

Volume 23 - Number 36 ■ 27 September 2019 ■ 27 Elul 5779

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ANC politician unrepentant after Jewish property smear

TALI FEINBERG

Gauteng Human Settlements MEC Lebogang Maile has insulted the Jewish community by accusing Johannesburg mayor Herman Mashaba of “giving buildings to Jews”, but he refuses to apologise, saying he did nothing wrong.

Maile’s offensive comment followed a tweet that claimed that Mashaba was “reclaiming the inner city the ANC [African National Congress] gave to Nigeria”, and was transforming it into “the Jozi we want”. His response to the tweet praising Mashaba’s efforts was, “He’s actually giving them [the buildings] to Jews. Ask him who are the new owners of these buildings?”

Mashaba said he was “horrificed and disappointed” at the tweet, and said that a senior politician “should know better than to drag the Jewish community into a conflict and create lies. It’s a dangerous game he’s playing.”

He said the tender process for revamping the buildings had always been transparent and was approved by the Johannesburg City Council. Furthermore, all winning tenders were listed on the City of Johannesburg website, so there was no need to wonder about who they were awarded to.

“There is no law that precludes the Jewish community from participating in the city of Johannesburg,” the mayor said. “If he [Maile] has a problem with me or the city of Johannesburg, why bring in the Jewish people?” He said that as an MEC, Maile and those above him in office – even the president – owed the Jewish community an explanation.

Responding to questions from the *SA Jewish Report*, Maile elaborated on what he meant by his tweet.

“It’s public knowledge that mayor Mashaba is giving a sizeable chunk of business from the

City of Johannesburg to our white compatriots, including the Jewish community. This has never been disputed by the mayor or DA [Democratic Alliance] itself,” he says.

This is problematic, because “given our heinous apartheid past, blacks in general and Africans in particular, were denied opportunities to participate fully in the ownership and control of the economy. Part of our concerted efforts is to de-racialise the economy and make sure that our people participate fully in the mainstream economy. It’s an undisputed fact that white compatriots, including Jews, have benefited more than our own people, hence it’s important that space is created for blacks to be empowered economically so that we build a genuinely non-racial South Africa.”

Even if Jewish businessmen have won tenders legally to renovate these buildings, Maile says he won’t take back his tweet. “I don’t see anything wrong with my tweet because I was stating a fact.”

He says it isn’t racist. “I belong to the ANC, and my party has always promoted non-racialism. As a disciplined ANC cadre, I stand for non-racialism.” Asked if he understands why people believe the tweet to be problematic, racist, and anti-Semitic, Maile says, “We should always be open to having robust engagement on sensitive matters that seek to unite us as we forge ahead to build a country that accommodates all of us, including economic inclusion.”

Asked if he would apologise to the Jewish community for the tweet, Maile says, “I haven’t said anything that warrants a public apology to our Jewish community. If anything, it’s the long-suffering black majority that are owed an apology owing to the fact that we are not moving fast enough with the transformation

of the economy, giving the land back to its rightful owners, and ensuring that they have access to productive assets as part of building an inclusive, equitable, non-racial society.”

Karen Milner, the Gauteng deputy chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) says that MEC Maile has called on all South Africans to join hands, but, “ironically, he is the one to single out a minority group and suggest that we are somehow unjustly benefiting at the expense of the greater Johannesburg population because of the supposedly unethical practices of the Democratic Alliance. What’s worse, Maile has adopted the position that he has done nothing wrong, but simply exposed the facts.

“The real question is why the MEC chose to identify the alleged building owners as being

Jewish at all, and moreover to do so in a context implying that they were benefiting at the expense of the majority population?

“It has become a matter of concern to the SAJBD that to an alarming extent, the official opposition in South Africa is being portrayed as a party that is secretly beholden to Jewish interests. This is a clearly racist allegation for which there exists no credible evidence.

“Even if it should prove to be the case that Jewish community members have acquired ownership of the buildings in question, their being Jewish is irrelevant. Pointedly drawing attention to the fact, especially in such a context, can only be regarded as malicious,” says Milner.

She points out that a few years ago, then

Continued on page 4>>

Charly’s sweet treats for royal angel



Charly’s Bakery owner Jacqui Biess was delighted when she was asked to whip up some treats for the royal family during their Cape Town visit. “This was Archie’s first appearance on the South African royal tour, and we are absolutely thrilled that he has a sweet tooth!” says Biess.

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Gandhi Rosh Hashanah greeting found in archives

A Rosh Hashanah greeting written by Mahatma Gandhi on the day that the Nazis invaded Poland has been discovered at the National Library of Israel.

The handwritten letter from the famed Indian advocate of non-violence to AE Shohet, the head of the Bombay Zionist Association, is dated 1 September 1939. The library placed it online this week.

“Dear Shohet, You have my good wishes for your new year,” the letter reads. “How I wish the new year may mean an era of peace for your afflicted people.”

The greeting was discovered as part of a library initiative to review millions of items in its archival collections.

Shohet was an Indian Jew from the Baghdadi community in Bombay. He also headed Bombay’s Keren Hayesod office, and served as editor of *The Jewish Advocate* newspaper.

He had interviewed Gandhi in March that year at his ashram in Wardha, according to the National Library. Gandhi had called for resisting Nazism solely through non-confrontational means.

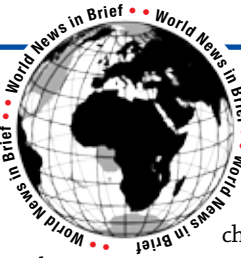
Synagogue Connect helps youngsters find seats

More than 1 100 synagogues across the United States and around the world will welcome Jewish college students and young adults to worship with them for the high holidays for free.

Synagogue Connect will help young Jewish people between the ages of 18 and 26 to find the synagogue with the appropriate affiliation near them to attend Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. It uses an online system to make

the matches.

More than 30 countries have participating synagogues, including Canada, Israel, Europe, Australia, and South Africa.



WeWork chief Adam Neumann steps down

WeWork co-founder Adam Neumann has stepped down as chief executive of the shared office space company, which has suffered a major devaluation amid investors’ fears about the charismatic but unpredictable leader’s control of the firm.

The company was valued at the beginning of the year at \$47 billion (R700 billion), but that figure has fallen to about \$15 billion (R223 billion).

Investors have expressed concern about the company’s business model and culture, the *New York Times* reported.

Last week, WeWork delayed the initial public offering of stock by several months as it seeks to repair its image.

Neumann will now become non-executive chairman of WeWork’s parent, the We Company.



Anti-Semitic leader speaks at Columbia University

Malaysia’s Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has called Jews “hook-nosed”, said they “rule the world by proxy”, and questioned the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust. He has even said he is “glad to be labelled anti-Semitic”.

The Malaysian leader was billed to speak about “the rule of law and multilateralism” at Columbia University’s annual world leaders forum on Wednesday.

Mohamad, who has served as prime minister since last year, also mocked Jews while speaking at Cambridge University in June.

Three pro-Israel groups on campus – Students Supporting Israel, Aryeh, and J Street U – expressed their concern about his visit to University President Lee Bollinger.

Bollinger called the leader’s remarks “abhorrent”, but said the university was “strongly resolved to insist that our campus remains an open forum”.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

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27/28/29/30/1 September/October					
CL	MS	CL	CL	YTE	
17:48	18:37	17:48	18:38	18:39	Johannesburg
18:28	19:20	18:29	19:22	19:23	Cape Town
17:37	18:28	17:38	18:29	18:29	Durban
17:56	18:46	17:57	18:48	18:48	Bloemfontein
17:59	18:52	18:01	18:53	18:54	Port Elizabeth
17:50	18:42	17:51	18:43	18:44	East London
CL: Candle Lighting					
MS: Motzei Shabbos					
YTE: YomTov Ends					

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Torah Thought Judging the highest and lowest in equal measure

This week’s Torah portion, Nitzavim, is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah. There are so many things about this portion that connect it to Rosh Hashanah. Nitzavim speaks of our commitment to G-d, His Torah, and *mitzvahs* (good deeds). It teaches about *teshuvah* (repentance), and foretells our return to G-d in this dark exile, reassuring us that G-d will gather us from the farthest places.

The portion opens with the words: “You are all standing – *nitzavim* – on this very day before the Lord your G-d”. Our rabbis teach that the term “this day” refers to the day of Rosh Hashanah, the day on which we all stand in judgement before G-d for a review of this contract.

The verse continues, “Your heads ... your officers ... from your wood choppers to your water drawers”. All Jews, no matter their station in life, level of observance or knowledge, are bound to G-d with the same contract.

The story is told that Rav Yosef, the son of the Talmudic sage Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, fell ill and was at death’s door, hovering between heaven and earth. His father prayed fervently for his recovery, and Rav Yosef recovered. When he recovered, his father asked him, “My son, what did you see up there?” Rav Yosef replied, “I saw an upside-down world. Those who are on top down here in our world are on the bottom there; and those who are regarded as lowly here, are exalted in heaven.”

The elevation of the leader or sage over the woodchopper or water carrier is as a result of our earth-bound perspective, which views things in terms of a hierarchy of roles. But when “you all stand before G-d” there is no higher and lower – what seems “low” here is still significant in G-d’s eyes.

I was recently called to say the final prayers at the bedside of someone in intensive care. The doctors said there was nothing more they could do. Walking through the silent hospital corridors got me thinking about the various milestones and life changing events that had happened over the previous year. I realised that a congregant who had decided to go kosher and kasher their home had really inspired me. I was in awe at another who decided that he would not continue a relationship with a non-Jewish girl. What life-changing decisions had I made in recent months? How will this Rosh Hashanah inspire me to greater heights in my Judaism?

Rosh Hashanah is the time when we all stand before G-d. Whether we are “officers” of Judaism, or “water-drawers”.



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IN PRE-OWNED VALUE #1

SA envoy to UN accuses Israel of ethnic cleansing

JORDAN MOSHE

South Africa’s envoy to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) this week accused Israel of using Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s planned annexation of the West Bank as an excuse to ethnically cleanse the region.

Clinton Gary Swemmer claimed in his apparent warning to UNHRC on Monday that, “South Africa is concerned that the annexation of Palestinian territory is highly likely in the South Hebron Hills and the Jordan Valley, selected because of their low population density with potential for ethnic cleansing.”

The envoy made these claims during a general debate at the UNHRC’s 42nd session in Geneva under the agenda item concerning the human-rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.

While he made other negative comments about Israel, his remarks about Israel’s intention to perpetuate ethnic cleansing through annexation were exceptionally ugly.

He suggested that Israel was guilty of such actions in the past, saying, “What started in east Jerusalem is going to spread unannounced and without an outcry, but with devastating consequences for Palestinian communities that will be left utterly defenceless and without residents.”

His comments appear to be in response to Netanyahu’s announcement last Tuesday that he would annex large swathes of occupied Palestinian territory if re-elected, including large parts of the West Bank. His assurances drew condemnation from across the spectrum, with UN Secretary-General António Guterres reportedly saying that the plan, if realised, would constitute “a serious violation of international law”.

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) National Chairperson Rowan Polovin called Swemmer’s remarks misleading and totally inaccurate.

“Neither the Palestinian city of Jericho nor the village of Duma would be affected by the theoretical

action in the Jordan Valley,” he said, “but Swemmer implies that Palestinians would be removed from the area, which is patently untrue.

“In reality, the only entity that actually practices ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the West Bank is the Palestinian Authority, which prohibits by law the selling of land to Jews, and sentences offenders to life in prison.”

Polovin called on Swemmer to condemn the Palestinian Authority’s anti-Semitic practices that attempt to cleanse the area of Jews.



Clinton Gary Swemmer addresses the UNHRC

The UNHRC meets three times a year, and each time, it debates human-rights violations around the world. All other countries are debated in a single agenda item, and then Israel is given its very own agenda item in which it is usually lambasted. Giving Israel its own agenda item is mandated by the UNHRC.

Israel routinely boycotts the specific agenda debate, according to the *Jerusalem Post*, and has called on all other countries to do so as well.

On Monday, none of the European Union (EU) member states participated in the debate, and Western countries also refrained from speaking.

In his address, Swemmer also focused on Israel’s response to Palestinian rioters at the Gaza border, the imprisonment of Palestinians, and the boycott of goods produced in occupied territories. All of his responses were

negative in the extreme.

“Israeli security forces continue to use live ammunition against demonstrators, with another 13 people including children killed as a result, and 859 injures since March 2019.

“My country is concerned at the trials of Palestinian detainees in military courts which are not part of the legal system and in which 99.7% of the accused are convicted, the ongoing mass demolition of Palestinian homes to make way for settlements, and the shrinking of civil society space.”

He said that


human-rights defenders who support the Palestinian cause routinely face smear campaigns, death threats to themselves and their families, accusations of treason, harassment, and intimidation.

Swemmer reiterated the call to boycott products manufactured in the occupied territories. “It cannot be that the powerful and moneyed continue to abuse the human rights of Palestinians in the name of profit,” he said.

Quoting John Dugard, a South African professor of international law, Swemmer asserted, “I have no hesitation in saying that Israel’s crimes are infinitely worse than those committed by the apartheid regime of South Africa.

“This pains us, and until this is no longer the case, we will continue to support the self determination of the Palestinian people, and the restoration of their human rights.”

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contact Swemmer in Geneva to clarify his remarks, but was told that he was unavailable for comment. Various individuals at the department of international relations and co-operation (DIRCO) were contacted to confirm Swemmer’s position, and whether it represented South African government policy.

Most of those who were said to be able to comment

were apparently attending a conference in New York, but DIRCO head of public diplomacy, Clayson Monyela, confirmed that Swemmer had been contacted to provide context for his comments.

“We have asked him to contextualise his comments so that we can understand them,” said Monyela. “We are following up on this, and will determine what he meant.”

Zambian politician accuses president of smuggling drugs and money from Israel

TALI FEINBERG

A Zambian politician has accused the country’s president, Edgar Lungu, of smuggling money and drugs on a return trip from a state visit to Israel in 2017. However, Israel’s ambassador to the country, Gershon Kedar, said that he “vigorously and officially denies such malicious and false allegations”. The ambassador is also the Israeli envoy to Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Israel, ambassador Kedar said that it was “important to take a stand and set the record straight” when Israel is mentioned in Zambian politics. However, he pointed out that the allegations weren’t anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli.

“Israel and Zambia have an incredible friendship on all levels. I’ve never come across a Zambian person who is anti-Israeli. A few months ago, a Friends of Israel group was established, and it has members from all political parties. Historically there is no anti-Semitism, and the country used to

have a large Jewish community.” Ambassador Kedar said that Israel had assisted Zambia after independence and continued to support the country to this day, especially in agriculture, social development, healthcare, water, and high tech. In fact, *DefenceWeb* reported in March 2019 that “Zambia has taken delivery of a new Gulfstream G650 VIP jet, which arrived from Israel in the Zambian capital, Lusaka, on 28 February.” And, on the same day that the Israeli ambassador debunked the allegations, a memorandum of understanding for co-operation was signed between the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and the ministry of tourism and arts in Zambia.

So, it was an unexpected turn of events when, in a speech two weeks ago, National Democratic Congress party leader Chishimba Kambwili claimed that there were rumours of money smuggling from Israel, while admitting that he had “no facts” to back up the allegation, reports the *Times of Israel*.

“I have no facts, but there is

Continued on page 5>>

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EXCLUSIVE TO KOSHERWORLD

NICOLA MILTZ

Attorney Ian Levitt confirmed this week that Matome Letsoalo is to be prosecuted for a string of vicious anti-Semitic comments he posted on Twitter more than a year ago.

Letsoalo was tracked down by the police in Limpopo after apparently going to ground after his rant 15 months ago. He is now facing *crimen injuria* charges after the state decided to prosecute him.

The elusive freelance writer, who used to feature on *News24*, posted several hateful tweets on his blocked @JustSmartRage Twitter account in June last year.

In one of his tweets, he wrote, “@SAJBD [South African Jewish Board of Deputies] The #Holocaust Will be like A Picnic When we are done with all you Zionist Bastards. F*** All Of You.”

In another one, he wrote, “@SAJBD Must get Decimated. We Can’t Have these Scandinavian Rats, Fake Jews, Zionist Bastards Running our Economy.”

He also posted distressing Holocaust photographs, a swastika, and images of a burning Israeli flag.

When criticised online for calling Jews “rats” and “scum”, he posted a picture of a semi-automatic weapon and tweeted, “I’m ready for you.” He removed the offending comments, but they remain in the Twittersphere.

It’s believed that Letsoalo has been blocked or suspended from Facebook and Twitter, and he doesn’t appear on *News24* anymore.

Disturbing tweets going back as far as 2014 allegedly show him to be openly anti-Semitic and racist.

Levitt, acting for the SAJBD, told the *SA Jewish Report* this week that the state had confirmed that the prosecution was going ahead. “We are awaiting the date for Letsoalo’s first appearance in criminal court,” he said.

At the time of the postings,

Letsoalo also allegedly threatened Levitt. On Sunday, 21 June 2018, Letsoalo tweeted, “You won’t take me to court cause I would Shoot you Dead in front of Police. Don’t mistake me for the common Native.”

Letsoalo’s tweets go back to June 2018 when a slew of anti-Semitic incidents sent shock waves through the community. They took place in the wake of television personality Shashi Naidoo’s comments on Israel and Palestine. Her comments followed a period of heightened tension and violence along the Israel Gaza border during the Great March of Return protests, and the controversial moving of the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Naidoo got into an ugly debate on social media, calling Gaza a “sh**hole”. She bashed Gaza for apparently not using aid and resources in helping its population, but pursuing an “ambition to annihilate Israel”. She came under attack by pro-Palestinian supporters and the Boycott, Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement for supposedly being pro-Israel.

Within a 24-hour period, a flurry of viciously anti-Semitic attacks were made against the community. The SAJBD said at the time that the incidents “generated great anxiety and anger in the Jewish community”, and that screenshots of various offending posts had gone viral.

SAJBD National Chairperson Shaun Zagnoev said on 21 June last year, “The posts show how easily radical anti-Israel sentiment can spill over into hateful slurs and threats against Jewish people in general. We are being told that we are ‘scum’, ‘rats’, ‘bastards’, ‘pigs’, ‘swine’, and ‘fat-nosed f**ks’. We are

Writer to be prosecuted for anti-Semitic rant

further being warned that ‘our time is coming’ and that ‘the Holocaust will be a picnic after we are done with you’.”

Other incidents in that month included an anti-Semitic rant by two Muslim teenagers on a WhatsApp chat group called Sneakerheads which sells takkies

the conversation covered the Naidoo event. The two teenagers have since made an unequivocal apology to the community.

Zagnoev said at the time, “Every single one of these incidents is not only an attack on the Jewish community, but an attack on our democracy. Racism has no place in this country. And certainly, any minority group is protected by the Constitution, which protects our freedom of expression and association. It’s no co-incidence that these anti-Semitic comments are coming after the very public humiliation and ‘re-education’ of model Shashi Naidoo for expressing her support for Israel. It would appear that those who support Israel are now ‘legitimate’ targets for attack.

“The vast majority of South African Jews are overwhelming and proudly South African, proudly Jewish, and proudly Zionist. We will not be intimidated by these attacks, and we call on every single South African who is opposed to racism and who values democracy and freedom of expression

to say, ‘Enough is enough!’. We need to condemn politicians who whip up racism, and we need to condemn extremist groups who intimidate and harass individuals who are vulnerable and express an opinion that doesn’t agree with theirs. There is simply no place for hate in our country.”

SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn told the *SA Jewish Report* this week, “It should be realised that legal processes are lengthy and complicated. The SAJBD’s mandate is to ensure that these cases are pursued responsibly to achieve the best outcomes. We work with excellent legal teams – in the case of Letsoalo with Ian Levitt – who has been committed to this case for more than a year. Letsoalo made his comments on social media, therefore it was difficult to locate him physically. This had to be done in order to issue him with a warning statement with a view to criminal prosecution.”

Describing Letsoalo’s comments as “deeply offensive threats”, she said, “Sadly, South African society has been inundated with incidents of hate in past weeks including against foreign nationals and women. We must stand up against bigotry whenever and wherever it appears, and for however long it takes. That’s why the SAJBD has pursued the case against Bongani Masuku for more than 10 years.”



ANC politician unrepentant after Jewish property smear

>>Continued from page 1

deputy minister and ANC Western Cape Chairperson Marius Fransman made similar allegations about the DA and Jewish property owners in Cape Town. At the time, MP and veteran anti-apartheid activist Professor Ben Turok criticised him, saying, “anyone who perpetuates an ethnic or racial stereotype could not only inflame anti-Semitism but lacks real understanding of South Africa’s political reality”.

In its editorial on the same issue, the *Cape Times* commented, “Whether or not property ownership remains dominated by whites is relevant because of South Africa’s history. However, it’s of no possible interest whether or not those landowners are Jewish.”

Says Milner, “Clearly, singling out Jewish ethnicity in relation to business interests is an old anti-Semitic trope that a non-racist party should not be engaging in. The SAJBD has requested a meeting with Mr Maile, in which we would explain the offensiveness of his comments.”

“His tweet is pure, undisguised anti-Semitism,” says Renney Plit, who has been a leader in the upliftment of

the Johannesburg CBD for more than 20 years. “He is more concerned about which race or religion is assisting in housing for the poor than actually addressing the problem. The ANC failed miserably at this, which is probably why he is making these comments.” He points out that as far as he knows, no Jewish businessmen have been granted buildings in the open tenders awarded thus far.

Brian Azizollahoff, who has been active in the property sector for more than 30 years, says, “This is an uneducated, simplistic comment. No one is giving anything to anyone. These buildings were purchased, and investors have spent and continue to spend huge amounts of money upgrading or converting the buildings. Since Jews are not the only landlords, the remark is clearly anti-Semitic in nature, and his agenda is ominous. Historically, many of the buildings were purchased by entrepreneurial developers when the major landlords were abandoning the CBD. In fact, the Jewish landlords I know have had a massively positive impact that has benefited the people.”

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NICOLA MILTZ

The company bowed out of the deal following huge pressure from Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) and other anti-Israel lobby groups who accused CBC of

One of the purposes of the commission is to investigate, control, and evaluate restrictive business practices, the abuse of dominant positions, and mergers in order to achieve equity and efficiency in the South African economy. It does this to promote employment and advance the social and economic welfare of South Africans, among many other things.



Ambassador Kedar said the two countries would move forward. "We will carry on



building the relationship between Israel and Zambian civil society, government, and its people. Just recently, two Israeli NGOs [non-governmental organisations] arrived in the country – one to implement solar power for schools, clinics, and infrastructure, and another to work on social development for women and children.”

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South Africans just want peace

Over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I will pray for peace and harmony. I will especially pray for an end to anti-Semitism.

I don't mind running happy news stories on our front page if it means that we have less ugliness and unpleasantness in our world.

This week, I experienced kindness, friendliness, and a sense of wider community on the few occasions I was out in public spaces.

Passing people in rowboats on the Zoo Lake on Heritage Day, everyone offered helpful advice, waved, chatted, and made us feel a part of a happy society. That was the most intimate of these occasions, but no different to our other experiences.

I didn't feel nervous, or concerned that my skin was too pale, or that I was too Jewish. It felt really good.

We are all just South Africans with our own chosen paths. It feels like as ordinary citizens, we are doing the best we can for ourselves and each other. I genuinely believe that most South Africans just want a country where we can live happily together.

But it doesn't take long to see a very different side to this country on social media. I understand that social media is a necessary evil, but the ugliness spewed on these platforms can destroy all the good the rest of us do in our day to day lives.

Lebogang Maile, Gauteng human settlements, urban planning and co-operative governance and traditional affairs MEC, recently made an ugly comment about Jews in his battle with Joburg mayor Herman Mashaba.

I was sure that he would soon realise that he should not have made such an offensive statement, especially as a government representative, and would apologise. I was wrong.

His response to questions from the *SA Jewish Report* following his insult of the community made it clear that he didn't care about offending us, digging himself further into the hole of racism. (See story on page 1.)

Then, we have Clinton Gary Swemmer, the South African envoy to the United Nations Human Rights Council, accusing Israel of using Netanyahu's planned annexation of the West Bank settlements as "an excuse for ethnic cleansing" of Palestinians. He claimed South Africa was concerned about this.

He was then quoted as saying, "What started in East Jerusalem is going to spread unannounced and without an outcry, but with devastating consequences." (See story on page 3.) What is he talking about? Not only is he accusing Israel of looking for an excuse for ethnic cleansing, but of having already done so in East Jerusalem. This is absurd and outrageous! It is such a clear example of what is termed "new anti-Semitism", in which there is clearly no truth to his ugly statements. It's pure Israel (therefore Jewish) hatred.

In light of both of these instances, the UN's scathing report released this week condemning mounting global anti-Semitism is all the more disturbing.

In the report, Ahmed Shaheed, the UN's special rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief, warned that, if left unchecked by governments, the "prevalence of anti-Semitic attitudes" poses "risks not only to Jews but to members of other minority communities, Anti-Semitism is toxic to democracy and mutual respect of citizens, and threatens all societies in which it goes unchallenged," he said.

He urged governments to adopt a "human-rights based approach" to combatting the hatred of Jews.

The report points to three main sources of hatred towards Jews: right-wing white supremacists; left-wing anti-Semitism that couches itself in anger at Israeli government policies or practices; and Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) "objectives, activities and effects [which] are fundamentally anti-Semitic".

Isn't it interesting that Maile cannot see that accusing the mayor of "giving" – not selling – property to Jews is a problem. In his response to us, he claimed that he meant all whites. But he didn't say that, preferring to pinpoint a minority that is so easily and quickly used as a scapegoat in racist behaviour.

As for Swemmer, I wonder how he justifies what he said. It would help if he deigned to respond to our request for answers. We will not let up on trying to get a response.

I am relieved that the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) is always quick to jump on these cases of anti-Semitism, not allowing people to walk away from making racist slurs against us. I appreciate that some people feel that the SAJBD is soft on anti-Semites, but I disagree. I believe it is doing the right thing by bringing the might of the law against these people. We dare not stoop to the level of those who despise us – we are above that. We need to use our integrity, moral judgement and the law to ensure people know we won't take their abuse.

In this newspaper, we make sure to alert you to anti-Semitic attacks, no matter how small. So, it may sometimes seem as if we are under general attack, but we aren't. We simply don't accept anti-Semitism. However, we are relieved that for the most part, Jews in this country are treated like all other citizens. And there is, comparatively, little anti-Semitism in South Africa.

I put this down to the fact that, intrinsically, South Africans are not full of hate, and actually want to get on with each other in a peaceful, calm way. We have our problems, but we want to be able to row our boats on the lake, and smile at those around us.

Here's to a peaceful 5780! Shabbat shalom and shanah tovah!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Who will be next to wear the Israeli crown?

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin announced on Wednesday night that he would task incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with forming a government coalition. It came as talks between the sides reached a stalemate.

After the second election in less than six months, Netanyahu's right-wing block was left with a 55 majority, one seat more than former Israel Defense Forces chief and leader of the Blue and White party, Benny Gantz's, centre-left bloc with 54. Neither has the minimum 61 mandates required to be the country's next prime minister.

All week, president Rivlin pushed the two leaders to work together. They met without him behind closed doors and it's anyone's guess what was said. Both blamed the other for the breakdown. It seems to have been over the issue of who would head a possible unity government between them. Both wanted it, and reportedly refused to budge.

Netanyahu now has 28 days to secure 61 mandates. If he can't, president Rivlin can then give him another two weeks. But even with the extension, he's likely to fail. His right-wing coalition partners will never agree to sitting with those on the left, and there's really no-one else left for Netanyahu to ask to join his coalition. The question is whether president Rivlin will then give Gantz the opportunity to try. But Gantz's centre-left coalition will never sit with those on the right, and so his chances are also less than promising. At the time of writing, speculation was rife that president Rivlin would reluctantly be forced to call for a third election.

Much has been written about former defense minister and leader of the Israel Our Home party, Avigdor Lieberman, being a kingmaker after securing eight mandates. Should he join Netanyahu, he'd bring enough votes to secure him



the government. But Lieberman has announced he's not joining forces with Netanyahu – or with Gantz for that matter.

In a significant development, the Arab Joint List (a political alliance of the main Arab-dominated political parties in Israel – Balad, Hadash, Ta'al and the United Arab List) gave their backing to Gantz, ending the community's usual policy of not supporting any candidate for prime minister. The last – and first – mainstream Jewish candidate backed by representatives of Israel's Arab minority was Yitzhak Rabin in 1992.

Still, the support was not unanimous, and three of the faction's members opposed the recommendation, writing in a statement that, "Gantz should not be recommended due to his right-wing political stance, which is not too different from Likud, as well as for his bloody and aggressive military history."

Gantz's response to the Arab support was lukewarm. In spite of Netanyahu's effort to paint the former army chief as a left-winger, on key issues, the two leaders are not that different. Gantz said he would not support a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank, and has so far refused to rule out the annexation of settlement blocs, echoing

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier

Netanyahu's comments. Also, don't forget that Gantz was head of the army during the 2014 Gaza War in which hundreds of Palestinian civilians were killed.

It's no surprise then that when the Arab Joint List endorsed him, his reaction was restrained, and he took pains to broadcast his limited appreciation. He knows their support comes at a price.

Among the demands already put forward by the Arab Joint List to Gantz are freezing home demolitions in unrecognised Arab villages; cancelling the controversial nation-state law that enshrines Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people; and revising a law that penalises illegal construction. This would benefit Arab Israeli towns where illegal construction is rife.

The Arab Joint List hasn't said what it will do if Gantz refuses its demands – and it seems highly unlikely he'll agree to any, certainly not most, of them. But with Netanyahu now tasked to form a government, this question is moot. It will become relevant only if Gantz gets the chance to try his luck.

