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Slain Jewish police officer remembered as a superhero

NICOLA MILTZ

“It’s harrowing being married to a police officer in a lawless society where the police are outgunned.”

This from the wife of slain Jewish police officer Delene Grobler-Koonin, 44, who was shot and killed in the line of duty last week.

“We are at war, and every day when they put on that badge, we don’t know if they are coming home,” said Marla Koonin, who this week buried her wife and “soul hero” of eight years.

Detective Warrant Officer Delene, who converted to Judaism, never made it home last Thursday, 5 March. She died in a hail of bullets during a botched cash-in-transit heist in Mahikeng in North West Province, sustaining a fatal gunshot wound to the head. Her necklace with a *Magen David* (Star of David), “which she never took off”, was still in perfect condition after the shooting, a distraught Marla told the SA *Jewish Report*.

Dozens of law-enforcement officers, civic leaders, and others gathered solemnly at West Park Cemetery on Wednesday morning to mourn her passing.

Members of the elite Hawks unit broke down and sobbed as they shovelled sand onto their slain colleague’s coffin, firmly embracing each other afterwards.

A highly decorated detective, she was laid to rest following an official police funeral attended by countless uniformed officers who came to pay their last respects.

A special place was reserved for Delene in the leadership section of the cemetery alongside notable figures who have given of themselves selflessly to the community.

During the lengthy and emotional ceremony, mourners recalled in tearful detail

how Delene devoted her life to justice and the fight against woman and child abuse.

“Her work to combat the exploitation of women and children was a passion that was evident in all she did, and she was a true hero both in life and in the way she died,” said Marla in her moving eulogy which was read by close family friend, Madeleine Hicklin, a member of parliament for the Democratic Alliance (DA).

Marla described Delene as a “kind, caring, and compassionate person” who could empathise with other people’s circumstances, qualities which made her an excellent detective.

She was described as “a hero to countless battered and bruised souls” and was “their pillar of strength and beacon in the darkness”.

Tragically, after a massive police manhunt was launched for the suspects, another shoot-out ensued later the same day, fatally injuring her partner, Warrant Officer Wynand Herbst, 42, affectionately referred to as Delene’s “work husband”. Only two weeks ago, Marla had told him how grateful she was that he “always had Delene’s back”.

“He told me that not only did he have her back, he would step in front of a bullet for her,” which is what he did, paying the ultimate price,” she said.

“It was the worst day of my life when I received that horrendous call. My life shattered along with Delene’s body,” said Marla.

The couple, who both grew up in different parts of the West Rand, met in 2007 at a touch rugby tournament. They were married under a chuppah in December 2012 on the top of Linksfield Ridge in Johannesburg.

They have a four-year-old son, Jake

Marcus, who poignantly bears a striking resemblance to Delene.

“Delene was a born mother, and although biologically born to me, there is not one person who meets Jake that does not see Delene’s soul shining right through – he is her mirror image. One of her proudest moments was his birth and *bris*,” said Marla.

“When Jake’s soul chose ours as parents, he knew he would have his work cut out for

live in the hearts and memories of every person she helped forever.”

“How many people can truly say they left the world a better place?” asked Marla.

The majority of Delene’s service was in the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS). She was involved in high-profile pornography and child-abuse cases, including the Bob Hewitt case amongst many others.



Police and members of the Hawks pay their respects to slain Jewish police officer Delene Grobler-Koonin, who was shot and killed while on duty

him because he would always be the son of a superhero,” she said.

The family said this week it was “humbled” by the hundreds of tributes which continue to pour in.

According to one tribute, “She leaves behind a legacy of bravery, service, and sacrifice, and for that she will continue to

She was promoted to the Hawks Technical Operations Management Section of the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation unit last year, and was the only female in her unit.

“I had an innate fear when Delene left FCS and joined the Hawks in a tactical unit,” said

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“Hitler loving” Mcebo Dlamini found guilty of public violence

NICOLA MILTZ

Fees Must Fall student activist and self-declared Hitler admirer, Mcebo Dlamini, was this week found guilty of public violence.

The former University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) student leader who took part in the Fees Must Fall student protests in 2015 was sentenced to two years and six months with a suspended sentence of five years. He had pleaded guilty to public violence and contravening South Africa’s immigration laws.

For the past four years, Dlamini has faced a protracted legal battle in the Johannesburg

Magistrate’s Court over the part he played in the student protests.

The embattled LLB graduate will now no longer be allowed to pursue his legal career.

Also in 2015, Dlamini made a string of comments on Facebook professing his love and admiration for Adolf Hitler.

Numerous complaints were lodged with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) following Dlamini’s inflammatory and anti-Semitic remarks. The HRC is yet to deliver its finding.

Last year, he told the *SA Jewish Report* he was willing to apologise for his remarks as he wanted to “put the matter behind him” and pursue his political career with the African

National Congress Youth League.

