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South African Jewish Report

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Appeal Court ruling could make hate speech more difficult to prove

NICOLA MILTZ

A ruling by the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) last week declaring the definition of hate speech unconstitutional will have far reaching consequences for our community.

Calling someone a “dirty Jew” will not be considered hate speech. Offensive? Yes. Insulting? Yes. But it’s not hate speech.

In future, in order to find someone guilty of hate speech, one will have to show that the speech advocates hatred and incites harm against somebody because of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.

It’s a tough test, say experts, and it will make the commission of hate speech more difficult to prove. However, some in the legal profession have lauded it as a breakthrough for freedom of expression.

One advocate who could not be named for professional reasons told the *SA Jewish Report* that it would make the Equality Act line up better with the Constitution. “It will provide greater free-speech protections while at the same time combating genuine hate speech,” he said.

The SCA declared unconstitutional the hate-speech provision contained in the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) – or the Equality Act. The Equality Act has been under scrutiny since it came into effect in 2000. The court of appeal held that the provision limited the right to freedom of expression.

Last week’s judgement found that journalist and former ambassador Jon Qwelane wasn’t guilty of hate speech in 2008 when he wrote in a column in the *Sunday Times* that it was “not okay” to be gay. If gays can marry, he asked, “how soon before some idiot demands to marry an animal?” Following an outcry, the Human Rights Commission took him to the Equality Court.

Some lauded last week’s judgement as the most important free-speech case to date. It still needs to be confirmed by the Constitutional Court.

“I don’t think the judgement will have a negative impact on the Jewish community,” said David Bilchitz, professor of fundamental rights and constitutional law at the University of Johannesburg.

“The judge recognised that advocacy of hatred which incites harm (which includes psychological harm) will remain prohibited. Ultimately, this is all the protection the Jewish community needs against serious expressions of anti-Semitism.”

He said that strong criticism of Israel, for instance, will be permissible – as it should be. The problem “is when such criticism crosses over into advocacy of hatred and incitement against a particular community as it did in the Bongani Masuku case”.

South Africa’s highest court is at present still deciding whether statements made in 2009 by Masuku of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) amounted to hate speech directed at Jews or constitutionally protected political speech. His statements were made in the aftermath of the brutal conflict in Gaza, known as the Gaza War.

Bilchitz said last week’s appeal court judgement dealt with the problem that the Equality Act potentially limits freedom of expression “too much”.

“The problem is that this section of the Equality Act could be read to allow restrictions on speech simply because it is hurtful,” he said.

“As the judges note, that would allow, for instance, a religious believer to claim that the speech of an atheist denying G-d exists constitutes hate speech. Valuing free speech must mean that one can assert points of view that some may find offensive or hurtful. Where speech becomes impermissible is where it crosses over into the realms of advocating hatred and inciting harm.”

The Constitutional Court is ultimately faced with deciding the approach to hate speech in the Equality Act. “The speech in the Masuku case clearly envisaged inciting harm. Masuku’s claim was that the focus of his speech was not against Jews – religion or ethnicity – but Zionists – “a political ideology”. When one analyses his statements, I don’t

find this claim convincing, and hope the Constitutional Court will be of a similar view,” said Bilchitz.

According to Bilchitz, what Masuku said was not simply “hurtful”, nor did it remain within the realm of intellectual argument or dispute. “He crossed over the boundary into advocacy of hatred and incitement to harm against Zionists. I don’t think threats of violence should be acceptable against anyone in a democracy for holding any view and, consequently, it’s to be hoped that the Constitutional Court will also recognise the need to challenge all forms of speech that advocate violence no matter who is their target.”

He said robust challenges of points of view were completely acceptable. “If Mr Masuku, had utilised the platforms he occupied to advocate for the rights of Palestinians ... there could have been no complaint. The problem was that he went further.”

The Appeal Court ruling could have far-reaching consequences for high-profile cases such as the one involving the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC),

which alleges that Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth used the word “h**not”, and wants this to be declared hate speech.

It could also have an impact on AfriForum, which is currently appealing an Equality Court decision that displays of the old South African flag constitute hate speech.

For offenders who have committed violations of dignity by, for example, calling somebody the “k-word”, they might still be criminally prosecuted for *crimen injuria* or sued in a civil claim.

“Hate speech is only one law which regulates speech. There are other forms of protection. There is *crimen injuria*, in which there is a severe infringement of a person’s dignity, and one can launch a criminal case on that basis. Defamation laws, the Harassment Act, the Intimidation Act – there are other ways of dealing with speech that isn’t hate speech,” said one attorney who wished to remain anonymous.

Attorney Ian Levitt said, “My view is that a criminal charge of *crimen injuria* should still be laid against those perpetrating racial

hatred. The consequences of a conviction for this crime can be very serious, and can even lead to the jailing of the accused, which is frankly where he or she belongs. There must be zero tolerance to anti-Semitism and all racial hatred, and it must be dealt with strongly and decisively. Only when people see the possible consequences of their conduct, will they think twice.”

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies said this week that it supported the constitutional rights of South Africans to freedom of speech.

National Director Wendy Kahn told the *SA Jewish Report*, “Equally, we hold dear the limits of this freedom not being absolute when it comes to hate speech. Protected speech is a pivotal component of our Constitution.

“We will continue to pursue our matters within the framework of the legislation, ensuring that our cases are most effectively dealt with,” she said.

The SCA has given Parliament 18 months to amend the act by making the definition of hate speech much narrower.

Machaneh, here we come...

See pages 6 and 14



Lenore Sandler hugs her son Brett before he leaves for Bnei Akiva machaneh

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

French parliament deems Israel hate anti-Semitism

The lower house of France's parliament passed a nonbinding resolution on Tuesday that deems some forms of hatred of Israel to be expressions of anti-Semitism.

The resolution, which passed in a 276-154 vote, also calls on the government to join other European nations in adopting the definition of anti-Semitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The definition states that some forms of vitriol against Israel,

including comparing it to Nazi Germany, are examples of anti-Semitism, though criticising Israel's policies isn't.

Weeks of debate in the French media preceded the vote on the resolution introduced by Sylvain Maillard of President Emmanuel Macron's ruling LREM (La République En Marche) centrist party.

In October, 39 organisations wrote an open letter to national assembly president Richard Ferrand warning against passing the resolution. The letter argued against a separate definition of anti-Semitism, as it would "weaken the universalist approach to combating all forms of racism" and compromise "the defence of freedom of expression and assembly for groups and activists that must be allowed to defend the rights of Palestinians and criticise Israel's policy without being falsely accused of anti-Semitism".

Sale of Bergen-Belsen eyewitness accounts on hold

The auction of a rabbinical court ledger that documents eyewitness accounts of the deaths of Jews in Nazi camps has been put on hold.

The auction of the Bergen-Belsen ledger was scheduled to start on Tuesday night at the Kedem auction house in Jerusalem. But the Tel Aviv Magistrates Court put a hold on the sale after a lawsuit filed by the Organisation of Bergen-Belsen Survivors in Israel.

The ledger of about 100 pages was compiled at the end of World War II by a rabbinical court at Bergen-Belsen as proof that Holocaust victims' spouses were dead. It allowed the survivors to remarry under Jewish law. It lists deaths that occurred at the Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Bergen-Belsen Nazi camps. Each page includes testimony signed by witnesses, a signed permit for remarriage, and is signed by known rabbis of the day.

The opening price at auction was \$4 000 (R58 418).

The Bergen-Belsen survivors organisation said that the document didn't belong in private hands, calling the sale of such documents "trade in the Holocaust".

ICC declines to probe Mavi Marmara incident

The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has decided for the third time not to open an investigation into the 2010 Gaza flotilla raid.

The office of Fatou Bensouda announced on Monday that any possible war crimes committed in the incident involving the Israeli commando raid on the Mavi Marmara were not serious enough to merit opening a case.

In the May 2010 incident, nine Turkish passengers including one American citizen were killed in clashes with Israeli commandos which boarded the Mavi Marmara. The ship and five others in the flotilla sponsored by the Gaza Freedom Flotilla was trying to evade Israel's maritime blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Israel isn't a member of the ICC. It has imposed a naval blockade on Gaza since the terrorist organisation Hamas took over the coastal strip in 2007.

'Game of Thrones' star protests Belgian parade



Carice van Houten, a Dutch actress known for her role in the hit series *Game of Thrones*, cancelled a television appearance in Belgium over the use of caricatures of Jews at a parade there.

Van Houten, who portrayed Melisandre in the series, and her associate, Halina Reijn, who is married to a Jewish soccer player, both pulled out of the panel of the talk show *The Appointment* after learning it would host Christoph D'Haese, the mayor

of Aalst, who has insisted on the legitimacy of caricaturing Jews at his city's iconic annual carnival.

In March, the carnival featured a float with effigies of grinning Jews holding money, one carrying a rat on its shoulder. The float was widely condemned, including by Belgium's UNIA (the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism), which called it anti-Semitic.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation, condemned the display as "racist and anti-Semitic" and scheduled a vote on whether to remove Aalst from its list of culturally significant events. On Sunday, D'Haese said Aalst would leave Unesco, and insisted again that the display fell within legitimate expression of satire in the context of the carnival's promotion of edgy humour.

Images of women vandalised in Israeli city

Images of women on billboards and the windows of stores displaying female mannequins were recently vandalised in the southern Israeli city of Ashdod.

White paint covered the images and was painted on shop windows, according to a reporter for the Kan public broadcaster, who posted some images on Twitter.

"We must bring to justice whoever perpetrates an act of vandalism and takes the law into his own hands," acting Ashdod Mayor Avi Amsalem told Kan.

Tension between haredi Orthodox and secular residents of Ashdod has risen in recent years. In general, images of women are considered immodest in the haredi community.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:25	Johannesburg
19:15	20:26	Cape Town
18:15	19:24	Durban
18:15	19:41	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:57	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:45	East London

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Torah Thought

Be present for every Jew, everywhere

I recently returned from the annual Chabad-Lubavitch Shluchim Conference (aka the Kinus) in New York, where the culminating banquet expressed the idea of being present for every Jew, everywhere.

Shortly afterwards, the chairman of the evening made the legendary roll-call, in which rabbis from around the world rise as their country is called – from 62 Chabad-Lubavitch *shluchim* (emissary) families in South Africa, to the new emissaries to Myanmar. Two months ago, a Chabad opened in Rwanda, and another just opened in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Each country got a round of applause, and the entire room erupted into dancing.

As we danced around the massive convention hall in Edison, New Jersey – no place closer to New York had room for 5 820 men – I thought back to an

explanation on this week's parsha that I had heard earlier in the day.

In the parsha, Jacob is travelling to his uncle Laban to escape the wrath of his brother Esau. On the way, he tires and lies down for a rest, but not before arranging some stones around his head for protection. As he sleeps the stones "argue". Each one wants the righteous Jacob to put his head on it. The Talmud tells us that G-d resolved the problem by merging all of the stones into one. Is this really a solution, however? If I take five blocks of my children's Lego and make them into one piece, there will still be a top and a bottom. Jacob would be resting his head on only one of the stones.

The answer, it was explained, is that when we are truly unified we don't mind if someone else gets a bit more honour than us. Once Jacob's stones were all one and acting for the same purpose,

Rabbi Pini Pink, Chabad Greenstone



they didn't mind which particular stone had the honour of having Jacob's head resting on it.

As we danced around, bumping into rabbis and lay leaders from across the globe, I realised that this is the strength of Lubavitch. This week we marked the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Gabi and Rivki Holtzberg, the Chabad-Lubavitch *shluchim* who were brutally murdered in the terrorist attacks in Mumbai. They were in Mumbai because like all their colleagues who were dancing around that room, they were willing to put aside their personal comforts and needs to care for others. They walked, ate, and slept *ahavat Yisrael* (love for their fellow Jew). Like Jacob's stones, once we realise that all Jews are truly alike, our own needs become secondary, and we can put the concerns of others first.

Jewish Report Editor Peta Krost Maunder – editor@sajewishreport.co.za • Sub-editor Julie Leibowitz • Journalists Nicola Miltz • Tali Feinberg Jordan Moshe • Editorial co-ordinator Martine Bass – editorial@sajewishreport.co.za • Proofreader Kim Hatchuel • CEO Dani Kedar
 ceo@sajewishreport.co.za • Advertising Britt Landsman: 082 292 9520 – britt@sajewishreport.co.za • Design and layout Bryan Maron/Design Bandits – bryan@designbandits.co.za • Distribution: Sandy Furman • Subscriptions Avusa Publishing (Pty) Ltd. Tel: 0860 525 200
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Phyllis Jowell move to Tafelberg hangs in the balance

TALI FEINBERG

The Cape Town Jewish community will have to wait at least six months before a judgement is made on the Tafelberg case, which saw the Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School (PJJD) caught in a battle between the City of Cape Town, the Western Cape government, the national department of human settlements, and housing activists.

The school took a decision a while ago to optimise its current location in Camps Bay pending the outcome of the case. This was because it “can’t operate in strategic limbo”, says PJJD director Lance Katz. However, “the original motivation for Tafelberg remains, and would be a big boost to the school”, he says.

Reclaim the City and Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU) took the province and the City of Cape Town to court for selling the former Tafelberg school property to PJJD for R135 million in 2017 instead of using it for social housing.

The human settlements department launched a separate case

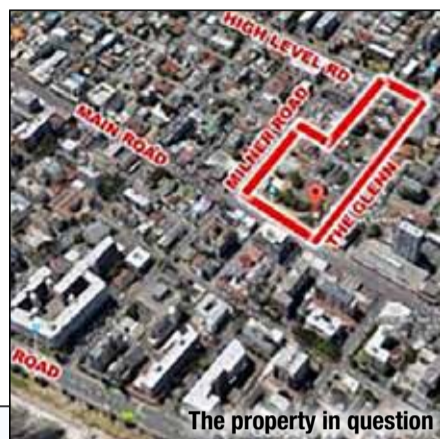
against the province for not consulting the national minister prior to making the decision to sell. Matters were eventually heard in the Western Cape High Court last week.

NU is a non-profit organisation that works to advance urban land justice in Cape Town. Reclaim the City is a movement of tenants and workers to end displacement from well-located areas and to secure access to affordable housing.

After five days of court proceedings, Judge Patrick Gamble said the earliest possible time for a decision would be in May or June 2020.

“You’ve given us lots to think

about, it’s going to take time,” Gamble said. “This matter has huge ramifications. We would like to encourage legal representatives and parties not to lose sight that this case has a long way to go. We encourage the parties to engage with each other as much as possible to see if there’s any aspect that can be resolved



The property in question

“In May 2015, the Western Cape government issued a tender to dispose of the property. PJJD tendered in good faith, and was selected as the preferred bidder based on the rules and criteria of the tender. Objections to the province’s disposal of the site emerged only after PJJD had already been selected as the preferred bidder,” says Katz.

He says the Tafelberg site represents a “once-in-a-generation opportunity to address a broad range of vital Jewish community needs along with other benefits to the wider Capetonian population. PJJD had been looking for an alternative site as a result of town planning problems and capacity issues. The school had exhausted all avenues to expand on its current campus or

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a school building which we plan to upgrade, and is very well-located in the heart of the school’s catchment area. Added to this, there is a plan for the possible relocation of Jewish old-aged facility, Highlands House, to Tafelberg.

“Everybody agrees that housing

is a critically important basic need, and the province and city have a long way to go in addressing it,” Katz says.

“For our part, should we be successful, we have committed to building 44 affordable housing units on the site entirely at our own cost without any reliance on scarce state resources. This is almost four times as many units as

existed previously in Tafelberg,” he says. This was also explained thoroughly in court.

“It’s unfortunate that we have been drawn into a matter not of our choosing, and that at times, particularly early on, the dispute was wrongly positioned as a ‘Jewish community versus social housing’ debate.

“However, as time has passed, this has settled down, and the focus has shifted away from the Jewish community to the real issue of the case which is where and how national government, the province, and the city implements a coherent, efficient,

and sustainable housing strategy. Also, it has moved to whether in this context, the decision of the province to sell Tafelberg to PJJD was permissible and valid.”

He says it’s important for the community “to be patient, to respect the process, and respect the diversity of opinions that exist within and without our community on this matter. The school itself has been successful in minimising the impact of the case on pupils, parents, staff, and the governance structures of the school.”

A number of Jewish activists vehemently protested against the sale to PJJD, and more than 250 Cape Town Jews sent a petition to the Western Cape government in March 2017, saying, “We, Jewish Capetonians, call for social housing in Sea Point and on other sites in an inclusive Cape Town.”

However, this group appears to have dissolved. One of the group’s leaders, Daniel Linde, says it has “not been active in years. It was really organised to make a statement of support. It was never a formal group, just a group of people expressing support for Reclaim the City’s case. Time has lagged between then and the case being heard.”