If that occurs, Arab support could weaken Gantz's efforts to attract right-wingers to his potential coalition. It has already partially been responsible for Lieberman's decision not to endorse him.

Balad, the most extreme Arab party in the Arab Joint List, opposed recommending Gantz, saying that it believed he intended eventually to form a unity government with Netanyahu and Lieberman that, in its opinion, would be "worse than a right-wing government".

Balad, though, will never support a Zionist leader. The party's founder, Azmi Bishara, was stripped of



his parliamentary immunity and fled Israel in the aftermath of the 2006 Lebanon War after being suspected of telling Hezbollah where its missiles landed. Former party Knesset members have taken part in the Gaza flotilla, and gone to jail for smuggling cell phones to terrorists in prison.

Still, the main reason the majority of Arab leaders support Gantz is that they want Netanyahu out. The latter's relentless incitement against the Arab minority during the election campaign galvanised Arab voters to go to the polls. Just prior to the elections, Netanyahu promised he'd annex settlements in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley which while buoying his right-wing supporters, had the opposite effect on the Arab community. His scare tactics continue to the extent that I've heard Likudniks say that if Gantz becomes prime minister, there will be an Arab defense minister.

These elections were as much about a vote of confidence in Netanyahu as anything else. The result is that Israelis want him – and don't want him. In the end, the country finds itself in the same position it was in this past April. Political analysis might be a science, but in Israel at the moment, it feels more like guesswork.



CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN



- *Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein has been the Chief Rabbi of The Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa since 2005. He has a BA, LLB (Unisa), and a PhD in Human Rights and Constitutional Law (Wits).*

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A new paradigm for resolving the Iran conflict

OPINION

GINA ROSS



Encouraging Iran to rejoin the community of nations while simultaneously keeping the world safe is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century.

Israel's warnings about Iran helped to strengthen Western sanctions, but were insufficient to influence the six nations from using more than diplomacy with Iran, foregoing the threat of military force. Israel's differing policies were used to demonise it as a warmongering state, and created tension with those who supported using diplomacy only.

In spite of its almost moribund economy and civil unrest, Iran surged after the deal, more powerful, rich, determined, and openly aggressive towards the United States, Israel, and the Gulf states. The deal allowed a regime to flourish which menaces many nations and threatens the extinction of Israel specifically.

The Trump administration decided to pull out of the deal and add more sanctions. The international response has consisted of two trends: recommending aggressive confrontation, or more diplomacy-only tactics.

However, there's a possible third approach. This new paradigm offers a new perspective on Iran's destructive, aggressive actions through the lens of a neutral psychological standpoint. We call Iran's aggression a "collective trauma vortex", a metaphor describing a whirlpool of fear, humiliation, loss, and hurt pride at the collective level, manifested in dangerous aggression and the inability to resolve conflicts peacefully. This approach to dealing with it incorporates the present philosophy of diplomatic efforts but combines it with clear boundaries and military consequences.

Iran's behaviour fits the description of a collective trauma vortex, namely the capacity to take care of its needs in positive ways is

compromised; its one-sided historical narrative generates a perpetual sense of victimisation, a polarised worldview, mistrust, paranoia, and conspiracy theories; there are claims of moral superiority with the demonisation and dehumanisation of adversaries; its population is repressed and human rights are abused. The nation is stuck in a dangerous reflexive and patterned fight response.



Photo: Philippe Wojazer / Reuters

French President Emmanuel Macron (right) and President Donald Trump tout a US-Iranian summit as they address a joint news conference on 26 August at the end of the G7 summit in Biarritz, France

Iran's ambitions, fears, and actions distort the fulfilment of its psychological universal basic needs (UBN). These include safety; autonomy; a positive self-image; identity; competence; trust in others; and being trustworthy; the validation of its experience and reality; a sense of justice; meaning and contribution. Nations caught in a collective trauma vortex need help, as they are unable to fulfil their UBN or prioritise those needs in healthy ways.

Effective diplomacy requires a respectful and firm approach, viable ways to meet Iran's UBN, and most importantly, a deep cross-cultural

understanding to meet these needs appropriately. Cross-cultural misunderstanding has made Iran perceive the Geneva Interim Agreement as a sign of weakness of will, and mistake its adversaries' reluctance for war as cowardice and/or fear of war.

The international community must show Iran that it understands its unfulfilled UBN, is willing to help fulfil them, and help it to protect its culture

from foreign influence. It must bring Iran into the community of nations, and remind it that attempts to meet these needs at the expense of its other needs, and of the needs of other people, have backfired and provoked a serious backlash.

Firm, believable, dispassionate diplomacy must be used first, making sure to address and resolve misunderstandings or affronts without blowing them out of proportion. It must also include the message that if diplomacy fails, force will be used. When dealing with a nation in an advanced trauma vortex such as Iran, it's essential to defend other countries' safety by stating the use of defensive force (versus aggressive force) as an inevitable natural consequence of continued aggression.

For Iran to emerge from its vortex and rejoin the community of nations, rules and standards for conflict resolution must be clear, firm, and all-encompassing, and the international community must follow them in unison. Failure to adhere to the standards must carry swift consequences. For this, all the nations involved must unite, and understand that war won't benefit anyone. The threat of the use of force could be withdrawn at any time if Iran steps back from aggression.

Economic sanctions are a non-violent initial form of defensive force. However, when they are ineffectual and a collective trauma vortex escalates into violence, it can be stopped only with military force. Yet, the threat of force must never be presented as punitive, retaliatory,

humiliating force because such language only hardens an aggressive and irrational vortex, in which people are blindly ready to risk their own safety.

Right now, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia, and China are holding the diplomatic carrot, the Israeli government and Trump administration are holding both, but are clear about the stick if necessary.

These pieces must be co-ordinated. The focus must be on how to stop Iran without making its regime feel it's compromising its essential need for safety and pride, and without feeling the need to develop nuclear weapons, and threaten other stakeholders.

All stakeholders, including the US, Israel, and their Arab allies, Europe, Russia, and China must challenge the Iranians' narrative and worldview while also acknowledging the suffering they have experienced and offering a list of the benefits to be gained by Iran if it enters into a real peace process.

Too often, we fail to validate suffering because the ways of expressing it are destructive. Or, conversely, we validate/condone destructive actions because we are aware of the suffering.

Objectivity, moral clarity and the interest of the whole international community, and not only of the parties involved in the deal, are crucial. Groups that insist on remaining in the trauma vortex and continue to do damage must bear the consequences, including judicial or military action.

Resolution comes when we understand:

- What fuels the trauma vortex of each party involved in conflict;
- The potential for the healing vortex of all involved; and
- That creative solutions can emerge only from healing

Our model clearly identifies the symptoms of dysfunctional collective behaviour and the need to develop strategies to control aggressive behaviour and implement them immediately. In this case, addressing Iranian threats and dysfunctional behaviour must be part of any dialogue and agreement with Iran with the clarity that the use of force will follow if it continues.

• Gina Ross is the founder/president of the International Trauma-Healing Institute in the US (ITI-US) and its Israeli branch (ITI-Israel). Born in Aleppo, Syria, Gina has lived in eight different countries on four continents. Her latest book *Breaking News! The Media and the Trauma Vortex: Understanding News Reporting, Journalists and Audiences* was launched at the Jerusalem Press Club in October 2018.

The passing of an honorary Jew

TALI FEINBERG

Just before Geoff Ramokgadi passed away, he told his friend, journalist Suzanne Belling, that he looked forward to seeing "his father, Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris" at the gates of heaven.

Ramokgadi, the vice-president of the African Jewish Congress (AJC) and the president of the Swaziland Jewish community, who passed away at the age of 66 on Friday, 13 September, in Eswatini, Swaziland, was known as an "honorary Jew". He died of cancer, which he believed he developed because he grew up near the mines in Rustenburg in North West Province.

Belling met him 30 years ago when she was editor of *Johannesburg Jewish Voice*. She received a letter from a Geoffrey Modise Menachem Ramokgadi who said he wanted to become Jewish. "This was a rather unusual request from a black South African. I wanted to meet him and interview him.

He and [his wife] Dudu came to my house. I published his story. We have been firm friends ever since that memorable day."

Belling and Country Communities Rabbi, Moshe Silberhaft said they recognised that Ramokgadi had a "Jewish soul". He was first influenced by the Jewish family who employed his mother. Visiting that family during the school holidays, Ramokgadi would pour over their books about the Holocaust and Judaism, and recognised that this was the path he wanted to follow. He would say that "coming from South Africa, a country with a history of racial discrimination, I've really found myself within the Jewish people".

Silberhaft, who also become his close friend, recalls, "When he decided to try to convert, he bought a flat in Berea to be close to the shul."

He says Ramokgadi's early passing is a huge loss as he played a key role in Africa-Israel Jewish relations.

Continued on page 10>>

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Far fewer home invasions

NICOLA MILTZ

While South Africa is regarded as one of the most unsafe places in the world, serious violent crime has gone down in most neighbourhoods where community members live, say security experts.

The latest national crime statistics released two weeks ago paint a grim picture of the reality of crime in the country, with the number of murders climbing to the highest level in a decade. Statistics also show a rise in major crimes such as sexual assault and robbery with aggravating circumstances.

However according to Sean Jammy, the chief operating officer of Community Active Protection (CAP), serious and violent crimes are down 29% in the Gauteng areas covered by the community-driven, non-profit security organisation.

“Throughout CAP’s footprint, we have seen a year-on-year drop in serious violent crime,” he said. “Home invasions are down massively.” A home invasion is classified as a contact crime where a victim or victims are confronted by an armed robber at home.

“CAP has had great success working with the police in affected areas to bring suspects to justice.”

Areas throughout Johannesburg including places like Emmarentia, Greenside, and Bryanston, have reduced home-invasion statistics, Jammy said. Waverley and Savoy were particularly hard hit by home invasions in the past, but there have been none this year so far.

He attributed the improvement to the “deactivation” of three specific gangs.

The perception exists that crime has increased, Jammy said, but this is largely due to national crime statistics and the number of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups reporting crime. Often this crime is not placed in context, or is reported as an armed robbery when in fact it is a burglary, Jammy said.

He said there had been an increase in targeted follow-home crimes. An example of this type of crime is the so-called Rolex gang, who follow a victim home from a shopping mall after being alerted by a scout. “The scout

looks for people with expensive jewellery, and then alerts a crew to follow the victim to a place convenient for an attack,” he said.

In the past six months, there has also been an increase in opportunistic follow-home crimes in which a criminal crew spots a victim, usually driving a high-end vehicle, in the traffic and follows them to their destination on the assumption that the driver will have expensive items worth stealing. “This is a new category of follow-home crime we are seeing,” Jammy said.

He encouraged people to not wear expensive jewellery, and to be more moderate about the vehicles they drive.

“The impact of the violent crime is far more severe than the enjoyment of driving the vehicle in the first place,” he said.

There has been an increase in public armed robberies in these areas, particularly affecting domestic workers who are held up for their cell phones in public places. It also affects people waiting outside for taxis.

“A perpetrator sees a person waiting in the street. Often they are on their phone and are caught off guard when their phone is yanked from them, and the perpetrator quickly disappears. This type of crime has become more prevalent because of the advent of Uber, and people’s behaviour when waiting,” he said.

He urged those waiting outside for lifts to use common sense and stay off their phones. They should also wait inside the gate if possible.

Jammy said there had been a measurable increase in home burglaries, specifically homes with a weak physical security presence. “Burglaries are easier to protect [yourself] against, whereas a follow home is a more complex crime and more difficult to secure yourself against. A burglary is simpler [to protect against] – have an alarm system and activate it at night.”

He urged people living in townhouse and cluster complexes not to become complacent. Burglaries still take place even though people feel safer because of security guards and electric fencing.

Jammy emphasised that it is imperative to have a good alarm system, and to check it regularly to make sure that it works.

The passing of an honorary Jew

>>Continued from page 8

The Ramokgadis visited Israel where they happened to meet then Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir at the Kotel. A huge framed photograph of Shamir shaking hands with the Ramokgadis takes pride of place in the entrance to their home, named “The Kibbutz”, alongside an equally large photograph of the Swazi king. Their home is full of Judaica, and even has paintings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Ramokgadi always hoped to convert Orthodox, but couldn’t do so because of various challenges. However, this didn’t deter him from following his passion – he learnt fluent Hebrew, wore a *kippah*, knew the services, attended shul as often as possible, and kept a kosher home where possible.

Belling and her husband would travel to Swaziland for Pesach, where she would bring Pesach-kosher food, and they would have the seder under the stars. “He always read from the Hagaddah in perfect Hebrew,” she says.

He had *mezuzot* on his doors, kept Shabbat and the festivals, put on *tefillin*, and asked to be buried in a *tallit* in a Jewish burial service. These wishes were granted when he was laid to rest last Thursday in a special section of the Rustenberg Jewish Cemetery, with Rabbi Silberhaft conducting the service.

Ann Harris, AJC president and the wife of the late Rabbi Harris, said, “Geoff was the AJC representative in Swaziland where he had lived for many years



Ann Harris gives Geoff Ramokgadi an award for many years of service to the African Jewish Congress

building up and organising several educational institutions. He wasn’t Jewish, but his love for the Jewish people and for Israel was one of the guiding principles of his life. People often use the phrase ‘a true *ohav Yisrael*’ without considering its full meaning. Geoff was just that. He loved us and all our faith stands for.

“We were so pleased early this year when his health improved a little that he was able to come to our conference in Cape Town, where we presented him with an award for his years of service to the AJC.”

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Retreat brings together three Abrahamic faiths

TALI FEINBERG

Open Mosque President Imam Dr Taj Hargey first envisioned holding an interfaith retreat for all three Abrahamic faiths – Jew, Christian and Muslim – four years ago. In spite of its challenges, it’s been so successful, it’s been repeated every year since, and was once again open to members of the Jewish community over the past weekend.

Hargey describes the Open Mosque in Wynberg, Cape Town, as “South Africa’s first truly liberal and progressive mosque with a forward-looking, all-inclusive ethos”. He sees the retreat as an opportunity to interact, share ideas, and build bridges in a peaceful, open environment.

He says the mosque is “openly Qur’an-centric, gender-equal, non-sectarian, intercultural, and independent. It is setting new theological benchmarks for Muslims

in South Africa, rejecting the corrupt, chauvinistic, and fear-inducing traditional Islamic clergy.

“Since a principal objective of the Open Mosque is to be all-inclusive, it was only natural for it to be in the forefront of interfaith dialogue and communal interaction. The original idea of the three Abrahamic faiths coming together was born out of this deep desire to bring people closer together so that we can work collaboratively for the benefit of the whole society, irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and class,” he says.

Looking back, he says there was much anxiety when the idea was first proposed four years ago. “How would Jews, Christians, and Muslims interact for three days and nights in an environment that they aren’t used to? What would the sleeping arrangements be? Would the food be kosher and halaal? Practical issues like these were quickly resolved, and at the end of the first interfaith retreat, everyone agreed that this concept should be repeated on an annual basis as the benefits were enormous and evident. Each year, a pertinent theme is chosen. This year it was about justice, next year it will be about the environment.”

Hargey says a gathering like this is vital in today’s world, especially in South Africa. “In a highly polarised world, it’s imperative that everything is done to bring people of different creeds, cultures, and colours together so that there can be mutual understanding and tolerance for all. The Open Mosque’s landmark interfaith retreat shows how this can be achieved in a small but significant way.

“Indeed, this retreat exemplifies the mosque’s mantra of ‘building bridges of friendship, and breaking the barricades of fear.’”

Hargey has been criticised for his idea. “As



Bryan Opert and visiting international scholar Dr Elham Manea at the Interfaith retreat

expected, we have the Orthodox Muslim clergy denouncing us for holding these groundbreaking conferences between members of the Abrahamic faiths. We have also had some reservation from ultra-conservative Christians and others who are not supportive of the idea. But these ‘stick-in-the-muds’ are on the losing side of history, as the only way forward is to bring people together in harmony and solidarity in celebrating our common humanity,” he says.

He believes the Jewish community will find these retreats meaningful. “Observant Jews will not only be able to interact and build friendships with Muslims and Christians, they will be able to gain objectivity about their faith, seeing it from the outside looking in. Remember, the retreat is not there to condemn and criticise other religions. It’s there to enhance each person’s spiritual and religious journey. Since most Jews are white and most Muslims are brown, this landmark inter-racial gathering is the best advertisement for genuine non-racism in South Africa.”

This past weekend, participants took part in lectures, seminars, workshops, tutorials, prayer ceremonies, and film presentations. There was also sport, meditation, recreation, and yoga. Bryan Opert chose to go on the retreat in spite of the fact that he had reservations about it initially. “*The Dignity of Difference* by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks cogently argues that the three Abrahamic religions have much in common, making dialogue not only possible but imperative,” he says.

“I met Dr Hargey. It was a pleasure to speak to him. His investment in seeing real interaction take place between these three faiths is a passion and perhaps even an obsession.” Distinguishing criticism of Israel from anti-Semitism is for me a pre-requisite to engagement. In discussions with Dr Hargey, it was clear that his ideas had evolved and become aligned with the following approach, in his own words, ‘I believe that the Jewish people have a legitimate right to a nation state in Israel alongside the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.’

“What we found was a unique group of about 40 people who – and I realise how cliched this sounds – were bound together in love and hope. It was a sharing of ideas by religious leaders of their faith’s views on a number of topics. Justice and gender, parenting, minority groups, and socio-economic issues were some of the topics examined.

“I believe that within Cape Town and maybe South Africa, this retreat is one of a kind, where authentic learning takes place with speakers who are deeply entrenched and knowledgeable in their sacred books and tradition. The ethos of respect and inclusiveness allowed for our strict observance of Shabbat and kashrut. Not only that, but there was a desire by the participants to share in Torah activities. Havdalah, specifically, was exquisite.”

Ultimately, Hargey’s message is simple, “We aren’t capable of resolving the issues of the holy land from this remote part of the world. What we can do is create true mutual respect, deeper understanding, and authentic harmony between Jewish and Muslim followers of the great patriarch Abraham in this highly fractured land.”



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Poles apart, teenagers strike up unlikely friendship

NICOLA MILTZ

When Johannesburg teenager Lolo Porter, 17, needed help in finding her way around Harvard, she had no idea the person who would come to her aid was another teenager just like her – only she was from Palestine.

Ever since that first encounter in July in the lofty corridors of the university, the two teenagers have become firm friends and speak via WhatsApp at least once a day. They share daily teenage missives about school life and friendships, and their bond has bridged cultural and religious divides.

Porter is Jewish and lives in Glenhazel, Johannesburg. She attends King David High School, Linksfield. Her new friend, Tara Masri, 16, is Muslim and attends Pioneers Bacculaureate School in Nablus, Palestine, near Ramallah. They both enrolled in an Oxbridge Summer School Programme in Boston to get a taste of American college life and broaden their horizons.

Their worlds could not be further apart, and yet according to Porter, they have so much in common.

“We are both passionate people who are independent and strong-minded. We were both travelling alone to a foreign country and staying in a dormitory with strangers. Our personalities are so

similar. I found her funny from the moment we met,” said Porter.

When Porter arrived in Boston, Masri had already been there for two weeks, and offered to show Porter around.

“We clicked immediately,” said Porter this week, “She is so much fun to be around.”

They decided to put their differences aside and get to know each other as people.

“At first, I was a little worried because I had never met someone my age from Palestine before. I was scared how she would react when she heard I was Jewish. I was worried it would be a problem, and we would clash.”

But the inquiring Porter was also “excited” to hear Masri’s perspective.

“Even when she found out I was Jewish and I found out she was Palestinian, it made no difference because we realised that we had so much more in common than our differences,” she said.

It didn’t take long for the teenagers to spend hours together chatting in the dormitory’s common room. They even shared similar hobbies like music and

playing the piano.

“We both want to do something in the world to make a difference. We bonded because of what we had in common rather than what we didn’t have in common,” said Porter.

are because we respect each other. This is an unlikely friendship, because I never would have imagined making a friend from South Africa. The fact that she is Jewish makes it even more special.”

if we put our differences aside.”

At the end of their course, the teenagers wrote a brief letter to one another.



Tara Masri and Lolo Porter

Masri said she liked living in Nablus, and would like to visit South Africa one day.

“It’s very safe here, there is a great community spirit, and I have lots of friends. My parents have been very supportive of my friendship with Lolo, and we plan to visit South Africa soon. Our differences haven’t stopped us from being friends. I have learnt how important it is to know a person before you judge them.”

Masri said she wants to study international law and politics when she completes high

school.

Porter said the unlikely friendship had taught her a lot.

“I’ve learnt not to judge a person based on what I hear. It’s better to really get to know someone, find out who they are, and where they come from, and not have any preconceived ideas. This way, you can have a relationship. It’s possible

“We both want to do something in the world to make a difference. We bonded because of what we had in common rather than what we didn’t have in common.”

In Porter’s letter to Masri, she wrote, “You are genuinely one of the funniest people I have ever met! Every day, you make me laugh more and more. I feel so close to you even though it’s been so short. You are literally like a sister to me! I have loved all our memories, and I will never forget them. Thank you for the most amazing two weeks! You are so much fun to mess around with, and I’m going to miss you so much! Stay in touch, and let me know if you’re ever in SA.”

In Masri’s letter to Porter, she said, “I will miss you so much. Although I met you two weeks ago, I feel close to you! You genuinely mean so much to me. I hope to see you again because you are definitely one of my fave people out there.”

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

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

citizenship, whether they can prove their Lithuanian lineage or not, and most South African Jews of Sephardic heritage are also eligible for European passports.

Ashkenazi: It is important to understand that until 1918, all of Eastern Europe was divided between three empires: Russia, Prussia, the Austro-Hungarian empire. Neither Poland nor Lithuania existed until 1918.

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

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

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

After World War II, the borders in Europe changed, resulting in cities changing

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

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

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

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



leading lawyer in the field of European citizenship, with a full understanding of local immigration laws.

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

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

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



I will be in Johannesburg from 14 to 20 November and then in Cape Town until 28 November. Please contact me for an appointment. My South African phone number is +27 64 745 5273 • Email me on adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com

Ruth Bader Ginsburg on mazel and role models

EMILY BURACK – JTA

It was a blunt statement in the midst of a cordial conversation: “I’m wondering why you’re here.”

That was Nina Totenberg, the NPR legal affairs correspondent, to Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg at last Thursday night’s *Moment* magazine awards dinner, where the justice had just walked out to a standing ovation.

Ginsburg, 86, is aware that she has been out and about just after completing radiation therapy during her latest bout with cancer, and she answered the question gracefully.

“This latest has been my fourth cancer bout,” she said. “And I found each time that when I’m active, I’m much better than if I’m just lying about and feeling sorry for myself. It’s necessary – a necessity – to get up and go. It’s stimulating. And somehow, in all of these appearances I’ve had since the end of August, whatever my temporary disability is, it stops and I’m OK for the time of the event.”

The judge held up throughout the evening, where she was the inaugural recipient of the Jewish magazine’s Human Rights Award. But Ginsburg didn’t shy away from talking about her retirement with Totenberg, her “favourite interviewer”.

When Totenberg asked if Ginsburg had any regrets about not stepping down during the Obama administration, shocked whispers rippled throughout the crowd.

“It has been suggested by more than one commentator, including some law professors, that I should’ve stepped down during President Obama’s second term. When that suggestion is made, I ask the question: who do you think the president could nominate that could get through the Republican senate that you would prefer to have on the court than me?” Ginsburg replied to loud applause.

The justice also spoke candidly about her Jewish heritage.

“Neither one of us is a person who goes to temple every Saturday,” Totenberg observed. “But you are a very, I think it’s fair to say, faithful Jew.”

Ginsburg replied, “Some of my most treasured moments growing up were of my mother lighting the candles on Friday nights. I love Passover because we would change the dishes, and I wish we could use the Passover dishes year round.”

Ginsburg went on to speak about sitting *shiva* (mourning) for her mother, Celia, who passed away when she was in high school.

“The house was filled with women, but only men could recite the mourner’s *kaddish*. I thought that was wrong,” she said.

The duo then went on to discuss how the Supreme Court used to be in session during

the Jewish high holidays, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur. Ginsburg, of course, changed that tradition.

“The chief [justice’s] first response was, ‘Well, we confer on Good Friday. So why can’t we sit on Yom Kippur?’ I was trying to think of an argument that would appeal to him, and I came up with a winner,” Ginsburg said to a large laugh.

Her argument? For the Jewish lawyers who had come into town, it was their once-in-a-lifetime moment to argue on the Supreme Court.

(Two years ago, she was a surprise Rosh Hashanah visitor at a Washington DC synagogue.)

In her acceptance speech later in the evening, Ginsburg began, “I know that good fortune, *mazel*, accounts in large part for the success of my efforts to achieve equal citizenship stature for women, and also for the office I have now held for more than 26 years. And, most recently, for the *Notorious RBG*.”

Her speech also addressed the question of role models. She pointed to two Jewish women who were both raised in the United States, “whose humanity and bravery inspired me”.

The first is Jewish writer Emma Lazarus.

“Emma Lazarus was a Zionist before that word came into vogue. Her love for humankind, and especially for her people, is evident in all her writings,” Ginsburg said. “Her poem, *The New Colossus*, etched on the base of the Statue of Liberty, has welcomed legions of immigrants, including my father and grandparents, people seeking in the US shelter from fear and long-fought freedom from intolerance.”

The other role model she discussed was Hadassah founder Henrietta Szold.

“My mother spoke of her glowingly. Szold, too, was a Zionist, even before Theodor Herzl came on the scene. Among her many undertakings, she started night schools to teach English and trades to waves of Jewish immigrants coming from Russia and other Eastern European countries,” Ginsburg said. “My father, born near Odessa, arrived in New York in 1909 at age 13. He was the beneficiary of a night school.”

She then went to tell an anecdote about Szold declining the offer of a male friend to say *kaddish* for Szold’s mother. In Jewish law, men traditionally say the prayer daily for a loved one who has passed away. Ginsburg quoted the entirety of a 1916 letter that Szold wrote, which displayed her passion for her Jewish heritage, and for feminism:

“You will wonder, then, that I cannot accept your offer. Perhaps it would be best for me not to try to explain to you in writing, but to wait until I see you to tell you why it is so. I know well, and appreciate what you say about the Jewish custom, and Jewish custom is very dear and sacred to me. And yet I cannot ask you to say *kaddish* after my mother. The *kaddish* means to me that the survivor publicly and markedly manifests his wish and intention to assume the relation to the Jewish community which his parent had, and that so the chain of tradition remains unbroken from generation to generation, each adding its own link. You can do that for the generations of your family, I must do that for the generations of my family.”

Ginsburg wrapped up her remarks by referring back to an older statement she gave on her own heritage as a Jew, and her occupation as a judge.

“I am a judge, born, raised, and proud of being a Jew,” she said. “The demand for justice, for peace, for enlightenment, runs through the entirety of the Jewish history and tradition. I hope that in all the years I have the good fortune of continuing to serving on the bench of the Supreme Court of the US, I will have the strength and courage to remain steadfast in service of that demand.”



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One in 40 Ashkenazi Jews susceptible to cancer

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

It’s estimated that one in 40 people of Ashkenazi Jewish descent test positive for the BRCA1 or 2 breast cancer susceptibility genes. Those testing positive for the BRCA1 or 2 mutation risk mostly breast, ovarian, and prostate cancers.

Mutation means there is permanent alteration in the DNA sequence that makes up a gene.

Yet, only Ashkenazi Jews with a history of cancer in their families are advised to be tested for the gene. “There has to be a personal or family history,” says Johannesburg-based genetic counsellor, Kara Stoler, who also works at the Malka Ella Fertility Fund. “We want to see how many generations the cancer goes back in your family, at what age someone had cancer, and what cancer they had.”

“Family history combined with certain backgrounds increases the chance of a positive test,” says Dr Carol-Ann Benn, a South African expert on breast-cancer.

Both these factors applied to Kerri Segal, who tested positive for the BRCA gene in 2016. She decided to wait until she had children before getting tested. “My mom passed away 23 years ago from ovarian cancer when I was 16. My sister and I always said we’d get tested for the BRCA gene once we’d had our families because you don’t want to have a hysterectomy before you’re ready.”

Yet in April 2016, Segal’s sister, Tarryn Goldberg, then 38, was diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer, and had a double mastectomy. “Her oncologist suggested we both do genetic testing immediately because the blood changes during chemo,” recalls Segal, who was 36 at the time.

Segal says that she and Goldberg were informed about the gene’s prevalence amongst Ashkenazi Jews, especially those with a strong family history. “My *bobba* [grandmother] had a melanoma,” says Segal, “and my mother had ovarian cancer which later spread – she passed away at the age of 50. My mom was one of four girls, and one of her sisters had breast cancer and tested positive for BRCA1. The other two sisters were negative.”

“Tarryn and I had our blood tests at Lancet, and we were both positive. Before the test, our genetic counsellor discussed our options, and asked if we were prepared for the results and willing to do the risk-reducing operations. We could have embarked on intensive [cancer] screening, but the best way to alleviate the dark cloud, for us, was to do the operations.”

Both sisters ultimately had double mastectomies and oophorectomies – the removal of the ovaries, uterus, and fallopian tubes. “I’ve dealt with a lot in my life, and thank G-d, I’m very good at putting things in a box,” says Segal. “While I was going through it, I was like a soldier, I was very focused. But afterwards, I experienced post-traumatic stress.”

