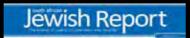
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Protestors support Hezbollah at BDS rally

NICOLA MILTZ

oycott, Divestment, Sanctions South Africa (BDS-SA) appears to have aligned itself with Hezbollah, allowing the terror organisation's flags to fly and people to chant for the "death" of Israel and Zionism at a protest last week.

Last Friday, BDS-SA and the Palestine solidarity movement held a protest calling on the Johannesburg City Council to change the name of Sandton Drive immediately (the street on which the United States Consulate is located) to that of international terrorist Leila Khaled.

More than 150 pro-Palestine protesters, many openly brandishing the sinister Hezbollah flag, gathered on the lawns outside the Johannesburg City Council chambers during lunch hour. It coincided with international Al-Quds Day, in which anti-Israel marches are held in numerous cities worldwide.

One pro-Hezbollah activist took to the podium and loudly chanted with the bemused crowd, "Long Live Hezbollah!" "Death to Israel!" "Death to America!" "Death to Zionists!". The organisers were cagey about him, refusing to divulge his name.

The man also chanted several times, "Long live Nasrallah!" Hassan Nasrallah is the leader of Hezbollah who last week said his Shi'ite organisation had enough precision missiles to hit all the targets it had marked throughout

The chanting took place against the backdrop of life-size banners of Nasrallah, with the wording: "Only the soldiers of Islam will liberate occupied Palestine" and "With our souls and with blood, we will defend you oh Al-Aqsa."

Young children were seen waving copies of the yellow and green, machine-gun adorned Hezbollah flag, and several protesters stamped paper Israeli flags into the ground. "Hezbollah is a terrorist organisation, and a criminal entity," Professor Hussein Solomon, senior professor of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State, said in response to this event. "Waving the flag of a terrorist organisation is problematic since it is the old problem of confusing so-called liberation movements and freedom fighters with a terrorist organisation."

step could involve some kind of violence",

BDS-SA director Muhammed
Desai in front of a Hezbollah
flag at the protest last Friday

Terror expert Jasmine Opperman, a director at the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, also said this was of concern. She said it was undeniable that Hezbollah was inclined towards violence against Israel and Jews.

"BDS is going into shock-tactic mode, getting messages across in the most extreme way. We must not underestimate the support for Hamas Opperman said.

"It is a hatred that grows, and one must ask whether South Africa is going to facilitate this process. A concerning question that remains unanswered is what the relationship is between BDS, Hamas, and Hezbollah, and if it is possible that money is flowing to BDS from both these organisations."

and Hezbollah in South Africa, where they are

not deemed terrorist organisations. There are

"The moment you have actions like this

against Jews in South Africa, there is a

responsibility on government to step in

and address the situation because the next

they are not illegal here.

known financial streams in the country because

BDS claims to be a peaceful, human-rights

organisation, and vehemently denies being anti-Semitic. Hezbollah is an internationally recognised terrorist organisation. It is unashamedly anti-Semitic, and rejects Israel's right to exist, as well having been linked to numerous acts of terror against civilians.

It is understood that its flag is considered by many to be incitement against Jews.

This is arguably the first time that dozens of Hezbollah flags have been seen at a BDS-SA anti-Israel rally. In the past, maybe two flags were seen, enough to cause concern in the community.

"BDS does not attempt to hide its true purpose while blatantly waving Hezbollah flags in support of a known terrorist group aimed at Israel," said the Israeli embassy. "The German bundestag, most states in the United States [US], and other parliaments have already made it clear that BDS is anti-Semitic. No street in the world should be named after a terrorist."

David Saks of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies said, "BDS is obviously not a democratic, human-rights-oriented movement, as shown by its consistent opposition to initiatives aimed at achieving a negotiated settlement in the Middle East. This is also seen in the threats, intimidation, and disruption it regularly resorts to in order to silence those who dissent from it.

"It is therefore hardly surprising to see a BDS demonstration coupled with support for Hezbollah and Hamas, both designated terrorist organisations committed to Israel's violent destruction."

Hezbollah (translated as The Party of G-d) is a Shia Muslim movement which emerged during the early 1980s with financial backing from Iran. Its political wing is already proscribed by several countries including the US state department, but not by the European Union.

Continued on page 8>>



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Volkswagen combats anti-Semitism

Volkswagen, the car manufacturing giant, is joining with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to fund a Berlin-based office that will research and combat anti-Semitism in Europe.

"The initiative will focus on assessing the root causes of anti-Semitism, extremism, and bigotry in society, and develop programmes to counter it through advocacy and education," ADL said on Tuesday.

A Volkswagen spokesman told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the venture would open an ADL office in Berlin, the first ADL presence in Europe in more than a decade. The funding, over the three years, would be in the low seven figures, the official said, with an option to expand and continue the initiative thereafter.

Herbert Diess, the chief executive of Volkswagen Group, said he was concerned about the recent spike in anti-Semitism in Europe, and that Volkswagen had a special obligation to combat racism because of its origins in Nazi Germany.

"We have more obligation than others," he said. "The whole company was built up by the Nazi regime."

The initiative will have four components: education in schools, education in workplaces, lobbying in European capitals, and research through surveys.

Call for easier conversion

A slight majority of Jewish Israelis want it to be easier for people to convert to Judaism, according to a new survey.

Respondents were asked about whether they want conversions to be performed as leniently as possible according to Jewish

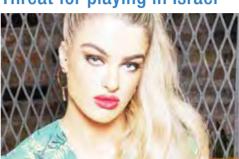
Fifty-two percent of Jewish Israelis want that to happen, while 35% want conversions to be more stringent, and 13% don't know. Among secular Jews, 68% want conversions to be easier; that number is only 2% among the haredi Orthodox.

The survey, performed by the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy

Research of the Israel Democracy Institute, comes amid a debate about conversions in Israel.

The chief rabbinate, which controls Jewish marriage, divorce, conversion, and burial in the Jewish state, is largely run by haredi Orthodox leaders. The rabbinate does not recognise any conversions performed abroad by non-Orthodox rabbis, and has also rejected some performed by Orthodox rabbis. People whose conversions are not recognised cannot marry in Israel or be buried in a Jewish cemetery there.

Threat for playing in Israel



Ireland's contestant in the Eurovision song contest said she received terrifying threats and abusive messages after performing in Israel.

Sarah McTernan, 25, told the Irish Sun over the weekend, "I got hundreds of threats... It did freak me out.'

In addition to threatening mail, much of which got delivered to her grandmother's house, the young singer also received

"hundreds and hundreds" of threatening and abusive messages on social media. She reportedly went offline for the days leading up to her appearance in the second semi-final of the competition held last month in Tel Aviv. She didn't advance to the final.

She said she knew representing Ireland in Israel would be controversial. "I was aware, but I didn't know how much of a backlash there

would be," she said. "I was happy to represent my country."

Left-wing Irish officials and performers called for their country to boycott Eurovision hours after Israel won the 2018 contest and the right to host

this year's Eurovision.

Nechama Rivlin dies at 73

Nechama Rivlin, the wife of President Reuven Rivlin, died on Tuesday at the age of 73, a day before her 74th birthday. She underwent a lung transplant three months ago.

Rivlin, who had in recent years rarely been seen in public without being attached to a portable oxygen tank, suffered from pulmonary fibrosis. The condition causes scar tissue to fill the lungs and makes it difficult to breathe. The transplant surgery was described as "complicated" by doctors, and she required a second surgery several days later.

"Medical efforts to stabilise her over time during the complicated rehabilitation period after the transplant did not succeed," the hospital said in a statement.

The Rivlin family thanked "citizens of Israel ... who have continued to ask after Nechama's health, to send letters and wonderful children's drawings to the hospital and to Beit HaNasi (the president's residence), and to pray for her every day, every hour. The Rivlins also thanked the Halabli family who donated their late son Yair's lung for the transplant.

All briefs supplied by JTA

YomTov Shabbat times

7/8/9/10 June				
CL	CL	CL	YTE	
17:05	17:57	17:57	17:57	Johannesburg
17:26	18:21	18:21	18:21	Cape Town
16:45	17:38	17:38	17:38	Durban
17:06	17:59	17:59	17:59	Bloemfontein
16:57	17:52	17:52	17:52	Port Elizabeth
16:51	17:45	17:45	17:45	East London
CL – Candle-Lighting				

YTE - YomTov ends

Torah Thought

A commanding voice

nd, Charlton Heston came down from Mount Sinai and gave us the Torah. Oops! Sorry, make that Moses. And, he was carrying the tablets with the Ten Commandments. The big 10, read in shuls around the world this coming Sunday morning for Shavuot, appear in the Book of Exodus, and are repeated in Deuteronomy as part of Moses' review of the past 40 years.

Moses describes how G-d spoke those words in a mighty voice that did not end. One of the explanations offered by Rashi is that Moses is contrasting G-d's voice with human voices. The finite voice of a human being, even a Pavarotti, will fade and falter. It cannot go on forever. But the voice of the Almighty did not end, did not weaken.

It remained strong throughout.

Is this all the great prophet had to teach us about the voice of G-d? That it was a powerful baritone? That it resonated? Is the greatness of the infinite one that he didn't suffer from shortness

of breath, that He didn't need a few puffs of Ventolin? Is this meaningful motivation for Jews to accept the Torah?

Moses was the greatest of all prophets. He foresaw what no other prophet could see. Perhaps he saw his people becoming caught up in the civilisation of ancient Greece, in the beauty, culture, philosophy, and art of the day. They might question whether Torah was still relevant.

Perhaps he foresaw Jews empowered by the industrial revolution, in which they might have thought the Torah to be somewhat backward. Or, maybe the Russian Revolution, in which faith and religion were deemed primitive.

Maybe Moses saw our own generation, with space shuttles and satellites, teleprompters, and technology. And he saw young people questioning whether the Good Book still speaks to them.

And so, Moses tells us that the voice that thundered from Sinai was no ordinary voice. The voice that proclaimed the Ten Commandments was a voice that was not only powerful at the time, but it did not end! It still rings out, still resonates, and still speaks to each of us in every generation, and in every part of the world.

Revolutions may come and go, but revelation

is eternal. The voice of Sinai continues to proclaim eternal truths that never become passé or irrelevant. Honour your parents, revere them,



look after them in their old age. Never abandon them to some decrepit old age home. Live moral lives; do not tamper with the sacred fibre of family life; be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Dedicate one day every week and keep that day holy. Stop the madness. Turn your back on the rat race, and rediscover your humanity and your children. Don't be guilty of greed, envy, dishonesty, or corruption.

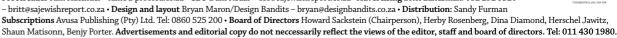
Are these ideas and values dated? Are these commandments tired, stale, or irrelevant? On the contrary. They speak to us now as perhaps never before. The G-dly voice has lost none of its strength, none of its majesty. The mortal voice of man declines and fades into oblivion. Politicians and spin-doctors come and go, but the heavenly sound reverberates down the ages.

Moses knew what he was saying, and who he was talking to. Torah is truth, and truth is forever. The voice of G-d shall never be stilled.

Jewish Report

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Human Rights Watch condemns torture by Hamas and PA

NICOLA MILTZ

uman Rights Watch (HRW) has called on governments to sever ties and cut off aid to Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA) because of their continued arbitrary arrest and torture of critics in the West Bank and Gaza.

HRW said Hamas and the PA's actions could amount to crimes against humanity under the United Nations' Convention against Torture. It therefore called on international powers to halt all aid to the Palestinian agencies responsible for abuse "until the authorities curb those practices and hold those responsible for abuse accountable".

Eight months ago, [HRW] accused the PA and Hamas of routinely engaging in "systematic" unwarranted arrests and torture of critics, suspected dissidents, and political opponents in the West Bank and Gaza. A new report released last week suggests that not much has changed.

The HRW investigates and reports on abuses globally. Israel has criticised it in the past for being biased towards the country.

However, in October last year in a report titled, "Two Authorities, One Way, Zero Dissent", the HRW accused both the PA and Hamas of developing "parallel police states" in the West Bank and Gaza.

In the 149-page report based on interviews with 147 witnesses, HRW detailed a common method of abuse and torture known as *shabeh* in which detainees are placed in painful physical positions for lengthy periods of time. This includes forcing detainees into squats, powerfully stretching their arms above or behind them, and leaving them standing or sitting for hours on end.

Such practices cause distress and trauma to detainees, while often leaving "little or no trace on the body", the report said.

The HRW's latest report is titled: "Palestine: No Letup in Arbitrary Arrests, Torture. Palestinian Authority, Hamas Muzzle Critics, Opponents". It shows that *shabeh* is still being practiced, as well as other forms of torture and human-rights violations.

The report said both the Fatah-led PA in the West Bank and Hamas authorities in Gaza are arbitrarily arresting "peaceful critics and opponents".

The widespread occurrence of such brutality indicates that "torture is governmental policy for both the PA and Hamas", according to HRW.

The October report cites Palestinian forces in the West Bank and Gaza regularly using threats of violence, taunts, solitary confinement, and beatings, to elicit confessions, punish, and intimidate activists.

Those subjected to this, the report says, are journalists, human rights workers, and peaceful activists

Both reports cite several cases in which activists or media workers were arrested for critical news articles or social-media posts and live streaming protest action. Hamas and the PA regularly abuse each other's activists in the territories they control, the reports say.

The two Palestinian factions split in 2007, after Hamas seized the Gaza Strip from forces loyal to PA President Mahmoud Abbas. For more than a decade, Hamas has maintained an iron grip on power, and suppressed any sign of public dissent.

In March, Hamas security members were seen arresting scores of people demonstrating against price rises and dire living conditions across Gaza.

Videos posted online showed officers beating unarmed "We want to live" protesters. Amnesty International said hundreds of people, including journalists attempting to document the rallies, had been subjected to arbitrary arrest

and torture. Abbas has also silenced dissent by clamping down on social media and news websites, with jail time for anyone charged of harming "national unity" or the "social fabric".

Both Hamas and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority denied the accusations, and said they would investigate.

The latest report said that from January



"The Palestinian Authority and Hamas remain bitterly divided, but unified in a common approach to crushing dissent..."

2018 through to March 2019, the PA admitted to detaining more than 1 600 people based on "peaceful expression". Hamas authorities arrested more than 1 000 during the March 2019 protests against its rule alone.

"The Palestinian Authority and Hamas remain bitterly divided, but unified in a common approach to crushing dissent," said Eric Goldstein, the deputy Middle East and North Africa director at HRW. "Leaders who have been in power for more than a decade without elections should at the very least listen to criticism, not punish it."

Last week, the former Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Arthur Lenk, tweeted, "I have issues with @hrw, but if you care about Palestinian lives, this is vital reading. Always easy to just blame Israel but here is a real discussion about awful behaviour by PA and Hamas. Friends of Palestinians need to speak out."

The HRW said there "have been no serious efforts to hold wrongdoers to account or any

apparent change in policy or practice" more than six months after its damning report.

It said both authorities "deny wrongdoing, and have failed to take meaningful action to address abuse, with impunity endemic".

From January 2018 until March 2019, no officers were convicted by Gazan courts for arbitrary arrest, mistreatment, or torture, while courts in the West Bank convicted only one security officer for these offences.

The report said that other countries should suspend assistance to Palestinian security agencies that routinely torture dissidents for as long as systematic torture and other serious abuses continue. This should include, in the case of the Palestinian Authority, the intelligence services, preventive security, and joint security committee. In the case of Hamas, it should include internal security.

"Continued promises to reform, and warnings about the fragility of their institutions fool no one when systematic abuse and impunity continue unabated," Goldstein said. "Governments should not fall for these tired excuses, but should cut ties to abusive Palestinian security forces."

South African lawyer Gilad Cohen said, "The PA and Hamas should adhere to the United Nations (UN) Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners – known as the Nelson Mandela Rules. These are guiding policies for all states to follow to ensure due process and fairness."

Cohen, who is involved in the Free Avera and Hisham Committee (two Israeli civilians being held hostage in Gaza) said the UN named the rules after Mandela, who is quoted as saying, "It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones."





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Top SA universities 'among world's best'

JORDAN MOSHE

he vice-chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Adam Habib, says South African top-end universities are comparable with any in the world.

He spoke to the SA Jewish Report this week in response to queries about the worth of a South African university degree now and in the future.

South African degrees are far from worthless, Habib says, in spite of negative perception following the recent protests which rocked local university campuses, and promises of free education.

"If you look at all the indicators by which we judge a university anywhere in world – research output, graduate output, skills capacity – our top-end universities are comparable with any across world."

In fact, they are financially a much better bet, he says. "You would pay R100 000 to R150 000 for accommodation for a Wits or UCT [University of Cape Town] degree," says Habib. "You would pay closer to R800 000 for the same at Oxford or Harvard. I would argue that relative to either of these renowned institutions, the degree we provide is comparable. You might have better access to some literature or equipment, but on balance, the quality of the degree is equal."

He points out that Wits graduates who pursue postgraduate degrees overseas perform exceptionally well overall, and it's "because of the grounding they receive here".

Habib believes that those who believe a South African degree is not comparable or under threat of becoming worthless are ignorant. "They are extrapolating from the political context of 2015 and 2016, and making assumptions about the value of our local degrees. As one who has taught and studied overseas, I think the top end of degrees is certainly comparable."

The United States (US) has about 5 000 tertiary institutions, Habib says, but only some of them offer a quality education. "The top 100 are magnificent institutions," he says. "The bottom 200 can be shocking.

"People are often unaware, and land up choosing places that are weaker than our best here. Sometimes they lack knowledge of higher education, and operate on perception rather than reality."

He does caution, however, that local universities are a differentiated lot, requiring careful selection before application. "For their cost, our top universities provide a world-class service."