NU Executive Director Mandisa Shandu told the *SA Jewish Report*, “Our position in relation to Tafelberg is that land is a critical transformative tool. This position held by NU is irrespective of the identity of the purchaser. The challenge in the Tafelberg matter primarily concerns the state’s constitutional obligation to redress spatial injustice and advance access to affordable housing.”



The old Tafelberg School

together,” he said.

The PJJD is a small play school and primary school that caters to children from the ages of 18 months to Grade 6, and blends secular and religious education. The school is situated in a relatively small space at the back of the Camps Bay shul, and would be better suited to a larger more central area like Tafelberg.

When PJJD tendered for the site, its leadership had no inkling of the dispute that would erupt. “At the time of the PJJD tender for Tafelberg, there was no public controversy surrounding the Tafelberg site,” Katz told the *SA Jewish Report*.

find an alternative site within the catchment area.

“Everybody agrees that housing is a critically important basic need, and the province and city have a long way to go in addressing it.”

“When the Tafelberg site was put up for sale by the province, it gave new hope to PJJD for a viable solution, hence its decision to bid. It is already zoned for a school, has

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Cape Town community shrinking – but not due to emigration

TALI FEINBERG

The Cape Town Jewish community might be shrinking, but it's largely due to fewer marriages, lower birth rates, and increased death rates in an aging community, not emigration.

This is according to the newly-released final results of the Cape Town Jewish community survey, which was commissioned by the Cape Town Jewish community and conducted by the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town. Its methodology included extracting data from communal databases, focus groups, and 770 face-to-face interviews with a random sample.

The Jewish Community Survey of South Africa is another project of the Kaplan Centre. The results of this survey are expected to be released in March 2020.

The Cape Town survey estimated the affiliated Cape Town Jewish community to be about 14 000

members, just over half of which (53%) are female. It's an ageing community, with a median age of 52.

The results show that between 2008 and 2017, there were 956 births and 2 311 deaths. This signifies a net natural population decline of 1 355 people over the period, or the loss of 136 people a year. A comparison of annual birth and death rates

indicates that, excluding emigration and "semigration", the Cape Town community has entered a phase of net natural population decline, says Kaplan Centre Director Adam Mendelsohn.

Between 2002 and 2006, there was an average of 64 Orthodox marriages a year, declining to about 40 per year for the period 2013 to 2017. Annual birth rates have declined from an average of 111 births a year between 2005 and 2010, to 91 a year between 2012 and 2017. Moreover, the number of births further declined to 77 in 2016 and 75 in 2017.

Compared to that data, emigration appears to be less of a threat. Seventy to eighty percent of Cape Town's Jewish students have attended Herzlia since the 1960s, and 56% of those graduates still live in South Africa. Only about 44% of all Herzlia graduates have emigrated: 13% are living in the United States, 9% in Australia, 9% in Israel, 8% in the United Kingdom, and only 3% in Canada.

While 71% of people over the age of 70 have at least one child living overseas, only 14% have all their children living overseas, and 43% have all their children living in South Africa.

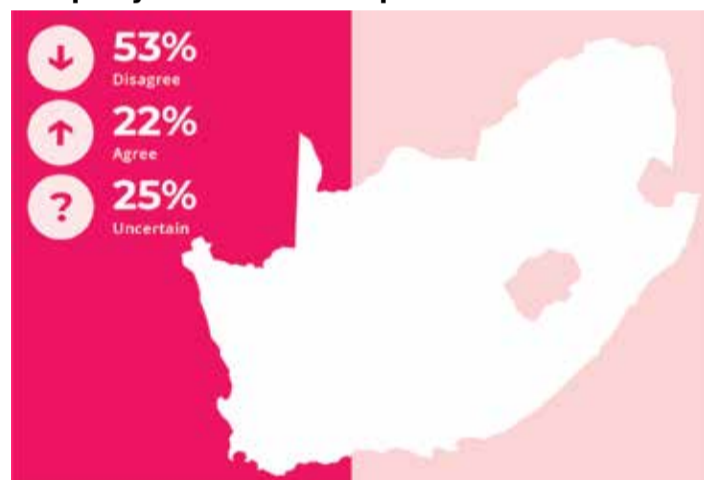
About 21% respondents of the survey are single, 58% are married, 11% are divorced, and 10% are widowed. Intermarriage remains low – only 11% of those who are currently married have a non-Jewish partner. The majority of respondents (76% overall) consider it to be important that their children are Jewish.

The survey certainly captured

a moment of pessimism and uncertainty, says Mendelsohn, with 53% of community members disagreeing that quality of life will improve in South Africa over the next decade, and 25% being uncertain. Within this context, youth are relatively more optimistic about the future, with 38% of the youngest group agreeing that quality of life in South Africa will improve. At the same time, an element of financial vulnerability exists amongst older community members. Of those aged 70 years and older, 34% are just making ends meet, 35% have no retirement savings, and 20% don't own their home.

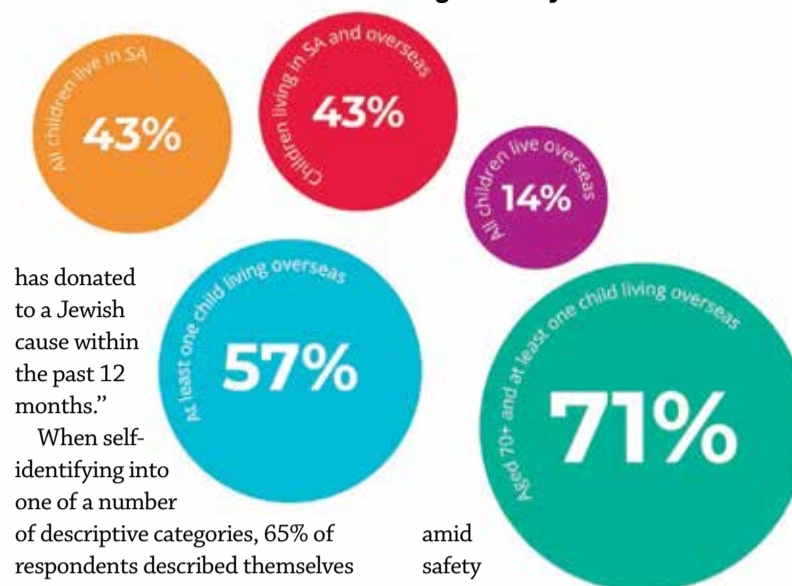
"The results underline the community's strong communal identity, with more than seven out of ten community members feeling connected to Cape Town communal life. The community has a strong emotional attachment to Israel, with about 90% feeling very or slightly attached. Furthermore,

The quality of life in SA will improve over the next decade



a Jewish education is the norm for the Cape Town community," writes Mendelsohn. "Emblematic of the community's sense of communal identity, 79% of respondents report that someone in their household

Of those with at least one child aged 22+ years:



has donated to a Jewish cause within the past 12 months."

When self-identifying into one of a number of descriptive categories, 65% of respondents described themselves as either "traditional" or "secularly/culturally Jewish". This manifests in religious practice, where 9% don't drive on Shabbat, and 15% eat only kosher meat when outside the home. However, 91% and 96% of respondents regularly participate in Shabbat suppers and Pesach Seders, respectively, and 78% refrain from eating pork.

"While anti-Semitism is perceived to have increased, participants lead an openly Jewish life. Cape Town community members very rarely opt-out of synagogue services or communal events. Specifically, 2% frequently/occasionally avoid synagogue amid safety concerns, while 6% frequently/occasionally miss communal events for the same reason. In contrast, larger proportions don't want to be publicly recognised as Jewish or Zionist. Specifically, nearly 30% avoid wearing Jewish apparel in public

amid safety concerns, and about 40% avoid wearing Zionist apparel," says Mendelsohn.

In terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the majority of respondents (64%) believe that, while there has been fault on all sides, on balance, Israel is in the right. A further 12% believe that Israel is completely in the right in all its actions.

When it comes to criticising Israeli government policy, 84% of respondents agree it's acceptable to be critical in Jewish communal spaces. By contrast, 43% consider it acceptable to be critical of Israeli policy in public (beyond the community). There is a strong age narrative, with the youngest age group being more accepting of public criticism of Israeli policy. For example, about seven out of ten 16 to 29-year-olds agree that South African Jews should be free to criticise Israeli policy in public, decreasing consistently to a low of 30% for the oldest age group.

The average household unit is small, with 2.6 individuals per household. This is comparable to the 2005 Kaplan Study which found an

average number per household of 2.9 nationally and 2.8 for Cape Town.

The community is extremely well educated, in terms of South African and global standards. Of those aged 22+ years, 54% have obtained tertiary-level education, 22% have completed a bachelor's degree, 19% have a postgraduate degree, and 13% have a professional qualification. This is compared to broader South Africa, where 4.1% of those aged 22+ have a bachelor's degree or higher.

In terms of employment, of those aged 22 years and above, 36% are self-employed, 30% are in full-time employment, 10% are employed part-time, and 1% are unemployed.

The Cape Town community places great importance on burial in a Jewish cemetery. When asked about the importance of a Jewish burial, 86% indicated that it's important to be buried in a Jewish cemetery (with 76% considering it to be very important).

Mendelsohn says that the data demonstrates dynamism – a population with a strong sense of connection, nurtured by an abundance of communal organisations – and challenges in the present and future.

"Some of these challenges reflect the particular timing of the study – the buffeting effects of crises at Eskom and with Cape Town's water supply; and dispiriting revelations from the Zondo Commission's investigation into corruption," Mendelsohn says. "But others reflect issues internal to the Jewish community including an ageing population and concern about the depleting effects of emigration. This study is intended as a step toward identifying and building on the strengths of the community, as well as preparing to meet these challenges."

Fake rabbi headline causes distress

JORDAN MOSHE

When a newspaper headline reads "Rabbi lures youth to lair", readers are going to assume it has to do with a Jewish spiritual leader.

Such was the case in Durban this week, when the *Sunday Tribune's* headline seemed to be reporting about a rabbi's misconduct, when in fact the individual in question wasn't even affiliated to Judaism.

In spite of its headline, the article was about a group of young men and women from Durban who abandoned their families at the behest of a local pastor, Siza Madlala, the founder of a church known as the House of Grace International. Their worried parents spoke to the newspaper, sharing concerns about illicit goings on at a house in uMhlanga where a group of young people committed to Madlala has been living and working.

Madlala is referred to as "rabbi" by his followers, according to the article. However, the article's headline, along with repeated reference to Madlala as "rabbi" without quotation marks, has caused considerable confusion and concern.

The Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) criticised the newspaper for its "poor and misleading headline" on Facebook on Monday. It suggested that the oversight could cause damage to the Jewish community.

The SAJBD KwaZulu-Natal Council sent a letter to the editor on Tuesday, which prompted a meeting with acting editor, Sandile Mdadane, on Wednesday

morning.

"Mdadane apologised, and committed himself to making it right as soon as possible," council head Jeremy Droyman says. "He really went out of his way to make us feel comfortable and resolved to fix the issue. The newspaper has promised to set the record straight, and it is falling over itself to make it right."

Droyman says that the newspaper recognised the insensitive nature and damaging potential of the headline, saying that it also appeared on newspaper headline boards affixed to street-side lampposts in Durban. "The article's headline poses a problem by referring to a rabbi, a title people associate with a Jewish spiritual leader. There's no rabbi involved in this case. The boards were even more problematic, as unlike the article, they had no context at all. It has the potential to be interpreted as anti-Semitic."

This concern was echoed by others.

"The false headline of the *Sunday Tribune* is an unethical and irresponsible breach of basic journalistic integrity," says Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein. "It damages the reputation of the Jewish community. The *Sunday Tribune* must take appropriate and urgent action to rectify the damage."

Anton Harber, adjunct professor of journalism at the University of the Witwatersrand and a respected former editor agrees, calling the headline a "disgrace" with damaging potential.

"It's inaccurate, damaging, perhaps even dangerous," he says. "It should have read, 'Fake rabbi' at the very least. It shouldn't have gone

to press without comment from the rabbinical community to make it clear that this person is not part of that community.

"It's disturbing that this kind of amateurish work can get into a major mainstream newspaper. Unfortunately, this paper belongs to Iqbal Survés' Sekunjalo Independent Media group, which has gone rogue. It has turned its back on the media council/media ombudsman self-regulatory oversight system, so it's operating outside of industry norms and without accountability. It's an embarrassment to journalism."

Nevertheless, the *Sunday Tribune* has recognised its error of judgement. Mdadane told the *SA Jewish Report* that their meeting was productive, and that the council's letter would be featured in this weekend's edition of the newspaper along with a follow-up article.

"We recognise fully that it was a mistake," he says. "We see that 'rabbi' refers to a Jewish spiritual leader, and recognise that we could have used the label in quotation marks to reflect that he isn't associated with Judaism."

However, he stressed that the article itself was important. "It was based on the concerns of parents whose children have been alienated from them because of the pastor. We can't ignore that his followers call him rabbi.

"We have been offered an opportunity to learn," says Mdadane. "Journalism isn't an exact science. We are human beings, and I don't believe we are unteachable. We need to learn from our mistakes."

Wellington cemetery reconstruction raises sustainability questions

TALI FEINBERG

One year after 39 Jewish gravestones were vandalised in the Wellington Jewish cemetery, their restoration is almost complete. However, the project has raised questions about the protection and care of country community cemeteries in future.

The reconstruction has entailed laying all 66 gravestones flat, at a slight angle in a bed of concrete, and restoring the ones that were vandalised. Then, the paving and walkways needed fixing, and the *tahara house* – the building where people gather for funerals and bodies are prepared for burials – needed better security. A wall and fence also had to be erected around the cemetery.

Many of the tombstones were broken in half, and some were smashed into smaller fragments and had to be sent to experts to be fixed. The *tahara house* was broken into twice during the restoration, with the theft of a generator and tools.

In spite of promises from the municipality, it gave little financial assistance, so the project was driven by the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and community members.

It cost about R12 500 to fix three graves, and the entire project has cost about R2.3 million thus far. “The lesson I’ve learnt is that if country communities don’t have a ‘nest egg’ or savings to go towards cemetery maintenance, then we may not be able to restore these cemeteries in future,” said Cape SAJBD Director Stuart Diamond. “We need to engage with communities that still have assets and prepare

for the future. Most municipalities are facing critical shortages, and are unable to help.”

Diamond said there were 22 country community cemeteries in the Western Cape. Most gravestones have been laid flat to prevent vandalism, but there are a number that are still upstanding.

Cape Town community member Raymond Schkolne said he assisted in raising funds for the Wellington project after he heard that the



The cemetery before the restoration

restoration of the vandalised stones was taking longer than expected. “My father grew up there, and I have family buried there. My late great-grandmother ran the only kosher guesthouse

in Wellington. I have the brass pot that she made jam in!

“My father’s late sister, Ray, who died in a terrible car accident and who I am named after, is buried there. My great-grandparents built the shul in Wellington, and were the first couple to be married in it. Stories like my great grandfather laying tefillin next to his horse and cart are embedded in my memory. I grew up hearing these stories, and although there is no Jewish community left, I wanted to assist.”

Diamond agrees that those buried in country community cemeteries are an important part of our community’s history “and we need to pay them that respect. Many of them are the first

immigrants who came here from Lithuania. They helped build the metros, and brought wealth into the country. This is our chance to ‘pay it back’. Most people don’t know how many Jews reached the interior of the Cape, and how there was some kind of Jewish life in many small towns. We need to ‘future-proof’ this.”

Together with Paarl Jewish community leader Mark Kaufman, Schkolne began contacting the descendants of those buried in Wellington to assist the project financially. The process was slow going, and a lot of the work entailed collecting emails and phone numbers.

It picked up momentum eventually as family members reached out to their own networks, and the response was warm and generous. Schkolne is concerned that the time and effort of such extensive fundraising might be difficult to replicate should other cemeteries be vandalised in future.

“There was no central fund to fund the restoration. The assets that had been sold had mostly been used for other Jewish causes,” he says. “There was a sum donated by the Wellington Community Fund, the rest of which is set aside for future maintenance of the cemetery. In addition, Stellenbosch Shul made a generous donation, and the Paarl and

Hermanus Hebrew Congregations also made donations.”

He emphasised that communities must ensure they have enough funds to restore an entire cemetery if needed. Meanwhile, the money raised has been ‘ring-fenced’ into a fund specifically for this project.

Asked why he volunteered his time and resources, Schkolne said it was a “sacred obligation. This was a vibrant, living community. It’s a requirement for people to get involved, both at leadership and grassroots level.”

Diamond paid tribute to Kaufman, who drove the Wellington restoration, and was constantly on site to ensure everything was done correctly, even though it wasn’t his own community. He emphasised that the Cape Board would always prioritise country communities.

