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Principal condemns pupils' attendance at anti-Israel rally

TALI FEINBERG

The principal of a Khayelitsha school criticised the fact that dozens of his pupils had been bussed to an anti-Israel picket outside Parliament in Cape Town last week, saying, "Children shouldn't be used as political tools."

Bulumko Secondary School Principal Gideon Skweyiya was shocked when the *SA Jewish Report* queried the presence of his scholars at the rally. He said that a Congress of South African Students (COSAS) leader called

him last Wednesday, 12 February, asking permission for 30 pupils to take part in an anti-Israel rally outside parliament ahead of the State of the Nation Address (SONA).

Skweyiya refused, saying that the parents had not signed any indemnity forms allowing the pupils to attend. He then told them that according to a bylaw, "children cannot be at a political event during school hours".

He told the *SA Jewish Report*, "We are an apolitical educational institution. We don't let teachers or any other adult's political views influence our learners. We don't support events like this."

Skweyiya's conversation with COSAS was the last the principal heard of the matter until the *SA Jewish Report* queried it with him. He has no idea how his pupils landed up at the rally, in school uniform, during school hours, but he surmises that they went on their own accord, possibly with COSAS.

He is still evaluating how he will deal

with the matter. "COSAS disrespected my instructions," he said. He had clearly turned down the organisation's request for pupils to attend the anti-Israel protest. "If children leave school on public transport on their own accord, they are taking unnecessary risks."



School children at last week's anti-Israel picket

He emphasised that the pupils should have "known better than to go to something they don't know about. It's sad that they agreed to go, but sometimes they don't know the right questions to ask." Indeed, when the *SA Jewish Report* asked the pupils (aged 14 to 16) why that were at the rally and what boycotting Israel meant, they couldn't answer either question.

COSAS is the same organisation that placed pigs' heads in Woolworths stores in 2014, apparently to "stop Woolworths buying products from apartheid Israel". At the anti-Israel picket last Wednesday, a COSAS leader told the small crowd (including pupils) that "Donald Trump must go to hell, and he must know we are coming for him!" This same activist also called out "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!"

Kerry Mauchline, the spokesperson for Western Cape Education Minister Debbie Schäfer, said, "The Western Cape

Education Department is investigating the circumstances of any learners' attendance at the protest held on 12 February 2020 [from 13:00 until 15:00]. Its policy is not to allow learners to participate in political activities during teaching time."

Rowan Polovin, the chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, said, "The South African Schools Act prohibits political activities during school time. According to the act, this includes campaigning; the conducting of rallies; the distribution of pamphlets and fliers; and the hanging or putting up of posters and banners. Taking learners to an anti-Israel rally is a form of indoctrination. This 'rent-a-crowd' tactic to boost numbers demonstrates the disingenuous nature of BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] supporters and the anti-Israel camp."

Stuart Diamond, the director of the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies, wrote to Skweyiya saying, "The Cape SA Jewish Board notes with concern the use of school youth for this agenda, especially during school hours."

He asked the school "to turn this negative incident into a learning opportunity", inviting pupils and educators to visit the South African Jewish Museum, the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, and the

country's oldest synagogue at the Gardens community campus in Cape Town.

The *SA Jewish Report* was unable to reach COSAS for comment.

Ahead of the pack



Noga Yadin, 18, casts an early vote at the Israeli embassy in Pretoria on Wednesday. Israel goes to the polls next week, its third election in a year. Only diplomats and emissaries can cast their vote outside of the country. Yadin is one of four young Israelis on the Shinshin program, in which Israelis who have just finished high school volunteer at King David schools and the community for a year. This is the second time she has voted, both times at the embassy.

CSO rescues women from bee terror

TALI FEINBERG

"I looked over at my mom, and her whole face was just black, covered in bees. She was sitting very calmly on the grass. Her face, neck and arms, and my face, arms, and legs were completely covered by bees."

These are the chilling words Lauren Glezer used to describe one of the most frightening days of her life. It started as a simple dog walk in Cape Town's Green Point Urban Park on 16 February, and ended with Glezer, her elderly mother, and their dog being attacked by a swarm of bees. The Community

Security Organisation (CSO) played an integral role in rescuing them. The women miraculously survived the incident, but their dog didn't.

Glezer describes what happened. "My mom Sylvia, my beautiful dog Charlie, and I often go to this park as it has a restricted enclosure where dogs can run freely. It's my happy place.

"We usually sit on the other side of the park, but it was full, so we headed to a bench that we don't usually sit on, which we didn't realise was near a beehive. Suddenly I felt a bee sting me, and then we were surrounded by thousands of bees." The next thing,

they were completely covered by bees, and were being stung all over. Charlie was also attacked, and even swallowed some of the bees, which he later vomited.

Glezer says that much of the ordeal remains a blur, but she remembers taking off her jeans as they were covered in bees, and she felt it was the best way to get them off her body. Park security tried to help them, giving her a jacket to cover her legs, and helping her to get the stings out of her hair. Most people couldn't get close enough to help the women, but a nearby friend, Rodney Beck, called the CSO, which rushed to the scene within

minutes.

Beck says he was on his way to meet Glezer when he received her frantic call. Leaving his wife and dogs in his car, he ran into the park, where he saw both women covered in bees.

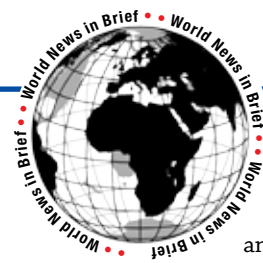
"I saw Lauren screaming and her mother lying on the grass. There were bees everywhere – they had followed them even though they were now quite far away from where it started. This was five or 10 minutes after the bees first attacked. Sylvia looked like someone had taken 50 or 60 needles and put them in her face and arms. They were saying, "It's burning, it's burning!" It was

absolute chaos."

Beck said he acted on instinct, leading them even further away from the area until no bees followed. He then called the CSO. "At that stage, there were no more bees, but the damage was done. Within minutes, the CSO had put up drips and monitors. It was like a movie."

The women were taken far enough away from the bees to a room behind the park's restaurant, and the CSO began treating them. "If the CSO hadn't come, I'm not sure what would have happened. It was there for us," says Glezer.

Continued on page 8 >>



Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:17	Johannesburg
19:15	20:06	Cape Town
18:15	19:10	Durban
18:15	19:28	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:38	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:27	East London

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Lady Kitty to convert to Judaism for marriage



Lady Kitty Spencer, the niece of the late Princess Diana of Wales, is reportedly converting to Judaism to marry ex-South African Jewish fashion mogul Michael Lewis.

Lewis, 61, is chairperson of The Foschini Group, and is 32 years older than his 29-year-old model fiancée, Lady Spencer, the first cousin of Princes William and Harry.

The couple got engaged in Cape Town in December. They both have strong links to South Africa, particularly Cape Town.

Lady Kitty, is the youngest daughter of Earl Charles Spencer, the younger brother of the late Princess Diana. She has often been compared to Diana.

This will be the second marriage for multi-millionaire Lewis, who is five years older than his future father-in-law, Earl Spencer.

The British *Sunday Times* cited friends of the couple who said that Lady Kitty was "taking religious instruction" in preparation for her marriage.

Lewis married his first wife, Leola, with whom he has three adult children, in an Orthodox Jewish ceremony in 1985.

Lady Kitty's first cousin, Prince William, is second in line to the throne of England, and is the future supreme governor of the Church of England.

It's unknown when the glamorous couple will tie the knot, but it's speculated that they will be standing under a *chuppah* (marriage canopy) when they do so.

Former POW, Gilad Shalit, gets engaged

Gilad Shalit, 33, the Israeli soldier who was held prisoner by terrorist group Hamas in Gaza for five years, is engaged.

His girlfriend, Nitzan Shabbat, posted a photo of the couple on Instagram in which she is holding up her hand to show a diamond engagement ring. Shalit proposed last Friday.

The couple have been dating for about a year and a half.

Shalit was captured in June 2006 in a cross-border raid through a Hamas tunnel. He was released in October 2011 in a controversial exchange with 1 027 Palestinian prisoners.



Egyptian diaspora returns to renovated shul

Dozens of Jews of Egyptian origin recently came together from around the world to celebrate Shabbat at the newly renovated 14th-century Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue in Alexandria.

One of the two rabbis leading the service was Yosef Nefussi, the son of the final Alexandria rabbi. He was joined by Rabbi Andrew Baker, the director of International Jewish Affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

Among the approximately 180 participants were the United States Ambassador to Egypt, Jonathan Cohen, and former Israeli ambassador David Govrin, as well as local cultural attachés.

The three-year, multimillion-dollar renovation project was completed last month.

Twelve of the synagogue's approximately 60 Torah scrolls were removed from the ark for the service, which was organised by the Nebi Daniel Association, a group dedicated to the preservation of Jewish sites in Egypt.

Alexandria was once home to up to 40 000 Jews, but now just has a handful. Fewer than 20 Jews are estimated to still be living in all of Egypt.

Israel plans rail link to Western Wall

Israel's transportation ministry advanced plans on Monday to build a new train station that would directly connect Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport to the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

The project, an extension of the recently opened Jerusalem-Tel Aviv high-speed line, will include a new 1.8 mile (2.8km)-long tunnel under downtown Jerusalem and the Old City, i24news reports.

This kind of construction in the Old City of Jerusalem is controversial. Palestinians object to Israel gaining more of a foothold in the city that they claim as the capital of a future Palestinian state, and archaeologists object to the possible disturbance of artefacts in the area.

Attempted stabbing at Cave of Patriarchs

A Palestinian man tried to stab an Israeli police officer at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the West Bank city of Hebron late on Monday morning.

The man pulled out a knife during a security check at the site, and tried to stab a member of the border police, Israel Police said. He was stopped and arrested by other officers. No injuries were reported.

• Brief by Nicola Miltz

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Torah Thought

Theatre of miracles

"We're going to the theatre," my parents told me, and an hour later, we entered a giant, dark place, with rows of empty wooden seats, and only a few people in front. I felt that death was tangible, and feared touching anything lest it infect me with a deadly virus.

The people there, mostly elderly, looked like they were carrying the weight of some invisible pain. The only comforting scene was when the men – who were in the front, talking or singing, standing up or sitting down, then standing up again – went and opened a door within which there was a beautiful bright blue fabric with big golden stars on it. It was as if a window had been opened in a dark, cold room and sunshine came flowing in. I kept my eyes fixed on it to soak up the light in this dreadful place, this "theatre".

It was only one of the many ways my parents kept the truth from me. You see, I grew up in Hungary, born less than 30 years after the Holocaust. My parents didn't tell me I was Jewish, though being

Jewish was a big part of who we were. My father's father was killed by the Nazis when my father was just seven years old. It was a miracle that my father and grandmother survived. My mom and her mom were in a labour camp in Vienna. They were supposed to end up in Auschwitz, and by another miracle, did not.

My father told me – I must have been about four years old – that his father was killed by "mean people". "Show me where they are, I'm going to kill them!" I said. When he told me that I shouldn't kill anyone, but be good and study, become cleverer than anyone who'd do such mean things, that way I could overcome their meanness, little did I know how long this message would drive me to keep learning.

Here I am now after a master's degree, a graduate certificate in Judaism and gender studies, and a couple of years of holistic midwifery training, finally fulfilling my dream. I'm studying in a rabbinic programme on my way to

Andrea Kuti Shabbat Shekalim



become something my parents could never have imagined. Their daughter, a rabbi. Studying *Gmara*, *chassidus* and how to lead a Jewish community. The ray of sunshine in that darkened shul of my childhood is now pouring light into my days and nights.

There are times I wonder what my parents and grandparents think about this – after all, you might think, this is a completely new thing, but there is a thread that runs right back through my family's history – of resilience, of yearning for learning, and of the need not just to survive, but thrive. And, the power of miracles. And here we are, with Purim around the corner, about to celebrate the miracle of the saving of the Jews from Haman the *rasha* (wicked). And this second generation holocaust survivor from Budapest is on the way to becoming a rabbi at the tip of Africa – a miracle indeed!

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Lotto shenanigans take toll on investigative journalist

NICOLA MILTZ

Investigating the National Lotteries Commission (NLC) has taken its toll on veteran South African journalist Raymond Joseph, who has doggedly exposed alleged corruption and several dodgy lottery projects.

For months Joseph, a seasoned freelance reporter and media trainer, and Anton van Zyl, the editor of the *Limpopo Mirror*, have been investigating alleged corruption and incompetence in NLC contracts.

Their exposés appearing in news agency *GroundUp* and elsewhere have caused the ire of the NLC, which has reportedly responded by launching personal attacks on Joseph.

“It’s like a microcosm of state capture, and I’m right in the middle of it,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Their numerous scathing reports have raised concern over how money meant for “good causes” – poverty relief and charity – is in some cases being dispersed in highly questionable ways.

After more than a year of persistent media coverage by *GroundUp*’s investigative team and other media, the NLC is finally investigating the corruption claims, with the NLC board appointing Sekela Xabiso to investigate fraud allegations against it.

A determined Joseph has on many occasions self-funded his investigations, making sure he is on the ground travelling the width and breadth of the country to see for himself how lottery money is being used and, in some cases, abused.

His investigations have opened a Pandora’s box of alleged corruption and incompetence. In a series of hard-hitting articles, Joseph and the small team of investigative journalists including his daughter, Roxanne Joseph, have uncovered a string of alleged irregularities and the misuse of lottery grant money.

“The biggest losers are poor people who really deserve the

money. It outrages me that money raised to uplift the poor is being abused. I keep saying I can’t be shocked by things, but this is shocking. Ultimately, it’s the poor who are being robbed, and to think how much good this money could do,” he said.

“The biggest losers are poor people who really deserve the money.”

For months, while evidence of corruption and incompetence piled up in *GroundUp* reports, Joseph felt the brunt of personal attacks levelled against him.

Nathan Geffen, the editor of *GroundUp* jumped to Joseph’s

defence last year when the *Sunday World* repeated an “absurd” NLC accusation that Joseph was “writing scathing stories about them [the NLC] after it stopped funding a non-governmental organisation of which he was once a director”.

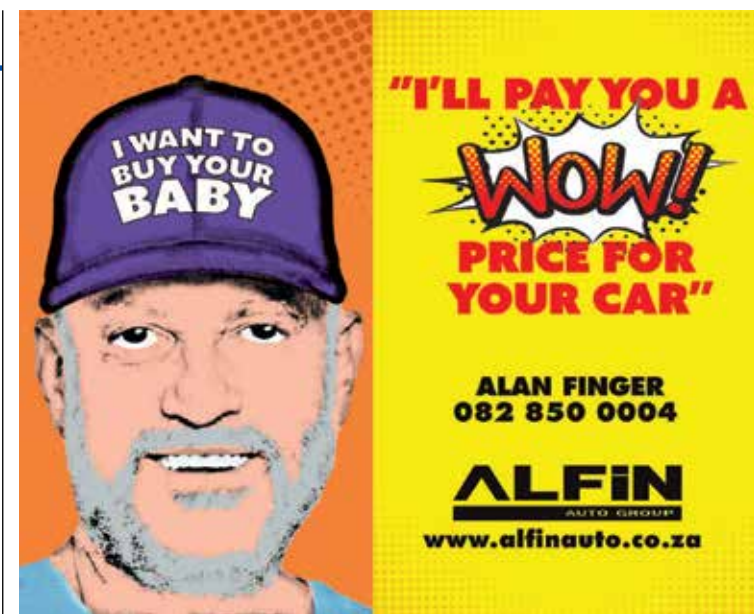
Geffen wrote, “For the record, Joseph was a founding member and former editor of *The Big Issue* decades ago. He was an unpaid board member from 1997 until 2016, when he resigned.