Habib says the potential for free university education should not affect its quality. "It's not whether free education is offered, but whether the appropriate investment is made," he says. "If the government offers free education and provision is made for the additional fees, it will have no impact on its quality.

"If you don't make the necessary investment required, obviously there will be a crisis. However, that's never been on the cards. We have made it clear that free education is not possible without appropriate



investment."

The issue of whether the state can afford to support the project is a different question altogether, especially without cutting back on other initiatives such as healthcare. "If you ask me whether free education in higher education is possible without affecting quality, my answer is yes, as long as the government makes up the difference."

When it comes to employment prospects, Habib says we have to operate on the basis of data and evidence, not perception.

"There is a belief that there is no future for young white professionals in our country," he says. "If you look at the actual data, the people who are employed the fastest are these very people.

"This is because most employment in South Africa works on the basis

of networks, and a clear majority of jobs are offered on the basis of skills. In both areas, white professionals are at an advantage because of historical conditions. If you look at where unskilled people get jobs, you could argue in favour of the black majority.

"But if you look at where people get jobs in the private sector, the skills concentration and therefore employability lies primarily with white and Indian groups."

He stresses that there is an urgent need for all of us to look at the evidence before making hasty judgements. "People make [judgements] based on political rhetoric. Do Julius Malema and Jacob Zuma say troubling things? Absolutely, but so do Nigel Farage and Donald Trump. Globally, we have challenges. Populism is on the rise, as are ethnic identity challenges. They afflict South Africa and other countries.

"We can't run from these issues. We need to address challenges and hold people accountable. You won't get away from it by going to the United Kingdom or the US, but you will find the same reality.

"We witness many debates in South Africa – race, identity, and others. The fact is that they have the same in the US and elsewhere. The same is true of violent attacks at universities. The rise of anti-Semitism in America or Western Europe makes South Africa look mild in comparison. We may have other fights, but not often about religion. That is something we often forget."

Israeli skin bank saves Palestinian toddler's life

JORDAN MOSHE

ighteen-month-old Palestinian toddler
Shams Ismail was rushed to the Sheba
Medical Center in Israel recently with
extensive burns to more than half of her body.
Her chances of survival were slim.

For days, Israeli doctors fought to save her life.

Today, she is well on her way to recovery. The team of Israeli doctors used her own skin to save her life.

"Shams is from the Palestinian town of Rantis, and was burned in a house fire six months ago when a heater short-circuited and

started a fire in her room while she was sleeping," says Naomi Hadar, the executive director of the South African Friends of Sheba Medical Center.

Life-saving treatment was administered by the hospital's renowned national burn unit in Tel HaShomer. Professor Josef Haik, Dr Moti Harats, Dr Gregory Troddler, and Dr Ayelet Di Segni used a state-of-theart skin bank to treat her, growing new skin with which

to replace the burnt surfaces on her body. This was the first time in Israel a skin bank has been used in such an extreme burn case.

"Doctors take a few cells of skin, incubate them under special laboratory conditions, and grow them in larger pieces," says Hadar. "The girl was so small and so badly burned, taking skin samples was very difficult." Ismail arrived at the hospital in a terrible state with severe damage to her legs and stomach, with smaller burns on her arms and face.

The team of plastic surgeons used Sheba's Kauffmann-Green Skin Engineering Laboratory to grow new skin from just millimetres of Ismail's own remaining healthy skin in a bold attempt at repairing the extensive skin damage. Within 10 days, there was enough new skin to cover the toddler's burned stomach area.

"By using the patient's own skin, there's no

resistance to the skin graft," says Hadar. This treatment comes after years of using other methods, which were not always successful because of lack of skin or the likelihood of rejection. Doctors could cut skin from another part of the patient's body, stretch it and perform a transplant, but this painful procedure wasn't an option for patients who didn't have enough skin left to use. Doctors also tried using skin from cadavers, donors from the victim's family, and even other mammal species, but the patient's immune system usually rejected these grafts.

This method entails taking skin cells that can be biopsied and sent off to a laboratory,

now we are beginning a long and hopeful rehabilitation regimen."

Ismail remains at Sheba Medical Center, receiving regular graft treatment and care from Haik and his team. "The burns forced the amputation of both her legs, and she'll need intensive plastic surgery," says Hadar. "Nobody knows exactly how long she will be at the hospital, but it will be a while. At some point, she will be moved to rehab."

The medical team will ensure that her face and arms show as little damage and scarring as possible, and that she is entirely ready to return home without risk of complications before they discharge her.

Ishmail will therefore remain in their care longer than most Palestinian humanitarian medical cases to ensure full recovery and rehabilitation.

Hadar says this form of treatment could revolutionise burn treatment in South Africa, where burns are a crisis. The problem with bringing this treatment to other medical centres, however, is that very few hospitals

in the world have dedicated high-tech burncentre units and staff, as well as the ability to grow human skin for grafting.

Still, there are other innovations in this area that are accessible, and that would have a tremendous impact on local treatment. Says Hadar, "People who are burned know that one of the worst things is changing the dressing – some have to be sedated to have it removed. The Israeli medical industry has developed a special gun to apply a dressing without touching the wound, and which needs to be removed only after the wound has healed.

"Some of the treatments used widely today often cause suffering, unfortunately, but it doesn't have to be this way. Sheba prides itself on helping patients of all nationalities, races, and religions. We are ready and able to do good in the world. These medical innovations can help so many people."



Director of Sheba Hospital burn unit Dr Josef Haik (centre) and his medical team at work

where they are grown by being fed various nutrients under special conditions. The process can take some time, but eventually, the cells will divide until they've created a sheet of skin larger than the original sample.

The procedure was successfully used in 2016 in Germany to treat a seven-year-old who suffered from a genetic disease which left him with open wounds covering 80% of his body. An almost full-body, lab-grown skin transplant saved his life.

"Using one's own skin to grow additional skin in a laboratory and graft it back onto the body is essentially the best treatment available to burn victims today," says Haik, who is the director of the burn centre. "When Ismail came to us, she was in a very severe condition with no certainty of survival. Our highly talented team of medical experts was able to treat her with this new method, and

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Breaking bread and boundaries at Ramadan Shabbat

TALI FEINBERG

rofessor Jonathan Jansen had a huge smile on his face as he spoke at the recent Ramadan Shabbat at the Cape Town Progressive Hebrew Congregation (also called Temple Israel) in Wynberg last weekend. Muslims from the Open Mosque in the same suburb were invited to break their daily fast at a communal Shabbat and Iftar dinner.

"I get goosebumps standing here with you at this event," said Jansen, the keynote speaker. "I cannot tell you how incredibly humbled I am to see this in our beautiful country. It doesn't happen in too many places in the world.

"I want to thank your communities for your vision and foresight in understanding that when we share what we have, it does not make us less Jewish or Muslim – it makes us more human."

Jansen said that as a Christian from an evangelical family, he saw the

facebook

value of breaking down boundaries between religions. He told the Jewish and Muslim crowd that his father's name was Abraham, his mother's name Sarah, and his brother's name

Jansen made the statement that "grace was scandalous", meaning that when people come together, forgive each other, or unite against a common cause, it's so unusual that it makes other people angry. This response means we must look at ourselves and what we want for our society – especially now.

"What brings us together is much greater than what keeps us apart. At no other stage in human history is it more important for us to demonstrate the kind of grace that you have shown this evening, because we live in a very violent and dangerous world," he said with regard to the recent massacres at places of worship in Pittsburgh in the United States and Christchurch in New Zealand.

"This is a response to that, and



yet, when people get together, it causes alarm. So, thank you for your courage." Jansen said that New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern "redrew the boundaries of race, religion, culture, and identity" in her response to the Christchurch massacre. Her decision to wear a hijab when visiting the families of the victims, and by saying that "the people who died here are us, and the

people who killed are not us" was a hugely important moment.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's example of welcoming Syrian refugees into the country by standing on the tarmac with a blanket was another powerful gesture of leadership that our world desperately needs, he said.

Jansen said he had a photo from a previous Ramadan Shabbat gathering

at Temple Israel, which he had shown to audiences all over the country, from schoolchildren to adults. "Every time I show this photo, I literally see the emotions. Because people know what that symbolism means."

In thanking Professor Jansen, Rabbi Greg Alexander said that the event came about "because of wanting to redraw the lines. The progressive Jewish community starts with the questions, and not the answers, and we look at what we can do to create change. If these are not the walls we want to build, we must take them down, and redraw those lines."

Melissa Fagan attended the event for the first time. She said it was especially important for her young boys. "They've never really had contact with other faiths, and don't know enough about them. If we weren't part of this congregation, they wouldn't be exposed to this."

She described the atmosphere as relaxed, with congregants mixing and

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Continued on page 8>>



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6 SA JEWISH REPORT 7 – 14 June 2019

Jewish Report The source of quality content, news and insights

A flag by any other name...

s BDS (the Boycott Divestment, Sanctions movement) was preparing for its protest outside the Johannesburg City Council last Friday to demand that Sandton Drive be renamed Leila Khaled Drive, we wondered if this was just another protest. We have seen many of them, and often these protests are simply drawing attention to the anti-Israel organisation. Frequently we choose not to give them fuel.

While this particular protest appeared fairly usual, it was not. There was a truly sinister element.

This was the proliferation of Hezbollah flags, both in paper form and actual material, as well as in the rhetoric of the day.



This was new to South African BDS protests.

There is often the odd Hezbollah flag brought to BDS protests, but never more than one or two. This time, everywhere you looked, there were yellow and green flags.

Perhaps someone mass produced them, and handed them out to all who arrived to protest, as you would Israeli flags at a Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration. Perhaps those who waved them did so because they thought it was a good look to have, and a trendy idea. Or perhaps there is truly something much more threatening afoot.

On Thursday this week, the German parliament was scheduled to debate

completely outlawing Hezbollah – the Lebanese terror organisation – in its

"Hezbollah's goal is the destruction of Israel and the Jews, and we should not be offering a safe haven for them to hide in Germany, and finance their armed struggle in Lebanon against Israel from our territory," Alternative for Germany (AfD) Party MP Beatrix von Storch said in a statement on Tuesday.

The AfD is a far-right-wing party, the third largest political grouping in Germany. It brought the proposal to the German parliament.

The parliamentary debate follows a new German intelligence report that asserts that support for Hezbollah is on the rise, with more than 1 000 members in the republic.

Already, Hezbollah has been outlawed as a terror organisation in the Netherlands, the United States, and United Kingdom.

According to Hezbollah, G-d cursed all Jews as blasphemers damned for all time throughout history. A fundamental goal of the organisation is the total elimination of Israel and every Jewish civilian who lives there. Hezbollah vows not to recognise any treaty, ceasefire, and peace agreement with Israel. All of this information and much more on Hezbollah, its doctrine, goals, and attitude towards us, is easily accessible online. It's not rocket science.

For an organisation like BDS – which one would imagine keeps up to date on Middle East politics – to align itself with such an organisation makes a clear statement

However, BDS consistently purports to call for peace in the Middle East, and claims that it isn't anti-Semitic. If that's the case, then how can it allow Hezbollah flags all over its protests?

I certainly didn't see BDS leader Muhammed Desai upset at their presence. He seemed totally at ease with them. Surely, he realised that the incorporation of Hezbollah paraphernalia is tantamount to BDS aligning itself with this terror organisation.

Hezbollah is a danger to Jews everywhere. Now, let me be clear, I am not saying that there are Hezbollah members in South Africa. I have no such information at hand

I cannot say that those people carrying the flags at the protest even align themselves with Hezbollah's beliefs. For all I know, most of them could have been bussed into the protest and given flags to fly.

However, there were people stomping on Israeli and American flags and they called "Death to Israel!", "Death to the US!", "Death to Zionists!" It actually wasn't a militant, nor threatening looking crowd. It was the flags and what they mean that concerned me the most.

With this understanding, you can see why it sent chills down my spine seeing all those people happily waving Hezbollah flags in front of the Johannesburg City Council.

It's time for Hezbollah to be outlawed in South Africa as well – or at least there should be discussion about it. It should never be acceptable for the flag of this terror organisation, representing the destruction of Israel and the Jews, to be waved around in public places.

Shavuot

With Shavuot this weekend, we look forward to Torah learning and discussion, eating delicious milchik foods, and children bringing *bikkurim* (first fruits) to shul.

In this edition of the *SA Jewish Report*, there are some phenomenal stories written by great minds in South Africa and overseas that will give you food for thought over this festival.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach! Peta Krost Maunder Editor The reason for Lieberman upending Netanyahu's government

sraelis are going to the polls again over an issue that is as divisive as it is seemingly unsolvable.
Should ultra-Orthodox (haredi) men serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), or not?

The former defence minister and leader of the Yisrael Beiteinu (right-wing secular) party, Avigdor Lieberman, is adamant that they should. Last year, he drafted a bill proposing annual enlistment targets for the haredi community that would increase each year. If the targets were not met, there would be financial penalties against ultra-Orthodox institutions.

The bill infuriated the religious parties who were – and will again be – part of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing bloc. Without them, Netanyahu doesn't have a majority in the Knesset (parliament).

The problem last week was that without Lieberman, he also doesn't. The intractable position of both sides means that Israel is holding what many feel is an unnecessary election that will cost the country millions of dollars.

What's more, it begs the question: does the IDF actually need these ultra-Orthodox soldiers, or are Israelis going to elections over something the IDF might not actually want?

I posed this question to a random group of Israelis. Every single one, without fail, told me that the IDF didn't need soldiers who didn't want to serve. They said these "soldiers" become a danger to themselves and others. This is backed up by figures.

The IDF is struggling with a shortage of troops. After a 2015 amendment to the country's draft law, mandatory service for men dropped from three years to two years and eight months. By next year, there are plans to reduce it even further.

Lieberman's proposal requires that more than 3 000 ultra-Orthodox men enlist each year,

and just more than 600 take part in some kind of national service.

These numbers would then increase by a few percentage points annually. This is what all the fuss is about. But, and this is an important point, these numbers are still far short of making up the deficiency the army is grappling with.

Lieberman himself admitted that the battle was more symbolic than anything else.

And, it's extremely emotive. An Israeli mother whose son is serving in the army told me, "We are talking about our children's blood. There is a specific discrimination between our children and the ultra-Orthodox children. Fair is not even the word. I think our inner strength as a society is breaking. We are becoming two societies – it's them and us. It's them that don't serve, don't work. It's us who serve, work, support them. It has become them and us. But we are one nation, and it shouldn't happen."

By contrast, a young yeshiva student I interviewed defended his decision not to go to the army. "An intelligence soldier or a non-combat soldier is not necessarily putting his life at risk," he said, "and their contribution to Israel's security does not fall short of those who do risk their lives. I never saw the mother of an infantry soldier complain to the mother of an intelligence soldier, and ask her, 'How come my son is risking his life, and your son is not?'

"I am part of a 'unit' that preserves the Jewish intellect, and the Jewish mind. I think this is as important as any soldier. When the war is over, what will we have to come back to, what will we have left of our Jewish heritage if there are not

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier

'soldiers' like me?"

When Israel was founded in 1948, religious communities who did not serve in the IDF and instead studied Torah were a small percentage of the total Israeli Jewish population. But the ultra-Orthodox community is growing quickly. By 2065, it is expected to make up a third of the population

Still, as a reserve soldier who spoke to me insisted, "These are young men who don't want to be in the army. What are we going to do? Force them? I don't want to put my life in the hands of a soldier who doesn't want to be there in the first place.

"There are so many willing, able, and hugely impressive young men and women who want to serve their country. We really don't need a few hundred who will land up costing us more – both in terms of resilience and money."

That much is true. The IDF spends twice as much accommodating haredi soldiers within an ultra-religious framework than it does others. Most come from relatively low socioeconomic backgrounds, and many are treated as 'lone soldiers' after being shunned and cast out from their families.



The close proximity to female soldiers is another reason why many ultra-Orthodox men choose not to serve. As more women join combat units, this becomes another headache for the army to deal with.

There are some middle grounds like the Nahal Haredi battalion which comprises about 1 000 religious soldiers who spend half their day learning while serving in a fully segregated environment. Initiatives aimed at helping religious soldiers on their release from service can also incentivise such young men to serve, especially when one in two ultra-Orthodox males is unemployed.

But for the IDF itself, the question of whether a few hundred more soldiers – religious or not – join its ranks is not consequential.

Much more pressing are its concerns about the proposed two-month service reduction next year, and receiving a larger state budget. The latter would help motivate soldiers to make a career in the military. It would also allow the IDF to outsource some basic services to civilian companies instead of relying on its troops to perform them.

In the long run, this would assist with the shortage in numbers much more than all the hysteria and attention around ultra-Orthodox conscription.

Having said all of the above, it's worth pointing out that most Israelis believe that Lieberman is using this issue to upend Netanyahu. Not that he doesn't care about the haredi enlistment issue – he does – but most people in Israel believe he cares more about becoming a future prime minister.

Shavuot: always receiving

he year was 1935, and the Spanish government was making elaborate plans to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the Rambam's birth, seemingly a great honour and proud moment for Jews everywhere.

Yet, while many Jews around the world welcomed the initiative and prepared celebrations of their own, some had reservations. These concerns were addressed to the leading Torah sage of the time, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski. Here is his extraordinary response:

"We do not need to commemorate the Rambam's birth, for he lives on wherever teachers and students discuss his words; his teachings upon which we meditate every day are his eternal remembrance. This has been an everyday occurrence for many generations – the wellsprings have not ceased to this day."

Stamps and statues. Plaques and paintings. Buildings and bridges. Google Doodles. These are the traditional ways we commemorate the great people of the past. And the 1935 Spanish government sought to celebrate the legacy of the great Maimonides, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, the Rambam, in much the same way. But we Jews aren't in the habit of memorialising our leaders and teachers.