“As long as there are still Jews out in the country, we will service them, connect them to their heritage, and help them combat anti-Semitism. We are planning more visits and a continued focus in 2020,” he said.

“We will work closely with the United Orthodox Synagogues and the new Small Jewish Communities Association (SJCA) led by Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft to ensure that these communities get their halachic and rabbinical services. I’m passionate about ensuring that these communities are future-proofed, and it only gets more difficult as time goes by. This is something we need to focus on now.”



One of the restored graves

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Machaneh – so much a part of who we are



A close friend of mine believes that once December starts, it is time to take the pressure off and not take anything too seriously. I love the sentiment, and see it as an effort not to get stressed in the last couple of weeks before the holidays begin. It's about not letting issues – no matter how big – make you feel negative, stressed, or upset.

Easier said than done because, for most of us, there is a great deal to do during this last stretch and we are all tired and a little tetchy because we need time out.

However, exams are over and school is finished for the year, so that takes a certain stress off us. Whatever you have decided to do for the holiday is planned and organised, whether it's chilling out at home, heading overseas, or to the beach. Suffice to say, if it isn't organised, it's unlikely to happen. So, that stress is eliminated too.

Then, there is the anticipation of most of us of taking a break and just resting and relaxing so that we can take on 2020 with vigour. We all need to take time out from our crazy lives to spend time with family, friends, and ourselves.

This week, many of us are sending our children off to Habonim, Bnei Akiva, and Netzer camps. It's never easy, as the overprotective generation of parents we are, to let our children go away without us. But for those of us who know what awaits them – having grown up going to machaneh – it's a little easier.

Who hasn't spent this week recalling camp experiences, be they blush-worthy, exciting, or just downright memorable? I have. In fact, I got out the photo albums...

Having been to both Bnei Akiva and Habonim, I have a sense of what I believe to be a real rite of passage for our Jewish youth.

I remember the first time I went to camp. I wasn't yet 10, and my mom and dad came to Park Station in Johannesburg to see me and my older sister off. They believed I was safe going as such a little because my big sister was there to watch over me.

I recall being quite scared ... until the train left. I looked around, and realised I was surrounded by children my own age, and was being looked after by teenagers. I actually remember feeling a sense of freedom. It wasn't long before I made lots of friends in my *shichvah* (age group), and the fun really began.

Machaneh was far more rudimentary then than it is now, but boy, those were fantastic holidays! I still have connections to people I met back then. I still have clear memories of those holidays. I remember sitting in a corrugated iron-roofed *hadar ochel* (dining area) with the entire Bnei Akiva camp, singing *birkat hamazon* (grace after meals) with gusto.

I remember showering in open-air, cold-water showers with makeshift walls around us at Habonim machaneh. I remember the walk to the beach on both campsites. So many happy memories.

Camp showed me I was capable of taking care of myself. It taught me independence. It made me realise the importance of democracy, and working with others for the greater good. I learnt to find my own opinions, and voice them. I learnt to debate and challenge where I believed it necessary. Habonim and Bnei Akiva helped me develop into the person I am today, and I'm grateful.

Having said that, I do worry about my own children going off to camp without me. I know we are way more protective of our offspring than our parents seemed to be of us. But the good machaneh does our children – who are so often mollycoddled and do very little for themselves – is exceptional.

When my colleague, Jordan Moshe, was relaying some of what he gleaned while interviewing for the story about Machaneh then and now (page 14), he loved the idea that just like King David Schools and shuls are an integral part of what our community is about, so is machaneh. I agree.

There are some of us – or our parents – who chose not to go to camp. It's not for everyone. However, those of us who did spend a number of those three-week stints sleeping in tents, going to *tochniot* (activities), learning about South Africa and Israel, singing, shouting war cries, laughing, perhaps sometimes shedding a tear, but living life to the full, have a special bond. We have a grounding in what it means to be Jewish in South Africa that nobody else can give us.

It wasn't about the food, the beach, or particular *maddies* (youth leaders). It was about the relationships we developed, the conversations, the learning, and interaction between us that made machaneh special.

I know I would get a fright if I walked onto the Habonim site in Onrus or the Bnei Akiva site in Mossel Bay because it probably looks totally different to what I remember. And, I can go on to criticise what youngsters pack in their trowsers, or how there is a barista at camp, which seems all wrong. I can tell you that perhaps "roughing it" isn't what it was in my day. I can probably wax lyrical about how machaneh should be, because that was my experience, but it is today as it is meant to be. The point is that those who go to camp now will get as much out of machaneh as I did.

So to all those youngsters who have embarked on the machaneh journey this week, *behatzlacha* (good luck) and enjoy! And to their parents, your children will only gain from being at machaneh. Also, expect them to need a few consecutive baths on their return to get the layers of dirt off them.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

From Russia – with love and hate

My grandmother had a very clear worldview. Regardless of what was happening in the world, she'd ask if it was good or bad for the Jews. No doubt if she was alive today, she'd ask me – as many people do – whether Russia's growing influence in the Middle East is good or bad for Israel.

Against the backdrop of a somewhat erratic American foreign policy that has resulted in Washington withdrawing from the region, Moscow has stepped up to play a central role in the Middle East.

The pivotal moment came four years ago, when Russia intervened in the Syrian war on behalf of her client, Syrian President Bashar Al Assad. Today, Moscow controls the skies over Syria, and has deployed troops to the north of the country to keep the Turkish and Syrian armies apart.

The advantage for Moscow is that it has relations with all the major players in the Middle East – Iran, Turkey, Israel, and increasingly the Gulf countries. For the first time in 12 years, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in October. Moscow is selling Russian defence systems to Riyadh, and has offered to mediate between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Although the Gulf states are longstanding allies of the United States, they are seeking to diversify their partnerships away from a heavy dependence on the West. They're not alone in feeling uneasy about American President Donald Trump's "America first" policy, and promises to bring American soldiers home.

Next month, Putin is scheduled to visit Israel. He will attend the International Holocaust Remembrance Forum, and unveil a monument to victims of Nazism in the Soviet Union during World War II, specifically the Siege of Leningrad.

For many Israelis, his visit is a sign of the warm ties between the countries. For them, Putin is the most pro-Jewish and pro-Israel leader who has ever sat in the Kremlin. The Russian air-force may control the skies over Syria, but it essentially lets Jerusalem do whatever it wants there as long as there are no Russian casualties. A senior Russian diplomat is on record as saying that Israel's security is "one of the top concerns of Russia".

But Moscow and Jerusalem have a complicated history. Among the founders of Israel were many Jews who fled persecution from the Russian empire. Former Soviet leader Joseph Stalin supported the establishment of the Jewish state in 1947 presumably to undermine the United Kingdom's position in the Middle East, and also as he hoped to export communism to it.

But his successors actively sought out Israel's Arab enemies – Syria and Egypt – and supplied them with weapons. After the 1967 Six-Day War, the Soviet Union broke off diplomatic ties with Israel. Relations were restored only in 1991.

At that time, the priority for Israel was to ensure that Russian Jews would be free to emigrate to Israel, and that those who stayed behind in Russia would be protected. Jerusalem was also concerned that Moscow would share dangerous technologies with Israel's enemies, and sought to prevent this.

At the turn of this century, the relationship became even more important as Russia recovered from decades of troubles, and Jews from Russian-speaking countries emerged as a significant voting bloc in Israeli domestic politics.

For Russia, Israel is a close American ally in a part of the world where Russia was once influential and wants to return. A boost in Russian-Israeli ties is something that Russia can also use to her advantage in her relations with the United States. No doubt she is also interested in Israel's military muscle.

It's worth noting that both countries have been subjected to international sanction, and both occupy a place in the international system in which

**DATELINE:
MIDDLE EAST**

Paula Slier

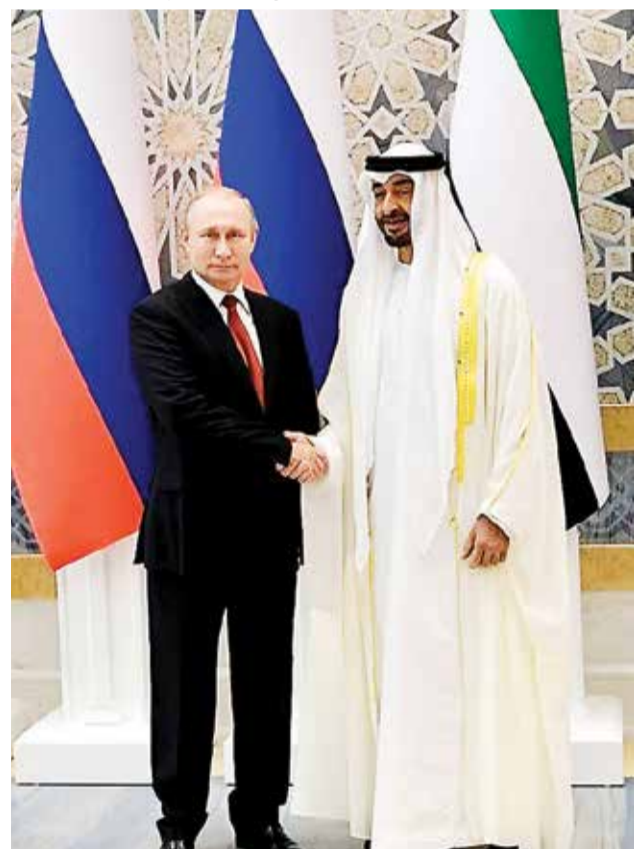


their influence is disproportionate to their size. Still, the relationship between Russia and Israel remains a complex bargaining act, especially when it comes to Iran and its growing influence in Syria.

Iran is Russia's oldest and closest partner in the Middle East from the post-Cold War era, and like Russia, Iran fought in Syria at the invitation of Assad. But whereas at the beginning of the Syrian war, Russian and Iranian interests converged – namely to prop up Assad – Iran is now looking to continue the fight while Moscow wants to wind things down.

Iran wants its soldiers on the Israel-Syrian border. Israel doesn't, and is pushing for Syrian soldiers to be placed there. Russia is fine with this, and has also turned down Tehran's request to purchase its S-400 air-defence system. In another overture to Israel, Moscow reportedly shared with her technical information about the earlier S-300 system she sold to Iran in 2016 so that it doesn't pose a threat to Israeli aircraft.

But Moscow has refused to criticise Iran's presence in Syria. As she plays this ambivalent game, in September, within one week, Putin met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. Nothing significant came out of those meetings, and sometimes being a friend with everyone can translate into being a friend of no-one. Another way of putting it is that Russia is a jack of all



Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed received Russian President Vladimir Putin on 16 October 2019

trades, but master of none.

The countries in the Middle East may want to talk to Russia, but they are under no illusion that Moscow can produce the results they are seeking. Moscow's political might must not be overestimated. Her military, diplomatic, and economic toolkit lacks the ability to address the region's pressing economic and societal changes.

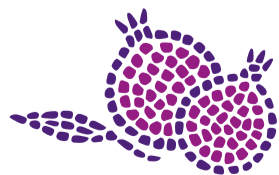
What's more, aside from Syria, Russia's most important relationships in the Middle East are with non-Arab states – Israel, Turkey, and Iran. Yet the Middle East's most pressing problems are within Arab societies.

As for Israel, in spite of the many times Netanyahu has flown to Moscow, he understands Putin's limitations. Just as he understands Trump's. Putin has visited Israel twice – in 2005 and 2012. When he touches down again next month, there'll be a lot of fanfare and appreciation from the Israeli side, but quiet cognisance that as warm as the relationship between the countries is, at the end of the day, it's motivated by self-interest and can always change.

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ChevrahKadisha

UK chief rabbi's comments a 'bombshell' in British politics

TALI FEINBERG

British Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis went out on a limb last week in openly telling the community and Britain who they should or shouldn't vote for because of anti-Semitism. His comments dominated headlines in the British press last week when he wrote a column in *The Times* asking, "What will become of Jews in Britain if Labour forms the next government?"

Mirvis, who was born and raised in South Africa, wrote among other things that "the overwhelming majority of British Jews are gripped by anxiety", and that "this anxiety is justified". He said, "A new poison – sanctioned from the very top – has taken root" in the Labour Party.

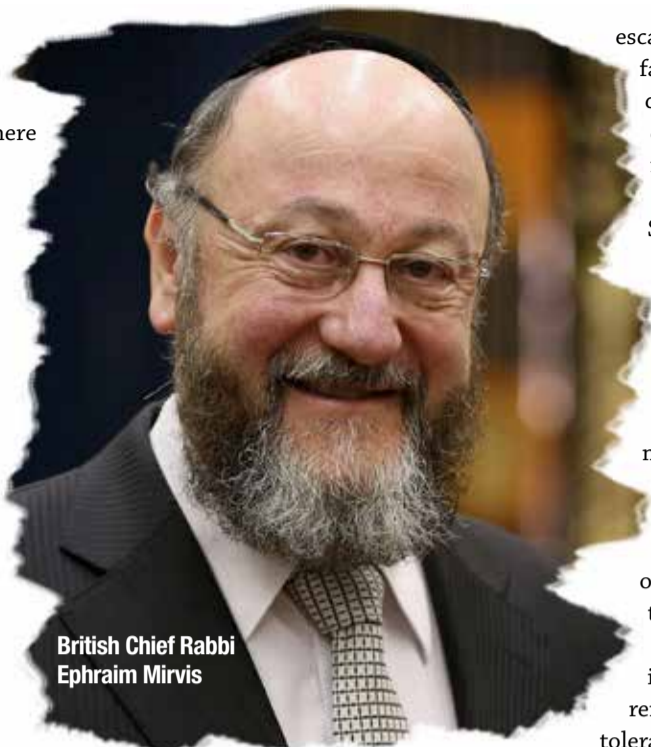
"It's not my place to tell any person how they should vote," he said. "I regret being in this situation at all. I simply pose the following question: what will the result of this election say about the moral compass of our country? When 12 December arrives, I ask every person to vote with their conscience. Be in no doubt – the very soul of our nation is at stake."

"I've never heard of a religious leader intervening in an election like this anywhere in the world," said local political analyst Daniel Silke.

While our Chief Rabbi [Dr Warren Goldstein] spoke out against state capture, President Jacob Zuma and corruption, he never intervened in an election, told Jews how to vote, or implied that the official opposition was dangerous.

"It's definitely an unprecedented move for a chief rabbi to intervene two weeks before an election, and to insinuate that the major opposition can't be trusted. His comments on anti-Semitism have broader ramifications about ethics and leadership in government. His comments carry additional weight because they are so soon before Britain goes to the polls," said Silke.

Essentially, Mirvis was involving



British Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

himself in what one journalist called the "anti-Semitism arms race" taking hold of British politics ahead of the country's national elections. "The treatment of anti-Semitism in British politics, a dangerous prejudice that demands our serious attention and analysis ... has become the subject of an

escalating partisan conflict. This familiar cycle – of allegations, defences, evasions, counter-claims and dismissals – has now reached a new level," wrote journalist Rachel Shabi in *The Guardian*.

David Horowitz of *The Times of Israel* called Mirvis' intervention a "bombshell".

"So blatant an effort by a chief rabbi, invoking moral authority, to steer an electorate in a democracy away from a mainstream party, and at the height of an election campaign at that, [his comments] would be resonant and dramatic in any country. In a Britain renowned for mainstream tolerance, and in a Britain where for decades it has been second nature for the Jewish community [perhaps 300 000-strong, less than 0.5% of Britain's 66 million population] to keep a low profile, to resort to a *gevalt* op-ed was nothing short of a bombshell." To direct voters is controversial, but the chief rabbi has been helped by support from other religious leaders

including Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, who said on BBC4 radio, "When you look at his article, he talks about it being one of the most painful decisions he's ever had to take, and I know that's true. "His instincts, like mine and others, are that during an election, you keep *schtum*, you say nothing. A lot of people in the Jewish community were saying, 'You've got to speak,' and he felt there was no choice."

Horowitz wrote in *The Times of Israel* that the chief rabbi must have been stuck between a rock and a hard place. "If he spoke out, and warned of the dangers of a Prime Minister Corbyn ... Mirvis would be castigated as a Conservative and Zionist stooge, accused of betraying the political impartiality of his office, and left with no access to the corridors of power were Corbyn indeed successful on election day.

"But if he was silent, and failed to sound the alarm, and the Jewish community – part of which has already begun to talk of emigration – found itself facing still greater hostility in a Corbyn-led Britain, would he rue his passivity, would he have ducked his moral and religious duty, and would he be judged by history to have failed?"

"Evidently, Mirvis concluded that there was more to gain by publishing his article. If Labour wins, Anglo-Jewry may indeed find the doors of Downing Street closed in its face. But then again, its key leaders – of whom Mirvis is the last, not the first, to speak out – would not have wanted to enter in any case. If Labour loses, the Jewish community may find itself widely blamed by Corbyn loyalists, and face more of the hostility it already endures. A price worth paying, Mirvis would presumably have sighed, as he pressed 'send'."

