jewish Report* that, "Lindiwe Sisulu has an obsession with Israel. She is

playing to a gallery of lobbyists rather than consulting her own department that already has an appropriate international policy on the Middle East. She supports BDS, which has been outlawed in many countries as being anti-Semitic."

Bergman said the topic of Palestine and Israel came up consistently. At a Dirco briefing to MPs held earlier this year in Pretoria, the Middle East was brought up by every director representing every branch of Dirco, with some mentions having absolutely no relation to the region whatsoever. "It's as if the Middle East issue is a deflection of the real issues happening internally," he said.

The SAJBD said in a statement this week that it had on many occasions explained how the proposed downgrade of the South African Embassy in Israel would not only be discriminatory and motivated by a clear political bias, it would do nothing for – and even be counterproductive to – peace building between Palestinians and Israelis.

It said it had appealed to the government to use its experience in peace building by using the South African model of resolving conflict through negotiation and dialogue.

The board said it remained committed to finding solutions to bring about a sustainable two-state solution in the Middle East.

"We will continue to hold dialogue with all political parties and the government of the day on all issues that affect us and contribute meaningfully to our democracy."



Praying for South Africa

Photo: Levi Uranovsky

See page 7

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Palestinians reject economic workshop

Palestinian leaders have rejected a plan for an economic workshop announced as the first part of the Trump administration’s Middle East peace plan.

The Palestinians said they were not consulted on the plan to hold the conference next month in Bahrain.

Finance ministers and global and regional business leaders will meet from 25 to 26 June in Manama to encourage capital investment in the West Bank, Gaza, and countries in the region, CNN reported on Sunday.

Jared Kushner, President Donald Trump’s son-in law and senior White House adviser, and White House Middle East envoy Jason Greenblatt have worked on the peace proposal since the beginning of the Trump presidency. The plan contains political and economic components and reportedly will be announced later this year.

“All efforts to make the oppressor and the oppressed co-exist are doomed to fail,” said Palestine Liberation Organisation Secretary-General Saeb Erekat. Attempts at promoting an economic normalisation of the Israeli occupation of Palestine will be rejected. This is not about improving living conditions under occupation, but about reaching Palestine’s full potential by ending Israeli occupation.”

Comedian feels the heat

Netflix has dropped an Australian comedian who made jokes about the Holocaust, and insulted a Jewish audience member who later complained in an email.

Last month, Isaac Butterfield asked his audience at the Melbourne Comedy Festival to “imagine the joy of people when they heard the Jews were sent to the gas chambers”, the city’s *Herald Sun* newspaper reported. The email sent to Butterfield from a Jewish woman said the joke was

“not remotely funny”.

He responded, “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the oven.”

Butterfield had what the London-based *Daily Mail* described as “a lucrative comedy special deal” with Netflix to air his stand-up show, *The Butterfield Effect*. But the video streaming company cancelled the deal following the offensive riposte.

Butterfield has nearly one million subscribers on YouTube.

In a video posted on 24 April on YouTube, he pretended to apologise for his comments, and then took it back, accusing the mainstream media of “an all-out assault on me”. Butterfield also defended his right to free speech as part of the 16-minute video.

Polish govt says no to reparations

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki vowed that his government would never pay damages in connection with World War II.

“If today anyone says that Poland has to pay damages to anyone, then we disagree and will continue to do so. It will not happen as long as the country is ruled by law and justice,” Morawiecki said at an event in Lodz on Friday.

Morawiecki’s remarks were widely understood to mean that he regarded offering restitution for Jewish property morally flawed and a victory for Nazism.

Earlier this month, Morawiecki said that Poland would never pay restitution because Poles were the greatest victims of WW II.

Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Jewish groups have protested against Poland’s failure to pass restitution laws for privately owned property lost by Jews in the Holocaust.

Arsonists target US shul

An arsonist attempted twice on Saturday night to set fire to a synagogue building in downtown Chicago.

Meanwhile, on the city’s north side in the West Rogers Park neighbourhood, vandals smashed the windows of cars parked outside of a synagogue.

Torah Thought

Shemitah feeds the doubters in all of us

The parsha of the week, Behar, tells us that we shouldn’t work the land of Israel in the seventh year (Shemitah) or harvest its produce. The parsha continues that nonetheless, G-d promises us that there will be plenty to eat. If we ask, “What will we eat in the 7th year?” G-d promises us that He will command His blessing for us in the sixth year, and it will yield enough for three years.

This promise doesn’t make sense. First, G-d alleviates our fear that Shemitah will result in starvation, then He acknowledges this fear, and addresses it a second time.

What’s the difference between believing in G-d, and trusting in G-d? I might believe in G-d, but, the Talmud suggests, my belief might be such that before I break into a home, I pray that G-d blesses my theft with success. “Belief” is a theoretical idea in my head, “there is a G-d”. If I trust in G-d, the awareness has moved from my head to my heart, and to my behaviour, I rely on G-d, because if good things are going

to happen, G-d will enable/make them happen. The journey of this awareness from my head to my heart (and actions) is my job. It’s hard, but I have a lifetime to do it.

Trust, as Rabbi Menachem Mendel, the third rebbe of Chabad (1789-1866) taught, means tracht *gut vet zein gut* (if you think good - because G-d will make it good - it will be good). Not that it will be good in some spiritual way, but in a practical way you can see, and not in some vague time in future, but now. And, the more convinced you are of this reality because you trust in G-d, the clearer and sooner that good will be obvious.

So, why does G-d tell us not to worry about food during Shemitah, then mention that we might worry about it, but that we shouldn’t worry about it because there will be plenty?

G-d is talking to two types of Jews. The first group trusts in G-d. It doesn’t ask if there will be food during Shemitah - of course G-d will provide us with food!

Deputy Police Superintendent Anthony Ricci ordered that synagogues, Jewish schools, and Jewish-owned businesses receive “special attention” while the suspected hate crimes were investigated.

Two attempts were made around midnight to set alight the Anshei Sholom B’nei Israel synagogue in the Lakeview neighbourhood. The remains of several Molotov cocktails were found outside the building. There was no damage.

The synagogue’s surveillance cameras filmed the arson attempts. Police told local media that they had identified two suspects.

Haredi mother wins race

A haredi Orthodox mother of five from Jerusalem has won a half-marathon in Latvia.

Beatie Deutsch, 29, was the top woman finisher in Sunday’s 13-mile (21km) race in Riga in a time of 1 hour, 17 minutes, 34 seconds, reportedly becoming the first haredi woman to win an international athletics competition.

She has a coach, and is receiving partial funding by the state to train for the 2020 Olympics.

“So many of you shared stories of your families that had perished in Riga, and it felt truly incredible to be running through the streets as a proud Jewish woman,” Deutsch, who uses the moniker “Marathon Mother”, wrote on Facebook after the race.

Deutsch won the 2018 Jerusalem Marathon and the Tiberias Marathon in January. She ran the Tel Aviv Marathon in 2017 while seven months pregnant.

Deutsch, who made aliyah from New Jersey in 2009, is known for running in modest clothing including a skirt, shirt sleeves below her elbow, and headscarf.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:07	17:59	Johannesburg
17:30	18:24	Cape Town
16:49	17:41	Durban
17:09	18:01	Bloemfontein
17:02	17:55	Port Elizabeth
16:55	17:48	East London



Rabbi Aharon Rose

The second group believes, but doesn’t trust. It asks, so G-d reassures it.

G-d looks after both groups, but differently. The first group trusts in G-d completely, so it will see a blessing of quality where a little food will be satisfactory. The second group doesn’t trust so much. It asks what it will eat, and G-d tells it that there will be a blessing, but a blessing of quantity (“produce for three years”). This involves much more work, but the blessing still exists. Those who trust in G-d completely don’t need to see three times the amount of food to calm their fears because they know G-d can do anything. G-d blesses both groups according to what they need in order not to worry.


Every Jew believes because we have a soul that is part of G-d. Our job is to turn belief into trust. The results/rewards will be obvious.

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German parliament condemns BDS as anti-Semitic

TALI FEINBERG

The German Parliament (Bundestag) ruled last Friday that the anti-Israel Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement (BDS) is anti-Semitic. It was the first country in the European Union to do so.

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) National Chairperson Ben Swartz, and Rowan Polovin, the chair of the Cape council, applauded the move, saying it carried weight especially because of Germany’s dark past. “We call upon the ANC, whose foreign policy and position towards the Jewish state is dictated by the BDS movement, to grasp the consequences of its alignment with an anti-Semitic fringe organisation,” they said.

The SAZF rejected the “disingenuous arguments” by International Relations and Cooperation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu’s advisor, Zane Dangor, that many Jews endorse the BDS movement and the downgrade of diplomatic relations between Israel and South Africa.

“The overwhelming majority of Jews in South Africa are vociferously opposed to the ANC’s unique discrimination and sanction of the one and only Jewish state amongst all the countries of the world,” they said.

“The German Parliament stated that BDS campaigns are a modern echo of ‘the most terrible chapter in German history’, and are reminiscent of Nazi campaigns against Jews. The SAZF calls on the ANC to consider the consequences, whether intended or not, of its alliances and actions, and where they may lead.”

The move in Germany came about after Chancellor Angela Merkel’s governing Christian Democratic Union submitted the resolution together with the Social Democratic Party, the Green Party, and the Free Democratic Party, according to the *Jerusalem Post*.

The resolution, titled “Resisting the BDS movement decisively – fighting anti-Semitism”, stated, “The argumentation patterns and methods used by the BDS movement are anti-Semitic.”

The motion is non-binding, and stipulates that in light of the Bundestag’s recognition of the importance of combating anti-Semitism, Germany must resolutely

condemn calls to boycott Israel.

It also said that the BDS campaign calling for Israeli products to be labelled with “don’t buy” stickers was reminiscent of the Nazi-era boycott of Jewish businesses, known in German as *Judenboykott*, which used slogans such as, “Don’t buy from Jews”.

The statement adds that calls for a boycott are also an attempt to restrict freedom of opinion, art and science, and are among the obstacles

Germany.”

On the other hand, he points out that, “Sixty Israeli and North American Jewish scholars have signed a letter decrying the appellation of anti-Semitism to BDS. In their view, boycott is a political tool and acceptable.

“The bottom line is that in all the BDS propaganda I have seen, it is far from clear if it accepts the Jewish State. That is its prerogative. But, as

against the Jewish people, and for the enormous suffering they endured during the last century. However, Germany must not correct its fault at the expense of the Palestinian people, rights, and freedom struggle against Israeli occupation.

“The Jewish people and the Israeli occupation are not the same. Therefore, we condemn passing this unfair resolution by the German Bundestag that is against the

“unconstitutional resolution” was anti-Palestinian and unhelpful in the fight against “real anti-Jewish racism”.

“BDS targets complicity not identity. The academic and cultural boycott of Israel is strictly institutional, and does not target individual Israelis,” the movement said in a statement posted online.

Most Israeli politicians welcomed the resolution. Said Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, “This is a crushing victory for the truth, and a great achievement in the struggle against Israel’s detractors,” while Yesh Atid Chairman Yair Lapid said it was an “important and just step. BDS is the modern manifestation of an ancient hatred. Now is the time for the rest of Europe to follow Germany’s lead.”

But former Israeli Ambassador to South Africa, Ilan Baruch, who heads the think tank Policy Working Group, opposed the motion. He has written to Germany’s former Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, arguing that, “In Germany, permeated with guilt toward the Jews and Israel, equating BDS – however much we oppose it – and anti-Semitism has no moral basis.

“There are anti-Semites who are friends of the Netanyahu government,” Baruch wrote, citing Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Austrian Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache as examples, “and there are Jewish supporters of BDS. The fact that there are anti-Semites who are present in the BDS movement doesn’t make it anti-Semitic. It is anti-Israel.”



to a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“This is an important step on the part of the German parliament,” said local anti-Semitism expert Professor Milton Shain. “Although the resolution is non-binding, it opens up a new chapter. Time will tell if these ideas about BDS move beyond

we have seen of late, rejection of the Jewish State is increasingly being defined as anti-Semitic.”

Meanwhile, Hamas official Dr Basem Naim said, “The resolution is regrettable and marks a black day in the history of human rights and freedom of expression. Germany is held responsible for its historic fault

Palestinian people’s right to resist the Israeli occupation, which is the most terrible occupation in history, with all means possible, given that boycott is a peaceful means of resistance against the Israeli occupation.”

BDS South Africa re-tweeted the statement of its international movement, saying that the

Masuku hate speech case heads to Con Court

NICOLA MILTZ

The protracted hate-speech row against Bongani Masuku of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) is headed to the Constitutional Court on 27 August this year.

Ten years ago, Masuku, while holding the position of international relations secretary of Cosatu, made a series of highly inflammatory and hateful comments directed at the Jewish community supporting Israel, following deadly violence in Gaza.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) laid a complaint of hate

speech with the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) which found in its favour, and referred the matter to the Equality Court which, in turn, found Masuku’s statements to be hate speech in terms of the Equality Act. Masuku was ordered to apologise unconditionally to the Jewish community.

He refused to apologise, and took the matter on appeal.

The Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) upheld his appeal against hate speech last December, finding Masuku not liable for committing an act of hate speech. The SCA found that the words were protected speech, and did not constitute hate

speech in terms of the constitution.

The SAHRC has been pursuing the case against Masuku on behalf of the SAJBD since 2009.

On 10 February 2009, Masuku said, “As we struggle to liberate Palestine from the racists, fascists, and Zionists who belong to the era of their friend Hitler! We must not apologise, every Zionist must be made to drink the bitter medicine they are feeding our brothers and sisters in Palestine.

“We must target them, expose them, and do all that is needed to subject them to perpetual suffering until they withdraw from the land of others and stop their

savage attacks on human dignity. Every Palestinian who suffers is a direct attack on all of us.”

Masuku reportedly said – among other ugly things – that Jews who continued to stand up for Israel should “not just be encouraged but forced to leave South Africa”.

The SAJBD has said that it believes his statements constitute unlawful incitement to cause harm. It is now looking to the Constitutional Court to address these critical issues, and hopefully to confirm the original hate-speech rulings of the SAHRC and Equality Court.



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REAL LIFE

Real Estate.



Religious leaders protest terror attacks

TALI FEINBERG

“I am motivated to join other religious leaders who speak out against religious violence and lead their congregations to join them in doing so,” said Rabbi Greg Alexander of the Cape Town Progressive Hebrew Congregation.

Last Friday, Rabbi Alexander joined religious leaders from the Muslim and Christian faiths for a silent vigil to protest against recent terrorist attacks on houses of worship around the world, including the massacres in Pittsburgh, Christchurch, Sri Lanka, and Burkino Faso, which they especially wanted to highlight.

“The Burkino Faso attacks on various churches over the past few weeks have received little media coverage. Does this mean that African lives don’t matter? This was the main reason for our vigil, and also to lament the fact that there have been so many attacks on places of worship over the past year,” says Iman Rashied Omar of the Claremont Mosque.