Rav Chaim Ozer's objection was based on the fact that we live with the Rambam – with his writings and teachings – every day. His philosophical ideas and halachic rulings form part of our collective Jewish consciousness. To commemorate an 800-year anniversary is to live in the past. Torah is about living in the here and now. The Rambam is not a historic relic; he is a figure of the present.

What, then, is our approach to history? Jewish history is rich and replete with important events. The Torah is filled with *mitzvot* (commandments) that are a remembrance of the past. Our holy days, the *chaggim*, are linked to historical events. And yet, there is tension between the past and the present. The Torah is very much about how we live life today. It seems to be rooted in both the present and the past.

This vignette about the Rambam provides a window into understanding the Torah's approach to history. We do more than remember the fact that the exodus from Egypt took place – we relive that liberation. The Rambam himself codifies – based on the Talmud – that a person is obliged in every generation to see themselves as if they had personally gone out of Egypt. And it's not just once a year. We live by the exodus daily – by its messages of faith in G-d, of the importance of freedom and of resisting tyranny, and of dedicating that freedom to something greater than ourselves.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, quoting from the writings of our sages, says Jewish time is not linear, but cyclical; that every year, when, for example, Pesach comes around, it's not that we are remembering an event that happened in the distant past, but rather that we experience the same spiritual energy that was unleashed in the world at the time of the original Pesach.

Similarly, when we keep Shabbat each week, we commemorate the anniversary of the creation of the world. But we also re-experience what it means that G-d is our creator, that we owe Him everything, and that the world is constantly being renewed and refreshed by G-d's pulsating energy into the molecules of the universe. We re-experience the same energy that G-d unleashed into the world on the seventh day of creation – the energy of rest and



rejuvenation and returning to source that was introduced on the very first Shabbat of human history.

This same principle applies to every one of the events that are recorded in the Torah, and that we are called on to remember. We are not merely remembering; we are reliving and reintegrating the experiences, and making them part of our daily lives, tangible and relevant in every way.

Arguably, no festival embodies this idea quite like Shavuot, which is the anniversary of the giving of the Torah exactly 3 331 years ago. The Kli Yakar points out that when the Torah calls on us to celebrate the festival of Shavuot, it does so without mentioning that it is the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at all. We infer that Shavuot is the anniversary of the giving of the Torah from the date on which the festival takes place (the 6th of Sivan), but there's no explicit mention of it. Why would the defining dimension of Shavuot not be directly stated by the Torah?

He answers that the Torah did not want us to fixate on one day as the anniversary of the giving of the Torah, to relate to this day as a memory of the distant past.

Our relationship with the Torah is immediate and visceral. We receive it – we incorporate it into our lives – every day. When the Jewish people are approaching Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, the verse says, "In the third month of the children of Israel leaving the land of Egypt, on this day they arrived in the desert of Sinai." Rashi notes that it says "this day" and not "that day". "That day" would imply an event in the past, "this day" implies that it's happening today. Right now. Let us stop for a moment now and realise that at this moment in time, we are actively receiving the Torah from G-d.

The Shema speaks about "these words that I command you today" (Deuteronomy 6:6). Rashi, on that verse says, that "today" means that the words of Torah should always feel as new and fresh to us as the day they were given. This is not some ancient, dusty manuscript stored away in a museum somewhere. This is a living Torah, a *Torat Chaim*. It gives us our mission and purpose; direction and guidance on how to live and why to live, and what our ideals are. It is something of immediate relevance, every moment of every day.

The Talmud cites the verse in Proverbs which compares our relationship with the

Torah to a suckling infant with its mother; the more we draw out of it, the more lifegiving nutrients are produced. The Torah is an endless reservoir of spiritual sustenance. No matter how deep you go, you can always go deeper. A small child, for example, can learn the first verse of the Book of Bereishit, "In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth", and understand it in a very basic way. And the greatest Torah sage of the

generation can learn that
same verse with all of its
nuances and mystical meanings in a much
deeper way. In each case, it's the same Torah
being learnt. But there's always something

There's a unique offering which was brought in the Temple on Shavuot – two loaves of bread, made from the newly ripened first grains of the wheat harvest. The Torah calls this offering the *Mincha Chadasha* – the "new offering". Why this focus on newness? By now, the reason should be clear. Shavuot is a celebration of freshness and renewal. It's a celebration of renewed inspiration and renewed challenge. It's a celebration of Torah today.

We must live life dynamically, not statically. We do not remain in frozen perfection like the angels; we struggle constantly to become better people. We do not remain set in what we know and what we've experienced; we must always search in the Torah for new knowledge and fresh inspiration. This is the way G-d wants us to live, and He sets the example. As we say in the morning prayer service, G-d "renews the works of creation in His goodness, at every moment of the day, always".

Just as G-d recreates the world from afresh, moment by moment, every single day, we should be recreating our own personal world on a similar basis, always looking for renewed inspiration, receiving the Torah into our lives that is as fresh as the day it was given.

Shavuot is a great place to start.



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#MeToo movement starts in childhood

TAL I FFINRERG

"Every fifth child is going through some kind of sexual harassment, and we don't know about it," says Dr Ayelet Giladi, a world-renowned sociologist and expert on this phenomenon. Her research has shown that people who sexually harass others often begin this behaviour in childhood.

"I was doing my PhD in sociology and was trying to find out how and when sexual harassment starts. We think of sexual harassment and abuse as being between two adults, but I realised it can originate a lot earlier. However, there was no research on this in Israel. So Giladi did her PhD in London, where her findings led to new ways of understanding sexual harassment in children.

She was in Cape Town last week to work with United Herzlia Schools, Waldorf Schools, and the Dream Factory, which supports women who have been sexually abused. But, her work is relevant to every facet of society. Ultimately, she found that when children play, they learn norms of behaviour. And if sexual harassment is allowed, it can continue into adulthood.

She gives an example of how she once saw a boy run up to a girl on the playground and kiss her on the cheek. The girl asked him not to do it, but he did it again, so she told her teacher. In spite of the girl being upset, the teacher told her that the boy liked her, "wanted to be her boyfriend", and she must give him her phone number.

This "boys will be boys" scenario is typical in all childhood environments, but Giladi says it needs to change because it is actually sexual harassment. If that boy is told that this behaviour is okay and that girl is told it is normal and she must welcome it, these patterns will continue into adulthood.

To put a stop to this, Giladi works with schools, teachers, parents, children, and caregivers across Israel through her organisation Voice of Child Association for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse among Young Children, under the hashtag #MeTooChildren.

Her workshops explain what is acceptable and what is not, and empowers children to know how to react if they are sexually harassed. It also teaches children and parents to put a stop to behaviours that begin in childhood which could lead to antisocial behaviour later.

Giladi works with children as young as four,



because at this age, they begin to understand gender norms and the boundaries regarding their bodies.

Her workshops are age-appropriate, using animals like a tortoise, a snail, and a frog to talk about respect, dignity, and equality.

At the same time, she ensures that children have the language to understand these values, and she also ensures that they use the proper words for private parts. "Once they have the language and the tools, they can go out into the world and be assertive about their bodies," says

Giladi.

She points out that this is relevant to all parents, not only those with girls. The most common sexual harassment she sees is boys to girls, then boys to boys, then girls to girls, and then girls to boys. For example, she spoke to boys who play a game where they squeeze the private parts of another boy if he misses scoring a goal in sport. Girls touch each other's breasts to guess the cup size when they get their first bra. All of these constitute sexual harassment. In Israel, parents can sue for this kind of behaviour, it is taken so seriously.

Giladi says if children behave like this, it is usually about power, as sexuality is not yet in play. She mostly sees it in children who are in

the middle of the social pecking order, and want to gain access to the top of the hierarchy by doing something "illicit" or "brave".

What are the signs that a child might be being sexually harassed or even abused? Giladi says to look out for bedwetting, crying, not wanting to go to school, making sexual comments or jokes, isolating themselves, bulimia, anorexia, and complaining of pain that is not easily explained by a doctor. Ultimately, "if a child's behaviour changes, then look into it. Don't explain it away or say it is a phase that will pass," says Giladi.

Giladi trains people all over the country to run her workshops and implement her methods. She is also the national HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents and Preschool Youngsters) Director in Israel, which serves more than 3 000 families a year. She also oversees seven prevention programmes in about 90 municipalities which educate at-risk families before the birth of the child until the child is seven years old.

She has written a book, Sexual Harassment

– No Children's Play, which focuses on
identifying early childhood sexual harassment,
understanding and coping with it, and
preventing it in the education system and at
home. The book can be purchased online.

Giladi's work has been recognised by the Israeli government. Her Voice of Child Association received a certificated from the Israeli ministry of education, and she received a certificate of recognition from ICASH (the International Coalition against Sexual Abuse) for her contribution to sexual-abuse research.

"I've been researching this for 19 years, and the world is now ready to hear it," says Giladi, referring to the #MeToo movement. She wants parents to know that they have the power to encourage a new dynamic between boys and girls, and that it is no longer acceptable to justify behaviour as "boys will be boys". Ultimately, if we work to change this now, these children will not need a #MeToo movement when they are adults.

Protestors support Hezbollah at BDS rally >> Continued from page 1

The United Kingdom (UK) banned the organisation in February. Membership is considered a criminal offence there, carrying a maximum sentence of up to 10 years.

The Hezbollah flag was noticeably absent from the Al-Quds rally in London last week where it has been seen openly in the past.

BDS, which was supported by the African National Congress, Economic Freedom Fighters, and the minor Al-Jama-ah Party (which originally called for the street name to be changed in council last year), handed over a memorandum to acting mayor Funzela Ngobeni.

The memorandum demanding the immediate name change was addressed to the

mayor, speaker, and Johannesburg council. It threatened to "escalate" the campaign if it was not done.

This week, members of the council's community development department met relevant city officials to discuss the matter.

The spokesperson for the speaker of council, Lillian Kolisang, told the *SA Jewish Report* that despite budget constraints, before such re-naming proposals could be finalised, due process must be followed in accordance with the Policy on Naming of Streets and Public Places.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the council said, "At the heart of the naming policy, there is the need for public consultation as an essential element of good governance, and this

aspect will still need to be addressed through the city's processes."

Solomon has written extensively about terror organisations including Hezbollah. In an article titled, "Hezbollah: The Criminal Syndicate", he investigates the criminal activity Hezbollah uses to fund itself, including drug trafficking, kidnapping, the diamond trade, cigarette smuggling, and intellectual property crime.

"Hezbollah has proven itself a tangible threat to international peace and security, and will continue to do so as long as its criminal network stays intact," he said.

When the UK banned the organisation earlier this year, Solomon told the SA Jewish Report that South Africa should do the same.

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I look forward to meeting you

Breaking bread and boundaries at Ramadan Shabbat

>> Continued from page 5

chatting, while the Muslims broke their fast over tea and dates.

The Shabbat service followed, and the main meal included variety from both communities, ranging from chopped herring to samoosas. "It was wonderful to see how the two services fitted together, and after the meal, the Muslim community completed their prayers," said Fagan.

She said Temple Israel would be hosted by the Open Mosque over Chanukah, which she looked forward to attending. "The evening made me realise that Muslims and Jews are really not that different to each other."

Rabbi Alexander said Temple Israel had hosted Ramadan Shabbat for the past four years. "It is always a significant Shabbat as much for us as for our Muslim guests. When the mosque massacres happened in Christchurch in March, we immediately reached out to the Muslim community to show support. Especially here in Cape Town, there is no reason for Jews and Muslims to hate each other. There has been a long history of interaction between our communities, and this continues today."

'Pills don't teach skills' says ADHD parent

NICOLA MILTZ

or Lorian Phillips, it seems like a lifetime since she felt like she was on permanent speed dial with her boys' primary school.

The successful clinical psychologist and mother of three has two sons (she has asked for them not to be named) with a form of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Her second child was diagnosed first with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) when he was very young. He was dreamy, unfocused, and distracted. Her first born was diagnosed later with ADHD, and he was prone to outbursts, tantrums, obsessive nagging, arguing, and anxiety.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder comprises three distinct subtypes namely inattentive (traditionally called ADD), hyperactive-impulse (traditionally called ADHD), and a combination. Symptoms can vary widely from the bouncing-off-the-walls energy to quiet spaciness and profound disorganisation.

Phillips gives talks at schools that relate to the lessons she learnt in bringing up these children. She delves into this complex and highly misunderstood neurological condition that often leaves parents (and teachers) frustrated and bewildered.

After trying to fathom what made her boys tick, it finally clicked that they had a neurological condition, and that their behaviour was out of their control and not

It was then that she realised that her job going forward – if she wanted to maintain her sanity – was to teach them how to manage themselves so they could function

Instead of viewing them as being "put on earth to punish her", she began to see them as little boys struggling to regulate themselves, and most likely feeling quite frightened and overwhelmed, she told the SA Jewish Report.

She read all she could on the subject, and gained a deeper understanding of how the brains of children with ADHD work. It changed how she dealt with her boys, and led to her developing her ADHD parenting course.

In a nutshell, she explains how all the functions affected by ADHD are located in the frontal lobes of the brain. This is the part of the brain that has to be awake to carry out vital functions such as sustained attention, organisation, planning and prioritising, time management, emotional and behavioural control, and working memory, for example. She calls these "executive skills" as they "execute our daily ability to function effectively".

In all of us, dopamine is the main brain chemical and neurotransmitter responsible for waking up our brain to carry out all these executive functions such as to sit still and calm down.

In the brain of a person with ADHD, a message is fired off by dopamine, and then there is a "re-uptake system" which, she explains, literally acts like a vacuum cleaner sucking the dopamine back so that the message doesn't get across fully. There is no scientific way to measure how much dopamine gets sucked back, which explains the wide range in behaviour.

Medication triggers more dopamine being absorbed, which goes a long way, but there is often still a gap. Medication also does not teach a child how to think or plan. "Pills don't teach

skills," said Phillips.

"We have to do the teaching very consciously, intensely, and for much longer than for a non-ADD child," in order to alter and lay down new neural pathways, she said.

She realised that her job was to play the role of being "my children's frontal lobe", while at the same time teaching them the skills they needed.

"Both ADHD and ADD kids are distracted. While ADHD kids are distracted by their external world, everything going on around them, ADD kids are distracted by their internal worlds - their thoughts and ideas - and so become dreamy and lost in their own

She learnt some fundamental lessons along the way which she shares with parents and teachers.

She learnt to stop telling her boys to sit still or stop fidgeting. The movement wakes the brain up to stimulate dopamine production. Instead, let them use a fidget cube, squeeze a stress ball, or sit on a bouncy ball.

She learnt that she had to engage and activate her sons' brains in order to keep them producing dopamine. She had to gain their interest and engagement. This required imagination and consistency.

"The best method to stimulate the uninterested brain is short-term rewards. These kids thrive on reward, and they do badly on punishment."

Phillips has many creative ideas for parents when it comes to homework which helps keep the dopamine levels flowing and the tantrums or apathy at bay. Break the work down into sections, put in short movement breaks, use lots of different mediums like crayons or window markers.

Getting dressed for school can be torturous. "Make it fun by playing a favourite song, or challenge them to get ready by the time you count to a certain number," she said.

"It is very draining and exhausting initially," but eventually new behaviours kick in, she said.

Children with this condition can lag behind in maturation by two to three years, so she urges parents to keep their expectations reasonable, and not compare their children to others as it can be damaging to their self-esteem.

To encourage self-interest, say to the child that if you do your maths now, then you can play soccer afterwards. "If they know that they will get their reward by doing what you want, they are far more likely to go along with it and it reduces the tantrums."

Phillips encourages a growth mind set, so that with effort and practice they can improve and change.

Tied into this is the importance of praise. "These kids get so undermined, sometimes by us in our frustration, that they desperately need positive affirmation."

Other helpful tips from Phillips include keeping instructions short, and maintaining daily structure and routine which creates a feeling of control and safety.

It is important to stay calm (as difficult as this can be) and not lose one's temper, as this rattles them and leads to greater outbursts.

> Choose a time when they are in a good space to communicate with them about their feelings and discuss ways of coping with difficult situations.

Phillips' relationship with her boys has blossomed. Her oldest is now 19. "We have a close relationship and a bond that I would never have imagined."

Her second "inattentive" son is almost 17 in Grade 11. "From being quite floaty and often disorganised, and having to teach him many organisational

(3)

Lorian Phillips

and planning skills up to last year, he seems to have had a maturational shift and is working consistently and organising himself well."

Phillips stresses that children with this condition are "unique individuals with different

strengths and weaknesses". In her experience, it's an ongoing process, with

different challenges at different stages but "things do get Michael David QUALITY WORKMANSHIP



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Mind the gap year

JORDAN MOSHE

rade 12 students often find themselves in a dilemma about their options after matric. The pressure to begin university studies and get on with life is tremendous, and taking a gap year seems like a waste of time. On the other hand, the thought of committing to at least three further years of studies without first taking a break is equally daunting, making the decision about what to do after matric extremely difficult.

"The pressure students feel as matric comes to an end frequently comes from their parents," says Joseph Gerassi, executive head at Redhill School. "There's a belief that if a child doesn't go straight to university, they never will. They will fall out of the discipline of exams and learning, and never return."

"My experience tells me that this is nonsense," Gerassi says. "Today, matric is probably the most pressurised year of the first 30 years of one's life. Comparatively, even the first year of university is a breeze, as you need only 50% to pass."

The stress of the matric year takes its toll on students, and should be borne in mind when making decisions about the future, he says. "Our matric students write exams in seven subjects. Many take on two or even three more. By the end of the year, most students are burned out emotionally and academically, but many of them go on to a degree straight away, in spite of not really knowing what they want to do."

For this reason, a gap year might be a good idea. "Every student is different," says Gerassi. "Not all are burned out, many know what they want to do, and can go to university directly. There's nothing wrong with that. However, some need time away from the rigours of study, and a gap year is therefore a good idea."