Silke pointed out that anti-Semitism might dominate the discussion, but for most British voters, Brexit, social services, and the economy are their top concerns.

Yet for the Jewish community in Britain, anti-Semitism in the Labour Party is their main concern, he said. This was made all the more urgent when last Friday, a London rabbi was beaten up by youths hurling anti-Semitic slurs, and the Labour Party was criticised for producing a video (released last Saturday) about minority groups being valued by the party but left out any mention of the Jewish community.

On Tuesday, Corbyn was repeatedly urged by ITV *This Morning* show host Phillip Schofield to "just say sorry" about the failure to tackle anti-Jewish hatred. He eventually said "Obviously I'm very sorry for everything that has happened but I want to make this clear: I am dealing with it, I have dealt with it."

But for some, this may be too little, too late. "There could be an existential crisis for the Jewish community in the United Kingdom if Corbyn comes to power," said Silke. "This election is potentially a watershed."

Ex-South Africans labour under uncertainty in UK

STEVEN GRUZD

Ex-South African Jewish voters in London are worried what a possible election win by the Labour Party – mired in allegations of institutional anti-Semitism – might mean for Jewish life in the United Kingdom. The 12 December polls come in the wake of political paralysis over Brexit, the conditions under which the UK will leave the European Union.

Labour faces serious charges of anti-Semitism.

Jonathan Rudolph, 54, is a medical doctor who left South Africa in 1991. He said, "The current Labour Party is full of people who detest Israel and its right to exist ... They don't hate all Jews, just the ones who feel Israel should exist, and the irony is they don't see that as anti-Semitism, but everyone else does."

Orthodox Rabbi Paul Solomon, 46, who left South Africa in 2002 said, "Claims of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party are absolutely true. It's the same old tropes ... Even though you've had stalwart Jewish Labour members who've been in the party for decades, and you've seen them warn and cry out for help, nothing has helped. The people in control have sidelined the moderates and centrists. The complaints about [Labour leader] Jeremy Corbyn calling Hamas and other militant groups his friends are true – you can see the videos."

Fifty six-year old copywriter Janine Stein left South Africa in 1985. She said, "I work with many people outside our Jewish bubble. I have known about Labour's institutional anti-Semitism for at least a year. But coming up to the elections, it's clear that non-Jews aren't aware of the specific granular issues and events ... They don't know about [Corbyn laying] wreaths at the graves of the murderers of 11 Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games. This is news to them. They don't know Jews were allowed back into the UK only 300 years ago. It's become them and us, and no one in [non-Jewish] Britain cares about real Jewish grievances with Labour."

So, where will Jewish votes go among all this disillusionment? Said Rudolph, "This is the most important election in this country in a generation.

Our politics has diverged to the extremes where we have a choice between a hard right Conservative Party and a hard left Labour Party, and very little choice in between. The Liberal Democrats who probably best represent my views ... would almost certainly go into power with [Labour leader] Jeremy Corbyn to stop Brexit. Therefore, as much as I dislike Boris Johnson and the current Conservative Party, I will be voting for them to prevent Jeremy Corbyn being elected prime minister."

it very clear that a Labour government is terrible for the UK," said Strous.

But Carrie Miller, 39, a corporate account manager who left South Africa in 2014, said things might have been blown out of proportion by electioneering. "There is a lot of scaremongering, but I don't believe that a possible Labour win would affect the Jewish community in a major way. It's a very vocal community of nearly 300 000 ... Having said that, a lot of people are threatening to leave or make aliyah."

Many think that a Labour government would be short-lived, to be voted out at the next election.

There are growing worries about anti-Semitism in a society where it was hitherto subterranean. "There is definitely a feeling in our community that things are a bit different," said Rabbi Solomon. "As a rabbi, as a *frum* family, we look Jewish, and we have had things happen to us ... Thank G-d it hasn't been violent." The inaction by political leaders on anti-Semitism "definitely raises the feeling in communities that maybe we're not so safe here", Solomon said.

Several ex-South African Jews approached for this story declined to be quoted. This self-censorship speaks volumes, suggesting that fear is percolating in the community.

"British Jews don't want to stand out," Stein said. "In my shul, British-born Jews didn't like the chief rabbi speaking out [against Corbyn]. Foreign-born Jews like myself and other South Africans were pleased he spoke out."

When asked if she is considering leaving the UK, Miller said, "Not at all, I think life for Jews in the UK is generally very good, and I haven't encountered anti-Semitism here myself. I have heard of a few incidents though, but I don't think it's worse than other countries."

Strous said, "Nowhere is perfect, and governments come and go. Jews have been living in the UK for more than 300 years ... We need more bridge building with different faiths and communities, and leaders who encourage this."

Stein said, "I won't leave the UK if Labour wins. But I feel like we had a break from anti-Semitism which is now over. Anti-Semitism is real in Labour, and it leaves left-leaning Jews like me homeless."



Dr Jonathan Rudolph



Janine Stein

Yoel Strous is 39 and works as a consultant for a global software and analytics company. He left South Africa in 2014. "Years ago, I liked the idea of New Labour and what Tony Blair stood for," he said, but he feels he has to vote Conservative, as this is a much more radical Labour Party.

Stein said, "I don't want Brexit, so I am voting Lib Dem [Liberal Democrats]. I can't vote Labour as it would be like a turkey voting for Thanksgiving. I can't vote Conservative because I don't trust Boris Johnson's leadership."

Opinion polls currently make an outright Labour win unlikely, but that's what was said about the 2016 Brexit referendum. If this happens, Rudolph said, "We will live in very uncertain times with a government opposed to Israel, and I suspect it will put a lot of what we do as a Jewish community within the areas of Zionism under stress."

"The big issue will be the relationship with Israel, and the relationship between the leadership of the community and government. The chief rabbi, Board of Deputies [of British Jews], and Jewish Leadership Council have made



Anti-Semitism survey has glaring contradictions

OPINION

PROFESSOR KAREN MILNER AND DAVID SAKS



Anti-Semitism, apart from being a vile and dangerous phenomenon, is also highly complex. Accordingly, the fight against it requires a multifaceted strategy.

An essential component of that strategy is to monitor levels of anti-Semitism around the world at behavioural and ideological level to better understand what is driving it (locally and internationally) and where urgent intervention is required.

Part of that challenge entails being aware of the cultural and historical context of a particular locality, and taking account of this when assessing the nature of anti-Semitic thought and behaviour. Failing to do so can result in findings that turn out to be misleading. This appears to have happened in the latest Anti-Defamation League (ADL) survey in regard to South Africa.

Since the 1960s, the ADL has conducted regular surveys on attitudes towards Jews around the world through the "ADL Global 100: An Index of Anti-Semitism" initiative. As a benchmark, the survey uses an eleven-question index focusing on such common anti-Jewish tropes as Jews being more loyal to Israel than their own countries and having excessive influence on the economy, media, and global affairs. While assessing only one measure of anti-Semitism – attitudes as opposed to actual incidents – the data provides a way of gauging prejudice and anti-Semitic stereotypes in different societies.

Against this background, the results of the latest ADL global index relating to South Africa are, to say the least, perplexing. Of the 18 countries assessed, only Poland scored (marginally) higher in prevalence of anti-Jewish feeling. If these results are to be believed, then every second South African harbours

negative attitudes towards Jews.

For the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), the obvious question is why anti-Semitic sentiment should be so widespread in a country where levels of direct anti-Jewish behaviour are strikingly low, compared with most diaspora countries. In France, anti-Semitic attacks frequently take the form of shootings and stabbings, and Jews are often advised against wearing kippot in public for fear of being targeted with violent verbal or physical attacks. There, only 15% of respondents had an unfavourable view of Jews. Contrast this to South Africa, where Jews walk around proudly and visibly Jewish, but score far higher than France on anti-Jewish sentiment in the survey.

Admittedly, the correlation between anti-Semitic actions and attitudes is not perfect. Hence, countries with low levels of anti-Semitic attitudes may still experience anti-Semitic violence. The relationship between attitudes/sentiment and behaviour is complex, and may have played some role in this disparity.

However, when the results are as inconsistent with the behavioural reality as in the case of this survey, further interrogation of such findings is warranted. The SAJBD has looked carefully at the full survey data for South Africa, and reviewed it in relation to similar South African research results (most notably the 2016 survey by the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town).

As a result, many glaring contradictions and anomalies have been identified. Only a few instances can be discussed here, but these alone call into question the reliability of much of the survey.

The figure of 47% of South Africans said to hold unfavourable opinions of

Jews came from collating responses to the eleven-question index. A separate question specifically asking what people thought about Jews yielded a negative figure of only 26%.

Another glaring contradiction concerns attitudes towards Israel. On the one hand, 36% did not support Israel's right to exist as a homeland for Jews, and 38% supported boycotts against it. On the other, when asked which side they sympathised with most in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 23% sympathised with the Palestinians, and 43% supported Israel. These are diametrically opposed findings.

Another puzzling finding concerns attitudes towards "white supremacists". In the local context, it's only within the white minority, comprising perhaps 8% of the population, that such individuals could be expected to have a degree of support. According to the survey, however, white supremacists are viewed favourably by more than 20% of South Africans, while a similar proportion has no opinion either way. This is obviously nonsense.

A further glaring anomaly is that 41% of respondents reportedly believe that Jews "want to weaken our national culture by supporting more immigrants coming to our country". Xenophobia is a real problem, but no previous investigations (including studies by the Human Sciences Research Council) have ever indicated that Jews are being blamed for the influx of foreign migrants.

South Africa isn't immune to anti-Semitism. Government rhetoric which regularly singles out Israel for particular censure is concerning for many Jews, plus our far right wing targets Jews as part of its racist ideology. We cannot afford to be complacent.

The results of this particular study are nevertheless problematic, and should be treated with care. They need to be reviewed in a more

nuanced manner that takes due note of our unique social, cultural, and historical realities.

• Professor Karen Milner is professor of psychology at the University of Witwatersrand and the national vice-chair of the SAJBD. David Saks is associate director of the SAJBD.

Israeli companies can't apply 'cookie-cutter' approach to SA

OPINION

AMIT LEV



Open a newspaper in Israel on any given day, and you will probably see an article about an Israeli company having just been bought by an international corporate, one that has just been listed on the stock exchange, or a big success story about an Israeli tech company. Many of these stories will be extraordinary, disruptive, and inspiring.

As a Jew and Israeli, it warms my heart to see the achievements of the Israeli state and economy. But I wonder how these solutions could be relevant to South African companies and its economy. Given that most of the Israeli companies aim first at high-gross-domestic-product (GDP)-per-capita countries such as the United States and countries in Europe, would it be reasonable to expect cutting edge Israeli companies to operate in South Africa?

I have been living here for close to two years, and base my observations on the hundreds of Israeli companies that have approached the trade mission requesting assistance. In assessing Israeli companies' attitude to the South African market, I would say it's positive, and not so positive.

It's positive because even in the current South African economic climate, there are pockets of excellence that perform very well, even on the global stage. To give you some examples, in terms of agriculture, the export of South African products grew 7% in 2018 to more than \$10 billion (R146.1 billion). This represents a record since 2001. Eighty five percent of all agricultural

products in the Western Cape are exported. It means that farmers and co-operatives are competing internationally.

This opens the door to Israel agri technology that is good at creating high-end solutions that can give farmers the edge to be competitive in international markets. In addition, agriculture is a seasonal industry. It makes it attractive to Israelis, because South African southern-hemisphere seasons don't coincide with those of the US and Europe. This means that Israeli companies have an opportunity



It requires both sides to do their homework and initiate detailed research.

to work with South African companies in a way that doesn't exclude their relations with Europe and the US.

Israel can also make a big difference in the field of cyber security in South Africa. A few weeks ago, the City of Johannesburg was hit by a cyber-attack from a group called Shadow Kill Hackers. They shot down the city's services to get a ransom of R500 000 in Bitcoin. Based on worldwide statistics, this is actually a very common type of cyber-attack. There are millions of such incidents every day all over the world.

With South Africa being a financial hub in sub-Saharan Africa, it is – and always will be – a target for hackers.

Given Israel's geopolitical issues, it was one of the first countries in the world subjected to cyber-attack when these infiltrations started happening. We called this field information security back in the 90s. Today, Israel has the second highest number of cyber companies in the world (750 companies) and 42 research and development foreign company cyber labs. The export of Israel's cyber expertise and products is estimated to be in the range of \$5.5 billion to \$6 billion (R80 to R87 billion) (based on the latest research of Israel's premier cyber data research centre). With this in mind, Israel can be a great partner to South African companies in tackling cyber problems.

Are you aware that South African has five of the 100 most innovative insurance companies in the world? Israel, by the way, doesn't have even one.

The Israeli insure-tech segment is evolving, and today consists of more than 250 companies from various sectors such as fintech, artificial intelligence, homeland security, and wellness. Even though South African insurance giants are innovative, they can't develop all their technologies in-house, and would surely benefit from engaging with small Israeli start-ups that create niche solutions in the insurance space.

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Euthanasia 'contrary to Judaism'

JORDAN MOSHE

Euthanasia, active or passive, is contrary to the teachings of Judaism. In extreme situations, however, the termination of human life is not considered a sin, but an obligation.

So explained physician and world-renowned expert on Jewish medical ethics, Rabbi Akiva Tatz, who unpacked the medical, ethical, and religious dimensions of ending human life in a talk at the LinkShul Saltzman Family Community Centre last Wednesday.

Tatz said today's medical reality regarding euthanasia is profoundly difficult to reconcile with Jewish teachings. "We're living at a time that is very adversarial to the Jewish approach," he said. "The medical profession today is moving towards terminating people's lives to a degree that we definitely don't agree with."

"The pendulum has swung to a position where the medical profession is much less concerned with keeping people alive than with quality of life. It's regarded as kinder to let someone die because they're suffering, and it's no longer assumed that we want to save a life by default. Technology has led to society asking if it's the right thing to prolong a life if a person won't enjoy it."

In fact, said Tatz, in Britain, keeping someone alive with a low quality of life is deemed unethical, and if one keeps a patient alive against their wishes, one can be sued for wrongful life and assault.

The criteria according to which medical ethics evaluates a case of euthanasia include autonomy, justice, beneficence, and non-maleficence, Tatz said. "Autonomy refers to the patient's right to decide what will happen to him. Justice refers to the patient being denied treatment if someone else needs it more, and it can actually trump autonomy.

Benevolence means one is obliged to do what's best for the patient, and non-maleficence means not doing anything that harms the patient."

More often than not, these conditions are easily satisfied, and the medical profession is willing to withhold treatment and allow a patient to die. "The real irony is that the Western world of today is much better at respecting autonomy when the patient wants to stop treatment, but not so good at respecting a patient's wish to continue," he said. "If a patient wants to die, doctors say it's his autonomy, and allow it. But if the patient wants to keep going, they say it's unethical and expensive. This is one of the tensions we experience."

By contrast, Jewish law dictates that we do anything to save a life under all circumstances. "We are obliged to save any kind of life for any amount of time at any cost," said Tatz. "That life is of infinite value is the default position."

"The Mishna says that if a person is buried under a collapsed building on Shabbos, you are obliged to break Shabbos to grant even a second more life, even if they are unconscious. Our view on saving life is extreme."

However, there are criteria which, if met, can enable the withholding of treatment. "Under certain circumstances, we agree

that it's not fitting to continue treating a person," said Tatz. "You need a terminally ill or hopelessly unconscious patient, uncontrollable suffering, and a wish on the part of the patient not to continue treatment. If these are met, says one of the greatest rabbinic authorities, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, not only is it acceptable to stop treatment, but you're obliged to do so. He rules it cruel to keep treating such a person."

Tatz went on to define the parameters of each criterion according to halacha. "In modern medicine, terminally ill means imminently dying," he said. "Halachically, the definition is one year. Old age is not a terminal illness – we'd all be considered terminally ill if we considered age such an illness. We mean a specific problem which is progressing and will end life within a year." He adds that Israeli law defines the period as six months, a period determined by the Israeli government after consultation with a commission of 34 experts.

Where there is uncontrollable suffering, modern medicine enables us to relieve virtually any degree of physical suffering. While this might not be true of psychosocial or emotional suffering, we are able to solve physical pain with modern painkillers, making this criterion more difficult to satisfy.

"We should never be dealing with someone who wants to die because of uncontrollable physical pain in this age," said Tatz. "The dilemma here is that, unfortunately, we might need to administer dangerous treatment to relieve pain."

"Still, we have a halachic ruling that if the only



Rabbi Akiva Tatz

Photo: Jordan Moshe

way to relieve pain is through dangerous means, it's not just acceptable but obligatory. When someone is in agony, relieving pain is considered not just humane but treatment of the disease as well. You give the drug not to kill the patient, but to make their situation easier. If the suffering is truly intractable, then we move on to the last phase."