“*The Big Issue* is a non-profit magazine sold by homeless people. To suggest a link between this and the stories Joseph has been publishing since early 2018 is ridiculous,” he said.

Earlier this month, the NLC said it intended to lay criminal charges against Joseph and *GroundUp* over the ongoing, in-depth investigations involving multi-million-rand lottery grants. It accused them of breaching the law by revealing details of lottery grants.

The NLC has demanded that *GroundUp* remove several hard-hitting stories from its website, many of which exposed incompetence, shoddy workmanship, nepotism, and probable corruption involving millions in lottery-funded projects.

Joseph said the Lotto investigations had “consumed him for a long time”. “It’s the second time in my 46-



Joseph said he was self-funding investigations because he was so “outraged” by what he was uncovering. He realised if he stopped reporting, “the story would die”. He said with the help of *GroundUp*, the story was alive and developing daily.

“I came very close to throwing in the towel. Time is money, and this has certainly taken its toll – financially especially,” he said.

Over the past several months, Joseph has been accused of theft,

policy that I don’t believe journalists should sue, suing is a distraction, and expensive. I speak with my pen. I refuse to get into a street fight and defend myself. Throwing mud around is time-consuming and exhausting. The closer you get, the more personal it gets. My biggest defence mechanism is to keep publishing.”

The NLC has been granting funding to non-profit organisations, non-government organisations, public benefit trusts, schools, and communities since 2002.

A percentage of the weekly proceeds are paid over by the licensed lottery operator – appointed every seven years and currently Ithuba – to the NLC, which is regulated by the department of trade and industry. By 2017, it had distributed more than R24 billion to good causes: R10.7 billion of that has gone to charities, R6.3-billion to arts, culture and national heritage, R6.1 billion to sport and recreation, and R686 million to “miscellaneous”.

The Democratic Alliance shadow minister for trade and industry, Dean Macpherson, has written to the minister of trade and industry, Ebrahim Patel, asking him to place the NLC under administration, to dismiss its board, and suspend its chief operating officer.

In spite of ongoing revelations about alleged corruption, the minister has reportedly remained silent.

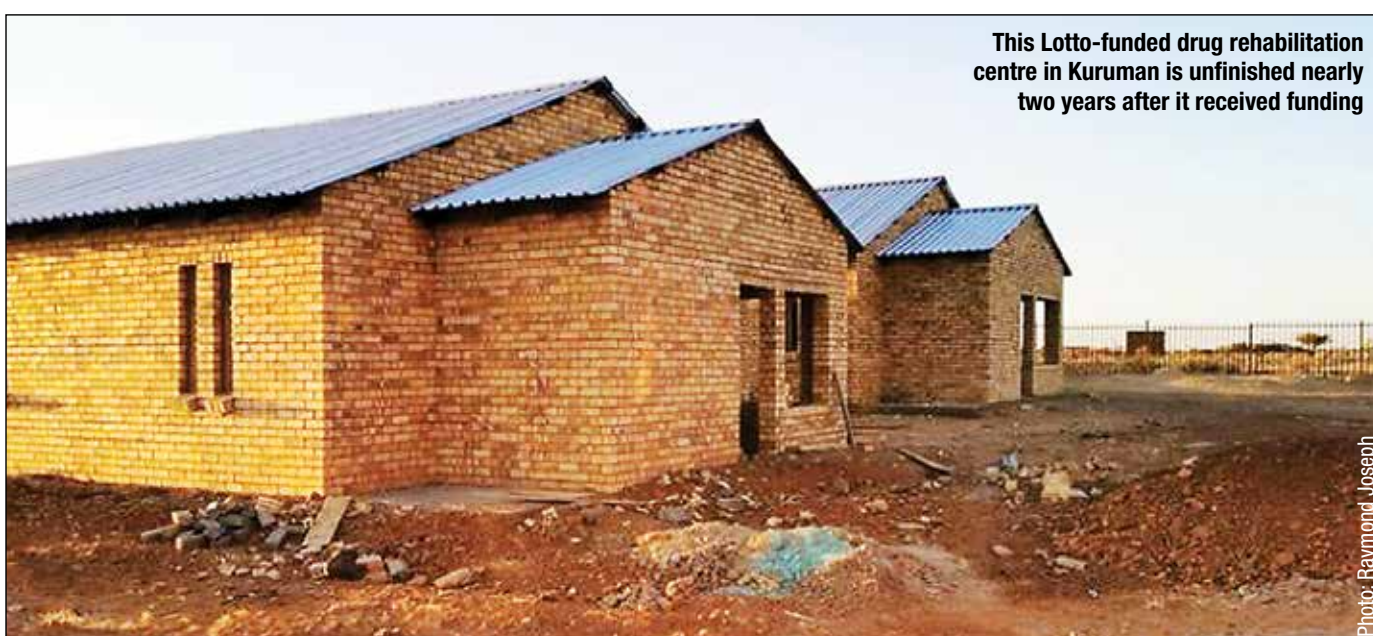


Photo: Raymond Joseph

year career as a journalist that I’ve become personally wrapped up in the story, and refused to let go. I’m the reporter on the ground who is witness to what’s going on. This isn’t my story, it’s about corruption and how money is being misused to the detriment of the ones who need it most. The lottery has dispensed about R26 billion over its life, this isn’t chump change. It’s now dispensing about R1.5 billion a year, so this isn’t small change, and can be used for a lot of good.”

stealing documents, and being disgruntled.

“It’s been tough going. I’m not used to being in the spotlight. From the beginning, we made a rule that nothing would be published without at least two sources to corroborate information. There have been some very brave whistle blowers. They are the real heroes as they are taking huge risks.

“Honestly I’ve been attacked and defamed, but I have a

defence last year when the *Sunday World* repeated an “absurd” NLC accusation that Joseph was “writing scathing stories about them [the NLC] after it stopped funding a non-governmental organisation of which he was once a director”.

Geffen wrote, “For the record, Joseph was a founding member and former editor of *The Big Issue* decades ago. He was an unpaid board member from 1997 until 2016, when he resigned.

“*The Big Issue* is a non-profit



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SONA 'big on promises, short on delivery'

As the dust settles after last week's State of the Nation Address (SONA), the SA Jewish Report asked influential people what they made of President Cyril Ramaphosa's speech, his leadership, and follow through.



Outside Parliament: Chaya Singer; SAJBD national chairperson Shaun Zagnoev; DA members of Parliament Michael Bagraim and Darren Bergman



Madeleine Hicklin, Democratic Alliance member of parliament

Cyril Ramaphosa wasted another golden opportunity to show he has a

backbone and the interests of South Africa at heart. He paid the most attention to the least compelling challenges, leaving Eskom's rolling blackouts, expropriation without compensation, jail terms for those found guilty of corruption, and the bailout of a failed airline with little to no attention. The Eskom solution he proposed originated in the DA: the unbundling of Eskom, and the introduction of independent power producers selling additional power into the grid has been suppressed by Gwede Mantashe for years.

Ramaphosa is big on promises, and very short on delivery. The most honest comment he made was that the government couldn't solve our economic challenges alone. But we at least need an enabling, capable society to seek aid. Holding summits and forging alliances are great, but without a capable state and capable leadership, they are meaningless. He is an incapable man heading up an incapable state.



Chaya Singer, parliamentary and diplomatic liaison for the South African Jewish Board of Deputies

I attend SONA

each year to look beyond the pomp and ceremony and focus on government's proposed agenda for the year, and how it will affect our community. This year, the stakes felt high, and in an age of much-needed austerity and reform, the cutbacks seemed to extend only as far as the replacement of opulent floral arrangements with a #SONA2020 photo prop on the red carpet. The presiding officers were determined that the rules of the house be upheld, marking a new political climate, which will probably result in a revision of the rules that won't allow for the hijacking of proceedings in future. There was a tone of realism in the president's address that we haven't experienced in previous SONAs, but there were none of the surprises or radical announcements feared or hoped for by

stakeholders. The takeaway was mildly optimistic, with the recognition that solutions are going to take time, and have to be done within the law. The upcoming Budget speech will determine the *tachlis* (real) direction of government spending and strategic priorities.



Sol Cowan, former Johannesburg ANC councillor

SONA, by its very definition, is where the country is, and a plan for it going forward.

The problem with the 2020 SONA was that it was short on detail in two important aspects, namely Eskom and the economy. Nowhere in the SONA is there a magic wand that details how the R450 billion debt is going to be dealt with, how funding for the entity is going to be guaranteed in the future, and where such funding will come from.

Economic growth is critical to address the problem of unemployment and various other issues. Nowhere does the speech detail what policies are needed to kickstart the economy in order to achieve growth, especially sustainable growth over a long period of time.

In conclusion, the speech does harp on Mandela's principles of non-racism, which is a good sign as opposed to former President Jacob Zuma's rhetoric on radical economic transformation and black nationalism.

Steven Gruzd, analyst at the South



African Institute of International Affairs

Domestically focused, SONA isn't the place for foreign policy pronouncements. Nevertheless,

Ramaphosa made mention of South Africa chairing the African Union and its tenure on the United Nations Security Council. It will oversee the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and push for women's rights.

Said Ramaphosa, "Through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), South Africa will work with other countries to advance good governance and democracy." The APRM is a golden chance for South Africa to scrutinise its governance shortcomings frankly. Will it do so honestly and openly though?



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In face of UN 'blacklist', is South Africa softening on Middle East?

STEVEN GRUZD

The battlefield over United States President Donald Trump's peace plan has moved from the African Union to the United Nations (UN). There, while the global body has just fingered firms operating in the West Bank for censure, South Africa appears a little softer on peace in the Middle East.

Following President Cyril Ramaphosa's comments that the peace plan reminded him of a "Bantustan type of construction", and the fierce comeback from Jewish communal groups, South Africa has further nuanced its position.

The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) published a "blacklist" of 112 (mainly) Israeli and international companies operating in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, following a 2016 UN HRC resolution, leading to rising temperatures. It includes Israel's major banks and its water, railway, and telephone utilities. Some international companies named are Motorola, TripAdvisor, and Airbnb.

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin criticised the list as "shameful", recalling "dark periods in our history". Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said the list's publication was "the ultimate surrender to pressure exerted by countries and organisations interested in harming Israel" and was "a stain ... on human rights itself".

The Israeli Embassy in Pretoria said, "We are confident that states and companies will not lend legitimacy or cooperate in any effort to discriminate against Israel or advance BDS."

Rowan Polovin, the national chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, said the organisation "strongly condemns [this] discriminatory and shameful measure".

"This 'blacklist' is a long-running measure that has been brewed in the United Nations,

and is carefully designed to target and discriminate against these companies through boycotts and punitive action," Polovin said. "[It] is consistent with the UN's history of anti-Israel bias, and won't promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians."

The HRC, which sits in Geneva, Switzerland, and generated the "blacklist", has a standing agenda item on Israel at every meeting. Its many members who are far less democratic than Israel escape this singling out. They also routinely object to country-specific resolutions, shielding rights-violating governments. Condemnation of Israel, however, is routine and regular by the HRC.

This year, its membership includes countries with notorious human-rights records such as Afghanistan, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Libya, Mauritania, Pakistan, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, and Venezuela. In 2017 and 2018, every African country supported or abstained on anti-Israel resolutions, with the notable exception of Togo.

The HRC's unfair anti-Israel bias was one of the reasons for the US walking out of the body in June 2018.

UN Watch, a non-governmental organisation fighting anti-Israel invective at the HRC, said, "Dictatorships initiated this blacklist not because they care about human rights, but to divert attention from serial rights abuses committed by council members like Venezuela, Libya, and DR Congo, by scapegoating the Jewish state."

"Doing business in disputed territories has never been prohibited under international law, nor, until today, subject to a UN blacklist," UN Watch said. "Curiously, out of more than 100 territorial disputes in the world today, including Tibet, Kashmir, Crimea, Western Sahara, and

Northern Cyprus, the UN chose to blacklist only companies doing business in Israel's disputed territories."

Palestinians and the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement naturally welcomed the list with glee. Human Rights Watch said it "should put all companies on notice: to do business with illegal settlements is to aid in the commission of war crimes".

"We are confident that states and companies will not lend legitimacy or cooperate in any effort to discriminate against Israel or advance BDS."

Meanwhile, is South Africa adopting a more moderate tone on the peace plan? The plan was discussed in the UN Security Council (of which South Africa is a non-permanent member in 2019-2020) on 11 February. There, ambassador Xolisa Mabongo, South Africa's deputy permanent representative to the UN, said, "the people of occupied Palestine ... tend to be ignored when their own destiny is being decided upon".

Trump's plan, though despised by its detractors, is pragmatic. It acknowledges the reality that Israel exists. The Jewish state isn't going away, and needs to safeguard its security in a rough neighbourhood. Repeated rejections of any compromise for a century has shrunk the territory a putative state would ever control.

South Africa dismisses the new thinking in the Trump plan. "Flagrant violations of

international law at the expense of what is deemed political reality or expediency," Mabongo said, "undermines the rule of just law and the global multilateral system."

He noted that South Africa's position is in line with "AU leaders [who] reaffirmed the continent's solidarity with the people of Palestine for their inalienable right to self-determination".

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was present at the council debate. He has repeatedly attempted to use the UN to push unilaterally for recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state.

Noting that the Trump plan had shone the spotlight on moribund negotiations, Mabongo advocated for both sides to hammer out a solution themselves. "The security council must support the necessary environment for Israel and Palestine to come together, as equals, to resume the peace process," he said.

South Africa is pushing for concerns to come back onto the table. "All final-status issues, including illegal Israeli settlements, the status of Jerusalem, and the right of refugees to return to their homeland, must be in line with international law." These conditions are anathema to the current Israeli government.

Mabongo noted that 30 years ago, Nelson Mandela was released from 27 years in captivity, and as president "demonstrated that, what for some had seemed to be intractable and unrealistic, was solvable. May this be a lesson in finding peace between Palestinians and Israelis."

It looks like the struggle will continue in the boardrooms and chambers of international organisations for some time yet. And while South Africa remains firmly in the Palestinian corner for now, its statements hint that it might aspire for a role as referee.

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South African Jewish Report

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Reframing our vision

Oh boy, people in the community seem to be so miserable! I keep hearing moaning and grumbling about our status quo. Loadshedding! The Economic Freedom Fighters hijacking the State of the Nation Address! President Cyril Ramaphosa not being strong enough! How tough things are financially! How our money goes nowhere! Yes, the list goes on...