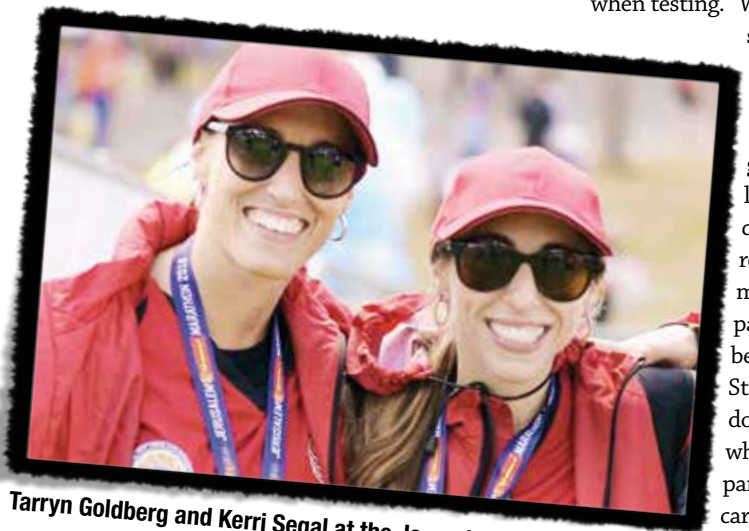
Segal says she still worries about the possibility of her daughters carrying the gene. “That was my biggest stress initially. But I’m told there are continuous advancements in breast-cancer prevention. We’ll test them only in their 20s, but

because you need to sit with someone who explains exactly what your risks and your screening or preventative options are once you receive a positive result,” says Stoler. Because not everyone has BRCA1 or 2, Stoler does a full “hereditary cancer panel” when testing. “We don’t want to miss something, especially if there’s a strong family history.”

Most Ashkenazi genetic conditions, like Tay-Sachs and cystic fibrosis, are recessive, which means that both parents have to be carriers, says Stoler. Yet, BRCA is a dominant condition, which means only one parent must be the carrier to potentially pass it on to their offspring.

Why are Ashkenazi Jews predisposed to certain genetic mutations? “A group of people who are usually historically from one isolated geographic area develops a genetic mutation,” says Dr Benn. “This is then seen more frequently in that group.” In other words, a mutation appears in the DNA of one or more of the individuals within a distinct community of people. This mutation can then be passed down to future generations within this group that consists of individuals with a similar genetic makeup.

“Every population group has something different,” says Stoler.



Tarryn Goldberg and Kerri Segal at the Jerusalem Marathon in 2018

it’s definitely a worry.” Goldberg is now cancer-free, and she and Segal both ran the 10km Jerusalem Marathon in 2018. Together, they raised more than R160 000 for DL Link, a non-profit centre focused on cancer patients and their families.

Dr Benn says BRCA testing isn’t as simple as going to a laboratory. One should be properly informed before being tested for the gene, she says. That’s why counselling by a genetic expert is essential. “People must understand what testing means and why, and they must know their family history.

“Genetic counselling is important

Historical monument helps Germans introspect about genocide

MIRAH LANGER

The House of the Wannsee Conference is a grand structure with high ceilings, artistic finishes, a lush garden, and a spectacular view of a placid lake. It’s also the place where Nazi officials gathered to draft the final solution to their “Jewish problem”.

These days, the Berlin site, where a memo detailing the planned mass extermination of the Jews was drafted in 1942, has a new purpose. It uses its history to encourage Germans to reflect on the past and the tendrils into the present.

“Even in 2019, everything is linked and rooted to that story,” said Eike Stegen, the house’s public relations officer, in an interview with the *SA Jewish Report*.

“Something didn’t just end – boom – in May 1945 – hour zero – and we can move on and see everything start anew. German society is still a post-national-socialist society.”

Unpacking what this means for contemporary Germany is one of the house’s key aims. Unlike many sites related to the Holocaust, which focus on the victims, Wannsee House focuses on the role of the perpetrator.

“There is a chance to learn from the development of these perpetrators, and how they moved into genocide – which was not there from 1933.”

In particular, says Stegen, there are lessons to learn when looking at the back stories of the individual men who toasted the drafting of the final solution with cognacs and cigars in the parlour of the house.

“These are men who studied at university; who had academic degrees; who travelled internationally. And the development of all of this is that they sat on 20 January 1942, at the conference table, and discussed the murder of millions of European Jews.”

Wannsee House carries out this work by hosting groups of adults from similar fields of work. In their sessions at the site, they probe how their particular

professions were involved in the “Holocaust; the creation of the Nazi dictatorship; and discrimination, dispossession and deportation.”

Stegen says that while on the surface this work might seem to relate only to those directly involved in areas such as policing or transport, in fact, a wide range of professions made up the story of World War II. A recent example is a group of apprentice hairdressers who came to the House of the Wannsee Conference to study how hairdressers were positioned during the time of the Nazis.

One discovery was that at the time, there was a popular women’s perm that originated in France. However, the Nazis didn’t want German women emulating the French.

“So the Nazis invented a German perm that was to be offered to German women. Thus, even the private sector was involved [in the Nazi project].”

Beyond this is the industry’s direct ties with genocide – the shaving and later the sale of the hair of inmates in concentration camps.

For example, the centre has, as one of its artefacts, “a bill from Majdanek where 500kg of hair was sold to a private firm for 20c a kilogram”.

Stegen says that though the hairdressers embraced the challenge of interrogating their professional past, and the social power it might continue to offer, not all sessions have been productive.

It doesn’t always work. You do get in Germany – and maybe other countries – feedback [from groups] that, “This topic has been discussed too much. We know everything. Don’t talk about Auschwitz again.”

In particular, police, prison guards, and soldiers – those trained and allowed to kill, who have the

For example, Central African people are at increased risk of sickle cell disease, and Afrikaans people are also at risk of BRCA mutations and familial hypercholesterolaemia.”

A BRCA gene mutation doesn’t automatically mean you will get cancer, but it does increase your risk of getting it. “With BRCA, we talk about a 60% to 80% lifetime chance of developing breast cancer,” says Dr Benn.

Only 2% of the women in the general population are at risk of ovarian cancer. Yet those with a BRCA mutation have up to a 60% lifetime risk, which increases as women enter their 40s. “Inherited BRCA gene mutations are responsible for about 5% to 10% of breast cancers, and about 15% of ovarian cancers,” says Stoler.

“But diseases, genes, and people don’t follow textbook guidelines,” cautions Dr Benn. Personal and lifestyle factors as well as pure luck also play a role in determining whether breast cancer will occur, and how it will present itself.

It’s also important to note that 65% of women diagnosed with breast cancer have no risk factors, whereas 20% have a family history of breast and other cancer, but are BRCA negative.

BRCA gene testing is simple and non-invasive. It involves either a blood or saliva test. When testing is covered by medical aid, blood tests are processed locally. Otherwise a saliva test is done in South Africa, and sent overseas for processing at a cost of about \$250 (around R3 700).

Those under 18 are not tested, and people are advised to wait until their 20s to test.

If a gene mutation is found, the options include risk-reducing surgery or enhanced cancer screening. Surgery can involve either a bilateral mastectomy and/or an oophorectomy. Surgery can be time dependent, and women need to consider things like their fertility or desire to breastfeed, says Stoler.

“Whereas one can ‘cut off breasts’ and ‘take out ovaries’, the same can’t be said for your skin or pancreas,” says Dr Benn. “Less than 20% of patients elect to do risk-reducing surgery. It isn’t cosmetic surgery, and has potential complications. It should always be discussed in detail, with a clear understanding of problems attached to any surgery.”

“In terms of screening, regular radiology and clinical screening is important. This includes ultrasounds twice yearly, mammography yearly from 35, and yearly MRI scans,” says Dr Benn. Monthly self-breast examinations are also vital.

With continuous advancements in fertility treatment, a future without inherited genetic conditions is possible. “Because couples don’t want to pass on any known genetic conditions to their children, undergoing an IVF protocol and screening the embryos – known as preimplantation genetic diagnosis – has become more common,” says Stoler. Here, only embryos without genetic mutations are implanted in the womb.



Wannsee House

is the business-like language, “the language of euphemism”, of the memorandum itself.

These avenues of reflection are powerful.

“A critical discussion of Germans as perpetrators, as bystanders, and onlookers is a meaningful discussion to have. It can make a society stronger, and more democratic in the sense that we are aware of what has happened, and should not happen again.”

Nine reasons to own a property in Cyprus

Nothing is more expensive than a missed opportunity. Owning an offshore property and realising a “plan B” for investment and residency is a dream that many South Africans have. The choice of where to invest can be intimidating, however, and the financial, legal, and tax implications coupled with language and cultural barriers sometimes make even thinking about a Plan B a non-starter.

Europe remains the preferred geographic location for the majority of South Africans. It is experiencing positive economic growth, decreasing unemployment, and continuing political stability – all of which has cemented the continent as a safe destination for our hard-earned rands.

Cyprus, an English-speaking former British colony and full member of the European Union, is an extremely popular investment destination for South Africans.

Here are the nine reasons why South Africans are buying property in Cyprus:

1. It's easy to get to Israel from Cyprus – there are six flights a day from Tel Aviv;
2. Cyprus has been voted one of the safest countries in the world;
3. Cyprus is a full member of the EU, economically stable and politically secure, so the country isn't flooded with refugees;
4. Being a former British colony (Cyprus isn't part of Greece), there is no language barrier as everyone speaks English;
5. You can acquire permanent residency or second citizenship of the European Union by buying property;



6. Properties in Cyprus offer excellent value for money when compared to Israel and other European countries – especially homes on or near the Mediterranean;
7. Cyprus is a popular tourist destination, so owning an investment property will reap an attractive offshore income;
8. There is no inheritance tax, so you can implement effective tax planning; and
9. The lifestyle on offer is similar to that of South Africa, with golf courses, breathtaking countryside, and modern cities.

Acquiring permanent residency in Cyprus is attractive because it gives three generations in the same direct family line the legal right to live in Cyprus without having to go through onerous

immigration processes should they wish to move permanently. All dependent children up to the age of 25, plus both parents and parents-in-law, qualify for residency on the same property purchase under the main investor. The property can be used as an investment tool to earn a Euro-based income, and there is no need to live in Cyprus for the residency permits to remain valid. No other programme in Europe offers this!

Some other attractions that Cyprus offers are:

- A European education gives your children/grandchildren a distinct advantage when they enter the global job market;
- Being a former British colony, there is no language barrier. All your documentation is in English. There is no need for a translator;
- The discovery of natural gas offshore is already having a positive impact on foreign investment and infrastructural development;
- There is a low-cost but high standard of living;
- Europe is on your doorstep: Cyprus has two international airports and several marinas; and



- There are first-world medical facilities and affordable healthcare, with highly qualified doctors and specialists.

Cypriot Realty is a pioneer in promoting property opportunities primarily in Cyprus. It has been doing this consistently and successfully from its Cape Town and Sandton offices since 2008. As a result, the company is recognised as Southern Africa's specialist in the promotion of Cyprus as an ideal destination for acquiring permanent residency/citizenship, property investment, immigration/retirement, and starting a European-based business. Contact us for a confidential meeting to discuss how we can help you realise your and you family's Plan B in Europe.



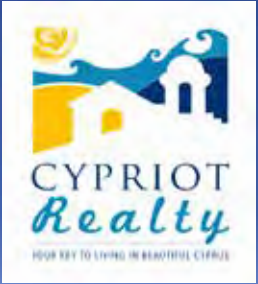
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The loneliness of the lone soldier’s mother

TALI FEINBERG

“I’m always worried about my boy’s safety. He often he goes into the field, and I can’t contact him for days at a time,” says the South African mother of a “lone soldier” – a diaspora Jew who serves in the army. Her son is serving in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). His mother does her best not to be anxious as she continues her life in South Africa.

months,” she says. “As well as being worried for his safety, I’m worried about his mental and emotional well-being.”

But there’s a positive side to it. Lone soldiers are well respected in Israel. This became evident when the mother went on a recent visit to Israel on a tour with Momentum Tours, the ministry of diaspora affairs, and Nefesh B’Nefesh, specifically for mothers of lone soldiers.

She joined women from around the world

their Zionism in a practical yet selfless way,” says Momentum Tours founder Lori Palatnik. “But it’s critical for us to remember that their parents are joining them in this call of duty. This special visit gives us the chance to salute the role of the mothers in their children’s experience.”

The mother says their children joining the IDF isn’t something most parents have control over. In most cases, they are simply informed that this is what’s going to happen.

recent suicides by lone soldiers, which it attributed possibly to the fact that they aren’t always screened as thoroughly as Israelis, and might not be prepared for the realities of life in the army unlike Israeli children, who have prepared for it their entire lives. However, this mother says her son was extensively screened, and has access to mental-health support.



“As well as being worried for his safety, I’m worried about his mental and emotional well-being.”

“Last week, he was on the Lebanese border. He called me before to tell me he would be offline, and then I didn’t hear from him for almost a week. You just try not think about it.”

The mother spoke to the *SA Jewish Report* on condition of anonymity. She says her son has almost completed his two and a half years of military service, and is in the paratroopers. He spent his gap year after matric in Israel, and “fell in love with the country”, later choosing to move there.

He believed that serving in the army was a vital way to integrate into Israeli society. Even though he comes from a small town, and never had Jewish schooling, he is now fully integrated and fluent in Hebrew.

“He was on the Gaza border for six

“Everyone was crying, hugging, and taking photos. We couldn’t imagine how they brought all our kids to us from bases across the country.”

laundry, and returned it before Shabbat, showing just how much Israelis care for these lone soldiers. These families are so revered that on their tour, the mothers were invited to visit President Reuven Rivlin at his home, which was a highlight. “We were treated like royalty,” she says.

For the rest of the time, they toured the country and met army officials to learn about their children’s new lives. Lone soldiers are treated the same as their Israeli counterparts in daily life, although they are given one day a month to do administrative tasks, and have to go home for one month of the year. “They are generally treated very well.”

A recent expose in the Israeli newspaper, *Ha’aretz*, explored the high number of

Just before their last Shabbat on tour, the mothers were given a surprise. They were at a lecture, when suddenly all of their soldier children burst into the room. “Everyone was crying, hugging, and taking photos. We couldn’t imagine how they brought all our kids to us from bases across the country. The soldiers were put up in a hotel, and we spent the whole of Shabbat together.”

The mother says the tour has exposed her to just how revered lone soldiers are, and how Israeli society revolves around the army. Her son reports that his Israeli counterparts think he is “mad” for doing this, but he sees it as a responsibility, a rite of passage, and an act of service. “It’s been a very positive experience. Yes, there have been lots of ups and downs, but he has grown as a person. I would say it’s more of a growing and learning experience than going to university.”

Now back in South Africa, the mother has stayed in close contact with the other mothers of lone soldiers she met on the tour. She is part of a very active WhatsApp group that will have supportive Skype sessions over the next year. “We come from all over the world, but now we have a connection and someone to talk to about our children serving in Israel. It’s special.”

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Arran, an organisational and social psychologist who was a professor for 16 years at different academic institutions in Israel, quickly found her way into the hearts of the local Jewish community. She makes it her business to reach out to all sectors, from the ultra-Orthodox to the secular far left. And she does it without judgement.

"It's very important for us to live within the Jewish community. It's the reason we chose to come here. We want to enhance this

Since she has been here, she has moved the document-gathering stage of the aliyah process online to a global centre which gives interested parties all they need to know. It frees up her office to be available to help people before they embark on the process and after.



Dr Liat Arran

Dr Liat Arran

While she enables Masa (heavily subsidised youth trips to Israel), Naale

She also says it's essential to ensure that South African Jews "feel hope, and are safe in South Africa" and that they recognise what they have here, which is "wonderful". "The local community brings so much to this country with its values, history, Bible, and traditions," she says. "It's an asset to this country."

OPINION

The brutal rape and murder of Cape Town student Uyinene Mrwetyana was yet another catalyst for change. My colleague, Yanir Grindler, was moved by that tragedy. He felt it was time for men to, in his words, “join a circle ... and discuss our role in combatting gender-based violence”. Under the banner of BE A MENsch, a group of men from across the

It's the first time in the Jewish community that such a gathering has been convened by men who recognise that they, too, have a role to play. The very existence of that circle allows like-minded men to connect, become sensitive to inequalities in our society, and call out injustice where it occurs. It has already created a ripple effect, with many of the participants wanting to take the initiative and create their own circles in their own communities. Initiatives like these grow. The men have also agreed to reconvene at a later date to discuss further initiatives.

- Charisse Zeifert is the head of communications at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

**CHARISSE ZEIFERT**

Photo: Marc Loon

Next, inappropriate words used to describe women were identified. Participants identified a spectrum of abuse – intrusive and



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The Power to Surprise

Eighty years on, what has World War II taught us?

STEVEN GRUZZ

World War II started 80 years ago this month. Adolf Hitler’s forces invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, and on 3 September, Britain and France declared war on Germany. The fighting engulfed the planet, and lasted seven years. Millions would die. Old empires and ideas would wither. The ground would be laid for the coming ideological clash of superpowers.

For Jews, 1939 ushered in the horrors of the Holocaust, in which six million men, women, and children would be deliberately slaughtered by the Nazis and their willing

collaborators across Europe.

How has the passage of time affected the world, the Jewish people, and the way we look back on 1939?

Mary Kluk, the director of the Durban Holocaust and Genocide Centre, said, “Eighty years ago, no one could have imagined what would have happened during that war. It was unthinkable. It’s still hard to grasp what transpired. The start of the war created the environment for the most insane and unprecedented human behaviour.”

Today, the global Jewish population is about 14.5 million people, equivalent to what it was in 1939.

“Our numbers have barely reached pre-war levels,” says Grant Gochin, a South African-born lawyer fighting the Lithuanian government to confront its role in the Shoah. “We lost many of our best, brightest, and strongest, and we are a remnant that still has to rebuild. Where could the world have been today if all those scientists hadn’t been murdered? What art wasn’t created? What music hasn’t been written?”

The shadow of the Holocaust reaches deeply into contemporary Jewish life.

Tali Nates, the director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, said, “I believe the Holocaust became part of Jewish identity alongside the Jewish religion and state of Israel. The Holocaust plays a significant role in most of the thinking among Jews including their fears, aspirations, philosophy, and way of life.”

Said Kluk, “The Shoah influences who we are and how we respond. Even 80 years later, it remains deeply hurtful and traumatic.”

Tracey Farber, a clinical psychologist who studied Holocaust survivors for her PhD agrees. “The survivors and certainly the second and third generation have been affected by being witness to their parents’ pain and everything that brings with it,” she said. “We can’t look at their trauma without looking at the amazing resilience of these people who went through such terrible loss and horror, and were able to renew their capacity to build their lives and invest love in their children and grandchildren.”

What did the war teach people? According to Nates, “The world has learned many lessons in the past 80 years, establishing international bodies and protective laws such as the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment for the Crime of Genocide, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, despite the commitment of the world to the notion of ‘never again’, genocide and other atrocities happen again and again.”

Nates points out that the language of human rights barely existed before 1939, “yet we cannot think about our world without referring to fundamental rights”.

“We also learned that people and governments have choices, and can remain bystanders or take action and become upstanders. The diplomats who saved Jews during the Holocaust – people like the Japanese Sugihara, Swedish Wallenberg, Swiss Lutz, or Portuguese de Sousa Mendes – show us that morality and ethics can stand above the law of the country.”

Nations continue to grapple with the



legacy of World War II today. “Germany can teach lessons on confronting a difficult past,” Nates said. “It took it many years to get to this point, but 80 years later, the country certainly acknowledges its dark past politically, educationally, and in terms of memorials and reparations. For other countries, the road is harder and longer. As we know ourselves through our own difficult past, the road is not an easy one, and many times governments take some steps forward but then backwards in a difficult process of acknowledging their own complex role during that time.”

Said Gochin, “Lithuania is still in a state of denial and deception. There can be no progress when a whole nation’s official and legal narrative is a distortion. [Then], lessons can’t be learned. It’s an inversion of justice.”

Will memories of the Holocaust survive the loss of the survivors? Said Nates, “Our oldest survivor in South Africa is 101 years old, and the youngest is in their early 80s. Sadly, it’s inevitable that in some years, we educators, descendants, and activists will have to continue to share the survivors’ stories for generations to come. I’m confident that the Shoah Foundation’s 52 000 testimonies, many other films, books, lesson plans, and other new technologies will keep the memory and lessons alive. I believe that the Holocaust, like other major chapters in world history, is here to stay in order to teach us all ethical lessons about humanity.”

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Risking life and limb for pilgrimage to Shechem

OPINION

PAULA SLIER



It's midnight. The dark hills of Shechem (Nablus), a Palestinian city in the northern West Bank, beckon in the moonlight. Escorted by the Israeli army, our armoured convoy of 10 buses slowly begins its descent into the narrow valley that for 4 000 years has nestled between two mountains.

After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, the Romans changed Shechem's name to "Neapolis" (meaning "new city"). This then became "Nablus". While Israelis today still call the city Shechem, Palestinians refer to it as Nablus.

Lying in an ancient junction between two important commercial routes, the city links the central coast of Israel to the Jordan Valley and biblical Judea to the south through the mountains.

The first time I heard the name Shechem was 15 years ago. I was reporting in Israel, and there'd been a terror attack in the city. As we headed there, the Israeli-Russian cameraman I worked with started to shake visibly as the road signs changed from Hebrew to Arabic. For almost 20 years, it has been off-limits for Jews and Israelis.

But its deep historical and religious significance hasn't waned. It's here that the remains of the Jewish forefather, Joseph, lie buried. The Bible tells the story that when Abraham entered the land in 1737 BCE his first stop was the "place of Shechem", where G-d appeared to him and promised him that "to your descendants I will give this land".

Dr Zvi Ilan, one of Israel's foremost archaeologists, Joseph's Tomb has been "one of the tombs whose location is known with the utmost degree of certainty, and is based on continuous documentation since biblical times".

It's a focus of Jewish pilgrimage



Jewish women entering the Tomb of Joseph through a special courtyard to pray

and prayer. And this week, for the first time, I visited it.

The bulletproof bus slowly winds its way through the dark and unpaved streets of Shechem. It's 02:53, and the city is eerily quiet. A few lights shimmer from inside the buildings we pass, but aside from the light thrown from the bus behind us, it's mostly dark. Somewhere, a dog barks. The population of 126 000 are nowhere to be seen – or heard.

I can make out the occasional Israeli soldier in the fog. The army has blocked off all the side roads, and is waving us on through the main street. The religious young men sitting alongside me in the bus who until now were singing and clapping their hands in excited anticipation, have quietened into a deep sense of awe. Everyone is deeply moved by the significance

passed, and for blessings for the one that is to come.

Joseph's Tomb in Shechem is considered one of the five holiest places in Judaism after the Temple Mount, the Western Wall, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and Rachel's Tomb. It's also holy to Muslims and Christians although the Quran doesn't mention its exact location, and few Christians pilgrims visit the site.

For nearly twenty years since October 2000, when the Israeli army withdrew from the area, its isolated and dangerous geographic location has meant that few Jews have prayed here either. Jews are allowed to visit the tomb only under heavy-armed guard and through prior authorisation with the Israeli army. Located in Area A of the West Bank, it's officially under complete Palestinian Authority security and civilian control. But the Israeli military still conducts activities here, and allows Jews occasional access to the tomb in the wee hours of the night because that's when it says it's easier for it to secure the area.

However, often during these visits, Palestinians throw rocks and sometimes Molotov cocktails at the soldiers and convoy.

I wipe away the mist from the bus window. It is now 03:04, and I can see people disembarking from buses ahead in the road. A body lies on the ground to my left covered in a silver sheet. I look again, unsure of what I'm witnessing, but the Israeli soldier waves us on. Later, I learn that two Palestinians were killed that night trying to disrupt the gathering.

It was back in 1967 following the Six-Day War that Israel first gained control of Joseph's Tomb. A small settlement grew inside the site's compound. In 1995, the area was transferred to Palestinian Authority jurisdiction but Israeli soldiers continued to control the site, as per the Oslo Accords, to ensure free access to pilgrims.

During the Western Wall Tunnel riots a year later, the tomb was attacked, and six Israeli soldiers were killed. Since then, it has become the site of continuous rioting and ongoing frustration between the sides.

Finally, we arrive. Most of the worshippers are men and alongside less than 100 women, I'm directed to a separate entrance where a large courtyard is lit up with candles burning on the floor against one wall. I walk through an entrance into a small room made from local stones. The loud praying and singing of women as I slowly make my way forward and touch part of the cloth that covers the grave, is deeply moving. No less is the heavy army presence and the soldiers who come up to me to ask

if I'd like some bottled water.

A day later, I'm at the Western Wall in Jerusalem where postal workers are collecting the notes in the cracks. They bury them twice a year (before Passover and Rosh Hashanah) in the *geniza* (cemetery storage area) along with remnants of holy books. Nothing is thrown away.

I'm struck by the poignancy of the two experiences. Both are places where Jews come to pray during this special time of year, and where their tears are mingled with the wish for a better year in spite of the ongoing violence and terrible conflict.

On Sunday night, Jewish families across Israel will be sitting down with loved ones to recount the exodus from Egypt. On Monday, they'll share in

the traditional family braai.

Tens of thousands are on their way to the grave of Rabbi Nachman in Uman, Ukraine, for the traditional Rosh Hashanah prayers that overwhelm the little town. Shoppers weighted down with bulging bags are scurrying through the Jerusalem market that, like shops everywhere, closes down for the holiday. Pomegranates dangle from trees – their rosy red colour and numerous seeds a symbol of fruitfulness and hope.

• Paula Slieber is the Middle East Bureau Chief of RT, the founder and CEO of Newshound Media and the inaugural winner of the Europcar Women in Leadership Award of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.

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Israeli soldiers guarding Joseph's Tomb in Shechem

Years later Abraham's grandson, Jacob, purchased a plot on the perimeter of Shechem that he promised to his favourite son, Joseph. Rising through the ranks to become viceroy of Egypt, Joseph in turn made the children of Israel promise that when they eventually left Egypt, they'd take his remains along with them. Generations later, the book of Exodus reveals how Moses carried the bones of Joseph, eventually burying them in the land that Jacob had bought.

Since then, according to the late

of this journey. Like tens of thousands of Jews who have been visiting the Western Wall all week in preparation for the high holidays, this too is a pilgrimage to pray and ask for forgiveness.

Tradition dictates that ever since Moses went up Mount Sinai on the first day of the month of Elul in order to ask G-d for forgiveness, Jews believe that one's fate for the coming year is sealed during this period of high holidays. Hence, Jews pray for forgiveness – *selichot* in Hebrew – for the year that has

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Admitting guilt obliges us to accept responsibility for our sins

OPINION

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS



Guilt is out of fashion these days, like sports jackets, courtesy, humility, and handkerchiefs. It has a sepia-tinted Victorian air about it. It belongs, so it seems, to that foreign country, the past. They do things differently there.

For us, when things go wrong, it was someone else’s fault: the boss, the colleague, the system, the government, the media, our parents, the way we were brought up, society, bad luck, or our genes. Feeling guilty, they say, is bad for us. It lowers self-esteem. Who does it anymore? We have finally reached the age Shelley dreamed of in his poem *Prometheus Unbound*. We are “free from guilt or pain”.

All of which makes it difficult to understand – except as some relic of the past – what Jews throughout the world are now doing: getting ready for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement, what we call “the Days of Awe”.

Yom Kippur could almost be defined as a festival of guilt. We repent and confess our sins repeatedly in long alphabetical lists. “We have been guilty, we have betrayed, we have robbed, we have spoken slander. For the sin we committed through hardness of heart, for the sin we committed through utterance of the lips,” and so on throughout the day.



Yom Kippur itself is the culmination of a process that begins forty days before with the sounding of the shofar, the ram’s horn, our moral early warning system. Then come *selichot*, the special penitential prayers said for a week before the new year, then the new year itself with its symbolism of the world as a courtroom in session, with our lives on trial. It’s hard to think of anything less in keeping with the *zeitgeist*, the mood of now.

I think, though, that Judaism gets it right and the *zeitgeist* gets it spectacularly, dangerously wrong. Consider the fact that guilt enters the world hand in hand with the spirit of forgiveness. G-d forgives – that’s the message emblazoned all over Yom

Kippur. G-d doesn’t expect us to get it right all the time. The greatest of the great, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, David, had their faults and failings, defeats and doubts. There is only one person in the Hebrew Bible who is said to have committed no sin: Job. And look what happened to him.

So, because G-d forgives, we can be honest with Him and therefore with ourselves. Unlike a shame culture, a guilt culture separates agent from act, the person from the deed. What I did may be wrong, but I’m still intact, still loved by G-d, still His child. In a guilt culture, acknowledging our mistakes is doable, and that makes all the difference.

Today’s secular environment is a shame culture. It involves trial

by the media, or public opinion, or the courts, or economic necessity, all of which are unforgiving. When shame is involved, it’s us, not just our actions, that are found wanting. That’s why in a shame culture you don’t hear people saying, “I was wrong. It was my fault. I’m sorry. Forgive me.” Instead, people try to brazen it out. The only way to survive in a shame culture is to be shameless. Some people manage this quite well, but deep down we know that there’s something rotten in a system where no one is willing to accept responsibility.

Ultimately, guilt cultures produce strong individuals precisely because they force us to accept responsibility. When things go wrong, we don’t

waste time blaming others. We don’t luxuriate in the most addictive, destructive drug known to humankind, namely victimhood. We say, honestly and seriously, “I’m sorry. Forgive me. Now let me do what I can to put it right.” That way we and the people we offend can move on. Through our mistakes, we discover the strength to heal, learn, and grow. Shame cultures produce people who conform. Guilt cultures produces people with the courage to be free.