Tatz points out that even if a patient is terminal and suffering physically, but wants to continue treatment, we do whatever we can. However, if they don't want to continue for legitimate reasons, we respect it and withhold treatment.

The difficulty, however, lies in determining what a patient's wishes truly are. Said Tatz, "The ideal is to ask a patient themselves. If we can't, we ask the family member the person would have trusted – most commonly parents, children, and spouses. If that's not possible, we ask the objective question

what any person in the situation would want."

If the above three conditions are met, treatment can be stopped. However, this means that medical treatment is withheld, but staples need to continue to be administered, even if it keeps the patient alive. Said Tatz, "Patients still need to be given basic medicines, fed, or get insulin if they're diabetic. In other words, you can stop treating the disease, but can't allow someone to starve, no matter how difficult it is to give them liquid or food. Unless they will die tomorrow, you are obliged to keep meeting their basic needs."

He stressed that withholding treatment doesn't mean stopping something already prolonging life, such as a ventilator or dialysis.

"If the patient is on a machine and you turn it off, you're killing them. However, you can withhold something not yet being given, such as stopping an intermittent treatment or not having the next treatment session."

He concluded by saying that one version of euthanasia is acceptable in Judaism: the removal of an external stimulus preventing imminent death. "When a person is actively dying, and they're in the throes of death, you are permitted to remove an external disturbance which is keeping them alive," he said.

"Suppose there's construction taking place nearby that's keeping one alive, Jewish law allows us to remove it as it's an external interference which prevents a person from dying then and there. If a life is being artificially prolonged by external stimulus, we can and should remove it."

Israeli scientists aim for the moon and more

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

"Israel's journey to the moon is a story that everyone can dream about. It's a good example of Israeli chutzpah." So said a top female Israeli aerospace engineer at an open discussion at a women's breakfast hosted by the South African Friends of Sheba.

The engineer, who could not be named for security reasons, worked on Israel's first mission to the moon on the world's first privately-funded lunar lander, Beresheet.

Her story is an example of how pursuing a passion for science can take you out of this world. The height of her career was 400 000 km above the earth, she joked. "I've loved science since I was in high school. My drive now is to lead in the technological world. My challenge is to keep us leading in the space industry which isn't always easy in our dynamic world of industries."

She argued that even though the moon landing itself failed, the mission was a success as it inspired the next generation. Beresheet began with three Israeli students who submitted their idea to the Google Lunar XPRIZE competition, a global contest that pledged \$20 million (R292.1 million) to the first private entity to land a spacecraft on the moon. Ultimately, Beresheet crashed just before landing on the moon.

"Israel is still in the top seven nations to orbit the moon even if we didn't land," said the engineer. "One of the main goals of this mission was educational – to encourage the young generation of Israelis to study STEM subjects [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics]. Now, many kids are dressing up as astronauts for Purim, and more students are studying science and will be the next generation of satellite engineers. Our message to them is that everyone can do better, that they must set the bar higher and higher each time. The most difficult moment is after failure, but they're often the best learning experiences. We're now considering what the next mission to the moon will be. We don't want it to be the same, we want to have a significant scientific goal or study to work towards."

As a start-up nation, Israel is well placed to espouse

such a philosophy. The country is leading in space technology and science, with far fewer resources than the superpowers who have traditionally excelled in the industry. "Space has no borders. It's a very good platform for international co-operation," said the engineer. "The fact that Israel, as a small country, is leading is a huge achievement. We're part of the space club, made up of only eight nations that have end-to-end capabilities in space. These start from designing a satellite to developing, launching, and operating a satellite in orbit year after year. Most of our communication comes from space. For a small country



Karin Fourie and Joan Joffe at the breakfast

like Israel, being able to have our own communication satellite in space and get our own images from space is a strategic capability, enabling us to work on scientific and technological breakthroughs."

In light of its political and geographical limitations, Israel can launch satellites only to the west, which has forced it to be increasingly innovative. "All other nations launch their satellites to the east because the earth's rotation is to the east so you gain earth's natural movement," said the engineer. "We've therefore needed to build lightweight satellites with the same capabilities, which has actually been to our advantage in space technology."

As a proud mother working in a very demanding industry, the engineer has also had to exercise ingenuity in achieving a work-life balance. Asked how she does it, she insisted that women can have it all as long as they

make the decision to do so. "There's no one answer, you have to create your own balance day-by-day. It's personal, and it's not easy. When you decide that following your dreams is an important thing to do, you do it, and you stick with your decision. We need to dare to dream our dreams, to believe, for us and for the next generation."

While she acknowledges the challenges that come with working in a male-dominated field, she chooses to be positive. "It's my choice to create my personal balance and to look only on the bright side. And to tell my kids that this is my choice." Her daughter was so inspired by her mother's example, that she, too, is an engineer, working in cyber technology.

Also underpinned by positivity, the South African Friends of Sheba aims to strengthen the relationship between the South African Jewish community and Sheba Medical Center in Tel Aviv, Israel. At the breakfast, Executive Director Naomi Hadar said the Sheba Medical Center rated one of the top 10 hospitals in the world, has a philosophy of non-discrimination, helping everyone from Israelis to Arabs to Palestinians. Sheba's work also benefits the globe, said Hadar, evident by its worldwide outreach programme. "Whatever we achieve, we want to share with the world. Wherever there's a disaster, Sheba is among the first to be there, whether it's helping with floods in Mozambique, or with the earthquake in Haiti."

In South Africa, the organisation aims to share knowledge and develop outreach programmes. It does this with the support of organisations like Eurolab, an innovative oncology company focusing on cancer treatment, management, and care. "We know that South Africa has good medical facilities, but they're only available to about 20% of the population," said Hadar.

"The rest depend on the government." From working on developing a portable clinic scanning for cervical cancer in Modimolle, to starting a nurses training programme in KwaZulu-Natal, the group is committed to making a difference. "Lately we've also sent many patients from South Africa to get treatment in Israel. We can't help everyone, but whatever we can do, we will do."

HIV/AIDS treatment about education as well as access



BRYAN SCHIMMEL

OPINION

It's nearly four decades since the first cases of HIV were diagnosed in the United States. In the first decade, the virus took down the biggest icons in the world. The deaths of film star Rock Hudson, superstars Freddie Mercury, and Liberace were a chilling signal that this virus didn't discriminate. Anyone who was infected was doomed to an untimely agonising, lesion-infested demise.

I was confronted with my first personal loss when my friend and colleague, Bill Faure, a visionary in South African television, lost his battle with the virus in 1994.

I was diagnosed four years later, and was at risk of suffering a fate similar to Bill. But by that time, the first successful antiretroviral (ARV) regimens resulted in the plummeting of the HIV/AIDS related death rate for the first time in 15 years.

Medication consisted of multiple tablets with complex dosing instructions. They were expensive and toxic to some organs, as well as producing myriad unpleasant side effects. But they kept people alive.

Over the past 20 years, ARV treatment has advanced exponentially. The cost has come down dramatically, and the dosing regimen has been simplified to one tablet a day.

For three decades, the world was inundated with safe-sex campaigns and drives to educate people on how the virus is transmitted, through

which fluids, and via which avenues of access to the body. In the past few years, irrefutable medical evidence has shown that HIV-positive people who are on ARV therapy and maintain an undetectable viral load are now considered to be non-infectious.

It's an odd yet reassuring feeling to know that as long as I continue in this way, I won't be considered clinically infectious.

The new catchphrase is, "undetectable = untransmittable". This is a huge concept to accept after so many years of focused education on the risks and dangers of HIV infection. I have been on ARV treatment for 14 years, and have been undetectable for as long.

It's an odd yet reassuring feeling to know that as long as I continue in this way, I won't be considered clinically infectious. I can't overstate the value of being tested.

It might seem that the key to all of this is simply commitment to ARV treatment. However, even with affordable treatment now being rolled out in South Africa, stigma is still a huge obstacle to treatment.

To coincide with this past World AIDS Day on 1 December,

South Africa has rolled out a new and affordable three-in-one ARV treatment. According to Robert Matiru of global health development organisation Unitaid, this new regimen, known as TLD, is a game changer for South Africa which has the highest burden of HIV of any country in the world.

It's a game changer because in a country that has been ranked amongst the highest in the world for inequality, the low cost to develop and produce this new ARV could assist in the treatment of up to five million HIV-positive people who are not currently able to afford or receive treatment.

However, the percentage of HIV-positive South African people that remain untreatable isn't strictly limited to socio-economic inequality or the inability to afford treatment. A relationship between inequality and stigma needs to be examined.

The middle to upper class who live in the urban centres of the country – regardless of cultural or racial background – who can afford private healthcare with direct access to medical practitioners who specialise in HIV infection and treatment, are likely to be more educated and informed about advancements and developments in the understanding of HIV/AIDS.

The lower class, historically disadvantaged and on the poverty line, who are less educated, lack

literacy, and are drawn into beliefs that reside deep in tribal, religious, cultural, historical, and ethnic mindsets, are most at risk of stigmatising and/or being stigmatised when it comes to the subject of HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

The tragedy of inequality in South Africa is not merely the gigantic gulf between the haves and have-nots. It's the seismic fault line that lies between those who are educated and those are deprived of sufficient education to be able to make informed choices that have an impact not only on physical health and well-being, but also mental

and emotional well-being.

It's all very well that a new, cheap-to-produce ARV has been rolled out in South Africa. But it's not going to be nearly as effective if there's no support programme that encourages that sector of the population to come forward and feel safe to be tested without fear of stigma.

• *Bryan Schimmel is a multi-award winning music director, arranger, performer and public speaker who won the Absa Jewish Achiever Award for Art, Sport, Science and Culture.*

Israeli companies can't apply 'cookie-cutter' approach to SA

>>>Continued from page 9

In terms of where South Africa is not so attractive to Israeli companies, we need to first consider that the South African market, in general, is not considered to be an early adopter. Israeli companies would need to change all of their marketing strategies from innovative and cutting edge to solutions-driven, established case studies. This isn't simple.

Then, the South African rand is one of the most volatile currencies around the world, and with slow GDP growth, South African companies are sensitive to buying new technology and expanding to new territories. Therefore, Israeli companies must redesign their cost structure to fit into the South African market. Also not simple.

Lastly, skilled negotiation is required to navigate and bridge cultural

differences. Israeli companies often ask me the following questions: Why is no one answering my calls during December? Why do I need a BEE [Black Economic Empowerment] certificate? I sent the person an email yesterday, and he hasn't replied ... Is something wrong?"

As you can see, there's no cookie-cutter answer to matchmaking between Israeli technology and South African companies. It requires both sides to do their homework and initiate detailed research. Then, they need to be patient and consistent until they formalise the right relationship.

• *Amit Lev is trade and investment commissioner, and the head of the trade and economic mission of the Embassy of Israel to South Africa.*



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Habonim alumni who have changed the world

TALI FEINBERG

What do Dr Stanley Hirsch, Stanley Fischer, Stanley Bergman, Morris Kahn, and Professor Michael Hayden have in common? They are just a handful of the many Habonim Dror Southern Africa alumni who have made their mark across the globe.

In fact, some say that the methods they use to run their companies and manage hundreds of thousands of employees are influenced by their time as Habonim *madrichim* (counsellors/leaders). They also say that they use the *hadracha* (leadership) techniques learned in the movement.

As Habonim gears up to celebrate its 90th anniversary in 2020, it looks back at an extraordinary number of past members who have made a major impact on the world.

Hirsch, currently chief executive of FuturaGene, says, “My experience at Habonim taught me certain fundamental values that have served as a foundation for me in my career and in the development of my management style. The dignity of work, and of every person, no matter what their background, imbues respect and balance that allows one to progress.”

Hirsch has played a crucial role in the healthcare, diagnostic, agricultural, and biotech

industries. His company is a leader in genetic research and development for the global sustainable industrial-forest sector. FuturaGene obtained the first ever commercial approval for yield enhanced, genetically modified eucalyptus. Early in his career, Hirsch was involved in the development of automated systems for plant tissue culture.

Fischer, probably Habonim’s most famous export, was deputy chairperson of the United States Federal Reserve, and before that, he was the governor of the Bank of Israel. “He is the embodiment of the old-school global leader,” wrote Sam Fleming in the *Financial Times* in 2017.

“In his near-five-decade career,

Hilary Meyer, Michael Hayden and Johnny Isaacsohn with other Habonim *chaverim*

Photo: Habonim Dror, the Kibutz Movement



Fischer could lay claim to being one of the godfathers of modern economic policy. It was Fischer who helped set the direction of central banking practice as an academic in the 1970s. Then, as

first deputy managing director at the International Monetary Fund, he played a leading role in the response to the Asian and Russian crises of the late 1990s. He went on to steer Israel through the global meltdown of 2007-2009 as governor of the country’s central bank,” Fleming wrote.

To complete a trio of Stanleys, Bergman won Chief Executive of the Year in 2017. He has been chief executive and chairperson of the board for Henry Schein since 1989, the largest provider of products and services for the dental and veterinary industries. He has grown the company to exist in 33 countries and employ more than 21 000 people.

Bergman told the *SA Jewish Report*, “Participating in Habonim from an early age reinforced the values of *tikkun olam* [healing the world], and was a strong complement to my parent’s values, while at the same time providing an excellent leadership-development platform. I always remind our young managers that those who are good at ‘running a summer camp’ make excellent future leaders in business, or, in fact, any walk of life. A great camp counsellor knows how to get the entire team engaged in the mission.”

He has received numerous awards and titles, and he and his wife, Marion, actively support several organisations that foster the arts, cultural diversity, grassroots healthcare, higher education, and sustainable entrepreneurial economic development initiatives.

Kahn was the man behind Israel’s mission to the moon in the form of Beresheet, the first privately-funded moon-lander that crashed into the lunar surface. Kahn, who is said to be preparing for Beresheet 2, is considered Israel’s wealthiest high-tech mogul.

“Unlike others who achieved what they did thanks to an inheritance that provided seed money or a swift exit, Kahn created his capital with his own two hands,” wrote Anat Georgi and Guy Grimland in *Ha’aretz* in 2011.

The billionaire Israeli entrepreneur joined Habonim in 1948. He wanted to go to Israel, but was encouraged to wait since he was still young. After getting married, he made aliyah with his family.

He founded Amdocs, one of Israel’s largest, most established high-tech companies with 26 000 employees worldwide, and Coral

Why Jewish culture dominates TV shows

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

“Are you going to answer my question with a question?” “If not here, where?” This exchange in shul on Yom Kippur on *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel* exemplifies the distinct Jewish flavour of many popular current international television series.

“There’s a strong trend towards Jewish-themed stories on television,” says social commentator and journalist, Gus Silber. Whether you’re watching Netflix, Amazon Prime, or even DStv, you’ll see many shows that are explicitly or implicitly Jewish.

In recent decades, *Seinfeld* set the tone for mainstream Jewish TV series. The comedy, in which York-based comedian Jerry Seinfeld and his friends were put in hilariously awkward situations that they discussed (to death), was famously called “the show about nothing”. It exudes Jewish humour, yet its universal appeal makes it part of celebrated mainstream television history.

“Absolutely a Jewish series, *Seinfeld* is engrained into popular culture,” says Silber. “*Curb Your Enthusiasm* by Larry David, the creator of *Seinfeld*, is actually much more Jewish though. You’re constantly aware of the lead character, Larry David, being a Jewish prototype, and in many ways a Jewish stereotype.

“He’s perpetually troubled, and largely immune to the chaos he causes in the world around him. An interesting character, he’s thoroughly unlikeable, but he’s hilarious because of that. I can’t think of one episode I’ve seen that doesn’t in some way weave his Jewishness into it.”

Yet there’s never been a Jewish TV show quite like *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel*. Set in the late 50s, it’s about Miriam “Midge” Maisel, who discovers her passion and flair for stand-up comedy when her husband Joel leaves her on the eve of Yom Kippur. And, it’s just when the rabbi is set to attend her family’s breaking-of-the-fast feast, the ultimate act of forgiveness after the horror of Midge’s wedding speech years before, where she joked that there was shrimp in the egg roll. The show celebrates the New York Jewish comedy scene of the time, but puts a feminist twist on the era with the introduction of an often underestimated and unwelcome woman to the fold. All that amidst divorce, disappointed parents, feuding in-laws, religious faux pas, and annual trips to the Catskills – where everybody knows your business.

Speaking to *The Times of Israel*, series creator Amy Sherman-Palladino describes her relationship to the humour which inspired the tone of the show. “My whole cadence is from my father,” she says. “He was

Borscht-belt, Bronx-Jewish, Mel Brooks’ *2000-Year-Old Man*. So, for me, Jews created humour. At that time, they really created humour. That inflection, that rhythm. The ... ‘oy’ and the ‘thing’ – it’s New York, and it’s Jews.”