Looking at all the negatives is depressing, and hard to bear. I can't deny them – they are all true. However, isn't it time we looked at what we actually have in the community and in this country?

For the most part, most of our community leads amazing lives. What's more, the community has created a supportive environment so we don't have to stress too much.

Close-knit community members support each other through thick and thin. We have organisations like the Community Security Organisation and CAP (Community Active Protection) that ensure we are physically secure and protected. We have the Chevrah Kadisha that helps when times are tough. We have Hatzolah for any physical emergency.

Our communal organisations are outstanding, among the best in the Jewish world, and the envy of other communities in South Africa.

Our schools are among the best in the world. Jewish schools invariably come out trumps in the academic ratings every single year in South Africa. We have scores of shuls scattered across the community in Johannesburg and Cape Town. You would obviously be able to find one that suits your needs perfectly.

Come the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards every year, and we are all inspired by the outstanding calibre of people we have in the community. Be they lawyers, entrepreneurs, media folk, communal leaders, big business leaders, philanthropists, we have them all. It's truly astonishing how many inspiring people exist in our small community.

At this point in time, the actual number of Jews in South Africa is in question. While I accept that we want to know how many of us live here compared to how many there were over the past 10 or 50 years, how important is it?

Other than being of interest, it doesn't really have too much impact on us, or does it?

If the numbers of Jews in the country is greater than we expected, does that make us better? If there are fewer than we thought, are we worse off? Hardly! Numbers are just numbers. Surely it's far more important to know how we can fend for ourselves, what we have created, and how high we punch above our weight? The day after we find out the numbers, we will still be in the same position we were the day before we knew them. We will still be part of an incredible community that's genuinely admired the world over.

When you speak to ex-pats in the United States, England, and even Australia, they may be happy in their new homes, but most of them long for the inclusive, caring community we have here.

Something I marvel at is that in South Africa, you can be Jewish, secular, Orthodox, and traditional all in one. Now, in most parts of the world, you are either secular, Orthodox, or traditional, you can't be all of it, according to seemingly strict and unbending communities.

And, although sometimes it might seem as if our community is terribly conservative and unforgiving, we actually aren't. We mostly allow people to be who they are, and still be a part of the greater Jewish community. There are very few areas where the community is unaccepting of its own.

Why am I saying all of this?

It's simple, it's time we reframed how we look at our situation. It's time we stopped looking at how awful things are. The truth is that you can always find the bad in any situation if you are looking for it. In the same way, you can find the good.

Recently, a friend of mine was in tears because the Chev had helped her cousin who had fallen on hard times. She was overcome with gratitude, and was quite frankly astonished at what this organisation does for people. Most people outside our community don't have such organisations.

Over the years, the South African Jewish community has made sure that it looks after its own. I'm not sure we realise just how incredible this is.

When shuls in the US were being attacked, we looked around and recognised that we have been protecting our shuls for a number of years. We already had some incredibly brave folk ensuring that you and I can safely attend shul.

The same goes for our schools. Astonishing!

We also have a magnificent home for Jewish orphans. In all Jewish areas, even in some places where Jews are a minority, we have CAP, which is a community-based, pro-active, anti-crime initiative that was conceived of by our own chief rabbi in 2006. We take it for granted, but CAP has brought down crime substantially in those areas.

I could go on, but suffice to say that we have a thriving, high-quality community that's the envy of the world. Yet, we still manage to dwell on the negative.

The vibrance and energy of the Jewish life we live is unmatched around the world. We are also a tough and resilient community which fends for itself, and reaches out to help others along the way.

I truly believe that our thoughts shape our reality. So, if you are constantly looking for the bad, you will find it, and it will become your reality. How about reframing our vision and considering what an incredible community and life we have here on the southern tip of Africa?

Yes, things aren't easy, but they are so much better than in most parts of the world, and we live within a community that cares.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



The real battle behind Israel's elections

I have a confession. I drive on Shabbat. It's not something I'm proud of, but it's necessary to state here to explain the following story.

A few Friday nights ago, several hundred haredim from the ultra-Orthodox Mea Shearim neighbourhood in Jerusalem blocked off the streets in the nearby Russian compound as they sometimes do. They shouted "Shabbas! Shabbas!" as they formed human chains to prevent cars from driving through. It's important to highlight that this isn't a religious neighbourhood. Unlike Mea Shearim, people who live here drive on Shabbat while circling around Mea Shearim where steel barricades prevent traffic from passing through on the weekend.

Had this happened in Mea Shearim, I wouldn't be writing this piece. But the ultra-Orthodox had come into a secular neighbourhood to provoke citizens living there.

We were on our way to my partner's family for Friday night dinner, and were trying to drive through the crowd. Suddenly a young protestor threw a huge rock at our windshield, cracking it almost in half. We were forced into a side street while being pelted with rocks. The protestors then closed the street by placing huge stones in our way, and forcing their children to stand behind them. The whole time, they screamed hysterically at us for breaking Shabbat and, I'm horrified to say, also repeatedly called me a prostitute.

The experience was very upsetting. I visited a friend's house a few days later who lives in the same neighbourhood. He keeps a plate of eggs near his living room window, ready to throw at ultra-Orthodox demonstrators every time they protest outside his apartment block.

Israel is just weeks away from its third



Thousands of people from the ultra-Orthodox community gathered in Jerusalem's Mea Shearim neighborhood to protest against plans to draft haredim into national service

election in a year, and the latest polls suggest yet another political stalemate. The question of the oversized influence of the ultra-Orthodox is again on the agenda. Many Israelis blame the religious establishment for repeated elections because of their refusal to compromise to Yisrael Beiteinu leader and "kingmaker", Avigdor Lieberman's, demand to draft ultra-Orthodox Jews into the army.

Currently they are exempt from service from the age of 24 and as a result, many learn in yeshivot until then. This week, a committee set up by the Israeli army found that the age of granting draft exemptions for ultra-Orthodox men should be lowered so as to prevent them from entering the job market only in their mid-twenties. The panel also found that a substantial number of recruits classified as ultra-Orthodox didn't

**DATELINE:
MIDDLE EAST**

Paula Slier



live a haredi lifestyle while they served in the military.

Increasingly, Israelis are voting less about security and more about questions of identity, Jewishness versus Israeliness, and democracy. The question of Orthodox conscription remains an election hot potato – as does the question of driving on Shabbat.

Since the last election in September, a private Shabbat bus system has gone operational in Tel Aviv and other cities, upending a decades-long blackout of public transport over the weekend. While many religious Jews consider driving on Shabbat profaning of the holy day, more than 70% of Israel's Jewish citizens favour public transport.

They complain that especially in areas that are almost entirely secular, there should be public transport over the weekend. The issue is the latest in a culture war between religious and secular Israelis that has increasingly dominated national politics.

Benny Gantz, former army chief of staff and the main rival of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has pledged to permit municipalities to operate public transport on Shabbat. He's also promised to liberalise marriage laws that are currently controlled by the Orthodox rabbinate.

His followers welcome such views, which is why his party is expected to win the most votes next month – but still fall short of being able to form a coalition majority.

The six new weekend bus lines have proven hugely popular, drawing more than 10 000 passengers each Shabbat. But their popularity has not made the religious parties budge.

For more than 70 years, buses and trains

haven't run in most of Israel from sundown on Friday to nightfall on Saturday. This was a promise by the country's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, to the ultra-Orthodox community and consecutive governments have adhered to it.

Netanyahu relies on the support of the religious right, and for as long as he is in power, it seems

unlikely that the government will allow buses to operate on Shabbat.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews make up just more than 10% of Israel's population. Recent polls predict that both the Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox party, United Torah Judaism, and its Sephardi counterpart, Shas, will maintain their influence with seven or eight seats each.

If there's one good thing that came out of that Friday night altercation, it's that an ultra-Orthodox youngster came to talk to me privately. He wanted me to know that the crowd didn't represent all haredim in Israel, and that many were against protesting in secular neighbourhoods on Shabbat.

Still, the growing rift between the religious and secular communities shows no sign of diminishing, least of all when it's used by political leaders for electoral points.

Third time, I'll scream

OPINION

BIKO ARRAN



In Hebrew, when you meet someone coincidentally for the second time the same day, you point at them and say, "Third time – ice cream", meaning if you meet them unexpectedly again shortly thereafter, they owe you an ice cream.

This bizarre saying is believed to be based on similar idioms in German or English. The most common explanation is that Israelis translate, "If we'll meet again, I'll scream," to the similar phonetics of having "ice cream" at our next meeting.

In two weeks, Israel will hold its third general elections, and we will neither scream nor eat ice cream. The Israeli public is tired. Exhausted. Apathetic. Hopeless.

The polls consistently indicate the same results: deadlock.



Once again, our elections focus on one topic: Bibi – yes or no.

This political situation probably won't change within the next two weeks before the unprecedented third general voting day in less than one year. On the one side, there is the centre-left parties of Blue and White and Labor/Meretz combined with the Arab Joint List. On the other, with almost the same number of mandates, is Netanyahu's Likud ruling party with the religious right-wing Yamina alliance and the Haredi parties (Shas and Yahadut Ha-Torah).

None of the blocks (alliances) hold a majority of seats in the Knesset (Israeli parliament). And, in the middle, in between those blocks, you can find the kingmaker, Avigdor Lieberman (Yisrael Beiteinu), who has already twice refused to crown a king. Lieberman rebuffed Likud in forming a government with haredi and "right-wing extremists", although this was for decades his natural leaning. He also rejected a Blue and White government supported by Arab votes.

So, we continue to have a dead-end. No government. Another election.

The leaders of the various parties have shown commitment to the promise not to sit with specific parties, thereby ensuring their inability to form a government. For example: Blue and White and the Labor Party promised not to sit down at a table with Netanyahu, and Lieberman refused to meet the Haredi or Yamina parties.

And so, no compromise was found in the past two elections. The result of the upcoming election is likely to have a similar outcome to the last two. Should we start talking about a fourth general election in September?

Almost three-quarters of the Israeli public believe Israel could soon head to the ballot stations for a fourth time.

There is only a slight chance that the polls are wrong. Israeli Arab citizens voted in higher numbers in the last election, rising from 10 to 13 Knesset seats. Trump's plan to swap Israeli Arab citizens with the Palestinian state angered this constituency. Together with the regular anti-Arab Likud campaign, the Joint List could potentially bring in new voters that have never voted before. Meaning new mandates for the centre-left block.

Besides those fresh new votes, there are many tired, unmotivated, sceptical voters, mainly from the Likud party, who might ultimately choose not to participate.

Having said that, in order to create a game-changer, all the parties are working hard against the indifferent atmosphere of the Israeli public. For Bibi, it's a case of bringing back tens of thousands of voters who abandoned Likud from the first to the second elections. For other parties, it's to energise and encourage fatigued crowds to vote once again.

With a blessed stormy winter this year, the weather forecast predicts more than a 50%

chance of a rainy election day on 2 March. This means it's going to be a huge challenge to ensure the typically high Israeli turn out rates (68%-69%) at the polls.

So, are we going to have a fourth election this year?

I assume once again, like I did after the second round, that we won't have another election. But this time with much more confidence (and again, with nothing to lose).

Israel isn't just exhausted from its continual political shenanigans. As of January, the end of the financial year, Israel doesn't have a budget. It needs a new government in place to allocate a budget. Without it, there can be no new tenders and non-governmental and other organisations won't get funding. So, there is now an urgent need for a new government.

Under these circumstances and with an Israeli public willing to compromise in order just to move on, I believe these are the last elections with the current scenario and characters.

The main breakthrough could be the formation of a minority government with Benny Gantz, Lieberman and Labor/Meretz support. The Joint List (the Arabs) would abstain.

Afterwards, Netanyahu wouldn't be in office anymore, and so the game to maintain a larger coalition would start. This scenario, for example, was not acceptable after the second elections, and now it's being pushed publicly by Blue and White as a legitimate and feasible option.

On the other hand, Bibi's whole campaign is now based on a threat, claiming that if you don't vote for him, you're voting for an Arab leader. His slogan, "Its Bibi or Tibi" refers to Blue and White wanting to form a government supported by Israeli Arabs and specifically Ahmad Tibi, the leader of the Arab Movement for Change.

A new factor in these elections and the post-election period is Netanyahu's status as a criminal defendant. His trial will start in coming weeks, and he will be in the Jerusalem District Court on an almost daily basis for a while to come. His interest, of course, is to stay in power, with or without a new coalition. Even as a temporary prime minister.

In fact, he is already a transitional prime minister for a year, but in office with full authority. So, fourth elections are a valid option for Netanyahu. Legally, he can be prime minister until the final ruling (which will take years).

But what about Israel having a prime minister defending charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust against him? This moral question is probably the main issue on the agenda for the coming election in less than two weeks, namely, is Netanyahu to carry on running the country during his days in court?

Once again, our elections focus on one topic: Bibi – yes or no. But it isn't just personal. It's what Bibi stands for. Netanyahu is an internationally talented, experienced leader. He is Trump's close friend. He is the charismatic, long-lasting new Israeli father figure. And then for many Israelis, he is Bibi the accused. The instigator and split personality. The one who keeps challenging and attacking the Arabs, the media, civil society and law-enforcement entities.

We are waiting for the public to provide the best and smartest answer, which we probably won't get.

Biko Arran is an Israeli podcast host, social entrepreneur, lawyer, and policy advisor. He has been living in South Africa since his wife, Liat, took up her position as director of the Israel Centre last year.

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Aliyah can't be made at the drop of a hat

JORDAN MOSHE

While Israel welcomes South African Jews, making aliyah is a difficult process that requires comprehensive planning and consideration, according to aliyah experts in South Africa.

Liat Amar-Arran, the director of the Israel Centre in South Africa, says emigrating to Israel isn't impossible, but doing your homework is more important today than ever before.

"The dream of making aliyah 'just like that' isn't one we encourage anymore," says Amar-Arran. "We need to know what a person is going to when they go to Israel. We worry less about certain people, but everyone should have some sort of plan."

Ahead of the upcoming Aliyah Expo, the SA Jewish Report met Amar-Arran and Johannesburg aliyah co-ordinator Ziva Taitz to unpack what it takes to relocate in 2020.

"We want to make sure that people do the right thing for themselves," says Amar-Arran. "It's very rare for us to stop people from going, but we try to make them understand what they're giving up, and what they're going to get."

In 2019, a total of 417 individuals made aliyah from South Africa, an increase of more than 20% from 2018. This number includes about 150 families and people from across the age and career spectrum.

People need to know what life in Israel is like today, Taitz and Amar-Arran say. Israel today faces an uncertain future, the result of multiple elections and political instability. "Government has also stopped operating for a year," says Amar-Arran. "People in Israel are feeling it only now. Certain government budgets and programmes have become stuck because of politics, and this has affected infrastructure to some extent."

Other major, contemporary topics include Israel's growing recognition of its diversity, and a renewed prioritisation of the conflict with Arab states, primarily the result of Donald Trump's political manoeuvring.