“Attention is often brought to how religious extremists kill people of other faiths in the name of G-d,” says Rabbi Alexander. “This perpetuates the myth that religion is warlike, destructive and dangerous to society. It obscures the truth that wars and atrocities are conducted in the name of money, land, power, religion, and political systems.

“Both Father Michael Lapsley [the South African Anglican priest and social-justice activist] and Imam Omar have dedicated their careers to speaking out against injustice and religious intolerance, while at the same time teaching their faith from a deeply religious perspective. I was proud to stand by their sides,” he said. “In fact, on Friday 31 May, Temple Israel is inviting Muslims to pray in our synagogue, break their Ramadan fast with us, and join us for Shabbat dinner.”

Father Lapsley, who heads the Institute for Healing of Memories, spoke at the Claremont Mosque before the vigil. “In different parts of the world, we have seen during the past year that holy places of the three Abrahamic faiths have suffered terrorist attacks,” he said.



Rabbi Greg Alexander, Imam Rashid Omar and Father Michael Lapsley

“It is often overwhelming and depressing when we see violence and terror all around us. It is very tempting to be an ostrich. But let us not fail to see and be signs of hope. I have long come to the conclusion that if we want the human family to live together in peace, we all need to embrace an interfaith future.”

He said that this year is the 50th anniversary of the murder in detention of Imam Abdullah Haron, who was tortured to death by the apartheid security police in 1969. Father Bernard Wrangmore was an Anglican priest who began a fast to demand that the apartheid government open an inquest into the imam’s death, to which there are still no clear answers.

“On the 40th day of his 67-day fast, Father Bernard organised an interfaith service to pray for an end to the vicious system of apartheid. Father Bernard didn’t know Imam Haron. He was of a different religion and a different colour. On what basis did he act? His own sense of right and wrong, of justice and injustice, of a common humanity,” said Father Lapsley.

“This was the genesis of the interfaith movement in Cape Town, which was forged during the struggle against apartheid,” explains Imam Omar. Although the faiths may disagree politically, they aim to work together on issues of common concern, and “affirm the full humanity of each other”. His community, in particular, is against extremism of any kind, especially regarding its own religion, Imam Omar said.

Father Lapsley said that the fact that he was born in New Zealand gave him a personal connection to the terrorist attacks on the

mosque in Christchurch. He spoke of his admiration of the actions of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern after the attacks. “The next day, the prime minister came to Christchurch wearing a hijab, and the following Friday, the call to prayer was broadcast live on national radio.

At a national memorial ceremony, she said, “The world has been stuck in a vicious cycle of extremism breeding extremism, and it must end. We cannot confront these issues alone, none of us can. But the answer to them lies in a simple concept that is not bound by domestic borders, that isn’t based on

ethnicity, power base or even forms of governance. The answer lies in our humanity.”

Father Lapsley has dealt with extremism in his own life. During apartheid, he was sent a letter bomb which blew off his hands, destroyed an eye, and burnt much of his face. In spite of this, he stood on the streets of Cape Town emphasising a message of compatriotism and forgiveness instead of anger and hate.

“If anyone would like to get involved, they can reach out to organisations like the Cape Town

Interfaith Initiative, the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum, or the youth organisation Face to Face/ Faith to Faith. Then there are more spontaneous events, like this silent vigil, so there are lots of opportunities for people to get involved,” said Imam Omar.

“It’s not always easy to navigate this interfaith path, but it is important. We have forged good relations over a long period, and we have an unparalleled interfaith solidarity movement in Cape Town, not easily found elsewhere,” he said.



Participants at the vigil

Left-wing Israeli activists find inspiration in SA’s fight for equality

TALI FEINBERG

“Israel’s democratic character is under threat,” says Mickey Gitzin, the national director of the New Israel Fund, which raises money for groups that work to improve Israeli society. The group is Zionist, and fights for Israel to abide by the values in its declaration of independence.

“Democracy is under threat in Israel firstly because Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his extreme right-wing allies are trying to make the judiciary non-existent. No matter what your political views, if the judicial system and the Supreme Court are under threat, we need to wake up and speak up,” says Gitzin.

He and a number of other left-wing leaders of non-governmental organisations in Israel were recently in South Africa of their own volition, to learn lessons about peace-building and transitional justice. They also aimed to build strategies to implement these lessons within the Israeli-Palestinian context.

The Israelis met with activists and civil society leaders who were involved in the pre-democracy negotiations in South Africa in the 1990s and people who are working at solving South Africa’s societal problems that have continued since then. The Jewish Democratic Initiative (JDI) took advantage of their visit to present them and their work to the broader South African Jewish community.

The JDI is a new South African movement that advocates for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, explains JDI executive committee member Joshua Hovsha.

“We see in the last election process how Netanyahu spoke about the judiciary as ‘the elite against the common people’, which is how we’ve heard other populist leaders talk,” says Gitzin. “Israel’s democracy is also quite weak because we don’t have a constitution, so laws can be changed more easily.”

Linked to the threat to the judiciary is another threat of annexation in the West Bank, a promise Netanyahu made in the days before the election. “This would be incredibly dangerous for Israel’s democracy. At the moment it is something temporary, but as soon as it becomes a permanent annexation, Israel will no longer be a democracy, and will have a minority ruling over a majority,” he says.

In spite of this, Gitzin remains hopeful about Israel’s future.

“After a week in South Africa, I can see that anything is possible. Yes, we are in an extreme time, but we are also close to a point where people will need to decide what kind of country they want Israel to be. It will be a long process, but I cannot imagine the day when Israel will cease to be a democracy. I believe in Israeli society.”

Gitzin says it is vital for the South African Jewish community to educate young people about the complexities of Israel, and make space for debate and questions. If we don’t, our youth will feel lied to when they discover the “real” Israel, and will “turn away”. Gitzin says he has seen this happen in Jewish communities all over the world.

Because we have such an extreme BDS (Boycott Divestment Sanctions) movement in South Africa, young people need to understand Israel’s burning issues before they go to university, he says, so that they will be better equipped to deal with the debates on campus. Furthermore, a moderate space for questioning is vital in counteracting the extreme BDS narrative that we have here.



Hagai El-Ad of B'Tselem

Photo: Gary Beechey

Advocate Sharon Abraham-Weiss, the executive director of ACRI (the Association for Civil Rights in Israel), says that her organisation is the only one monitoring and engaging on the full spectrum of rights.

“ACRI deals with threats to Israeli democracy. This is often in the form of legislation that erodes essential democratic institutions like the high court, civil society organisations, and discrimination against minorities. At the other end, it defends the rights of the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. In between these two poles, ACRI handles a range of civil rights issues.”

Continued on page 5>>

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SA Rabbi thanks Sugihara heir for rescuing his father

TALI FEINBERG

“Your father saved my father,” said Rabbi Yossy Goldman of Johannesburg as he embraced Nobuki Sugihara at a long-awaited gathering in America last week.

The Japanese man and Jewish rabbi met to celebrate the actions of the late Chiune Sugihara, who defied his government and wrote thousands of visas for Jews to escape Lithuania during the Holocaust. The late Rabbi Shimon (Simon) Goldman was one of those lucky men.

Now, 75 years later, the younger Goldman was able to thank the younger Sugihara for his father’s heroic actions. “It was the rescuer meeting the rescued,” said an emotional Rabbi Goldman on the phone from Philadelphia, where the meeting took place.

“My father was the sole survivor of his family. He ran away from home at the age of 14, and joined the Chabad yeshiva in Vilnius. This was one of the places where Sugihara distributed his visas. But every other member of my father’s family perished in Majdanek or Treblinka.”

The long-awaited interaction between the sons of the fathers was made possible because of Goldman’s own son, Rabbi Yochanan Goldman of Bnai Avraham Chabad in Philadelphia, who invited both men as part of an annual tribute event.

Nobuki lives in Antwerp, but he travelled to the United States especially to meet the son of a man his father once rescued.

“I was very emotional, embraced him, and thanked him. I’ve been waiting for decades to say thank you. It was very moving,” says Goldman of the moment they met. The two also enjoyed a tea ceremony at a Japanese centre, where they sat on the floor sharing bowls of green tea and dates (all kosher for the rabbi), and anecdotes of their fathers. The unusual sight of a rabbi taking part in a Japanese ceremony was a powerful image of how anyone can reach across cultural divides for the greater good.

“We spoke about the commonalities between Jewish and Japanese cultures, such as respect, morality, and honesty. The story of our fathers shows ‘the power

of one’ – how a single individual can act with courage and integrity to save lives. My whole family would not be here if it were not for the courage and nobility of his father defying

his victory over Hitler.”

Many of Goldman’s family members joined him in Philadelphia for the event, as did other Sugihara survivors. “A member of the audience had been a little girl in Lithuania when Chiune wrote a visa

had to leave, and most made their way to Shanghai, China. There was a thriving Jewish community of refugees there, with at least four or five yeshivot! After the war, the yeshivot’s American counterparts organised visas for these Jews to settle there, which is how Goldman’s father landed up in the US.

Incredibly, Goldman’s daughter Zeesy Deren married Rabbi Asher Deren, whose father, Rabbi Chatzkel (Haskiel) Deren, was also saved by Sugihara. The couple therefore both have grandfathers rescued by the same man, and the two men are even pictured standing next to each other in a photo of Jews in Kobe, Japan.

“The first time I saw the list of names that he had saved taken from his records, I got a chill. First, my grandfather was on the second to last page of the thousands of names, meaning that his was one of the last visas issued. But more significantly, one of the names before his was Simon Goldman,” Zeesy’s beloved grandfather,” wrote Rabbi Deren on Facebook.

“I knew the historical connection, but seeing it in black and white and in such proximity, made me realise to what extent the divine providence of my destiny was intertwined with the selfless kindness of this righteous man.”

“My teacher, the Rebbe z”l, said that every Jew born today is a survivor because Hitler’s goal was that there would be no Jewish nation left,” says Rabbi Goldman. “We therefore have an obligation to survive as strong, proud Jews. I have invited Nobuki to come to South Africa, and I hope he will visit soon.”



Photo: Sharla Feldscher

Rabbi Yossy Goldman and Nobuki Sugihara

his government’s instructions,” says Goldman.

“The Talmud says that to save one soul is to save an entire world. To some, it may just be a nice turn of phrase, but here we can see how it unfolded literally. One man’s actions saved generations and generations” he says.

Goldman explains that the visas handed out by the elder Sugihara were only transit visas, meaning that Jews still had to cross Communist Russia to make their way to Japan. The journey was dangerous, so the diplomat had low expectations that anyone he helped would actually make it out of the war alive.

“But most of the 6 000 people he saved did survive, and some estimate that between 40 000 to 60 000 descendants are alive today because of his actions,” says Goldman. “When my father passed away at the age of 91, he had more than a hundred blood descendants. Every time he held a new grandchild, it was a sign of

for her, her sister, and her mother. She brought the treasured visa to the event to show the younger Sugihara, who was extremely moved.”

Goldman says that most Jews who got visas settled in Kobe, Japan. But when Japan joined the war a year later, they

Left-wing Israeli activists find inspiration in SA’s fight for equality

>>Continued from page 4

Her organisation faces major challenges. “Our criticisms of government policy have, over the past decade, elicited consistent attack by our country’s elected leadership, including the prime minister.

“Perhaps the most well-known example of these attacks came in the form of the NGO Transparency Law in 2016, which exclusively targeted organisations that are critical of the official government line.

“Another example is the Jewish Nation-State Basic Law in 2018, which elevates the Jewish character of the state over the democratic character, and with it targets the status of our Arab minority,” she says.

“Now, with many of the sanctions against minorities and civil society organisations anchored in legislation, a new wave is cresting, and the 21st Knesset is set to intensify attacks against the gatekeepers of democracy. These include the separation of powers between the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government. Israel is at a critical juncture.”

Hagai El-Ad, the executive director of B’Tselem or the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, says that his organisation strives to end Israel’s occupation. “We recognise that this is the only way to achieve a future that ensures human rights, democracy, liberty, and equality for all people, Palestinian and Israeli alike,

living on the bit of land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.”

B’Tselem’s challenge is “to move ahead towards ending the occupation, in the face of a right-wing government supported by destructive American foreign policy”. As El-Ad recently wrote in the *New York Times*, “We, the nearly 14 million human beings living on this land, need a future that is worth fighting for: one based on the common humanity of Palestinians and Israelis who believe in a future of justice, equality, human rights, and democracy – for all of us.”

El-Ad says that 25 years after the advent of democracy, “South Africa continues to hold a unique, global, symbolic position, as a source of inspiration for anyone fighting for justice and equality in the face of an entrenched oppressive regime. This unique legacy is an asset that no other country – and hence no other Jewish community – has to offer. Leveraging this history in order to help bring about a radically different future for Israelis and Palestinians, that is the challenge I hope the South African Jewish community will rise to.”

Says Hovsha: “These are people who fight human-rights abuses each day, and are committed to a future in which Israelis are at peace with Palestinians. We were proud to host activists of their calibre from Israeli civil society. Their work inspires us in our advocacy for a just and democratic future for all.”



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Inspiring teachers create successful adults

While the reaction to our story on the minister of international relations and cooperation, Lindiwe Sisulu, on last week’s front page might seem like the obvious thing to write about, I think we have said enough for now (see page 1).

I am far more excited about the tribute we have paid to some unique and amazing teachers who have changed people’s lives at Jewish schools. The truth is that these are just the tiniest fraction of the incredible educators we have had, and continue to have, in our midst. Their stories, and the impact they have had on young minds, is a microcosm of the essence of what makes us who we are.

As Jewish people, we may scrimp on many things, but never on educating our children. We make sure that they get the best education we can possibly offer. Sometimes, this is at the expense of many other things that might make our lives a little easier.

But as my parents – and I am sure most of yours too – told us, “the one thing nobody can take from us is our education”. They made it known to me that I was going to get a good education no matter what, so that I would be able to become a contributing member of society.

Reading the stories of those teachers brought back memories of the teachers who had an impact on my life.

There was an amazing teacher in Grade 5 who told me how creative I was. She told it to me in a way that I believed her. There was also an English teacher in high school who always commented on my ability to write stories or essays. If it wasn’t for them, would I have the courage to write this for you now, and to guide this team in putting this newspaper to bed every week? Who knows?

As adults, we may look back at school, and think getting through school is easy, but it isn’t. And, the pressure on our young people is immense. Frankly, I think it is way too much and our children would benefit from less pressure and more inspiration.

What I do remember, though, is that when you have one of those inspiring English teachers who bring Shakespeare to life and make it thrilling; and maths teachers who make geometry fascinating, the pressure seems to fade. So, too, does the fear of exams. As does the heavy dread of having to go home and study. If someone has inspired passion in you for a subject, even late-night swotting isn’t going to get you down.

A great deal of what we become in our lives is shaped by those who stand up in front of us in the classroom day after day. Those same people can undermine our confidence too.

How many of us were told by a teacher that we were not numbers people, and we should stick to words or languages? I’m one of those. It has taken me a long time to realise that I’m not that bad with numbers. The influence teachers have on us is immense.

And, while we have only 10 teachers in this edition, we salute all those teachers who bring out the best in our children, and who brought out the best in us.