His comments go back to a Facebook discussion on 25 April 2015. His remarks and other disciplinary issues at Wits resulted in him being expelled as a member and president of the Student Representative Council.

At the time, Wits Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Adam Habib, labelled Dlamini’s Hitler remarks as “racist and offensive in the extreme”. Dlamini defended his remarks saying that he “admired Hitler’s organisational skills”.

Dlamini is said to have made several other inflammatory, anti-Semitic comments earlier in 2014, also on Facebook and on radio.

The Swaziland-born law student was arrested in 2016 for involvement in Fees Must Fall, and charged with violating a court order, public violence, theft, malicious damage to property, and assaulting an officer during the protest. In August 2019, he embarked on a 56.6km walk from Wits to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to ask President Cyril Ramaphosa to release student activists arrested during the #FeesMustFall protests.

Dlamini, who was defended by lawyers Dali Mpofu and Aviwe Yakopi, is contemplating whether to stay in South Africa. According to his lawyers, he was born in Swaziland but his parents are from South Africa.

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Chinese touched by Jewish hand of friendship

NICOLA MILTZ

“Your gesture brought back our faith in humanity,” the chairperson of the Chinese Association, Erwin Pon, said this week following the support and solidarity shown by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) to the Chinese community in the wake of the coronavirus epidemic.

The SAJBD called for a show of solidarity against the unjust and irrational treatment of the Chinese community following the virus’s outbreak by encouraging the community to shop at Chinese markets in Bruma and Amalgam in preparation for Purim.

On Monday, 9 March, members of the community and communal leaders from the SAJBD were seen doing their pre-Purim shopping at the China Mall in the south of Johannesburg.

Said Pon, “The visit has touched the hearts of so many in our community. There are many who don’t know about the [extent of the] history that Chinese people have here in South Africa. We have always been a small minority

group, and at times we have felt so alone. During this outbreak of coronavirus/Covid-19, our community has been attacked from all



sides. Many of us have felt stigma, racism, and discrimination because of the colour of our skin. But through the actions of the SAJBD and the hand of friendship you have extended to us, it has brought us some much-needed comfort and faith.”

Pon said the gesture “brought back our faith in humanity, and in the people of South Africa”.

“Through your actions, you have shown us what compassion and understanding is. You have shown South Africans and the world, that

in spite of the challenges and awful things happening around us, you can still treat people with dignity and kindness. For this and more, we as the Chinese community will always remember your hand in friendship during this very difficult time.”

Wendy Kahn, the national director of the SAJBD, said it was committed to “fighting hate whenever and wherever it arises”.

“We have been distressed by the verbal and even violent abuse being experienced by the Chinese community internationally and in our own country,” she said. In line with this, the Board developed #ShoppingAgainstPrejudice to speak out against this bias against a fellow minority.

“We have raised our voice against the stigmatisation by meeting the leadership of the

Continued on page 4>>

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
18:07	18:56	Johannesburg
18:48	19:39	Cape Town
17:57	18:46	Durban
18:15	19:05	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:10	Port Elizabeth
18:10	19:00	East London

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Torah Thought Picking up the pieces

“It’s too late. I’m too far gone.” How many times have we heard those words? Or, worse still, said them?

This week, we read the story of the Golden Calf, the worst national sin in the history of the Jewish people. Now, frankly, if I were the editor of the Bible, I’d have left that part out. How humiliating to the Jews! Just weeks after the greatest revelation of all time, when they saw and heard G-d up front and personal, they go and bow down to a cow! How fickle can you get? But the Torah is unflinchingly honest, and records this most unflattering moment of ours in all its gory detail.

Why?

Perhaps the very important lessons we need to draw from this embarrassing episode are, first, that people do sin, human beings do make mistakes, and even inspired Jews who saw the divine can mess up – badly. And, second, even afterwards, there’s still hope, no matter what.

In the same chapter, we read how G-d tells Moses to carve out a second

set of tablets to replace the first set he smashed when he came down the mountain and was shocked by what the Jews had been up to. The Torah doesn’t intend to diminish our respect for that generation, but rather help us to understand human frailty, moral weakness, and the reality of relationships spiritual or otherwise.

G-d gave us a perfect Torah. The tablets were hand-made by G-d, pure and sacred, and then we messed up. So, is it all over? Is there really no hope now? Are we beyond redemption? After all, what could possibly be worse than idolatry? It was the ultimate infidelity.

So, the Torah teaches us that all is not lost. As bad as it was – and it was bad – it’s possible for man to repair the damage. Moses will make new tablets. They won’t be quite the same as G-d’s, but there will be tablets, nonetheless. We can pick up the pieces in life. Hope springs eternal.