"Israel today is a very materialistic country," says Taitz. "There's a big gap between the haves and have-nots. In spite of much wealth entering the country, it's still a socialist country in which people expect the government to care for the poor.

Organisations do exist to help people, but it's very different to what we have in South Africa, where people can expect more from the Chevrah Kadisha."

Unlike before, more parents are open to making aliyah sooner than later, no

arrival in the country), but Taitz stresses that one cannot live on this alone. This means that unless one is emigrating with a sizeable financial reserve, efforts to find a job must be undertaken timeously.

While almost 99% of those who emigrate



longer opposed to taking their children out of school and placing them in the Israeli system before matric.

She and Amar-Arran stress that while failed aliyah does exist, these cases are in the minority, and are far from ideal. "We don't want people to have to come back," says Taitz. "When you're back, you're often in a worse position than before."

Amar-Arran emphasises the importance of making people understand that the support they may get here might not be the same in Israel. "Social services in Israel recognise a person after one year only," she says. "It takes time to find the best fit in Israel. People need to know it's a process."

According to Taitz and Amar-Arran, younger, financially stable candidates without family ties to Israel are often the easiest aliyah cases. Those who don't have all the necessary documents in order in advance, those with an unsold South African property, and those who have no potential career plans, are those who experience some difficulties.

Israel continues to offer an appealing array of absorption benefits (including a monthly stipend for six months after

do so without any job on the table, jobs are available in Israel, but finding them requires considerable flexibility and savvy. Fields with potential for South Africans include the high-tech and medical industries, engineering, and English teaching.

"On average, it takes six months to find a job," says Amar-Arran. People who want to work and are willing to compromise can find a job. One must remember that an employer isn't obligated to do anything until a person lands in Israel. It's rare to sign a contract in advance, and most employers wait until you arrive and settle your citizenship before committing to anything."

Essential to finding a job and ultimately to making aliyah successfully, is a firm grasp of Hebrew. Taitz says that whether undertaken prior to departure or after arrival, ulpan remains an essential part of integration into society, school, and the workplace.

Ultimately, knowing exactly what you want out of your aliyah can help soften your landing. It's important to consider the type of community you want to be part

of, whether settling in a central location is essential, or what type of school you require if you have children.

This means doing research well in advance, and utilising opportunities like the Aliyah Expo to ask questions, even if you're not poised to make aliyah right now. The expo will feature 57 delegates giving lectures and one-on-one meetings not just on aliyah, but subjects including investment opportunities, property, higher education, and gap-year programmes.

Perhaps most essential, however, is to remember that Israel isn't always the answer to whatever problem you may be facing.

"Israel is waiting for no one," says Taitz. "If you want to be part of it, you need to do your research and weigh up what you're getting into. Israel supports aliyah, and we can help, but in the end it's your journey, and you need to make it yourself."

• The Aliyah Expo takes place in Johannesburg from 23 to 25 February. For more information or to book, contact info@israelcentre.co.za or 011 645 2666.

CSO rescues women from bee terror

>>Continued from page 1

"Lauren and Sylvia were clearly in pain, and there was nothing they could do to help themselves," adds Beck. Once the women were stabilised, he got out of the way of the medics, and helped contact family and friends.

Glezer remembers vomiting from the poison in her system. Throughout the ordeal, her mother, who is almost 83 years old, remained calm. "She had been stung from head to toe," says her daughter. Meanwhile, their dog was rushed to the vet. The family are heartbroken that he didn't survive.

Natasha Salkinder was with her husband Darren, a CSO medic, when the incident call came through. When they arrived at the scene, "he immediately started attending to the patients. I watched as Darren picked out the stings, and eventually started using his debit card to pick them off, as it's more effective. It was later decided to take both patients to hospital in the same ambulance." The two women were in intensive care for three nights. Glezer was discharged from ICU on Wednesday, and her mother remains in hospital.

Says CSO Cape Town's Dani Janks, "The CSO's role in situations like this is for well-trained and dedicated medical responders to assess the situation and the condition of the patient in need of medical attention, begin treatment, stabilise or resuscitate the patient if needed, and activate an ambulance for every call. If critical, the patient is handed over to a private or government ambulance service to be transported to hospital.

"Our advice to anyone who finds themselves in a similar situation is to try to remain calm and remove yourself from the area, seek immediate medical attention, and don't further aggravate the bees. If you are allergic, always carry the necessary medication. When outdoors, always try to remain in groups, and ensure that you have adequate cell phone battery and signal."

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Take care not to be ripped off buying property in Israel

JORDAN MOSHE

Crooked estate agents and crafty property managers are ripping off foreigners buying property in Israel. So, if you're in the market for Israeli property, make sure you know what you're supposed to be paying.

"Foreign purchasers may be charged higher than normal agency and legal fees," says the chief executive of Creative Estates Israel, Shaun Isaacson. "Because they are far removed from the Israeli market, they don't realise that these charges are extortionate."

Isaacson, a licensed realtor, property manager, and qualified lawyer, says that standard legal fees on property purchases are usually 1% plus VAT for foreign residents (more if the deal is particularly complicated). There's also an agents' commission fee, usually between 1% and 2% plus VAT.

"There is also a purchase tax of 8%, so buyers should typically budget an additional 12% of the cost of the property to cover fees," he says. "In Israel, agents' fees are paid by both buyers and sellers."

"Anything above 2% in agency fees would be excessive, and foreign residents who don't know better are frequently overcharged."

The fees (known as closing costs) are charged on top of the purchase price, a standard in any property purchase in Israel. Real-estate consultant with T&T Investments, Kim Bash, says that these costs include the agent's fee, the lawyer's fee, and purchase tax.

"Foreign buyers aren't always aware of these closing costs," Bash says. "It's up to the agent to discuss and educate a prospective buyer before they meet, and show them potential properties," she says.

"My rule is to have a conversation to explain all costs before I meet the client. This is usually done over the phone or by email before they even come to Israel. I also schedule a meeting with a real-estate lawyer [at no charge] to explain all the legalities of purchasing and the costs involved. I also encourage a meeting with a mortgage broker



to discuss rates and financing opportunities.

However, they agree that it's not uncommon for foreign buyers to be charged excessive amounts. Although agents who exceed standard rates can be reported, some have been known to take a chance.

"Unfortunately, I've heard of too many cases," says Selwyn Hare, the manager at Home in Israel real-estate group. "The excuses are often that they charge for 'project management', which is a total hoax."

Isaacson, too, knows of a number of buyers who've been charged as much as 2% more than the standard rate.

"Unfortunately, if the buyer has signed a contract with the agent agreeing to that commission rate, they are bound by it, and taking them to court would be a protracted,

difficult, and expensive process. The contract that purchasers sign with an agent is a standard contract, but the commission percentage is usually added in by hand, after negotiation with the agent."

Isaacson therefore recommends that any buyer check that their agent is registered – there is an online registry that they or a Hebrew-speaking friend can inspect.

Although potentially costly, Bash says that if a buyer has had a bad experience with an agent, they can be reported to the local justice ministry. If anything illegal has transpired, their license can be revoked.

It's therefore essential that property owners who aren't based in Israel make every effort to appoint a licensed property manager to safeguard their investment. Hare stresses the importance of using a recognised property management company, and Bash says that a good property manager may be necessary, even for a once-a-month check up on the property.

"Property owners are sometimes reluctant to hire a property management company because of the expense," she says. "Rates range from 500 shekels a month (R2 192) to 1 500 shekels (R6 576) a month or more. It's important to have someone check on the property."

Isaacson agrees, stressing that a properly appointed manager is better than relying on a friend to manage your property. "You should get references from clients, and insist that they send you monthly statements," he says. "If anything is amiss, you should ask them to send photos. You could also arrange for a local friend to visit the property and check everything is being taken care of."

"If your property is poorly maintained, or

if the mortgage isn't paid because the tenant defaults on rent payments, owners can find themselves in a real mess. Property managers should report regularly on all income and expenditure associated with the property, as well as reporting to the Israeli tax office if the rental income is above the reporting threshold."

He says that you should also ask to see the rental contract that the agent signs with tenants on your behalf, and get it translated from Hebrew if necessary.

All three property experts emphasise the need for first-time foreign property buyers to understand the market, and get their information from a reliable and licensed real-estate broker and real-estate lawyer.

"When deciding what property to buy in Israel, always speak to disinterested professionals and don't rely exclusively on the person who wants to sell you the property," Isaacson says. "It's always better to find your own lawyer rather than using the lawyer recommended by agents – who may have a conflict of interest – and always ask for references."

Bash concurs, "In Israel you need a good team, professionals who know the market, and most importantly, understand the client's needs. There are many real-estate agents and often online listings on real-estate websites that aren't current. Pick one agent, and get referrals for the agent if need be."

"Any purchase in Israel is a spiritual investment, not just a financial one," Bash says. "If someone has the means to buy in Israel, they should – it's a solid investment. The market continues to be strong, and prices are stable. The bottom line is you can't go wrong."

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Israeli technology on frontline in battle against coronavirus

JORDAN MOSHE

As global efforts to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus (now called Covid-19) continue, Israel is devising strategies to bring the disease under control.

Across the country, scientists are working around the clock to develop innovations that can address the situation in different ways. From preventative measures to actual treatment, various ideas are being devised and tested to turn things around, and bring hope to more than 73 000 infected people.

Because there is no vaccine or treatment for Covid-19, personal protective equipment remains a vital barrier against transmission. Disposable facemasks block only some of the dangerous bacteria and could potentially house the bacteria pathogen after prolonged exposure.



For this reason, a reusable mask with anti-pathogenic properties could prove a potent preventative measure. On 28 January, ISRAEL21c reported that two Israeli companies, Sonovia and Argaman Technologies, had devoted themselves to sharing their novel antimicrobial technologies with China and the broader global community.

The nanotechnology process they have developed to impregnate textiles with antifungal and antibacterial chemicals could provide a critical defence against the spread of the disease.

Earlier this week, Sonovia reportedly sent samples of its antimicrobial polyester-cotton fabric to be tested in China for effectiveness against the virus, and results are expected to be shared in 10 days. Sonovia cofounder, Shay Herchcovi, told Israeli media that this textile could not only be made into washable facemasks, but also used to fashion other protective garments and hospital linen.

Dealing with diagnosis, Israeli start-up MeMed aims to help officials detect people carrying the virus before symptoms appear. Because the virus reportedly becomes infectious before the display of any symptoms, a system of early diagnosis could prove helpful for doctors devoting a great deal of time and resources to basic diagnosis.

ImmunoXpert, the company's

first product, studies a patient's blood sample using algorithms and sensors to determine whether the patient is fighting bacteria or a virus anywhere in the body. The technology is already being used in the European Union, Switzerland, and Israel to distinguish within two hours whether an illness is viral or bacterial.

According to MeMed Chief Executive Eran Eden, the innovation could have applications for Covid-19. Israeli media reports that Eden told the OurCrowd Global Investor Summit last week in Jerusalem that the company was working with collaborators around the globe to find out whether certain technologies derived from its invention could detect infectious patients in the pre-symptomatic stage.

Also addressing the issue of diagnosis is Dr Amos Danielli of Bar-Ilan University, who, together with his team, has developed technology which can drastically reduce the time needed to analyse saliva samples for signs of the virus. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, the solution was first discovered in 2007 to address cattle diseases, and the same technology has been adapted for multiple viruses.

"We collaborate with several laboratories in China and Vietnam, and they were telling me that the time they needed to analyse the saliva samples was severely limiting the amount of people they could test every day. I thought this could help," Danielli told the *Jerusalem Post*.

Diagnosing coronavirus takes about one hour using existing methods. Danielli's solution combines optics and magnetic particles, enabling the rapid testing of 100 samples of patients potentially infected with the virus, reducing diagnostic time to about 15 minutes. Earlier versions of the technology are being used at the virology laboratory at Sheba Medical Center in Tel Hashomer, but further testing is needed to determine if it can be used effectively against the new virus.

Another innovation is being piloted at Sheba, this one addressing the needs of those already infected. A telemedicine app, Sheba's "Datos Health-In", enables patients to remain in isolation but also in the comfort of their homes. Should an epidemic occur and isolation rooms become overburdened, the app enables patients who aren't severely ill to enter vital signs and other information, and submit them directly to their doctor. Patients can also make contact with their physicians at any time of day or night.

The app was launched on 9 February, and has already been used by Israelis suspected of carrying the virus. "This is one instance where telemedicine protects staff as well as other patients – by minimising direct contact with those infected with coronavirus," Galia Barkai, the head of telemedicine services at Sheba, told the media.

Another high-tech solution for those potentially infected is a robot which can enter the patient's room and be controlled remotely by medical staff. The robots, designed by California-based virtual healthcare



Datos Health-In, a telemedicine app

company Intouch Health, are already in use in other departments at the centre. "This technology is the perfect solution to provide care for inpatients infected with coronavirus, while protecting staff from contagion," said

Barkai.

Finally, there are other companies who have devoted themselves to treating the virus. CoughSync, a device developed by a Jerusalem paediatric and adolescent rehabilitation facility, could help treat victims suffering from pneumonia, and also reduce the danger of contagion. Innovated by Alyn Hospital, the product was invented by Dr Eliezer Be'eri, and is designed for people on ventilators, simulating a normal cough which clears phlegm from a patient's airways.

Aside from being less invasive, the device can also be attached to the ventilator, eliminating the need for

medical staff to remove the ventilator to give treatment and potentially exposing them to bacteria, making it eminently suitable for preventing the spread of coronavirus.

There are even those working on a cure itself. Immunotherapy biotech company, Vaxil Bio, announced last week that it believes it has successfully identified a Covid-19 vaccine candidate. The company, which specialises in cancer and infectious diseases, has harnessed its unique and patent protected signal peptide technology, which it believes can be effective as a prophylactic vaccine against the virus, and might also demonstrate therapeutic value in the future.

Case of wait and see for business on hold from Covid-19

JORDAN MOSHE

South African-born businessman Jack Slier is sitting on *shpilkes* (in agitation) in his Johannesburg cluster home with his eyes glued to any news of the coronavirus known as Covid-19. He has felt its impact in spite of being in perfect health and nowhere near the Far East.

He is feeling the pain of watching his business, which has an office in Shanghai, grind to a halt since December because of this devastating virus. He has a cattle-hide business, and his office in China processes transactions and fills orders. Since December, he has been left waiting for things to return to normal.

"There's been no activity at all for the past three weeks," he says. "We've been at a complete standstill. We usually mostly sell to factories in the Hubei region, all of which have remained closed since the end of the Chinese New Year."

Slier is certainly not alone. As the two-month mark since the outbreak of the coronavirus approaches, businesses across the globe are weighing up the impact the disease has had on trade. From Apple to Estée Lauder, companies are reporting a decline in sales, with demand down and supplies dwindling.

According to MarketWatch, Apple isn't expected to meet its second-quarter financial guidance targets because production has slowed or been halted in China. Apple generates about 15% of its revenue from China, and many of its products are made there. Similarly, toy manufacturer Hasbro reportedly continues "to have office and third-party factory closures" in China as a result of the outbreak. The company said China is responsible for about two-thirds of its global sourcing.