This leads me to another story in our newspaper this week dealing with unemployment, and what our community is doing to find jobs for people. The unemployment figures are staggering, far worse than most countries in the world.

Right now, there are 6.2 million unemployed, and 237 000 who were employed in December who no longer have jobs. There remain 16.29 million employed. The most staggering figures are those of the youth, with 55.2% of young people in this country unable to find employment. What does that say about our future?

The truth is that no matter what promises are made to us by our new government, no matter what actions are taken against corruption, unless we sort out unemployment, we are heading for disaster.

Most parties made bold promises about employment in their election campaigns, including the ruling party, but I don’t believe we can wait around for them. They certainly don’t have a great track record.

And while in our story on page 8, you can see how much our community is actually doing to help, for me, it ties in with teachers and education.

If the general (not private) education system in this country was at a high standard, and teachers across the board were inspiring young minds in this country, we would be in a different situation.

We would be bringing young adults into society believing that they could succeed and, most importantly, believing in themselves and their abilities. These young adults would be able to inspire respect and trust in potential employers. Many would also believe in their ability to create their own businesses and employ others.

Education and employment go hand in hand. If the education system works well, and we have exceptional teachers, our youngsters will go out into the world and make it work. If we don’t have that, we are setting our children up to fail.

At our schools, we are fortunate. While not every teacher is going to make their subject a favourite, and not every subject is going to appeal, we are giving our children the best of the best.

No matter what happens, this will stay with them. They, too, will one day look back and remember those handful of exceptional teachers that had an impact on their lives and the choices they made.

Here’s to a country of inspiring teachers!

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Euromania mostly good for Israel

Israel is recovering from Euromania. The theme “Dare to Dream” permeated last week’s festivities. As one of the show’s announcers remarked, “Israel is a country of people from all over the world who dared to dream and follow that dream to make it come true.”

That dream came true last year for Israeli singer Netta Barzilai, who won the event in Portugal. Following a tradition in which the winner’s country hosts the competition the following year, Eurovision was brought to Israel for the third time in the competition’s history.

For Israel, Eurovision 2019 was the largest international cultural event the country has ever staged. While about 7 000 fans attended the live concerts, it was watched by an estimated 200 million viewers around the world.

The Expo Tel Aviv was outfitted with state-of-the-art props, lighting, and cameras that managed to create the impression of contestants singing in what seemed to be on-stage showers or standing on massive stilts.

The line-up boasted past winners, and Madonna, the “queen of pop”, whose participation was uncertain until the last moment.

Many organisers, international broadcasters, fans and Israelis applauded it as the best Eurovision show in living memory.

Except for one thing. It didn’t bring in the expected tourist numbers. In the run-up, hotels in Tel Aviv dramatically increased their prices with the result that many rooms remained empty. Tickets to the performances were expensive, and many simply couldn’t afford to attend. This was the reason numbers were down, not calls by the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement to stay away.

Not to gloss over the efforts of Israel haters. On arrival, as visitors travelled from Ben Gurion Airport to the host city, Tel Aviv, they were greeted by a massive billboard declaring, “Dare to dream... of freedom.” This was alongside a photograph of Israel’s security barrier and the Palestinian city of Hebron. Sponsored by the organisation Breaking the Silence, a group of former Israeli combat soldiers who oppose Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, it advertised daily tours to Hebron to see the “full picture”.

Participants and artists were urged to boycott in support of Palestinian rights. As an alternative to Eurovision, Palestinian, Israeli, and international artists put on a series of concerts in the West Bank, Haifa, London, and Dublin. Coming together under the banner of “Globalvision” these anti-Eurovision parties were streamed live around the world during Saturday night’s finale.

Madonna, too, was under pressure not to attend. She signed the contract with Eurovision only three days before her performance. The delay was reportedly caused by the politicised content of her songs and copyright concerns. But Madonna defended her decision to participate, saying that she would always speak up to defend human rights, and that she hoped to see “a new path towards peace”.

It came as a surprise to many then, when, at the end of her performance, the last two dancers to leave the stage were wearing Israeli and Palestinian flags on their backs. The words “Wake Up” flashed on the screen.

The show’s organisers insist they didn’t authorise this. Israeli Culture Minister Miri Regev was furious, insisting that, “Politics should not be involved in a cultural event, and such things should not happen, with all due respect to Madonna.”

It’s possible that at the last moment, Madonna tried to pacify those who criticised her for coming to Israel. Or maybe, as some of her fans point out, her message was a call for harmony rather than a protest. Madonna

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier



tweeted that she was “grateful for the opportunity to spread the message of peace and unity with the world”.

Still, the singer might be wondering if it was all worth it. In spite of being paid more than \$1 million (R14,4 million) for her performance – the bill was footed by Israeli-Canadian billionaire Sylvan Adams – she has been criticised extensively for a poor performance and for singing out of tune.

But she was not the only one to inject controversy into the contest. Members of the Icelandic band Hatari waved scarves bearing the Palestinian flag as the score for their performance was announced. Cameras were quick to pan away, and security confiscated the scarves, but not before the protest had been seen worldwide.

It wasn’t a surprise. In the lead-up to the concert, the group expressed its displeasure about the Israeli government and its policies. Social media was abuzz, while Palestinian supporters praised the gesture. The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, a founding member of the Palestinian BDS movement, said, “The most meaningful expression of solidarity is to cancel performances in apartheid Israel.”

Israeli fans pointed out that the revealing and provocative clothes this somewhat nutty group from Iceland wore, and the fact that they are gay, would have resulted in them being thrown off roofs in Gaza by the very people they support. Eurovision organisers have since said that Iceland’s entry could be “punished”.

The only other hiccup – if one can call it that – is that rehearsals for Saturday night’s finals were held on Shabbat. It prompted the country’s Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi David Lau to call for the Sabbath to be extended by 20 minutes in response to the “desecration” of the holy day.

He asked observers to refrain from doing work 10 minutes before the start of Shabbat and 10 minutes after it finished, as a way to “beg G-d to protect us”.



Duncan Laurence of the Netherlands reacts after winning the 2019 Eurovision Song Contest

Any impact of Iranian sanctions on SA?

STEVEN GRUZD

The Unites States is set to impose sanctions on countries importing oil from Iran from 2 May, phased in over 60 days. South Africa does not import much oil from Iran, so will this have an impact on us?

A year ago, the US pulled out of the Iran Nuclear Deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). This deal softened sanctions on Iran in return for Iranian compliance in halting its nuclear weapons programme.

The US has since beefed up sanctions again, applying what the US state department called “maximum pressure” on the Iranians. The US seeks to cut Iranian oil exports to zero, and has rescinded waivers that eight states had to continue importing Iranian oil. South Africa is not on that list.



The US state department has said “entities that engage in sanctionable activity involving Iran risk severe consequences”, including losing access to the US markets and financial system.

So, will this put Pretoria in Washington’s sanctions sights? The experts think not.

While Iran was a clandestine supplier of oil to the apartheid regime, and the oil trade strengthened after 1994, South Africa, in fact, imports very little oil from Iran today.

“Under pressure from the US, South Africa reacted and stopped buying oil from Iran some years ago,” said Dr Azar Jammine, the director and chief economist at Econometrix.

Almost all of South Africa’s crude oil comes from Saudia Arabia (about 42%), Nigeria (about 34%), and Angola (13%). At one point, more than 35% emanated from Iran.

Jammine said tensions with Iran were “one reason for the recent sharp oil-price rise... which is obviously negative for the South African economy”. However, he said direct fallout from any US sanctions would be negligible as the country weaned itself off Iranian oil in the early 2010s.

Willemien Viljoen, a researcher at the Trade Law Centre, confirmed that imports from Iran have declined over the

past few years, and that fuel does not appear significantly in international trade statistics. “South Africa is not close to being a big trade partner of Iran, in either exports or imports,” she said.

The details of the threatened US sanctions are not clear, so it’s difficult to speculate accurately about their possible effects on South Africa.

Brooks Spector, a former US diplomat and associate editor of the *Daily Maverick*, said, “South Africa does not appear on the list of countries heavily dependent on imports from Iran – it’s not even on the pie chart. And it’s notoriously difficult to figure out where oil comes from once it enters the world oil stream. It often gets ‘reflagged’ as coming from somewhere else.

“There is a rough global oil-market equilibrium, with higher supply from the Saudis, the US, and Russia offsetting shortfalls from Iran. It will probably be possible for South Africa to import the necessary amounts of oil without worrying about imports from Iran.”

John Stremlau, professor of international relations, said, “an ill wind blows no good for anyone. These moves must be seen against Trump’s promises to ‘Make America Great Again’ by promoting America-first nationalism, getting more out of trade deals, and reducing involvement in costly foreign wars.

“Trump has so many other problems, he may be getting cold feet on sanctions,” Stremlau said commenting on the lack of details about it in the public domain. Stremlau is more worried about the US being egged onto a disastrous war with Iran by Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Tension between the US and Iran have skyrocketed over the past few weeks. The US dispatched aircraft carriers to the Persian Gulf in response to what it called “credible threats” from Iran and its proxy forces in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria.

This provoked a war of words with belligerent threats from both sides. Iran has again begun enriching uranium that could eventually be used in nuclear weapons.

The state department said Iran used oil exports “to support terrorist proxies, fuel its missile development, and engage in other destabilising behaviour”. It said it had “denied the regime direct access to more than \$10 billion (R144.4 billion) in oil revenue since May [2018]”.

Nevertheless, Pretoria’s close relations with Tehran do not sit well with Washington. South African positions in the United Nations, which are consistently at odds with the US, have also not endeared the country to the Trump White House. It may still need to tread carefully in balancing its ties with Iran and the US.

The South African departments of international relations and cooperation and trade and industry had not responded to calls for comment at the time of going to press.

Chief leads prayer for president and country

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein said a prayer on behalf of the Jewish community at the swearing in of South Africa’s president and newly elected members of parliament (MPs) on Wednesday.

In his prayer, he asked for President Cyril Ramaphosa and the new MPs to be blessed with abundant success in their sacred work for South Africa at this critical moment in our history.

“Bless them with the wisdom and the courage to restore morality and integrity to government, and indeed to all of society,” the chief rabbi said. He called on G-d to instil them with a “sense of sacred mission, of duty, and honesty” to permeate every decision and action they take as government. He asked that the MPs be blessed with “success in unleashing the awesome promise and potential of this country”, and he spoke of a country that has “waited so long for

inspired ethical leadership to enable it to emerge in all of its bountiful possibilities”.

The chief rabbi has also written a prayer for the presidential inauguration on Saturday, which will be read out on his behalf because he cannot attend it on Shabbat.



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, Reverend Paul, Cyril Ramaphosa and Guru Krishna

He has sent a version of this prayer to shuls across the country to be recited on Saturday morning to coincide with the inauguration. It will be said after the Torah reading, and in addition to our prayers for the country and Israel.

In addition, Goldstein shared the

prayer with other religious leaders of all faiths and citizens of South Africa, so that “as a country we can come together and humbly seek G-d’s blessings for the country, our president, and the betterment of all”.

“Prayer has real power to change the world in the most tangible way through G-d’s blessings,” Goldstein said.

He said he believed that G-d had given Ramaphosa an opportunity to restore morality and integrity to government and beyond. However, “No blessing can come to South Africa until morality and integrity are restored to government.

“The past ten years have seen one of the most brazen and iniquitous

attempts in history to steal an entire country – all in broad daylight. The project of state capture unleashed and endorsed a feeding frenzy of corruption at every level which has impoverished and denuded very aspect of life for 50 million South Africans,” Goldstein said.



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Jewish business gets to work on youth unemployment

JORDAN MOSHE

As unemployment soars, there is a desperate need for jobs and the Jewish community is at the forefront of trying to create employment, particularly for the youth.

“According to the National Development Plan, by 2030, 90% of new jobs will be created by small business, and we believe this is where opportunity lies,” says Adrian Gore, Group Chief Executive of Discovery, who is involved in this endeavour.

The Jewish community makes a sizeable contribution to improving employment prospects for the youth, Gore says. About 6% of Johannesburg Stock Exchange-listed companies are founded or led by Jews, 17% of South Africa’s gross domestic product is based on Jewish led or founded businesses (according to 2013 data), and 1.67 million jobs have been created by Jewish-led businesses – 1.9 million including direct and indirect jobs, mostly in the retail, financial services, and mining sectors.

Listed Jewish companies are also spending more than R1 billion a year on Corporate Social Investment initiatives, not-for-profit initiatives, and community building. This include corporate mentorship programmes and training, as well as training for health professionals in HIV treatment by the SMILE Foundation, Hatzolah, the Abraham Fund, and CHIVA.

Statistics South Africa released the latest unemployment figures last week, which have risen to their highest level since the third quarter of 2017.

The number of employed people decreased by 237 000 in the first quarter of 2019. This means that 16.3 million are currently without jobs.

With the unemployment rate at 27.6%, the

hardest hit is reportedly the youth, with 55.2% being out of work. Though many of them hold no qualifications, some remain unemployed despite holding a degree or diploma, a reality which is nothing short of alarming.

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With the unemployment rate at 27.6%, the hardest hit is reportedly the youth, with 55.2% being out of work.

“There is a potential ticking time bomb of disenfranchised youth who have been let down by government,” says Errol Freeman, sales and marketing director at youth employment engine Lulaway. “There are systemic socioeconomic issues that are deep-rooted and need to be addressed.”

But the problem doesn’t stop with getting a job. “Job retention is also a massive problem, and expectations are not in line with reality. Unfortunately, most young people don’t have role models that can help them navigate through their first job, so they drop out, diminishing their opportunities going forward.”

Compounding the problem even further is South Africa’s economic disadvantages. “Besides the unemployment crisis in South Africa, this is also one of the poorest countries in the world,” says Ariellah Rosenberg, chief executive of ORT South Africa. “If compared to the worldwide trend, where unemployment rates improve or stabilise (on average at 5%), South Africa is far down on the unemployment scale with two-digit numbers of 27%

generally, and with almost 60% of our youth unemployed.”

Freeman points out that labour laws in the country are draconian, hindering employment, as most businesses would rather not employ someone than be stuck with the wrong person who they can’t get rid of.”

He explains that the only way new jobs will be created is if they go hand in hand with the development of small business. “One of the real reasons small businesses are not growing is the lack of resources for employing someone to share the load,” he says.

“The YES [Youth Employment Service] initiative has been launched by our new president to address the problem. This is done by incentivising corporate South Africa to fund interns in small businesses, thereby raising [the corporates’] BEE [black economic empowerment] scorecard.”

The YES campaign aims to ensure sustainable employment for youth. Gore, who is one of the backers of this initiative, says approaches like this are sorely needed, including involvement from government, individuals, and the private sector.

Says Gore, “We have seen the launch of YES, and the South African SME [small and medium enterprises] Fund launched the CEO Circle, an initiative aimed at accelerating the growth of high potential black businesses within the fund’s shareholders’ supply chains.