The Talmud says that the Day of Atonement is one of the happiest days of the year. That’s an odd thing to say about a day of fasting and confession. But the rabbis are right. In place of a low, dishonest culture where everyone blames someone else and no one admits responsibility, Yom Kippur offers a world of honesty and responsibility, where guilt melts in the flames of G-d’s forgiveness, and we are made new in the fire of His unconditional love.

• *Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks served as the chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from 1991 to 2013. He is an international religious leader, philosopher, award-winning author, and respected moral voice. The article is taken from www.rabbisacks.org.*



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The art of a good apology

TALI FEINBERG

The high holy days are a time of introspection, and for many, it’s a chance to apologise to those we may have offended, hurt, or cut ties with over the past year. But how do you apologise sincerely, genuinely, and make real amends?

“Rosh Hashanah offers a space for people to reflect on who they owe an apology to, whether the person needing the apology is alive or has passed on,” says Maryse Barak, a local corporate training and facilitation consultant and executive coach who works with teams from large organisations in South Africa and Europe. Barak helps to transform meeting processes, mentoring, and team alignment among other business applications.

“There are personal and public apologies. For example, we recently saw the chancellor of Germany apologise to Poland on the 80th anniversary of the beginning of World War II,” she says.

Although working with people is her area of expertise, she recently caused “unintended psychological injury” to someone because of her own “blind spot” in a situation, and this led to ripples of discontent that needed to be repaired. Ultimately, she needed to apologise.

From this experience, she advises that anyone seeking to give a real apology first needs to take personal responsibility for the hurt they caused, even if it was unintentional. Second, they need to use language carefully, to ensure that it is gracious, honest, and sincere. Third, they need to take “absolute ownership” of what happened, and then ask what they can do to make it right, especially in practical ways. “The most important aspect is restoring the connection of trust and respect that has been eroded,” she says.

It’s also important not to “infantilise” or patronise the other person. “Be acutely aware of your tone of voice.” Ultimately, a good apology must have no excuses. “You need to say, ‘I screwed up’, and then see how the other person responds.”

Barak warns that even with a genuine, sincere, and heartfelt apology, the offended person might still not accept it or might take time to accept it. Sometimes it’s a person who you engage with as if nothing has happened, but you know an apology still needs to take place and is hindering your relationship. It’s also a chance to reflect on who you think owes you an apology, and to ask yourself, “Can I let that go without receiving it?”

“It’s all about repairing and rebuilding. I think you can apologise beautifully, and it might still not be well-received. Sometimes the other person has to do their own work to recalibrate and regain their sense of self. There are rhythms of time and acknowledgement in this process, and hurt sometimes takes longer to heal. We also need to recognise that injury, and know that it might take time before we can reconnect. That’s the risk of apologising – it might not “land” as you want it to, and can remain open-ended,” she says.

Barak says that there is always space for anger, and nothing wrong with that emotion, but revenge isn’t productive. She sees in corporates how people hurt, demean, or belittle others all the time, and the impact it has on the organisation as a whole. She suggests that big companies, small businesses, and any group of people build tools for apologising into the culture of their organisation, instead of fumbling or rushing an apology when it’s needed.



“No matter how high up someone is in the hierarchy, they need to make room for apology. That’s a sign of mature leadership.

It’s not ‘soft and fluffy’, it takes courage and humility to make a good apology.”
In South Africa, we have the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission to look to as a system built around apology. We also see moments when South Africans utter racist and derogatory statements, or when businesses and brands mess up, and these apologies are often rushed or feel insincere.

Barak says that individuals and brands should consider how they would apologise if they did something offensive so that they are prepared and proactive in making the apology matter.

“Genuine remorse is an opportunity to show you actually learnt something from a negative situation. It is not just ‘putting a plaster’ on the wound, but actually ensuring that restorative justice takes place.”

She suggests you ensure that actions back up your words

“Ultimately, if an apology is taken seriously, it can make this time an incredibly meaningful change of year.”



LEVERAGING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY
FOR EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

ROSE LERER COHEN PhD
rlerercohen@gmail.com

THE GATEWAY TO YOUR FUTURE
OBTAINING AN EU PASSPORT

YOUR ANCESTRAL LINK TO LITHUANIA

Your ancestors who were born in Lithuania and immigrated to South Africa, Israel or elsewhere to start a new life and thus broaden their horizons. In so doing, they have GIFTED you, the chance of receiving citizenship of the country of their birth.

The Lithuanian Government is restoring citizenship, they are giving you the opportunity to broaden your horizons. With over a decade of success, with clients in South Africa, the UK, Australia, the US and Israel, we look forward to sharing our knowledge and expertise with you and obtain your EU passport.

Did you know that a Lithuanian passport grants its holder visa-free access to over one hundred and fifty countries, thus granting you travel-free-dom? I can assist you to achieve this, by leveraging your family history for your Lithuanian Citizenship.

For the past decade, together with my Lithuanian partners, I have been facilitating Lithuanian Citizenship Reinstatement. We have successful applicants in South Africa, Australia, the UK, the US and Israel. As an ex-South African I speak your language, I understand the requirements of the South African applicant, and am familiar with the supporting documents required to augment your application.

Your ancestors who immigrated to improve their future, have gifted you the possibility of EU citizenship and the opportunity to spread your wings. They did not live in a void. They left behind a culture, friends and extended family. As an historian, genealogist and passport facilitator specializing in Lithuania, I want to share the significance of the documents located in the Lithuanian archives. The documents that prove your eligibility, lead to additional documents and all these together unearth a treasure trove of your history. These documents give you the opportunity to learn of your past while serving as leverage for your European Citizenship.

On February 16, 1918 Lithuania became an independent country, with Kaunas/Kovno serving as the capital. At the Paris Peace conference in 1919, the Lithuanian Jewish community was granted broad autonomy in internal affairs, including matters of religion, social welfare, education and culture. Their languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, were publicly recognized, and Jewish primary education was made compulsory and free of charge. Thus, began Golden Age of Lithuanian Jewry with unparalleled development of Jewish religion, thought and culture.

Lithuania remained independent until it was occupied by the Soviet Union in June 1940 following the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. On June 22, 1941 – Operation Barbarossa, the German army invaded the Soviet Union setting in motion the Holocaust in Lithuania. Ninety four percent of the Jewish population of Lithuania was decimated, including many relatives of the immigrants to South Africa.

If your ancestor immigrated to South Africa during the years of Lithuanian Independence between 1918-1940, you may be eligible for Lithuanian Citizenship.

South Africans are generally granted Lithuanian Citizenship in the simplified manner; by descent. You can go back three generations. Therefore, if you have a great-grandparent who held Lithuanian citizenship, you should be able to qualify to become Lithuanian Citizen yourself. You will have to prove the family connection through an unbroken chain of documentation all the way up the family tree until you reach your ancestor with Lithuanian ties. Citizenship is not granted if your ancestor lost or forfeited his or her Lithuanian Citizenship for any reason.

Following my first conversation with potential clients, they complete an eligibility questionnaire. This enables me to gain an understanding of the ancestry and the framework for assessing eligibility. As a genealogist and family researcher and citizenship facilitator, I review this questionnaire in a different light, not only as a tool to prove eligibility but also as the basis of a family tree and the means to glean additional information.

A marriage document may reveal a maiden name that was unknown or the names of grandparents and great grandparents. Birth documents may reveal names of siblings that were born after your ancestor immigrated. Death documents often state the reason for death. Information of this kind is vital when seeking information for hereditary diseases. School reports, documents of membership of youth movements, of political affiliation, of religious affiliation and conversion documents sometimes come to light. Holocaust information may reveal the fate of family members.

Your quest for EU citizenship is of prime importance and proving eligibility is the main aim of archival research, but there is a bonus, you can learn about ancestors that remained behind.

I will be pleased to assist you with your application for Lithuanian Citizenship. Please contact me at rlerercohen@gmail.com. Your free consultation will include assessing your eligibility, reviewing your documents, discussing supporting documents and answering questions. View my website www.kin-search.com

The soul-searching cry of the shofar

OPINION

REBBETZIN WENDY HENDLER



Every Rosh Hashanah we go back to the point at which G-d decides whether mankind as a whole is worth recreating, and whether we as individuals are worth re-investing in for another year. The true definition of man is his moral centre, his essential self, which is divine connection with G-d. But has that centre eroded or got lost? Are we able to come back to our guiding core?

We may feel removed from any connection with our soul. And yet, there is a way to reconnect and listen to the still small voice within us. By listening deeply to the sounds of the shofar, we are able to hear the cry of our soul, and return to our source.

The long *tekiah* blast represents our optimistic and confident vision for the coming year, a world of peace, justice, and G-dliness. It's also a vision of our own contribution towards bringing about this ideal. This is our wake-up call to our own potential greatness.

Then the blowing turns into the wail of the *shevarim*, and the broken, heartfelt sobbing of the *teruah*. A cry elicits emotion

in us. When we hear someone cry, it often evokes our own tears.

It's not easy to hear someone cry as it makes us feel their pain. A cry demands our attention, our response.

Very often, we are faced with a situation in which we give our opinion on an important matter and another person disagrees vehemently and attacks us. A verbal slinging match ensues, bringing in its wake damage and destruction.

Before this cycle sets in, can we take a step back and ask ourselves, "What button is being pressed in this person? What hurt and pain lies beneath their visceral reaction? How can I hear the cry of their soul?"

We can see this dynamic operating in our children. When a child feels misunderstood, his negative behaviour escalates, and he shouts louder and louder. If only we were able to listen to and hear the feelings of hurt and sadness underpinning the screaming, and say, "I hear you. I understand, and I will help you". If we could extend this to the adults in our lives, particularly those with whom we fundamentally disagree, how much pain and heartache could we dispel?

How closely this relates to how we treat the victims of abuse. When a victim cries out for help, be it loudly or through their actions, we find it extremely painful to hear them and acknowledge their suffering. How much easier is it to deny their story, to paint them as liars or over-exaggerators, to tell them to get over it.

We do this because it's hard to carry another's pain, particularly regarding experiences we would rather not think about. And so we turn our backs on the victim, and retreat to the safety of our own lives.

But G-d looks down and hears the cries of the victim. G-d wants more of us, and knows we are capable of more than this. G-d expects from His children that we take care of one another, that we reach out with kindness and love to people in pain.

On Rosh Hashanah, the nation of Israel as a unit is judged according to how we have lived up to the divine task of caring for one another. On Rosh Hashanah, we address G-d as, "Our Father, our King", and we beg G-d to judge us with mercy, as a father would be merciful to his child.

The Jewish people are one unit, part of the same body. What more does a father want than to see his children treat one another kindly and compassionately? What greater *nachas* (pride) can any parent feel? And what greater sadness when children deny the pain of their brothers and sisters, and turn away from them.

Sometimes our own souls cry, but we fail to hear them too. The shofar takes us on an inward journey, in which the cry of our soul can be heard. How have I utilised the gift of life in the past year? How much G-dliness could I have expressed that I haven't?

Could I have been kinder, more tolerant, more giving, and more compassionate? Where have I refused to listen to the messages from my soul, and missed opportunities for greatness? The fragmented sounds of the *teruah* are the sounds of your soul sobbing for the missed opportunities, the lost greatness.

And then the sobbing lessens. Your soul has been heard, and attended to. You have come back to your centre, ready once again to be guided by divine essence, to commit to changes which will bring you closer

Community Notice: JHB Jewish Cemeteries

It is customary to visit the graves of family before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. At the time of visiting, it is appropriate to give some tzedakah in the name of the deceased. This mitzvah benefits the soul of the departed.

VISITING TIMES:

Westpark: Sunday - Friday from 07:00 - 16:00

(closed to drive-in traffic to graves on 22, 24, 29 September and 6 October)
We are not able to make any exceptions, however we'll provide transport during these times.

Brixton: This cemetery has 24 hour security and may be visited on any day except Shabbos and Yom Tov.

Braamfontein: No security is available. Should you wish to visit please contact West Park Cemetery to make the necessary arrangements.
The community is encouraged to visit this cemetery in groups of at least two.

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Photo: Ian Ossendryver

to realising your vision. The long *tekiah* reinforces this sense of optimism. You feel comforted and hopeful, reinvigorated and full of purpose.

May we all be inscribed for a sweet New Year!

• *Rebbetzin Wendy Hendler is a director and co-founder of Koleinu, an organisation opposing abuse in the Jewish and wider community.*

Sunday (29 September)

- Chabad Sandton Central hosts Rosh Hashanah sundowners. Join us to perform one last *mitzvah* for the year. Time: 17:45. Venue: Sandton Central Shul, 8 Stella Street, Sandton (opposite the Gautrain). Info: Rabbi Ari Kievman 079 434 1293.

Monday (30 September)

- Chabad Sandton Central hosts free high holiday services. Morning 09:30. Shofar 11:00. Delicious lunch 13:00. Evening 17:45. Venue: Sandton Central Shul, 8 Stella Street, Sandton (opposite the Gautrain). Info: Rabbi Ari Kievman 079 434 1293.

WHAT'S ON

Thursday (3 October)

- Learn Yiddish every Thursday with Tamar Olswang and the Union of Jewish Women (UJW). Time: 10.00 to 11.00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Cost: R100 per person, R80 for pensioners and UJW members. Includes tea/coffee and refreshments. Contact: 011 648 1053.

- Chabad Sandton Central hosts Tashlich and Shofar in Mushroom Farm Park, Sandton. Time: 16:30. Contact: Rabbi Ari Kievman 079 434 1293.



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A row of five bottles of Villa Cane wine. From left to right: two bottles of red wine and two bottles of white wine. A large, stylized orange price tag with the number '399' is overlaid on the left side of the bottles. A small garnish of a lemon and green leaves is visible in the bottom right corner.

A close-up photograph of a wooden honey dipper. The dipper is covered in thick, golden honey, which is dripping down onto a slice of light-colored fruit, likely an apple. The background is plain white.

- Rav Ilan Herrmann is the rabbi of Soul Workout Shul and runs the Soul Workout outreach organisation. He publishes Soul Sport, a Jewish sports magazine.

How to pray in a meaningful way

OPINION

RABBI ARI KIEVMAN



Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur attract more Jews to shul than any other time of the year. Unlike other new-year celebrations, ours includes a significant amount of time in shul praying.

Shul most certainly is a centrepiece of Jewish communal life. Yet many get lost in the labyrinth of prayer, not understanding its flow, language, or purpose.

It’s worthwhile to reflect on meaning and purpose, which play a central role in personal and communal Jewish life. Unravelling some of the primary elements of prayer will make for a more



meaningful service.

The Hebrew word for prayer is *tefillah* (to connect). It’s not just about chanting words, singing songs, and flipping pages, but rather a personal, transformative experience in which we dig deep and open up to reclaim our vulnerability and humanity, connecting to our creator.

You know the old joke of a Jewish granny playing with her grandchild at the beach when suddenly, a wave pulls the kid into the water. Panicked, she prays, “Hashem, please bring him back! Please let him live!” Suddenly, another wave bursts out of the

ocean, setting the kid right at his *bubbe’s* (grandmother’s) feet. She scoops him up into a hug, then stares up to heaven, and says, “Thank you G-d, but he had a hat.”

For some, prayer is the answer when they are out of options, a magical intervention when life gets tough. However, it’s much deeper than that. With modern-day responsibilities pulling us in so many different directions, we seldom get a chance to reflect on our lives, purpose, and what’s truly important. In prayer, we can express ourselves and attempt to bring our minds, hearts, and ourselves closer to G-d in our own uniquely personal way. All the surrounding ritual is to enhance, not impede, this expression.

In many ways, praying is a battle of epic proportions between our overconfident ego and humble inner spirits, our bodies and souls. When we acknowledge our limitations, vulnerabilities, and humanity, we can recognise the divine power beyond us, and connect.

Praying is an opportune time to touch base with our soul. To do so, we need to understand what we are

saying when we pray, otherwise the experience can be lacking, for as much as we are talking to G-d, we’re talking to ourselves too.

Much of our prayers are requests to G-d for personal needs, health, sustenance, and so on. Does the almighty really need our prayers to fulfil our needs? Prayer enables us to tap into our blessings, as G-d wants us to reach out and connect with our entire being.

By having personal needs, we are motivated to pray and connect regularly. Praying for our physical needs makes our connection personal, and demonstrates our commitment

and belief in G-d. It engages our bodies, for which physical needs are important. We are connecting our physical selves, not just our spiritual existence, with G-d. Prayer can also create new blessings even if we aren’t deserving of them. We pray for G-d’s involvement in our regular human experience. Prayer for our personal needs is part of our desire to have a genuine relationship with G-d.

The siddur and *machzor* prayer books help to guide us through the process. Like a generic greeting card, they give us the right words to express ourselves. The words of prayer become our own words through our personal touch. We articulate an individualised message within the template of the prayers.

Here are some suggestions that will hopefully make your shul experience more meaningful:

- Take time to reflect and introspect. Try to clarify (or remind yourself) what’s most important to you, and who you really want to be.
- While reciting prayers, focus on quality rather than quantity, on depth rather than breadth. Try to ensure that at least one prayer is said with understanding, feeling, and a personal connection.
- Don’t worry about falling behind the minyan. The page that you are on is the correct page.
- Select a passage that you find relevant and meaningful, and linger awhile. Say the words slowly and repeatedly to yourself. Allow them to touch you. Savour the words as you open your heart to their content and message.
- Not proficient in Hebrew? Don’t worry, G-d understands whatever language you speak, and can discern what’s in your heart even if you’re having a hard time expressing it.
- As you are in shul, remember that you are joined by millions of Jews all over the world. Your presence in shul makes a powerful statement about your commitment to Judaism, and to the Jewish people.

Wishing all a *shanah tovah*. May all your prayers be answered.

• *Rabbi Ari Kievman is the rabbi of Sandton Central Shul – Chabad Goodness & Kindness Centre.*



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Are we creation’s purpose, or an afterthought to the mosquito?

OPINION

RABBI DOVID HAZDAN



“Today is the birthday of the world.” We say these words repeatedly after hearing the sound of the shofar. It’s a moment of solemn celebration. We sense the excitement of renewal, and its accompanying sense of responsibility. It’s a birthday celebration with the gift of opportunity to ensure that this year, 5780, has an impact on our lives and the lives of those around us.

In fact, this birthday marks the birth and creation of Adam and Eve on the sixth day of creation. If we are commemorating the advent of the world, wouldn’t it be more appropriate to celebrate Rosh Hashanah on the first day of creation? Why is the birthday celebration delayed to the day in which Adam and Eve arrived, six days later?

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 38) explains that our late arrival was to deter us from arrogance, to remind us that even an insignificant mosquito preceded us in creation. The Talmud then presents an alternative opinion. It suggests that we entered into the arena of creation as the most important guest who enters the banquet hall only once every detail is already in place. All is readied to receive the honoured VIPs of creation – Adam and Eve.

These opinions seem mutually exclusive. Is the human being an afterthought to the mosquito, or

are we the very purpose of creation? Chassidic teaching explains that every form of existence has its defined potential and purpose. The lowest form is the inanimate. It has no apparent sign of life. The vegetative world is more elevated as it has the capacity to grow and bear seed. The animal kingdom



has personality, emotions, and the freedom of mobility. The human being has the sophistication of intelligence and intellectual capacity.

The spiritual ecosystem allows for the elevation of the inanimate, and for it to be absorbed into the world of the vegetative, which draws nutrients from the soil. The vegetative world is assimilated into the animal kingdom that feeds on the plants. The animal can be elevated into the world of the human, who derives energy from

the brute strength and force of the animal.

But what then? What’s the next stage in this spiritual ecosystem?

Humans are far more than homo sapiens. We have been endowed with infinitely more capacity than intelligence. We have a G-dly soul that aspires to achieve meaning,

purpose, and spiritual elevation. We are a composite of the dust of the earth and the spirit of holiness. We are the only creature that is not pre-programmed. We have conflicting instincts and drives to indulge in the material and reach for the divine. We have the ability to choose the direction and definition of our lives.

We are the last all-important link in the chain of elevation. We hold in our hand the key of creation. We alone can make the decisions on which the world around us

depends. Will we fail the challenge and degenerate back into the world of the animal, vegetative, or even the inanimate? Or will we elevate our surroundings to reach for the spiritual purpose of G-d?

If we descend into the realm of self-indulgence, the Talmud reminds us that we are not the first parasite of creation. We are, in fact, the afterthought to a mosquito.

But if we choose the route of serving a higher, more sublime purpose, the Talmud reminds us that the entire world is waiting for the pre-eminent last creation – the human being – who is endowed with strength and ability to build a kinder, more gentle, G-dly world.

It’s on Rosh Hashanah that we re-embrace our *raison d’etre*, and determine why it is that we were created last. We are the author of the reason for our late arrival in creation. By our mind-set and focus on Rosh Hashanah, we determine whether we are the afterthought to the mosquito, or the honoured VIP of the banquet hall.

The birthday of the world is celebrated on the day of the birth of Adam and Eve – not before then. We celebrate the advent of our magnificent world only with the arrival of the agents who can cultivate G-d’s beautiful garden into a dwelling place for Hashem.

As we listen to the stirring sound

of the shofar, let us stretch beyond our selfish entitlement. As we pray to G-d to grant us a sweet and happy new year, let our thoughts also be filled with resolve and commitment. We have the capacity to dedicate ourselves to sweeten the world for others. We can muster our talents and abilities to share, contribute, and commit ourselves to the broader needs of the community.

The sound of the shofar can pierce the heavens and awaken G-d’s mercy and kindness. But, Maimonides teaches us that we are the ones who need to be woken. The shofar stirs us from the habits of mediocrity to reach for excellence. It beckons us to move beyond our comfort zones, and aspire to a higher purpose.

On this Rosh Hashanah, the birthday of man and woman, let us resolve to unwrap our gift of a new year. More importantly, let us unwrap and reveal our own individual potential to live each day ahead with creative commitment and resolve to have a positive impact on all G-d’s children, to elevate our surroundings, and to recreate the garden of Hashem in a world redeemed.

• *Rabbi Dovid Hazdan is the dean of Torah Academy, and the rabbi at Great Park Synagogue.*

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A photograph of a woman and an elderly woman posing for a selfie. The woman on the left has dark hair and is wearing a dark top. The elderly woman on the right has white hair, is wearing a white jacket over a dark top, and has a pair of pink sunglasses with blue lenses perched on her head. Both women are smiling broadly. The background is a simple indoor setting with a blue wall and a framed picture.

once a year, if not more often. We choose the *chaggim* to do that because we feel they – especially Sukkot and Pesach – are big family times.” The two usually spend one of these *chaggim* in England, and the other in South Africa.

For the Fletchers, being with their parents, siblings, and extended families on the *chaggim* is also about building special

Sarah*, who's lived in the UK for two years, is planning to surprise

Sarah says the *chaggim* are different in London. “I’ll probably struggle when I have to skip a year of coming home for yom tov. The more traditional and less religious British families don’t take the holidays as seriously as we do in Joburg. They keep it small, and don’t entertain as much. But having South African family friends in London means I’ll always get an invitation over yom tov, so I’m lucky. There’s nothing like home, though.”

*name has been changed

OPINION

TANIT PEREL



Rosh Hashanah is always the best time of the year. The weather is great. We get to wear pretty new clothes. We get to eat honey on

When we hear the shofar, it's supposed to give us a wake-up call. It blasts through our ears and awakens our mind, and we realise that we should be asking for forgiveness,

Rosh Hashanah means that the third term is coming to an end. Everyone is cramming to get assignments in, projects finalised,

Rosh Hashanah rolls around at the perfect time. This time of year, people start to lose track of what's important, and what's not. It's a good time to set goals for ourselves. When we set these, it's important that we include our commitment to achieve them. A goal can't be accomplished if we're not willing to do our part in the process. Sometimes it can take a lot of work to achieve what we want in our lives. I have never been afraid to

We realise that when the air gets hotter and the breeze blows in, we should take a step back and look at the past year from a new angle.

- *Tanti Perel is in Grade 11 at King David Linksfield and is a student leader and head of the arts and culture committee.*

The power of praying en masse

OPINION RABBI YOSSEI CHAIKIN



I clearly remember the most powerful time I led a congregation in prayer. It was in the thick of the Second Intifada in 2002, and the South African Rabbinical Association, along with the chief rabbi, had called for a mass meeting of the community. This took place during Chol Hamoed Pesach, in the wake of the gruesome attack on participants at a seder at the Park Hotel in Netanya, which left 30 dead and 140 wounded, some grievously so.

The venue chosen for this was the Oxford Synagogue, where I have the privilege of serving as rabbi, the largest sanctuary in our country (and if I’m not mistaken, the southern hemisphere). Yet, even the shul’s 1 600 pews proved insufficient to seat the thousands who arrived in solidarity and with the intent of storming the heavens in response to these horrors. The aisles of the shul were filled with standing room only worshippers, and more flowed into

it’s true that He hears our entreaties from everywhere, the response to our request is far more likely to be positive if made as a community. Simply put, He hears the individual’s plea, but may answer “no”. However, a communal plea is not so easily rejected.

Furthermore, the mere presence of a *minyan* (prayer quorum of ten men), or more, gathered in one place brings down the divine presence (*shechina*). We are all familiar with the halacha that some sections of our siddur are recited only within the quorum of ten. But the larger the gathering, the greater the level of *shechina* attained.

Thus, when three or more have broken bread together, grace after meals is preceded by a formal *zimun* (invitation), with the leader suggesting to his meal mates, “*Nevarech sheachalnu misehlo*,”

(“Let us bless our G-d, He of whose we have eaten.”) But If 10 or more have gathered, the *zimun* formula is upgraded to include Hashem’s name – “*Nevarech l’Elokeinu*”. Less known is the minority opinion of Reb Yose the Galilean, which states that the *zimun* is further enhanced after meals eaten by a gathering of 100, 1 000, or 10 000. In the latter case, the invitation is made, “Let us bless G-d, our G-d, G-d of Israel, G-d of the legions, who dwells above the *keruvim* [angels] for the food that we have eaten.” Although this isn’t accepted practice, his principle remains valid: the more souls gathered in one

place, the more *shechina* is perceived. It may explain and even validate why many habitual *shtiebel* (small shul) dwellers choose to attend a larger synagogue for the *yamim tovim*.

While the peace and quiet of one’s own home might feel appropriate, there remains an inherent sanctity in a dedicated house of prayer. During designated services, the aura in a shul lends itself to better liturgical expression, particularly when led by the melodious voice of a good chazan, accompanied by a choir, and interspersed with meaningful sermons by a capable orator.

But a Beit Knesset remains holy even when no actual service is taking place. On occasion, I have entered Oxford’s magnificent main shul for a private prayer of my own, to encounter other pop-in visitors who were there to talk to Him briefly in His home.

One Yom Kippur, a few years ago, towards the end of Neila, I noticed a visitor standing in the passage, holding the door slightly ajar but not coming in. I approached him to invite him to join us, but he refused, claiming that he was unworthy of the privilege of being inside a holy sanctuary on the holy day. He had merely come to remain on the outskirts of the shul, to be near the house of G-d, and to hear the sound of the shofar at the conclusion of the holiest of all days.

Shanah tovah, and remember to visit the one who inscribes us in the Book of Life in one of His many homes over the upcoming *yomim tovim*. There is one near you.

• Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi of Oxford Shul, and the chairperson of the South African Rabbinical Association.



the passages. The adjoining Simon Kuper Hall had been set up with speakers so that those unable to get inside would be able to participate. I later found out that hundreds more joined via a hastily installed sound hook-up as well.

The service began with Maariv, which I had the privilege of leading. As I intoned the words “*barchu et Hashem*” (praise Hashem) the resounding response of the congregation was a powerful, thousand-strong “*baruch Hashem*” (blessed is Hashem). I had goose bumps, and the feeling was shared by the entire congregation, moved by the power of the massed multitudes.

This time of year, conversations in the Jewish community revolve around which shuls we frequent, and when congregants intend patronising their respective houses of worship. Will it be just on Yom Kippur, or perhaps the first day of Rosh Hashanah as well. An indignant, more religious participant in the discussion will preach the necessity of being at shul for all the high holiday services.

In probability, somebody will then challenge the need to go to shul at all, arguing that one can daven just the same at home and that, in a sense, it’s easier to do so with much less distraction and greater piece of mind. Then, there are those who “don’t do crowds”, generally shunning mass events because of a reclusive personality or genuine agoraphobia.

Is it really so important to daven in shul? Can G-d not be reached everywhere?

To answer these questions, we need to take a step back. What, in fact, is prayer? It’s an acknowledgement that Hashem is the source of all blessing, and that it’s to Him that we turn in times of need. While

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Forgive – for your own sake

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

“Sometimes we have to find the strength to forgive, not for the other person, but for our own peace and ability to move forward,” says clinical psychologist Liane Lurie reflecting on the power of forgiveness.

Jeanette Sapire experienced the healing power of forgiveness first-hand. “I had a particularly bad relationship with my mother from my childhood onwards,” she says. “Many years went by, and I was unable to resolve this relationship. It came down to me not being able to be in her company anymore.”

Yet, her mother’s illness last year sparked something in Sapire, and she knew it was time to let go of the resentment she’d been harbouring. “My mom became very sick last year, and passed away last November,” says Sapire. “I was able to be at her bedside at the time. She was unconscious, but I was able to tell her that I loved her, and that I forgave her.”

Asked how she reached forgiveness, Sapire says it came down to seeing her mother in such a vulnerable state. “When I saw my mom suffering, I felt such compassion for her,” she says. “I felt that no matter what she did to me, she still didn’t deserve to suffer like that. I saw her as a human being at that moment, and realised that maybe she hadn’t known what she’d done. I think that because she wasn’t awake it was easy to forgive her because there would be no backlash from her. I also realised that with her being on the edge of life, she may have felt guilty about what she’d done, and she may have really needed my forgiveness.”