Smaller businesses like Slier's are potentially even worse off.

His operation involves the procurement and supply of hides to various buyers, primarily tanneries in China's Hubei province. He also deals in finished leather products with buyers beyond China, but all his business lines remain inactive.

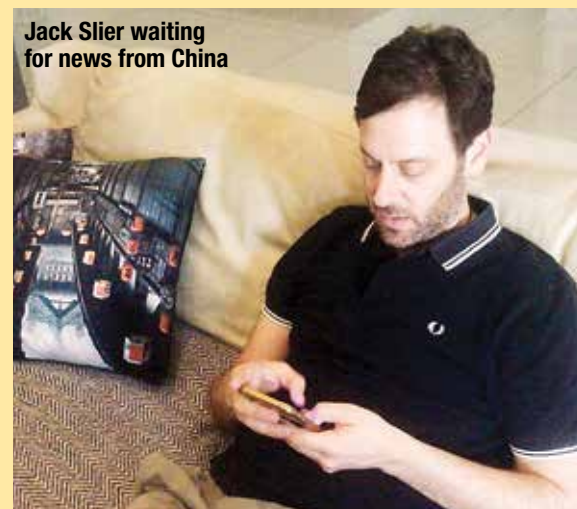
"We usually sell between 60 and 90 containers of hides every month. In the past month, we've sold only four, and have received no deposit on them either. This is just one indication of how bad things have really been."

Slier has been operating out of Shanghai for the past 11 years, commuting between China and South Africa for the past two years. He left China on 20 December to visit his sister in England before travelling to Johannesburg, where he first heard news of the outbreak. Since then, he has been staying in Oaklands, keeping up to date on developments in China and trying to get business back to normal.

"The New Year celebrations should have ended on 3 February, and I'd have returned to Shanghai," he says. "Staff at the office contacted me that week to say that they had received notice that our building could not reopen until the 17th. The holiday was basically extended, and during that time, the virus became more intense and spread through China and beyond."

He says not even the Chinese population itself knows how intense the issue really is, pointing out that the Chinese government censors information about the real rates of infection.

"The government can't tell people that 5 000 have died. It would cause chaos and panic. Even the Chinese themselves are unsure how significant the virus is, and the actual number of fatalities is definitely being withheld.



Jack Slier waiting for news from China

"The Chinese government is trying to make matters seem normal. The national government is insistent that it's business as usual, while regional governments are segregating whole towns, even neighbourhoods. It's far from normal."

Most unnerving, says Slier, is the conflicting information being broadcast across China. "Some reports say that people are recovering and some sort of initial cure has been found. There was even a case of a 97-year-old man who had been ill for two weeks and was said to be cured. Other reports have talked of people dying within two days."

In terms of business, he says the lack of certainty has left many buyers wary of dealing with China. "Shipping companies are very hesitant to take orders from China," he says. "Containers have arrived in Chinese ports, and are just sitting there causing congestion because they're not being cleared. Many manufacturing plants are also out of action, with workers afraid to gather in groups for fear of catching the virus. Domestic and international business has been badly affected."

Slier is in regular contact with staff at his Shanghai office, and says the consensus seems to be that things will return to normal towards the end of March or April.

"The Chinese authorities are definitely trying to get things back to normal," he says. "Two state tanneries have been reopened but are struggling to get workers there. We still get conflicting reports, and don't know when things will be completely back to normal."

Until then, Slier has no choice but to stay here, tracking shipments that are still on the water, and forging ahead with an e-commerce project to pass the time. While some deposit and balance payments have trickled through, there has been no new business, and he has had to rely on his savings to support himself.

"It's literally a day to day existence with daily assessment," he says. "I speak to colleagues regularly, and they mostly complain of boredom. These people are stuck in their hometowns, literally confined to their apartments."

While some remain confined, others have braved the outdoors and ventured out. "It depends on the region," says Slier. "Some are worse than others, but some people take their chances. It leaves companies in a difficult situation: if they call their workers back, are people obliged to return if they're scared? Can they be sacked? It's hard to say.

"One doesn't really feel the impact of the virus here unless one has business ties to China – that really gives you a sense of what's actually going on. People in China are nervous, and the uncertainty makes it worse. It's all a matter of time, but no one can be sure of when."

Food for thought on raising healthy kids

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

“Mommy, do I look fat?” is a dreaded question that many parents are ill-equipped to answer. This week, feeding coach Eliana Cline presented a talk that delved into this dilemma.

Parents need to change the narrative around weight, argues Cline. Her focus is on the feeding relationship, and creating attitudes and behaviour that supports a child’s ability to eat and grow according to his or her body. Rather than imparting the belief that “there is only one way to have a good body”, teach your children that “all bodies are good bodies”.

Cline acknowledges how hard it is to break our own conditioning around weight. Yet, it’s necessary to do so in order to raise well-adjusted children. If our child has enough emotional maturity, we can share our own challenges and work together to accept the truth – that there’s no one ideal body.

“Shut up, and look at the facts,” Cline urges parents. “If your child is a bigger kid and always has been, that’s how they’re made,” she says. “Trying to change that is the worst thing you can do for them. The more you embody the belief that all bodies are good bodies, the more they’ll emulate it – as in anything in parenting.”

When we over-identify with our own bodies, our kids learn to do the same. Cline emphasises the importance of watching what you say in front of your children. “The comments we make really land. Any messaging around bodies, be it good or bad, is damaging for your children,” she says. So, if you tell someone they look good because they lost weight, that plays on your child’s mind. “It teaches them that thin is better, that they’ll be loved and more accepted by their parents

and the world if they’re thin.” Don’t talk about weight in front of your kids, she says.

“We can’t escape the world,” she says, “but you can do your best to make your dialogue and your message as good as it can be.” Ultimately, the most important message to give our kids is that they are more than their bodies. What you love about your children won’t be their size, it will be their sweet natures, their senses of humour, who they are. We don’t want to tie their self-worth to their size.

It’s really about being kind to our kids and to ourselves. “Sensitivity to bodies in general is a wonderful thing to teach your children,” says Cline. “By telling our children we don’t accept their bodies, we’re telling them that we don’t accept them. It’s all about the environment you create. Create a space of dialogue with no judgement but rather compassion, acceptance, and love. A child needs to know they’re loved and unconditionally accepted as they are.”

Diets are harmful, Cline says, and ultimately, 95% of them fail. They work in cycles, starting with the promise of helping us feel better and gaining praise. But ultimately, we obsess over food because we’re restricting what we eat. When they don’t work or we fall off the wagon after they’re over, we land up feeling ashamed and that something is wrong with us rather than with the diets themselves.

“Children and adults come in different shapes and sizes, and that’s normal. We start looking at food without appreciating that the most defining part of our weight is genes. Even if we all ate and moved the same amount, we

wouldn’t look the same. Yet the world we live in doesn’t appreciate body diversity.”

We take the world’s singular image of what a healthy body looks like, and we apply it to ourselves and our kids. Yet, argues Cline, as long as our kids stay on the same growth curve, it’s a natural progression. “We can look

of a changing environment that needs to be managed.

We also need to teach our kids that their bodies will change, and that that’s normal. This is often something that parents encounter earlier than they expect, generally in prepubescent years. “Parents of kids of around eight, nine and 10 start seeing these changes, don’t understand them, and then freak out and unintentionally create issues,” says Cline. “Often girls and boys going through puberty get a bit chubby before they get longer, and then they fill out into whatever shape they’re meant to be.”

At this time, your children are also growing aware of their bodies and body differences, and they’re vulnerable. It’s important to cultivate a healthy dialogue, and create a safe space for your children around weight and body changes.

“They need your reassurance that it’s normal and that it’s good that their bodies are changing because they’re becoming women or men.” Also keep in mind that every kid will go through puberty in a completely different way because all bodies are different.

It’s better to focus on building resilience in our children, says Cline. “A resilient child is someone who can stand up in spite of their differences,” she says. Instilling boundaries regarding food is important but focus on cultivating a healthy lifestyle in the home regardless of everyone’s size. “It’s more sustainable to pursue health. Provide children with enough food groups and nutrients over time. In regard to food, show, don’t tell. Model good nutrition.”



at our children’s behaviour and want them to behave healthily around food,” she says, “but we can’t control their weight as much as we think we can without terrible effects.”

If there is a rapid change in weight, look at your child’s behaviour, as that is something that can be controlled. Rapid weight gain or loss is a symptom of a deeper problem or

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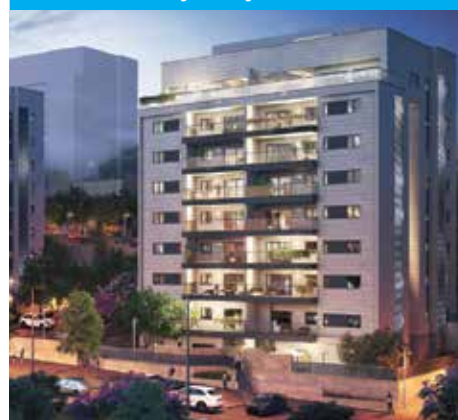
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Gandhi's formative years with SA Jews

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Mahatma Gandhi's closest supporters in South Africa were Jews and, if he hadn't come to this country, he possibly wouldn't have become the great legend that he was.

So said Dr Shimon Lev, speaking about Gandhi and the Jews at the South African Jewish Museum in Cape Town on Sunday evening.

Lev was referring to Gandhi's 21 "formative years" in this country – 1893 to 1914 – where the civil rights' activist developed the non-violence (passive resistance) struggle. "Everything he did in India later, one can find the roots in South Africa," he said, stressing that this period was "therefore very, very important".

Gandhi, an Indian lawyer, was the leader of India's non-violent independence movement against British rule, and advocated for the civil rights of Indians in South Africa.

Lev is an Israeli artist, curator, writer, and

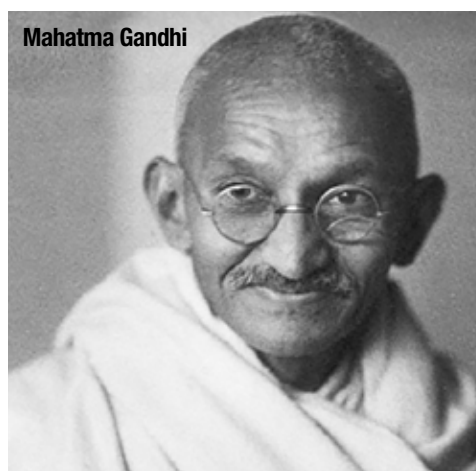
researcher. He holds a doctoral degree on the mutual influence of Jewish and Indian cultures, with a particular focus on Gandhi and his encounters with the Jewish and Zionist world.

Lev is in South Africa to conduct research on Gandhi for a new publication titled *Gandhi and the Jews, The Jews and Gandhi*.

He is the author of *Soulmates*, the story of Mahatma Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach, which is the first comprehensive study of the enigmatic relationship between the two men. Both were immigrants, Kallenbach hailed from Lithuania.

Lev drew attention to an interview Gandhi gave to the *London Jewish Chronicle* in 1931, during which he said, "I have a world of friends among the Jews. In South Africa I was surrounded by Jews."

For many years, Gandhi had been "deleted" from the Jewish/Zionist discourse as he had written a "very problematic article" in 1938 which viewed Zionism as a colonialist project, Lev said. "Some even say Gandhi



was anti-Semitic. "Of course, that's not true. He was a universalist who later modified his objection to Zionism and the state of Israel." When asked who was worse off, the Jews who were discriminated against or the Indian "untouchables", Gandhi said the former.

On Gandhi's attitude to the Holocaust, however, Lev said, "His sympathies were with

the Jews, but he wasn't in favour of a national home for the Jews." When comparing the Jews in Germany with the Indians in South Africa, he had said the latter were worse off.

"This is completely wrong, and shows he didn't understand what was going on," said Lev, pointing out that it had resulted in his name being "deleted".

In Lev's view, "Gandhi probably modified his view on Israel after the Holocaust."

Lev's interest in the man was sparked many years ago when he undertook a trail across Israel and came upon the ashes of Kallenbach buried at Kibbutz Degania's cemetery near the grave of AD Gordon, the spiritual force behind labour Zionism. Kallenbach was cremated by Reform Rabbi M C Weiler in Johannesburg. His ashes were interred for many years in a crypt on Linksfield Ridge in Johannesburg, before his relatives moved them to Israel.

Ironically in view of Kallenbach's strong support of Gandhi, Indians were not allowed into the proceedings, and had to stand at the door, Lev said.

Amongst Gandhi's other Jewish friends in South Africa, Lev mentioned Henry Polak (1882-1959), an English lawyer who Gandhi sent to India to lobby for the Indian cause in South Africa. He had been the first to publish a book about Gandhi and had "put his name out there".

Kallenbach had been more the "intimate friend", Lev stated, "but the stories about the relationship they had aren't true". Kallenbach was a successful architect who bought the piece of land outside Johannesburg on which Tolstoy Farm, Gandhi's experiment in communal living, had been established.

The name of the settlement was in fact Kallenbach's idea. Interestingly, it was established at the same time as Kibbutz Degania. One could view both as Tolstoyan settlements, noted Lev.

Sonja Schlesin became Gandhi's secretary, having started working for him at the age of 16. Lev described her as "a feminist, ahead of her time".

Louis Walter Ritch (1868-1952), another Jewish supporter, founded the Theosophical Society. In fact, most of Gandhi's Jewish supporters came from Theosophical circles, Lev noted. "For many Indians, the fact that so many Western Europeans were interested in their wisdom, gave them confidence."

Ritch had been sent to England by Gandhi to complete his legal studies and lobby for Indians in England, the colonial power. He later worked as a lawyer in Gandhi's office.

Then there were the Vogls. "Mrs Vogl was very active in teaching sewing classes and organising the Indian Women's Bazaar with Schlesin to help the family finances, selling Indian products when the men were arrested," Lev said.

"Gandhi writes very positively about her."

Gabriel Isaac was the only non-Indian to sacrifice his life for the Indian struggle. "He came out of jail (after the government's 'almost successful' attempt to crush Indian resistance) totally broken physically and mentally.

"Almost nothing has been written about it which is very strange. There is complete silence about him. Even worse, Gandhi doesn't even mention him in his autobiography," Lev said.

"It's a mystery. I've been trying to look for information about him." Hailing from Leeds in the United Kingdom where his family had a big jewellery business, Isaac, also a jeweller, came here to escape family pressure, according to Lev.

He fought in the Boer War, then became a "very active" theosophist. It was, in fact, Isaac who introduced Polak to Gandhi at a vegetarian restaurant in Johannesburg.

Polak was the only one who wrote about Isaac after his death. When Polak, annoyed, questioned Gandhi about the omission, he had been "very apologetic", saying that it had been "unintentional".

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Environmental activist at watershed of change

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Steve Collins is unequivocal that we are in an environmental crisis. He should know, being an expert in rural development, land reform, and sustainable resources. Collins has worked in the rural-development sector for the past 27 years, focusing on how human rights can be respected and enhanced by development.