“SMEs make an important contribution to the economy,” he says. “Hence, the vast majority of the fund’s investment focus is on small businesses of R100 million or less in value. It’s about empowering entrepreneurs to progress from start-up phase to businesses of scale in order to move the needle on job creation.”

Freeman says that the community can always do more.

“The only way we’re going to get things right is if the government and big business works together as opposed to being at loggerheads with each other,” says Freeman. “I’ve met lots of businesses over the past couple of months that want to get involved, want to be part of the solution, want to be part of the future. But we still need more business commitment.”

From a bedroom in Benoni to exponential possibility

HOWARD SACKSTEIN

There is something surprising about Benoni, it keeps on spewing out remarkable South Africans. First came Hollywood actress Charlize Theron, then came Morris Kahn, the Israeli philanthropist and tech billionaire who sent Israel to the moon, and now come three brothers who are changing the face of corporate executive education in South Africa.

The three Mann siblings, Kevin, Shayne, and Mic, hail from the quiet streets of the suburban east rand. When the oldest brother, Kevin was studying for his accountancy board exams, he needed extra income as a side hustle, so he started a Barmitzvah and wedding video business in his bedroom.

That business has grown under the mentorship of legendary business icon Jonathan Beare into a mega media production company called Mann Made Media.

“When Jonathan came to do the deal to invest in us, we didn’t even have any real furniture, we made him sit on a bean bag on the floor,” says Shayne. “Jonathan made us believe in ourselves, and from a little business, he made us understand that we could build a big media and events company.”

The transition progressed from weddings, to corporate videos, to a Shaggy concert, and then doing some of the largest country-wide roadshows for Standard Bank and Absa.

But the big break came when Absa brought Singularity University to South Africa. Mann Made won the pitch.

“We were sitting in the room with some of the most remarkable speakers in the world,” says Shayne. “We looked at each other, and we had an ‘OMG’ moment, when you’ve suddenly just seen the light. We had to partner with these people.”

Says Mic, “Singularity was so impressed with the production we put on for it, that it made us its local partner.”

Most education focuses on learning from past experiences and case studies. Singularity University has turned that model on its head by zeroing in on the dramatic changes that will shape and have an impact on the future of

humanity. “We sent Mic to California to cement the relationship,” says Kevin, “he was suffering from Tick bite fever and pumped full of antibiotics, but we put him on a plane to the Singularity executive programme. We needed to understand how we could fundamentally improve the lives of people in Africa and South Africa. Once you have been exposed to the world experts in artificial intelligence, bio-tech, drones, robotics, and disruption, you see the world in a completely different way.”

Next week, the Mann brothers host Africa’s first Singularity University Exponential Finance Summit in Cape Town. It will bring together people leading the disruption of the finance




sector. Today, China is leading the way in cashless mobile payments, with more than one billion people using Ali Pay and 600 million on WeChat Wallet. Israel may well be the first country in the world to become a completely cashless society.

“Africa has the ability to lead the world in some of these innovations,” says Shayne, “it’s not burdened by legacy systems, so it’s able to leapfrog the rest of the world through the adoption of new digital technologies, all it takes is leadership.”

This year, Singularity University will take place in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Lagos (Nigeria), and Nairobi (Kenya). “We are ‘future proofing’ Africa, and creating a global community of African changemakers,” says Mic.

“The Development Bank of South Africa is our partner, and we are going to find the next Elon Musk studying by candlelight in a township somewhere in South Africa,” says Kevin.

What started in a bedroom in Benoni is now one of the most innovative executive learning programmes in South Africa.



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‘Tattooist of Auschwitz’ born out of chance meeting

TALI FEINBERG

The *Tattooist of Auschwitz* has sold millions of copies, been translated into 43 languages, and is soon to be turned into a miniseries. However, it was written by the unlikelyst of authors: a social worker from New Zealand who is not Jewish, and had little knowledge of the Holocaust before meeting survivor Lale Sokolov.

The book is based on the true story of Ludwig “Lale” Eisenberg, who changed his surname to Sokolov after the war, and Gisela “Gita” Furman, who instantly fell in love when he tattooed her number on her arm. They kept their love alive in horrifying conditions, and managed to survive against the worst kind of odds. The novel also describes how Sokolov used his role to help others, even as he took on the horrendous task of tattooing his own people.

So, how did Heather Morris get to write the book that would change her life, bringing the true story of love in Auschwitz to millions of readers around the globe? “It was thanks to a cup of coffee and an offer to meet a complete stranger,” quipped the charismatic author to a captivated audience in Cape Town.

She was in South Africa to attend the prestigious Franschhoek Literary Festival, followed by this event hosted by the Jewish Literary Festival. Her journey to writing this story is almost as unbelievable as the book itself. To a packed audience she explained that she met a woman for coffee who said that her friend’s mother had just passed away, and he was looking for someone to write his father’s story.

His father was Lale (also known by the nickname Lali), who had never told his story in fear that he would be called a collaborator. But now that his wife, Gita, had passed away, he had decided to share it. Yet, he had a condition: the writer mustn’t be Jewish, as he didn’t want someone bringing their own family history or “baggage” to the telling of the tale.

Morris was taken to meet him, and the two made an instant connection. Later, Sokolov would say that Morris was the most significant person in his life since his wife died. But it still took time for Morris to earn his trust. She describes the moment as when she bonded with his dogs – he told her that if they liked her, then he knew he could trust her. And so she was “gifted with the story of a lifetime”.

Morris spent three years visiting Sokolov, where they simply spent time speaking about his story. “I never took notes or recorded anything, and it was difficult to get the story in one go as he never really finished a sentence before jumping to the next idea!” But somehow through these endless conversations, Morris was able to piece the story together. Her training as a social worker came into play as it taught her to listen,

and that’s exactly what she did. Morris would never leave her discussion with Sokolov before changing the subject to a lighter topic, like sport, family, or women (he admitted that he had been a



Heather Morris

“playboy” before the war, and he loved the fairer sex). This way, she knew that he would not dwell on the trauma of his past after she left. At the same time as Sokolov “unloaded” the story onto Morris, she found that the tragedy and trauma was affecting her, and she would take some quiet time in her car to process it before heading home to her own family.

Although Morris did not have access to Gita, she did have access to a friend who had been with her in the camps and is described in the book – Dana (whose real name is Lottie). Along with other female survivors in Australia (where both Morris and

Sokolov live), she “coloured” the story for Morris, giving her insight onto the character .

In addition, both Sokolovs had recorded testimony for the Shoah Foundation. Gita had always been reluctant to do so, but eventually she did it as long as her husband wasn’t in the room while she testified, and never watched the video – a promise he kept even after she died. “But I watched it,” said Morris with a smile, which was a great help in writing the book. The author had done screenplay courses, and hoped to turn

the story into a screenplay. After a few years of struggling to do so, she locked herself away for six weeks and wrote the book. However, the style of a screenplay remains in the text, and audience members pointed out that at times it is a little stilted and unemotional. Other criticisms of the book are that it is unrealistic in describing life at the camp, and is factually incorrect in some places.

To this, Morris said she was writing Sokolov’s story as he told it to her. She never intended for it to be a definitive account of the Holocaust.

Morris visited Auschwitz only last year on the March of the Living. She

said Sokolov told her he wanted to go back there, and stand on a step near Crematoria Three, “to say sorry to everyone he didn’t save”.

So, while there, Morris did exactly that, and also said a prayer for his parents, who were probably murdered in Auschwitz. Sokolov never knew their fate, and also never found out the fate of the two men he worked with in Auschwitz: Pepan and Leon. Morris said her researchers could not find out what happened to them.

While in Auschwitz on the march, a rabbi told her group that a survivor had once told him that she didn’t remember the pain of getting her tattoo. “She just remembered the face of the man who tattooed her, who kept saying ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry’ as he did his work. And he had no idea who I was as he told this story.”

Another time, the daughter of a survivor told Morris how her father had been saved by Sokolov when he tattooed the number of an older inmate onto a younger inmate. The older one had chosen to swap places with the younger one who was going to be sent to the gas chamber. That man survived and settled in England, where he always told his family how was saved by “the tattooist and a man whose name I did not know”.

Where to next for Morris? She has just finished writing the story of Cilka, who features in the book, and who Sokolov described as “the bravest person I ever knew”. She says Sokolov would never have wanted to be described as a hero, and “I think he would have struggled to comprehend how big it has become,” as he never lived to see the book’s success. “But at the end of the day, it is a simple story. Indeed, all the best stories are.”

SA migration stories the focus of leading Jewish filmmakers

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

When Adam Thal, a Joburg-based filmmaker, was growing up, his parents gave him everything he needed. It was only at the age of 39 that he learned how hard it had been for them, who left Zimbabwe in 1986 to re-establish themselves in South Africa.

Thal’s parents left their home in Harare with nothing, and created an empire in South Africa. At first, his father worked as a shop assistant and in a bakery before opening his own factory making bags. His company, Jodam Manufacturers, now employs 130 people.

Thal has another amazing story on his mother’s side of the family. His grandfather, Solly Jossel, was one of the 200 Ochberg orphans rescued from civil war in Eastern Europe by Isaac Ochberg in 1921, and brought to South Africa with no family or possessions.

These tales of family fleeing their home for a better life in another country, and surviving and succeeding against the odds reflect many other stories of Jewish immigration, particularly from Eastern Europe to South Africa in the late 19th and early 20th century. Indeed, they are still being told in the current emigration of Jews from South Africa to other countries across the globe.

Of course, the particular qualities of toughness, resilience, and enterprise that Jewish emigres demonstrate is not limited to South Africa. Jews have successfully migrated all over the world, often against huge financial, social, and political odds.

But, it is the tales of South African Jewish success – not just financial, but social and

spiritual – that Thal wants to record for posterity. He and his friend and co-worker, Greg Hack, a corporate videographer and photographer, intend to capture the incredible stories of migration to South Africa, and the creation of the community we have today.

The two, who describe themselves as “proud South African Jews”, plan to interview “anyone and everyone” with an immigration story. “We aim to document first-hand success stories from arrival in South Africa. We are



Greg Hack and Adam Thal

interested in first generations from anywhere,” they say, pointing out that their project isn’t “a Holocaust thing, but about a journey from leaving to arrival”.

Stage one is to document and capture the stories. Thereafter, they will be distilled into 20-minute clips, including archival

B-roll footage, interviews with relatives, and animation, which can be shared with the rest of the world.

Thal was inspired to do the project partly by a recent documentary on the Ochberg orphans by Lee-Anne Dance. Titled *My Dear Children*, it tells the story of Feiga Shamis, who gave up two of her children for adoption to save them from Russian pogroms. These children subsequently became part of the Ochberg evacuation of small children to South Africa.

“The successful self-creation of Jews around the world is a phenomenon. It’s incredible that in every age group, generation after generation, there are these stories,” he says.

“We are privileged today – I’ve met youngsters who believe that there is nothing they can’t do. But this wasn’t always the case. Our forebears had it tough. Millennials should know the incredible path wrought by their forebears.”

Says Hack, “It’s about finding the ‘secret source’. What is it in our DNA that we constantly reproduce

this in every area?” A possible answer, they say, is South African Jews’ cultural affiliation and sense of community, which creates opportunities for mentorship and other forms of support.

“Our culture is about celebrating life,” Hack says. “We are forced to celebrate the good

things – in fact we have a strict schedule for doing this. We are also one of the strongest communities outside of Israel. This creates many opportunities for discussion and mentorship between the generations. There is always a story at a Shabbos dinner, and a lesson to learn.”

Says Thal, “We are proud of our heritage. We want to capture the incredible stories of migration to South Africa – though we are probably coming five to 10 years too late for some stories.

“It’s not just about the hard work, discipline, and success of our forebears, it’s also about communal success, the fact that we developed organisations like the Chevrah Kadisha to have each other’s back, that we built a strong spiritual edifice.”

“Storytelling is a great way to communicate,” he says. Thal knows a thing or two about this. His company, The Star Film Company, which produces TV commercials and digital content, was recently ranked second best in the country in the official Loerie rankings.

Hack, the founder of Hack Films, is currently documenting first-hand immigration stories for private families. He shares premises with Thal, and their idea was born out of these projects.

“I keep asking what my grandpa would do,” Thal says. “These stories will hopefully steer us in a positive direction, rather than being caught in the fluff of today. We must stick to the secret source.”

• If you have a first-hand account, or know of someone who can tell a unique story of immigration and success in SA, email Thal and Hack at jewishjourneysa@gmail.com.

Lag Ba’Omer ignites the fire within us

JORDAN MOSHE

Jews around the world sang and danced by the light of crackling bonfires on Wednesday evening. From Great Park in Johannesburg to Gan Sacher in Jerusalem, on Lag Ba’Omer, we put aside our practices of mourning and celebrate a unique festival.

Lag Ba’Omer is observed on the 33rd day of the Omer (which we start counting from Pesach). It is not a religious holiday, but it marks a break from the semi-mourning practices of the 49-day period which is counted between Pesach and Shavuot.

The Talmud offers the most often cited explanation for Lag Ba’Omer in that a plague killed thousands of Rabbi Akiva’s students because they did not treat one another respectfully. So, the custom of being in semi-mourning is believed to be in memory of those students. Hence, the reason for Jews customarily refraining from shaving, cutting hair, and celebration.

Because Lag Ba’Omer is a break in mourning, it means weddings can be held on that day. We can also have haircuts and light bonfires, according to Jewish law.

It is traditional to light bonfires on Lag Ba’Omer eve. This is to commemorate the greatness that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a scholar who passed away on that day, introduced into the world through his continued learning and passion for his faith.

Jews around the world gather in their thousands to attend the festivities, celebrating around blazing bonfires.

While counting the Omer is a mitzvah, the mourning practice is custom.

“It is important to make a distinction between the counting and the mourning,”

says Rabbi Gabi Bookatz. “The mitzvah to count comes from the Torah, while the mourning customs don’t even feature in the Talmud. As a custom, mourning has evolved and come to be expressed differently in various communities, and is observed at different period during the Omer.”

Bookatz explains that four different customs, not one clear-cut one, are observed by various groups.

“The Chassidic community tends to observe the entire 49-day period because of the belief that the students of Rabbi Akiva continued to die from Pesach through to Shavuot. Sephardim mourn until the 33rd day, stopping to celebrate Lag Ba’Omer, but then resuming for the 34th until dawn the next day.”

Two customs exist for Ashkenazim, says Bookatz. “The first is based on a tradition that the students stopped dying on the 33rd day. This means that mourning is observed until Lag Ba’Omer only. The second is that the scholars died only on certain days – on which we recite *Tachanun* (supplication) – meaning that the month of Nissan has no mourning, but people mourn from Iyar until three days before Shavuot.”

The periods overlap, so you may hear of people who keep the “first-half” or “second-half” of the Omer.

Because the mourning customs developed only after the codification of the Talmud, the way we express them were not established at once.

Bookatz says the period’s initial mourning practice was to refrain from celebrating weddings, dating back to the 8th century. “This was the first practice put into place,” he says. “As time passed, people took on more

limitations such as not celebrating, not cutting hair, and, most recently, not listening to music.