I once heard a good *vort* (Torah insight) from a colleague about the significance of breaking the

glass under the chuppah. Besides never forgetting Jerusalem and praying for her full restoration, this ceremony teaches a very important lesson about life to a bride and groom who are about to embark on their own new path in life. What happens immediately after the groom breaks the glass? Everyone shouts, “Mazeltov!” The message is clear. Something breaks? Nu, it’s not the end of the world! We can even laugh about it, and still be happy. This too shall pass. A very practical, peace-keeping tip for the new couple.

It’s possible to pick up the pieces in life. Whether it’s our relationship with G-d, our marriage partners, our kids, our friends, or our colleagues, we can make amends and repair the damage. Falling off a horse or a bicycle dare not mean that we never ride again.

If the Jews could recover from the Golden Calf, our own challenges are small indeed.

Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Sydenham Shul



Act now to save our universities, says Wits vice-chancellor

JORDAN MOSHE

South Africa’s top universities are among the best in the world, but unless society stands up and addresses the issues confronting these institutions, we could risk losing them for good.

So said the outgoing vice chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Adam Habib, last Wednesday evening. Hosted by the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre, he addressed the challenges and opportunities facing the South African higher-education sector and made it clear that we need to do more to secure the standing of our universities.

“Our institutions are up against several challenges, but they are worth protecting,” he said. “It’s not the sole responsibility of the vice-chancellor to come to the defence of a university, but that of society. South Africans aren’t standing up for their universities.”

Habib resigned from his post last month after being offered the position of director of the London-based School of Oriental and African Studies from 1 January 2021. He has held the position of vice-chancellor for the past seven years, a period during which he has been no stranger to the upheaval of student protests, the latest of which erupted on campus last week.

He began by stressing that we easily forget how good our universities really are. “A graduate from Wits, Stellenbosch,

the University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria, and a few others is the equivalent of one emerging from the United States or the United Kingdom at 20% of the price.

It will cost you about R1 million a year (considering fees, accommodation, and subsistence) to study at Oxford University, Habib said. While the environment might be more charming and the equipment better, in substantive terms, you could get an equivalent

said. “It’s now on its knees because collectively, we didn’t stand up to say, ‘You can’t go around burning lecture rooms in the name of free education.’ I worry about this.”

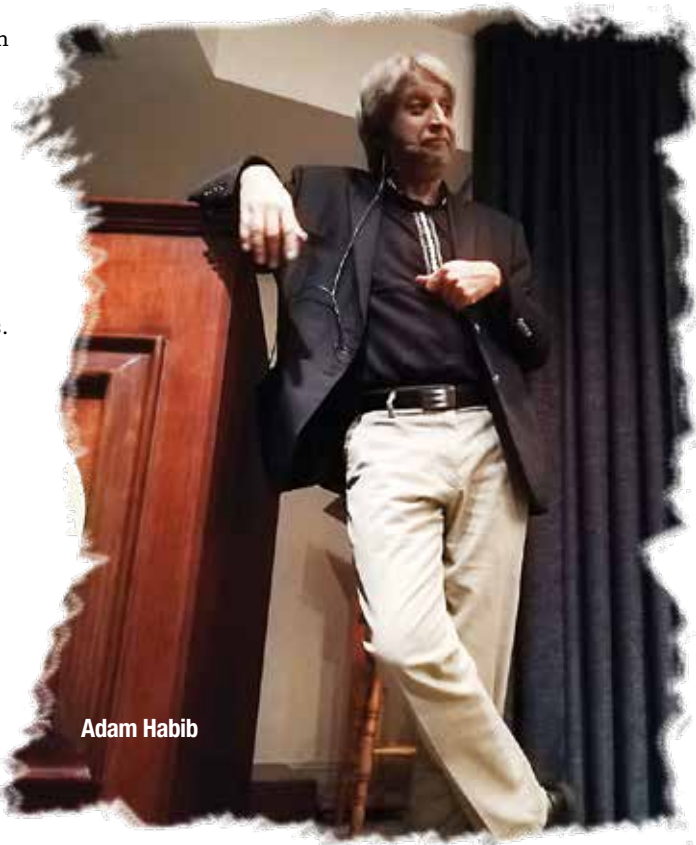
When people decide to leave the country and enrol their students overseas, it’s a cop out, said Habib. “Also, it will cost you five times more, and the middle-class can’t afford that. It therefore pays us to rise to the defence of our institutions.”

He said that one of the most pressing issues confronting our universities is the rising cost of tuition. A year of study at Wits costs R150 000 inclusive of tuition and other associated costs. This when 50% of our population earns less than \$2 (R31) a day Even the middle-class struggles to pay the fees, spending almost half of its gross annual salary to send two children to university.