He told the Greenside Shul community last weekend that every year, humans use more resources than are generated. Population growth and a drying continent requires innovative solutions and technology, but most of all it requires regional co-operation.

At the shul's special Tu B'Shvat Shabbos gathering, Collins spoke about the efforts by governments and communities to adapt to the impact of climate change in southern Africa.

Collins is a skilled facilitator, who brings parties together to solve environmental problems. He helped mediate between parties during the KwaZulu-Natal violence in the 1980s. He also mediated between mining companies and communities in the St Lucia estuary. He's now working on a programme called Resilient Waters, which brings parties together across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to find solutions to water shortages, floods, agriculture, and conservation.

He says South Africa currently has a population of 56.7 million people, and that by 2050 this is expected to rise to

75 million. Everyone will need food and water, and there just isn't enough water in the system.

He points out that a farmer needs 880mm of rain a year to survive agriculturally without the help of additional water technology. But ultimately, the impact of climate change isn't less water, it's that it will come in big dashes.

Collins went on to alert the community to the fact that gases such as methane from livestock, landfills, and sulphur dioxide are warming the earth. The ocean is heating up, and sea levels are rising. Fertilisers, pesticides, and land-use change are creating massive extinction, leading to an imperative to allocate more land for conservation and biodiversity. South Africa, in particular, has one of the highest carbon footprints in the world.

He points out that the continent has invested massively in hydro power, but questions how this will be impacted by drought. In Malawi, the problem has been exacerbated by the widescale felling of trees for charcoal, resulting in massive water runoff.

Collins talks about a "food-energy-water nexus", by which he means that environmental crisis forces us to see the interconnections.

However, he says he is encouraged by the level of regional co-operation and environmentally conscious decisions taken by SADC and its communities, though he says lack of sharing, cost

constraints, and difficulty with change are still challenges.

"Maybe apartheid did us a small favour in creating the so-called frontline states, which then became SADC," he said. "It has some of the most progressive environmental policies in the world."

SADC is helping Africa to resist colonial boundaries through

towers and eco-system services (for example cleaning water systems using reeds, rather than chemicals – even in private swimming pools), and the Waterberg, Soutpansberg, and Groot Marico have been declared significant environmental zones.

Collins outlined three main approaches to the crisis we face: mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.



Okavango River

organisations like Okacom (the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission) which is an agreement between Angola, Namibia and Botswana to co-operate to protect the Cubango-Okavango River Basin.

South Africa, which has many different biomes from desert to tropical, has a climate-adaptation strategy in place, he says. The concern is that a lot of the Cape-based biomes won't survive as they are sensitive to the water cycle.

There is greater recognition of water

Mitigation, he says, involves moving away from the use of fossil fuels, fertiliser, and plastics to ecologically sound alternatives like solar energy.

He gave the example of the profusion of water hyacinth in the Hartbeespoort Dam in North West Province as a result of the fertiliser runoff from farms upstream. Likewise, he says, landfills are a huge problem because they release methane into the atmosphere. There is a ground-breaking experiment taking place to use black soldier flies to

compost waste.

Another way to mitigate damage is through taxes and, he says South Africa last year signed a carbon tax on greenhouse gases into law.

Adaptation means finding ways to use less water. In South Africa, 80% of our water is used for agriculture.

Israel has been successful in growing food through drip irrigation, hydroponics, greenhouses, the use of fish and plants in same water system, and by placing crop residues on the soil to improve soil structure.

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from shock. For example, he says, Kenya's wheat fields were destroyed by too much rain over the past two years, and there has been large-scale destruction of wildlife as a result of drought, leading to conflict between humans and wildlife. Hence, experts are looking carefully at where to dig waterholes – including for elephants – and where to plant.

Resilience is also about knowing who your friends are. Digital networks help to share information and resources in times of disaster.

In conclusion, Collins says we need to transition from a carbon-based energy system which guzzles large amounts of water. We need to find ways to deal with droughts and floods, we need to invest in biodiversity, and we need greater regional co-operation to make it happen.

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

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

descendants, these Jews are eligible for European citizenship which will result in them obtaining an EU passport.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



Avi Horesh

Destroyed Warsaw, January 1945

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

Adv. Avi Horesh has in-depth knowledge of the applicable legislation and in his experience, the majority of South African Jews have ancestors who were illegally deprived of citizenship. As their

I will be in Johannesburg March 5 and March 20 to 26, and in Durban March 6 to 9, and in Cape Town March 9 to 15
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The swastika saved me, says Holocaust survivor

MIRAH LANGER

A Jewish teenager saved his own life during the Holocaust by pretending to be a Nazi. This is the story of Solomon “Sally” Perel, now 94, a proud Israeli grandfather, who continues to share his story around the world.

“I’m happy I was able to carry out my mother’s instruction to stay alive,” he says.

Yet, he continues to grapple with the complexity of his experience. “I [still] live with this dual identity. I was a Jew, and I was a Nazi. I was a victim, but I was also a perpetrator. The Hitler Youth is still a part of me today. It was the swastika that saved me.”

Perel was speaking at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre last week as part of an educational tour of South Africa as a guest of the Sylt Foundation. Perel’s memoir, *I Was Hitler Youth* Salomon was turned into the Oscar-nominated film, *Europa, Europa*.

His story began when he was an eight-year-old boy, growing up in the north German town of Peine when Hitler came to power. At 10, he was thrown out of school because of the Nuremberg race laws, and shortly afterwards, his family, including two brothers and a sister, left for Poland.

Within four months of the German occupation in 1939, the ghetto was created in Lodz, and his family were told to move. At this point, Perel’s parents decided that Perel, then aged 14, along with his older brother Izaak, should flee to eastern Poland.

Perel’s father was a rabbi. In parting from his son, he said a prayer, and told him, “You must always remember that you are a Jew, and must always believe in G-d.” His mother told him, “Go my son. You must live.” This, said Perel, was “an order and an instruction”.

Perel spent the next two years in a children’s home in the town of Grodno. When he was 16, the Germans invaded the area, and the orphanage tried to relocate to Minsk.

On the way, Perel along with thousands of other refugees were caught by the German forces and taken to a field. “The Jews were sorted from the rest, and immediately taken to a forest and shot.”

“Then, it was my turn. A German soldier stood in front of me, ordering me to put up my hands. Immediately, he asked if I was a Jew. My first reaction was to remember my father who had said never to forget that I was a Jew or G-d would leave me.

“But then immediately, I realised that if I said that, I [would be] dead in five minutes. Here I was on the spot, what do I say?”

Perel then thought about what his mother had said, “She had said to live ... What I thought then is what I still believe today: the most important [thing] of all is life. There is no ideology, no Kaiser, no king, and no set of ideas for which you should sacrifice young lives.

“To this day, I believe that it was essentially my duty to stay alive.”

Perel said he stopped shaking with fear, and in a clear voice, told the German officer that he was not a Jew, but in fact was an ethnic German.

The officer accepted his claim in spite of his story that he had lost



1943 group portrait of members of the Hitler Youth in Braunschweig, including Solly Perel in the centre

his documents on a train. He told them his name was Josef to hide his Jewish origins.

“I was given a German Wehrmacht uniform, and put into a unit as a translator of German and Russian. The other officers were very proud because they had the youngest soldier in their unit.”

His commander even sent him back to Germany to attend an elite boarding school for Hitler Youth. “I was quickly subjected to indoctrination in the school, and I felt great pride in being part of the young generation which was going to build the thousand-year Reich for the furher, Adolf Hitler,” he said, noting the dark irony.

It was a protective mechanism. “Basically, I said to myself that I have to forget who I am. I have to be one of the boys.”

One of the greatest dangers for Perel was the fact that he was circumcised. “I stand in awe at how creative I was in hiding this fact.” At one point, Perel even attempted to perform an operation on himself.

During a school holiday in 1943, Perel went to the Lodz ghetto to see if he could find his family. “I had a real longing to be there, just to be with them.”

He remembers his arrival at the ghetto, dressed in the school’s black swastika winter uniform.

“I found myself standing at the fence around the ghetto. I saw things for which my vocabulary today is simply inadequate to describe. I saw frozen corpses lying on the street, and I realised any one of these could be my mother or father.”

He spent 12 days looking for his family.

“There’s a tram that goes through the ghetto. I used to sit on the tram and go through the ghetto in the hope that my mother would see me. Since then, I have nightmares that I am going on this tram through the ghetto. I wake up from this nightmare to this day.”

Finally the end of the war came with the arrival of American troops. Perel was arrested along with his Hitler Youth classmates. “It was surreal: here was the Jewish kid, ‘Sally’, in a Nazi uniform and now an American prisoner of war.”

Eventually released, Perel began to come to terms with the disjuncture between his reality and that of other Jewish survivors.

“I discovered that just 30km away from my elite boarding school was

the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp. That was my first real collision between ‘Josef’ and ‘Sally’. I realised that in my neighbourhood, at a time

when I was able to flirt with girls, have a good time, and get through these years quite comfortably, my contemporaries, Jewish children, had ended up being exterminated in Bergen-Belsen.

“I immediately went to Bergen-Belsen, and saw what had become of my people.”

Perel also soon discovered that his brothers had survived.

He said that even though he had seen the film of his life a hundred times, when he watched the scene where he is reunited with his brother Izaak at Dachau

Concentration Camp, with him still dressed in his Hitler youth uniform and his brother in prisoner garb, “the tears still come every time”.

Perel’s parents had died years earlier in the ghetto. His sister had been shot by a German guard when her feet froze while travelling to a concentration camp near Danzig.

Later, Perel and his brothers emigrated to Israel. He served in the War of Independence, and for two further years. He married a Polish Holocaust survivor, and started a family.

Perel said that until about 40 years later, when he decided to write his memoir, his family didn’t know his story. “I wrote down my story in Hebrew, but because I had never learnt it at school, I didn’t know the grammar. So I had to give it to my sons to correct. That’s how they learnt my story.

“At one point, my youngest son said to me, ‘Papa, why didn’t you tell us your story before? Then, we would have known earlier that we have a hero for a father.’”

Inside the head of a 14-year-old Holocaust victim

MIRAH LANGER

24 December 1943

“Oh to write! ... To be able to write, to make pen move on paper! I need to write.”

11 February 1944

“I’m just a little creature that can hardly be seen through the microscope. I, a poor Jewish girl from the ghetto, I who don’t know what will happen to me tomorrow ... I’m laughing at the entire world because I have a support, a great support: my faith, because I believe!”

17 February 1944

“It hurts so much. (For them, we are not humans, just machines) Oh pain! But I’m glad that I can “feel” that it hurts because at long as its hurts, I’m a human being. G-d! Thank you for your kindness towards us.”

12 April 1944

“We look at this wonderful world, this beautiful spring, and at the same time we see ourselves in the ghetto deprived of everything. Oh G-d, how much longer?”

These are brief extracts from the diary of Rywka Lipszyc, a young Jewish girl who was imprisoned in the Łódź Ghetto, aged just 14.

The diary resurfaced in 2016, and became the inspiration behind an international exhibition currently on show at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

The director of the Galicia Jewish Museum, Jakub Nowakowski, who was one of the curators of the exhibition, spoke to the *SA Jewish Report* about its genesis.

Nowakowski says the diary was discovered in the ruins of a crematorium at Auschwitz by one of the Soviet military doctors that were involved in the liberation of the camp in 1945.

Unable to read Polish, the doctor nevertheless realised the preciousness of the notebook, and kept it. It was decades later that the doctor’s granddaughter contacted a Jewish organisation in San Francisco about the diary, that by now was in her possession.

In the diary, Rywka stated her name as well as those of others in her family. From this, researchers began “putting together the story of Rywka Lipszyc, piece by piece”.

Her existence was soon confirmed. “She was the daughter of a very Orthodox Jewish family.” The diary begins on 3 October 1943, and details her experiences after being taken to the Łódź Ghetto. Yet her story has no clear conclusion, with her last entry on 12 April 1944, ending “in the middle of the sentence. The sentence is broken.” As fragmented as the diary’s end, so too is any definite conclusion about what happened to Rywka or how the diary ended up at the

Auschwitz crematorium by 1945. Through the testimony of Rywka’s cousins which was found at Yad Vashem, it was determined that she landed up in Bergen-Belsen. While she survived to experience liberation, she was terribly ill at this point. There are conflicting reports about what happened to her after this. “Her fate remains unknown,” notes Nowakowski with pathos.

Yet, what is known is the story of her life. Her diary serves as a profound and rare window into aspects of the Holocaust about which we know little – especially because it isn’t the testimony of a survivor but someone who it seems most likely didn’t survive.

Moreover, her position in society offers an unusual viewpoint. “First of all, if you read the diary, you’ll quickly realise that Rywka is at the very end of the food chain; she is the tiniest cell in the big body of the ghetto. She’s just trying to react to the things that are falling apart. There’s nothing of the war in a political sense. It’s a very intimate story of one single girl trying to survive in a world she doesn’t understand.” Furthermore, says Nowakowski, there are very few testimonies of Orthodox Jews, especially Orthodox women, as so few survived. “Rywka was very religious, and that’s unique.”

Because Rywka was so religious, she interacted little with men. Thus, as part of the exhibition design, the focus is on the world of women. Commentaries on Rywka’s story in the exhibition, whether they are made by doctors, psychologists, or rabbis, “all of them are female to keep Rywka in her female world”.

Furthermore, because there are no known photographs of Rywka, for the visual aspect of the exhibition, the curators decided to use the space to honour all those who remain unknown. “We chose photographs [from the Łódź Ghetto] where we couldn’t find the names of the subjects. This is a tribute to all those people lost.”

He says the photographs chosen have real poignancy as they were photographs taken by Jewish photographers of other Jews. They are portraits not of the dehumanised victims of the Nazis, but people still “smiling, holding onto each other, trying to hold onto those last fragments of human dignity”.

Diaries like Rywka’s are invaluable first-hand artefacts of the war. “These are like bottles with a letter thrown into the ocean of time that we discover today. This is the unedited point of view of a single person that otherwise is gone.”

Nowakowski suggests that Rywka’s perspective is particularly moving in how she ultimately engages in a never-ending, agonising debate about faith during the Holocaust.

“People ask, ‘Where was G-d?’ I think, for Rywka, G-d was there with her ... within her ... all the time.”



Photos from the exhibition of Jews of the Łódź Ghetto whose identities remain unknown



On the train to nowhere

TALI FEINBERG

Former struggle photographer Eric Miller has seen and recorded a lot in his career, but he has never been moved to make a film – until now.

“I happened to be passing through Hutchinson, a railway junction in South Africa’s Northern Cape Province, on the main route between Johannesburg and Cape Town. I was intrigued by what I was seeing, and had a long conversation about it with my family as we continued to drive. The next year, my wife, Laurine Platzky, and I decided to make a film about it,” he says.

The result is a one-hour documentary called *Hutchinson: SHUNTED* that has just won an Award of Excellence at the Impact Docs Awards, which recognises top documentaries from around the world. “We are absolutely delighted to be recognised by a group of people who watched and evaluated our film amongst so many others,” says Miller.