“The prohibition is only about 150 years old,” he says. “People didn’t listen to music in private. It was a public activity. With the onset of modern technology, a new custom extended beyond the original one.”

This is particularly true in South Africa, where we have developed the custom of avoiding watching movies. This is the only country where this is practiced.

Whatever one’s custom, Bookatz stresses that one must behave within reason. According to the halacha, it is not music that is prohibited as much as the emotion it inspires. “In ancient times, a band would follow a funeral procession and play music,” he says. “It was contextually appropriate music, and of course it wouldn’t be prohibited.”

Therefore, if one wants to listen to mellow music that doesn’t inspire dancing or the like, it is perfectly acceptable. Moreover, many leniencies exist in cases where a person relies on music for therapeutic purposes, using it to treat depression or other emotional problems.

“If you’re feeling down and need cheering up, all agree that you can listen to anything for therapeutic reasons,” says Bookatz. “This applies even to formal mourning, so it certainly applies to customary mourning



Eli Lipskar, Aaron Avtzon, Ben Samuels and Rabbi Dovid Hazdan at Great Park Shul’s Lag Ba’Omer celebration this week

practices. They need to be practised within reason.”

Irrespective of one’s custom, however, all the Omer mourning practices are suspended on Lag Ba’Omer.

Many Israelis take their merrymaking to Meron, where by far the largest Lag Ba’Omer celebration takes place in and around Bar Yochai’s tomb. Children are given the opportunity to take part in colourful street parades across the country. The Lubavitche Rebbe encouraged the practice of arranging such parades on Lag Ba’ Omer in celebration of Jewish unity, a major theme of the day.

In South Africa, many shuls like Greenside, Great Park, and Sandton Central Shul hold spectacular bonfire nights, where congregants and others enjoy entertainment, braais, and other festivities beside a roaring fire.

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Passion, pain resonates for Jews in

NIA MAGOULIANITI-MCGREGOR

“Flamenco is a flame of light that ignites the body, mind and soul.” There’s something tantalising about the way South African choreographer and dancer Rosana Maya describes this impassioned dance form in her book, *The Flamenco Fanatic*.

“We courageously face our demon shadows and bring them to the light,” she says.

Jacqui Shapiro, flamenco dancer and passionate devotee, loves this portrayal by Maya. “Flamenco has a mystical, mythical quality. It’s hard to explain it. It can only be felt,” she says.

Shapiro, 34, has been part of the world of flamenco, one of the three forms of Spanish dancing that includes classical and regional dancing, from a young age. For her, it’s more of a heartfelt passion than a hobby.



Jacqui Shapiro in Esencia Flamenca

And far from being unusual, Shapiro is just one of many Jewish women (and the occasional Jewish man) who has not only found a home in Spanish dancing, but whose identity depends on it, whose essence revolves around it. “If you look around at the dance companies and studios in South Africa, you’ll see a large proportion of those dancing are Jewish,” she says.

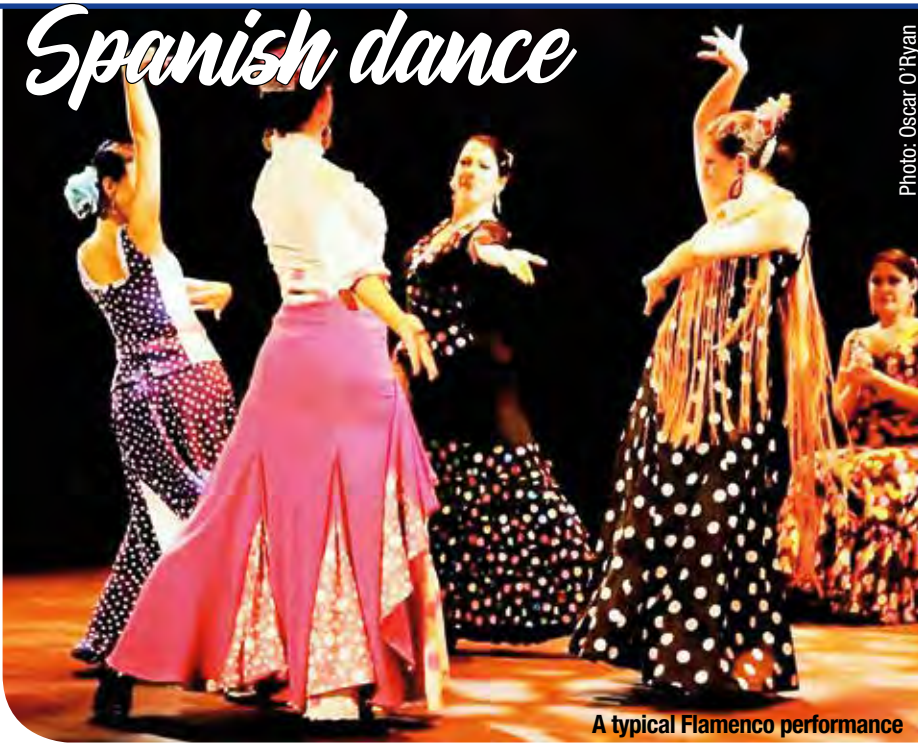
Shapiro presented her reluctant parents with the name of a dancing teacher at age 11. “Nothing was going to stop me,” she says. “I think it’s because Jewish people can relate to the oppression and persecution of the original founders of Spanish dance. I identify with the suffering. You go to a deep place and in that way, learn something about your own life.”

There are many interpretations about the origins of this moving spectacle of hand-clapping, fiery emotions, and twirling skirts. It’s thought to be an expression of the pain felt by the gypsies, Sephardic Jews, and Moors, persecuted in the Spanish Inquisition in the late 1400s, who then escaped into the mountains. There, flamenco was born – a fusion of guitar, dance, and survival in the face of heartbreak.

Another contention is postulated by the late director of La Rosa Spanish Dance Company, Carolyn Holden, in her dissertation at the University of Cape Town titled *Flamenco in South Africa: Outsider in Two Places*. “One theory is that Spanish Jews who had fled to Flanders were now permitted to sing their religious songs unhindered. These songs became known as ‘flamenco songs’ by Jews who remained in Spain during the Inquisition.”

Certainly, Dame Mavis Becker, honoured by Spain in 2000 for her lifetime contribution to Spanish culture, says Spanish dance and more specifically flamenco “touched something” in her soul from the moment she discovered it. “I felt the desperation of the time,” says Becker, who is also known by her stage name, Marina Lorca.

She is one of the founding members of the Johannesburg-based Spanish Dance Society,



A typical Flamenco performance

formed in 1989. The school helped pioneer an internationally recognised syllabus which is still taught in universities and dance schools around the world.

“Along with the gypsies, Jews had to escape persecution from Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain,” says Becker. “When I hear the *chazonis* (songs) sung in shul, it takes me back to that time. There is a strong connection for me.”

Cape Town-based Orit Laskov-Sachar of Flamenco del Cabo dance company, says it was only after falling in love with Spanish dancing that she discovered that her mother’s side of the family were Sephardic Jews affected by the Catholic expulsion. “There is a strong, perhaps subliminal cultural connection.”

Laskov-Sachar says the sense of community in this dance form is highly appealing. “There is something that resonates among Spanish dancers the whole world over. “In real life, I’m reserved,” she says. “Flamenco brings out my alter ego. I crave performing and being on stage. It’s an outlet that expresses another side of me. And, it’s not about

faultless steps. It’s about making others feel your pain, your anger, your life experience. It’s an internal process that is expressed to others.”

Spanish dancer Vivienne Katz-Hamburger believes there is a reason that Jewish women become addicted to this dance form. “We have a natural flair for this. There’s the Sephardic connection, but also we have what is known as *gein*. We have a joy.

“Spanish dancers are a close-knit community. We dance together. We socialise together. We have an idea of what we experience, of how we respond to the feel of this music.”

Joanne Bobrow who co-runs dance company El Rincon Flamenco, agrees with Katz-Hamburger. “It’s inbred for us Jews. We appreciate the arts and musical expression. We’re an emotional people.”

There is also something “adult” about flamenco, says Bobrow, 50, who started dancing at age 18. “You use your life experience to enhance the passion and fire of your dancing.”

Jacqui Shapiro says at the age of 14, she was told by the esteemed Dame Hazel Acosta, “You’re not old enough to dance properly.” It was only recently that I finally understood what she meant. Heartache, loss, pain – all that is imbued in your dancing. You must relate to it all on a soul level.

In 2012, Shapiro and Bobrow went to the Jerez Flamenco Festival in Spain to “catch the air” as Shapiro puts it. “Walking in a street in that little town, hearing Spanish guitar, I felt myself evolve as a dancer. I was at home. There was a different energy about me after that afternoon. My soul was elevated.”

She says culture informs dance. “The Japanese, for example, are technically perfect, but don’t express their emotions. The Israelis, on the other hand, identify with rawness, with intense authenticity, which is why [flamenco] is so popular there.

Jobe’s contradictions brought to life in SA play

PETER FELDMAN

The quintessential story that embodies the question “Why do bad things happen to good people?” is the biblical Book of Jobe. This story is brought to South Africa and given a black economic empowerment (BEE) bent on stage at the Auto & General Theatre on the Square at the end of the month.

“He is a resoundingly upright BEE man in a cruel and corrupt world,” says *Jobe* Director Josias Dos Moleele. “The question is, will he become corrupt as well? Or will it be the old adage, ‘Why do bad things happen to good people?’ That’s for the audience to decide.”

Moleele joined forces with writer and actor Teboho Sengoai to bring their modern interpretation of this biblical tale to the stage. They were drawn to the story because they equate their own life experiences with the life of Jobe.

Jobe is a story about a man who endures great adversity and pain during his lifetime. He longs for explanation and counsel as to why his world has been turned upside down.

According to the Biblical tale, this counsel is revealed in a dramatic life-changing vision that strikes his beliefs to the core – and those of his wife and friends.

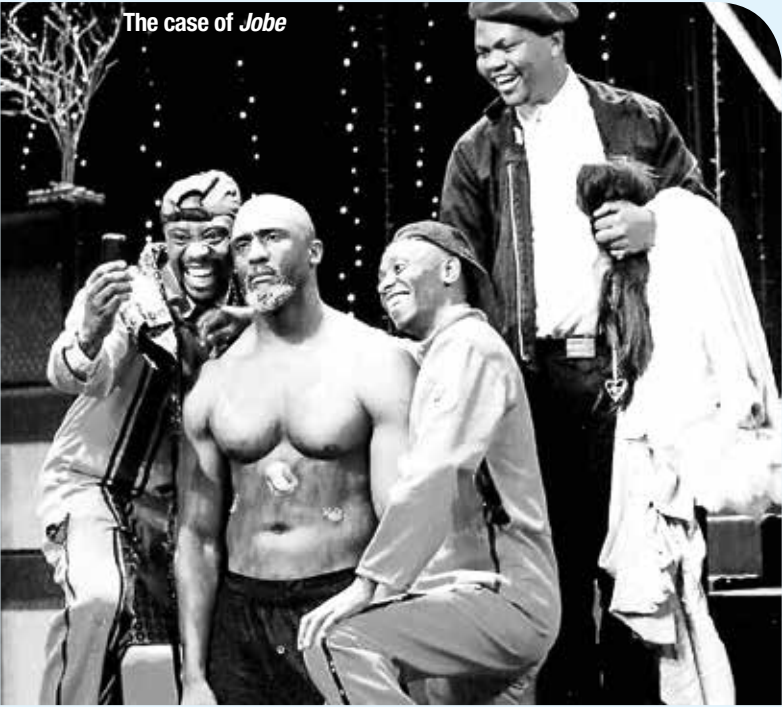
Sengoai, whose father was a pastor, said he chose this story because “it is by far one of the

most artistic books in the Bible. It is a mixture of prose, poetry, monologue, and dialogue. As an artist, I love and appreciate the beauty of the inspired writing found in this book.

“However, after reading the

challenges. It’s necessary medicine for our current strata. It’s packed with a message of hope against all odds, and redemption.”

He was inspired to take on the production when he read about the different schools of thought on the



The case of Jobe

book, G-d inspired me to write and share this story. Having been through a difficult season myself, I know many people can relate to Jobe’s story, and be inspired and encouraged just as I have been.”

Moleele believes this is an *Everyman*-type story. “The rise and the fall and the rise again of any human is worth telling in a world that is heaped with socio-political

book.

“In some Jewish literature, there is the belief that *Jobe* was a parable to teach people about good versus evil, while others believe that the character actually existed, and went through the hardest challenges of life.

“However, the catharsis is relevant to every human being. We all have the power to bounce back after an ordeal. I found that notion

necessary in a society that needs edutainment as escapism.”

Sengoai says that by utilising styles such as realism, naturalism, and a touch of symbolism, they hope audiences will relate to the story. “There’s drama, tragedy, and comedy in the play, and no matter what the audience’s race or religious persuasions are, we believe they will enjoy it.”

Says Moleele, “The audience will be fed a familiar visual and compositional element. It will be a day in the lounge of a Hyde Park mansion, with the relatable challenges of husband and wife. It will portray how to sustain a wealthy lifestyle in an economically and politically challenged environment. This is a universal problem.”

Actor Simpho Mathenjwa, who plays the character of Jwaga (Zophah), one of Jobe’s friends, says his approach was to make his character an individual who judges everything from the prism of religion. “I have set Jwaga in the contemporary charismatic context,” says Mathenjwa. “So, unlike Jobe, he is not a man of perfect integrity, but a man who has an appearance of righteous religion.”

• *Jobe, which features TV and movie actor Muzi Mthabela as Jobe, Mogau Paulina Motlatswi, Titus Mekgwe, Mathenjwa, and Sengoai, will be on stage from 29 May to 15 June.*

• *Dance company El Rincon Flamenco stages Esencia Flamenca at the Lesedi at Joburg Theatre, 163 Civic Boulevard, Braamfontein, from 30 May to 2 June. Full of passion, power, twirls and drama, the show is directed by Dame Hazel Acosta.*
• *It is based on the play The House of Bernarda Alba by 1930s Spanish Poet Federico Garcia Lorca. Joanne Bobrow and Rosana Maya, the latter who is performing the lead, co-produce this Lorca classic. To book, contact www.joburgtheatre.com or 0861 670 670. Cost: R230 for all the shows.*

Conflict is our natural way of being, says Israeli author

TALI FEINBERG

As Jews, some kind of conflict is our natural way of being, says Dr Amalia Rosenblum, a visiting Israeli author, columnist, filmmaker, and psychologist.

Conflict, she says, is also “our basic framework to organise relationships”.

Rosenblum was in South Africa at the invitation of the Israeli embassy, and presented at the Franschhoek Literary Festival in mid-May. Her list of accomplishments and skills is vast, so much so that it is impossible to put her in a box. She prefers it that way. However, Rosenblum wears a few other caps, including couple’s therapist, family mediator, mother, and academic.

“I define myself as a couples’ therapist first. I prefer my writing to be like my lover more than my lawfully wedded partner!” she says, chuckling. “I don’t depend on it as it’s not feasible. In Israel, we have more people writing than reading.”