Sapire says that forgiving her mother gave her a massive sense of relief. “Although she was unconscious, she reached for my hand and squeezed it as I spoke to her. The feeling of happiness that I experienced was beyond description. It was as if a weight had been lifted off me.”

Indeed, when you harbour resentment, you’re often the one who suffers the most, which explains why forgiveness is so powerful. “Forgiveness ultimately creates a feeling of freedom and calm,” says Lurie. “We’re no longer bogged down by the weight of feeling wronged. We don’t have to approve of what happened, but we can accept it and give ourselves permission to move forward. It also allows us to re-evaluate what’s important to us.”

There’s no better time for re-evaluation than as we approach Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. As we ask G-d to forgive us for our transgressions for the past year, it follows that we reflect on forgiving



those who have wronged us. “We’re asking Hashem to forgive us for all of our mistakes and sins,” says More To Life coach and mentor Rebbetzin Wendy Hendler. “If we’re able to do that for at least one person in our lives, it opens the way for Hashem to say, ‘Yes, the way you behave to others is how I will behave towards you.’”

Yet, Hendler acknowledges the immense difficulty of truly forgiving others. “It’s the most spiritual, G-dly thing to do, yet there’s not much that’s harder.” Together with Rebbetzin Joanne Joffe, Hendler runs forgiveness workshops based on the teachings of More To Life, an organisation offering experiential tools and practices to help people access their full potential.

Hendler explains the practical process that one needs to go through to reach a point of meaningful forgiveness. Defining resentment as ill will held over time towards someone for what appears to be a good reason, Hendler suggests first examining why we hold onto the resentment. “What’s it doing for us? What benefits do we get out of holding resentment?” she asks. “What are the payoffs?” Moral superiority, and being the centre of attention as we tell our sad stories and get a sense of self-justification are some possible payoffs.

Then, look at the costs of holding onto resentment. It has an impact on every area of life, says Hendler. “It costs me the relationship with that person, as well as my physical and emotional health. I can’t sleep, I have no energy, and I’m so consumed by my resentment that I can’t be fully present. It costs me spiritually as I feel distanced from Hashem when I’m engaged in this poisonous thinking and behaviour.”

We realise that the supposed payoffs are actually costs. “Only when you feel sick to your core, only when the cost is too high will you be ready to let go,” says Hendler. Regardless of how big, small, or justified our resentments are, the price we pay in terms of our own soul is the same. Yet, letting go of resentment is hard. “People grow to like their resentments – they’re there for very good reason.”

“Many of us may make forgiveness contingent on the other person apologising,” says Lurie. “In reality, this doesn’t always happen.” We need to get into a space in which we can forgive simply for our own well-being.

Forgiveness isn’t condoning the other’s actions or turning the other cheek, says Hendler. “It’s not about the other person.

It’s totally focused on ourselves. Often while we’re holding onto the resentment and stewing in it, the other person doesn’t even know. Forgiveness is an active process we go through for ourselves.”

Through the process, you do a form of *teshuvah*, confessing your damaging behaviour. “You conjure the person up in your mind and look them in the eye,” says Hendler. “Then, you confess the full extent of your resentment to them. You say, ‘I’ve been resenting you for ... I accept responsibility for how I’ve judged you, how I’ve behaved towards you, and what I’ve been resenting you for.’”

Then you ask for and offer forgiveness to the person you’ve conjured up. Even though the other person has done you wrong, you need to ask them for forgiveness for your behaviour and the resentment you’ve held onto. “You make an active choice to let go. It’s not that you’re saying what they did is ok, it’s never ok, but for your own sake, for your peace, for your soul, you need to drop it. It comes from the realisation that you’re hurting yourself, and you’re not willing to let your beautiful life be compromised in this way.

“The person who hurt you is simply the messenger, a challenge from G-d,” says Hendler. “He has sent us an opportunity for growth and healing. Our job is to act in a way that reflects our best self.

“The final step of the process is to commit to a new action or intention.” You can go for coffee and talk out your issues with the person. Or you may choose to end a toxic relationship, but let go of your ill will towards the person. “You honour your healthy choice for yourself, and act from a place of truth.”

Six tips on eating before Yom Kippur

SHANNON SARNA – JTA

Yom Kippur is one of the most, if not the most, important day on the Jewish calendar. For many Jews, fasting and being in synagogue is the focus of the day.

Fasting isn’t easy, nor is it for everyone. Some people can’t fast because they are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have a medical condition. Or they simply don’t function well abstaining from water and food for a 25-hour period.

But for those who choose to fast as a meaningful way to engage in Yom Kippur, there are actually foods that can set you up

for a more successful, less onerous fast. As I did research for this story, I found that most people stick to a menu that is classic and delicious but not too crazy or spicy: chicken soup, chicken, rice or pasta, a vegetable, some challah, and water.

Here are some more tips on eating before the fast

1. Avoid foods that are hard to digest
This might be different for everyone, but in general, stay away from heavy meat dishes, fried foods, or lots of dairy. Because you know, Jewish stomachs.

Continued on page 46>>

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Leave your stomach out of it – pamper your soul on Yom Kippur

OPINION

RABBI GREG ALEXANDER



Zog the alien comes to Earth. The first human that Zog meets is you. And, as you explain life on Earth, you get to the Jewish stuff – the festivals, blessings, kashrut, Shabbat, and so on – and Zog finds this fascinating.

They don’t have Judaism on planet Zog. So, curious, you ask Zog what it/he/she thinks would be the most popular thing among all of these for Jews who are not, well, 100% committed to being Jewish every day?

Zog scratches his/her/its four chins and thinks, surely it would be something fun like Purim or Simchah Torah, or spiritual like davening, or ethical like marching for social justice? It might be baking *challah* (yum), or hearing the shofar.

The one thing that you can safely assume is that Zog wouldn’t guess that fasting on Yom Kippur would hit the top three. Why, out of all the many things that Jews could do, would the thing that resonates most every year involve sitting in shul and starving for 25 hours!

And yet, to my amazement, Yom Kippur remains one of the highlights of the Jewish year for those deeply involved as much as those on the peripheries of Jewish observance.

Why is it so enduring, and what brings people back to it year after year? Is it that we love a challenge, an endurance test? Or, are we a nation of masochists that loves to beat

ourselves up with guilt and suffering? Or, is it more an annual act of tribal connection (well then why not connect on a happy festival with food to scoff)?

It could be for all of these reasons and more, but let me give you one more to add to your list. You see, most people see fasting as suffering, and indeed, the *mitzvah* (good deed) comes from the Biblical verse (Lev. 16:31), which states that on Yom Kippur, “you should afflict [or deprive] yourselves (*v’anitem et nafshoteichem*)”. Let’s be honest, who isn’t suffering by Yom Kippur afternoon when your head is a bit woozy, you are fantasising about (fill in your fantasy food, drink here) and your breath smells like a buffalo died in your mouth?

But, why come back year after year to make ourselves suffer? Isn’t there enough suffering in our lives, in this world? Is that a motivation for Jewish practice today?

What we really need instead of more guilt and suffering are the tools to lift our lives, give us strength, dignity, compassion, meaning, and inspire us to be the divine beings that we are created to be. How does fasting serve that end?

I like to see Yom Kippur less as suffering and more as a luxury spa. A

day to turn off phones, turn off the world outside, and journey into our inner world. A day that we have to worry about nothing except who we are and who we want to be. All day. Intensely focused. So much so that we don’t need to break, even to eat



or drink. It’s like Shabbat on steroids. It’s actually called that in the Torah – Shabbat Shabbaton – the Shabbat of Shabbatot, the super Shabbes!

In fact, when he came to write the requirements of this day, Maimonides (Spain 1135 to 1204) codified the laws of Yom Kippur as enabling our bodies “to rest from food and drink”. To rest (*lishbot*), the verb with the same root as Shabbat – resting, restoring ourselves, like we do each week when Shabbat comes in. Not in the sense of prohibition, but rather in the sense of re-creation and repair. (Laws of Sh’vitat Ha-Asor 1:4). In other words, Yom Kippur is not to be seen as the chief day of suffering, but a day to reboot, restore, “re-Jewvenate” and all those other re- words that we need so much right now.

One can see each of the five services on Yom Kippur as a meal. Yes, you aren’t actually eating, but you are feeding your soul. On Shabbat, we famously eat an extra-special meal, *seudah shlishit*, making for three “feasts”. But

on Yom Kippur, we have five feasts – kol nidrei, the morning service, and mussaf, mincha, and neilah. That’s a full day of feasting, not fasting, each service a delectable banquet of soul food. Forget hunger, leave your stomach out of it, and pamper your soul.

We live lives that are so pressured, so demanding, so filled with input from our phones, work, Netflix, that we are rarely given time to think. Yom Kippur is an island in time, a day to switch off and come back to ourselves, to return, return, return and, in doing so, find ourselves again. That is its gift. That’s why people keep coming back for it and to it. And, if we stop seeing it as a day to “get through” but rather a pamper day to luxuriate in, we might get more benefit from it.

So instead of wishing for an “easy fast” this year, let’s wish each other a “delicious one”. May we all have a restorative one, a meaningful one, a transforming one. May this Yom Kippur bring you the opportunity to go deeper and emerge stronger, happier, and more peaceful when you reach the other side.

From Andrea and my family to yours, a *chatimah tovah*, and a delicious fast.

• Rabbi Greg Alexander is one of the rabbinic team at the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation.

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What can we do to renew our contract with G-d?



OPINION

REBBETZIN AIDEL KAZILSKY

The curtain on 5779 is about to come down, and the dawning of 5780 is upon us. Our mystics teach that an unusual cosmic occurrence happens as we light the Yom Tov candles that usher in the new year.

All through the year, we are blessed with a presence of divine light that radiates and energises the universe. Clothed in nature, it infuses every being with life and guides everything in matter, every second of each day. From time to time, we see the hand of G-d, the divine providence that leads us, which gives us a reassuring thumbs up that our father in heaven is looking down on us, and caring about each step we take and each decision we make.

But as we light the Yom Tov candles on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, we are told that the divine presence goes into hiding. It withdraws from the world, and from a mystic perspective, we are plunged into darkness, into a comatose state. That's not to say that the sun won't rise and the earth won't rotate on its axis, but rather the extent to which an individual can feel the diminishing of the divine light.

Why, you may ask? Because once a year, we are asked to renew and revitalise our contract with G-d. How do we do that? By showing up with an agenda of renewal, repentance, and recommitment to our divine mission. And how do we draw the divine presence back into the world? By listening to the cry of the shofar.

The raw wailing of the shofar mimics the soul's resonance and yearning to be reconnected to its maker, and this gives us the impetus to make that recommitment.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, what can I honestly do to renew my contract? What recommitment or renewal can I possibly take on that will guarantee another year?

Reflecting on this past year and the state of the world, it's a very difficult question to answer. The media has surrounded our lives and the places we find ourselves in with negative talk. It feels like the world is on a downward trend, with everything spiralling out of control. Meet anyone on the street, connect on social media, and there's a bad news story to share. Sit around the Shabbat table, and discuss the bad state of affairs with ... fill in the blanks.

I'm not some naïve ostrich with my head in the sand. It isn't pretty out there.

But here are my thoughts for this new year. This plunge into negativity that we are experiencing mimics the withdrawal of G-d's presence in the world on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. What's the purpose of this withdrawal? As said above, it's a space in time where G-d waits on us

to renew our contract with Him for the next year. It's what they call a job appraisal in the business world.

Let's take a step back and ask ourselves whether this constant state of negativity is helping us in any way? Are we better people for it? Is our society better off because of it? How motivated are you to function



in this environment? Darkness (aka negativity) is simply the absence of light, and as the saying goes, a little light dispels a lot of darkness.

So, this new year, we should flip things around, and do things differently. Let's not lament the state or lack thereof of our country, our economy, our relationships, our world. Let's recalculate, reroute, and change direction. My proposition is to choose to look at everything (OK – even something) with a good eye, find a good word to say, show appreciation for something good.

Imagine that a person gets up

in the morning, and goes through the motions of his day, in which he experiences ten different circumstances. The chances are nine are good experiences – he woke up feeling good, he had a great breakfast, he squeezed in an hour at gym, he arrived at work safely, he managed his meeting well, he met some interesting business contacts over lunch, he felt accomplished because he signed off on a project, his wife called to say their kid passed an important exam, and then he drove home in the traffic and every traffic light was off due to load shedding.

Guess what the topic of conversation around the dinner table will be? Not the great workout at gym or the completed project. Rather, frustration and irritation about the load shedding. Think about it. Map out your day, and look at all the things that happened – those that went right, the things you should be grateful for, the things that really matter, and then, yes, the things that weren't great. Human beings are lazy, and chances are we prefer to wallow in the mud, and talk about that which went wrong rather than focus on the positive aspects of our lives.

So, we have a choice: to live in this world, focused on everything that's wrong, and everything that

can go wrong, or we can wake up in the morning and find the good things that G-d gives us. At a job appraisal, what would an employer look for? A sullen, demotivated individual who bemoans his position, bemoans the working conditions and the people around him? Or a motivated, positive individual who sees things differently, and is inspired and willing to make the changes needed to take the company forward?

This Rosh Hashanah, as G-d waits for us, let's surprise Him, by thanking Him for all the good He has showered on us this previous year. You're alive, aren't you? Let's make a commitment to spreading good news, and being grateful for the good stuff in our lives. Let's commit to doing acts of goodness and kindness, and let's look at our sphere of influence and commit to making a positive change there.

Surely then G-d will reciprocate in kindness towards us, and renew our contract with Him, not only for another year of health, happiness, and all the blessings we require, but perhaps this year we will be the recipients of the ultimate gift – a world restored to good with the arrival of the Mashiach.

Shanah Tova Umetukah!

• *Rebbetzin Aidel Kazilsky is a radio and television host, and an inspirational speaker who teaches the wisdom of Torah and applies it to contemporary times.*

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sephardi: The descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are most likely eligible for a Portuguese



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

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

Horesh resides in Israel, but has spent seven years in Poland, and is recognised as a leading lawyer in the field of European citizenship, with a full

understanding of local immigration laws.

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

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

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

I will be in Johannesburg from 14 to 20 November and then in Cape Town until 28 November. Please contact me for an appointment. My South African phone number is +27 64 745 5273 • Email me on adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com

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BAR NOW OPEN!

As powerful as these traditions are, did our ancestors really believe these foods to be portents for the

Along with babke, cream cheese, and plenty of other foods, these dishes bring people together post-fast at tables groaning with variety. The post-fast feast seemingly has no halachic basis, nor is it necessarily a *mitzvah* (good deed). Still, the fact that we have repented and concluded our fast makes us joyous, and this tends to translate into a meal of some significance after Yom Kippur.

us to something profound, perhaps connecting us to the essence of Rosh Hashanah as an affirmation of human life on this planet.

In our busy lives, food can be reduced to pure physicality. We can end up eating on the run, mindlessly taking in food in a concrete and disconnected kind of way. But on Rosh Hashanah, we are invited to eat in a way that attempts to see something in food beyond the physical, a symbolic connection which brings together physical and spiritual properties. From food to our wider lives. As we eat the apple and

- *Adina Roth runs B'tocham Education in Johannesburg, teaching courses to B'neimtzvah and tanach and midrash to adults. She is also a Melton educator and a clinical psychologist.*



ADINA ROTH



JORDAN MOSHE

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Five hacks for the best Rosh Hashanah ever

BEATA ABRAHAM – JTA

I can't help but wonder why Hallmark and the retail world at large haven't co-opted the Jewish New Year. True, while there may "only" be about five million to seven million Jews in the United States (depending on who's counting), Rosh Hashanah is a particularly important holiday on the Jewish calendar.

Many Jews spend Rosh Hashanah at synagogue immersed in prayer, self-reflection, and repentance, kicking off 10 days of "awe". But it's a family holiday, too, usually celebrated at home with a big family dinner.

So why aren't there any light-up shofars or

tasteful Happy New Year banners to be found leading up to the big day?

Of course, depending on where you live, you may come across a dusty box of matzah on the shelf of your local grocery store in a well-intentioned, if misguided, attempt to acknowledge Rosh Hashanah (along with every other Jewish holiday).

But fear not. In lieu of tacky, ready-made accoutrements, you can design your own Instagram-worthy Rosh Hashanah celebration. Keeping in mind that the goal is to create joy and lasting memories, I have tried and tested a few ideas to make your Rosh Hashanah celebration personal and memorable.

Conduct an apples and honey taste test
Not all apples – nor honey – are created equal. So here's a fun way to see which varieties your family really prefers. Procure as many types of honey as you can (but remember, this is not a reality cooking show, so don't go crazy). Put out a variety of sliced apples to dip and create your own voting method. For a bit of extra flair, add a blindfold. The honey with the most votes will receive the honour of the blessing for a sweet new year.

Create a Rosh Hashanah craft museum
Remember all those New Year's crafts your kids brought home over the years from school? It's time to unearth those boxes filled with clay

honey pots, handcrafted Happy New Year cards and paper apple mobiles. Bonus if you can excavate the childhood Rosh Hashanah relics from your own youth. And if kids never made them – or you tossed them years ago – you can always make new Rosh Hashanah crafts, like a honey jar or shofar. Cluster these items in a special museum-style display for all to enjoy. Heart strings will be tugged, guaranteed.

Throw a birthday party for the world
Rosh Hashanah isn't just a Jewish holiday. According to the Talmud, it's the birthday of humankind and the world. Considering that the universe is a pretty significant creation, some special treats to commemorate this day hardly seem like too much effort. Whether you celebrate with a spherical cake frosted to look like planet Earth or a candle on a single cupcake, or even just a Happy Birthday banner, let it spark a conversation about what each individual's part can be in making the world a better place – the ultimate birthday gift.



An apple and honey taste test is one way to make a joyous and lasting Jewish New Year

Make a Rosh Hashanah tablescape
If you are overwhelmed just thinking about setting an elaborate table for the holiday, just remember that you are going to want to eat at some point, so it might as well be at a striking and impactfully set table. But that doesn't mean an overwrought one. Small touches can go a long way, like an apple-print tablecloth; a few carefully placed honey or bee-themed items; a decorative tray filled with apples and pomegranates; a shofar as centrepiece. Tip: use your imagination, not Google.

Spark meaningful conversation with reflection cards
Rosh Hashanah is a mini workout for the soul, so you should probably break an existential sweat self-reflecting, soul-searching, and resolution-making. Like any good workout, it will transform, strengthen and fortify you for navigating your daily life in the year to come.

Write some open-ended questions on cardboard, and arrange them on your table for your family or friends to select and answer aloud. Some examples: What were your biggest mistakes over the past year? Greatest achievements? What brought you the most joy? Which moments felt deeply meaningful? What have you resolved to do differently next year?

What you write is up to you, just make sure that each question can be answered by a responder of any age, and keep in mind that Rosh Hashanah is not just about looking backward, but is an opportunity to look forward as well.

I hope you will use one or all of these ideas to set the stage for a sweet and meaningful New Year. And, full disclosure: while they are undoubtedly fun, none of these ideas will absolutely guarantee that you will be written in the Book of Life, but they may get you featured in Martha Stewart Living.

• Beata Abraham, a lifelong writer and a Jewish educator, is director of education at a Reform shul in Columbus, Ohio.

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G-d in the wilderness

OPINION

ILANA STEIN



in every ordinary thing and event”. He or she needs to look for the image of G-d in all the wonders of the world.

But in the wilds of Africa, I like to think that it just comes naturally.

• *Ilana Stein combines her degrees in nature conservation and English in her work as a writer for ecotourism company Wilderness Safaris. She also lectures on Tanach, Judaism, and the environment at the Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning in Johannesburg and Cape Town.*

Ever heard a shofar in Zambia? Presumably it’s blown in the Jewish community that still exists there.

However, it was somewhat surreal to be in the country that styles itself “the real Africa” and what the Victorians called “darkest Africa”, and hear a sound that so patently belongs to hot, crowded mornings in shul.

It happened early one morning just after the sun rose and the light was still a gentle, dim blue. We had just heard the morning grunt of a lion on the opposite bank of the river, and the mosquitoes were whining above our heads. The water mirrored a “V” of storks flying overhead. We were having breakfast on the deck overlooking the water, when those long quavering notes, followed by the staccato sobs, broke through the morning silence. It seemed to hover a while over the still waters of the Zambezi River.

G-d, it seems, can be proclaimed monarch in the farthest corners of the earth.

The G-d/human encounter while out in nature is not unknown in religion, and Judaism is no exception. Indeed, the Bible uses nature imagery all the time.

The story of creation indicates that we should be aware of our place in nature and make use of it while protecting and guarding it (as in *Breishit*), and the many psalms and verses dotted throughout our prayers extol G-d through the beauty of creation, from mountains to crocodiles.

Those of us who live in South Africa are especially blessed. We are within driving distance of a number of places considered to be the most outstanding of their kind in the world. There is the Kruger National Park, the Garden Route, Table Mountain, and the Drakensberg. From wildlife to scenery, we have it all. Further afield, neighbouring countries offer a magnificent plethora of places to see and wildlife to wonder at.

Many South Africans journey to such places every year. Many will tell you that it is out there, in the wilds, far from traffic, cell phones (well, sometimes you need to switch them off yourself), and the maddening crowds, that they can breathe deeply. It’s then that they have the time and space to contemplate the creator of the beauty that’s around them. Out there, they feel closest to G-d, and can remember their relationship with the divine.

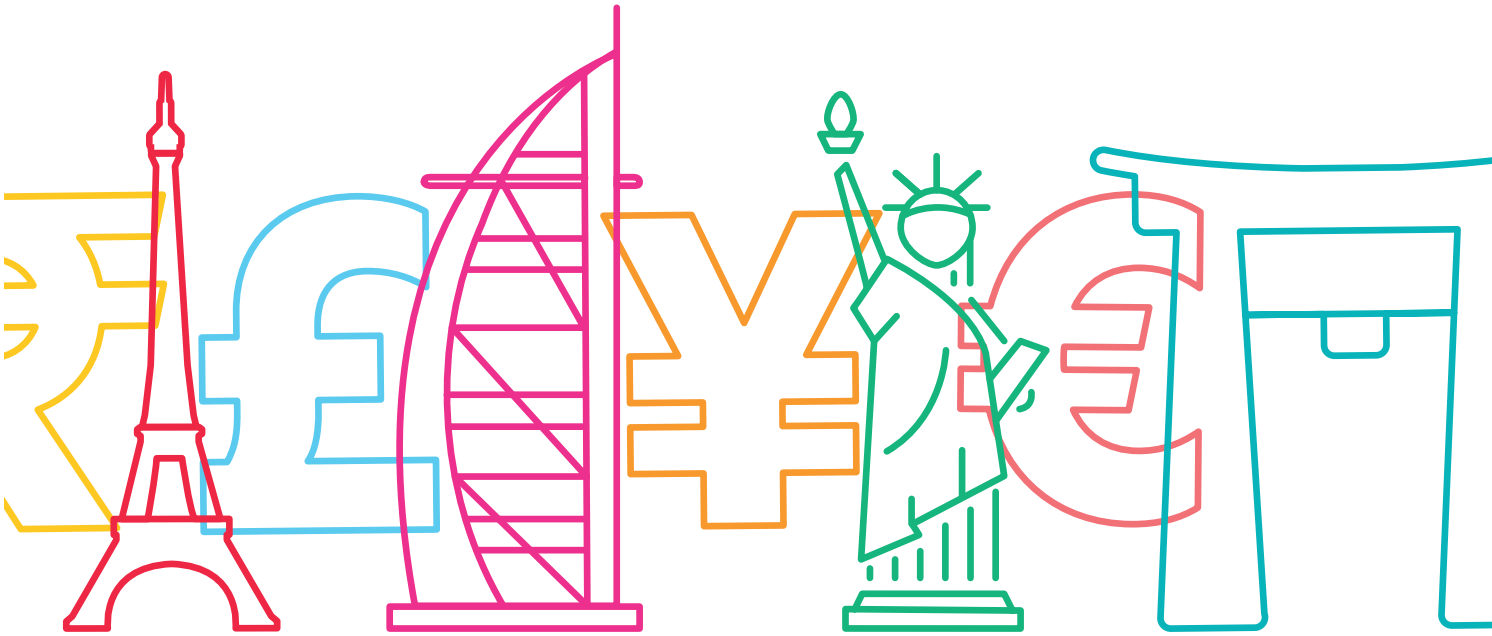
It’s no wonder that G-d took the Jews into the desert to receive the Torah, a place stripped of the pyramids, the glamour, and noisy civilisation that was Egypt. The word *midbar* means an uninhabited place. It also has the root of *davar* (word) in it. In the silence of the desert, the word of G-d can be heard.

Having travelled through many places on this amazing continent of ours, I have seen this power of nature at work.

But, our eyes need to be open to it. That’s where the challenge lies. For all its breathtaking wonder, the experience of nature can remain a shallow, sensory appreciation and nothing more.

How then does one transform the aesthetic experience into a religious one? What’s our reaction to the beauty of a sunset, and how can we raise the level of that reaction from a sensory experience to one that is spiritual or has meaning?

Rabbi Dr JB Soloveitchik raises this question in several essays including *The Lonely Man of Faith*. He explains that there needs to be a sense of awe and admiration, childlike in its wonder of the universe. Yet this should not remain a passive encounter. On the contrary, the person of faith also needs to “seek the unusual and wonderful



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The link between Jews, magic, and mysticism

JORDAN MOSHE

Amulets, exorcisms, and incantations might seem the stuff of fantasy, yet they aren’t foreign to Jewish life. Since the days of the Tanach, the relationship between Jews and magical belief and practice has been complex and tenuous. Sorcery and witchcraft were repeatedly condemned in the ancient Jewish world, yet we find certain occurrences distinctly magical.

To what extent does Judaism believe in magic? Do Jews hold by sorcery, and if we do, how does it work?

The Torah contains multiple mentions of sorcery, which seems to suggest a belief in magic. In Exodus, Moshe and Aharon perform extraordinary feats, and bring the ten plagues. Pharaoh’s magicians imitate some of these supernatural acts, transforming their staves into snakes, and summoning frogs.

Later, a number of verses in the Torah explicitly prohibit magic and sorcery: “You shall not allow a sorceress to live”; and “There shall not be found among you ... a soothsayer, a diviner of times, one who interprets omens, or a



sorcerer, or a charmer, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to G-d.”

The supernatural but divinely-powered actions of the Israelites are feted, but the magic of others (derived from a source beyond G-d) is disparaged. Many Torah authorities seem to believe that magic does in fact exist, and echo the negative sentiments expressed against practicing it. “He who practices magic will be harassed by magic,” wrote the third century sage, Levi, and the *Sefer Chassidim* warns that a “magician will come to no good”. Ramban agrees, saying that G-d created “spiritual” forces through which the natural world can be manipulated, but cautions that if one subverts the system by using this supernatural world, he is going against the will of G-d.

The rabbis in the Talmud echo the distinction, speaking against foreign magic which is not divine, but narrating stories of magical feats brought about by Torah learning and G-d. Talk of encounters with demons, reversing the flow of a river, and stopping houses from collapsing through supernatural powers occupy the narrative often. Consequently, Jews continued to be associated with magical practices by the broader world. In the Middle Ages, Christian beliefs about Jewish magic resulted in persecution. Called allies of Satan, Jews were charged with performing black magic, and it made them targets of the Inquisition. Certain Jewish customs, like washing hands upon returning from a cemetery, aroused suspicion and provoked violence, leading some to abandon certain religious practices and customs.

Some have suggested that this was the result of the Jewish propensity for science and medicine, areas often looked at with suspicion in the Medieval era. Jews were generally more effective medical practitioners

because of their wide knowledge of languages, and their scientific arts made them superior “magicians” to some. The triumphs of Jewish medicine enhanced Jews’ reputation for sorcery, and though many non-Jews were known to call on these “sorcerers” to help them, some continued to treat them with suspicion and animosity.

The mysticism of the Kabbalah complicated this reality even further. Scholars have suggested that medieval Jews considered certain magical customs to be legitimate and embraced them because they were divine. The Kabbalah of the 13th century offered mystical values of Hebrew letters and esoteric formulae for coming closer to G-d, expressed through meditation and name-recitation – easily considered incantations and spells.

Another example derived from the Kabbalah and with roots in even earlier texts is a “Jewish amulet”. The Shulchan Aruch (code of Jewish law) rules that it is permitted to heal with an amulet, and to carry one for protection. Among the best-known amulets in our tradition is the mezuzah affixed to our doorposts, and the hamsa, a palm-shaped charm with an eye embedded in it.

Like the red string you might have seen people wearing around their wrists, the latter was and continues to be used to ward off the *ayin hara* (evil eye), a superstition which claims that a person or supernatural being can harm a person by looking at them. Jews have even been said to have a penchant for exorcism. The second century Christian scholar, Origen, credits us with a talent for exorcising demonic forces, and indeed, the first allusion to exorcism appears in the Tanach in the narratives of David. The Midrash outlines various procedures for expelling demons, and the famed Dead Sea Scrolls include several incantations, mostly for the banishment of disease-causing demons. Many exorcisms were public spectacles, often performed in a shul or requiring the presence of a *minyán* (prayer quorum).

Accounts and even videos of Jewish exorcisms continue to circulate today, and people said to be possessed by malevolent spirits still seek out personalities versed in mysticism to banish them. Other traditions of magic with which Jews have been associated continue to linger, though some in more modern manifestations. Writer Ted Merwin says that it has been estimated that about 20% of American magicians are Jewish, including illusionist David Blaine. Others include Israeli mentalist Uri Geller, and even older examples like famed escapist Harry Houdini (born Erik Weisz, the son of a Hungarian rabbi), 19th-century French sleight-of-hand artist Alexander Herrmann, and the 20th-century Polish-American illusionist Max Malini (born Max Katz Breit), who performed for four different presidents at the White House.