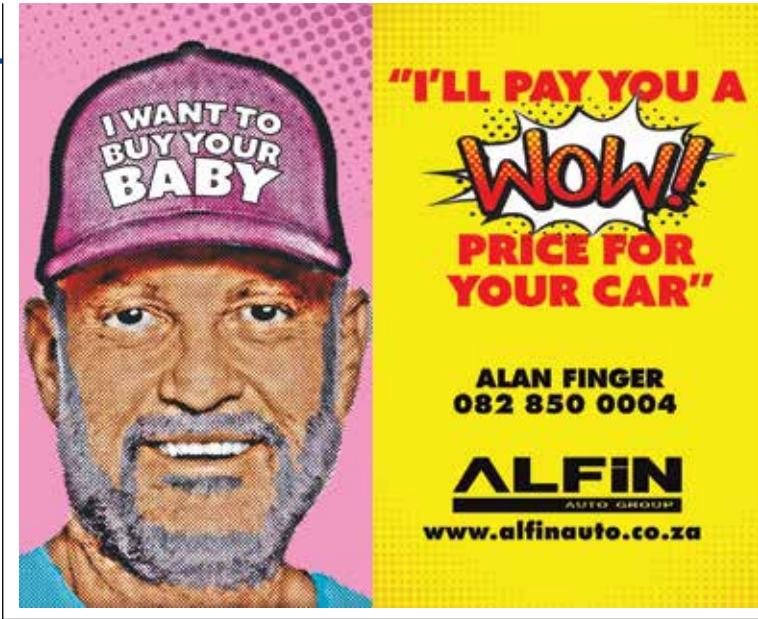
Said Habib, “The ANC [African National Congress] spoke about free education but never implemented a policy for it. What it did was expand higher education while it put in less money.” Habib said that between 1994 and 2015, the number of university students in South Africa jumped from 420 000 to 1.1 million while the per capita subsidy declined. “In 1994, 70% of Wits’ expenditure was paid for by the state. By 2014, the state contribution had dropped to 33%. For us to retain quality at Wits, we ramped up fees, and the cost of higher education became too high.”

Therefore, students had every reason to protest in 2015. What he can’t accept, however, is the means of protest. “There was no logic in marching and burning things,” he said. “Students were being dragged from their classes by those claiming to act in their interest.” Student activists also expected a double standard to be applied to them, avoiding being held accountable for their actions by hiding behind their cause.

The fees issue persisted, and in spite of Habib’s negotiations with



Adam Habib



students and political leadership, little was done to implement workable solutions like a loan scheme for deserving students. Although a funding system was eventually put into place, it catered only for poorer students, while those who didn’t fall within the lowest bracket (primarily lower-middle class students) missed out. These “missing-middle” students remain a problem today.

“Since 2016, we’ve had buildings burned worth R2 billion in South Africa, and there hasn’t been a single arrest. How many societies would allow this?”

Addressing last week’s protests, Habib said that most of the students who demanded accommodation didn’t have a leg to stand on, having lost their funding because they had failed their university courses twice. “They expected Wits to pay for their accommodation,” he said. “How could we justify that? Still, we found R17 million for this purpose, helping 900 of the 1 100 students who needed it.”

Habib said that he was floored by the hypocritical behaviour of student leaders during the negotiation process last week. Not only did they violate their agreement with the university after accepting an arrangement, they balked at the request to repurpose the R10 000 honorarium Wits awards each of them at the end of their term.

“The same SRC leader who *toy-toyied* in the concourse and shouted about freedom wasn’t prepared to give up his money,” said Habib. “It’s nice talking about inclusion when it’s somebody else’s money, but never easy when it’s your own.”

“Students leadership moans, correctly, about the lack of integrity amongst our politicians, but how different are they? I accept that they’re young, but if you don’t hold them accountable now, why are you surprised that you have someone like Julius Malema in 15 years’ time?”

These problems need to be addressed promptly, he stressed. Regarding the “missing-middle”, he believes in the establishment of a loan system in which students repay loans once they start working. Banks and large companies would gladly participate, he said, helping universities to work out a scheme as part of their contribution to the system. The other pressing need is to hold students accountable for violence.

“When you don’t hold them accountable for breaking agreements or burning buildings, you can’t be surprised at violence in South African society. Since 2016, we’ve had buildings burned worth R2 billion in South Africa, and there hasn’t been a single arrest. How many societies would allow this?”

This is why society needs to draw the line, or risk the collapse not just of its universities, but the entire country. “People grumble about collapse, but don’t do anything,” Habib said. “People are *gatvol* (fed up), and the right-wing steps in when no one else does. I fear we’ll all lose out if this happens. We need to prevent things from unravelling now.”

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The ripple effects of Israel’s lockdown

TALI FEINBERG

From Thursday, 12 March, anyone arriving in Israel will have to place themselves under quarantine for 14 days after they enter the country thanks to the rapid spread of Covid-19 around the world.