Having already won multiple awards, *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel* recently topped the comedy nomination list for the 2019 Emmy Awards with 20 nominations, testament to its widespread appeal. The show ultimately took home eight awards, including best supporting actor and actress wins for Tony Shalhoub and Alex Borstein. Borstein, who plays Midge’s agent Susie Myerson, honoured her grandmother in her acceptance speech, revealing how she escaped being shot during the Holocaust

similar elements.

“*Transparent* is very different to *The Goldbergs*, but they’re almost interchangeable in the way they depict family drama. A lot of this seems to happen around the table. Eating is where the drama breaks out. That in itself is Jewish.”

Boasting worldwide popularity and critical acclaim, these shows all have massive appeal beyond their Jewishness.

“You don’t necessarily have to be Jewish to enjoy them or to be touched by them – they resonate. Every Jewish family has its own kinds of troubles, frustrations, celebrations, and crazy characters, and that’s universal. That’s why you can watch a show like that set far from where you live, with people that you’ll never come across, yet it feels like home. It’s part of why you tune into shows, and even obsess about them.

In analysing why Jewish shows are so prevalent, Silber points to the Bible. “There’s not really much difference between the big biblical family dramas and family dramas on television,” he says. “There’s a big Jewish family tradition going back thousands of years, and TV writers play on that, put it in a modern environment, and have fun with it. The original biblical Jewish stories translate into modern stories well, and they’re almost always about relationships between people, especially between children and their parents. *Transparent* is a good example of that. There are also stories about

people being taken from one circumstance and thrown into another, like *Schitt’s Creek*, where a well-off family loses everything and suddenly, they’re ‘in exile’ in this ramshackle town. These themes are ancient, but simultaneously very modern.”

Speaking of how Jewish shows handle religious and cultural sensitivities, Silber argues that it’s all about how it’s done, and who it comes from. For example, one of the world’s greatest Jewish comedians, Sacha Baron Cohen, deliberately crosses the line playing fictional satirical characters. More recently he’s turned his hand to dramatic acting in another Jewish/Israeli series, *The Spy*, about top Mossad spy Eli Cohen. Yet he’s on form comedically in his 2018 show *Who is America?* “Here, he plays on stereotypes and people’s perceptions of Israelis, pretending to be a hardcore Israeli operative. He pushes things too far, almost challenging his victims to say, ‘You can’t be real!’” Silber says.

“The basis of Jewish humour is self-deprecation. It comes from a long tradition,” he says. “It says that no matter how hard you try, you won’t be as deprecating about me as I am about myself. If somebody else does that about your culture, it can be seen as offensive, but when it’s done internally, usually that’s not the case. Ultimately, what characterises these shows and what makes them worth watching is their warmth – that’s what draws you in.”



by literally “stepping out of line” – something she encouraged all women to do.

“There are also many series out there that are deeply Jewish in theme, yet you don’t immediately think of them as Jewish,” says Silber. Enter *Transparent*. Following the Pfefferman family, the show starts with a 70-year-old divorced father, played by Jeffrey Tambor, announcing his impending gender transition to his kids.

“*Transparent* is a classic Jewish family drama with a massive difference,” says Silber. “After a while, you forget about the somewhat radical theme, and become involved in the classic family story of how the father deals with his transition, and with his children and ex-wife. It’s modern, contemporary, and not something you would have seen on TV 10 or 20 years ago, but it feels relevant. It’s warm, it’s quirky, it’s full of anxiety, and it’s absolutely 100% Jewish.”

Silber also references lighter Jewish family comedies, namely *The Goldbergs*, about creator and writer Adam Goldberg’s childhood, and *Schitt’s Creek* created by well-known Jewish comedian and actor Eugene Levy.

“Those series will be immediately familiar to anyone who’s ever been brought up in or interacted with a Jewish family,” says Silber. What’s interesting about all these Jewish TV series, he says, is that while they cover different themes, they all have

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From long drops to cell phones, camp is still machaneh

JORDAN MOSHE

Long drops, tinned sardines, and bucket showers – these are the features of December machaneh that are indelibly ingrained in the minds of the campers of yesteryear.

Though these iconic camp memories are foreign to campers in 2019, Habonim or Bnei Akiva campers still tap into a timeless experience that hasn't changed.

Log fires may have given way to LEDs and trains have been replaced with planes, but it seems the spirit of the camp experience remains unchanged.

"There's no question that in our days, things were simpler," says Errol Anstey. "We wrote letters, made do with simple food, and accepted the basic nature of the camp experience. That's what it was."

As honorary president of the Habonim youth movement, Anstey got involved as a *channich* (camper) in 1981. He later became a *madrich* (camp counsellor), and then *sgan-rosh* (deputy head) of camp. He remains involved, visiting the campsite regularly and seeing the changes that have taken place.

Where tents were once standard for every camper, younger *channichim* are today housed in cabins. The long drop toilets and bucket showers of yesteryear have been replaced with flowing water amenities.

Security upgrades have also left their mark, a perimeter fence around the campsite preventing the use of a zipline that older *channichim* remember riding from the top of the site's iconic tower into the neighbouring sea waters.

In addition to the physical alterations, Anstey notices a change in the pace of the daily schedule. "Life was much slower back then," he admits. "Everyday activity was simpler, carried out at a slower pace and far more relaxed. We drifted from breakfast to activity, always chilled, and in no hurry."

He compares this to the constant movement and activity at machaneh today. "There's no time for kids to be bored at camp today," he says. "The space itself is much more dynamic and active. People don't stop – they stay busy. It's not a bad thing, but it's a dramatic shift."

Equally dramatic is the move towards greater inclusivity, opening the camp experience to more youngsters than before. "If you were 'complicated' in the past, you just didn't go on camp," says Anstey. "If you were gluten intolerant, sickly, unable to afford camp – you just didn't go. Camp provides a variety of meal options, medication, and funding today that were unheard of before."

The former conference centre has also been converted into a basic infirmary, and the campsite features additions such as five-a-side soccer courts, trampolines, and other recreational amenities.

Where food is concerned, not only are vegans and vegetarians catered for, but a team of Israeli chefs is involved in preparing the everyday fare. "The quality of basic food offered has definitely improved," says Anstey. "Kids are realising that they don't actually need to bring a trommel full of food because good food is



At Bnei Akiva camp: (back row) Joanne Zagnoev, Jacky Krengel, Persha Valman and Lorene Hodes. (Front row) Rabbi Rael Krengel, Zev Krengel, Avrom Krengel and Charles Krengel.

provided."

He says the programmes conducted on camp have also changed significantly, catering for a reality that simply didn't exist in the past.

"The education system on camp is much more sophisticated – it has moved with the times. Back then, *madrichim* had to prepare all their material before camp, type and print it out, and use it as it stood. We couldn't make changes, even if the schedule changed or something happened that made a programme less relevant."

Daniel Sussman, Habonim *mazkir klali* (secretary general) and *rosh machaneh*, says that the education provided has had to adapt to the demands of reality in South Africa and Israel. "In the past, continuous growth of Israel was a key focus," he says. "*Tochniot* (activities) really stressed the need to help Israel grow, to go to Israel, and establish a kibbutz."

Habonim has had to reevaluate its relevance in relation to the Jewish state, realising that equipping *channichim* to contribute on kibbutzim is no longer relevant. "As a more secular Jewish institution, we've had to redefine our identity while maintaining a core Jewish identity in spite of changes in the Israeli way of life," says Sussman. "The camp experience has to remain up to date."

Another key change Sussman identifies is a lack of independence amongst youngsters today, who lack the self-reliance which defined the *channies* of old. Anstey agrees, pointing out that access to cell phones and constant communication with parents makes this even more challenging.

"In the past, if a child missed home in the beginning, they got over it because they couldn't speak to their parents and their *madrichim* helped them handle it," he says. "Today, their parents speak to them constantly, and they actually encourage them to come home. They don't help them become independent."

Zev Krengel, the second of three generations to attend Bnei Akiva machanot, says, "My mom went on Bnei, I went, and my children go today.

"Parents didn't really get involved in my day. They saw you off, but weren't really invested in your experience. Today, parents value what camp offers more than they did before, meaning they want to be more involved in making sure their child enjoys the opportunity."

After going on camp as a *channich* for years, Krengel served as *rosh machaneh* in 2005.

Krengel says Bnei Akiva

also has changed only in terms of superficial and time-related elements, maintaining a core that looks identical to that of his day. "Of course, there are more cosmetic changes made today and tweaks are made all the time," he says. "I have no doubt that the youngsters who run Bnei today do a far better job than we did. It's more demanding, and things have had to change."

Indeed, the Bnei Akiva campsite now offers a comprehensive array of sporting equipment for rugby, soccer, volleyball, netball, indoor basketball, and more. It has improved shower facilities, a tuck-shop stocked with all the necessary nosh, and outstanding Shabbat meals.

"The changes are there, but the reality is that kids are still excited to sleep in tents, will eat food provided in bulk, and work hard for a united purpose."

They all agree that camp is still a quality experience. "*Channichim* are still the same *channichim* – they will complain about the food and the heat, but they bring the same energy to camp that was legendary before."

"Visiting the campsite at Bnei is like entering a time warp," says Krengel. "You arrive and, in spite of some changes, you see the same setup and spirit you did decades ago."

"Machaneh perpetuates our community's unity, and like our Beth Din and characteristic South African warmth, it's one of the true cornerstones of our Jewish community that makes us what we are. Jewish youth camps remain a defining factor of our South African Jewry."

A tale of three trommels

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



When my two teenage daughters heard I was writing about what kids pack for their annual machaneh (summer camp) at the coast, they objected vehemently to being written about. So we'll just call them Sylvia* and Bernice*.

Getting ready for camp is a major logistical operation. It all revolves around what goes into the trommel, the ubiquitous Smurf-blue metallic trunk.

Most youngsters decorate their trommels to distinguish them and express their identities. This usually entails parents forking out for several cans of spray paint. The transformed trommels boast skylines and nature scenes, football teams, and movie idols, sunsets, and geometric patterns.

The next step is waterproofing the trommels in case it rains at camp, because they don't sit in the tents but outside them. Now as a Y-I-D I'm not very keen on D-I-Y, but I dutifully bought a silicone gun and squelched the goo onto all the joints and edges inside the trunk.

This year, Sylvia didn't bother with anything else, while Bernice spent several hours affixing black dustbin bags to the inside of her trommel with packing tape. They had to be perfectly aligned. She's so fussy that when she was wrapping her stretcher in green bin bags, you would have thought she was embalming the mummy of King Tut.

The volume of clothing that my girls packed was impressive. An outfit for all occasions, from Shabbat to swimming and everything in between. Each subcategory of clothes was placed into its own stiff packet and labelled by my wife. Sometimes there were packets inside packets. These were loaded into the trommel like Russian matryoshka nesting dolls, each containing a smaller doll inside themselves.

The trick seemed to be to pack as much as possible so that, G-d forbid, Jewish teenagers would never, ever have to wash any item of clothing. It all returns as a foul-smelling multicoloured mass after machaneh.

Next comes the food. We had to purchase a ticket for a separate food trommel. You would think that the thousands we pay for camp would cover all meals. Apparently not. My two girls packed cereals and long-life milk and instant noodles and dried fruit and rusks and peanuts and biscuits and energy bars, and heaven knows what else. Apparently a camp favourite is setting toilet paper alight in a can of tuna to smoke it. I expect to see that in a Jamie Oliver cookbook soon.

But the killer for me were the toiletries. When I travel, I take a toothbrush and toothpaste, hairbrush, shaving cream and razor, and deodorant. That's it. My daughters packed plasters, pills, potions, unctions, and lotions of every description. When my bank sent me an SMS of how much was purchased at the pharmacy, it exceeded the annual GDP (gross domestic product) of Lesotho.

"There are doctors on site. Surely you don't need to schlep all of this medicine?"

"Dad, the doctors just give out Strepsils for everything," Sylvia said.

"And why can't you share the medical supplies?" "Because Bernice's tent is far from mine."

And then, at the last minute, we had to rush off to the shops to buy yet another set of combination locks to seal the trommels. This was in spite of having bought combination locks every year for the same purpose.

"Why do you lose the locks?" I said.

Cue withering teenage eyerolls.

Once everything was finally crammed into the trommels, two people somehow dragged them to the car and delivered them to the drop-off point. That park was festooned with stretchers, mattresses, and hundreds of trommels. There were also a few deckchairs, a portable stove, and gazebos because there is hardly any shade on the campsite. The trommels were then stacked like Lego blocks into enormous trucks that would transport them down to the campsite. In my camping days, the trommels went on the same train as we did. Nowadays, kids fly to camp.



Trommels at Oxford Shul

Photo: Julie Leibowitz

"So, how are you going to carry the trommel on the other side?" I asked.

"Oh, I'll find some boys to help me," Sylvia smiled.

After all the trommel troubles, these kids will hopefully have the time of their lives.

* Not their real names

• Steven Gruzd is an analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs

Canines help child-abuse victims go to court

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Cardbury and Shiloh aren't your typical magistrate and prosecutor. They may be wearing the requisite robes and uniforms, but they're actually dogs, and they are helping child victims of sexual abuse pursue justice.

Using dogs to help children heal and tell their experiences in a legal setting has had much success, according to Shaheda Omar, the clinical director of the Teddy Bear Clinic, which assists victims of child abuse. And with such a high abuse rate, any success is a huge step towards stemming the problem.

We may be in the 16 days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children, but for Omar, this is a battle waged 365 days a year. "South Africa is the 128th largest country in the world," she says, "but if we look at the prevalence of abuse, we're in the top five of the most violent nations. We need to realise that child abuse is not your problem or my problem, it's our problem."

The Teddy Bear Clinic often uses innovative programmes to facilitate healing and prepare for court. Canine-assisted therapy is one such programme.

Omar and representatives from the non-profit volunteer organisation Touch our Pets Therapy Dogs, known as TOP Dogs, reveal how dogs help children. She was speaking at a recent event hosted by the Union of Jewish Women's (UJW's) Shalom Bayit Project and Koleinu.

There are two types of dogs, those who assist children to prepare for court, and therapy dogs.

Omar says the Teddy Bear Clinic began its court-preparation programme for children in 1997. "It began in response to the fact that children's evidence was viewed with caution,"

she says. "Children are the most vulnerable and marginalised population group. When they're sexually abused, they can't always provide a clear and coherent account of what happened as they can't make sense of it themselves."

The legal process often results in secondary victimisation as children are forced to relive the trauma in a scary setting that they don't understand. "This violation is more gross because they have to retell their story repeatedly and are questioned about explicit details," says Omar. "Since the inception of the court-preparation programme, we can see that more and more cases are being reported and finalised."

However, it's far from an ideal situation. According to Omar, 65% of cases that go to trial are withdrawn, and 75% of those are rape victims. "Yet, in the past few years, we've received a number of life and other harsh sentences, and this really motivates other children and families to come forward."

TOP Dogs came on board in 2015, taking the Teddy Bear Clinic's court-preparation system to the next level. In the clinic's mock court room, the dogs are allocated a role and position. "The children come in, and they're introduced to the role, not to the dog," says Belinda Lamb of TOP Dogs. "Our role is to support the children, and if the dogs and the children wish to interact, it's

entirely up to them. We do court preparation once a month, and have seen remarkable changes in the children." Children look to the "magistrate" – played by the dog – and have to identify him and understand what he does. The more they practice, the less threatened they feel.

The Teddy Bear Clinic offers court preparation to children between the ages of three and 18.

"The aim is not to teach the child what to say in the courtroom," says Omar. "It's about saying it as it happened, speaking the truth, and getting the child to understand the difference between the truth and a lie."

"We teach the child it's ok to say 'I don't know', or 'I can't remember'. It's so critical that every child that has to testify is empowered and enabled to say things like this. This is how we help children to understand that they have rights and the responsibility to speak the truth, to talk about things as they happened."

They are also taught how court works, and the fact that sometimes there is insufficient evidence, but it doesn't mean the magistrate doesn't believe them when the case is dismissed.

"We take them into the courtroom to allay their fears and anxieties and [help them] understand the process," says Omar. "They're reassured, and gain the courage to testify. We aim to empower them to become competent and credible witnesses. It's about giving a voice

to the voiceless. In most cases, we submit assessment reports to say that the child will suffer undue mental stress should they testify in open court. We strongly recommend that children testify in camera with the use of an intermediary where possible."

Aside from court preparation, the dogs offer immense therapeutic benefits. "We have an amazing phenomenon called the silent process," says Lamb. "Often, the children who come to the Teddy Bear Clinic are severely traumatised, there's no communication, they're just blank. We recently had one little girl that made contact with Shiloh, and they had a silent process. It's something remarkable and unexplained that's triggered between human and dog. All those good hormones are jumping around, the children relax, and they start communicating."