There are various definitions of a gap year, he says, but it's not time off spent doing nothing. "It should be relaxed, but time spent doing something constructive. Whether it's for six months or more, working at a job, acquiring a skill or volunteering, you need to guard against thinking of doing nothing."

Besides the obvious benefit of having a break after the stress of high school and matric in particular, gap years can have tangible benefits when it comes to mental health, says psychologist David Abrahamsohn.

"In 2013, about one-third of university-age students in America reported experiencing depression, and almost half experienced overwhelming anxiety," he says. "Gap years can give students the tools they need to navigate the challenges that adult life brings."

Gap-year activities also expose students to situations that require critical thinking, adaptability, and problem solving, allowing them to develop personality strengths. "They are beneficial for students who haven't been exposed to many experiences outside of their families, community, and school. Through a gap year, people are often pushed out of their comfort zones when they experience different customs, cultures, and languages."

Abrahamsohn says a gap year might also help students to navigate the challenges of tertiary education, a point with which both Gerassi and Dr Max Price, the former vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town (UCT), agree.

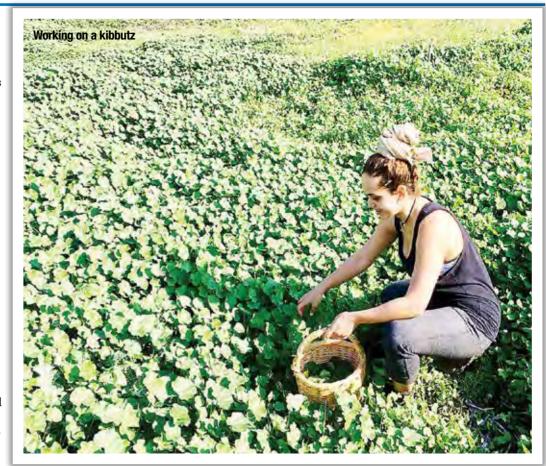
Says Price, "Although we can't prove it empirically, we've often found that students who take a gap year adjust better to the demands of university.

"For many of them, it's the first time they are away from home, outside of a familiar environment, or are responsible for their own studies and lives in general. It's their decision whether to go to class or not, whether they will go out for the night and miss the next day.

"Some students who go to university directly find this difficult to handle, and their freedom often results in failing and not adapting to the huge jump educationally and socially."

The discipline of work experience or volunteering might inform career and study choices, offer a global perspective, and make better students, Price says.

Unfortunately, the year could have the opposite effect. "Some come back very unsettled and more confused," says Price. "They find it difficult to readjust to study. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that shows how one might respond. The family and



student must think through what will work in their case, emotionally, academically, and financially."

Gerassi says a gap year need not come immediately after matric, but can take place after initial undergraduate study or a few months before enrolment in some cases. "A gap year is a good idea at some point. If one goes directly into university after matric, it's best to take some time off before an honours or master's degree."

Whenever one chooses to take it, all agree that it needs to be a productive and structured year. Says Gerassi, "Even an ulpan kibbutz is a learning experience. I am not for doing nothing or just going to 'find yourself' – you don't. You can find yourself within a programme, by learning something, or working at a job.

"The concept of a gap year is brilliant one. Whether it is after school or undergraduate study depends on the student. It's a meaningful gift."

Beloved KD security guard graduates in computers

MIRAH LANGER

Mandla Mpofu, a beloved member of the King David Linksfield campus, expressed his gratitude to the community earlier this month after graduating from college.

Mpofu's graduation was a huge milestone in the long journey he has travelled from growing up in Zimbabwe as the youngest of six siblings. Though he is the last-born member of his family, he is the breadwinner, to whom "everyone looks for each and everything".

"Jews I love you with all my heart. You made me who I am today. My children have got food and clothes because of you. Forward with Jews, and forward with Israel!" Mpofu said.

"I came here about 20 years ago because of the economy in Zimbabwe," he said.

Subsequently, three of Mpofu's siblings have died, but he remains close to his older brother and sister.

In Zimbabwe, Mpofu completed his O Levels (the equivalent of matric), then worked as a substitute maths teacher in a

However, at the age of 22, he decided to seek greater possibilities in South Africa. "When I came here, I started as a security guard. In my first job, they posted me at King David High School, Linksfield."

Mpofu worked in this role for the next five years, achieving iconic status.

"When I came to the school as a security guard, I used to help students coming out of the gate with my maths skills – that is how I became famous. Then I started to know them by name, and would greet them individually. It was special to them because they felt safe knowing that I knew every student."

Soon, the parents became fans as well. In 2010, one family even took Mpofu to the soccer world cup – a highlight for this married father of two.

Shortly afterwards, Marc Falconer, then the principal of the high school, called Mpofu with

a proposal for a new career.

Falconer asked Mpofu to take on the role of student controller. This involved checking student attendance of classes, ensuring that their uniforms were correct, confirming all was in order with teachers, and generally making sure that the campus ran smoothly every day.

As a security guard, Mpofu had woken up at 04:00 to travel by train to the school in time for

"I was putting money away. The day I got my licence, I bought my first car."

He was also offered the chance for further study by the school board and four years ago, he embarked on an information technology course at Boston City Campus in Orange Grove.

He chose to study computers, he said, because "they are the future".

Balancing studies and work required strict self-discipline.

Mpofu, who by now had moved to live in staff accommodation on the school campus, designed a timetable for himself to ensure that he managed his time.

"I woke up at 04:00 and took a shower. At 04:30, I started studying until 07:00. At 07:00, I left my house and went to work. After work, I would go back home and study from 18:00 to 19:00. From 19:00 to 20:00, I would relax, watching TV.

Earlier this month, all Mpofu's hard work paid off when he celebrated his graduation with a Higher Certificate in Information Technology. He is now a qualified systems administrator with wideranging skills in the field.

"It was a marvellous graduation, and what a surprise as at the graduation I was honoured as the top-achieving student for 2018. I was top of my course, having achieved three distinctions."

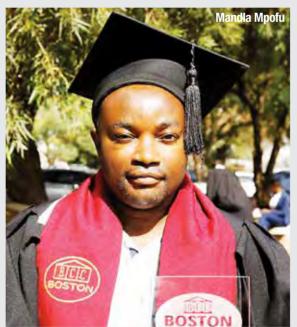
Mpofu's wife, who works as a domestic worker in the Linksfield area, as well as his sister-in-law, were there to cheer for him at the ceremony.

His children, a son of 17 and a daughter aged 10, are also proud of him. The two are attending school in Zimbabwe.

"My son sent me a message saying, 'Congratulations father!', saying I am a role model and someone he can look up to."

When it comes to the future, Mpofu looks forward to helping others with his skill set, and wants to continue his education.

"I would love to go on and study and study until I become a Dr Mpofu!"



the 06:00 start to his 12-hour shift. As such, this change of career was most welcome.

"I was blessed," he said, pointing out that he has changed and grown a lot since he became a core part of the campus.

"I am one of the respected people in my family; I am one of the respected people in the Jewish community. I'm not shy to say I'm like this because of Jews."

Mpofu has received encouragement in other areas as well.

At first, he travelled to school on a bicycle. Then, a member of the Jewish community paid for him to receive driving lessons. 7 – 14 June 2019 SA JEWISH REPORT 11

'The Girl from St Agnes' exorcises demons for local filmmaker

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

arriet Gavshon, a stalwart in the film and television industry in South Africa, wanted to create a series based on a girls boarding school because she had been to one. The Girl from St Agnes was her ticket.

A teenage girl at an elite girls' boarding school is found dead. It's ruled a tragic accident, but there's something more sinister at play. Launched on Showmax earlier this year, the series has created a buzz, and will reach international TV screens by early 2020.

Gavshon, the managing director and shareholder of the award-winning film and television production house Quizzical Pictures, said, "Showmax was looking for an English drama, and the idea had been kicking around in my head for a long time – a murder mystery set in a girls' private school. I was trying to exorcise some demons of my own about going to a girls' private school, and about being a Jewish girl at that school.

"Originally the character who died was Jewish, but ultimately, she ended up not being Jewish. I wrote the original idea, and then handed it over to the show's writers. The emotional tone of the story tried to capture something – first my memories, and then the memories of many of the writers and directors on the series."

Having attended St Mary's in Pretoria as a day girl, Gavshon often had to deal with the disconnect between her home and school life. "While in the end the show wasn't my story at all – nothing as extreme happened to me or anyone I knew at school – making it allowed me to dwell for a while on my memories," she said. "I thought of that feeling of being trapped in an environment that's so rule bound. As a Jewish girl in a school like that, I did feel dislocated. I grew up in a kosher home and I spent Shabbat at shul, and then I went to that school. So, I had two sides to my life."

Yet, The Girl from St Agnes raises issues far beyond any individual experience. "We wanted to make a series which captured something that mattered," said Gavshon. "The abuse of young girls and the idea of generational abuse, abuse that comes down over generations. We also explored the tone of female friendships; they feel resonant whichever school you went to."

Nimrod Geva, a producer on the series, said the show evoked memories for him as well. "I liked the world immediately," he said. "I could see the misty rolling hills in a really prestigious, uptight private school with dark stuff happening in the background that no-



one wants to talk or know about. The idea of appearance versus reality appealed to me. I went to King David, which was a kind of intense private school. It was very different in a lot of ways, but the religiosity and links to community and tradition were things that jumped to mind."

Geva likes the fact that the story reflects social issues and matters of real concern. "We dealt a lot with gender, with power, privilege, and somewhat with race," he said. "It was an effective way to reflect on where we are in 2019 as a country, but within this microcosm of a really elite private school."

Gavshon said that while some aspects are unique to South Africa, the show has an international feel. "Our international distributor, Red Arrow, came in from the beginning, so we always knew it was going to be distributed internationally," she said.

The show should be flighted internationally, in the United Kingdom and United States, by the beginning of 2020. "It's the first South African series that's getting big international distribution like this," said Geva.

Gavshon said the show was a cautionary tale about taking care of each other. "The world for young girls is not an easy place, so it comes down to the advice I would give to my own daughter, which is look out for each other. It also reflects the idea that secrets breed secrets. And it offers lessons for parents about talking to their children."

Said Geva, "It looks at the pressure kids are under today, the incredible stress and expectation placed on them. It's also about the importance of friendship, and the way girls' relationships are affected by guys. We look at how teenagers are split into two selves, the self they present to adults versus the self they are

with their friends and online. Straddling these selves is becoming trickier."

Also somewhat tricky is the entry archway of the fictional St Agnes school, which some have said is reminiscent of Auschwitz. "I didn't even think of that," said Gavshon. "That's completely subconscious, I think. People take images and they read their own experiences into it." Geva said the likeness did occur to him once he saw it. "I can see why people have that response. I don't think it was intentional. They wanted to keep the name on the arch, and once you're working with wrought iron and grey and mist, it creates a mood that might suggest that."

"Initially I thought there was no relationship between being Jewish and my work," Gavshon said, "but then I was asked to speak on the topic at Limmud one year. I realised that I had created many Jewish characters, particularly Jewish female characters, almost unconsciously. I spoke to a Jewish director about how, broadly speaking, Jews in South Africa occupy such an interesting position as simultaneously the oppressor and the oppressed. It's an ambiguous position."

Asked what it takes to succeed in the industry, Gavshon stressed the importance of resilience. "Never take no for an answer. I'm quite dogged, resilient, and optimistic. When I've had disappointments – and of course there have been many – I've just shaken them off and started again."

Geva emphasised the importance of networking. Currently in Los Angeles trying to get some projects off the ground, he said being Jewish often helped. "The Jewish network is always useful. I don't want to make it sound like a mafia here," he laughs, "but there some nice connections."

Leading the Rubik's Cube challenge in Africa

TALI FEINBERG

ameron Blumenow is only 16 years old, but he holds the South African and African records for the fastest completion of the Rubik's Cube, being able to do it in seconds.

"I hold the African record of 39.60 seconds, which is my average of five attempts on a Rubik's Cube with four layers. I also hold the South African record for my average of solving a three-layered cube with one hand in 18.05 seconds. Then, I hold the South African record for a single solve of a three-layered cube in 6.96 seconds," he says.



The Rubik's Cube can be rearranged in 43 quintillion different ways, writes Harry Wallop in the *Daily Telegraph*. It was invented in 1974 by Ernő Rubik, a Hungarian architect who wanted a working model to help explain three-dimensional geometry. After designing the "magic cube" as he called it (twice the weight of the current toy), he realised he couldn't actually solve the puzzle. After a month, and using a method of rearranging the corners of each side first, he finally solved it.

It seems like young people have always had a knack for solving the Rubik's Cube – or perhaps they just refuse to give up. In 1981, when it was a worldwide craze, a 12-year-old boy, Patrick Bossert, wrote a book titled *You Can Do the Cube*, which sold more than 1.5

million copies. The Rubik's Cube has become a feature of popular culture, and even featured on *The Simpsons* six times.

Blumenow, who attends King David Linksfield, says that he "started cubing in 2015, and I didn't ever realise I had a talent for it. I just kept practising and improving".

How did he get so good at it? "There are lots of good tutorials online on how to solve the cube and get faster at it. I learned a lot from them, practised, and over time, I got quicker. It doesn't require any real dedication, I just practise often because I enjoy it."

Blumenow's records were officially recognised by an organisation called the

World Cube Association, which holds competitions all over the world.

"There are official delegates at these competitions that make sure everything is done correctly, and it posts official results for anyone who has ever competed. There are official world records, continental records, and national records," he says. "Just like any other competitive 'speed-cuber', my goal is to hold a world record."

While he doesn't think "cubing" has any significant impact on brain development, "it does help one to look at particular situations from a different angle". Blumenow doesn't think his skills are valuable training for a future career, and he isn't sure what he wants to study.

But in a world filled with technology, he says there is still something captivating about a classic toy like the Rubik's Cube. "It's very simple yet very complex, and very eye-catching. Everyone knows what a Rubik's Cube is, and when they actually learn how to solve it, they realise just how fun it can be. There are also

hundreds of different variants that you can

solve."

For those who want to follow in his footsteps and get into "cubing", he advises looking at the hundreds of excellent tutorials online. "The Rubik's Cube is much easier to solve than people think," he says. "It is seen to be an 'impossible' challenge, but only a little skill is needed to learn how to solve it. You definitely don't need to be good at maths to solve one, and if you just put a little bit of effort in, you could learn how to solve it in just a couple of days."



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In Judaism, abortion is not a right – and pregnancy is a responsibility



OPINION

Rabbi Avi Shafran – JTA

s in all life matters, when it comes to abortion, Judaism doesn't speak of rights, but responsibilities and obligations. Seeing things through that lens can be a real eye opener.

The concept of "rights" is deeply ingrained in our Western minds. We rarely stop to question it. But the idea, as wonderful as it is and as helpful as it has been to humanity, doesn't coexist very well with a fundamental Jewish truth: everything benefiting us isn't due us, but is rather a gift that we are charged to use responsibly in the service of something higher than ourselves.

We have no legal or moral claim on financial success, happy marriages, health or good fortune – no "right" to any of those things – in Jewish law or in the Bill of Rights.

In addition to having no right to such things, Judaism also teaches that we have a fundamental obligation to act responsibly toward others.

While the much-invoked aphorism "the right to swing my fist ends where the other man's nose begins" may well reflect the American legal approach, Judaism sees the assailant who doesn't stop at a nose not as having violated the nose-owner's rights, per se, but as having incurred a responsibility – an obligation to pay for the damage, pain, medical bills, missed work, and embarrassment that the fist owner has wrought. It's a subtle but important distinction.

Which brings us to the religious stance on abortion. As in many areas of *halacha*, it is complex. There are a variety of approaches, situations, and opinions. A good overview of the *halacha* of abortion was written recently for *JTA* by nurse practitioner Ephraim Sherman. But a compendium of sources and applications cannot touch the core issue, the one that should



be a game changer for Jewish-minded Jews: responsibility.

Abortion, in Jewish law, is not a right. In the vast majority of cases it's actually a wrong. But even in cases where it is permitted or required, as when a Jewish mother's life is endangered, even indirectly (or, although the matter is hardly free of controversy, according to some respected rabbinic opinions when the pregnancy seriously jeopardises the mother's health), the decision to terminate a pregnancy is not a question of a woman's right to choose but of her responsibility to choose correctly, her obligation to do what halacha counsels in her particular case, whatever that may be.

And so, from a Jewish perspective, all the constitutional, judicial, and philosophical issues whacked back and forth across the tennis court of public discourse are beside the main point.

It's not the stage of pregnancy that ultimately matters, and not the "status of a foetus". Not "ensoulment" and not the spectre of looming back-alley abortionists. What counts alone in Judaism is the responsibility to do what Jewish law requires in any particular case.

Most reasonable people on both sides of the perennial abortion debate would like abortion to be rare. Currently, although the abortion rate in the United States has dropped somewhat in recent years, it is very far from uncommon. The predominant reasons for seeking an abortion, according to a 2013 US National Library of Medicine-National Institutes of Health survey, have been financial (40%), timing (36%), partner-related reasons (31%), and the need to focus on other children (29%).

From a "rights" perspective, all such justifications are perfectly acceptable. From a "responsibility" perspective, though, not so much. In fact, not at all. *Halacha* considers a potential life to trump most other concerns.

There is, of course, no reason why Jewish theology should be embodied in American jurisprudence. But Judaism's stance happens to reflect the feelings of a majority of Americans. A 2018 Gallup survey found that only 29% of respondents believed abortion should be legal in all circumstances.

Blanket bans on abortion, to be sure, would deprive Jewish women of the ability to act responsibly in cases where abortion is halachically required. And so, what orthodox groups like Agudath Israel of America, for which I work, have long promoted, is the regulation of abortion through laws that generally prohibit the unjustifiable killing of foetuses while protecting the right to abortion in exceptional cases.