This rule will be reviewed in two weeks’ time, but it has already led to droves of community members cancelling trips, family gatherings, and *simchas* (celebrations) in Israel, and schools, youth movements, and travel agencies putting tours on hold.

The Israeli Embassy in South Africa’s deputy ambassador, Ayellet Black, says that travellers will have to “demonstrate their ability to

cessation of flights to Israel. EL AL Chief Executive Gonen Usishkin told the *SA Jewish Report* that “EL AL has a huge responsibility in maintaining air routes to and from Israel during emergencies, for passengers and cargo, and will therefore continue to operate flights to the United States, Canada, Europe, and Africa according to demand and need.”

However, he says the airline will make adjustments to its flight schedule. It allows customers holding tickets that start their journey up to 30 April 2020 to postpone or freeze their tickets for departure until 28 February 2021 free of charge, change, or handling fees subject to changes in airline ticket prices.

“Most of our hotels were full for Pesach. What this translates to is a drastic reduction of working hours, hotels closing for a few months, and staff either going on unpaid leave or being let go.”

“Our plans are a mess,” says Vanessa Raphaely, who was planning to visit family in Israel with her children near the end of March. “Airbnb is offering a full refund, but Turkish Airways is asking us to wait two days and offering a change only this year and no refund, which doesn’t help us as this was the only time we could go.”

Some are choosing to wait and see. “We are supposed to go to Israel for most of April with lots of friends and family. We’re probably going to cancel our trip, but it depends

cousins from all over the world have had to cancel”.

Tammi Forman has two sons in Israel, and was due to fly there for Pesach on 2 April with her third son, Sam, who is in Grade 11. “We were advised to cancel by our doctor as Sam is on immunosuppressant therapy. I did consider risking quarantine to see our boys and be together, but on the doctor’s advice, we have cancelled.”

Schools are also dealing with the fallout. United Herzlia Schools says three exchange programmes – Diller Teen Fellows, Partnership 2Gether, and Galilee Dreamers – have been cancelled by Israel’s education ministry, and “at this time, our pupils and staff won’t travel to Israel on school programmes”.

King David Schools General Director Rabbi Craig Kacev confirmed the cancellation of the exchange programmes. In addition, the Momentum trip for mothers in May is cancelled. The Partnership school teachers’ trip to Israel in May is under consideration. The King David Sandton teacher trip is going ahead as a decision will be made closer to the time. The King David/ORT Hatter education conference for life science teachers has been cancelled.

Yeshiva College’s Gavin Price says: “We have teachers who were due to travel to Israel on a school twinning programme and a student programme – Kafar – that is organised for the end of the year. Unfortunately, we will need to review sending delegates to Israel for the twinning programme, but will wait before making a decision on our Kafar Programme at the end of the year.”

The measures have even had an impact on the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) campaign against upcoming Israel Apartheid Week. “Coronavirus has obviously caused unplanned obstacles for all parties involved. However, SAUJS has a fantastic

campaign that will be going ahead as planned, and we look forward to transforming this hate-filled and aggressive week into one of education and dialogue,” says SAUJS National Chairperson Kayla Ginsberg.

“This translates to is a drastic reduction of working hours, hotels closing for a few months, and staff either going on unpaid leave or being let go.”

It’s also a nightmare for youth movements. Habonim Dror Mazkira Nina Reitenberg says the organisation’s 10 gap-year participants are currently confined to the Kiryat Moriah campus in Jerusalem along with 240 other youngsters from around the world, and have been asked not to leave Israel at this time.

“Our big concern is Shorashim, our three-week Israel trip for Grade 10s in July, for which there is already massive interest. We are still assuming it will happen. We are monitoring the situation regularly, and are in close touch with the embassy.”

Ari Chipkin, the programme co-ordinator of Diller Teen Fellows, says, “The biggest impact for Diller has been the cancellation of the Jewish Community Mifgash in which 16 Israeli groups travel to partner communities around the world. Staff and participants are obviously disappointed. However, the South African staff is working closely with an international leadership team on alternatives.”

Meanwhile, EL AL’s Usishkin has asked the South African Jewish community to “continue to support us in these trying times, now more than ever, until we overcome this global crisis”.



Ben Gurion Airport

enter a 14-day home quarantine in Israel. Home quarantine should be at a relative, friend’s house, or their own home. It excludes hotels and other facilities. Upon arrival at Ben Gurion Airport, the full details of the home quarantine must be given to border control. All consular services, including visas, require prior communication with the consular department at the embassy.”

The *Times of Israel* also reported that, “In its guidelines on the new restrictions, the health ministry said that tourists already in the country would ‘be given time to leave Israel in an orderly manner in coming days’. It didn’t specify the date they must leave by.”