Although Miller and Platzky had no experience of filmmaking, they had a deep understanding of South Africa, and recognised the

potential of making a movie about Hutchinson, which has been called a real-life “ghost town”.

Says Miller, “Hutchinson is a microcosm of other similar towns across South Africa. Its economy was always dependent on the railways, so when the railways declined, the town became ‘hollowed out’. It’s a symbol of the same deterioration in many other towns that depended on the railway lines. I have since seen a number of other towns that look almost exactly the same.”

There are less than 400 people living in Hutchinson, 100 of them children. There

is Victoria West, 10km away. Many Hutchinson residents walk the distance to get their basic supplies, otherwise a taxi ride costs R40 each way.

Why do they stay? “Many of them have homes there, with running water and electricity, even if there is no other town structure. Others simply want to stay as it’s what they have always known. Most can’t find work elsewhere, and they live off social grants and a government work programme, where they might earn R100 a day. Very few enjoy their living conditions,” Miller says.

To begin making the documentary, Miller and Platzky put the word out that they were seeking to speak to former and current members of the town. They were soon contacted by a woman, Marlene Hendricks, from Beaufort West, who had lived in Hutchinson and had many stories to tell. She became their unofficial guide, networker, and narrator, featuring among other residents and former residents in the film. It was as a result of Hendricks that Miller and Platzky were convinced that they needed to make the documentary.

They did it on their time and using their own resources, often driving the seven hours to Victoria West from Cape Town and spending a long weekend to 10 days there. They would visit Hutchinson from as early as 05:00, and stay the whole day,

filming the daily lives of those who live there or who did so in the past. “We did about seven trips in total, and spent about 30 days working there for this one-hour film.”

The stories they gathered are told by school teachers and principals, shunters, drivers, policemen, managers, postmasters, and others who were central to the town’s life then and now. “In spite of growing up in separate communities and experiencing life in Hutchinson differently, residents and former residents recall varying accounts of common events. The one thing most of them share is a powerful memory and connection to the town of their youth,” he says.

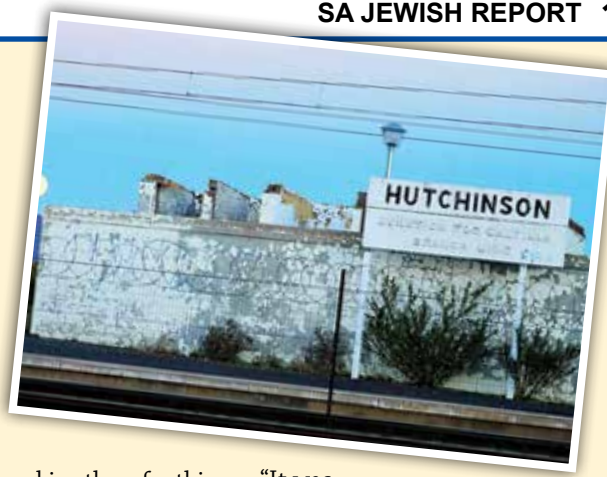
Miller also took evocative photographs of the place. We see a child standing amongst the rubble of the old all-white school, and the abandoned swimming pool, changing rooms, recreation hall, and playground in the old “white” part of town. Abandoned railway houses have been left vulnerable to the elements and plunder, and a schoolboy on his way to an early-morning class asks passing train passengers for food.

“It was a passion project, fuelled by the belief that this was a story that was useful and should be told. It connects history to our contemporary reality. Before we launched it to the public, we showed it to the 20 people featured in the film, and their response was that it was an accurate rendition of history, memory, and the current town,” says Miller.

“While the film paints a heartfelt picture of the struggle these residents face, it also poses a challenge to government and Transnet to take responsibility for the impact of changes on these communities,” Miller says.

Readers can keep an eye out for the documentary at upcoming local film festivals, and after that, Miller hopes to show it at universities, schools, and private screenings.

• To view the trailer, visit <https://emill93.wixsite.com/hutchinsonshunted>



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FW debacle a diversion from more important debate

The “FW de Klerk conversation” says a lot more about us than it does about him. It speaks to our attraction to the most basic of dialogue, and proves once again how much more comfortable we are with being outraged than we are with dealing with matters of complexity.

Apartheid was a crime against humanity. We all know that. And, most likely, so does De Klerk. Why he chose to answer the interviewer’s question as he did, only he and G-d knows, but given that he was an active member of the National Party back in the day, his outlook should hardly surprise us. More than that, I’m not sure why we should care.

Very simply, De Klerk is exactly who he has always been.

Like masterful magicians who make us look elsewhere, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) have succeeded in diverting attention away from their behaviour at the State of the Nation Address (SONA), away from the content of the president’s speech, to have us all engaged in the most puerile of conversations. It has succeeded in getting us to debate something we all agree on.

With the reward being the feeling of outrage we seem to crave.

The EFF’s technique isn’t new. It repeatedly slings mud against a wall to see what sticks. Often, South Africans shrug off what it has to say without a second glance, but this time, because it used SONA as ground zero to launch, when millions of South Africans were paying attention, success was almost guaranteed.

And so, instead of the country debating the issues regarding Eskom, South African Airways, or youth unemployment, our

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



pages and hearts are filled with outrage that a man who was a minister and an enforcer of the apartheid system didn’t think it was a crime against humanity. Is anyone really shocked?

Psychologists call De Klerk’s thought process cognitive dissonance. In essence, we all want to feel good about ourselves. According to social psychologist Dan Ariely, everyone cheats, and everyone lies. But we do so until we are no longer comfortable about what we are doing. This results in us either pulling back and curtailing our behaviour, or justifying why we do what we do. This is called cognitive dissonance, and I suspect that De Klerk might be suffering from a bad case of it.

Even while keeping perspective, it’s important that Jewish South Africans don’t negate the offensive nature of De Klerk’s statement. It’s tantamount to Queen Isabella of Spain saying, “Yes, indeed, the inquisition was bad, but at least Jews got to travel.” It’s stupid, offensive, and it contributes nothing positive to critical dialogue.

We also need to be able to see these statements and those who make them for what they are. We need to strive not to get distracted to the point that we cease to have the conversations that are crucial. Every dialogue comes at the expense of another, and I believe that South Africa can hardly afford the cost that comes with debating something that everyone already knows.

Braaivleis, rugby, sunny skies, and hate crimes

Many white South Africans probably can’t imagine that they might have been perpetrators of a crime against humanity. It sounds like such a gigantic, malevolent, bloody concept. On the whole, they saw themselves as going about their ordinary lives, growing up, getting an education, raising their families, and mixing with relatives and friends, not necessarily as political activists.

During their youth, many white South Africans travelled the world, associating freely with people from other countries. Yes, there were anti-apartheid and anti-South African protests in various places, at various times, of which they might or might not have been aware, but these didn’t really affect the average South African’s travels. South African companies thrived all over the world, and international companies came here and flourished.

The majority of ordinary white South Africans are also probably not aware of the wording of the Rome Statute, or even the existence of the statute. It says that the apartheid system in which they lived alongside black people or above them as masters for decades, was a crime against humanity, an international crime. The 2002 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court says apartheid was similar to other “crimes against humanity”.

So, when FW de Klerk and his foundation, without debate, issued a statement last week saying that the idea that apartheid was a crime against humanity was incorrect, many ordinary white South Africans were probably confused. In finer detail, he said it was an “agitprop” project initiated by the Soviets and their African National Congress/South African Communist Party allies to stigmatise white South Africans by associating them with genuine crimes against humanity. Images conjured up by the words “crime against humanity” include totalitarian repression and the slaughter and torture of millions of people. The Germans in World War II did it; Stalin did it in Russia; the

TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin



Hutus did it to the Tutsis in Rwanda. But South Africa didn’t do it.

De Klerk was joint deputy president under former president Nelson Mandela in 1994. He had previously been the last apartheid president. He had presided over the dismantling of the entire legislative framework of apartheid, freeing the way for the present non-racial democratic Constitution. He jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize with Nelson Mandela.

Following outrage over his statement, and pressure from wiser South African leaders including Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, the FW de Klerk Foundation apologised on Monday, and unconditionally withdrew it.

The statement stoked the uproar of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in parliament last week at the State of the Nation Address. To onlookers, the EFF looked like a bunch of rowdy attention-seekers. But they claimed to represent black South Africa, to tackle the eons of white colonialism and apartheid, and demanded that De Klerk, sitting in the public gallery, be kicked out as “he had blood on his hands”. Predictably, they rejected the foundation’s apology, and demanded that De Klerk be stripped of his Nobel Peace Prize, and lose his privileges as a former head of state.

The loud, unruly manner in which the EFF punted its message, or the apparent lack of focus of the party’s attacks on people, from Public Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan to De Klerk, made it hard to listen to it. But does the EFF and its fiery leader, Julius Malema, really represent black South Africa today? Apartheid is gone; the country is on a different track, however tenuously, and with whatever problems. Whatever it is these people in red overalls represent, they make us sit up and take notice that the trauma of black South Africa hasn’t gone away, nor the polarities between black and white.

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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

SONA silver lining

I attended last week’s State of the Nation (SONA) address in Parliament together with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies’ (SAJBD’s) parliamentary liaison, Chaya Singer. Without underplaying the very formidable challenges that still need to be overcome, what we heard was cause for at least cautious optimism. Much of what President Cyril Ramaphosa said remained on the level of hopeful rhetoric rather than substantive action, but I was personally encouraged to learn about the genuine progress that is undeniably being made in certain crucial areas. Admittedly, this has been frustratingly slow, but we need to be realistic about what’s practically achievable, given the considerable constraints that state capture has placed on the ability of government to implement effective change.

The fact that the SAJBD, as the acknowledged representative body of South African Jewry, is regularly invited to important national gatherings of this nature is itself very positive. We have genuinely been made to feel that we are not just spectators, but part of the greater discussion about where our country is going. Chaya’s work in Parliament further enables her to engage with players across the political spectrum. In the same week as SONA, for example, she attended the Democratic Alliance alternative SONA, and the Economic Freedom Fighters’ post-SONA event at the Press Club of South Africa. By having a presence on the ground, she is the face of the board – and therefore the Jewish community – in the legislative hub of South Africa. By being part of the national



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



conversation, it makes it easier for the board to fulfil its core mandate of representing the Jewish community and bringing its concerns to the attention of those responsible for determining and implementing government policy. The connections we have been able to forge over the years have time and again proven invaluable when issues of specific concern to our own constituency have arisen.

SONA this year was to a large extent overshadowed by the disruptive behaviour of certain MPs, which held up proceedings for more than an hour. For those present, it was an especially frustrating experience, given the importance of the occasion for all South Africans. Even so, I felt there was a positive side to the incident in that in spite of the crassly provocative behaviour of an unruly minority, the rules of parliamentary procedure were scrupulously followed in responding to it. The temptation to ride roughshod over those bent on causing disruption must have been strong, but instead, proper procedures were followed throughout. It was a sign of a mature democracy, and we can be grateful for that, even though democracy can occasionally be frustrating.

• 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

From Mzansi to *Makoti*, the rising star of Micaela Tucker

NICOLA MILTZ

Young King David Victory Park alumnus Micaela Jade Tucker's star is rising fast while still a hard-working drama student. Tucker, 21, may still be a fourth-year drama student at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), but she is establishing herself as an actor to watch.

As a teenager, Tucker was an established presenter on SABC 1's *YoTV*, Mzansi's premium and longstanding teen variety show.

But, the actress and presenter is best known for her television role as Jessica in the SABC 1 comedy-drama series *Makoti*, which recently ended a successful season one.

It was her first starring role in television, and has led to her often being asked by young fans for her autograph or to pose for a selfie when she is out shopping at a local mall.

"*Makoti* really helped my career because it was widely watched and gave me great exposure," Tucker told the *SA Jewish Report* recently.

The highly rated and popular relationship drama, in which Tucker played one of the leading roles, was watched by more than four million viewers. It was voted the country's most watched television series last year.

"It was inspiring working with such experienced actors, being the youngest member of the television cast," said Tucker who matriculated from King David High School Victory Park.

Up until recently, *Makoti* was aired every Wednesday at 19:30 on SABC 1.

Tucker plays Jessica in the show, which she describes as a relationship drama that gets more and more "saucy and spicy" as the show progresses. In it she plays conservative Jessica (who like Tucker, is Jewish) who meets rebel

disc jockey and graphic designer DJ Mo at their workplace.

"Jessica and DJ Mo work together in an office for a love blog. Jessica is the journalist, and DJ Mo is the graphic artist and a DJ on the side. In the beginning, Jessica is a very conservative overthinker, she is a 'goodie-two shoes', and DJ Mo is the complete opposite."

It isn't long before the two form a steamy love relationship that leaves viewers begging for more.

When asked what it was like to act in love scenes, Tucker said, "My first day on set was hard. My co-stars all have a lot of experience behind them in shows like *Generations*. I was the youngest on set, a student, with no time to get into the role, so I felt a bit out of my depth. But I loved the challenge," she said.

"I met Ayanda McKayi, who plays DJ Mo, on the day we started shooting, and we had to develop a real chemistry between us. I had to act as if I had genuine, heartfelt feelings for him, but I had just met him. It was tough.

"It tests you as an actress doing scenes where you're falling in love with someone, kissing, and touching; it's quite tough," she said. The show aired during family time, so a lot was left to the imagination.

But it didn't take her long to get into the swing of things, and now she hopes SABC 1 will screen season two.

Her parents, Carol and Howard, and her younger sister, Racquel, are her biggest supporters.

Having said that, Tucker said, "My mom refused to watch, she can't cope with me kissing a guy on TV, and just couldn't bring herself to watch those more intense love scenes.

"My dad watched every episode, but he'd be like, 'Oh My G-d, Micaela!'"

As an honours student in performance and musical theatre, Tucker is no stranger to balancing acting work and studies. She has been dancing, singing, and acting all her life.

"I used to put on shows for my parents on Shabbos. I'd turn the dining room into a mini theatre, and they'd have to sing and clap and be my audience," she said, "I was always a bit of a character."

In primary school, Tucker played Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* at the Wits Theatre. It was her first professional children's production, and from there the acting bug continued to bite.

Tucker has her heart set on musical theatre. As a classically trained ballet dancer, she now attends tap dancing lessons as well as singing lessons several times a week. "Singing is a challenge, I won't lie," she said. However, she feels blessed to have started vocal training with her musical-theatre lecturer, well known South African theatre actress, director, and producer, Gina Shmukler, and her vocal performance lecturer, well known singer and

actress Carly Graeme.

Tucker said her high school mentor, drama teacher Renos Spanoudes, inspired her to pursue an acting career. Spanoudes, the head of arts and culture at King David High School Victory Park, continues to be one of her biggest supporters attending most of her Wits shows.

Spanoudes said Tucker was a talented performer with a solid work ethic. "Micaela is a wonderful inspiration for us all. She was one of those students who was very clear about her vision and her plans for her life and future.