In the end, while abortion in Judaism's eyes may not be a matter of "rights", it is indeed a matter of "choice", a word much invoked in the abortion debate and central to all aspects of human life.

Not "choice" in the sense of "all choices are equal", but rather in the sense conveyed by the word as it is used in Deuteronomy: "I have placed before you," G-d informs us through Moses, "life and death, the blessing, and the

"Choose life," the verse continues, "so that you and your offspring will live."

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The power of shaping people's sense of self

RABBA WENDY AMSELLEM
Shavuot, 49 days after

Passover, marks the jubilant end to the exodus. On Passover, the people of Israel left Egypt, but it is only on Shavuot that they become G-d's chosen people by accepting the Torah at Sinai.

As such, Shavuot is a celebration of a journey, and it is a critical part of the Jewish people's national narrative.

On Shavuot, we read the Book of Ruth, which is also about a journey and the crafting of a narrative. There is an important moment in the second chapter, where Ruth's story of herself is recast and reframed. The scene is set as Boaz, a prosperous farmer, spots a new person in his fields. He enquires about her identity, and is told that she is a Moabite girl who came back to Bethlehem with Naomi.

Boaz tells the stranger that she should continue to glean in his fields, and that he has instructed his servants not to harass her. Moreover, if she is thirsty, she should feel free to drink some water.

Ruth, the Moabite woman, is overwhelmed by this kindness. She falls forward, and bows before him asking, "Why have I found favour in your eyes that you have taken notice of me, given that I am a foreigner?"

Ruth's response teaches us a lot about the difficult circumstances in which she finds herself. Boaz has offered her the bare minimum that a host can offer – freedom from molestation and a drink of water – and yet she is overcome with gratitude.

She assumes that as a stranger, she is not even entitled to expect this much. It seems that she sees herself much as Boaz's workers see her – a straggler who tagged along with Naomi, and wound up in Israel, subsisting on charity.

Boaz answers Ruth's question with a powerful speech:

"It has been told to me all that you have done for your mother-in-law after your husband died. You left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and you travelled to a nation that you did not know.

"May G-d repay your efforts, and may you receive full reward from the G-d of Israel under whose wings you have sought shelter. (Ruth 2:11-12)"

In these two verses, Boaz rewrites Ruth's story. She is not a random Moabite girl. She is connected to other people; she has a mother-in-law, a father, a mother, and a deceased husband.

Ruth did not randomly show up in Bethlehem. Instead, she embarked on a purposeful religious quest. Boaz deliberately uses the language of Abraham's iconic spiritual journey. Like Abraham, Ruth chose to leave her parents and birthplace, and travel to an unknown place in order to seek out G-d.

Boaz's words have a transformational effect on Ruth. She thanks him for comforting her and for speaking to her heart. He has given her an immeasurable gift, the ability to see her own life story in noble terms.

Most of us think of ourselves as the authors of our own life stories. We make choices, we respond to challenges, obstacles, and opportunities, and the constellation of those actions form the narratives of our lives.

Boaz's conversation with Ruth teaches us that we have the power to shape another person's sense of self. By supporting their choices, and ascribing aspirational intentions to their actions, we can help them see themselves in a more elevated way.

Indeed, this is not just the kindness Boaz shows Ruth, it is the grace that G-d showers upon Israel.

The exodus from Egypt could be understood as a ragtag bunch of slaves fleeing their masters. By connecting Passover, the holiday of the exodus, with Shavuot, the



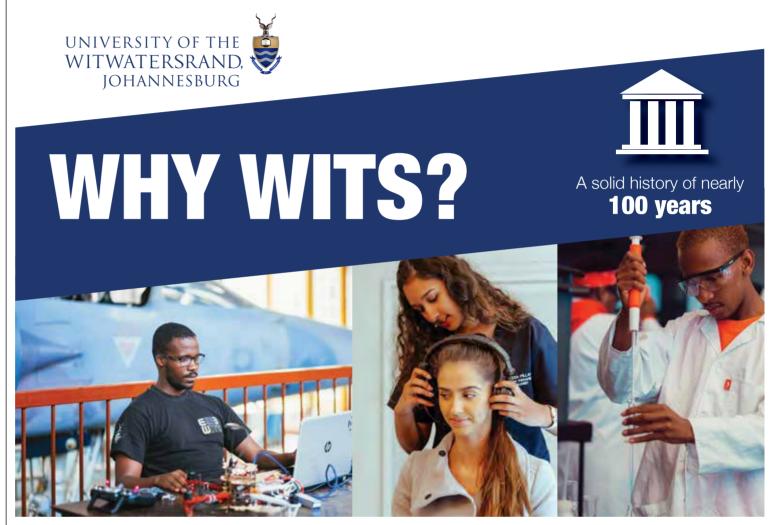
holiday of the revelation at Sinai, G-d constructs Israel's journey not as a flight from but rather as a deliberate movement towards the Torah.

Boaz tells Ruth that she has left Moav to seek shelter with G-d. G-d tells Israel that they have left Egypt in order to receive the Torah and become G-d's chosen people.

Both journeys are recast as pilgrimages, ennobling the travellers. On this Shavuot, may we listen generously, and help one

another to understand and tell our life stories.

• Wendy Amsellem is a rabba who teaches Talmud at Yeshivat Maharat, and is the editor of Maharat's 'Keren Journal'. She is also a faculty member at the Drisha Institute and the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. She will be speaking at Limmud Johannesburg (16-18 August); Limmud Durban (21 August); and Limmud Cape Town (23-25 August).



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RABBIY

and the oral law.

recall my sense of excitement the first time I was allowed to come to shul with my father on Shavuot for the all-night Torah vigil. I felt o big!

After dinner, we walked back to the synagogue in the Anderlecht section of Brussels (this was back in the day when those streets were safe for Jews to walk freely). There we sat, with the rest of the assembled community, studying from the sacred texts until first light.

It is an ancient custom to stay awake on the night of Shavuot. The festival marks the giving of the Torah, but we don't treat it as a mere historical commemoration. We celebrate that



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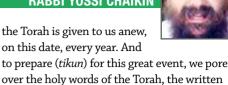
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The Midrash relates that the night before the original revelation at Sinai, the Jews slept soundly and had to be woken when G-d appeared on the mountain. Staying awake is a form of *tikun* (repair) for this national misdeed.

There are very early mentions of this custom. The Zohar relates that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (second century CE) held an all-night vigil on the eve of Shavuot, and extolled to his disciples the value of following this practice.

Doing this, he explained, was the equivalent of adorning (also *tikun* in Hebrew) the Torah with jewellery prior to it being taken like a bride to the chuppah the next day. The Holy Arizal (Rabbi Isaac Luria, 1534-1572) taught that one who stays up the entire night, not sleeping even for a moment, and engages in Torah study, is guaranteed a year when no harm will befall him.

June nights in Belgium are blissfully short and warm. So it was not such a big deal. Nightfall was at 23:00. So, by the time the services were over, we had gone home to eat the Yom Tov meal and had returned to shul, it was well after midnight. Dawn was at 02:30.

Fast-forward a couple of decades, and I am now living in Johannesburg. June nights are freezing cold, and long... very, very long. Remaining awake is much more of a challenge here.

So, how do we keep ourselves busy for so many hours?

The Holy Shaloh (Rabbi Yeshaya Hurwitz, 1558-1628), following a tradition handed from the Arizal, prepared an anthology of texts to be studied on that night. It consists of the first few verses and last few verses of each of the books of the Torah, Prophets, and Scriptures (Tanach), and the written law. This is followed by the first and last Mishna of each of the tractates of the Talmud, the oral law. Then portions of Kabbalistic works, the Sefer Yetzira and Zohar, are recited. It concludes with a full listing of all 613 commandments of the Torah. This collection is referred to as "Tikun for the eve of Shavuot" alluding to all three meanings of the word "tikun": prepare, repair, and adorn.

It takes a couple of hours to read through the entire Tikun. On a short northern hemisphere night, there is barely enough time to complete this whole order. But when Shavuot falls in winter, after having completed the Tikun, there are still hours to go.

Our local rabbis have been most creative in keeping their communities up and awake. Traditional lecture-like shiurim may work for the earlier hours of the evening, but as the night progresses and tiredness, then exhaustion, sets in, most of us will quickly succumb to slumber if we are to sit there passively. So guest speakers are hired, debates are arranged on engaging and fascinating subjects, and lay people are asked to share their own Torah thoughts.

Some prefer learning deep intellectual Torah texts. Others like more philosophical study. You can learn one-on-one, with a *chavruta* (friendship) partner, or in a group. Other than the Tikun text, there is no prescribed or recommended subject. This night it is not really about what you learn, but that you are learning. The key is to study material that will interest you, and most importantly, keep you stimulated and awake.

Warm clothing, good strong coffee, and the Shavuot staple, cheesecake, will of course also help. Come dawn, you will feel spiritually invigorated albeit physically exhausted. But ready to receive Torah. Chag Sameach!

• Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi of Oxford Shul.

The diamond with 70 facets

havuot celebrates zman matan torateinu – the time of the giving of the Torah. From time to time, I am asked if progressive Jews have a different Sefer Torah to orthodox Jews. At first, the question just bowls me over. Open the ark in any shul, orthodox or progressive, and you will find the identical scrolls with the identical scribal texts so sacred to our people. But I get the question behind the question: if we have the same Torah, how is it possible that we often differ in the way we read

If you open a traditional Hebrew chumash (Torah in printed form), you will find a tiny half a verse of Torah text in the middle of the page, surrounded by a sea of different commentators. From Rashi in France, to Ibn Ezra in Spain, Sforno in Italy, to Saadia in Babylon, they all have different ways of seeing that same verse. It's like the page of the *chumash* is a table around which are sitting each of these learned sages arguing over the meaning of the Torah. Yes, they lived in different cities and often different centuries, but you get what I mean. I know it's famously true that if there are two Jews, there are three opinions. But how is it possible that there is more than one interpretation of a verse of Torah? Surely it's Torah or not Torah, surely if "x" is true then "y"

Well, it all goes back to a little mountain in the middle of a little desert 3 500 years ago. We learn in *cheder* that G-d gave Moses the Torah on Mt Sinai, and taught it to the Jewish people, but the rabbinic reading of that moment makes things much more complex. Take this midrash (ancient commentary) in P'sikta d'Rav Kahana, for example:

"Rabbi Yosi son of Rabbi Chanina said: 'According to the strength of each individual, [G-d's] utterance spoke to them. And do not be amazed at that thing, for the manna would fall for Israel, and each individual would taste it according to their strength - babies according to their strength, adolescents according to their strength, and elderly people according to their strength... And just as with the manna, each individual would taste according to their strength, so too with [G-d's] speaking, each person would hear according to his or her strength." (12:25)

have hints that the Torah, even at the moment of revelation, sounded different to different people. In fact, one midrash says there are literally 70 aspects – or facets – to Torah. (Bamidbar Rabba 13:15) It's like the Torah is seen as a diamond reflecting light from each of its facets. One verse refracts out in many ways.

The early rabbinic commentators understood



It's a beautiful analogy. When the manna (the miraculous food that nourished the children of Israel as they made their way through the desert) fell, people tasted it in the way that best suited them. For babies, it was like mother's milk, for teens like pizza, and for elders like, what – gefilte fish? A sidebar here on different generations loving different foods. If you ask our parents what traditional Jewish food is you will get kichel and herring, babke and bulke, tzimmes, and chrain. If you ask my teenage kids, they will probably say fried fish and sushi because that's what turns up at most of the brocha tables at any shabbat or simcha they go to. Or cheesecake, because that's why they come for Shavuot. Mmm, cheesecake! But I digress back to the P'sikta.

From this and many other midrashim, we

that, and we are blessed with 2 000 years of healthy rabbinic debates that fill libraries with their disagreements, and continue today on webpages, podcasts, and blogs the world over. We are the people of the book, but we all read it differently. And it was always this way. Two of the most famous of the early sages were Hillel and Shammai. They lived 2 000 years ago at the time that the Temple still stood in Jerusalem, and they were famous for disagreeing. Not that either of them was "wrong", just that they often disagreed. What is astounding is that both their arguments - despite who won them, in most

cases that was Hillel or his students - are recorded in our literature, and studied today. Why would you study the words of the loser of the argument? So comes this incredible piece of Talmudic wisdom:

"Rabbi Abba said in the name of Shmuel: 'For three years Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel argued. One asserted, 'The law agrees with our views', and the other asserted, 'The law agrees with our views'. The voice of G-d came down and announced, 'They are both the words of the living G-d, but the law agrees with Beit Hillel." (Eiruvin 13b)

Incredible – the divine voice sees both their arguments as divine. How is that possible if one argues "x" and one "y"? Can they both be true at the same time? The answer is yes. What is even more incredible is how you resolve a dispute if both sides are right.

The Talmud continues: "Since both were the words of the living G-d, what entitled Beit Hillel to have the law agree with them? Because they were kind and modest, they studied their own rulings and those of Beit Shammai, and not only that, but they mentioned the rulings of Beit Shammai before their own."

There is the answer in a nutshell. There are 70 facets to Torah, and if yours looks really different to the guy next door, it might just have a different angle. The bottom line is to agree to disagree, and to understand and quote the ruling of your neighbour first. This is good advice as we take those last steps to receiving the Torah again at Shavuot.

• Rabbi Greg Alexander works on the rabbinic team at the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation.

Shavuot: seeing the face of G-d

■he Jewish festival of Shavuot – the Feast of Weeks - celebrates the encounter between G-d and the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. As described in the Biblical book of Exodus, the newly freed children of Israel receive the Ten Commandments, establish a covenant with G-d, and become a holy nation - a distinctive, set-apart people, committed to live as a model of justice and righteousness.

So, what actually happened at Sinai? In a radical teaching found in the 7th century *midrash* (ancient commentary) Pesikta de Ray Kahana, Rabbi Levi taught "The holy one appeared to them (Israel at Sinai) as though a statue with faces on every side. A thousand people might be looking at the statue, but it would appear to be looking at each one of them directly. So, too, when the holy one spoke, each and every person in Israel could say, 'The divine word is addressing me.' The divine word spoke to each and every person according to his particular capacity."

In order to explain the encounter with G-d, Rabbi Levi compares G-d to an idol. Using this blasphemous metaphor, Rabbi Levi teaches that at Sinai, the people experienced G-d so individually, they would have said G-d was addressing them personally. This teaching suggests there is a deep relationship between our own individuality, temperament, and personality, our biography and place in life, our

context, culture, and world, and the G-d we experience.

The Sinai experience was personalised to each of the 600 000 people standing there, nothing less. This means that certainly in our secular times, where G-d is far more hidden and we must strain to hear the still small voice, our experience of G-d must surely flow from who we are, and the expectations and intentions we bring to the experience.

In other words, each person in each age finds an understanding of G-d appropriate to his/her needs and circumstances. No one image or understanding of G-d will ever be appropriate for every person in every time and place.

There is, instead, an ever-changing, dynamic human perspective in which different images of G-d speak in ways appropriate for the moment. Sometimes G-d is father, king, teacher, creator, destroyer, warrior, redeemer, shepherd, the one above, maker of peace, healer, lover, friend, place, nothing, emptiness, presence... or, as Rabbi Levi teaches, a statue of thousands of faces. Chag sameach!

• Rabbi Irwin Kula is president of CLAL - The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership in New York, which works at the intersection of religion and innovation, and the science of human flourishing. He will speak at Limmud Johannesburg (16-18 August); Limmud Durban (21 August); and Limmud Cape Town (23-25 August).







Jewish Report

Winning Shavuot competition recipes

Jews love food, but not all of us love cooking. However, whether you are a budding chef or not, there is nothing better than a recipe that always gets rave reviews. KosherWorld called on the community to participate in a Shavuot Cooking Competition and the response was overwhelming.

Following the submissions, an independent panel of judges selected six finalists – three Chalav Yisroel recipes and three parev recipes – whose chefs were invited to take part in a cooking competition on 2 June. This took place in the Chalav Yisroel Kitchen at Frangelicas and the Feigels Kosher Deli Kitchen at KosherWorld.

Each contestant was tasked with cooking/baking their recipes according to a deadline, followed by a blind tasting by the judges. The dishes were evaluated based on their appearance, texture, taste, smell, presentation, and the accuracy of the recipe/dish. Here are the winners.



FIRST PLACE: COTY ITZIKOVITZ TUNA BAKE

Ingredients

- Four tins of tuna
- Quarter cup spring onion
- One cup mixed mushrooms
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Half cup mayonnaise
- One onion fried
- · Shop bought puff pastry
- Sesame seeds

Method

Combine all ingredients. Fry onion. Add to puff pastry, and bake until cooked.

Serving suggestion

Serve with a salad of mixed tomatoes, purple onion, capers, and olives, with red wine vinegar and olive oil.

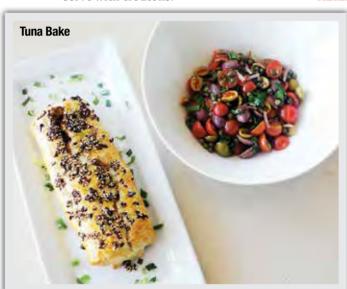
SECOND PLACE: NAOMI LICHTENSTEIN ZUCCHINI SOUP

Ingredients

- 2 medium onions diced
- 1 large punnet of zucchini with peel on, diced
- · 4 small peeled potatoes, sliced
- 1 carrot peeled and sliced
- 2 tblsp Osem consommé soup powder
- Salt and garlic pepper to spice
- 1.5 litres of water

Method

Fry onions in an oiled frying pan until soft. Add the rest of the vegetables, cover the vegetables with water, and boil for an hour. Add soup powder and spices. Liquidise, and serve with croutons.