Nevertheless, she is a successful author. Children’s books, fictional novels, non-fiction self-help books, blogs, articles, and columns fill her curriculum vitae.

So how do her lines of work influence each other? “The main thing that writing contributes to therapy is the use of analogies and metaphors. The tools we use are the language of the subconscious and emotions. In addition, life is far crazier than fiction. And, therapy provides my writing with endless examples of nuances and meaning in extreme situations, and the intense drama of daily life.”

If she was to give one piece of advice to couples, it would be “in a conflict, don’t talk about your partner, talk about yourself. The more you use the word ‘you’, the more trouble

you’re in.

“You need to be as self-reflective as you can. Our strategy for regulating ourselves emotionally as kids is great when we are young. But it’s probably that same strategy that’s catching us in a negative loop as adults. Daring to be vulnerable is what brings people together. The more defensive you are, the more you will push your partner away.”

Rosenblum was previously married to Assaf Bernstein, the director of the first season of *Fauda*. Her brother, Ido Rosenblum, is a well-known film and TV personality. Her current husband, Yuval Banay, is a rock star. Her sister-in-law, Yonit Levi, has been a TV news anchor for 15 years, and her late father, Adam Baruch (previously Baruch Meir Rosenblum), was a well-known cultural figure in Israeli society who died young.

“He was a journalist and art critic, and came from an Orthodox family. He was very bohemian. He died 11 years ago from complications from diabetes, which he neglected to take care of. Ironically, it didn’t seem as tragic then. He was 63. Now I’m 45, and he’s still 63. The older I grow, the harder it is,” she says.

Seven years after her father died, Rosenblum decided it was time to make a movie about her dad. She woke up to realise, as she says, “Israel as a society is experiencing early onset dementia, and this is the last moment we could possibly get funding for a film about him.”

She brought her brother on board, and they made the film *Memory Agents*, which has now been shown in South Africa. “Making the film was a beautiful experience, intense and emotional. After it was done, I had a huge sense of relief. It was out there in the world, and our kids or anyone interested in



Dr Amalia Rosenblum

Israeli culture of the 1970s to 1990s could watch it. It’s like a time capsule that helps us understand the intricacies of that period of time.”

Rosenblum finds Israeli society to be a rich source of content for any writer or artist. “Israel is like having 50 people from different walks of life trapped together for 70 years, and [seeing] what happens. It’s fascinating to me.”

She is also looking to South Africa for insight and inspiration. “As an Israeli, I am worried about where Israel is heading politically. This is an interesting opportunity to get some sense of the lessons South Africa has learned. Also, with two degrees in anthropology, I’m curious

about people, so it’s great to explore here.”

She is also happy to be visiting South Africa as she had a close friend when she was young whose family made aliyah in the 1970s. They then went back to South Africa, and returned to Israel. “It’s somehow part of my childhood that I want to relook at with adult eyes.”

For those wanting to understand Israeli arts and culture, Rosenblum recommends reading the cultural section of *Ha’aretz* online, which “really covers the social atmosphere and spirit of the times. Israeli cinema is also quite a powerful aspect. All the TV series are fantastic, but they are more universal than local. Even *Fauda* is a fantasy, and as such, it’s great.”



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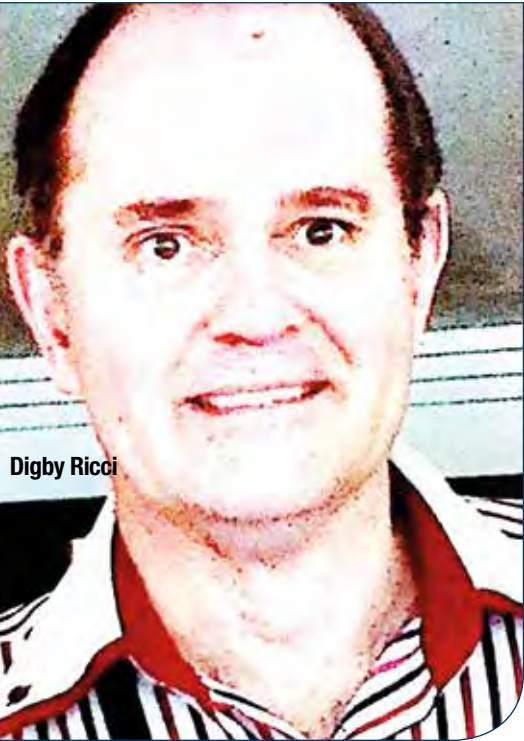
ON COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES



Paying tribute to legendary teachers

JORDAN MOSHE

If you think back to the people who had a significant impact on your formative years, chances are that at least one of them will be a teacher. Whether they drive us mad or push us to succeed, the educators who come into our lives leave an indelible mark, be it for quoting Shakespeare incessantly or praising the beauty of an equation. The *SA Jewish Report* asked *Joburg Jewish Mommies* to tell us about legendary teachers in their lives or those of their children at specifically Jewish schools. We were inundated with the names of our community’s most memorable educators. While so many legendary teachers have passed through the portals of our schools, these are the ones whose names appeared most often in this very unscientific selection. We reached out to them.



Digby Ricci

Ricci is an eminent educator of English, having taught at universities and high schools since 1980. He joined King David Linksfield during in the 1990s, and is today Head of English at Roedean.

“Teaching is a very onerous profession”, he says. “You never leave your work at the office, and only an idiotic masochist would claim that marking is a delightful activity.” However, he says the reward of constant engagement with enquiring minds more than compensates for it.

It is this engagement which perhaps best illustrates why Ricci has earned the description of “an inspirational English teacher and I will never forget him” by former student Romy Ancer.

His classroom has witnessed too many memorable moments to recount. Says Ricci, “The hilarious moments leap to mind, but, in general, I always remember the remarkable work of young men and women who really possessed intellectual curiosity, and shared their insights with me.”

He recalls in one history class that whenever he mentioned a death (and there are, of course, many deaths in history), the boys “would grimly roll their trousers up to their knees to symbolise a flag at half-mast”. On another occasion, he recalls how “an enchanting girl solemnly raised her hand, but instead of answering a question, she exclaimed, ‘Sir, your shirt is hanging out!’”

Ricci believes no great teacher is “trendy”. “A mediocre – even harmful – teacher is what I call the “grandmother in fishnet” type of teacher: needy, sentimental, and desperate for popularity. A great teacher will not be a Jean Brodie figure, desperate for acolytes, but will be delighted when learners fly the nest of his/her instruction.”

Ricci says he has been touched and delighted by the responses of pupils who have not always gained the most impressive results, and he has learned never to be too rigid in his expectations.

“A nun at the Star of the Sea Convent in Melbourne wrote of the youthful Germaine Greer, whom she had the pleasure of teaching: ‘I certainly remember you with your searching eyes, restless frame, and quick brain.’ I have had the privilege of teaching many students, boys and girls, who could fit that description!”

June Barclay

Barclay’s maths teaching career stretches across 40 years. She started teaching in 1956, and arrived at King David Linksfield 10 years later. She taught maths until she retired in 1996 to move to New Zealand to be with her family.

Having come from a family with generations of teachers, she says she has seen first-hand what makes a great teacher.

“A great teacher should be able to empathise with their students, show their passion for their subject, and create a relationship of respect and genuine care. In return, the students will show the teacher respect and care.

“A teacher is someone who inspires their students even if they don’t enjoy a particular subject or think they can’t do it.”

Barclay’s years of teaching include several memorable occasions, such as taking two *ulpans* (Hebrew instruction courses), one to Sde-Boker in 1972, and the other to Jerusalem in 1973, where she, her daughters, and students spent six months immersed in Israeli life.

She was also involved in school productions, like *Guys and Dolls* and *Grease* (in which she played the role of the headmistress of Rydell High). She dressed up as Queen Elizabeth I for a matric dance one year.

“Teaching is a vocation, you are not in it for the money,” Barclay says. “Being a teacher is one of the most important jobs in the world. The future relies on teachers to provide the educational foundation for those who will decide on the future of mankind.”



Sheryl Benjamin

In spite of her small stature, Benjamin loomed large in her maths classes. At the age of 19 in 1967, she started teaching mathematics and mechanics at King David Linksfield. Her career there lasted 41 years, and when she retired at age 60, she was also senior deputy principal. She continues to tutor maths.

As her mother’s entire family were teachers, it seemed inevitable that when Benjamin displayed a talent for maths, her uncle, Norman Sandler (the first headmaster of King David High School), would insist that she join the staff as soon as she graduated.

She is described by former scholars as “an amazing lady and teacher”. Benjamin helped hundreds of students navigate the complexities of mathematics while

maintaining a special connection with them as people.

She says it takes many years of experience and dedication to be able to impart knowledge with compassion and firmness, while showing empathy for everyone in the class. “Great teachers find a way to connect to their students,” she says.



In spite of her years of being in the classroom, she says the most memorable moments have little to do with the actual classroom. “I have wonderful memories of our first production of *Fiddler on the Roof* which we took to the Civic Theatre and on tour, the visit of Nelson Mandela, and wearing a tutu and dancing *Swan Lake* with some very large fathers in a Purim play. I may be wrong, but I think I’m the only woman to have been invited into the first team’s “huddle” before a match.”

She believes that associating daily with teenagers has instilled patience, humility, self-discipline, perseverance, and an ability to relate to others in a very human way. “There are very few careers offering the exceptional personal satisfaction that teaching does. I don’t regret a single moment, even the hard times!”

Hilary Waters

Waters’ connection to Herzlia in Cape Town began when she attended then Herzlia Highlands Primary aged six, matriculating in 1973.

She began teaching there in 1978, and has mainly taught Grade 6 and 7, with a short stint teaching History to Grade 9. Having taught for almost 40 years, she is currently teaching Grade 6 English and Social and



Natural Science, and is the intermediate phase head and deputy principal of the school.

“Without a shadow of a doubt, the greatest teacher I have ever come across is Hilary Waters,” writes Linda Rawray. “She is a legend of a teacher and human being.”

Waters says that teaching makes you realise the enormous impact you have on a child’s life. “There is something so special about being part of a child’s journey,” she says. “It’s so powerful and so rewarding. No two days are ever the same. I begin each year as eager as I was in the previous year, ready for the challenge, welcoming a new set of students for a fraction of their lives.”

Though she has taught for almost four decades, she says she still wakes up enthusiastically at 05:30 every morning to head to school by 06:10. She attributes this to several very special and rewarding moments over the years that have kept her happy and fulfilled.

“From my years of teaching, I have learnt that I learn as much from my students as they from me. I have learnt not to sweat the small stuff, and to realise that a year in school is such a tiny part of the bigger picture. I have learnt that facts are not as important as skills, and that



being a *mensch* is ultimately the goal in life.

“I doubt I would have been as happy in a corporate environment. There is something so special about being part of a child’s journey. No two days are ever the same, and I begin each year as eager as I was in the previous year.”

Sandra Levitas

Levitas started her career at Jewish schools only after being forced to retire as principal of Johannesburg Girls Preparatory School in Berea in 2013 when she was 65. She had already been a government-school teacher for many years before being made a principal.

Levitas was determined to continue putting her passion to use after “retiring”, and spent one year at King David Linksfield before joining the Shaarei Torah Primary staff in 2014. She teaches Grade 6 boys as well as Grades 7 and 9 girls at the girls’ school.

Described as a “true legend” by former student Ruth Becker, Levitas’ approach to teaching is defined by her passion and heart.

“Teaching is about one thing only: passion,” she says. “You need to have



Ingrid Rachman

a drive to make a change for the better in children’s lives. You do need the enthusiasm to teach, as without it you wouldn’t be able to face its challenges. Without passion, it means very little.”

Alongside passion, she stresses that a keen sense of humour is equally important. “You need to be equipped with a sense of humour that you can use at certain times. You need that sense of humour to cope with the stresses inherent in education. The ability to laugh is crucial.”

Her years of teaching have taught her how essential it is to do what you love. “You are never bored or unhappy if your job excites you,” she says. “Whether it meets with society’s approval or not, if you do what you love, it’s not work.

“Teaching is what I was put on this earth to do,” she concludes. “It’s when I see students achieve brilliantly that I experience joy. Every stage of my career has had its positive and negative moments, but they all make for one experience I’d never want to exchange for anything.”

Joseph Gerassi

For Gerassi, teaching means dedicating your life to the well-being of those you have been given the privilege to teach. He served as principal of King David Victory Park High between 1999 and 2009, before heading to Melbourne to head Bialik College for three years. Since 2015, he has been the executive head of school at Redhill, where he continues to teach.

He says that as adults, we are too quick to dismiss children’s ideas and solutions to problems because we don’t feel they are mature enough to contribute to society. “I have learnt to listen, empathise,



Joseph Gerassi

acknowledge, and appreciate my students’ uniqueness and their ability to challenge and contribute to their society.”

Gerassi’s passion for teaching and ability to make students love what they were learning is apparent in the online comments about him, with former students saying that they will never forget his class debates and discussions.

In his 25 years of teaching, Gerassi

says that he encountered so many remarkable students that to list any would be unfair. “I have amazing memories of students overcoming difficulties and learning how to succeed and thrive on the stage, on the sports field, and in the classroom,” he says.

“Memories of laughing with students in happy times, and crying with them in more difficult times. Of celebrating various festivities, and finally staying in touch with many of them as they discovered the world outside of school, got married, had children of their own.”

He concludes that the role of a good teacher is to see the difference in all students, and to allow them to develop as individuals who have unique talents.

“The art of teaching is being able to see your students differently and to treat them differently so that they have the freedom to express their own identities, feelings, and ways of being.”



Gail Segal

Ingrid Rachman

Rachman has been teaching for 33 years and has been part of the King David family for 24 years. She teaches English and Social Science to Grade 6 and 7 students.

Central to her teaching philosophy is the belief that no teacher should ever write off a child. “A great teacher takes the time to understand the pupils and their needs, especially in a changing world,” she says.

“It is the children who have achieved in all aspects of life, against all odds, that make moments most memorable.”

Rachman remembers arriving at King David Linksfeld (KDL) as a new, energetic teacher on the block. “I was standing on a table with my harmless ‘Bozo Freeze’ stick, teaching maths times tables. I was ‘actively’ calling out the sums when my new Grade 5 colleague, Caryn Cohen, came past and asked me if everything was alright. We still have a good laugh over my unusual introduction to Grade 5 at KDL.”

She says seeing children gain confidence, believe in themselves, and shine in their unique way is what makes the moments memorable. Her belief that teachers teach children, not subjects, and ensure that they all feel acknowledged, has clearly been recognised by many. Among the online comments, this ringing endorsement stands out:

“She always found the good in each child,” writes Lianne Jacobson. “[She] showed genuine love, interest and care.”

Gail Segal

Segal began teaching in 1967, and though she worked in retail for a time, she resumed teaching at King David Linksfeld primary in 1989. Though now retired, she is still teaching as a locum.

“My career started as a six-week locum and

I just didn’t leave,” she says. Traveling from Northcliff to Linksfeld and back daily for years, Segal committed herself to education from the very beginning.