In spite of this, there isn’t a

The travel ruling is having a dramatic ripple effect. “I’m sitting in limbo. I’m getting married on 30 April, and my entire family as well as some of my fiancée’s family are coming from overseas,” says a former Capetonian who lives in Israel who asked to remain anonymous. “No one knows what will happen in a few weeks’ time, which leaves us having to be patient and hopeful that things will change. However if they don’t, we will have to postpone our wedding to a future unknown date.”

She works for a hotel chain with more than 15 hotels spread out over the country. “Groups, individual tourist rooms, and most surprisingly, Israeli guests, have a 100% cancellation rate,” she says.

on whether the airline grants us refunds and whether the quarantine is lifted by the time we’re supposed to fly,” says Dalya Abromowitz.

David Hotz says that family from Australia and South Africa were going to meet in Israel for a Barmitzvah and Pesach. “Half the family have pulled out of a month-long trip. A few, including the Barmitzvah boy, are waiting to see what happens.”

Leigh Creswick had a family wedding at the end of March, “and

South African fights for his life in Haifa

PAULA SLIER

South-African born Juan van Niekerk has been fighting for his life for two weeks at Haifa’s Rambam Hospital. He’s still in intensive care, but the latest word from his doctors is that he’s out of danger and might be moved to a ward in the coming days. While his parents are certain he can hear and understand them, he still can’t talk.

However, this doesn’t mean he can’t remember.

It was Friday night, 21 February, when, during a heavy downpour, Juan celebrated his first anniversary as a volunteer on Kibbutz Bar’am in northern Israel. He and his friends were clowning around when he fell off some apple crates, hitting his head. His parents, Traci and Jacques, still don’t understand exactly what happened.

“We were having coffee when we got the phone call,” his visibly distraught mother recalls. “Within four hours, we’d left our farm (45km outside Pietermaritzburg) and were at the airport. Both of us thought Israel was a desert, and I remember

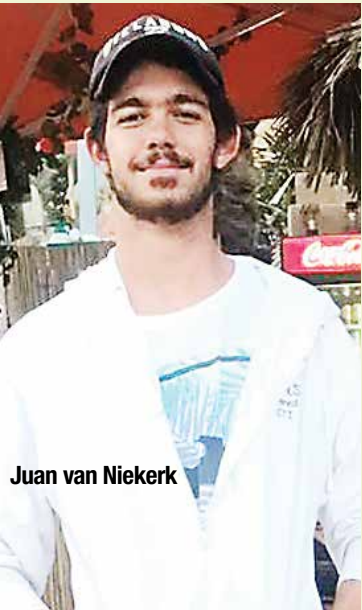
saying I needed to cover my head and shoulders. I was worried that I didn’t have stockings with me.”

We meet on a hot afternoon at a coffee shop outside the hospital. Juan’s parents have just come back from visiting him. They’d planned a big family celebration this weekend where he would meet his cousins, aunts, and uncles. Instead they’re sitting with me.

“He was more responsive when we saw him today,” Traci says, “because he’s on the machine and doesn’t have to concentrate on breathing. He can concentrate on other things. But we got a hell of a shock when we first saw him. He has pipes, monitors, drips, a neck brace, things on his leg.”

Doctors are optimistic that Juan will be able to walk again, but only after a long period of rehabilitation. The big question at the moment is the state of his brain. He’s recovering from brain and back surgery after suffering a broken rib, two burst lungs, and a broken collar bone.

It’s a case of *déjà vu* (been there before)



Juan van Niekerk

Chinese touched by Jewish hand of friendship

>>>Continued from page 2

Chinese community in China Mall, one of the places where the effects of this discrimination is so evident. Using our personal experience of being the victims of prejudice, including in the Purim story, we have reached out in support and solidarity with the Chinese community,” she said.

Said Barry Schoub, professor emeritus of virology at the University of the Witwatersrand, and founding former director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, who accompanied the delegation, “The coronavirus epidemic confronts us with two challenges, a new one and an old one. The new challenge is to control the spread of this virus, and we are still in the learning curve. The old challenge is to confront the virus of stigma and prejudice directed at a

particular ethnic group.”

He said the stigmatisation and persecution of a population group as the cause of disease outbreaks was something Jews were painfully aware of in our history.

“Over and above the moral abhorrence of doing this, stigmatising any ethnic group, which has absolutely no scientific or medical basis, only serves to drive the disease underground and severely hampers efforts to control the epidemic.”

Expressing gratitude, Chinese community leader and businessman, Ernie Lai King, said the Chinese community had always held the Jewish community in the highest regard.

“Your attributes of humanity, compassion, and generosity of spirit are those of a great community,” he said.

Continued on page 12>>

Coping with Covid-19: SA expats try to stay positive

TALI FEINBERG

What's it like to be in quarantine in Israel or China, or to have your campus shut down because a student has coronavirus? South African Jews around the world are feeling the impact of Covid-19, but they remain positive and optimistic.