THIRD PLACE: ALIZA FREEMAN

MUSHROOM PASTA Ingredients

- Packet of mushrooms
- 1/2 cup grapeseed oil
- 1/2 cup soya sauce
- Packet of pasta, preferably fettuccini
- 1 teaspoon Himalayan salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic
- Fresh parsley

Method

Fry garlic in oil. Add mushrooms, add the rest of the seasoning, add soya sauce. Pour over cooked pasta. Garnish with parsley.



For lactose intolerant Jews, Shavuot is a challenge

SARAH GOLD – JTA

any modern-day Jews aren't all that familiar with Shavuot, which celebrates the day when the Israelites first received the Torah from G-d, and falls seven weeks after Passover marked their exodus from Egypt.

Jews with some familiarity of Shavuot probably know the holiday as a day for eating cheesecake – along with other creamy, dairyrich dishes, like cheese blintzes and kugel for Ashkenazim and soutlach and boyikos de keso for Mizrahim.

Photo: Dividing

There are varying theories about the significance of dairy in Shavuot celebrations. Some invoke the idea that since the Torah laid out the dietary restrictions on non-kosher meat for the first time, the Israelites celebrated with the only foods that conformed to the new laws of kashrut (until they purchased meat-only dishes, that is). Others involve mystical numerology (in particular, the Kabbalistic interpretation of the Hebrew letters spelling "milk") or scriptural passages in which G-d promises the Israelites a "land of milk and honey".

Still other theories offer a more practical explanation: the holiday

falls during the spring, when calves are weaned and cows produce a surfeit of milk.

Whatever the reason, dairy dishes have become part of Shavuot celebrations among nearly all parts of the Jewish diaspora. According to the New York-based culinary authors and Jewish food historians Jayne Cohen and Jennifer Abadi, while cheesecake, blintzes, and kugel are traditional Ashkenazi preparations, Sephardim and Mizrahim mark the holiday with similarly creamy dishes. These include bourekas (flaky, originally Turkish pastries filled with sweet and savoury cheeses), Syrian calsones (ravioli-

like, cheese-filled pasta dumplings), buttery North African couscous, and Levantine mujaderrah – a sort of pilaf made with rice, lentils, or fava beans, generously slathered with labneh (yoghurt cheese). Soutlach is a Turkish rice pudding and boyikos de keso are cheese biscuits.

What's ironic about the apparently universal love among Jews for dairyrich dishes is, of course, that we Jews are largely predisposed to lactose intolerance. Several studies suggest that 60% to 80% of Ashkenazim are

lactase-deficient (lacking the enzyme that allows for easy digestion of the lactose sugar in milk products). Though less studied, the condition is also considered prevalent among Sephardic and Mediterranean Jews.

Explanations for this genetic tendency abound, but many seem to indicate that pastoral peoples, who stayed rooted in place long enough to cultivate and graze livestock, more easily developed dairy tolerance, while more nomadic subcultures, whose members may have relied more on sheep and goats than cows, and who

may have preferred fermented dairy products for portability purposes, did not.

According to Jeffrey Yoskowitz, a Brooklyn-based author specialising in Jewish food culture, that particular clue — about how our ancestors probably enjoyed dairy foods that were fermented or cultured — might actually hold the key to how Jews developed our paradoxical affinity for, and intolerance of, the dairy-rich dishes enjoyed on Shavuot.

"The issue isn't that we're somehow destined to have bad digestion," Yoskowitz says — or that we're doomed to have a tortured relationship with the dairy dishes we love. "It's how bastardised Jewish food — especially Ashkenazi food — is today in this country."

Centuries ago, he says, Jews had a lot of gustatory wisdom about how to produce, and pair, foods for optimal digestion, making cultured dairy products like sour cream, and fermented foods like pickles and horseradish, at home. But mass-produced versions of these items, especially pasteurised dairy products, are a far cry from those our ancestors probably consumed. Little wonder we've inherited the love – but not the same tolerance – for dairy.

As a way to savour the original traditions of Shavuot, Yoskowitz recommends that modern-day Jews try to make some of these preparations from scratch.

"Making your own farmer's cheese, or cream cheese, or even your own butter, and using them to make hamantaschen or pierogi is a great way to see how different these dishes can taste from what we're used to," he says.

Such treats may also go down a bit easier than their more convenient counterparts. Studies have shown that fermented or cultured products, like kefir, sour cream, and labneh, tend to have less lactose and more lactase than the non-cultured varieties.

Of course, for those who aren't keen to get creative in the kitchen, there's also always the fallback option plenty of us already use: popping a dietary aid along with our cheesecake.

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Mystery of the milchik festival

hen you ask a

Jewish six-year

old what their favourite festival is, you will probably get the answer that it's Purim. It's definitely the most fun - dressing up, giving, and receiving gifts, making noise when you hear Haman's name.

If you ask a parent whose children are overseas but come home once in a while for Yom Tov, it's likely that Pesach is their favourite chag (holiday). Family time together around the seder table, sharing old memories, and creating new ones.

A nature lover? Surely Sukkot - a festival spent outdoors in which plants and fruits play such a prominent role.

Ask a vegetarian, and you will probably get the answer that it's Shavuot - a festival at which suddenly, everywhere they go, meals are milchik (dairy) and they can munch on the entire spread.

Why is the latter the case? The general practice in the Jewish world is to have meat meals over Yom Tov, based on the Rambam who said (Hilchot Yom Tov 6:18) that joy on Yom Tov is experienced best through meat and wine. However Rabbi Yosef Karo, the author of the Shulchan Aruch, disputes this, and does not record this as halacha.

I tell my community that on Yom Tov, they should eat what they and their families find the most delicious, but on Shavuot, the Jewish world goes milchik.

My Rabbi and teacher, Rabbi Azriel Chaim Goldfein, taught us that in Judaism, there are things that are significant and important, and others that are not so

much. From the perspective of halacha (Jewish law), having dairy on Shavuot is certainly not so important.

If someone prefers meat, they can munch on biltong from the beginning of the festival to the end without taking a

bite of cheesecake, and not feel that they have disrespected the festival. However, every custom of Israel has deep meaning and wisdom, and this one is no exception.

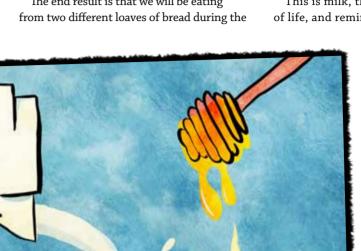
The most straightforward explanation for our love of cheesecake on Shavuot is that given by the Mishnah Brura. He explains that when we began receiving the laws of the Torah, we realised all that was involved in koshering meat: shechting (slaughtering), removing the forbidden fats, salting, and so

forth. The easier option for our ancestors around Mount Sinai was to avoid meat altogether.

The Ramo - Rabbi Moshe Isserles offers more complex reasoning. The special offering in the Temple over Shavuot was two loaves of bread. If we begin our meal with milk, and then switch over halfway through to meat, we must change all of the cutlery and crockery. More than that, we

need to wash our hands, clean our mouths, and start a new loaf of bread in order to avoid inadvertent mixing of milk and meat.

The end result is that we will be eating



Shavuot meal - milk at the beginning and meat at the end. The difficulty of this approach is the risk of making a kashrut mistake. This is why my shul doesn't follow this for our communal dinner, although for private homes, it's a great Shavuot experience.

On a deeper level, the Sfat Emet, the Chassidic Rebbe of Ger, explains that when we reach the highest level of purity on Shavuot, after all of the internal work that

we have done during the Omer, we reach the source from which both purity and impurity come.

This is milk, the source and beginning of life, and reminds us that Torah too is

> our source of life and nourishment, from which all else in our life flows.

In closing, I would like to offer my own explanation: the Torah was given in the desert to teach us that anyone, anywhere, can accept Torah, and forge a meaningful and holy relationship with Hashem (G-d).

But we were never intended to stay at Mount Sinai forever. Accepting the Torah and making it a part of us, we were destined to make our way as a nation to the land flowing with milk and

honey, to Israel, where we could build a Torah society, and develop as a holy nation.

Torah speaks to each of us, but our own personal acceptance of it is not the end – we must flow from there to building communities and societies infused with goodness and holiness. Chag Sameach!

• Rabbi Sam Thurgood is the rabbi of Beit Midrash Morasha at Arthurs Road in Cape



Time to nominate Jewish achievers

jewish achiever awards

JORDAN MOSHE

ominations for the 2019 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards are open, and it's time to acknowledge those among us who have achieved remarkable things.

This unique awards ceremony celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. It is a special event which recognises local personalities for the influential and lifechanging roles they played and continue to play in South Africa.

"We are calling for nominations," says Howard Sackstein, the chairperson of the SA Jewish

Report. "The award categories are broad and diverse, allowing people from across the

spectrum to be recognised for the impact they have had on us and our society. It's time to recognise these unique individuals.

"Our community has contributed four of the seven South Africans who have Nobel Prizes for science and literature," he says. "It serves us well to remember and honour laureates Nadine Gordimer, Sydney Brenner, Aaron Klug, and Michael Levitt. They, like so many others, have brought pride to our community and country."

The awards enable us to rejoice in a community that has thrived on freedom and contributed so remarkably to the development of South Africa in every sphere, says Sackstein.

"The shadow of our impact looms large. These awards recognise talent, determination, and tenacity. But most importantly, they create role models for our community and South Africa as a whole."

The nine categories for which individuals can be nominated are comprehensive and inclusive, including three categories created by title sponsor Absa bank. It gives us the opportunity to recognise personalities from across the professional spectrum for their tremendous contribution to our society, Jewish and beyond.

Last year, a record 774 people gathered at the Sandton Convention Centre to recognise the achievements of more

than 430 people who were

nominated in nine award categories. The stars of

the evening included Anniversary hotel mogul Sol

Kerzner; theatre doyenne Hazel Feldman: the Chevrah Kadisha's Colin

Datnow; Professor Bonita Meyersfeld, and marketing visionary Jason Xenopoulos.

Organisations Freedom under Law and the Helen Suzman Foundation were also acknowledged, as were Judge David Unterhalter, business leader Mike Abel, and former Investec Chief Executive Stephen Koseff.

"Each nominee is worthy of an accolade," says Sackstein. "Each inspires us."

Nominations are open to the public. All nominations should be sent via email to nominations@sajewishreport.co.za. Nominations must include the nominee's name, telephone number and email address; the award for which the nominee is nominated; as well as a short motivation for the nomination. Nominations close at 17:00 on 14 July 2019.

How Shavuot came to be associated with cheesecake

JORDAN MOSHE

hen Jews think of Shavuot, cheesecake is almost as obvious an association as learning through the night. Shavuot is simply not the same without cheesecake. But how did this decadent dessert become a Jewish holiday tradition?

Before we seek an answer, it is important to note that not all cheesecakes are the same. The quintessential Shavuot dish comes in a myriad of forms, including variations such as sweet, savoury, custard, mousse, crumbly, topped, and plenty more. They are all made from innumerable cheeses like mascarpone, ricotta, cream cheese pot cheese - the list is endless.

The diversity of its forms and ingredients is equally true of its development over the years. Recipes have evolved depending on location and time, with ingredient changes and modern technology having a hand in the form the cheesecake takes. We would probably fail to recognise earlier cheesecake if they were served today at shul brochas.

Although cheese making can be traced back as far as 2 000 BCE, cheesecake seems to have first appeared in ancient Greece. The author of Cheesecake Madness, Joe Segreto, explains that the first recorded instance was between 800 to 700 BCE on the Island of Samos in the Aegean Sea.

This decadent treat was reportedly fed to competitors in the first

Olympic Games, supposedly giving them the energy needed to compete. Unlike the complex creations of today, the simple ingredients of flour, wheat, honey, and cheese were formed into a cake and baked.

The dish then became a wedding cake for wealthy Greek brides and grooms, eventually reaching the common man by the time of the

Roman Empire. As a result of the empire's vast reach, cheesecake spread throughout Europe during Julius Caesar's reign, supposedly even reaching the Middle East.

Some suggest that the dish hails from the Middle East. Joan Nathan, the author of Jewish Holiday Cookbook, maintains that the cake was originally created in

the Middle East by placing sour cream in a bag and stringing it up for a time. It allowed the moisture to drain so that it would dry into a type of curd. This was then mixed with honey, lemon peel, egg yolks, and more sour cream, and baked into quite a lumpy cake. Nathan says the dish was spread by the Crusaders, who brought it back with them to Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries.

He says cheese curd was transported to Russia by the Mongols in the 13th century, where it was embraced by the Jewish community. Jews developed the recipe further when they moved to other places in Europe and North America. As Jews



adapted recipes to local ingredients and tastes, variations on the original abounded across the world.

Even Christian tradition seeped in, with Italian Easter cheesecake being made with citrus rind and fragrant orange blossom water. This is served today in Italy on Shavuot, while cheesecakes in France are often made with fresh farmer's cheese or savoury goat cheese, while Greek cheesecake uses Greek yoghurt, even feta. In Israel, Jews eat a light and creamy

cheesecake made with gvina livana, a white cream cheese.

But how did this dish become associated with Shavuot?

Shavuot celebrates the giving of

the Torah, a milestone in the journey of the Jews to Israel. It would therefore make sense that the promised sweetness of Israel be remembered on this day. Some say the sweetness of cheesecake is the flavour of the combined milk and honey of the promised land. Additionally, it may also be a nod to the early Greek cheesecake recipes which prominently featured milk and honey.

Another reason may lie in more recent history. German-Jewish restaurateur Arnold Reuben was the proprietor of Reuben's Restaurant and Delicatessen, a landmark

restaurant and deli in New York City which first started trading in 1908.

The restaurant became known for inventing the Reuben sandwich, a less-than-kosher composition of corned beef, Swiss cheese, sauerkraut, and Russian dressing, grilled between slices of rye bread.

However, Reuben also achieved greatness for his momentous decision to use cream cheese instead of milk curd in cheesecake for the first time in the 1920s. His creation became

known as the New York Cheesecake, and it rapidly became all the rage among Jews and non-Jews alike.

His recipe, also known as Jewish cheesecake thanks to his heritage, was allegedly a favourite of actors and actresses wanting a little late-night

Some say cheesecake thus became popular in New York, especially on Shavuot, the holiday of dairy foods.

indulgence after shows.

There is no particular religious rationale for eating cheesecake on Shavuot. A novel – and particularly cheesy - reason is that Har Gavnunim (the Mountain of Many Peaks) is one of eight names for Mount Sinai where the Torah was given. This name shares an etymological likeness to the word gvina (cheese) in Hebrew, hence the custom of eating cheesecake.

However, it may be that we eat cheesecake simply because there is little else to do. Unlike every other Jewish festival, Shavuot has fewer rituals for us to perform. Where Pesach has seders and Sukkot has a sukkah, Shavuot has no specific mitzvot (commandments) other than typical observances such as meals, prayers, and general festivity.

Perhaps it makes up for the absence of latkes, matzah, or apples dipped in

Whatever the reason, the bond between Jews and cheesecake is firmly entrenched over Shavuot. Historical debate might help you to better understand the custom, but the burning question of which recipe to use is ultimately yours to answer.

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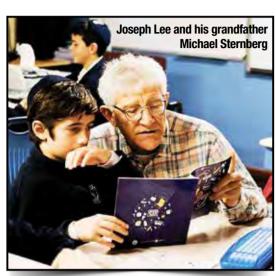


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7 - 14 June 2019 **20** SA JEWISH REPORT

Generation Sinai – a blessing for parents and children

nce a year, parents of young scholars make a real effort to spend one hour at their mostly-Jewish school to study Torah values with their children. It's an experience that they look forward to because it's about mutual learning and, more importantly, bonding



"I had to stop and catch my breath and take in how beautiful that scene was," said Wayne Kay about his Tuesday morning at The Cheder with his children. "It got me wondering what it might have meant to have had this time with my dad as a child, a structured opportunity to learn Torah together like this."

For the past six years, Chief Dr Rabbi Warren Goldstein's Generation Sinai initiative has brought Jewish parents and children together in classrooms across the country. This year, it centred on the morning blessing, which Goldstein describes as "a G-d-given formula for starting our day in the best possible way".

Parents and children worked through a booklet containing sources and inspirational ideas relating to five key morning blessings. They are: Modeh Ani, Al Netilat Yadayim, Asher Yatzar, Elokai Neshama, and Birchot HaTorah, representing gratitude, purpose, wonder, purity, and growth, respectively.

"These five ancient meditations are specifically

> formulated to focus the mind, open our hearts, and connect our neshamas (souls) to their infinite source, opening up our day to infinite possibility,' said Goldstein.

"This year's

Generation Sinai was wonderful. The content was interesting, and pitched at a level that my daughter and I could learn something from. We went through the first two *berachot* (blessings), and wanted to keep going, but unfortunately there wasn't enough time," said Sara Wosk at Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School.

"It was great bonding time with my child, and an opportunity to experience firsthand what he's been learning from his incredible



teachers. I loved the atmosphere of families learning together as part of a community," said Mandy Wiener at Sydenham Pre-Primary School.

"The whole family participated. I loved that my husband came along normally it's just the moms who do these things. We were both amazed that our kids knew the berachot. It was great to see how much they actually know," said Alison Charne at Sandton

Learning at Ohr Somayach

"What a gift... to our children and to us! Taking davening – which can be quite challenging for all of us - and making it relevant, engaging, and soulful. A guidebook for bringing to life these morning brochos (blessings) which Jews have been saying for centuries. Priceless!" said Mendel Medalie at Torah Academy.