Omar elaborates, "You can see there's an exchange between dog and child. The rule is that there's no interference, prompting, or engaging, you leave them to connect and work it out for themselves. The child's whole demeanour changes. It's a light-bulb moment."

Often, there's an initial fear of dogs among children who have grown up with parents scarred by apartheid, in which police and dogs were seen as synonymous and not to be trusted.

"When lots of the children first encounter the dogs, there's fear and anxiety," says Omar. It relates to how child-abuse victims feel about their attackers – they paint people of the same race as their attackers with the same brush, and therefore don't trust them. As the children and dogs start interacting, the children learn to trust again in all areas of life. This was one of the rationales for bringing the dogs into the therapeutic process," says Omar. "They start breaking down those barriers and stereotypes."



Belinda Lamb from TOP Dogs with Shiloh

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Suchet's magic realism connects spiritual and physical world

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Cape Town Rabbi Sam Thurgood says Zvi Suchet is able to connect physical and spiritual worlds through a style of magical realism portrayed in works currently on exhibition at the South African Jewish Museum.

Speaking at the opening of *The Radiant Portal: Jewish Magical Realism* on Sunday, Thurgood said, "Judaism has so many rich metaphors, and he brings them to life through his art."

"Through representing them visually," says Thurgood, "they no longer remain evocative verbal metaphors. One is able to understand and conceptualise them so much better."

Suchet is, in fact, fine-art photographer Marc Hoberman, who has embarked on a new path. Having built his reputation on glossy coffee-table travel books, he is now working under the *nom de plume* Zvi Suchet, looking inward and exploring his own spiritual journey.

Zvi is Marc's Hebrew name, and Suchet his mother's maiden name. His maternal grandfather was, in fact, Zvi Suchet.

Suchet's debut exhibition, which runs at the museum until February, fulfils a life-long dream to produce a fine-art collection of Jewish-inspired imagery.

The exhibition showcases Suchet's unique style of Jewish magical realism, a combination of photography and illustration exploring Jewish themes of identity and mystical symbolism. Described as "a unique and modern refresh of a centuries-old subject", Suchet's artworks are aimed at generating renewed interest in Jewish art and culture amongst a new generation.

He has aspired to publish coffee-table books since the age of five, following in the footsteps of his late father, renowned photographer Gerald Hoberman. He published his first book at the age of 12, consisting of photographs of stamps depicting ancient Jewish coins.

Schooled at Herzlia, Suchet has kept journals from the time of his Barmitzvah, pages of which have found their way into the exhibition and form rough sketches for some of the pieces.

"We used to have morning prayers," he says. "I used to read things in the siddur, imagine all these visuals, and design artworks. But I wanted to wait until I felt I was mature enough to do it justice," the 39-year-old reflects.

"I literally woke up at 03:00 one morning, couldn't sleep, and the thought popped into my head, 'Now's the time.'" Since that day six months ago, he has been working "like crazy" to get the show on the road.

The photographs, some of which are taken in Jerusalem, some against his garage door, are composites, and include images of, for example, birds, foxes, and forests (drawn from his career as a wildlife photographer) that he has stored in his 40 000-strong image archive since his teenage years. "All the images are superimposed on the background, so it's photography and digital illustration," he says of the unique art form.

"You can't tell 100% whether it's a photograph, a painting, or an

illustration – it doesn't really fit neatly into any one of those boxes," he says, alluding to the magical realism of the exhibition's title.

"It's digital fine art," he clarifies, adding, "I always try to run away from the term 'digital', but when you use it subtly and correctly, it's an art form."

One of the pieces, *The Rabbi of Port Louis*, which inspired Suchet's new direction, features a rabbi looking out to sea. The sea is that of Port

The Old Testament has some of the most amazing symbolism in the world – there's nothing like it."

In addition, Suchet writes on an exhibition panel that "For inspiration while producing my work, I often listen to recordings of legendary voices such as [chazzanim] Moshe Koussevitzky, Frank Birnbaum, and Yitzchak Meir Helfgot."

Suchet has had no formal training, instead his knowledge comes from watching his dad, and on-



Louis, Mauritius, with the image of the rabbi superimposed on it.

"There's a very strange gap in the market for aesthetically relatable Jewish art for people today," he comments. "It's such a visually beautiful, rich subject."

"I love the idea of creating art out of reverence.

the-job experience. He was given cameras at the age of five, and the pair travelled the world during school vacations, taking in places such as the Amazon jungle, the Antarctic, and Cape to Cairo.

The Boys of Sabbath, taken in Jerusalem, resonates with Suchet's own experience. "I've always really loved Shabbat," he states, "especially as a child,

sitting with adults at the table and being included in the big world.

"I found that very magical, so I thought of the three faces of Shabbat as I remember it – wonder, learning, and imagining – with these children."

In another piece, *Lehadlik Ner Shel Shabbat*, 14 different images have been worked into one. The exhibition's main piece, *The Radiant Portal*, is set in a derelict mansion in Kolmanskop, an abandoned diamond mining town in Namibia.

"In its day, it was an incredibly opulent town," Suchet says. "The symbolism is so beautiful. The people left, and the sand filled up inside these homes – the sands of time."

"This painting is about the life phases of a Jewish boy, becoming a man, becoming an old man, with *abba* [father] and *ima* [mother] standing on the side watching the life unfold." Three interleading rooms in the mansion serve as metaphors for the different ages.

"I always thought that nothing shows [the passage of] time better than a picture of Kolmanskop. With total patience, the sand rises, and takes over these manmade things."

As opposed to raw photography, the artistry here is more about collecting images, designing the piece, and compositing, says Suchet of his creations. "Normally photography is totally instant – you have to wait for the moment, catch the moment. With this I can actually create the moment."

Suchet hopes to take the exhibition to New York, London, and Sydney next year.

At the opening, museum director Gavin Morris described the work as "a major departure from what we have come to expect from Marc Hoberman".

Morris paid tribute to Thurgood, who he said had been "a mentor, advisor, and teacher to Suchet, offering insight and advice to him as he explored the themes presented in the works we see here tonight".

Jewish Cape Town snapped for worthy cause

JORDAN MOSHE

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a collection of 301 photographs is a legendary epic. The images which appear in *A Handful of Sand – Jewish Cape Town 5779* collectively tell the story of the Jewish community in the mother city in a way words cannot.

Tony Raphaely, the man behind this venture, hopes that it will be a testament to Cape Town Jewry that will last millennia.

Published last month, the stand-alone volume is a pictorial slice of daily Jewish life in Cape Town at some point since Rosh Hashanah last year.

Commissioned and curated by Cape Town-born Raphaely, the book showcases its members in various stages of life, spanning from infancy to maturity and everything in between.

"History teaches us that no Jewish diaspora community has tenure," says Raphaely. "To give historians of the future a pictorial window into Cape Town's wonderful Jewish community, I decided to publish an image-only book showcasing a selection of the city's diverse and dynamic Jewish citizens."

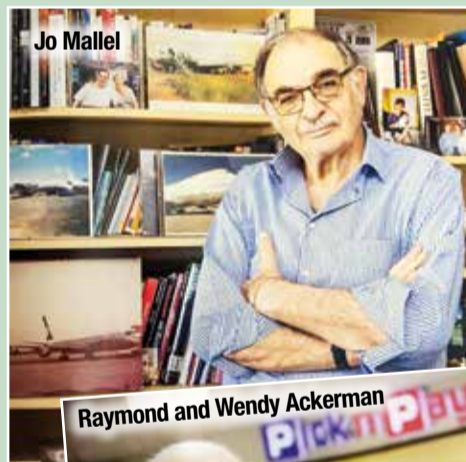
With the number of Jewish residents in Cape Town dwindling annually, Raphaely, who is now based in London, felt it essential to present a cross section of everyday Jewry today. He wanted to tell a story not of the past, but the immediate present.

"I was trying to create a resource that in 200 to 300 years' time will give researchers a window into Cape Town's wonderful, though diminishing, Jewish community," he says.

Armed with the brief to tell a story, a dedicated team of 17 photographers captured an array of pictures from across the city, moving from surgery to synagogue, wharfside to warehouse, and seeking out people from all walks of life.

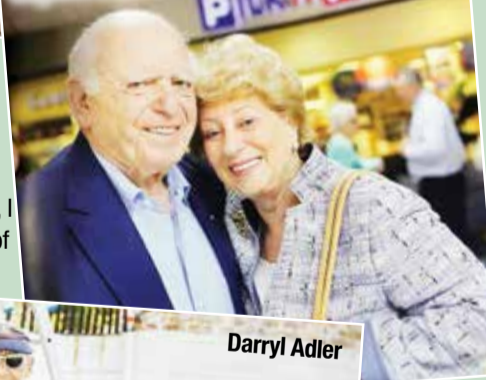
Raphaely says virtually every citizen approached was eager to be part of the project, honoured to exemplify Cape Town Jewish life in all its diversity and colour.

In fact, only two individuals didn't want to get involved. The rest took up the opportunity with fervour.



Jo Mallel

Raymond and Wendy Ackerman



Darryl Adler



Yolanda Ntanyana and Balu Nivison

"One of them said that he was a low-profile person who didn't do this sort of thing, and I suspect the other thought this was going to cost him money, even though I told him it wouldn't be the case," says Raphaely of the two who refused. "Almost everyone else said that they would be honoured to be in the book."

Raphaely describes the Cape Town Jewish community as committed to Jewish values and strongly supportive of Israel, with about 480 of its members appearing in the book.

Although he suspects that the bulk of the books sold will be bought by those featured in it, he says he is heartened that the Cape Town division of the South African Board of Jewish Deputies (SAJBD) has already ordered copies to present to overseas visitors.

Published by Penguin Random House, the book will be on sale for R360 at four community venues in Cape Town, including the Gardens Shul complex, the bookshop adjacent to Café Riteve in Gardens, and the kosher counter at Checkers in Sea Point.

Funds raised by book sales will be used to fund the tuition fees of local university students. "As my wife and I are donating the total proceeds of the book sales to Jewish education in the Western Cape, we are hopeful that

there will be in excess of R500 000 raised to assist in financing the studies of young Jews' university level education," says Raphaely.

With its depiction of the vibrant everyday life lived by Jewish Capetonians, the book will be a valuable resource for decades to come. "This book promises to be an enduring record of the dynamic range of professions and occupations represented by the close-knit community living at the southernmost tip of Africa," says Raphaely.

Our 'spoilt brat' heroes

Those of us who were adults at universities in the 1970s and 1980s had a socialist bent, and the goal of keeping workers content was deeply felt. It overrode many other things.

Many trade-union members and anti-apartheid activists came from idealistic Jewish youth movements such as Habonim and Hashomer Hatzair. Before that, Jewish activists historically played roles helping build unions throughout the 20th century. Anti-apartheid activist Solly Sachs, for example, was a Communist Party member in 1919, and secretary of the Garment Workers' Union in 1928.

Now, what do we think of trade unions who have dominated the headlines for striking against South African Airways (SAA)? Are they there to ensure that national organisations like the airline run smoothly for the country's good? Or are they there only for members to squeeze out as much as possible for themselves without concern for the consequences? The desired answer seems obvious. But it's not so simple. Their members' demands are often justified, but meeting them all in this country today is impossible.

The media is full of stories covering the fight between SAA and the trade unions NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa) and SACCA (South African Cabin Crew Association). It's bizarre for an airline that analysts say is in terminal collapse to be engaged in a fight like this.

Professor Jonathan Jansen reportedly described the strike as akin to the Titanic's crew striking. They wanted higher wages just after the ship hit the iceberg. Unfortunately, in South Africa's hectic politics, striking has become almost the default position for voicing a grievance.

Negative perceptions of unions may be unfair

TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin



since they continue to ensure fair working conditions for thousands of members. But union leaders are perceived by many as behaving like children. They are seemingly oblivious to the dire state of the country, and unwilling to see further than their members' immediate demands. South Africa has a 29% unemployment rate, and a sinking economy. It seems unions would blithely bring the country – and its airline – crashing down around them rather than act responsibly. Their dealings with SAA are typical, insisting on wage increases far beyond what the airline or country can afford. They forced SAA to cancel scores of flights as a way of confronting it. This cost SAA hugely in terms of reputation and finances.

It's come to a sad pass. Commentators see unions today not as heroic fighters for fair working conditions, but as "spoilt brats", as Sikonathi Mantshantsha wrote in Business Maverick last week. The reality is that in sane government circles today, there is talk of a general wage freeze in the public sector to curb costs, rather than giving salary increases.

What would the old idealistic Habonim activists think about the South African trade unions they were passionate about in their youth? Would they be disappointed to see them reduced from the heroes they were during apartheid to naughty children throwing their toys out of the cot? Would they even recognise them?

Many would certainly have changed with time both in their worldview and lifestyle. Similarly, the unionists and the rationality of their demands have changed. But there is debate about whether it's been for the good.

Trommel and strife

This weekend, we will be celebrating. All of our camp going children will have left for three weeks, and we intend to enjoy every second of it. I intend kicking off the event by using the word "me" in a conversation with my wife, and I fully expect her to do the same.

By the weekend, all our home living children will have left for three weeks, and we fully intend not to miss them. At least not until Monday. Sunday at the earliest.

I was magnificent and patient as a father until I happened upon a list of "must haves" that was left on the dining room table. Whereas I was delighted that my 15-year-old daughter was organised enough to make lists, the content pushed me slightly over the edge. Listed as item number one on the critical list, ahead of "underwear", and above "toothbrush" was "Saphira – leave in mud *pour tous types de cheveux* (for all types of hair)".

"Abby! Come here please!" I called so that I could address this face to face. "You are going to camp! You are sleeping in a tent for three weeks. It will rain, and the entire campsite will turn into a mud wrestling amphitheatre. Do you really need to take more mud to Hartenbos, for G-d's sake?" She returned my stare without saying a word. Then she turned, looked at my wife, shook her head slowly as if to say, "I actually feel sorry for you living with a buffoon that's so out of touch and doesn't understand sun damage. Then quietly and very patronisingly she said, "It's French mud, dad. It's French mud." And with that, the conversation was over, and I was shamefully dismissed.

It's a myth that when kids go on camp, us parents get a holiday. What it does mean is that everything we need to do over a three-week time period now has to be taken care of in a matter of a few days. It means that money that we would

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



have spent over a month we spend in days, and that all the arguments we would have had are had with no intervals.

It took us five trommels, three stretchers, tent reflectors, countless bottles of water (some sparkling some still), peanut butter sachets, muesli, tuna, and more toiletries than Mossel Bay has ever seen, medicine, sun block, and a bottle of Saphira – leave in mud *pour tous types de cheveux* to get three of our children camp ready.

And we are still, apparently, not happy with the colour of the trommels, the brand of our shower shoes, and the quality of our disposable bowls.

Bless them.

The reality is that although our children might take their mobile phones with them to camp, for the time that they are there, they will be stepping back into the world that we want them to enjoy. Three weeks in a Jewish-observant environment with their friends, in the sun, sleeping in tents, in a healthy and caring environment that is not technology dependent is rare and special.

With a zero tolerance policy against drugs and alcohol, and with my poor 15-year-old daughter having two eagle-eyed brothers on the same campsite, it's truly a blessing that we don't take for granted. The reality is that it gives them time to find out who they are without their annoying parents telling them who they want them to be.

And, of course, as parents, having banked everything we have to get them ready, we get to take it a bit easier while they are there.

This weekend we will be celebrating. Come past if you want. Bring your own *pour tous types de cheveux*. Just don't bring your children.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

ADL survey not an accurate reflection of SA

Not only those of us in the field, but even ordinary community members were taken by surprise by the results of a new survey into anti-Semitic attitudes conducted under the auspices of the Anti-Defamation League.

According to these findings, nearly one in two South Africans has an unfavourable view of Jews, a rate that with the exception of Poland is considerably higher for any of the other countries surveyed. This squarely contradicts not only the objective evidence that we and other research bodies, including the University of Cape Town's Kaplan Centre, have compiled over the years, but the everyday experiences of the person in the street.

Elsewhere in this week's issue, South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Vice-Chair Professor Karen Milner and Associate Director David Saks unpack what the survey actually says, describing some

of the puzzling anomalies and glaring contradictions that emerge once the data is examined more closely. This has confirmed our sense that so far as our own society is concerned, the survey clearly failed to reflect the realities of the South African situation, and that a different approach should be considered when the occasion next arises to assess the nature and extent of anti-Semitic attitudes in this country.