Whether bringing plagues or escaping from boxes underwater, Jews continue to have an interesting relationship with magic. Distinguishing forbidden sorcery from esoteric religious practice has been a challenge throughout Jewish history, but ultimately, magic seems to have a place in our tradition and heritage.

ADVERTORIAL

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Most South African investors in balanced funds already have a considerable international allocation. Pension funds are allowed a maximum allocation of 30%. But you might have discretionary savings (money not in a retirement fund) to invest offshore, and don’t know how to go about it. If you read further, we hope any confusion will be replaced with clarity. It’s about knowing where to start. And with offshore investing, you start with the end in mind.

Where do you plan to spend your savings in the future?

Being able to answer this question will put you on the right track to making the right decisions when investing offshore for discretionary purposes.

If you plan to spend your savings abroad in the future

Your plans might require you to spend money in a foreign currency. You might want to travel abroad during retirement, visit your children (and grandchildren) living on different continents, pay for a child’s international education, or even live abroad yourself.

If these are your aspirations, consider investing in a foreign-domiciled international fund that only holds international assets such as Coronation Global Managed or Coronation Global Capital Plus. You can use some or all of your R1 million annual discretionary foreign allowance to invest in these funds. You can also apply to the South African Revenue Service for an additional foreign investment allowance of R10 million a year.

Given that the above funds require a minimum investment of \$15 000 (roughly R225 000 at current rates), you can choose to invest a smaller amount (starting at R500 via monthly debit order) in a rand-denominated feeder fund that still gives you all the benefits of

international exposure but allows you to build up capital in rand terms first before you eventually invest it in a foreign-domiciled fund.

If you expect the majority of your future expenses to be local

Even if you are living in South Africa and expect the majority of your future expenses to be local, you might still want your savings to benefit from offshore exposure.

Apart from gaining access to a wider investment opportunity set, there will always be a range of items in your shopping basket that are largely priced in foreign currencies, such as fuel, some foods, and healthcare. The inputs of these items are either commodities with prices set in global markets, or they are heavily reliant on imported content. Investing offshore can help protect your money against any weakness in the rand and subsequent local price increases in the future.

If your goal is to remain in South Africa but you don’t know what portion of your discretionary savings should be offshore, consider investing in a rand-denominated worldwide flexible multi-asset fund such as Coronation Optimum Growth.

This fund manages international exposure on your behalf without constraints, while still aiming to provide long-term growth for your investment in local currency terms. Alternatively, if you know what portion of your discretionary savings you want to invest offshore, you can consider a rand-denominated feeder fund that holds only international assets.

Investing offshore with Coronation

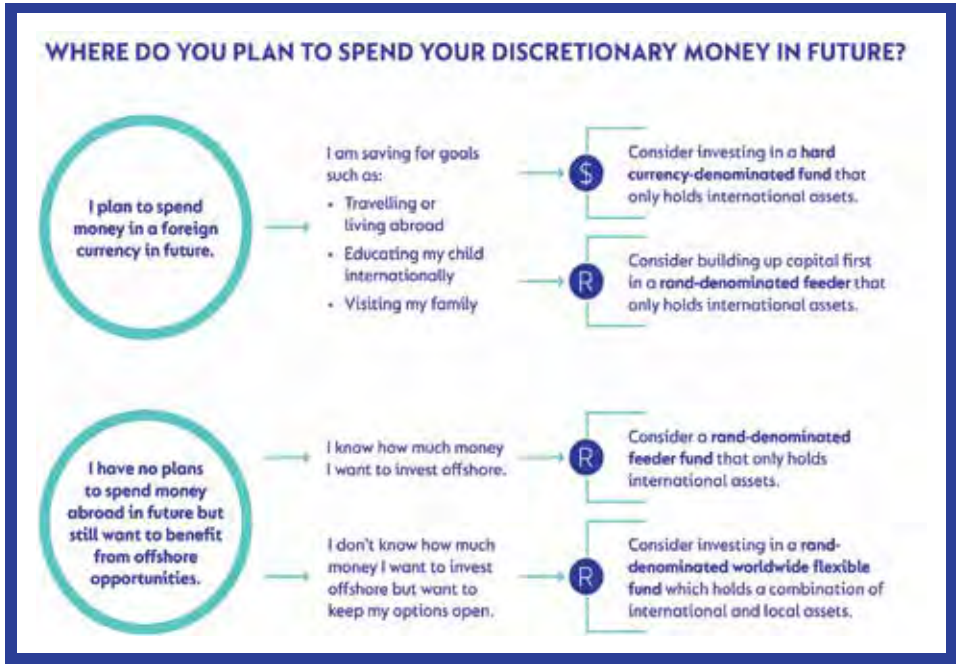
To meet these varied offshore investing needs, Coronation offers a range of international funds managed by a global team of 66 individuals with expertise across all asset classes and geographies.

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What is the hardest faith of all?

OPINION

Faith is a loaded word. When hearing or reading it, one person’s heart can swell with serenity and connection, whereas their neighbour’s heart might contract with patronisation and disdain.

Let me be clear that the above is not in reference to faith in Hashem. I’m talking about a tougher faith, perhaps, faith in the goodness and potential of our fellow human beings.

The story is told that a certain sage who survived the holocaust was asked how he could believe in G-d after seeing what he saw. He responded, “Who else do you think I should believe in? Man? Am I to put my faith and destiny into the human being who could gas millions or watch the atrocity in silence?”

Belief in our fellow human being, not as a g-d, but as someone with the capacity for redemption and kindness, seems to be a bigger leap of faith than to believe in the existence and goodness of the creator.

Allow me to quote from an incredible 2008 TED talk from Samantha Power (later to be United States ambassador to the United Nations):

“I spent the better part of a decade looking at American responses to mass atrocity and genocide. I’d like to start by sharing with you one moment that to me sums up what there is to know about American and democratic responses to mass atrocity.

“That moment came on April 21 1994, 14 years ago, almost, in the middle of the Rwandan genocide, in which 800 000 people would be systematically exterminated by the Rwandan government and some extremist militia. On April 21, the *New York Times* reported that somewhere between 200 000 and 300 000 people had already been killed

in the genocide. It was in the paper, not on the front page. It was a lot like the Holocaust coverage, it was buried in the paper. Rwanda itself was not seen as newsworthy, and amazingly, genocide itself was not seen as newsworthy.



“But on April 21, a wonderfully honest moment occurred. That was that an American congresswoman named Patricia Schroeder from Colorado met a group of journalists. One of the journalists said to her, ‘What’s up? What’s going on in the US government?’ Two hundred thousand to 300 000 people have just been exterminated in the past couple of weeks in Rwanda. It’s two weeks into the genocide at that time, but of course, at that time you don’t know how long it’s going to last. And the journalist said, ‘Why is there so little response out of Washington? Why no hearings, no denunciations, no people getting arrested in front of the Rwandan embassy or in front of the White House? What’s the deal?’

“And she said – she was so honest – she

said, ‘It’s a great question. All I can tell you is that in my congressional office in Colorado and my office in Washington, we’re getting hundreds and hundreds of calls about the endangered ape and gorilla population in Rwanda, but nobody is calling about the

people. The phones just aren’t ringing about the people.”

I remember hearing that talk a few years ago, and it has haunted me ever since. I felt a similar heart-drop when reading online a major headline about ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) destroying ancient artefacts in Iraq and Syria, and yet on the same day, dozens of murders took place and they were relegated to the bottom of the page in small type. Artefact destruction is, indeed, terrible, but when it seems to overshadow the heinousness of murder of human life, I believe that we have lost a fundamental value.

On Rosh Hashanah, we commemorate the creation of Adam and Eve. What’s interesting is that we don’t commemorate the new year on the first day of creation when the Torah tells us that the world was born into existence, but rather we memorialise the sixth day, the final day of creation when the first human beings were born.

Until the creation of Adam and Eve – human beings with free choice – G-d was a king without a people, a father without a

child, and a lover without a beloved. This is the day that life truly began on earth.

Yes, it’s a Torah value to respect mother earth, to respect the animal kingdom. And yes, we have often failed at this task and we must do better. But when we hear warped ideas about the human being as the destroyer of this world, and the fact that the world would be better off without us, it’s a false and dangerous narrative.

False, because G-d has placed us here for a reason, and as a collective, we have done – and continue to do – much more good than evil.

Dangerous, because when we lose faith in humanity, human life becomes cheaper than gorillas and ancient buildings.

Each of us is created in the image of the creator, and is full of overwhelming goodness and beauty. Our job is to reveal and activate the goodness instead of highlighting and magnifying the foibles and weaknesses. We can and ought to look at each other with a good eye and an open heart.

In the South African climate, we are blessed to live in a culture of kindness and forgiveness, surrounded by some of the sweetest and happiest people on earth. Yet, often we find that the conversation and sentiment is driven by the actions of a minority of individuals, which then paints our perception of reality in faded and doomed colours.

To believe in the inherent goodness of each other is not a fool’s naivete. It is an act of braveness in the face of cynicism. Yes, we must be careful and cautious, and keep up our guard, but in no way should that warp our perception of our fellow seven billion people all created in the image of their creator.

Wishing you and yours a good and sweet year.



RABBI LEVI AVTZON

• *Rabbi Levi Avtzon is the newly appointed rabbi at Linksfield Shul, a presenter on ChaiFM, and a writer on the Judaism website Chabad.org*

What would we do without the days of reckoning?

OPINION

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN



Rosh Hashanah is more than just a holiday. It’s Judgement Day. That’s why the traditional greeting at this time is not “happy holiday”, “*good yom tov*” or “*chag sameach*”, but rather, “*shana tovah*” or “*ah gut yohr*”. The heavenly court will decide our destiny and determine our fate for the new year, so we wish each other that these days of reckoning go well, and that we each be blessed with only good things for the new year.

I’ve often wondered what we would do without Rosh Hashanah. For Jews, this is the season of *cheshbon hanefesh* – spiritual stocktaking and making our most personal inventories. We reflect on the year gone by, our successes and shortcomings in our relationships with G-d and our fellow men and women. We try to pinpoint our failings so that we might correct them for an improved New Year to come. We make amends with those we might have been hurtful to in the year gone by.

What if we didn’t have Rosh Hashanah? Would we ever emerge from the rut we work ourselves into over a long, hard year? In all probability, we would just continue along the same tedious treadmill of life until something drastic jolted us out of our dreams. Would we ever stop to consider whether this is the way we really want to live? Would we ever pause to become pensive enough to rethink life’s game plan?

More than likely, we might just keep running the rat race and, as some wise man once observed, “In the rat race, even if you win you are still a rat!”

Unless we are on the absolute fringes of Jewish life, Rosh Hashanah is a time when we are virtually compelled to sit up and take notice, to put the brakes on the mediocre merry-go-round, and shout, “Stop the world, I want to get off!” These days of awe compel us to think about life, about ourselves, our families, and our way of life. And, if necessary, do a re-think. It gives us the chance for at least an annual “compass reading” to establish our sense of direction, so that if necessary, we can alter course and re-route ourselves. How does the lady inside our GPS put it? “Recalculating..”

In our chaotic, often mad world, we ought to thank G-d for this wonderful annual opportunity. Honestly and truly, what would we do without Rosh Hashanah?

Rochel and the children join me in wishing the community – and indeed the world – *shana tovah*! May we all be inscribed in the Book of Life for a happy, healthy, peaceful, prosperous, safe, secure, and spiritually rewarding New Year.

• *Rabbi Yossy Goldman is senior rabbi at the Sydenham Highlands North Hebrew Congregation, and president of the South African Rabbinical Association.*

Wishing all our Jewish customers a sweet New Year and well over the Fast.

We shouldn't need to proclaim #ImStaying

OPINION

HOWARD FELDMAN



On 7 September 2019, a new Facebook group sprang into existence. At the time of writing, #ImStaying had 118 000 members, and was growing every hour.

“This group is dedicated to the South African women and men of all races and religions who remain loyal to South Africa,” according to its Facebook page. “This group is to honour all those who still believe that we as a nation can turn things around. To all those who choose to stay and work together to save this beautiful country we call home! This group belongs to all willing to make a positive difference! #ImStaying is our hashtag.”

It’s a positive, happy, courageous environment where people share stories and the reasons they have decided to continue to make South Africa their home.

I love the group. I love the enthusiasm, the heart-warming stories, and spirit of ubuntu that speaks to our emotions, and the fact that we get to make choices.

But I hate the fact that it needs to exist.

South Africans have long found themselves justifying why they have decided to remain in the country. Intentionally or unintentionally, emigrants who have settled all around the world unsettle us. We think back to only a few generations in our past, of Jews who remained in Europe when the signs seemed so obvious.

“The fact that more than 118 000 people have joined since 7 September speaks to the desperate collective need for positivity.”

In the late 1800s in fact, when millions of European Jews left their homes for the “golden medina” of America, many rabbis were horrified. They often spoke from the pulpit, and lamented the fact that a large number of those who had left had given up their religious observance and embraced the new secular culture. This theme continued to the extent that when the “unsinkable” Titanic did just that, it was compared to the Tower of Babel that had challenged G-d; the idea being that if G-d chose to sink the ship, then it would. From some pulpits in Eastern Europe, the Titanic was used to “prove” that leaving Europe wasn’t as good an idea as everyone said it was. It became a symbol of materialism, arrogance, and of course G-dlessness.

The sad thing about this approach is that history proved the folly of those who advocated that Jews remain. Many would ultimately succumb to either the Nazis or the Russians.

With this background of justifiable anxiety, it’s little wonder that South Africans are easily rattled. Add the nuance that immigration isn’t easy, and that many who have moved to other parts of the world miss South Africa terribly, and another complexity arises. Unhappiness or struggle in a new country might mean that there can be a tendency to undermine the “old” country as a way of reaffirming the choice to leave. This is by no means the approach of all who have left, but it takes only a few comments to make us nervous, and make us wonder if what we are doing by staying in the country is smart. Or dangerously stupid.

Add economic uncertainty, fear about crime, and the scary language of NHI (the National Health Insurance), and it’s a wonder that more of us aren’t permanently and chronically medicated.

What’s interesting to note that whereas the Jewish community might have its own reasons and history to view life with scepticism, the #ImStaying group has a very broad appeal. It’s not demographically weighted, and the stories shared are not particular to any one

racial experience. It’s all about individual nuance that makes South Africa a continued choice for many.

The fact that more than 118 000 people have joined since 7 September speaks to the desperate collective need for positivity. My own experience bears this out. Daily, I’m asked to either present talks or assist companies to shift towards a more optimistic outlook. No one succeeds in a negative and depressing state, which is why this type of group has emerged.


South Africa is the home of choice to many. Whereas #ImStaying is a wonderful initiative, it’s important to note that no one needs to justify why they have chosen to do so. Just as anyone who seeks another home shouldn’t have to explain their decision, South Africans need to be confident about the decisions that they have made. It’s also worth noting that #ImStaying today doesn’t mean a commitment to tomorrow.



The magnificence of being human is that we are all different, and that none of our situations and personal circumstances are the same. In essence, that means that no one gets to tell us where to live. And no one gets to demand an explanation as to why.

As we head to Rosh Hashanah, my wish for us all is that we have the courage to live the life we choose, that we are confident enough not to have to justify our decisions, and that when next year comes around, we will have the peace of mind of knowing that we did the right thing.

Shanah tovah!



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Celebrating high holy days at risk of life and limb

TALI FEINBERG

Even during times of persecution, oppression, expulsion, and hardship, Jews found ways to celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – often at great risk.

After the Spanish Inquisition, when it was illegal for Jews to practice their religion, some would still continue to do so in secret. “Each Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the secret Jews of Barcelona and elsewhere would gather to pray. On Rosh Hashanah, they would eat a furtive festive meal together. On Yom Kippur, they would go about their business in public, never letting on that they were fasting. But blowing a shofar out loud, let alone for the 100 blasts prescribed for each day of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, was impossible. Doing so would lead to immediate arrest, torture, and death,” writes Dr Yvette Miller for Aish.com.

Five years after the Inquisition, a prominent Barcelona Jew and conductor of the prestigious royal orchestra in that city, Don Fernando Aguilar, said that on Sunday, 5 September 1497, he would personally lead the Royal Orchestra of Barcelona in a brand-new concert of his own composition. Every instrument ever invented around the world, no matter how far away, would be represented.

“There were bells and horns, stringed instruments, and an array of different drums. Then, in the middle of the concert, a musician with the orchestra who was rumoured by many to be a secret Jew took the stage. He was holding an unusual instrument: a ram’s horn.

The musician put it to his lips, and began to blow. *Tekiah, shevarim, teruah*. Each note of the Rosh Hashanah shofar service rang out throughout the hall, one hundred notes in all. Most of the audience appreciated it as a virtuoso performance of an unfamiliar instrument. But to the secret Jews in the audience, Don Aguilar’s ‘music’ gave them their first chance in years to fulfil the *mitzvah* [good deed] of hearing the shofar.”

There are many testimonies of Jews marking the high holy days during the Holocaust. According to Yad Vashem, in one such story, Rabbi Naftali Stern, a Hungarian Jewish inmate of the Wolfsberg forced-labour camp, finished writing out

the Rosh Hashanah service on 15 September 1944. He wrote it from memory, writing with a pencil stub on scraps torn from bags of cement he had purchased with bread rations.

Stern had been a cantor in the city of Szatmar, and wanted to lead a service in the camp, which he did. After the war, he recalled, “We prayed on Rosh Hashanah and the service was lovely, the service was good – to the extent that one can say that. But on Yom Kippur, we were unable to pray. The Germans evidently were ready for it. On Rosh Hashanah, they tolerated it, and I received a larger portion of soup in the afternoon, which was worth something, and I prayed. The entire service lasted less time than today.”

After liberation, the rabbi kept the handwritten pages in his home, stored inside the family *machzor*. Every year he would spread out the pages and pray from them. After 43 years, the pages began to crumble, and Stern decided to give them to Yad Vashem for safekeeping and preservation.

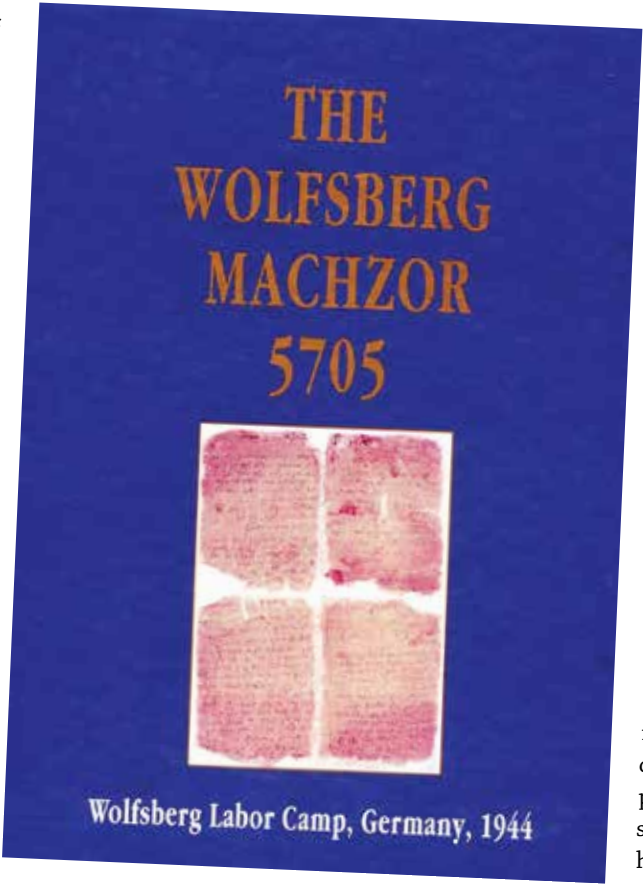
Rabbi Stern passed away in 1989, and in 2002, Yad Vashem published *The Wolfsberg Machzor*. It’s not a prayer book, but is made up of five articles about faith and prayer in the Holocaust, and includes five pages showing a scanned copy of Stern’s handwritten *machzor*.

Many Holocaust memoirs and testimony record how Jews living under Nazi rule took extraordinary risks to mark Yom Kippur in some way. Yaffa Eliach’s book, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, recounts the horrors endured by a Hungarian Jewish slave-labour battalion in 1944.

The prisoners were routinely beaten, starved, and used as human mine detectors. On *erev* (the night before) Yom Kippur, they were warned that anyone who fasted “will be executed by a firing squad”.

On Yom Kippur, it rained heavily, and the area was covered in deep mud. When the Germans distributed their meagre food rations, the Jewish prisoners pretended to consume them but instead “spilled the coffee into the running muddy gullies and tucked the stale bread into their soaked jackets”. Those who had memorised

portions of the Yom Kippur prayer service recited them by heart until finally, as night fell, their work ended and they prepared to break the fast.



They were then confronted by the German commander, who told them he was aware that they had fasted, and instead of simply executing them, they would have to climb a nearby mountain and slide down it on their stomachs. “Tired, soaked, starved, and emaciated,” the Jews did as they were told, 10 times “climbing and sliding down an unknown Polish mountain which on that soggy Yom Kippur night became a symbol of Jewish courage and human dignity”.

Eventually, the Germans tired of this sport, and the defiant Jewish prisoners were permitted to break their fast and live – at least for another day.

The stories of Rosh Hashanah during the Holocaust are not only of hardship but also of miracles. As the final minutes of Rosh Hashanah ticked away, 13-year-old Leo Goldberger was hiding, along with his parents and three brothers in the thick brush along the shore of Dragor, a small

fishing village south of Copenhagen. The year was 1943, and the Goldbergers, like thousands of other Danish Jews, were desperately trying to escape an imminent Nazi round-up.

“Finally, after what seemed like an excruciatingly long wait, we saw our signal offshore,” Goldberger later recalled. His family “strode straight into the ocean, and waded through three or four feet of icy water until we were hauled aboard a fishing boat” and covered themselves “with smelly canvases”. Shivering and frightened, but grateful, the Goldberger family soon found itself in the safety and freedom of neighbouring Sweden,” writes Rafael Medoff for JNS.org.

Lily Rotman writes in *Time* magazine that it all started when Copenhagen’s Jews gathered to mark Rosh Hashanah on the same date as it will be celebrated this year – 29 September. The chief rabbi, Marcus Melchior cancelled the religious services. He had been tipped off by a diplomat that a Nazi round-up was planned to take place during the holiday when the Jewish population would be at home or at their synagogues. He urged the people to hide or flee,” she writes.

Numerous Danish Christian families hid Jews from Holocaust persecution in their homes or farms, and then smuggled them to the seashore late at night. From there, fishermen took them across the Kattegat Straits to neighbouring Sweden. More than 7 000 Danish Jews reached Sweden, and were sheltered there until the end of the war. “This was one of World War II’s most notable moments of heroism,” she writes.

Six tips on eating before Yom Kippur

<<Continued from page 34

2. Eat foods that have fibre and water
Foods with lots of fibre will keep you fuller longer, and foods with water (like fruit and vegetables) will keep you hydrated. Chickpeas or lentils are a great vegetarian protein source to eat, especially a dish like Mujaderra. A hearty chicken soup with noodles or rice and lots of veggies is another safe bet.

3. Avoid salt
Salty foods like olives, pickles, chips, canned soup, or dishes made with those bouillon cubes will bloat you and make you even more thirsty. So stick to something a little blander for that pre-fast meal.

4. Avoid sugar
Too much dessert before fasting may cause your blood sugar to spike and then come crashing down, which can be unpleasant at its best and cause a headache or moodiness at its worst. Too much sugar also makes you thirsty, like salt, and have you craving more sweets during your fast.

5. Drink water
This is pretty obvious, but make sure to drink plenty of water, not only at the meal right before the fast begins, but on the days preceding it as well.

6. Avoid eating too much
Eat a moderate-sized meal that leaves you satisfied but not unbuttoning your pants. You will feel uncomfortable, and it will be more difficult to digest a monstrous-sized meal.

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JESSICA HALFIN

Rosh Hashanah menus, while traditional and delicious, can also get a little stale year after year. With Israeli food trending across the globe, now is a perfect time to add some authentic Israeli flavours to your holiday.

We have gathered three exclusive recipes from some of Israel’s top chefs.

Apple streusel honey cake

Chefs Rossella Jona and Amir Porat, Biscotti Bakery
What started out as a very small Tel Aviv business 15 years ago is now a booming catering business with a staff of 200 workers and future plans to become an Israeli café chain. Now located in Bnei Brak, just east of the big city, they are committed to using high-quality ingredients to make their mark on the Israeli pastry shop scene. To replicate their famous apple streusel-topped honey cake at home this holiday, just follow this recipe, which we took straight from the head chefs.



Ingredients
For the cake

- 4 large eggs
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup plus 1 1/2 tablespoons honey
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup strong fruit tea, brewed and cooled
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 green apple, peeled and sliced for garnishing the unbaked cake

For the streusel topping

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup cold butter, cut into cubes
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- Pinch cinnamon
- Pinch salt

Directions

1. To make the topping: In a food processor, blend all the ingredients in short pulses until you get a coarse crumb.
2. Transfer the crumbs to a sealed container and chill until ready to use.
3. To make the cake: Preheat oven to 350F (176C).
4. Whip eggs with the sugar until the mixture becomes thick and triples in size.
5. Add the oil and mix to combine, then add the honey and do the same.
6. In a medium bowl, combine the spices, flour, baking powder, and baking soda. Add to the egg mixture, and add the cooled tea. You can also add fresh peeled and chopped apples or pears, or cherries to the batter at this stage if you wish.
7. Pour into two loaf pans, and top with a light layer of streusel and 12-13 apple slices in a vertical line down the centre. Bake for about 40 minutes.
8. Cake is done when a toothpick comes out dry with a few moist crumbs attached.

Apple and honey whiskey cocktail

Milk & Honey Whiskey Distillery, Tel Aviv
Israeli whiskey is making its name on the international scene, and Rosh Hashanah is the perfect occasion to treat yourself to a bottle of the first official batches of the stuff. With at least five Israeli whiskey distilleries having popped up in the past few years, the race is on to see which one can produce the best barrels the fastest. The warm climate in Israel actually speeds up the distilling process.

Milk & Honey’s whiskey has a smooth taste, which happens to be perfect for blending into a sweet apple and honey cocktail.

Ingredients

- 1/4 Granny Smith apple, diced
- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons honey syrup

Three trendy Rosh Hashanah recipes from Israel’s top chefs



- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1 tablespoon Calvados (apple brandy)
- 3 tablespoons Milk & Honey whiskey or other “new make” whiskey

Directions

1. Make honey syrup: mix 3 parts honey with 1 part hot water and stir thoroughly until liquid unifies. For example: 10 ounces (283g) honey and a little more than 3 ounces (85g) of hot water. Bottle and keep refrigerated.
2. In a cocktail shaker, muddle the apple with honey syrup.
3. Add the rest of the ingredients, fill with ice and shake vigorously.
4. Strain into a cocktail glass and garnish with an apple slice.

Cream puffs with candied pecan and date honey custard

Pastry Chefs Itzik and Keren Kadosh from Kadosh Café in Jerusalem
Kadosh Bakery and Café in Jerusalem is practically a city landmark. The establishment got its start back to 1967, and has been in the Kadosh family ever since. Now run by a husband-and-wife pastry chef team, Itzik and Keren Kadosh, the place preserves the European café culture of the family’s Hungarian

roots while modernising the menu to include Israeli treats, sourdough breads, French pastries and fresh pasta, all handmade.

This is an exclusive recipe we got from the legendary chefs for Paris-Brest, a doughnut-shaped cream puff filled with a candied pecan and date honey pastry cream.

Ingredients

- For the choux pastry:
- 1/2 cup full-fat milk
- 1/2 cup water
- 8 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sifted all-purpose flour
- 4 large eggs

For the garnish

- 2 tablespoons sliced almonds
- 1 teaspoon egg white
- 1/2 teaspoon powdered sugar

Apple and honey whiskey cocktail

For the pecan and date honey custard filling

- 1/4 cup corn starch
- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon full-fat milk
- 3 egg yolks
- Scant 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 vanilla bean (or 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract)
- Scant 1 cup chopped honey roasted, or candied pecans
- 1/4 cup date honey
- 1/2 cup whipped heavy cream (from 1/4 cup heavy cream)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350F (176C).
2. To make the choux pastry: in a pan, bring the milk, water, sugar, salt, and butter to a boil. Immediately take the pan off the heat and add the full flour amount all at once.
3. Mix with a wooden spoon and put the pan back on a medium low flame. Cook until the mixture starts to dry out and the dough pulls away from the sides of the pan to form a ball around your spoon. Take the mixture off the heat and let the mixture cool slightly.
4. In a mixer on low speed (or in a medium bowl by hand), add the eggs one at a time, beating until each egg is thoroughly combined before adding the next egg. (The mixture will curdle initially, but then come back together as you beat it.)
5. Prep a baking sheet by lining with baking paper and tacking the paper down with a small dot of the choux pastry mixture on the underside of each corner.
6. Fill a large pastry bag with the



- mixture. Using a 6-inch round cookie cutter to guide you, pipe a fat 7-inch circle. The circle should be a bit raised and not completely flat.
7. Mix the almonds, egg white, and powdered sugar, and spread it on top of the piped circles. Bake for 40 minutes, until deep golden brown, take out of the oven and set aside to let cool.
 8. To make the pecan and date honey custard: dissolve corn starch in 1/4 cup cold milk. Add the egg yolks and sugar, and lightly beat into a fully combined mixture.
 9. Pour the rest of the milk (3/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon) into a saucepan. Add the vanilla bean and bring to a boil. Remove the vanilla bean from the pot with a slotted spoon, split, and with the help of a spoon scrape the seeds into the saucepan. Return the vanilla pod to the pot, and lower the heat.
 10. Add a third of the hot milk to the egg-yolk mixture and beat well. Pour the tempered egg yolk mixture back into the hot milk mixture and cook over a low flame, stirring constantly for about two minutes, or until the mixture thickens and can coat the back of a spoon.
 11. Remove the empty vanilla pod, add chopped pecans and date honey, and mix to combine.
 12. Pour the mixture into a bowl, and cover with a piece of plastic wrap directly covering the surface of the custard. Let cool to room temperature, then transfer to the fridge to chill for two hours.
 13. After chilling, whisk the custard for about half a minute to get a smooth mixture without clumps. Whip cream, and fold into the custard mixture and transfer to a piping bag fitted with a large round piping tip.
 14. To assemble: cut the cooled choux pastries in half lengthwise, pipe a fat layer of custard and seal with the other half like a sandwich. Sift powdered sugar over the top as a garnish.