Dorron Kline, the chief executive of Telfed (the South African Zionist Federation in Israel) has been in quarantine in Israel since he came to South Africa for the Aliyah Expo and travelled home on Turkish Airlines on 25 February. He has to be in quarantine for two weeks.

“An Israeli on my flight from Istanbul to Tel Aviv, Shimon Dahan, was in quarantine on the Diamond Princess cruise ship in Japan. He tested negative [for coronavirus] in Japan, and positive on his arrival in Israel,” says Kline.

Being in quarantine means that he has



Gadi Burman and his family

to stay in his bedroom as much as possible. "If I leave my bedroom to go around our apartment, I need to wash my hands with soap, and wear a mask. All of my family members need to keep a two metre distance from me. I'm working from home. Modern technology helps to keep me occupied and in constant contact with the Telfed office and outside world."

Kline even voted in the Israeli national election on 2 March at a special voting station. “There was a very high turnout of those in quarantine. More than 4 000 people (out of a total of 5 500) came to vote at the 14 special sterile tents set up around the country. Besides fulfilling their civic duty, I think many wanted a valid excuse to get out of their bedroom!

“We had to travel alone in private cars to and from voting booths, with no stops along the way. We had to wear masks while waiting in line. Although we were meant to keep two metres apart from each other, the long lines soon turned into a social gathering, exchanging stories about how each of us got into quarantine.

“I waited 2.5 hours in line together with Carla Kamilar, who was at the Aliyah Expo with me and on the same flight back to Israel via Istanbul. We didn’t complain. We were enjoying the fresh air, sunshine, and company of about 100 others in the same situation. The voting took much longer than usual because of the sterile process involved.”

Former Capetonian Gadi Burman lives in the megacity of Shenzhen in the south of China with his wife and two young daughters. When the virus hit, he was at home while his family were in Taiwan, visiting his in-laws over Chinese New Year. They have not seen each other since 24 January. "There was no window of opportunity for me to join them in Taiwan as by the time the scale of the disaster was realised, Taiwan had shut its borders to mainland travellers," he says.

He has been confined to his apartment in the heart of the city, and has ventured outside a handful of time to take out the garbage.

Describing the scene around him, he says, “My neighbourhood erected an extensive barricade allowing for only one entrance in and out of the suburb for residents, and then only after mandatory temperature screening.”

He is grateful his wife and daughters are safe in Taiwan, and that he can communicate with them and his parents in South Africa. His wife orders food for him online, and it's delivered to his door.

"I have busied myself with cooking, painting, and communicating with friends back in South Africa in addition to engaging online with my high school students and other members of staff," he says. Burman heads up the drama department at Shenzhen College of International Education.

“Teaching continues to be a challenge. My drama students are keeping positive and doing the work that they can, but it’s too early to know what will happen with their practical examinations. Our weekly check-ins are as much a comfort to them as they are to me.

"We are doing our best to innovate with the technology available to us. The biggest lesson learned in this context is the need to be prepared for unexpected situations on the scale of this one," Burman says.

“One thing I wish people would realise at times like these is that panic is the greatest enemy, and will not change anything on the ground. The best advice I can give is to keep your

mind active, take care of your body, and try your best to maintain a routine to keep you focused as you move forward. We will get through this crisis. All we require is patience, and a good pinch of faith.”

Dylan Stein of Johannesburg recently returned from the AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) Conference in Washington DC where at least five individuals (at the time of going to print) were confirmed positive for the virus. “I had no symptoms upon landing, and continued to have no symptoms until the morning of 8 March.”

With a sore throat, mild cough, and minor headache, he called South Africa's coronavirus hotline as he knew the official instructions

were to avoid hospitals if presenting with symptoms. Yet the operator insisted that he go to hospital, where he sat in a crowded waiting room for hours, and was assessed by nurses and doctors not wearing masks in spite of him telling them his situation. When he finally saw a doctor, he was told that the hospital didn't have the test for the virus.

A private doctor later saw him and tested him for the virus. It came back negative.

His assessment of the whole experience is that South Africa isn't ready for the coronavirus.

Former Johannesburg resident Hazel Chait lives in Melbourne and is the assistant librarian at Yeshiva-Beth Rivkah School in the heart of the Jewish community. The school was closed on Wednesday, 11 March, on the recommendation of the Australian health department.

"I was alerted early this morning that school was closed for the day. One of the staff members had tested positive for the dreaded coronavirus [after travelling home from the United States]."

She says there are many ex-South African staff and students at the school. "It came as a bolt that this threat is now very real – and here – in spite of the travel bans imposed on various countries. No one is used to the new normal."

Noah Tradonsky of Johannesburg is 22 years old and studying finance at Yeshiva University (YU) in New York City. Its Washington Heights campus has been closed because an undergraduate student tested positive for the virus.