"She came into the school hungry to do drama, to engage in the major productions. In the one-act plays,

she was always someone who wanted to grow with every piece. She wanted to stretch herself. She wasn't happy if she was in a comfort zone and a piece, character, or performance was too easy for her. She isn't scared to work hard and go into territories and characters that are challenging."

He said that as a King David Victory Park alumni, she has gone back to the school to mark drama practicals and be there for younger students.

Spanoudes has no doubt we will be seeing much more of his former student in the entertainment world.



Micaela Tucker

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

understanding of local immigration laws.

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

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

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

I will be in Johannesburg March 5 and March 20 to 26, and in Durban March 6 to 9, and in Cape Town March 9 to 15
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King David marimba band shown at Ben Gurion airport



The King David Senior Primary Linksfield marimba band, from left, Amalia Frankel, Hannah Benson, Michelle Fine, Samuel Alexander, Sierra Sher, Cole Kopelowitz, and Jacob Spector. Front: Samuel Gewer

A giant photograph of the King David Senior Primary School Linksfield marimba band will soon be exhibited as part of the “Hamsa on Us” photo exhibition in the departure hall at Ben Gurion Airport.

The photo was taken recently during a collaborative marimba band jam session between King David Senior Primary School Linksfield and Har Tuv Elementary School in Beit Shemesh, Israel.

It is one of the initiatives of the school twinning programme between King David and Har Tuv. This programme, under the auspices of the P2G framework of the Jewish Agency, has been running for a few years.

The exhibition, which opens in April,

celebrates the 90th anniversary since the establishment of the Jewish Agency in 1929. It is led by Israeli President Reuven Rivlin through his flagship initiative “Israeli Hope”, as well as the Israel Vibe Organisation.

The photographs show the partnerships between different sectors of the community that represent the DNA of Israeli society. They aim to prove that there is strength in diversity, and that this diversity contributes to the vigour and success of Israel within different arenas, while at the same time, respecting all groups of people in the country, namely secular, religious and ultra-Orthodox Jews, Arabs, and Jewish communities living in the diaspora.

Popping up for the new year



Torah Academy Nursery School entertained new pupils with popcorn and a puppet show at its orientation day for new pupils and parents last week, while parents were briefed on the school.

Yeshiva College gets into swim of things

Yeshiva College Primary school students shone with pride at the schools' Inter-House Gala on 14 February, showing true *gees* (spirit) and cheering on their swimmers.



Ada turns 104

A small party of family and friends was held at Our Parents Home in Gardens, Johannesburg, on 11 February for Ada Plett, who turned 104.

Her son, Rodney Plett and his wife Anita were present, as were their children (Ada's grandchildren) Nicole Plett Nathan, and Adam and Dana Plett and their families. Four of Ada's seven great grandchildren were also there – Riley Nathan, Harley Nathan, Ethan Plett, Kyle Plett. Incredibly, the age difference between Ada and her youngest great grandchildren, Ethan and Kyle Plett (aged seven) is 97 years!

Born Ada Weinberg on 11 February, 1916 in Markwood, Free State, Ada was the oldest of



five children. She is the only one of her siblings still alive today. She was married twice (first to Norman Gross and then to Manning Plett) and has three children: Sharon, Rodney, and Malcolm Plett.

Joburg city councillor honoured for Hillbrow regeneration

Ward councillor Zama Shezi was awarded a Jewish National Fund (JNF) tree certificate at a service at Temple Israel on 15 February for his achievement in improving the living conditions in the Hillbrow precinct.

The award, presented by Temple Israel Heritage chairperson Reeva Forman, was given during a service conducted by Rabbi David Benjamin from Israel.

After the service, Grace Green from Greenworks and Shezi planted trees outside the shul. Green also donated three spekboom (a drought-tolerant South African plant which is a phenomenal carbon sponge with excellent soil binding properties).

Ghana's history brought to light

Retired Ghanaian architect Kwasi Agyare-Dwomoh enthralled the audience of the adult education division of the Union of Jewish Women with a presentation on “Ghana – past, present and future”.

Agyare-Dwomoh, who is proficient in English, French, Russian, Akan (Ghana) and Setswana, discussed much of Ghana's history, going as far back as 1473 when the Portuguese landed, followed by Danes, Norwegians, the French and finally the English.

He explained that the large thriving country named the Gold Coast was divided, subdivided, and now, after many struggles, is a smaller area we know as independent Ghana.

Ghana today is a thriving, colourful country with a healthy gross domestic product. It produces commodities such as cocoa, and minerals including gold. Education is free and compulsory for every child.



UJW Adult Education Division Committee members with Kwasi Agyare-Dwomoh

Letters

ANTI-SEMITISM FIGURES BASED ON DETAILED RECORDS

In the 14 February 2020 edition of the *SA Jewish Report*, Darren Bergman expressed his concern that the “SAJBD had politicised the situation to create a sense of calm and an image that the SAJBD is in control” and that we are “complacent and/or out of touch”. To allay Mr Bergman's fears, I would like to provide him with some information. The purpose of our reporting isn't to “pat ourselves on the back” as he suggests, it's a globally recognised resource used within academic and international Jewish parameters. For many decades we have worked with universities, foreign governments, and the United Nations Human Rights Council utilising our monitoring techniques.

Undeniably, many incidents are going unreported, but that's true everywhere in the world. In the United Kingdom (UK), for instance, it's estimated that only about 10% are brought to the attention of the authorities or Jewish communal bodies detailed with monitoring and investigating such activity.

One of the functions that compiling records of known incidents does perform is to show trends from year to year.

The likelihood of incidents going unreported is heightened in cases where they occur in areas where Jewish presence is small, and where there are consequently no Jewish organisations on the ground equivalent to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) or Community Security Organisation (CSO). The more centralised a community, the easier it is to obtain a reliable sense of what's happening on the ground. This is the case with South African Jewry, which is primarily concentrated in four cities, all of which have a branch of both the SAJBD and CSO responsible for

monitoring and responding to anti-Jewish activity.

As can be seen from a detailed breakdown of actual incidents recorded over the past two decades, the SAJBD scrupulously records all incidents that come to its attention. These range from serious cases involving physical violence and/or threats, to an offensive remark made in a school playground. A response appropriate to the nature of the incident is determined. Put another way, nothing is being suppressed or swept under the carpet. In fact, in France, whose records in recent years include more than 13 people killed in separate attacks, as well as cases of attempted murder, a fair number of what in South Africa is adjudged to be incidents would probably be considered too innocuous to be added to the annual tally at all.

The more identified people are with their Jewishness, the greater the likelihood they will have a) the motivation and b) the information about who to report incidents to. The South African Jewish community has notably high levels of Jewish identity, and the board's experience is that people certainly don't hold back when they believe they have experienced anti-Semitism. Indeed, some individuals can be somewhat over-zealous in that regard, seeing anti-Semitic motivations where, once looked into more closely, don't in fact exist.

The relatively small number of Jews in South Africa compared to other diaspora countries with a significant Jewish presence (Canada, UK, Australia, France, and Germany) obviously does, in part, explain our low rate of anti-Semitism (certainly as measured by actual incidents). Fewer Jews logically translates into fewer targets. However, the discrepancy between incidents in South Africa and in

those countries is far too great to be accounted for by this. The Australian Jewish community is roughly twice the size of ours, yet last year, the number of incidents it recorded was more than ten times higher than in South Africa. Canada has about nine times more Jews than South Africa, but last year, recorded nearly forty times more incidents. The UK comparisons show a similarly high degree of discrepancy.

We would be more than happy to explain to Mr Bergman or any members of our community how our monitoring and reporting is conducted. – **Wendy Kahn, National Director SAJBD**

CLIMATE CHANGE NOTHING NEW

There is much ado about climate change, what with a greenhorn girl lecturing us. What's next, babies in prams giving the weather forecast?

Readers might like to know that, without being a climate change “denier”, David Gunnlaugsson points out that when Iceland was first settled, it was covered in forests (*The Spectator*, 23 November 2019). Also that the OK glacier has been receding for more than a century. However, some glaciers are now much larger than they were more than a millennia ago. The writer is a former prime minister of Iceland.

You might also consider two graphs shown in Martin Cohen's *Philosophy Problems*. The first shows temperature rising over the past 150 years, the second covers over more than 1 000 years, showing that the increase in about 1000 AD is well above the year 2000, but reached a low in about 1600. It shows that the climate is always changing. – **Peter Onesta, Johannesburg**

Saturday (22 February)

- Bet David hosts a talk by Lieutenant-Colonel William Bergman of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League on *The Jewish contribution to South African military history from Van Riebeeck to the 20th century*. Time: 12:00. Venue: Bet David, 3 Middle Road, Morningside. Contact: 011 783 7117.

Sunday (23 February)

- Second Innings hosts Rene Posniak, educator in holocaust education at schools on *The challenges and imperatives of holocaust education today*. Time: 09:45 for tea; 10:30 for the speaker. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Second Floor, Golden Acres, 85 George Avenue, Sandringham. Cost: R20 members; R40 visitors, includes tea/coffee and refreshments. Contact: 011 483 7425.
- Open ongoing – Nechama Growth From Grief support group. Time: tea from 09:30, group starts at 10:00 to 11:30. Venue: Jossel Card Room, Ground Floor, Golden Acres, 85 George Avenue, Sandringham. No need to book. Men and women welcome. Contact: Linda Fleishman 011 532 9701.

Monday (24 February)

- ORT Jet is hosting Adobe InDesign Training with Nicholas Nesbitt. Dates: 24 February, 3 and 10 March. Time: 18:00 to 19:00. Venue: 44 Central Street, Corner 10th Avenue, Houghton. Cost: R100 members, R200 non-members. Bookings: admin@ortjet.org.za or call 011 728 7154.
- The Union of Jewish Women (UJW) hosts Terry Rendel, building manager of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre on *Being shot at in an Israel Defense Forces tank while patrolling Israel's borders*. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053.
- The House and Garden Circle is excited to have an exquisite venue for its next meeting. Venue: 87 Forrest Road, Inanda. Time: 09:30 for 10:00. Entrance fee: R100 (delicious tea included). Please bring your own folding chairs. For directions or information, call 011 648 1053.

Wednesday (26 February)

- Second Innings hosts a guided tour of Constitutional Hill. Time: Bus departs at 09:00; tour from 10:00 to 12:00. Meet bus in the parking below Golden Acres. Cost: R190 per person, including bus and fully guided tour. Enquiries: book with Ros Traub and Gloria Hillowitz. Contact: 011 483 7425.

Thursday (27 February)

- The 106th annual general meeting of WIZO (the Women's International Zionist Organization) in Johannesburg. Liat Amar Arran, the Jewish Agency representative and director of the Israel Centre South Africa, will be guest speaker. Time: 09:30 for 10:00. Venue: Beyachad Auditorium, 2 Elray Street, Raedene. Please stay for tea. Call: 011 645 2515 or email: wizojhb@beyachad.co.za





Sports Page

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Israeli rugby hones skills on SA battlefield

LUKE ALFRED

Two talented young Israeli rugby players, Yotan Shulman and Omer Levinson, arrived in the Western Cape in January for a five-month spell under coach Frankie Horne at the elite South African Sevens (SAS) Academy in Stellenbosch. This is a singular achievement.

Horne identified the two players while on a coaching trip to Israel arranged by Israeli national coach Kevin Musikanth through his Bridges through Rugby programme.

The spell in Stellenbosch – in many ways the spiritual centre of rugby in the country, with its famous statue of Danie Craven and his dog Bliksem – is designed to fast-track two of the most exciting young talents in the Israeli game.

Musikanth believes that the best way for the sport to develop in Israel is if young Israeli players (both Shulman and Levinson are full Israeli internationals) expose themselves to best practice in other parts of the world.

Working with Horne – a legend in Sevens circles, who played Sevens rugby for South Africa for nine consecutive seasons – is inspirational in itself, but Musikanth hopes both Shulman and Levinson will return home both physically and technically better players.

“I’m very proud of these guys,” says Musikanth. “They’re rubbing shoulders with some elite local players in Stellenbosch, people like [former Blitzbok] Rosko Specman, and they’re creating a pathway for others to follow. I can’t say enough positive things about them.”

Both from the Yizreel Valley in the north of Israel, Levinson and Shulman are in South Africa as part of the Israeli army’s elite sportsman programme, which allows talented sportsmen to train outside of Israel as part of their national service.

Although both are the same age (21), the similarities end there, with Levinson

being the little guy, (therefore, the scrumhalf), while Shulman is a full head-and-a-half taller. A big, bearded unit, it’s no surprise to find out that he’s a lock.

Both face a busy time this weekend when they’ll be playing for the SAS Academy against not only opponents from Maties and the University of Western Cape, but visiting teams from France and Russia.

In just over a month’s time the two, doubtlessly battle-hardened, will return to Israel for important internationals against Malta (away) and Cyprus (home) on consecutive weekends.

Musikanth will use both tests to gauge how much better Israel need to be if they are to rub shoulders with regional big boys like Croatia and Slovenia, sides Israel must consistently beat if they’re to make any impression on their regional sphere in the world game.



Omer Levinson and Yotan Shulman

“We’ve never beaten Malta and Cyprus, so next month’s matches are two very difficult games,” he says.

Bringing Levinson and Shulman to

South Africa is all part of Musikanth’s project to improve rugby in Israel through exposure to the big boys of the sport. Playing stocks in Israel are small, so he’s also hoping that as the relationship between South African and Israeli rugby develops, he might just be able to dig up what he calls a “rough diamond” locally, particularly if South African players have relatives born in Israel and feel they might have a future playing under him.

“According to International Rugby Board [IRB] rules you can play for a country if you either have a parent or grandparent born there, or if you’ve undergone a residence qualification and lived there for three years. In the case of Israel, I’m hoping to unearth some guys who might like to play for us through that route,” he says.

Musikanth wears many hats, and while he is the Israeli national rugby coach, he’s also the director of rugby at King David Linksfield. This year, he says, King David

has a talented bunch of players, many of them already having had first X1 experience in 2019.

Recognition for King David’s improved fortunes came in the form of an invitation recently to the elite St Stithians Rugby Festival over Easter, the oldest Easter festival in the country. King David will be playing on Easter Monday at Saints against Michaelhouse, a rare honour. “We’re thrilled to be playing at the festival,” he says. “It’s wonderful to be rubbing shoulders with the cream of South African schoolboy rugby.”

Musikanth is quick to point out that King David has not suddenly been catapulted into the elite division of South African schoolboy rugby after a healthy 2019. Turning the school into a consistent rugby performer

will take time. Indeed, much of King David’s season will take place in the comparatively unnoticed realm of playing against the first XV’s of local Joburg co-ed schools, as was the case last year. This said, the curve is obviously upward, with King David having one or two unusually talented players in their midst in 2020.

For all the energy of the burgeoning relationship between South African and Israeli rugby, Musikanth’s Bridges through Rugby tends to drain money rather than make it. He’s always looking for benefactors and donations because not only is the cause a worthy one, but he has the habit of making a success out of whatever he turns his hand to. With him at the helm, Jewish rugby is entering a new dawn.



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