Described as an “unbelievable teacher who changed my child’s life” by Tali Mansur Janet, Segal is clearly a woman with a lasting legacy. Given her approach to teaching, this comes as little surprise.

“To teach is to touch lives forever,” she says. “[I have] witnessed children changing ‘can’t’ to ‘can’, and have shared personal achievements with students who were told that they would ‘never’.”

Her students have, indeed, gone far. Just last week, she says, a parent called to tell her that their daughter had just graduated from Macquarie University in New South Wales with a Master’s degree in Psychology.

“To witness the growth of introverted pupils standing on a *bimah* [alter] with confidence, singing *maftir* and *haftorah*; to be invited to the weddings of pupils and seeing [them] under the *chuppah* [canopy], these are the defining moments. It’s beautiful to realise that relationships are created with small beginnings.”

We are always learning, she says, and life lessons can be gleaned through the eyes and heart of a child. “The courage and tenacity of children speaks volumes when life throws curve balls,” she says. “Children have taught me so much over the years.”

“Respect for pupils and going the extra mile afforded me wonderful opportunities. I wouldn’t have done it any other way.”

Rob Wucherpennig

Little did Rob Wucherpennig know that when he made a “gentleman’s agreement” to teach information

technology for two years at Herzlia, he’d end up staying for 31 years. Employed by Solly Kaplinski in 1988, he didn’t have formal teaching qualifications at the time as he didn’t plan to go into teaching.

I very foolishly and naively thought to myself, “They are just children; how hard could this be?”. As it turned out, it was harder than he’d imagined.

“People speak of teaching as a ‘calling’,” he says. “I don’t believe that’s entirely true. Sometimes circumstance puts you there, and you must do the best you can. Being a teacher means that you get to play a role in a person’s life, helping them to achieve their goals, or even affecting their choice of a goal.”

In his time at Herzlia, Wucherpennig taught individuals who have risen to prominence. These include Alon Cohen, now a well-known and respected maths teacher at the high school, and Anton Krupenia, who is now principal at one of the Herzlia junior schools. He also taught two of the Rosenkowitz sextuplets who are now in their mid-forties, and, according to the internet, are the oldest surviving sextuplets in the world.

“Teachers learn early on in their careers that if they mess up, it’s not just their butt that is on the line. Failing to prepare pupils properly for exams will affect the life choices they are able to make, the jobs they are able to be interviewed for, the universities they will be allowed to attend. It’s a massive and terrifying responsibility.”

Aside from teaching at Herzlia, he has also lectured part-time at Boston House Computer College and the Computer Science Institute, and has worked for the education department. Still, he finds it hard to imagine working at a school other than Herzlia today.

“I have met so many really special



Rob Wucherpennig

individuals, colleagues and students, and consider myself fortunate and privileged to have been able to share part of a life journey with all of them.

“There is potential in everyone, and there are many forms of intelligence, of which the education system addresses only a few. I have seen students who are fairly average [or below average] in a class environment do wonderful things when they leave school, and make a true success of their lives.”

Joy Comaroff

“She was incredible then, and she is incredible now.” Former student Elsie Dave’s ringing endorsement of Joy Comaroff captures the sentiment expressed by so many.

Comaroff began her career 43 years ago in 1976 in Vereeniging at Milton Primary School, making her way to King David Victory Park in 1993. For 26 years, she has helped hundreds of Grade 1 students navigate the complexities of entering primary school.

“A teacher is someone who guides supports, motivates, and teaches children in many different ways for their future. A great teacher ultimately equips her pupils to face life with confidence. She is compassionate, empathetic, tolerant, and patient,” Comaroff says.



Joy Comaroff

She says that 43 years of teaching have taught her valuable lessons, including the power and importance of collaboration with colleagues, parents, and pupils.

Teaching is a vocation, and highly rewarding. “The belief that teaching is one of the worst careers out there is absolutely untrue! If I were to choose my career again, it would be teaching for me, without a doubt.”

She doesn’t even mind that her colleagues have noticed that she is a little older than them. “One of my pupils asked if I knew Adam and Eve when I was young.”

“A sheer joy in every sense of the word. A Grade 1 teacher who is the epitome of a teacher,” wrote Wanda Sher.

Life just isn’t like Hollywood

Not for the first time, it became clear to me how much Hollywood creates expectations that will seldom be met. It was around 12:00 on Wednesday, when I lay on the bathroom floor unable, and quite frankly unwilling, to get up.

I half expected my wife of 28 years to kneel beside me during this terrible time, to desperately clutch my sweaty, stomach flu-infected hands, while she gently dabbed my burning forehead with a slightly (but not overwhelming) scented cloth. I would have most likely chosen something in the lavender group, but the final decision would be hers. I was, after all, not well, and couldn’t be expected to make all the decisions. Instead, clearly afraid to enter the battle field, she stood at the entrance to the bathroom, and communicated from a safe distance. “Do you need to go to the hospital?” she asked, unsure of what to do. “Think so,” I replied weakly, batting off a cat that had chosen to settle on my chest. Silence. Not the answer she was hoping for.

“Do I need to call Hatzolah?” more hesitant and disbelieving. “Think so,” I replied. Silence. “Oy. Ok,” was her sensitive and inspirational message. I didn’t want to be picky, but those were hardly words I would be able to cling to as I staved off the grim reaper.

Must be that she is overwhelmed with emotion but was hiding it well, I thought.

Time elapsed, and the next thing

I knew, the wife of 28 years was fully dressed, earrings and all, and Hatzolah were bustling into the room. She claims they took four minutes from call to arrival.

I am deeply dubious as to her actions at that point, and will always be suspicious that she took the time to get fully attired (I’m sure I even noticed a flesh-coloured lipstick) before she called the first responders.

That said, I will never be able to prove it, as the timeline is pretty much a blur to me. Projectile vomiting and fainting on the bathroom floor can do that.

As exhausted as I was, I have to say that I was a little offended that no one asked me to “stay with them”. I have rarely seen a medical drama when this isn’t asked of the person who is compromised.

And given that I was indeed on the floor in a state of horrible half undress, I most definitely checked that box. Not one word of “stay with us, Howard” passed anyone’s lips.

And if I’m honest (which I try to be), I have to acknowledge that that causes me more than a little pain. I have no idea if I did or didn’t (stay with them),

but before I knew it, I was being assisted onto a stretcher so as to be carted off to the Linksfield Clinic.

“Have you told the kids?” I asked in my best on-the-way-to-hospital voice, as they squeezed me into an ambulance that looked a lot more spacious from the outside. “Why wake them?” she responded, efficiently. Really?

After 28 years of marriage, we are finally going to choose 01:30 whilst in the middle of a medical emergency as the moment to start thinking rationally?

My brain was working, but the words didn’t form in my mouth. I was also preoccupied with not losing my right arm, which kept getting caught on the side of the van as they tried to slide me in elegantly. I was sure that the kids would care. Wouldn’t they?

Unlike on Netflix, my wife of 28 years didn’t offer to ride along so as not to leave my side for a moment. Which was a bit of a relief, considering the space limitation and the nausea that was still coming at me in waves. There was also the fact that we would need to have a way to get home from the hospital – assuming I survived.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



Rational thought aside, at the very least, I expected a teary farewell as we were separated for the four minute ride from the house to casualty. I had been sick for hours. I had earned a bit of drama, surely.

Here’s the thing. I really was ill. Worse than I have ever been in my life. And yet I feel so blessed to have had that experience – even if it is just to see how blessed and fortunate we are.

We spend so much time comparing ourselves to other places around the world in order to list what we don’t have, that we spend too little time noting the things we do.

From the moment that I said “maybe” to my wife calling the magnificent angels at Hatzolah First Responders through to my experience at Linksfield Clinic, which was caring, warm, attentive, and kind, I never felt alone, afraid, or compromised. Aside from the few minutes that it took for my wife of 28 years to choose earrings.

What are we doing to our children?



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

There is so much hatred in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after 70 years, it is impossible to conceive of children not absorbing it. Whatever one’s view is about the politics of the conflict, both sides face the question of what to teach their children. For Israelis: are all Palestinians terrorists? For Palestinians: are all Israelis oppressors? To sane adults, it is obvious neither side can be simply defined. But can a small child withstand the cynicism and expediency of adults?

All societies at war, or after it, face the dilemma of educating children amidst rage about what has happened. What should Jewish educators teach about Germans after the Holocaust? Or Rwandan Tutsis about the Hutus who killed 800 000 Tutsis in the 1994 genocide?

After apartheid’s end, what should black South Africans teach their children about white South Africans? As conflicts continue to erupt and the phrase “never again” becomes hollower, the problem gets worse.

German writer Gunter Grass, a Nobel Laureate who as a child was forcibly conscripted to the Hitler Youth, was a careful thinker on this topic. With books like *The Tin Drum*, he created a child character that looked to the previous generation with horror at its hypocrisy. A thread in this novel is exactly this: whatever shall we teach our children in the wake of such atrocities for which we are responsible?

A United States-funded study in 2013, carried out by the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, found that both Israeli and Palestinian textbooks depicted the other as “the enemy” while presenting their own culture in positive terms.

It maintained that both teach their children little about the other’s religion, culture, or economy. It said most maps in Israeli textbooks make little reference to the West Bank or Gaza, and Palestinian maps often ignore Israel’s existence.

How can a school child be expected to distinguish between what is accurate and what is not? A Grade 4 textbook in a state-supported ultra-orthodox religious school says Israel is “like a little lamb in a sea of seventy wolves...” A Grade 12 Palestinian textbook says, “Zionist occupation and its usurpation of Palestine and its people’s rights comprise the core of the conflict in the Middle East.”

Should we believe Israel’s repeated complaints about Palestinian textbooks, or is it propaganda? The textbooks released in September 2018 are supposedly more radical than previous ones, encouraging *jihād* (a fight against enemies) and demonisation of Israel and Jews rather than engagement with peace-loving Israelis.

Past peace negotiations between Palestinians, Israel, and Arab states, such as the Roadmap, Wye Agreement, and Israel-Jordan peace treaty are omitted. So is the Jewish historical presence in Jerusalem and the land of Israel.

Even maths education contains negative references to Israelis.

International agencies are getting more involved. The European Union gives massive aid to the Palestinian Education Ministry, but with a condition that programmes financed should “reflect common values such as freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination within education”.

The EU parliament passed legislation in April 2018 intended to prevent European aid funds to the Palestinian Authority (PA) from being used to teach hate.

Marcus Sheff, the Chief Executive of the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, says the PA misuses EU money for the “abuse of children” rather than “meaningful education for peace and tolerance”.

While adults rage, children are victims. Entire generations are conditioned to hate each other. It is supremely difficult to undo. But it must start with adults, and Israel and the Jews are the stronger side. Jewish institutions would be a good place to start.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Survey offers invaluable perspective on SA Jewry

Last week, after a lengthy process of testing and piloting, the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research at the University of Cape Town (UCT) launched its Jewish Community Survey of South Africa.

The questionnaire will focus on a wide array of areas, including attitudes towards South Africa and its future prospects, Israel and Zionism, involvement in Jewish communal life, anti-Semitism, emigration, religious affiliation and degree of observance, and political orientation. As on previous occasions, it is being conducted in close consultation with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and other major communal bodies like the Chevrah Kadisha, rabbinical leadership, and South African Zionist Federation.

This will be the third such survey of South African Jewry to be conducted by the Kaplan Centre, the previous two having come out in 1998 and 2005. These surveys have been an invaluable source of information and guidance for our communal leaders. As far as the SAJBD is concerned, they have been used, amongst other things, to demonstrate the strong attachment to Israel in the community.

This has become increasingly

important, since we are regularly seeing attempts to downplay this connection in order to boost the credibility of anti-Israel elements within the community and to create the false impression that South African Jewry is profoundly divided on the issue. By referring to these two rigorously conducted academic surveys, we have been able to show – in political meetings, court cases, and other important forums – that in fact, more than 90% of Jews regard themselves as Zionists, and those who dissent are therefore no more than a fringe element.

Another area in which the Kaplan findings have proved extremely useful is in our interactions with government at all levels, since it provides us with authoritative data through which to report on the mood and concerns of Jewish South Africans and their attitudes towards and involvement in broader society. We further draw on it as a source of reliable information for numerous articles, reports, and presentations on South African Jewry, locally and for international Jewish forums and publications, and to assist journalists, academics, and other communal organisations.

To the maximum extent possible, the intention is to provide a



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

representative overview of Jewish opinion on a range of critical issues, both regarding specifically Jewish-related concerns and on matters relating to the country as a whole. The aim, therefore, is to get as large and diverse a proportion of our community as possible to buy into the project. Accordingly, I strongly encourage all readers to follow the www.jcssa2019.co.za link and participate in the survey (as well as encourage others to do so).

While it will entail a certain amount of time and effort on your part, it will be of considerable assistance to our communal bodies in obtaining critical grassroots insights into the needs, concerns, attitudes, and intentions of our community today. This information is invaluable for assessing the current requirements of members across a wide spectrum, and to plan the way forward.

• 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

Sunday (26 May)	Monday (27 May)	Thursday (30 May)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second Innings hosts Bev Goldman, Israel consultant to the SA Israel Chamber of Commerce, on <i>My relationship with Israel over the years</i>. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, 2nd Floor, Golden Acres, 85 George Avenue, Sandringham. Cost: R20 for Second Innings members; R40 for visitors (includes tea/coffee and refreshments). Contact 011 483 7425.• The Jewish Women’s Benevolent Society Morning Market & Book Fair. Time: 08:00 to 12.30. Venue: Jabula Recreation Centre, Anne Street, Sandringham. All books for R20; portobello; paintings and artwork; clothing; tea; coffee; cakes; and toasties. Contact: www.jwbs.co.za or 011 485 5232.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second Innings hosts a cruise on the Vaal and refreshments. Venue: Stonehaven-on-Vaal. Time: Bus departs at 09:00 sharp. Meet the bus in the parking below Golden Acres. Cost: R280, R300 for non-members, includes bus, cruise, and refreshments. Enquiries: 011 483 7425, or book with Betty Kowal, Fanny Baumann, or Gloria Hallowitz at Sunday meetings.• The Union of Jewish Women (UJW) hosts Muriel Mushariwa, senior lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand School of Law, on <i>The nature of gender disadvantage in the mining and legal professions</i>. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn Yiddish with the UJW and Tamar Olswang. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Cost: R100 per person, R80 for pensioners and UJW members. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053.• Join the Women’s International Zionist Organisation every Thursday for a <i>Lunch & Learn shiur</i> with Rabbi Michael Katz. Time: 13:00 at Beyachad. Contact: WIZO office 011 645 2515.



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The Power to Surprise



Noah and Ben Miller, Cruz Thal, Jack Kupritz, and James Bernic sitting astride their Har Sinai in the sandpit.

Counting down to the Torah

King David Rosabelle Klein Nursery School is counting down the days of the Omer. They are also counting down the days until Moshe is given the ten commandments in the form of two tablets upon Har Sinai.