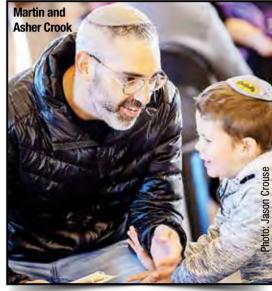
"It was really nice to

sit with my child and learn something meaningful and inspiring. We said the berachot together which was beautiful," said Yael Pollak at Rimon Nursery School.

"I treasured spending time with my children learning about the morning prayers in an age-appropriate and engaging way," said Andrea Nussbaum at King David Pre-Primary School Linksfield.

"I loved the booklet. So meaningful and so simple at the same time. At this age and stage of my life, the morning *berachot* are the only part of davening I have time for, so it was as relevant to me as it was to my kids," said Simone Penn at Hirsch Lyons.

"I especially loved the focus on gratitude, and starting our day with a connection to Hashem, which really sets the tone for the rest of the day. It was great spending



quality time with my kids, and I look forward to continuing learning with them at home," said Sara Ress of Sinai Academy (Cape Town).

"It was a wonderfully accessible learning experience. One of my favourite Generation Sinai experiences so far," said Farrah Zuckerman at Herzlia Weizmann.

Penning pain into poetry

JORDAN MOSHE

ach Fouche finds inspiration in the ordinary, making waves by penning verses based on human experience.

"Most people around us are trying to figure life out for themselves," he says. "Many of us

go through the same things. Sometimes we think we're alone, but we are actually connected through experience."

Fouche, 27, is the author of the recently published poetry anthology, Wheren I Go, I Want to Leave, which was launched in Johannesburg last week. He is the son of local kosher-style food artist Dolores Fouche, and has been living in the United States since matriculating from King David Linksfield in 2010.

Fouche moved to New York just three weeks after completing matric, determined to nurture his passion for acting and writing.

He was head boy and captain of the school rugby team. "At school, I divided my time between rugby and drama," he says. "I enjoyed rugby more, but I always wanted to be involved in theatre.

"I didn't want to study drama at Wits [the

University of the Witwatersrand]. I love South Africa way more than New York, but I chose to go there purely for my work. I had never been there before, and though it was super scary, I dived right in.

"It was just after the global recession," he says. "Everyone was trying to make it, and

they came from all over. Even today, everyone is trying to climb the ladder all the time."

However, he found that the city gave him the opportunity to be free. "In New York, I was anonymous. I could do crazy monologues, write weird poems, and express what I felt and saw whenever I

wanted to - on the subway, on a bus, or even at a bar at 03:00."

When he wasn't writing, Fouche attended classes at the city's celebrated Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute, honing his acting skills alongside his flair for writing, and also starred in local productions.

After living in New York for four years, Fouche moved to Los Angeles in search of new opportunities. "LA is the Superbowl of the

artistic industry," he says. "If you walk up to any random person in LA and say, 'I love your work', they will say 'thank you'. There's a delusion that everyone is a star there."

It was there that he set out to get his big break. "I was a small fish," he says. "I went for plenty of auditions, faced a lot of rejection, and was broken down and analysed over and over. I took writing and acting classes, worked at a bar, and kept looking for opportunities. Bookstores, coffee shops, listening to people's conversations - I used every experience to learn and look for a chance."

Hollywood had minimal appeal for him, being little more than a dazzling mirage of scant substance and broken dreams. Says Fouche, "Hollywood is grimy and dirty, full of sad people. You see dozens of them sitting on the pavement in their sleeping bags clutching notebooks full of writing, waiting for someone to come past and give them their lucky break."

His frustration at the reality he witnessed fuelled his poetry. Upset at the world and its inequality, Fouche penned poems regularly when he felt inspired by something he saw or heard, whether he was on a bus, tending a bar, or walking through the city.

"I found inspiration in the conversation between two drunk old men," he says. "I listened to what people were saying or watched what they were doing."

What began as a form of personal emotional expression quickly gained momentum and developed into a collection of poems drawn from reality.

"The language and structure of a poem don't matter," he says. "The content informs the heart of a poem. I listened to everyday conversations, and let life inform my writing, wanting it to be accessible and relatable to anyone from anywhere. It's about the normal experiences we all have."

Fouche dedicated himself to the project, penning about 120 poems over two years. He decided to get the collection published, approaching about 200 different publishers. Eight of these replied to his submission, and after meeting them, he selected one, and signed a contract for the publication of his work in May 2016.

"I was writing not only for myself but for others," he says. "Loneliness and isolation are two of the themes which are expressed in my poems. We all have dark moments that come and go in our lives, and I wanted people to know that it's normal."

Fouche believes those who have responded negatively to his poetry, accusing him of being too dark or melancholic, are fearful of acknowledging their own loneliness.

He hopes to pen another book soon, but already has a big project slated for the end of the year, with a script he wrote set for production in November. He attributes his success to his family and Jewish identity, both of which provide him with a sense of stability and rootedness.

"My parents and brothers are my first and best readers," he says. "Family provides me with a solid foundation that I can always rely on. My Jewish identity helps me know who I am, and no matter what happens, I am assured of some certainty in that. There are many people who aren't so fortunate."

South African artists push boundaries at Israel Festival

wo South Africans are being celebrated as part of the innovative and contemporary Israel Festival this year. Choreographer Robyn Orlin and performance artist Steven Cohen held their own amidst the myriad of Israeli productions and other highly-acclaimed guest productions from France, Brazil, Switzerland, and Poland.

Orlin and Cohen were included in the rich and varied artistic programme of dance, music, theatre, performance art, video art, and installation at the 58th Israel Festival from 30 May to 15 June.

The festival's director, Eyal Sher, and artistic director, Itzik Giuli, aim to identify new artistic movements, forms, and languages on the global culture and art scene, as well as innovative and original interpretations, while conserving the festival's historic value and its achievements for more than 50 years.

"In the arts, we are witnessing a constant attempt to narrow the freedom of artistic expression, but that's something we do not take into consideration in our programming. We perceive cultural and creative achievement as a unique means to create space for dialogue and cultural encounter. We are proud to continue a consistent line of artistic programming that conforms to just one criterion: excellence," says

Veteran choreographer Robyn Orlin's And so you see show looks at post-apartheid South Africa. In it, this Laurence Oliver Award-winning choreographer questions whether South Africans are truly free, and whether promised democratic values especially gender equity - meet the hopes laid down in the constitution.

Cohen, born in South Africa and now based in France, performed in Israel for the

first time this year, presenting a tribute to his partner Elu in Put your heart under your feet... and walk.

Self-described as a South African, white, gay, Jewish man, Cohen has created a performance hybrid that brings together all these identities. In a chilling requiem to his partner of twenty years, he performs a brave parting ceremony that celebrates art as a way to cope with loss, and as a resolute choice in a vital and passionate existence.



Victory Park pupil reminisces on 'terrifying, phenomenal' Bible Quiz

ing David Victory Park High School Grade 11 pupil, Tzipora Krawitz, competed in the prestigious International Bible Quiz in Jerusalem on Yom Ha'atzmaut in May, placing South Africa 7th out of 42 competing

"I shed a few tears when it was announced that I had qualified for the Diaspora Quiz (Chidon Hatfutzot)," Krawitz said, "mainly because of the terrifying thought of having to compete against friends who knew the Bible by heart.

The quiz is an annual event that brings Jewish youth aged 14 to 18 from around the world together in Israel. Prior to the final quiz, contestants meet in Israel for a twoand-a-half-week Bible camp that focuses on the importance of the Bible within their Jewish identity. They also learn about Israel's history, and meet several government officials including the prime minister. The event peaks on Israel's Independence Day, when the quiz is broadcast on state television.

"The day of the quiz itself is

extremely exciting. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attends. Education Minister Naphtali Bennet and Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein were also there. I was amazed at how highly Israel values the event," she said.

"I was happy to

get through to the final eight. Unfortunately, the marks from the written test were carried over, and I couldn't quite make up the deficit to get into the final four."

Qualification for the event is equally onerous. Each country sends only two to four participants who have to learn 180 chapters and take tests throughout the year to qualify.

"When I signed up, I never dreamed that I would eventually need to cover a total of 400 chapters of the Tanach in preparation for the international quiz. Four hundred chapters – with each chapter averaging at least two pages - makes that about 800 pages of pure facts! I was horrified to discover that many of my fellow participants knew it off by heart."

On her experience of camp, she said, "Imagine landing in a foreign country and being sent to a camp with more than 70 teenagers from

foreign countries, all speaking foreign languages. We were all a little wary of one another. Suddenly, in the bus on the way from the airport, one of the participants says to another, 'How many times does the word 'seraphim' appear in Chapter 8 of Yerimiyahu?'

The participant closes his eyes, and starts to recite Chapter 8 of Yerimiyahu off by heart. 'Three,' he answers. Silence. He was correct! It was then I thought that I was completely out of my depth..."

Krawitz said her fellow contestants "came from amazing places. Uruguay, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Netherlands, Mexico, Panama, to name a few. Many had truly remarkable stories to tell about their home countries. Some impressive and some very sad. My friend from Venezuela, for example, was not convinced she'd be allowed back into her country due to the airport being closed because of the unrest in that country."

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Girls are made of sugar and spice

By Sunday night, I had the answer to the question: "Would you consider adopting Abby?" I had messaged two friends. "We will continue to pay the cost of her tuition, and will cover her hair products." I didn't want to blindside anyone, especially as I know that keeping her hair in the perfect curl sets us back monthly. It's a line item in the family budget.

"Shouldn't be a problem," said the first. The second said they would be honoured. "Voetstoots!" I responded, thinking it would make them reconsider. I used to be a lawyer, after all. Both were happy to proceed.

Then I felt bad.

Mostly I really do adore her. She is smart, courageous, and kind. It was just this weekend that, well, she wasn't.

To be fair, at the time that I made the offer, the woman-child was sobbing uncontrollably in her room. Sobbing as though someone had died, suddenly, and for no good reason. Why? Why was she weeping inconsolably?

Because my wife had asked her to try on a new dress that she had altered for her. And she didn't want to. Not at that moment. The fact that she had been asked to do this for at least a week didn't seem relevant to the woman-child. "I've had such a long day!" she wailed, "My brain is fried! Please! Don't make me do this! Please!" It was hard to take it seriously.

I exchanged glances with my son of 17. He was pale, and there was no doubt that he was in deep shock. He needed sugar, and we would need to debrief him. I feared that if we didn't, there would be a good chance that he would never get married.

For the sake of order, I will take a minute to describe the nature of her long day. She woke up at 10:00 after a wonderful evening out with her brother and friends the night before.

She bounded through the door, giggling with joy and bursting with anecdotes and laughter, after which she drifted off to slumber on a cloud of happiness.

When she woke up, the sun was already confidently in the sky, and mom had made her breakfast of fresh salmon and eggs while she chatted about the evening before.

After breakfast, she left to shower, and dedicated about an hour to get ready (you already know about the hair). She then joined us out for lunch, came home and relaxed some more, before getting ready to go to a friend for a birthday tea.

My family recently lost our mom, Vanessa

years, quietly contributed to her community

without judgement or the need for anything

in return. I am writing to acknowledge the

great work and compassion of the Chevrah

At our time of need, Phillip Kalmonowitz

and the Chev dealt with the situation with

visited our mom in hospital despite the fact

that she was no longer officially a member

of their shul, and accepted our secular ways

without criticism or judgement. The Chev

has a thankless task dealing with people

at their most vulnerable. On behalf of my

family, we are grateful for its compassion

and care. - Alan Glass, Johannesburg

an enormous amount of care and dignity.

Similarly, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Uzvolk

Kadisha, as well as Rabbi and Rebbetzin

Uzvolk from the Victory Park Hebrew

Glass, a great matriarch who, for many

She took no buses, she did no

Letters

Congregation.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman

schoolwork, she didn't take the trash out, and she didn't work in any underground mine that is guilty of unfair labour

She most probably didn't even make her own bed, she certainly didn't wash a dish or help prepare her meal. The only thing "fried" was the schnitzel her mother made for her for supper.

"You just don't understand me!" she wailed. "Nope". I thought. "I most definitely don't."

Nor, of course, did my 17-year-old son. My wife, alone, apparently did. "It's a girl thing," she said understandingly. But then turned to Abby in a ferocious, teeth clenched tone, and hissed "Try! On! That!

So convincing was her instruction, I found myself reaching for the item to try it on myself. This was not a woman to be trifled with. If that dress had to be tried on, then it needed to be tried on, and it didn't seem to matter if it was Abby, my 17-yearold son, or me.

Someone had to do it.

It did happen in the end. When she finally emerged from her room in the offending item, it was plain to see how beautiful she looked. Even her swollen eyes didn't detract from it. She really looked wonderful.

Fortunately, no adoption papers were signed by the end of the evening, and it seems as though we might rescind the offer, or at least put it on hold for the time being. She really is lovely to have around most the time.

By the time I left for the studio at 05:00, she was already up and busy in the kitchen decorating a cake that she had baked for a friend's birthday.

We might still be suffering from a touch of post-traumatic-stress disorder, but she was well over it. She hummed as she worked as though the night before had never happened.

Fourteen is not an easy age. The biggest challenge for parents is that we never know if it is woman-child or child-woman who will emerge from her bedroom.

With boys it was different. They remained boys no matter what type of body they inhabited.

But that is a subject for another day.

----- A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Securing the religious rights of SA Jewry

A vital part of the mandate of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) is to ensure that members of our community can practice their religion without being unfairly disadvantaged. In the main, this work involves resolving problems that arise when university examinations are held on Shabbat or Yom Tov. We work on an ongoing basis with the relevant universities, and sometimes private colleges, to make suitable alternative arrangements for writing when it is not possible for dates to be

An arrangement is now in place that allows observant Jewish students to write their papers at Beyachad immediately after Shabbat or Yom Tov, with invigilators present and under the board's auspices. Another way we have been able to assist has been to obtain permission for students writing on Friday afternoon to begin their papers a little earlier to give them enough time to get home before Shabbat begins. Another recent case involved arranging for a culinary studies student to be allowed to use alternative ingredients for an upcoming practical to avoid infringements of kashrut.

By and large, we have seldom been unsuccessful in resolving issues of this nature, thanks in large part to the co-operation and understanding of the institutions involved, as well as the Beth Din and the individual rabbonim with whom we work closely. Beyond that, we can be grateful to be living in a country where religious and cultural diversity is respected and legally protected, and where there is a firm commitment to upholding the right to equality of all its citizens in such areas.

Debating the Hate Crimes Bill

Last week, SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn spoke at a conference on the Prevention and combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

Bill, held at Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth. From the outset, the SAJBD has involved itself extensively in the ongoing debate over this landmark piece of legislation, including making a formal submission and recommendations to the relevant parliamentary portfolio commission. We have also participated in the drafting of a submission from the Hate Crimes Working Group through our representative on the steering committee of that

Wendy's presentation focused on anti-Semitism in South Africa, how the SAJBD combats it, and the complex processes and legal issues this entails. It was interesting that in addition to Kahn's presentation, several other presentations also made reference to the importance of the board's hate-speech case against Cosatu (Congress of South African Trade Unions) International Relations spokesperson Bongani Masuku for defining the parameters of hate speech in South African law. That case will be heard by the Constitutional Court

Earlier in the month, Kahn spoke at the combined SAJBD-UJW (Union of Jewish Women) annual general meeting in Port Elizabeth. It is encouraging to see how the Jewish community in Port Elizabeth, which has the distinction of being the country's second oldest, remains active despite its diminished

· 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

Desperate measures for messy times

Some people find it difficult to agree with United States President Donald Trump on almost anything. However, he was right when he said, with characteristic arrogance, that Israeli election politics is "all messed up".

We've watched with amazement over recent weeks as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tried - and failed - to assemble a coalition government that would be able to shield him from indictment on corruption charges.

For South Africans, this has echoes of former President Jacob Zuma's legal dodging and diving, with endless court appeals, to avoid appearing in court on corruption charges. Then there was the African National Congress repeatedly backing him

in parliament to defeat votes of no confidence.

One could correctly say that both Israeli politics and South African politics are "all messed up", where the entire country is bent to serve one man's needs - the leader of the government.

The ugly drama of Israeli politics upsets many South African Jews as much as others. An example of an upsetting statement is from farright leader, MK Bezalel Smotrich, who insists that Israel should become a state governed by Jewish biblical law as in King David's time.

Smotrich, known for extreme right-wing opinions, and a declared homophobe, announced during recent coalition talks that he wanted the justice portfolio. He won't receive it - even from Netanyahu.

The world's two largest Jewish communities, America and Israel, have been growing further apart for a long time, with American Jews on the whole still more liberal than

A recent survey of

ISSUE Geoff Sifrin

TAKING

by the American Jewish Committee revealed that the divide is growing faster than expected. Last

1 006 American Jews

year, 70% of American Jews questioned said that caring about Israel was a "very important" part of their Jewishness. This year, only 62% said so.

Politically, the divide is more dramatic. On the explosive political issue about Jewish settlements in the West Bank, in 2018, 15% of respondents said Israel should be willing to dismantle all settlements as part of a peace agreement with the Palestinians. But in 2019, this had risen to 25%, according to *Haaretz*. Only 6% of Israeli Jews, however, were willing to dismantle the settlements.

A comparable split exists regarding the nature of a political settlement. Two thirds of American Jews support a two-state solution, which establishes a demilitarised Palestinian state in the West Bank. Only 39% of Israeli Jews do.

Aside from politics, Israel is experiencing a brain drain, primarily to America. Increasingly, Israel's most educated citizens are immigrating, says a report by the Shoresh Institution for Socioeconomic Research of Tel Aviv University.

Those leaving come from the segment most crucial to Israel's success - educated Israelis, professionals looking for a better lifestyle. In spite of Israel being the "start-up nation", workers in high-tech face huge pressure to go to America where they are closer to investors and markets.