Good news for UJ students

Over the past decade, the board has gone to a great deal of effort to make alternative arrangements for University of Johannesburg students whose exams have been set on Shabbat. In terms of our agreement with the university, the students concerned have been allowed to write their papers at Beyachad immediately after Shabbat, under our supervision, and after having been under the supervision

of their rabbi during the preceding day. It has been a complex process involving frequent meetings with the university, engaging with students, arranging visits for them to the Beth Din, organising rabbinic supervision throughout Shabbat, and our staff being present and facilitating the exams at our offices with UJ invigilators for six Shabbatot a year. We are therefore delighted to learn that from next year, UJ will no longer be holding exams on Saturdays, which will make everyone's lives a great deal easier.

The situation regarding UNISA (the University of South Africa) students is unfortunately a bit more complicated. While UNISA doesn't schedule exams on Shabbat, it is all but unavoidable in view of the large number of students that have to be catered for that exams will sometimes fall on the *chagim* (Jewish holidays). Over many years, the SAJBD has paid for UNISA invigilators



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



to supervise *motzei chag* (end of Yom Tov) exams at Beyachad, which is an official UNISA exam centre. Unfortunately this year, one clash required legal intervention on our part before it could be resolved. The SAJBD, as always, will ensure that our students are never unfairly disadvantaged because of their religious commitments. For their own part, those with scheduling clashes need to notify us as timeously as possible to facilitate working with the university to make alternative arrangements.

• Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Jewish Board Talk, 101.9 ChaiFM, every Friday from 12:00 to 13:00.

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

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Stepping out of their shoes and into the future

Thursday, 28 November, was a milestone moment for the majority of King David Victory Park (KDVP) Grade 12s as they wrote their last exam paper. KDVP is proud of them, not only for leaving fond memories, but for leaving behind their school shoes and uniforms to be donated to community upliftment group the Kliptown Youth Program. Mazaltov and *behatzlacha* (good luck) to the class of 2019!



2019 matrics: Chad Rayd, Nadia Bartel, Danit Krawitz, Emma Berger, Jenna Fanaroff, Shalya Katzeff, Jozef de Aguiar, Adam Danilowitz, Samantha Kobrin, and Erin Kobrin.

Sunday (8 December)

The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre is screening a short documentary, *Blind Love*, the story of six Israelis and their guide dogs who take part in the annual March of the Living programme. It includes a special discussion with the SA Guide-Dogs Association and TOP Dogs Therapy Dogs. There are some subtitles. Volunteers will be on hand to assist those who are visually impaired. Please specify with your RSVP if you would like assistance. Time: 15:00. Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. RSVP: dawi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100. Free admission, donations welcome.

Monday (9 December)

The Union of Jewish Women (UJW) hosts *Jason Kree - Laugh a minute*. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40.

Contact: 011 648 1053.

Bet David hosts Dr Taj Hargey, distinguished Oxford academic and specialist on Islam and the Middle East, on *Radicalism and reform in contemporary Islam. The battle for the hearts and minds of Muslims today*. Time: 19:00. Venue: Bet David, Middle Road, Morningside. Contact: 011 783 7117.

Thursday (12 December)

Learn Yiddish every Thursday with Tamar Olswang and the 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.



WIZO Christmas fun for kids

The Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) Johannesburg had a fun-filled morning at its annual Christmas party held at Orange Grove Primary School on 25 November, with the help of donors including Smilemakers, Nando's, McDonald's, Amrod, and Sportsmans Warehouse. Watching kids entertain themselves was the best entertainment!

Art, architecture, and a lifetime opportunity

Art met architecture last week at the Art@Life exhibition at Life on Iris in Norwood, Johannesburg, which offered art lovers an opportunity to purchase carefully curated works.



Organisers architect Asher Marcus and artist Natalie Knight stand with Dr Stephanie Fischer in front of a sculpture by Colleen Maswanganyi

Batmitzvah of kindness feeds the soul

Jewish food fund Yad Aharon & Michael held a unique and memorable Batmitzvah celebration at its *bayit* (house) on 25 November. Dina Goldberg in Grade 6 at Hirsch Lyons chose to have her entire *simcha* (event) at Yad Aharon, doing *chesed* (compassionate) work with her friends and family. The vibe was incredible as they packed foods for recipients, sang, danced, and demonstrated to the community that a *chesed simcha* of this nature is far more meaningful than a big, fancy affair.



Dina Goldberg

Letters

DIRCO'S HYPOCRISY KNOWS NO BOUNDS

Accusing Israel of ethnic cleansing, the South African envoy to the United Nations, Clinton Swemmer, cited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's statement about annexing the Jordan Valley. Surely, he remembers similar statements by Netanyahu prior to the previous elections. Even a diplomat should understand political rhetoric, similar to the promise that South African President Cyril Ramaphosa made before the South African elections of building a million new homes in Alexandra – promises, promises for political expediency.

The envoy's remarks about ethnic cleansing were fallacious in the extreme. How can there be ethnic cleansing when the Palestinian population has grown exponentially? Could he perhaps be referring to the Christian population in Palestine that declined from about 10% in the 1960s to less than 1% today. Bethlehem and surrounding villages were 86% Christian, but by 2016, the Christian population had dipped to just 12%. Prior to Israel's withdrawal, the Christian

population in Gaza numbered more than 5 000, whereas as today, it numbers less than 1 000.

The minister and deputy minister of the department of international relations and cooperation (DIRCO) are women. Yet, in the face of the recent wave of gender-based violence in South Africa, Swemmer makes no mention of the horrific gender-based violence in almost the entire Arab world with which South Africa maintains strong diplomatic relations, but deems it necessary to downgrade diplomatic relations with Israel.

DIRCO has ignored the plight of women in the Arab world whose lot is worse than that of a goat, who have no or little rights, and are subject to the whim of their father or husband. More than 90 million girls are pressed into forced marriages and genital mutilation is common practice. So too is stoning to death for being the victim of rape in Iran. Honour killing is accepted as a norm in Arab society. Limb amputation and the flogging of both men and women is the favoured method of punishment

in many countries of the Levant, and the beheading of criminals is common practice in Saudi Arabia.

The South African ministry of foreign relations headed by two women has yet to raise any concern with these countries, but is quick to vilify a country whose women enjoy some of the most liberal rights in the world, whose status is equal to men, and who participate in all aspects of political and civilian life. A country where fair and free elections are held every four years, and sometime even more frequently.

In the Arab world, women are barred from participating – that is, if elections ever take place in many of these countries. The hypocrisy of DIRCO knows no bounds, given that Ramaphosa has committed in the strongest terms to combat gender-based violence. Yet, his foreign affairs ministry seems to condone the treatment of women in the Arab world with which South Africa maintains the closest of relations. – **Allan Wolman, Israel**

BAD SERVICE TURNS OFF KOSHER CONSUMERS

The recent closure of two iconic kosher food stores is a sad testament to our ailing economy. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the age-old anti-Semitic assumption that 'all Jews are rich' were true! Imagine being able to indulge without restraint, enjoying all the traditional (now luxury) treats sold locally.

These thoughts raise something that has long baffled and annoyed me. I have noticed, lately and over the years, that at the various kosher bakeries and delis, as well as at the kosher counters in supermarkets, I seldom see the prices displayed for the weighed-out items.

Goods on the shelves usually have a price tag, however it's only on being served that one finds out – by asking – the price of the baked goods per unit or per kilo.

I would be much more comfortable making my buying decisions, pondering which of the various items I should choose, how much, working out the cost and what quantity to take, which choice is better value, while waiting in line, and then stating my order when my turn came. Many's the time that rather than sounding like a *yenta* (busybody) asking about this price and that at length, standing at a crowded counter, I've simply left and gone elsewhere or done without, resulting in a sale lost to that particular shop and, I guess, a saving for me! – **Sonja Bulkin, Johannesburg**

Habonim alumni who have changed the world

>>Continued from page 12

World, which operates an underwater observatory in Eilat. A major donor to the Weizmann Institute of Science, Kahn helped launch the field of systems biology.

The institute quickly became a world leader in this nascent field, which fuses physics and biology to create a holistic understanding of how the structure of our biology is closely intertwined with its function. Recently, he established the Morris Kahn Institute for Human Immunology at the institute, which will fund the work of a range of studies in this field.

"I balance between business and philanthropy," he told *Ha'aretz*. "Many of my businesses have a philanthropic angle. I want to change a lot of things, not only in Israel, but all over the world."

Hayden, best known for his research into Huntington's Disease (HD), was recently named one of the 50 Canadians born in the 20th century who have changed the world, but he was born in Cape Town.

With numerous titles and awards, he has identified 10 disease-causing genes and developed gene therapy approaches – the first

approved gene therapy in the Western world.

He also spearheaded the development of a youth-friendly recreation, counselling, and learning centre in partnership with the township of Masiphumelele in Cape Town. This centre aims to promote responsible sexual behaviour among at-risk youth, empower HIV/AIDS-affected youth, and build a sense of self and community-participation within the township.

Other well-known alumni of Habonim Dror Southern Africa are Maxine Fassberg, the chief executive of one of Israel's largest

companies, INTEL Israel; Alan Hoffmann, former director general of the Jewish Agency; Alan Swerdlow, a top stage director and film maker in South Africa; anti-apartheid advocate, the late Jules Browde; businessman and trade union founder Johnny Copelyn; Israeli psychiatrist Jonni Benjamin; Moira Benigson, a top head-hunter in London; and Stephen Pincus, a Canadian lawyer and board member of the Jewish Agency.

And there are many more who may be joining Habonim to celebrate its 90th anniversary next year.

Adam Fine, the mastermind behind Cape Town's Futbol

LUKE ALFRED

Fives Futbol held their world finals at Century City in Cape Town last weekend, with South Africa winning the competition in both the men's and women's categories. The men beat a competitive Colombian team 5-2, while the women needed extra-time to prevail over their Chinese opponents, 3-2.

The mastermind behind the Cape Town finals was Adam Fine, the son of a South African Jew who emigrated to England in 1988. A long-suffering Manchester United fan, Fine studied economics at the University of Nottingham and has been the local operator for Fives Futbol, a five-a-side adaptation of the 11-man game, for the last four years.

"It's fast-growing," he says with just a touch of evangelical zeal. "It's easy to find a quick hour for a five-a-side game rather than, say, taking three hours off in the evening on a weekend afternoon and also having to deal with a long commute."

Last weekend's finals featured 24 men's teams and four in the women's competition, with seven African competitors in the men's draw including teams from Morocco, Senegal, Ghana and Mauritius amongst others.

The men's draw also included teams from Europe, Asia and South America, including France, India and Argentina, which gave the tournament a truly international flavour.

Israel sent a team, but they were beaten by Mexico, who were victorious 6-1 in the quarter-

finals.

It was the second year Fives Futbol have held their world finals in the Cape, with the 2018 tournament also being held in the Mother City. China was meant to host last year's finals but only weeks before the tournament was scheduled to kick-off, the Chinese authorities became stuffy about issuing the requisite hosting permits.

South Africa agreed to host the tournament at short notice.

Qualifying for the finals started at the beginning of the year and featured approximately 150 000 participants in 27 countries. After a team had won domestically for their particular country, they qualified as a national representative for the Cape Town finals.

Fives Futbol is strictly amateur and contains no professional players. A half is 20 minutes long, with the game being played on artificial outdoor surfaces or Astro-turf.

As head of Fives Futbol locally since 2010, Fine is not one of those ivory tower chief executives. He plays his sport about three times a week, and even scored a couple of handy goals – he is coy on the exact number – in last Friday night's pre-tournament media game between a



Israel vs Mexico in the Quarter-Finals

Photo: Marc Beriman

South African and a European invitation team, with the European team winning 6-4.

As well as proving to be enjoyable, he says actually playing the game gives him insight into the "customer experience", and, as a result, the product has been tweaked over the years to make it more user-friendly. "We realised, for example, that you could foul as a deliberate strategy and we didn't like that – it ran counter to the ethos of the game," he says. "So we tweaked the rules and you can now take direct free kicks after fouls."

"We're always looking for ways to make improvements and ways of keeping the ball in play for longer which makes the game more enjoyable and a better spectacle."

While Fine is satisfied with what transpired last weekend, he's not resting on his laurels. His aim is to build more pitches outside of the South African metropolitan areas and grow Fives Futbol in far-flung corners of the land. "We've built pitches in some absolutely crazy places," he

says. "We've built at Clifton [Beach] and on a rooftop in the Cape Town CBD. We'll be opening at the Maboneng Precinct in Joburg in April, also on a rooftop. It's really beautiful to play five-a-side football in the Johannesburg CBD."

"Other than that, we built a pitch in Limpopo in October. We're generally looking for ways to reach rural communities and move further afield. We certainly want to expand on our 52 pitches nationwide in 2020."

Fives Futbol's model involves partnering with local landlords and renting land from them close to, say, a rural shopping centre. Once an Astro-turf pitch has been laid, then Fives Futbol employ a local manager to oversee the pitch and handle the playing logistics.

Fine says that they tend to "price discriminate" depending on the wealth of the community which they serve, and you can either enter a team in a league (which lasts ten weeks) or rent the pitch for a nominal fee on a one-off basis. "We employ 50 people full time across the country and about 100 part-time, so we're bringing employment too," he says.

With the condition of full-sized pitches and their upkeep by municipalities a constant issue in South African life, Fives Futbol offer a small-scale handy corrective. Johan Cruyff, the former Dutch master, often said that you need only two things to play football – clean boots and a decent pitch to play on. Fives Futbol have provided – and will continue to provide – the kinds of small pitches that help to improve the standard of local soccer, so they're doing a fine job.

Long may they grow and long may their vision prosper.

Bikers celebrate renewal after huge challenges

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The Celebration of Life Ride on Sunday had a different vibe to the 94.7. It wasn't about energy or commitment, it was about celebrating friend and fellow cyclist Howard Tucker's recovery from Guillain-Barré syndrome.

More than 100 cyclists from the Capri Wheelers Cycling Club and Hatzolah participated. At least two of them, Tucker and David Slotow, had overcome huge personal ordeals by the time they set off from Huddle Park Golf Course to salute life and raise funds for charity.

This is the second year they have participated, but this year, Tucker didn't want the ride to be named after him, so they changed it to the Celebration of Life Ride, according to Capri Wheelers chairperson Selwyn Sanders.

"The riders did three 50km loops," says Sanders. "Each time we left the golf course, we did a 50km loop that goes around the Benoni area, and then made our way back. After each 50km loop, the riders came into the clubhouse, where we gave them cooldrinks, muffins, water, and whatever else they wanted."

While the cyclists quenched their thirst during the intervals, Capri Wheelers had a raffle and raised almost R20 000, which was split evenly between the Community Security Organisation and DL Link.

"We are still celebrating the fact that Howard is well," says Sanders. "Howard is an exceptional cyclist, and very strong."

Tucker, who enjoyed the event's camaraderie, says, "My resilience stems from my motto that there is no mountain too high, and I will never give up until I'm on top of that mountain."

In 2017, Tucker rode up the Lombardy-based Mortirolo Pass in the Italian Alps, which is 12.4km long at an average gradient of 10.5%. It is such a demanding climb, even the then-doyen of doping, Lance Armstrong, described it as the "hardest climb" he had ever ridden.

"Only four years earlier, I had bacterial diarrhoea two weeks prior to contracting Guillain Barré," says Tucker. "I was prescribed an antibiotic called Ciprobay. I believe I contracted Guillain Barré as a reaction to Ciprobay, which was featured on *Carte Blanche* about five or six months ago. There were a couple of ladies that had similar symptoms to me, and have never fully recovered."

Initially Tucker was completely paralysed, but he is thankful that it is largely a reversible condition.

Although his recovery has been "much slower" than envisioned, these days, he manages to accomplish whatever his heart desires during the day. "I was a fit cyclist before I got sick in November 2013. I call that period 31 November 2013, because I couldn't move, and felt like I was

going to stay in November until I could ride the 94.7 again."

He managed it in 2015. "I was fortunate that I could ride my first 94.7 two years later," he says.

"I continue to recover. I can walk fine, but I still can't run, and I have quite weak muscles in the bottom part of my legs. I can't do all exercises, but I can ride. I am a highly motivated person. Every year, I continue to push the barriers and find bigger challenges."

While his friend, Slotow, calls Tucker a "real Rockstar", Tucker says Slotow is a "real hero".

Slotow's story is as follows: "When I was 18, I walked in on a robbery at Delancey's, Illovo. I was shot in the spine, and the prognosis was that I would never be able to get out of a wheelchair."

"Cycling was something that was unlikely, if not impossible. But I was fortunate enough to get back on a bike after a number of years. I cycled the 94.7 this year, 20 years after I was shot."

Slotow says he enjoys the sense of camaraderie at the Celebration Ride, which has the spirit of a team time trial without the bunch sprint for victory.

However, getting to the finish line is a celebration of life for more than just Slotow and Tucker. For every cyclist who did the ride, there is an understanding that supporting one another over tough rides is what life's journey is all about.



Cyclists pedalling for a cause

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