Diller teens paint Joburg blue

Every year, two weeks before Pesach, 16 Israeli Diller communities travel to their respective diaspora partner communities, where they are hosted by local teens for 10 days. The teenagers are Diller Teen Fellows, a select group of Jewish 10th and 11th Graders from six continents and 32 communities, who are invited to step up, lead their communities, and help to repair the world.

The Johannesburg Diller Teen Fellows and the South African Zionist Federation welcomed their partners from Bet Shemesh-Mateh Yehuda for one of the highlights of the year – the Jewish Communities *Mifgash* (encounter).

The goals of the programme are threefold: to educate Israeli teens about the vibrancy and lifestyle of Jewish communities and countries abroad, to allow Israeli and diaspora groups to bond,

and to allow the two groups to work together to plan their Israel experience in July.



Local Diller Teens welcome their Diller Israeli Partnership community

Over the course of their visit, the Israeli teens were shown the best of what Johannesburg and its Jewish community had to offer.

They also engaged with the community as they visited shuls, schools, and held a panel discussion with community leaders. The teens showed passion, skill, and generosity by running an activity for the Grade 10s at King David Victory Park, as well as spending a day painting a house and engaging with children at Afrika Tikkun's centre in Orange Farm.

The highlight was the Shabbaton at Hunter's Rest. Over three days, the Israeli and South African groups had fun, bonded, learnt about the Jewish people, and planned their visit to Bet Shemesh in July.

Students design election campaigns in mock poll

Shaarei Torah held a mock poll at the school recently to teach students how to run an election and how to vote. The class divided into four groups of four, and came up with manifestos that could be sold to the other students in exchange for votes.

The winners were treated to a discussion session and hot chocolate with ward 72 councillor Lionel Greenberg (whose area includes Glenhazel and Linksfield), and Member of Parliament Darren Bergman.

Bergman remarked afterwards that it was refreshing to hear what worked and did not work in the students' campaigns.



Darren Bergman, Akiva Landau, Lionel Greenberg, Shmuel Osrin, Yehuda Hollander, Zachariah Kramer, and Sandra Levitas

Grade Rs thrilled to a T

Grade R students at Mino Lopato Nursery School proudly graduated to wearing their Grade R T-shirts recently. The T-shirt is a big part of becoming the seniors at the school. It represents a coming of age and when you get it, you know you are the seniors.



Amelia Kanter, Adam Roth, Daniel von Gottberg-Cohen, Rorisang Kutumela, Leeya Choritz, Thuba Mnguni, Aaradhya Pandey, and Joshua von Gottberg-Cohen

After watching kids older than them wearing their Grade R T-shirts so proudly every Friday for the years before hitting Grade R, the graduation brings much excitement because they have eventually hit the Mina Lopato T-shirt grade, the big kids.

This year's Grade Rs received their unique T-shirts, proudly made with their class's drawings on the back.

Teens explore emotional impact of digital age

Students at King David Victory Park High School recently participated in workshops to deal with the emotional fallout of the digital age.

In the workshops facilitated by Trulife, an organisation that works to educate and inspire youth, Grade 8s were challenged to value difference in others and confront the traumatic effect of cyber, physical, and emotional bullying.



Performers from an organisation called Trulife perform a play on choices in relationships

Grade 9 and 10 students watched a play that looked at the flippancy of the sex culture that has permeated popular culture via music, dance, and social media. It also explored the consequences of confusing sex with love.

Grade 11s participated in a workshop that focused on online pornography, and its devastating impact on the relationships between young people today.

Tikkun olam nets King David pupils prestigious award

King David High School Linksfield pupils Anna Kayla Joffe and Carly Rachelson have been awarded the World ORT Gina and Joseph Harmatz Award for Social Responsibility 2019.

This award, which comes with \$300 (R4,320) in prize money, recognises students who have made an outstanding contribution to *tikkun olam* – our shared responsibility to heal, repair, and transform the world.

Joffe and Rachelson's dedication to this project was exceptional, World ORT said. The award was a reflection of the commitment to social responsibility they showed in their work, the positive impact they made, and the hope that it would inspire others.



Letters

SISULU NOT ELECTIONEERING, JUST PLAIN OLD ANTI-SEMITIC

In the *SA Jewish Report's* front-page article (17 May 2019) headlined "Sisulu is SA Jewry's threat in government", it is suggested that Sisulu is engaged in an electioneering stunt to curry vote getting from the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement and Muslim community. Not so. Her actions are simply old fashioned, rampant anti-Semitism dressed in euphemisms.

The local Jewish community, and particularly its leaders, have yet to break the chains of

quiescence by confronting Sisulu vociferously regarding her litany of lies regarding the embassy downgrade. She is plainly damaged goods, and if Zev Krengel has the ear of Cyril Ramaphosa, now is the time to call for Sisulu's removal.

If Mary, Queen of Scots were alive today, she would have counselled the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, "No more tears now. Think rather upon revenge." – **Errol Horwitz, Johannesburg**

remarks? Why has he allowed Sisulu to say that all relations with Israel are being severed, and the embassy will be downgraded to a visa office, without repudiating her in public?

Commentator Ferial Haffajee speculated in last Friday's *Daily Maverick* that Sisulu would lose her job as department of international relations and cooperation minister, and be replaced by house leader (former speaker) Baleka Mbete. Be afraid, very afraid. Mbete is cut from the same cloth as Sisulu. As recently as March, when the sixth Boycott Divestment Sanctions conference took place in Gaza, she also gave her unqualified support to the Palestinians. Her message read in part, "South Africans under the ANC government are consistent and unequivocal in our support to the Palestinians since our democratic dispensation. Our president recently confirmed our position of a downgraded embassy in Tel Aviv. We know that more needs to be done, and we will continue to stick to our anti-imperialist stance until a truly free Palestine is realised."

In my view Ramaphosa is an appeaser, and no matter what he says, the ANC comes first. He is also an astute politician. He will tell his audience what they want to hear. – **Brian Josselowitz, Cape Town**

ANTI-ISRAEL POLICY ISN'T SISULU, IT'S ENTIRE ANC

Is Zev Krengel, the national vice-president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), naïve or living in Lotus Land? ("Sisulu is SA Jewry's threat in government" – *SA Jewish Report*, 17 May 2019).

Krengel and National Director Wendy Kahn can celebrate and rub shoulders with as many ruling party members as they like. But the African National Congress (ANC) is unequivocal in its support for the Palestinian people's fight for self-determination, and believes that the Palestinians are the victims and the oppressed, because rightly or wrongly, their situation resonates with the party's own fight for liberation from the apartheid government.

You can schmooze with the political elite, and even take selfies with ANC President Cyril Ramaphosa, but he serves at the pleasure of the national executive committee, and he will not vote against ANC policy, especially on the question of Israel.

The *SA Jewish Report* (SAJR) gave him its unqualified backing when he won the ANC presidency at the party's last elective conference, and if he has, as the SAJR would have us believe, an open mind about the conflict, why didn't he take cabinet colleagues Naledi Pandor and Sisulu to task, in public, for their anti-Semitic

Disclaimer: The letters page is intended to provide an opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed. Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not reflect the views of the *SA Jewish Report*. The editor is not obliged to use every letter and will not publish vitriolic statements or any letters with inappropriate content. Letters will be edited and – if need be – shortened. **Guidelines:** Letters are limited to 400 words. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime phone number. Letters should be emailed to editorial@sajewishreport.co.za

WIZO discusses ‘agony and ecstasy’ of marriage

Psychologist and couples therapist, Connie Valkin, spoke recently to the Women’s International Zionist Organisation’s (WIZO’s) Women Inspired branch about the intricacies of marriage.



Lorraine Rosmarin, Leslie Fine, Connie Valkin, Joceline Basserabie, Isarae Seeff, and Maureen Shaftoe

The talk was titled, “What goes on inside marriage... the agony and the ecstasy”. Issues were raised like how it is possible – although not easy, with the right help – to heal from infidelity; how long marriage relationships differ from new ones; and how doomed relationships can often be predicted by the frequency of critical and contemptuous remarks.

Questions from the audience came thick and fast, covering complications including step-children, snoring, gaslighting (psychological manipulation), thoughts about arranged marriage, couples who like different bedtimes, and one’s ex turning into the exact person you wanted after you have divorced him/her.

The audience was let in on some therapeutic secrets about body language, and how the principles of Judaism are never at odds with good psychology.

Ramaphosa and ORT SA’s focus on unemployment

President Cyril Ramaphosa was guest of honour at the launch of the Nedbank YES (Youth Employment Services) campaign on 2 May in Sandton, in which ORT SA is one of the implementing partners.



ORT Chief Executive Ariellah Rosenberg said, “[YES] is an amazing opportunity to align this

programme to ORT SA’s mission of making people employable. This is a wonderful fit for providing work-place experience to these youth, beyond the skills training that we give.”

Through YES, 400 previously unemployed youth recently began a 12-month stint as administrator assistants in schools across Gauteng. They will help to alleviate the administrative burden of teachers to release more time for teaching.

YES was launched in 2018 by the president as a joint initiative between government, business, labour, and civil society to address youth unemployment in the country. To date, about 18 000 recruits

have been placed at different companies.

Ramaphosa told the recruits that their 12-month stints could be the beginning of their career aspirations. “The YES initiative has been made possible through the hard work and commitment of many people. I wish to express my gratitude in particular to Stephen Koseff, Colin Coleman, and Jabu Mabuza for having taken up the challenge we put to you two years ago, and for having pursued it with such determination and zeal.”

“If every business offered just one or two work opportunities, the country would look very different [in the future],” said YES Chief Executive Tashmia Ismail-Saville.

SA charity auction a knockout in US

Former American boxing promoter Joel Berman hosted a charity benefit in Brooklyn, New York, last month to raise funds for two South African non-profit organisations: Operation Smile South Africa and Ubuntu Pathways.

The event – aptly named Fight for Good – was held at the world famous Gleason’s Gym in Dumbo, Brooklyn, New York, on 25 April 2019, with almost 200 people in attendance. Twenty artworks and sculptures created by renowned South African artists, as well as boxing gloves signed by Floyd Mayweather and Oscar De La Hoya, were auctioned off by South African



auctioneer Ariella Kuper to raise funds for both organisations.

The event raised just more than \$40 000 (R578 000), and will probably be the first of many similar collaborative events in the near future. Operation Smile South Africa offers free cleft lip and cleft palate reconstructive surgery.

UJW celebrates volunteers and donors

Lilian Kallmann was awarded volunteer of the year at the Johannesburg Union of Jewish Women’s (UJW’s) 87th annual general meeting on 7 May. Kallmann works in the UJW’s flagship project, Kosher Mobile Meals.

The AGM celebrated the organisation’s numerous successful and ongoing projects. These include Kosher Mobile Meals, the House and Garden Circle, adult education programme, Yiddish lessons, sewing school, granny-headed households feeding scheme, Alexandra aftercare, as well as other feeding schemes.

Guest speaker Talia Isaacs spoke about surviving a double lung transplant, sharing the captivating story of how she is able to “breathe a new life”.



Glynis Revenson (UJW exec); Isabelle Kampel and Susan Cohen (Brain Boost volunteers), Lucelle Salomon (House and Garden) and Bev Cohen (UJW exec)



State of Israel
Ministry of Strategic Affairs
and Public Diplomacy

Notice for Open Tender:

APPLICATIONS FOR SUPPORT FOR PRO-ISRAELI ACTIVITY FOR 2019 – THE MINISTRY OF STRATEGIC AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy has announced the opening of the submission process for applications for grants in 2019 in relation to the topics listed below.

1. Support for pro-Israeli activities abroad – Support for pro-Israeli activities in the geographic regions listed, in order to strengthen ties between Israel and said countries. **The funds provided will be limited to 3million NIS.**
2. Support for pro-Israel activities on the internet aimed at target audiences abroad – Support for activities of pro-Israel organizations and pro-Israel initiatives in the geographic regions listed. This included positive campaigns regarding Israel, and promoting efforts to combat anti-Semitism, discrimination, incitement and the delegitimization of Israel. **The funds provided will be limited to 3 million NIS.**

Information on the criteria, accompanying forms and contact details can be found on the Ministry of Strategic Affairs website:

https://www.gov.il/he/Departments/General/strategy_support

The deadline for submission of applications for the **first** grant type via email, together with all the required information and documents, must be completed by July 1st 2019. The deadline for submission of applications for the **second** grant type via email, together with all the required information and documents, must be completed by July 1st 2019.

Applications should be submitted to the following email addresses:

For the submission of applications for grants for pro-Israeli events abroad pursuant to section 1 above, the applications are to be submitted to: grants.events@pmo.gov.il

For the submission of applications for grants for pro-Israeli activities on the Internet for target audiences abroad pursuant to section 2 above, applications should to be submitted to: grants.initiatives@pmo.gov.il

Deputy Director: Operations

Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa (UOS Cape Council)



With 22 affiliate member Shuls and 137 employees working in multiple locations across the Western Cape, the UOS plays a pivotal role in protecting Jewish continuity and Orthodoxy in Cape Town. From cradle to grave, the organisation promotes Torah and the Jewish way of life taking care of all our Jewish needs through the 4 legal entities that falls under this umbrella organisation.

They are recruiting a Deputy Director: Operations to offer operational leadership supporting the Director and Management Committee and to drive Operations, logistics and facilities management across 12 Divisions: Beth Din, Cape Council, Conversion, Education & Outreach, Eruv, Kashrut, Mikvah, Office of the Chief Rabbi, Rabbinical Association, Shechita, United Chevra Kadisha (UCK), Cemetery Maintenance Board (CMB).

Location: Gardens, Cape Town

Reporting to: Director

Hours of work: 08.30 – 17.00 (Mon - Thurs) 08.30 – 15.00 (Fri)

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Interested?

Email Loren for a detailed spec & application form: loren@ctjc.co.za

Closing date for applications: 31st May 2019

If you have not been contacted within 2 weeks of submitting your application, kindly consider your application to have been unsuccessful



LUKE ALFRED

Both are based at the Glen Tennis Club at the bottom of Clifton's Fourth Beach, a location primed to inspire a booming second-serve or deft cross-court lob better than most. It's one of those places that



Gottschalk was stricken with Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma a couple of years back, and in spite of suffering from the rigours of chemotherapy, tennis sustained her through a challenging time. "People shouldn't be scared of chemo, I

“His dream was to do in Africa

Young South African stars can

While keeping an interested eye on Harris at Roland Garros over the coming weeks, both Markovitz and Gottschalk need to start sharpening their appetite for Hungary. They have a reputation as the glamorous grannies of the local veteran's circuit to preserve, after all. They'll need to be busy in Budapest if they're to add to their already impressive list of titles.

King David Linksfield's first XV will be playing against the Israeli under-18 national side during a lightning week-long tour of Israel in July. This was confirmed by King David director of rugby, Kevin Musikanth, on Tuesday. Under coaches Dylan Col and Chris Worthington, the King David side have had a superb season, having won 11 of their 12 matches so far. These include victories over the second XV's of Michaelhouse, St David's, St Stithians, and St John's.

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