• *Jessica Halfin is an American-Israeli baker, gourmet cook, food, and culture writer, and all-around foodie. She is the owner and operator of Haifa Street Food Tours, a company that leads custom foodie adventures in Haifa, Israel, where she lives with her husband and three sons.*

Nine things you didn't know about Rosh Hashanah

MY JEWISH LEARNING

Impress your friends and family with these little-known facts about the Jewish new year.

It's known for apples dipped in honey, record synagogue attendance, and as the kick-off to the Days of Awe, which culminate in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. We're guessing that even the most experienced holiday observer, however, won't know all of these facts about the holiday:

It's traditional to eat a fruit you haven't eaten for a long time on the second night of Rosh Hashanah.

This tasty custom is often observed by eating a pomegranate, a fruit rich in symbolism (and nutrients). It developed as a technical solution to a legal difficulty surrounding the recitation of *shehechyanu* (blessing of thanks) on the second day of the holiday. Use it as an excuse to scout out the "exotic fruit" section of your grocery store's produce department.

Apples and honey (and pomegranates) aren't the only symbolic foods traditionally enjoyed on Rosh Hashanah.

Other foods traditionally eaten to symbolise wishes for prosperity and health in the new year include dates, string beans, beets, pumpkins, leeks – even fish heads. Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews often hold Rosh Hashanah seders in which a blessing is said for each food and they are eaten in a set order. If you want to try this but are a vegetarian or just grossed out by fish heads,

consider using gummy fish or fish-shaped crackers instead

The Rosh Hashanah liturgy has inspired at least two rock songs.

Avinu Malkeinu, the prayer that means "Our father, our king" inspired Mogwai, a Scottish post-rock-trio, to write a 20-minute epic song *My Father, My King*. The song, which borrows the prayer's traditional melody, is alternately soft and beautiful and loud and raging. More famously, Leonard Cohen's *Who By Fire* draws on the *Unetanah Tokef*, which many consider the most important prayer in the high holiday liturgy.

Tens of thousands of Hasidic Jews make a pilgrimage to Ukraine for an annual Rosh Hashanah gathering known as a "kibbutz".

This lively gathering, which dates back to the early 19th century (and has nothing to do with the Israeli kibbutz movement), takes place in Uman, the town where Nachman of Breslov, the founder of the Breslover Hasidic sect and great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, was buried. Nachman believed Rosh Hashanah was the most important holiday, hence the timing of the pilgrimage.

It's traditional to fast on the day after Rosh Hashanah.

The Fast of Gedaliah is not a cleanse for those who overindulged at holiday meals, but a day set aside to commemorate the assassination of Gedaliah, the Babylonian-appointed official charged with administering the Jewish population remaining in Judea following the



destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE. Unlike Yom Kippur, which comes just a few days later, this fast lasts only from sunrise to sundown.

Rosh Hashanah is one of four Jewish new years.

It might be the best known of them all, but Rosh Hashanah isn't the only Jewish new year. According to the Mishnah, there are three others. The first of Nisan, the month when Passover falls, is the beginning of the year, according to the Book of Exodus. Jewish tradition also marks Tu Bishvat (the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat) as the new year for trees and the first of Elul (usually in August) as the new year for the tithing of animals.

American Jews used to exchange telegrams for Rosh Hashanah. A lot of them.

In 1927, the Western Union Telegraph Company reported that Jewish people

sent telegrams of congratulations and well-wishing much more frequently than members of any other group. In particular, they exchanged thousands of messages for Rosh Hashanah. "So great has the volume of this traffic become, Western Union has instituted a special service similar to those for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter," JTA wrote. "This special service, started in 1925, showed a 30% increase in 1926."

Rosh Hashanah wasn't always the Jewish new year.

In the Torah, the beginning of the year was clearly set at the beginning of the month of Nisan. However, sometime between the giving of the Torah and the codification of the Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah became the primary new year. The reasons are unclear, although some scholars theorise it was because neighbouring people in the ancient Near East celebrated their new years at this time.

The shofar, the traditional ram's horn blown on Rosh Hashanah, is stinky.

You have to get close to one to notice, but a common complaint is that these horns smell bad. According to online vendor The Shofar Man, all kosher shofars have a bit of a scent because they come from a dead animal. To mitigate the odour, he suggests applying a sealant to the inside of the shofar. Believe it or not, several competing products are marketed exclusively for the purpose of removing or neutralising shofar smells. We can't vouch for any of them, but perhaps if they don't work for your shofar, you could use them for your bathroom or car.





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Judge and jury – when it’s okay to speak your mind

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

While Rosh Hashanah reminds us that G-d is the “true judge”, there’s no denying the fact that as human beings, we often judge one another. How do we maintain strength and self-belief when someone else is judging us or our choices?

“So much of this comes down to self-confidence and self-esteem,” says clinical psychologist Lana Levin. “It’s about knowing yourself well enough that you trust your judgement to be right for you. They may not be right for others, but that doesn’t make them wrong for you.”

Matthew Gordon is one of those who have had to stand their ground against social opinion. He says trusting his judgement has helped him to deal with those who judge him for his sexual orientation. “I’m at a point where I don’t need someone else’s validation. I’ve always believed strongly that my relationship with G-d is between me and G-d, and what I do is between me and G-d. If I’m affecting you in any way, you can judge me. Otherwise if someone judges me it’s on them, not on me. It’s about their insecurities and interpretations. I often have to remind myself of that.”

Gordon came to this realisation via a difficult personal experience. “I volunteered for a Jewish organisation,” he says. “I was religious at the time, which was required, but I was also openly gay. At a show with fellow volunteers, girls were saying that the comedian who performed was good looking and I said; “Yes he is.” I got this weird look from them. Soon afterwards, I was called in and told I couldn’t be a member of the organisation because of that.”

Such attitudes have pushed him away from

a religious lifestyle. “Going to a shul and being openly gay, I also feel very judged,” he says. “It might just be my perception, but I feel people look at me differently, so I try and avoid shuls.”

Also facing religious backlash, Jenna* has stuck to her choices. Working for an Orthodox organisation, she wasn’t altogether surprised when colleagues’ eyes widened when she became engaged to a non-Jew. “They asked if he’d convert for me,” she recalls. “When I said no, their eyes went even bigger, and then they kept quiet and walked off.”

On another occasion, Jenna was setting up for a meeting, and heard attendees discussing intermarriage in spite of the fact that she was there. “One man was talking about how disgusting it was that someone he knows married a non-Jew. Everyone agreed, and practically gasped at how ‘one of their own’ could even think of doing something so disgusting. I kept quiet. I just didn’t invite any of them to my wedding.”

When Jenna later chose not to bris her son, many actively tried to change her mind. “One staff member offered me R40 000 to give him a bris, while an acquaintance got a doctor who

performs brisses to phone me, and tell me about the benefits. He was very nice, and offered to bris my son for free.” Yet Jenna wasn’t swayed.

“It doesn’t upset me because I know they’ve been brought up to think one way, and to them, it’s right,” she says. “I think they’re close-minded. Not everyone in the community is like that though. Many people just see me as a person with a different mindset to them. They know that if they don’t judge me, I won’t judge them. With everything I’ve done that’s ‘not right’ according to the community, I couldn’t be in a happier place. I’m more in love than ever before, and thank G-d, my son is thriving.”

Talia* bemoans the way mothers judge one another, especially on social-media groups. She recently wrote a post on one such group calling people out when a mom was judged for what she fed her child. “Being a mom – especially these days when everything is an issue – is hard,” she says. “In a mommy group, we’re all in the same boat, yet you are judged. We feel so guilty all the time anyway. Give others room to be flawed and human, not everyone has the same priorities. I strongly believe that as moms, we need to support one another. Instead of insulting or judging any parent, just say you’re doing a great job, do the best you can.

“The pressure on women is greater because we’re working, and we’re supposed to be the primary caregiver,” says Talia. “I’m the main breadwinner, and my husband is around for the kids, but invariably their teachers still contact me because I’m the mother. They’re taken aback when I tell them to contact him. He also gets judged for ‘not supporting his family’.”

Rabbi Ari Kievman of Chabad’s Sandton

Central Shul addresses Judaism’s take on judgement. “On the one hand, we naturally judge each other, it’s just the way human beings are,” he says. “On the other, the Mishnah [oral Torah] teaches us that one shouldn’t be judgemental of others. Yet, Pirkei Avot has the words *kol ha’adam* – it says judge the entire person favourably. So, the Mishnah says don’t judge others, and the other says judge the whole person.”

Kievman explains how to reconcile the two. “We don’t always know a person’s situation. If you’re judging someone, you better have a good understanding, otherwise don’t judge them. There’s often more to the picture.” In the case of judging people’s religious choices, Kievman says, while the thinking is “if you see something, say something”, you still need to know the full story.

“In the Torah, where it says you should rebuke someone, it says you should rebuke your friend,” he says. “Consider how a friend would tell another friend that they’re doing something wrong. If they’re not your friend and you don’t know them well, if you’re not going to wield any influence, there’s no point in saying anything.

“Only speak if you know that you can make a difference to that person’s life. The Rebbe would say that words that come from the heart will penetrate. It’s not about judging the other, it’s about being concerned about them in a genuine way. If I’m just being judgemental, then I don’t care for the other person. That doesn’t help. If you really care about someone, you’re going to make a difference in their life, and you’ll work with them through whatever their challenge might be.”

If someone makes a judgement about you, instead of automatically dismissing it, evaluate its validity, suggests Levin. Consider three things: “The source of the feedback; how many people are giving you the same or similar feedback; and the impact that your behaviour is having on your life.”

If you know their judgement is invalid, consider your response before acting, she says. “The cost-benefit ratio needs to be assessed in terms of what you’ll get out of a confrontation.”

**Names have been changed*

By chilling out on Rosh Hashanah, I made Judaism truly meaningful

JULIE MATLIN – JTA

Picking through gefilte fish in the kosher department searching for the freshest packages, I think of my grandma Fanny. She made her gefilte fish from scratch, lovingly combining the cod, whitefish, pike and whatever other secret ingredients she threw in that made it so good.

When my grandmother hosted Rosh Hashanah, it was an affair. There could be upward of 25 people around the table, which would be set with the finest china and freshest flowers. The food was first-class, and the conversation lively. What I don’t remember was much religious content.

Now that my husband and I have taken on the responsibilities of hosting, the table has become even smaller, maxing out at 11 if all my in-laws are in town. I don’t have fine china or exquisite silver flatware. I don’t have crystal glasses or homemade gefilte fish. Frankly, I don’t have the money to “do Jewish” the way my grandparents did.

But even though our table has gotten smaller and my place settings would have my grandmother rolling in her grave, the whole holiday has become much more meaningful to me.

While many Jewish communal leaders warn

about how younger generations are drifting away from traditional Judaism, I believe they have missed the mark. Even though I “do Jewish” very differently to my grandparents, the older I get, the clearer Judaism’s contributions to my life have become.

Stripping away the excess of the high holidays has made me see what’s important. Yes, the meal is a celebration, but it’s also a solemn entry into the 10 days of introspection and repentance before Yom Kippur.

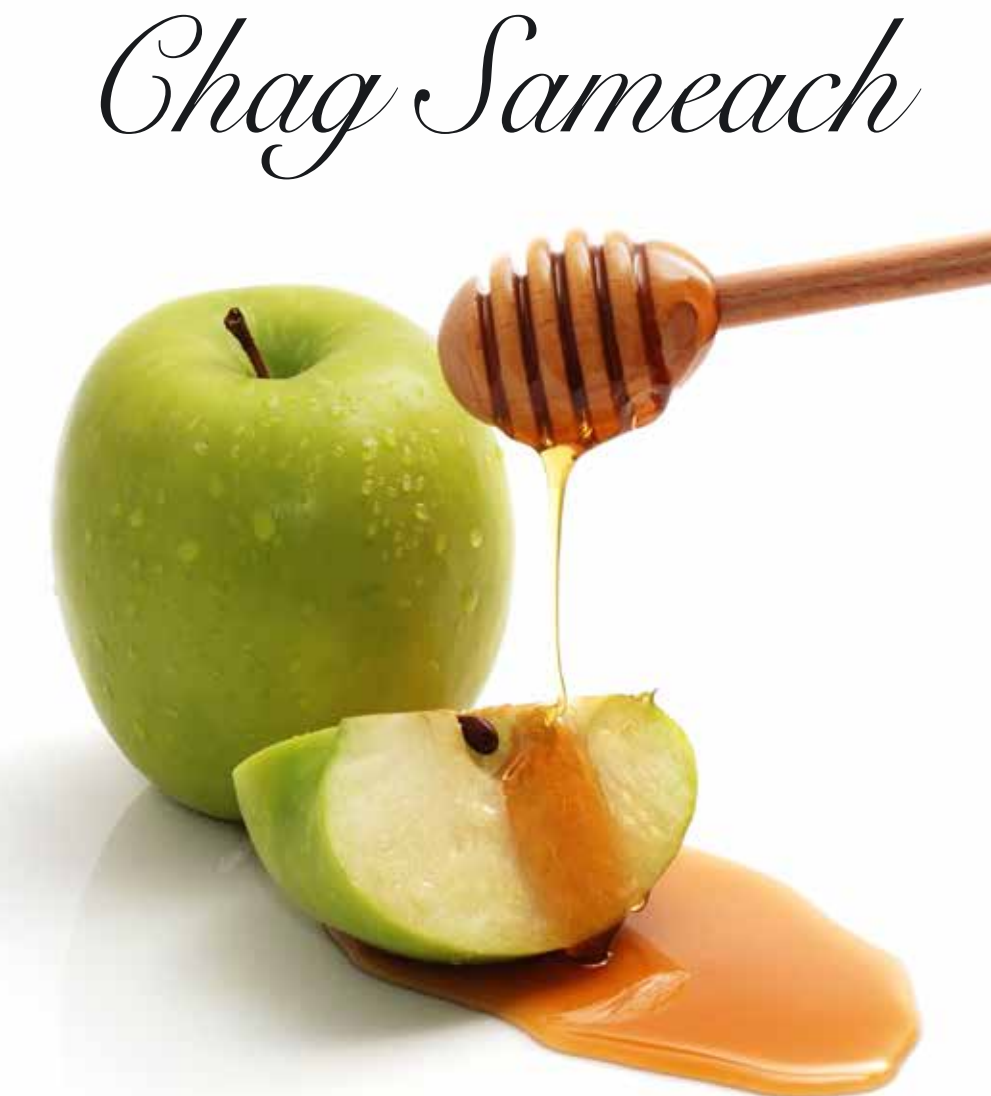
The 2013 Pew Portrait of Jewish Americans suggests that Jewish identity is changing, and that 22% of Jews claim to have no religion. Far from being distressing, these numbers make sense to me. Young people just don’t define Judaism and religion in the same way as earlier generations.

To get a more accurate picture of American Judaism, we must adjust the parameters to match today’s realities. The options aren’t just Orthodox, conservative, reform or “nothing” anymore.

My family doesn’t meet the definitions of Orthodox or conservative, or even reconstructionist. There’s no box for us. This Rosh Hashanah, instead of worrying about fitting into a traditional mould, I’m going to focus more on defining my own Jewish identity and what informs it.

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When asking for advice on this topic on the Facebook group Joburg

However, if you are kosher, having your guests make a contribution can be a problem “but visitors who can do so should be asked to contribute a dish to your meal. Those who can’t bring homemade food can be asked to bring a bought item, usually

“A Yom Tov meal for ten people with three full courses, drinks, challah, and *simanim* costs about R2 000 to R3 000 a night. If you do big lunches, it can work out about the same. I use coupon apps and loyalty points to reduce costs. I look for things on special, and if need



be, buy in advance, cook, and freeze,” she says.

Also on Joburg Jewish Mommies, women advise that you write a menu and shopping list – and stick to it. “You will find with the correct planning, you will save time, money, and petrol, and even find some extra for a Yom Tov gift for yourself.” Others said to stick to what’s affordable. Keep the menu simple. There is no need for a gift for the hostess. “Our Rosh Hashanah meal is similar to a Shabbat meal, but with the added *simanim*,” said a Facebook user.

“Put effort into preparing appropriate food for thought to share at your Yom Tov table besides the delectable dishes. That can really change your guests’ lives.”

Being a parent of a child with ADD can be so much more demanding than I ever realised. And while I truly believe being a parent is my most

With the high holidays upon us, I take solace in the fact that Judaism places a much higher value on what people do and how we act – and not what we think. I also know that so many parents lose patience or have selfish thoughts. That doesn't mean we don't love our children or that we're

This is my assignment for the Jewish new year. I know it's a tough one. As I confront the liturgy and life's frailty and impermanence, I'll try to focus the mind and spirit on how lucky I am. I'm sure I'll falter – I'm only human. I'm just a dad, trying to do the best he can. Here's hoping my best gets better.

- *Bryan Schwartzman is an award-winning writer living in Ambler, Pennsylvania. He and his partner, Amy, are the parents of two daughters.*

On some level, one dad says, he has failed to empathise with his own child



Photo: Fat Camera/Getty

ineffective parents.

At the same time, however, everything from the Rosh Hashanah liturgy to modern psychology reinforces the notion that what and how we think influences how we behave. So, as I prepare to sit for hours in shul, I'm pledging to work on my thinking, to reframe the narrative from one of burden to one of gratitude, to focus on nourishing my child's gifts rather than lamenting her faults. I hope to use this time to focus on what I'm gaining through the joys and challenges of raising both my daughters rather than what I'm losing. I don't think I'll make it all the way to my destination,

Seinfeld still funny, but is it still fresh?

DANIEL TREIMAN – JTA

A lot happened in 1989. The Berlin Wall fell, the Iron Curtain crumbled, and a young political theorist named Francis Fukuyama announced that with Western liberal democracy’s triumph, we had reached “the end of history”.

Also that year, the pilot for what was then called *The Seinfeld Chronicles* aired on NBC.

While NBC was tentative initially about the show’s prospects, *Seinfeld* would become not just an unlikely hit for the network, but the most popular sitcom of the 1990s. To put it in perspective, 76 million viewers tuned in for the sitcom’s 1998 series finale – that’s nearly four times the number who watched the last episode of HBO’s *Game of Thrones*.

What more propitious time for a “show about nothing” than the end of history?

Now, 30 years after the debut of *Seinfeld*, Netflix is betting big on the timeless appeal of the TV show that “yada, yada, yada’d” its way into America’s hearts, buying its exclusive streaming rights starting in 2021.

“*Seinfeld* is the television comedy that all television comedy is measured against,” Netflix’s chief content officer said. “It’s funny and fresh as ever.”

The enduring charms of *Seinfeld* in the streaming era, however, should not obscure the fact that the show is

also very much a product of its time.

One aspect of the *Seinfeld* story that seems like a relic from a distant past is NBC’s initial concern that the show was “too New York, too Jewish” to be a hit, as the network’s entertainment president, Brandon Tartikoff (a New York Jew himself), memorably worried.

“Who will want to see Jews wandering around New York acting neurotic?” he asked.

Amid such *shpilkes* (anxiety), the Jews behind *Seinfeld* masked the Jewishness of the show’s characters. True, the show’s four main characters seemed like over-the-top caricatures of Jewish New Yorkers (some were even based on real-life Jews, with George Costanza as a stand-in for series co-creator Larry David, and Cosmo Kramer inspired by David’s former neighbour, Kenny Kramer). But aside from Jerry Seinfeld’s eponymous character, none of the main characters were identified by the show as Jews.

No matter how Jewish Elaine Benes (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) seemed, *Seinfeld* viewers learned that she was, in fact, a magnet for Jewish men due to her “shiksappeal”. Meanwhile, the fact that George, played very Jewishly by Jewish actor Jason Alexander, had an Italian last name, was cause for considerable confusion, including for Jewish actors Jerry Stiller and Estelle

Harris who played his parents.

“It was never really clear if the Costanzas were Jewish or Italian, or what they were,” Stiller later recounted. “Jason, Estelle and I were given the name Costanza,

Perhaps thanks in part to the success of *Seinfeld*, Jewish TV characters no longer need a witness protection programme.

Now, you can have an entire series about

spends a whole season on a family trip to Israel (*Transparent*); or a show in which a character might make wisecracks about how wearing a yarmulke in a Palestinian chicken restaurant is akin to the raid on Entebbe (Larry David’s own *Curb Your Enthusiasm*). And that’s not even to mention the Emmy-conquering *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*.

Seinfeld, though, was a different animal to any of these. It was the top show on network television before cable and streaming fragmented the American TV-watching audience.

Above all, *Seinfeld* is a product of a more innocent time. At the end of history, with America at peace, Jerry, George, Elaine, and Kramer could run around preoccupied with minutiae.

Photo: Jeff Kravitz/FilmMagic, Inc/Getty Images



The stars of *Seinfeld* at the 1993 Emmy Awards

which sounds Italian, but there were episodes where I cooked Jewish food and ate *knishes* and *kasha varnishkes* in bed. When people asked me about this, I would simply say it was because we were a Jewish family in the witness protection programme.”

Amid the plenitude of Jewish-themed comedy on *Seinfeld*, the fact that the show’s characters could not be openly Jewish seemed like a joke itself.

the *mishegas* (craziness) of two young Jewesses wandering around New York, moaning about fasting on Yom Kippur and yearning to host a Passover seder (*Broad City*); a show whose protagonist engages her childhood archnemesis from Scarsdale in a “JAP rap battle”, replete with obscure-to-gentiles rhymes about Birthright Israel and the Jewish fraternity AEPi (*Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*); another show that

Netflix is certainly right that *Seinfeld* is still funny. Like the original ratings-topping sitcom *I Love Lucy*, *Seinfeld* is comedy for the ages. If you stream it, people will watch and laugh.

But is it still “fresh”?

• *The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author, and don’t necessarily reflect the views of JTA or its parent company, 70 Faces Media.*

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Taking the fashion world by storm

TALI FEINBERG

What are the chances of two Jewish guys from Cape Town making it big in the New York fashion world? Quite good, it seems. Sivan Miller (30) was recently signed to a photographic agency there, and Aaron Shandel (19) is working as a fashion model in the Big Apple.

Both are enjoying their leap into the stratosphere of success, but at the same time they remain grounded in their Jewish and South African identities.

“I attended Herzlia, and the school’s motto is “if you will it, it is no legend”. I think that definitely impacted my life. It led me to believe that if you want something, you can do it. It’s an important message for a kid,” says Miller.

He got a digital camera when he was 16 years old and started taking photos of landscapes, editing them and uploading them to a website. A



Sivan Miller and Aaron Shandel in New York

few months later, Oprah Winfrey saw his work and contacted him. Her magazine, O, did a two-page feature on his photographs.

After school, Miller studied 3D animation and digital effects. He was still doing landscapes, but after seeing a fashion show he realised he wanted to take photos of people and become a successful fashion photographer. He left his dream job, supported by his boss, who said he could come back if fashion photography didn’t work out.

But Miller hasn’t looked back. He taught himself everything, dreaming of making it as a photographer in the fashion capital of the world. And, 13 years later, his goal has been realised. “I was signed to a photographic agency in America. They handled my visa and now I am based exclusively in New York.”

Some of his highlights include photographing the Oscars in 2017, New York Fashion Week and covers for *ELLE* magazine (he recently shot the cover of *ELLE Bulgaria*), and his work being featured in *Vogue Italy*. He also assisted Alexi Lubomirski, the photographer of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle’s wedding.

He maintains links to his Jewish identity by trying to go to shul on Friday nights, and he was warmly welcomed by Jews in New York. However, he finds that people are not very friendly in the Big Apple, so staying grounded is important to him. He also maintains close contact with family and friends back home.

Although many of Miller’s career dreams have come true, he says he does have new goals, including delving into video work.



Sivan Miller (right) with rapper, singer, songwriter, and actor Jaden Smith

He would also like to shoot in Tokyo.

To those wanting to get into fashion photography, he says: “Following your dreams is a big thing. It’s about understanding the difference between perseverance and delusion, being honest with yourself, and getting honest opinions. You literally have to work at it every day. It’s not an easy road, but it’s worthwhile.”

Shandel says he got into modelling completely randomly: “I was scouted by a British photographer while surfing in Sea Point when I was 14.” He did his first modelling gig when he was 16 for *GQ South Africa*, and in his school holidays he would go to Fashion Week in Europe.

“It was quite a challenge balancing school, especially matric, with the modelling career. I ended up missing a lot of school for jobs, as well as a lot of jobs for school, and had to make some tough decisions,” he says.

“I wouldn’t have been able to do it without the support from my parents and Herzlia High School, which allowed me to miss many school days for modelling. The staff went out of their way to catch me up on missed work and gave me extra lessons.”

After completing matric at the end of 2018, Shandel flew to New York, where he has hit the runway running. “I do modelling for designer brands, magazines, and runway shows. At New York Fashion Week I walked for brands such as Tom Ford and Zadig & Voltaire. I have also had the opportunity to travel loads for work.”

His highlight so far has been an advertising campaign for Versace shot by iconic photographer Steven Meisel. “It was amazing to work with such influential and creative people and be alongside models such as Gigi Hadid.” Just last week, he was on the cover of *Harper’s Bazaar Russia*.

Despite his international success, Shandel remains true to his roots. “Growing up in the Jewish community has shaped me into who I am and will always keep me grounded. I have a strong set of values and Jewish identity, which I am proud of and uphold wherever I go. The community has been so supportive of me and given me such excellent advice and guidance.”

He is extremely proud of his South African Jewish roots. “I have thoroughly



Aaron Shandel walks the catwalk for Tom Ford at New York Fashion Week

enjoyed educating people around the world about Judaism and what it’s like growing up in South Africa, especially as people have bizarrely inaccurate perceptions of what it’s like,” he says.

Shandel is spending 2019 modelling full time and is taking each day as it comes. “The industry is extremely spontaneous and there is not much you can plan. I do want to go to university and am spending this time learning about different things and trying to find what I am truly passionate about.”


His advice to young people who want to get into the fashion industry is to act on their dreams. “Don’t be afraid to call up

modelling agencies abroad and apply online – they are constantly looking for new faces to sign. Be proactive and reach out to people in the industry. Take every opportunity that comes your way and be patient.”

He does miss home, “as my greatest passion is surfing, and I am currently missing that a lot living in New York”. To the South African Jewish community, he says: “Thank you to everyone for all the fantastic advice, love and support I have received throughout my journey. All my friends and family have been so motivating and encouraging, which has made me believe that anything is possible. The community we have in Cape Town is so unique and special.”



Aaron Shandel





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A love-hate relationship with Jozi

BOOK REVIEW

I recently made the mistake of stopping on orange in Joburg, instead of speeding up to beat the red light. The guy behind me slammed his palm on the hooter, and I looked in the rear-view mirror to see him shaking his head and gesticulating.

In turn, I shrugged my shoulders, and pointed at the red light, but it was too late for my cardinal sin to be redeemed.

I had obeyed an injunction to pause amid the rush, in a city where nothing is ever lukewarm or in-between; where it is always either hot or cold, fast or slow, green for go, or red for HOOT.

Joburg can drive you crazy, and it can drive you to despair, but love it and hate it (there is no either/or) it drives you. This is the thesis at the heart of *I love you I hate you*, a remarkable work of book-art by Love Jozi, the t-shirt and design company founded by proto-Joburger Bradley Kirshenbaum,

and housed at 44 Stanley on the edge of Braamfontein. Part mock-guidebook, part “tongue-in-chic” fashion and lifestyle catalogue, the book is above all a testament, in words and pictures, to the dualities of life in our schizotopian metropolis.

Here, interspersed with short essays by 34 Joburg writers, we see Love Jozi’s witty and minimalistic t-shirt designs from over the years, flirting with such icons as the hadeda ibis, the Parktown Prawn, the freeway interchanges, the minibus taxis, and the Hillbrow and Brixton towers, bracketing that pulse-quickenng District 9 skyline.

But the first thing you notice about the book, is the book. From the seductively embossed lettering on the cover, to the lacquered sheen of the paper, to the rat-tat-tat of the pages as you flip them by, it has a solid, satisfying heft.

It feels like it could be used as a weapon under the right circumstances, and indeed, a weapon it is, against restfulness, against complacency, against the lull of the ebb tide of history.

Rarely have I held in my hands a book that feels so vital, so alive, so a-bristle with creative energy, and a good part of the reason is the tactile prank that



Bradley, the designer, plays on the reader. Blessed with a sharp and sly design sensibility, he has laid out the photo-spreads, which are beautifully styled, posed with swagger, and lit with a gold-bar gloss, in counterpoint to the essays, so that you have to flip the book on its edges and steer it sideways every now and again, as if you’re negotiating your way through the Joburg traffic. The effect is disorienting at first, but as a user’s note explains upfront, this is design as metaphor. “The flipping motion calls to mind the way most Joburgers feel about their city. One day, you’re up, and the next day, you’re upside down.”