This has serious implications. About 3% of Israelis work in high-tech, accounting for nearly 40% of the country's exports. Less political tension in their lives would also be a drawcard for professionals.

Trump may be right: Israeli politics really is all messed up. But given his own "America first" agenda, his power, and his closeness to Netanyahu, he is not the one to help clear things up.

KINDNESS AND CARING AT TIME OF **NEED**

are Israel's chances in European soccer?", SA Jewish Report, 31 May.

Benayoun was so good, all the top English Premier League teams wanted him. He played for means he was more than a half-decent player. He also won the UEFA Europa league with Chelsea, and made 231 appearances in the Premier League.

There was also Tal Ben-Haim, who played for the likes of Chelsea and Manchester City, and made 189 appearances in the Premier League.

of world-class players. - Saul Kamionsky, **Johannesburg**

ISRAEL HAS A LONG LIST OF WORLD-CLASS FOOTBALL PLAYERS

I disagree with Luke Alfred in his article, "What

To claim that Yossi Benayoun and Ronny Rosenthal were not world-class does not reflect their talent as players.

Liverpool, Chelsea, and Arsenal - a feat that surely Rosenthal, who made 118 appearances in the

Premier League, was a star for both Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur.

Israel, therefore, has produced a number

7 – 14 June 2019 SA JEWISH REPORT 23

Torah Academy sports day focuses on fun events



Avrohom Dovid Fox (Grade 6), Dovber Ress (Grade 4), and Avremi Swimmer (Grade 4) running in the 100m dash during Torah Academy Primary School's Lag B'Omer sports day

Torah Academy Primary's annual sports day took on a different format this year. Instead of the usual two teams, Torah and Mitzvah, there were six teams on the boys' side, and six on the circle.

The teams were chesed, gevurah, tiferet,

netzach, hod, and yesod (six mystical attributes). Some of the more technical events were replaced by fun events such as egg and spoon races, allowing for participation by every child. Grade 6 students led the teams, offering an example to the younger children.

Off to a flying start

Sandton Sinai pupil Jude Helper got off to a flying start in the Melrose Arch ToyZone Kiddies Cycle Challenge held at the Piazza on 26 May. The race was open to children aged between three months and 13 years in four age categories. It helped to raise funds for the Smile Foundation which assists children in need of facial reconstructive surgery.



Jude Helper at the start line for his race

'Tattooist of Auschwitz' author enthrals audience

eather Morris, the author of the bestseller, *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, was hosted by the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) Johannesburg on 23 May at the newly opened Capital Fitzgerald Hotel and Suites in Melrose.

In conversation with renowned local talk-show host and book maven Jenny Crwys-Williams, Morris told the story of how she was first introduced to the book's protagonist, Lale Sokolov, who took her on a journey she had never imagined.

She started writing Sokolov's story as a screenplay, but after various hurdles, decided that she would self-publish it as a book, which is when she caught the attention of one of Australia's largest publishers.

The audience came away with a sense of knowing that history is in safe hands because of gifted authors like Morris who ensure that these vital stories are not lost.

Heather Morris and Jenny Crwys-Williams The state of the

Saturday (8 June)

 Shavuot dinner with guest speakers Brenda Stern, Chemo & Courage, and Elisheva Liberman, Redneck to Rebbetzin. Cost: R250 for adults, R150 for kids. Sandton Central Shul. Contact: 072 801 7491 or email batya@chabad.org.za

Sunday (9 June)

- The Big Band Music Appreciation Society hosts a programme presented by Gunter Ruhnke. Audio: big band favourites well-known songs performed by great bands and singers from all over the world. Movie: Andre Rieu live in Dublin. Time: 14:15 sharp.
 Venue: Beit Emanuel Slome Auditorium, 38 Oxford Road, Parktown (entrance in Third Avenue). Contact: Marilyn 072 243 7436 or Jack 082 450 7622.
- Sandton Central Shul hosts Shavuot day one services. Time 09:30, Ten Commandments 11:00, followed by ice cream party for all.
 Venue: 8 Stella Street, Sandton. Contact: rak@chabad.org.za

• Sandton Central Shul hosts Shavuot day two services. Time 09:30,

Yizkor 11:00, followed by lunch with Ambassador Lior Keinan talking about *Israel-SA relations*. Venue: 8 Stella Street, Sandton. Contact: rak@chabad.org.za

Wednesday (12 June)

- The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) presents a public lecture by Danny Brom, clinical psychologist and the director of Metiv: the Israel Psychotrauma Centre, on Holocaust survivors in the last phase of life: needs and responses. Time: 19:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. RSVP to dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100. Free admission, donations welcome.
- The Union of Jewish Women (UJW) hosts Jason Kree, financial expert and motivational speaker. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053.

Thursday (13 June)

- The Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) Forum hosts a celebration of Jerusalem with dynamic and passionate speaker Sihle Ngobese, the head of strategic operations at the Institute of Race Relations, and the host of the Big Daddy Liberty show on YouTube. A short film will be shown on the reclaiming of Jerusalem. Time: 09.30 for 10.00. Venue: Beyachad, 2 Elray Street, Raedene. Cost: R52 (for 52 years of Jerusalem!) includes tea and refreshments. To book, contact: Lauren 011 645 2515 or wizojhb@beyachad.co.za
- Join WIZO every Thursday for a Lunch & Learn shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz. Time: 13:00 at Beyachad.
 Contact: WIZO office: 011 645 2515.

KDVP celebrates Jerusalem reunification



King David Victory Park
High School celebrated Yom
Yerushalayim on 28 Iyar – the
day of the reunification of the
old and new city of Jerusalem.
The school held a special
assembly followed by a shuk
(market) and tea for parents
who were invited to take part
in the celebration.

Thomas Stenz, Gabriel Ferreira, Abigail Klug, Jozef de Aguiar, and Danit Krawitz (Krawitz and Ferreira are head girl and boy, the others are the heads of the Judaica committee)



ABSA PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD



24 SA JEWISH REPORT 7 - 14 June 2019

Looking back at 'Mobil' and the 'Dapper Duo'

LUKE ALFRED

ith the Cricket World Cup testing South African fans' patience and loyalty to the full, the question arises about Jewish cricketers in the tournament.

Alas, there aren't any. Although some may have thought Adam Zampa, the Australian leg-spinner with the Justin Bieber-like good looks, is Jewish, he is of Polish descent, but not Jewish.

Closer to home, there have long since ceased to be South African Jewish cricketers capable of playing international cricket, although this wasn't always the case.

The best story of all concerns Norman Gordon, nicknamed "Mobil" because of the slightly greasy brylcreem streaks of pomade in his hair.

For many years, Gordon, a fast-bowler born in Boksburg and educated at Jeppe Boys, was not only the oldest surviving member of either side who played in Durban's famous Timeless Test of 1939, but the oldest living Test cricketer per se.

Aged 103, he passed away five years ago, secure in the knowledge that Wally Hammond, who played for England in the Timeless Test, talked of him in the same sentence as England fast-bowler Maurice Tate, a compliment Gordon cherished.

To put things in perspective, Hammond was the greatest batsman

in the world throughout the 1920s. A sublime technician who hit the ball hard, he was the Joe Root of his age.

That was until Don Bradman, a dapper Aussie from country New South Wales who favoured doublebreasted, pinstripe suits started to grace the cricket stage. Some joked that with Bradman eclipsing Hammond as the pre-eminent



batsman of his generation, the Englishman's nose was out of joint for a decade.

Having earned Hammond's respect, Gordon and the taciturn former England captain became friends during World War II, playing on opposing sides in games of social cricket designed to keep up morale.

Hammond was stationed at times in South Africa, and finally settled in Kloof outside of Durban, marrying a Durban socialite and former "Miss Hibiscus", Sybil Ness-Harvey.

Gordon lived for cricket, he once told me, so much so that it compromised his studies at Jeppe Boys, and he earned his matric at least a year later than he probably should have.

During the Timeless Test - a Test lasting so long that the South African, Ken Viljoen, had time for

two haircuts before it ended -Gordon bowled 92.4 overs. In those days, overs were eight balls long, which meant that he bowled the equivalent of approximately 120 overs by today's sixballs-per-over standard. "It was so muggy that the front of

my cricket whites were sticking to my legs below the knee I was sweating so badly," he told me in one of several interviews he gave me through the

Those 92.4 overs weren't an easy, wicket-taking romp by any stretch of the imagination. Gordon took only one all match: that of batsman Eddie Paynter, caught by keeper Ronnie Grieveson in the England second innings for 75.

When canvassed by the International Cricket Council (ICC) many years later on the subject of re-introducing timeless tests as a way of deciding a Test championship, Gordon was aghast. "I hope nobody has to go through something like that again," he told them.

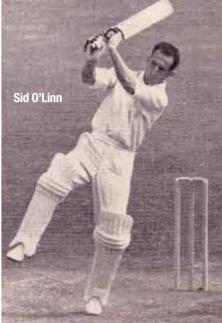
Gordon was Jewish but, unlike Jewish cricketers of earlier generations, wasn't required to name-change or disguise his ancestry. Many didn't realise, for example, that Sid O'Linn, a double Springbok in both cricket and football, came from a Jewish family of Polish descent called Olinsky.

O'Linn's father was a kosher butcher in Oudtshoorn in the Karoo, according to a 2017 article by Daniel Lightman in the Jewish Chronicle. The family later moved to Cape Town, Sid matriculating from Sea Point Boys' High as it then was.

Charlton Athletic was the club destination of choice for South African footballers of O'Linn's generation, and he duly went across to London in 1948, spending 10 happy seasons at the Valley.

His contract ran to 60 pages, and stipulated that there was to be no dancing or drinking after Wednesday nights (football was on a Saturday) and riding a bicycle or motorbike was frowned-upon. Ice-skating was expressly forbidden.

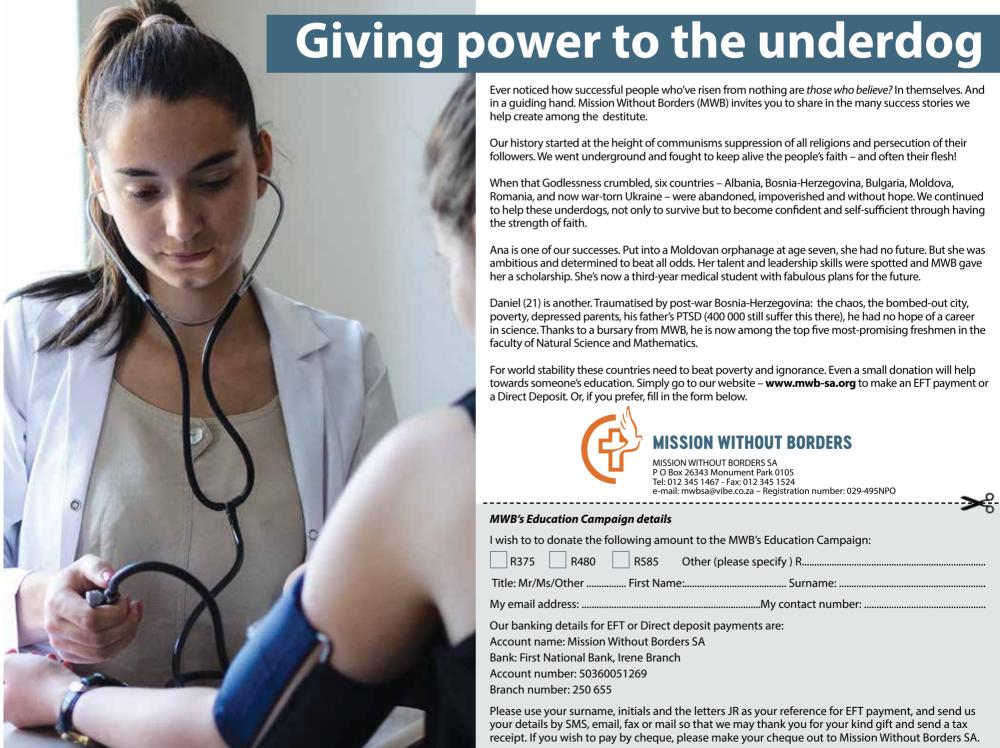
In the English summer, O'Linn, an obdurate left-hander, played country cricket for Kent. His progress was



erratic and, returning to South Africa, he did so well in a Test trial for the 1960 Springboks to England that, according to his good friend, Johnny Waite, "the buggers were forced to pick him".

O'Linn and Waite later became part of the dapper duo who ran LF Palmer, a sports shop originally in the Joburg CBD before it moved to a nook inside the Wanderers Stadium.

Many a slightly wide-eyed Joburg schoolboy of the 1970s and early 1980s bought their cricket equipment from Sid and Johnny. It was an outing looked forward to for days. Little could I have guessed then that O'Linn, often dressed in a trademark lamb's wool cardigan and Hush Puppies, was not the selfcontained Irishman I thought him



Ever noticed how successful people who've risen from nothing are those who believe? In themselves. And in a guiding hand. Mission Without Borders (MWB) invites you to share in the many success stories we help create among the destitute.

Our history started at the height of communisms suppression of all religions and persecution of their followers. We went underground and fought to keep alive the people's faith – and often their flesh!

When that Godlessness crumbled, six countries – Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, and now war-torn Ukraine – were abandoned, impoverished and without hope. We continued to help these underdogs, not only to survive but to become confident and self-sufficient through having the strength of faith.

Ana is one of our successes. Put into a Moldovan orphanage at age seven, she had no future. But she was ambitious and determined to beat all odds. Her talent and leadership skills were spotted and MWB gave her a scholarship. She's now a third-year medical student with fabulous plans for the future.

Daniel (21) is another. Traumatised by post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina: the chaos, the bombed-out city, poverty, depressed parents, his father's PTSD (400 000 still suffer this there), he had no hope of a career in science. Thanks to a bursary from MWB, he is now among the top five most-promising freshmen in the faculty of Natural Science and Mathematics.

For world stability these countries need to beat poverty and ignorance. Even a small donation will help towards someone's education. Simply go to our website - www.mwb-sa.org to make an EFT payment or a Direct Deposit. Or, if you prefer, fill in the form below.



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.....My contact number:

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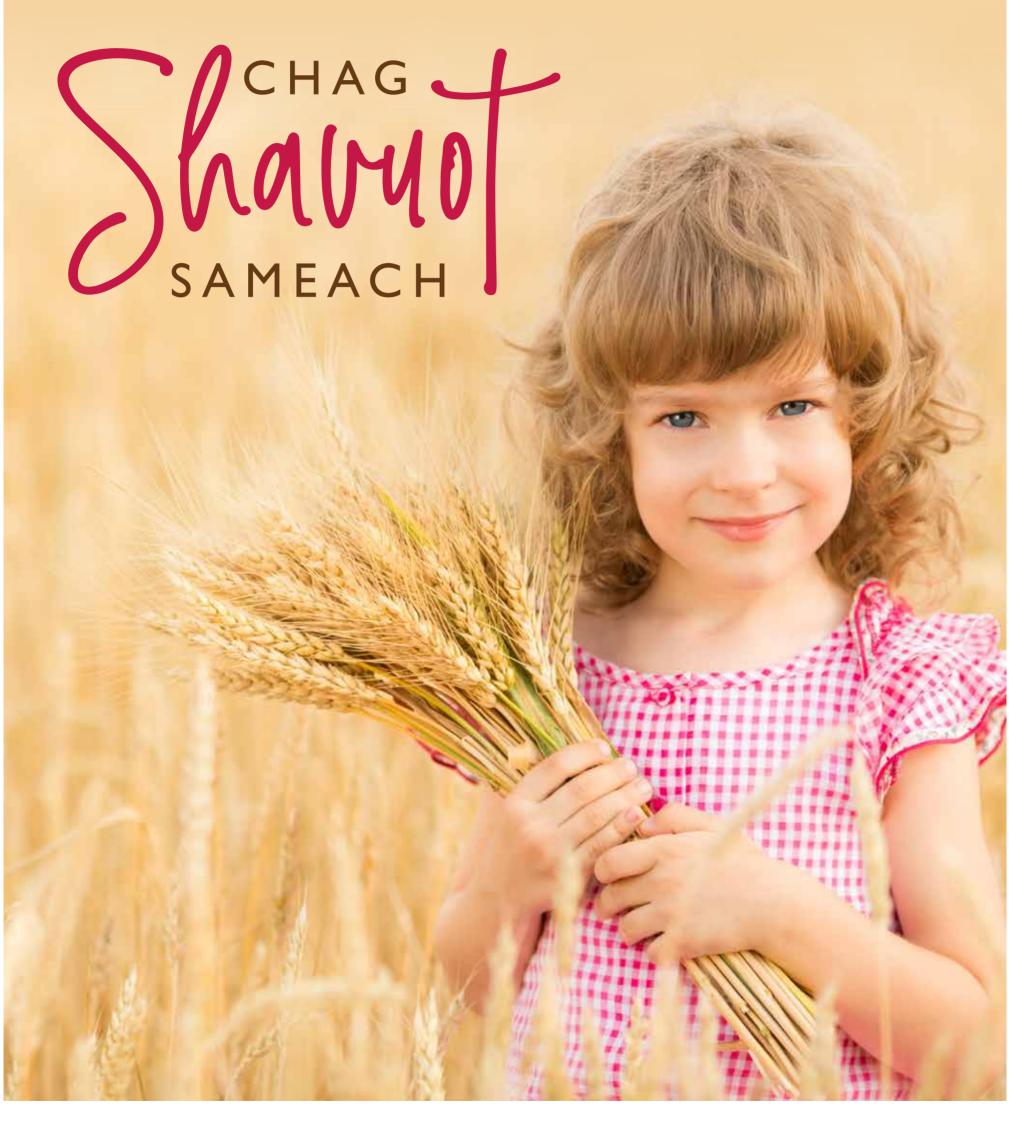
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