GUS SILBER



This, therefore, is not a book to be read in linear sequence, at one sitting, nor is it a book to rest on your coffee-table; rather, it is a book to grapple and engage with, to shake your head at, to fall in Love Jozi with, whether you’re crazy enough to live here, or whether you’ve ever wondered how and why people do.

• Gus Silber is an award-winning journalist, editor, speechwriter, and author, with a special interest in social entrepreneurship. He has penned several books, covering South African socio-political satire, innovation in business, entrepreneurship and mobile technology.

Photos taken from *I love you I hate you*



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The Jews of *Downton Abbey*

JORDAN MOSHE

If ballgowns, bouillabaisse, and Bates mean anything to you, chances are you're a fan of the hit series, *Downton Abbey*. The release of the long-awaited film based on the series this past week gives us a chance to look back on it with hindsight and reflect on the presence of a less-obvious element we might have overlooked: the Jews of Downton.

Across six seasons, the period drama enthralled audiences with its riveting narrative of early 1900s England, the aristocratic Crawleys, and their devoted cadre of servants. The triumphs, trials, and tribulations of our beloved characters took place against the backdrop of idyllic Yorkshire, far removed from us and our modern-day lives. However, certain Jewish personalities and influences at various points give us an added dimension of connection, and might enhance our appreciation of the series.

Jewish identity is at the heart of the Crawley family. The Abbey's Lord and Lady Grantham, Robert and Cora Crawley, are in fact an interfaith couple. Though not born strictly Jewish, Cora is the daughter of Martha and Isidore Levinson, therefore Jewish on her father's side. She hails from a wealthy American family, and this seems to matter more to her upper-crust British in-laws than the fact that she comes from an interfaith family.

Judaism more broadly rarely comes into the storyline. But as the series progresses, creator Julian Fellowes introduces a Jewish love interest of Russian lineage in the form of Ephraim Atticus Aldridge for Lady Rose MacClare. Tall, dashing, and a lord to boot, it turns out he was a member of a Ukrainian Jewish family that fled the infamous pogroms of Odessa. His family's struggle to be accepted mirrors the experience a wealthy Jewish-British family might have faced in the 1920s, and even the Rothschild family is mentioned during the episode.

His heritage raises little objection from Rose, but acting like typical Jewish parents themselves, her parents and Ephraim's are resistant to the match. His father, Lord Sinderby, is as opposed to his son marrying outside the Jewish faith as Rose's mother is to her marrying into it. Sinderby tells his son, "Our family has achieved a great deal since we came to this country. Not just for ourselves, for our people. We have a proud history, and we've taken our place among the leaders of this land. And now you want to throw all that away for this little *shiksa* (gentile)!" He also objects to the fact that their children won't be Jewish, to which his son retorts that they might choose to convert.

Complex though the issue might be, it's an all too familiar reality for many of us. In fact, Fellowes reportedly received a personal thank

you from a Jewish peer in the House of Lords for accurately portraying what it's like to be a Jew in British society. The series might be set 90

they're separating a whole category of people." Fellowes himself dated a Jewish girl in his youth, a match on which neither side looked on

illogical," Fellowes said. "The English Jewish community supports the arts, it supports science, it supports education. It has great family values.

Everything people approve of is rooted in this culture."

Add into this decidedly Jewish mix the fact that certain people behind the scenes are Jewish. One of the series' directors is Minkie Spiro, whose mother is an Israeli educator who, together with her husband, founded the Spiro Ark, one of the best-known Jewish education institutes in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the director of the film is none other than



A scene from the movie *Downton Abbey*

years ago, but the antipathy of Rose's family to Ephraim speaks volumes about the anti-Semitism which still resonates today, and which Fellowes says he aimed to address.

He told *Ha'aretz*, "English aristocracy anti-Semitism has always interested me. It's quite mild and so ingrained, they're sometimes hardly aware of it. Someone will say something like, 'You're rather Jewish looking.' They don't know

favourably.

The series' Jews are not the only victims of prejudice and hatred. With the arrival of the late twenties, the fifth season is the first to mention Hitler and the Nazis. The dreaded brownshirts (the Nazi militia founded by Hitler) are mentioned, and "Nazi thugs" are said to have supposedly murdered Lady Edith's beau, Michael Gregson.

"I find anti-Semitism weirdly

Michael Engler, who is descended from Russian-Jewish pogrom refugees on his mother's side, and German-Jewish immigrants on his father's.

Although not central to the show, there's a distinct sense of *varnishke* alongside the vichyssoise in *Downton Abbey*. A Jewish presence is often felt in the most unlikely of places, and as the dowager countess says, "There's always something, isn't there?"



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Diamond industry – former jewel of Jewish Joburg – loses its lustre

LIONEL SLIER

Once a trade for a nice Jewish boy, diamond cutting and polishing in South Africa no longer is. Jewish names like Goldstein, Reichman, Herskowitz, Blom, Messias, Rosenstrach, de Neve, Fransman, De Jong, Landau, Slier, Katz, Kadinsky, and Zlotowski were prominent in the late 1920s when South Africa’s diamond industry took off in Johannesburg. At that time, Amsterdam was the centre of the diamond cutting industry. The profession was heavily influenced by Jewish diamond workers because there was no guild system in Holland preventing Jews from working with diamonds as there was in other trades. My grandfather, Philip Slier, was in the trade in Holland, and his son, my father, Jack, aged 14, followed him as an apprentice. Four years after being apprenticed, World War I broke out in 1914, and Jack was drafted into the Dutch army. Fortunately, Holland’s neutrality was recognised by Germany, and there was no military activity in the country like there was in neighbouring Belgium.

By the time the war ended in 1918, the diamond trade had practically ceased to exist in Europe. Diamond cutters were keen to travel to America where the industry was still active. But they were subject to a quota system imposed by Washington, limiting the number of immigrants from each European country. There was a burst of activity in 1919 in Holland when the Russian royal family jewels were sent to Amsterdam for re-polishing. These diamonds were referred to as the “Bolsheviki” and created a short boom, but that was all. Like many other diamond workers, my father applied for a work permit to America. Meanwhile, diamonds had been discovered a half century earlier, in the northern Cape in 1867, when a 15-year-old farm boy, Erasmus Jacobs, picked up a pretty pebble near Hopetown. A Boer farmer, Schalk van Niekerk, visiting the farm saw him playing with it and sent it to a geologist in Grahamstown who authenticated it as a diamond. It was to be the Eureka diamond, “The Star of South Africa,” weighing 21 carats. (To give an indication of the size, most people walk around with diamonds of less than a carat in their personal jewellery). At the time, the British governor of the Cape Colony, George Grey, said, “This is the stone on which the future of this country rests.”

There was a great deal of excitement in the Cape about the possibility of finding diamonds in the colony, but a British geologist went on record as saying, “The soil in South Africa would certainly not hold diamonds, and the news of their discovery there is absolutely fake.” However, Kimberley was invaded by fortune seekers from the Cape and Britain, and some made money by trading in the rough diamonds bought from diggers. One such man was Barney Barnato, a Jew from England; others were German Jews like Alfred Beit and Ernest



Jack Slier (left) and staff from Amsterdam Diamond Cutting works, circa 1926

Oppenheimer. The latter bought two farms owned by locals, the De Beer brothers. Cecil John Rhodes, who later became prime minister of the Cape Colony, joined Barnato, and together they developed De Beers Consolidated Mines, which become the world’s largest diamond company. Illegal diamond buying (IDB) was made a criminal offence in the Cape, and diamond dealers had to have a police permit to handle rough diamonds. After the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the law spread to the whole country. There was general dissatisfaction among diamond dealers who were restricted from trading in South Africa for this reason. They could deal only in polished diamonds, and there were relatively few of these in the country. Diamonds mined in South Africa were shipped uncut to be polished in Holland and Belgium. The 1924 general elections resulted in the National Party under General Barry Hertzog forming a pact with the Labour Party under Frederic Creswell. They won the election against General Jan Smut’s South African Party. (Smut lost many voters after he put down the Miners’ Strike in 1921 through a massive show of force, using the air force and army against the white striking miners).

After the Pact Government came into power, agitation from Kimberley diamond dealers to start a diamond cutting industry in South Africa was favourably received. Two diamanteers were sent to the Netherlands to recruit diamond workers to come to South Africa and teach locals the trade. My father, Jack, who was still waiting for a visa for America, was told that in South Africa, they spoke the same language as in Holland, and there was a job available. He decided to go to South Africa and in 1925, arrived in Kimberley with an older brother, Andries, also a diamond polisher. But a few years later, the trade in Kimberley faltered, and many polishers moved to Johannesburg because that’s where business was. My father and another Hollander, Harry Messias, opened one of the first diamond cutting factories in the country, Amsterdam Diamond Cutting Works, around 1926. Very soon afterwards, Johannesburg became the centre of the South African diamond trade.

Many of the diamond factories that opened up at this time were Jewish owned. The Diamond Club was formed and, according to Louis Lipchin, a member of its executive in later years and known to have a phenomenal memory, most of the diamond dealers in those days were Jews. “The diamond trade was definitely part of the Johannesburg identity. A list of the members of the executive of the Master Diamond Cutters Association contains more than 40 names, mostly Jewish,” he said. The global financial problems of the 1930s

affected the trade, but it survived. The war in 1939 brought about a revival, and the industry soon thrived. My father and his Dutch Jewish partner parted company. My father said, “The world is divided between those who can have partners and those who can’t, and we were obviously both in the second category.” He opened Holland Diamond Cutting Works in the centre of Johannesburg. Meanwhile his brother, Andries, returned to Amsterdam to be with the family. Andries said he was afraid of the rising tide of anti-Semitism in Europe, also in Holland, and didn’t want his parents to be alone. The entire family was killed in Sobibor death camp. After World War II, the South African diamond industry continued to be fairly stable, and my father expanded his business to include jewellery as well as diamonds, and had a shop in the centre of Johannesburg. But competition from the global industry was growing. The United States, Holland, Belgium and South Africa were the main players, soon to be joined by Israel after 1948. Today, the largest diamond centre in the world is in Dubai. De Beers has moved its headquarters from Kimberley to Gaborone in Botswana. The local trade nowadays also faces competition from Russia, India, and China. Many South African factory bosses complain that it’s difficult to compete price-wise with these countries. High labour costs and indifferent government legislation has virtually put local polishers out of business. There are less than 300 diamond workers in the country. The trade is faltering in spite of the fact that the end of apartheid did away with labour restrictions, and the trade is open to everyone. Diamonds have lost their glitter. The Jewish handle at the helm has loosened, and isn’t being replaced. I’m pleased that my father isn’t around to see it.

Wheelchair assembly gives lift to disabled children

The Women’s International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) recently partnered with pupils from Yeshiva College High School in Johannesburg to assemble custom-designed wheelchairs, which were given to children at The Hope School in Westcliff. Four wheelchairs were also donated to the Red Cross Children’s Hospital and Tygerberg Hospital Paediatric Oncology wards by Bnoth Zion WIZO Cape Town. The Gardens Shul Batmitzvah programme assembled chairs for the project. WIZO Durban and the Valley Trust donated chairs to children most urgently in need of independent mobility in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, giving them the gift of dignity and self-reliance.



Gabriella Pokroy in Grade 11 at Yeshiva College with a recipient of a new wheelchair

Israeli virtuoso performs in Pretoria

Renowned Israeli pianist Dr Michael Tsalka performed Mozart’s piano concerti nos 20 and 25 at the Brooklyn Theatre in Pretoria on 15 September. Tsalka performed the concerti with three young South African prodigies: Daniel Spies

(flute), Gilah Kellner (violin), and Willie Naude (cello). He has won awards in Europe, the United States, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America, and has recorded numerous CDs, including all of Beethoven’s works for mandolin and piano.



The concert was supported by a collaboration between Tararam, the South Africa/ Israel Culture Fund, the Israeli Embassy, and the Brooklyn Theatre.

Sarit Keinan (Israeli embassy), Dr Michael Tsalka, Willie Naude, Willem Vogel (Brooklyn Theatre), Gilah Kellner, Daniel Vos (Brooklyn Theatre), Daniel Spies, Ayellet Black (Israeli Embassy), Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan, and Victor Gordon (Tararam)

Beit Luria’s opening the realisation of a dream

The opening of Beit Luria on 8 September 2019 was a dream come true for its founders. Beit Luria is the 11th progressive synagogue in South Africa, and the first in



Rabbi Julia Margolis

Gauteng in almost 50 years. It’s also the first progressive shul to be opened by a female rabbi. Rabbi Julia Margolis persevered against all odds to build up the congregation, which then applied to the South African Union for Progressive Judaism (SAUPJ) for affiliation as South Africa’s 11th progressive shul. She was assisted by friends, including Steve Lurie, the honorary life president of the SAUPJ, and Leonard Singer, also a past member of the SAUPJ. At the shul’s opening, a Torah scroll donated by Rabbi Hillel Cohn of San Bernardino in California was handed over. Margolis and the management of Beit Luria look forward to a new journey with the SAUPJ and the World Union for Progressive Judaism to advance and promote the traditions and values of progressive Judaism within our community and, by extension, our country and the worldwide movement.

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR
AND WELL OVER
THE FAST.



Pick n Play

פלאפל ושייקים פירות

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

Life Esidimeni stage production brings darkness to light



Theatre director Sylvaine Strike; actress, voice, and text specialist Gina Shmukler; choreographer Phumlani Mndebele; and the first-year students of the Market Theatre Laboratory have created *Eclipsed*, a production inspired by the Life Esidimeni tragedy, in which 143 psychiatric patients died of neglect as a result of the termination of a contract by the Gauteng government. The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to **Gina Shmukler** about the production.

What inspired you to do this piece? My friend and colleague, Sylvaine Strike, one of South Africa’s finest directors, asked me to join her in the creation of what she had already named, *Eclipsed*. I said yes instantly. First, we had been wanting to work together for a while, and second, I’m always attracted to work that speaks to the human condition.

Describe the Market Theatre Laboratory and the work you do there. My only previous experience with laboratory was when I co-produced Eve Ensler’s *Emotional Creature* in South Africa.

This is the first time I have worked with the students who study theatre training there, and I’m beyond impressed with the way the lab runs. It’s intensive theatre training with a deep respect for the craft.

How did the students feel about doing this? They were apprehensive when we presented them with the reading pack which formed the research of the play. I remember one student saying to me, “This is very dark.” I answered, “It will be up to you to find the light.”

What did your students want to say to the audience through this work? The beauty of creating work in a lab setting with students is that you don’t have to cater to a specific audience. You create to tell the story as best as you can. From day one of rehearsal, I used a scripting technique which I call “tracking”. It’s like journaling. One or two

sentences in response to a question or thought or feeling. This often becomes a part of the script, which gives the actors their voice within the text, capturing an authentic response to the work.

In your press release, you ask the question: has unaccountability become our new culture? What do you and your students believe?

Yes, absolutely. Aside from nobody being criminally charged for the massive negligence – or as one of the students coined it, “strategic mass murder” – the response from government during the 44 days of arbitration hearings was, and I quote, “It was an instruction from above... it is the actions of the

collective.”

What was the response from the audience?

Audiences have been very moved and in some ways



shattered after witnessing *Eclipsed*. A common response from young and old has been that the work has to be seen at schools and in theatres across the country. The conversation needs to keep going.

What did you and your students learn from this process? Some of the students were 15 years old when Life Esidimeni happened, so they were unaware of the event. Aside from gaining knowledge and

dealing with the complexity of the tragedy, I learnt that irrespective of age, our response to the state of our country is the same or similar – we love it, and we need things to change. We need people to be held accountable so the cycle of negligence is broken. To quote one of my favourite lines in the play, “Everyone involved forms a piece in the puzzle in their own way. From the government officials, to the NGOs [non-governmental organisations], to the men and women who drove the trucks.” This speaks to all those involved being held accountable top to bottom! And for most of the cast, accountability means imprisonment.

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About CSG NSW

The NSW Community Security Group (CSG) is the security organisation operating under the auspices of the Council for Jewish Community Security (NSW) and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, which is the political roof body of Jewry in NSW, Australia. CSG is charged with operating and advising as the key consultant to the NSW Jewish Community on Security, Intelligence, Incidents, Investigations, Operations and Crisis Management.

Email your cover letter, CV detailing relevant experience and two professional referees to careers@sydcsg.com.au

Applications close 15th November 2019.

Find out more at csgnsw.org.au

Cut down on caffeine for a more fabulous fast

I have never fasted well. From a young age, the mere thought that I would have to do so filled me with anxiety and stress. It was even more frustrating for me that my experience wasn't the same as others, who regard a day without food as a mere inconvenience.

I dealt with this in my column in the *SA Jewish Report* a few weeks ago. The response I received was surprising, as I hadn't realised how many others struggle through a fast day. In fact, for weeks after I wrote the piece, people came up to me to discuss their fasting experience.

In my column, I also mentioned that I had engaged a "fasting coach", and many people asked me to share his advice. I need to make it clear that the advice contained below is advice that I have been given, and that anyone wishing to follow it does so in the full knowledge that it's not medical advice given to them specifically. Further, anyone with a medical condition should rather speak to their medical practitioner.

Dr Anton Meyberg is a close friend who also happens to be a specialist physician pulmonologist. He doesn't have "fasting coach" on the door to his office, but has guided me over the past few years. With his permission, here are some of his thoughts about improving the fasting experience.

Some basics about fasting: sugar is our primary energy source which we get in the form of carbohydrates. The liver and muscle store the glucose, and release it into the bloodstream when the body requires it.

According to Meyberg, "During a fasting period, after about eight to 10 hours, the liver uses the last of its glucose reserve – this is when a process known as gluconeogenesis develops. This is basically the generation of glucose from non-carbohydrate stores in the body such as fat and skeletal muscle. Gluconeogenesis then increases the calories that body burns/uses." This is why one needs to be prepared for 25 hours of fasting.

For a week before the fast: reduce caffeine. Dependency on caffeine can have a significant impact on the fast day. Withdrawal can lead to headaches, migraines, and nausea. Reduce your coffee or Coke intake each day (I generally cut back on one cup a day) so that at least 48 hours before the fast is caffeine free. A word of caution is that so called "decaf" coffee as well as many other drinks contain some level of caffeine. So too does green tea, and most non-herbal teas.

The day leading up to the fast: drink at least 10 glasses of water. Eat a banana in the morning, and another later on in the day. Eat healthy carbs like rice and potato. Start the fast with protein

and carbohydrates, and make sure that the food you eat during the day prior to it isn't too salty. That means no biltong or other foods with a high-sodium content.

Breaking the fast: Meyberg recommends rehydrate products for people who find fasting difficult. He also suggests having a small meal initially, and an hour or so after breaking the fast, seeing what your body can handle. A "sugar dump" can cause real discomfort. It's a good idea to try and avoid this.

He reiterates that fasting should ideally be individualised. Each person is different. "If someone has specific medical issues such as

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



diabetes, kidney problems, or is on multiple medications, this will most certainly not be the correct advice. Rather, consult your doctor about what's best for your needs."

One of the difficulties with struggling to fast is that it dominates every aspect of a day like Yom Kippur. It becomes difficult to focus on the other aspects of the day. Perhaps if we are all better prepared this year, those of us who do battle can enjoy some respite, and be able to use the time for introspection and prayer. May we all be blessed with a shanah tovah.

Tinderbox patterns on fabric

What is it about a piece of fabric with patterns and colours that can make people rush into battle and get killed? Millions have died in wars, heroically emblazoned with their national colours, proudly dying for the flag!

Even if they didn't die in war, on the way to the graveside, an important person's coffin gets draped ceremonially in their national flag.

With the resurgence of neo-Nazis in Europe, fascist-like thugs are appearing, brandishing flags with swastika look-alikes reminiscent of the 1930s, expressing anti-Semitic obscenities. Jews fear displaying their own flags or Israeli flags outside synagogues, particularly in countries with intense anti-Semitism such as France.

Historically, flags have represented not just prejudice, but slavery. In the American Civil War in 1862, in which more than 620 000 died, the Confederacy's national flag, called the Stars and Bars, flew in pro-slavery Montgomery, Alabama. The war was fought over slavery in the southern states – the Confederacy had seceded to form a new country to protect slavery. Incredibly, thousands of soldiers died willingly for this in

the shadow of the Stars and Bars.

Such passions die slowly. Today, the Confederate flag is among the most recognisable, popular items in American memorabilia, appearing everywhere alongside the American flag, the Stars and Stripes. Americans argue about what the Confederate flag stands for now: is it heritage or hatred? Supporters of its continued use claim that it's a proud symbol of the culture of the American south. In a national survey in 2015, 57% of Americans said the flag represented southern pride, not racism.

Should some flags be banned? It's unlikely you can repress something like this without reverting to a police state. Some countries have tried. In Germany, you can't legally display the Nazi flag in public, except for historical purposes.

But in the United States, free-speech laws allow the display of Nazi symbols. It's a favourite of eccentrics like motorcycle gangs. But there, too, anti-Semitism is rising.

Thankfully, Jews are still fairly safe from anti-Semitism in South Africa, and it's unlikely a Nazi flag with a swastika would be allowed to be displayed publicly. It would probably be deemed

TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin



hate speech by the Constitution, the right to dignity of Jewish citizens would disallow it, and public sentiment would reject it. The Nazi flag is a close cousin of the hated apartheid flag, and would evoke similar distaste.

Anyone who grew up and lived in apartheid South Africa will recall the old, evocative apartheid flag flying above government buildings everywhere, with ugly associations for black South Africans and some whites. We have a new flag now, but the old one keeps hanging around, causing controversy. At the time of writing, a legal spat is continuing between the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) and South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), and AfriForum's Ernst Roets over his display of the apartheid flag.

Freedom of speech is never straightforward. Countries which guarantee free speech are sorely tested to define exactly what that means in practice. Similar to words, a flag is much more than a piece of fabric with patterns and colours.

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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

The need for change

People tend to be suspicious of change. The thinking goes that if things have worked well enough in the past, why not carry on as before? On the other hand, circumstances inevitably do change, and when the old ways of doing things are no longer sufficiently efficient and/or cost effective, then one is equally inevitably required to adapt to the new reality in order to remain sustainable. This isn't necessarily a bad thing in the long term. Even if certain worthy aspects of an organisation's work have to be sacrificed, new ways of doing things also create fresh and exciting new opportunities.

In the course of this year, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has reviewed and restructured two long-standing services it has provided to the Jewish community since the 1940s. One is the assistance provided by its country communities department (CCD) to small, geographically isolated Jewish communities in maintaining their connection to Judaism and the mainstream community.

As previously reported in this column, this process culminated at the end of June in a decision by the various stakeholders to establish a new, independent body to be called the Small Jewish Communities Association to carry out the department's work in future. Aably headed by Kimberley's Barney Horwitz and with the ongoing involvement at every level of the esteemed Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft in ensuring that the core work of the CCD continues, this body is already at an advanced stage of implementation. The SAJBD is committed to working with and supporting smaller communities to ensure a smooth transition.

The second SAJBD community service that has been revamped is *Jewish Affairs*. Launched in

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



ABOVE BOARD

June 1941 as a monthly information bulletin, it soon established itself as South Africa's leading Jewish historical, cultural, and current-affairs journal. In common with all publications, particularly those of a more academic, niche-market nature, it became increasingly apparent that it would have to adapt to how people communicate and publish today. Earlier this year, therefore, the editorial board took a decision that henceforth, *Jewish Affairs* will appear in a new electronic format adapted for a modern-day readership, and that this will replace the traditional printed version.

We are pleased to announce that, just in time for Rosh Hashanah, the new online format of *Jewish Affairs* is up and running, and that the first online issue has now appeared. To read it and future issues, go to <https://www.sajbd.org/jewish-affairs>. All issues from Pesach 2009 to Pesach 2019 can also be freely accessed on the main SAJBD website. I invite you all to become online subscribers to *Jewish Affairs*. Signing up is free, and enables you to receive regular bulletins and updates. Send your name and email address (and mobile number too if you would like to be included in a JA WhatsApp group) to david@sajbd.org (copying) sajbd@sajbd.org.

This being my final column before Rosh Hashanah, on behalf of the SAJBD, I wish everyone a *shanah tovah umetuka*.

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



L'shanah tovah!

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Israel baseball team to compete in the Olympics

LUKE ALFRED

Quick Trivial Pursuit question: “How many Israeli teams have competed in the Olympics?”

None? Two? Three? Well, from Sunday, the correct answer is four, because on Sunday, Israel’s baseballers won a six-nation Europe/Africa Olympic qualifying tournament in Italy, making them the fourth Israeli team after basketball (1952) and football (1968, 1976) to make it to the Olympics.

For the record, in Israel’s final game, they beat South Africa, who finished last in the qualifier, 11-1, to book their ticket to Tokyo in 2020.

Also featuring the hosts, the Netherlands, Spain, and the Czech Republic, the qualifier was co-hosted in the Italian cities of Parma and Bologna over five days from Wednesday to Sunday. After three straight wins against strong European opposition, the Israelis lost 7-4 to the Czech Republic on Saturday, putting their Olympic dream in jeopardy, but their win against South Africa combined with wins against Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands meant they have achieved a rare and precious honour. Israeli Baseball Association President Peter Kurz said he had “no words” after qualification. He was almost moved to tears.

Truth be told, Israel’s passage to Tokyo took place in rather low-key surroundings. On a soggy Sunday afternoon in Parma, in front of an empty stadium, leftie first baseman Danny Valencia hit a three-run home run in the eighth innings for Israel to seal a comfortable victory over the South Africans, Africa’s sole representative in the competition.

Valencia has Major League Baseball experience with a variety of franchises including the Boston Red Sox, the Toronto Blue Jays,

and the Oakland Athletics, the latter team immortalised in Michael Lewis’ famous book, *Moneyball*. He is considered by many to be the team’s best player. Appropriately, he scored the runs that sealed Israel’s passage. “What we did was huge,” said Valencia as team Israel gathered round for photographs, post-tournament interviews, and celebrations. “It shouldn’t go unnoticed.”

“I just try to do my part,” he said. “I couldn’t hope to be around a better bunch of guys. We worked really hard, and the preparation

earnest for the four-yearly spectacle.

The son of a Jewish mother, Mindy, and Michael, a Cuban father who converted to Judaism, Valencia was born in Miami, Florida. He turned professional in 2010 after initially playing shortstop for four years in high school with the Spanish River High School Sharks.

His starring role for team Israel is not without controversy, with critics pointing out that this is an assembled team made up mainly of Jewish-Americans and lacking in home-grown Israeli talent, where the sport remains minor.

is history.

Like Valencia, pitcher Joey Wagman, who played a major pitching role in team Israel’s success in the Italy tournament, has only recently become an Israeli citizen, earning citizenship last October. The son of Californian parents, Wagman has significant minor-league experience and, like Valencia, he also played for team Israel during their fourth place in Bonn.

Right-handed pitcher, Shlomo Lipetz, is another member of team Israel, but his is a slightly different story to those of Valencia and Wagman. The “senior citizen” of the team at 40, Lipetz was born in Tel Aviv in 1979, although now lives and works in New York, where he manages a chain of city wineries.

On a boyhood vacation to New York, he was taken to see the New York Mets play, and fell in love with the game. An accomplished all-round sportsman, he played for Israel in the Little League World Series aged 10, and after serving in the Israeli Defense Forces, went on to play college ball in the United States.

After his university education in California, he played semi-professionally in New York, and even played a season of ball in Mexico. Unlike Valencia and Wagman, Lipetz has been playing for team Israel since 2008, with several European qualifiers and European Championships under his belt.

Having qualified for the Tokyo Olympics, Israel now find themselves alongside the world’s baseball elite. Olympic baseball was held in neither Rio (2016), nor London (2012), the last time it appeared was Beijing (2008). The International Olympic Confederation decided to re-introduce the sport in the Tokyo games, however, with South Korea being the current gold medal holders from Beijing.



required a lot of work and time. We came here to perform a task, and we did it.”

Valencia, who turned 35 on the second day of the qualifying tournament, has an impressive baseball resumé, but is currently a free agent, so he’s hoping that the Tokyo qualification might put him back in the shop-window and re-ignite his career. He said as much after the tournament’s conclusion, mentioning that he would be interested in exploring any offers that came his way as Israel starts preparing in

Although Jewish, Valencia obtained Israeli citizenship only earlier this month, ahead of the European Baseball Championships in Bonn, Germany. Israel reached the semi-finals in Germany, losing 6-7 to Italy, and losing their third-placed playoff game against Spain 16-11.

As a result of finishing in the top four of the championships, however (the eventual winners were the Netherlands), Israel earned a place as one of four best-placed sides in last weekend’s Olympic qualifiers in Italy. The rest, as they say,



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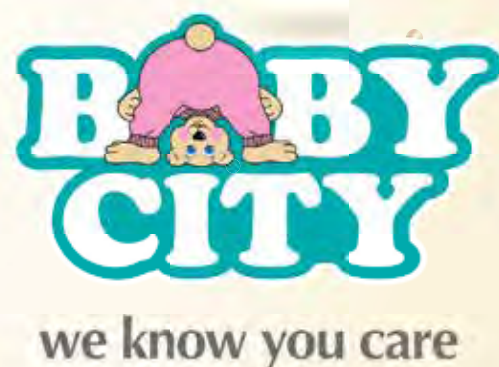
Rosh Hashanah



Shana Tovah from all of us at



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