“On Tuesday [3 March], there was news that a man from New Rochelle – a big Jewish community 20 minutes north of the city – had contracted coronavirus. A week earlier he had been in shul with the La Rochelle community. So, all the people from New Rochelle at YU, five of whom live on my floor, went home and into quarantine with their families. This case was unique because it was a person-to-person transmission. He didn’t go to Italy; he didn’t go to China. He just went to work.”

The patient has a child at the Salanter Akiba Riverdale (SAR) high school, and one at Yeshiva University. “The son was at school [Yeshiva University] for at least four



Dorron Kline at the special voting station

days where he came into contact with other students. But school went on,” Tradonsky says. “Then on Wednesday, we got an email from the president, Rabbi Dr Ari Berman, saying the man’s son had tested positive for coronavirus. The letter announced that school was cancelled, and asked students to stay out of communal areas like the *beit midrash* (shul) and dorms, and those who could go home should do so. On Thursday, we got a message from New York Governor Andrew Cuomo saying that YU and SAR High School would be closed until after Purim.” This has since been extended for another week.

“I’ve never been this careful about washing my hands in my life. I’m [also] being careful not to touch my mouth. Seventy percent of the undergraduate body live in New York, so they all went home. Wednesday night was like a ghost town. It’s cold, dark, and lonely, quiet, and a little bit spooky, and you have to find a way to buckle up. To get over your sorrows is easier said than done in a cold, dusty dorm room in Washington Heights.”

However, the community has “really pulled together”, he says, and he has been invited to numerous homes for Shabbos and Purim. There are three other South African Jews on his campus, and they are all fine.

"I'm not considering going home. School could open soon, and the borders might close," he says. "I might not even be able to come home for Pesach. But everything will be okay. I don't think people should worry."

• *Gadi Burman's account was originally published by the International Schools Theatre Association (ISTA) in 'Scene' www.ista.co.uk/scene on 4 March 2020, and is republished with permission here.*



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The importance of laughing at ourselves

I believe we are all feeling stressed and traumatised. We live in a country where there is a high rate of crime, our economy is battling, and we are facing the threat of a coronavirus pandemic.

All the more reason to be able to laugh at ourselves. We are a quirky, phenomenal, and unusual community. None of us is perfect, but most of us have big hearts, and care deeply for what’s important to us. We need to take a chill pill every now and again, letting out a good giggle or a warm belly laugh at ourselves. It’s healthy for us, and makes life just that bit easier. For this reason, every year, the *SA Jewish Report* publishes a Purim Shpiel.

This year, we got some good giggles and some belly laughs, but we also got a lot of abuse from people who were angry at us for daring to focus our spoof on a King David school.

As you know, I’m a proud alumnus of King David Linksfield. I was there from my first day of nursery school, and lived across the road from the school for my entire childhood.

My beloved mother, who has just passed away, was the secretary of the primary school principal during that time.

They say that our experiences make us what we are, and the many years at King David are embedded in my personality.

As, I’m sure, they are for the person who wrote the Purim Shpiel last week – Professor Shpiel Pu Rim (otherwise known as Howard Sackstein), who like me, is a proud alumnus of King David Linksfield.

So, to say that either of us meant any harm by the Purim Shpiel he wrote and I published is astonishing. We both have the greatest respect for the school, its educators, the pupils, parents, and alumni. It’s without doubt an exceptional school, which is part of the reason I, for one, was so sure that nobody could possibly believe any of the nonsense that was written in the piece. It was absurd, as Purim Shpiels are meant to be. Who on earth would question the values of the school? We certainly didn’t, which is why we believed we had a great Purim Shpiel.

However, while there was much laughter, we also somehow managed to upset a number of people with our words, and for that I’m extremely sorry. We certainly never meant any harm or malice. It wasn’t a real story, nor was it meant to be.

We were so sure that all the clearly absurd markers in the story would scream “Purim Shpiel”, but for some of our readers, particularly the parents and children at King David, it wasn’t amusing. They didn’t see the joke, and are furious with us. To them, I give my assurance that we meant no harm.

We have received ugly emails, and we have even been called anti-Semitic for publishing this shpiel. We were told that we were “mocking a Jewish school”, and asked why we hate King David. The *SA Jewish Report* also came under attack on the valuable platform of Joburg Jewish Mommies. Interestingly, while there were many who defended us, nobody mediated the vicious attacks.

I watched this unfold with astonishment, as this fury and hatefulness certainly wasn’t our intention. It was lighthearted, and a little bit of fun.

Quite simply, we didn’t believe that anybody in their right mind would imagine a top school like King David allowing drugs or any of the absurd things written in the shpiel. Even the thought of it is absurd!

I guess there are many in our community who are also unfamiliar with the tradition in the Jewish media of a Purim Shpiel, which is much like an April Fool’s joke. It’s when the Jewish media pranks their readers once a year, just before Purim, with a patently obvious nonsense story. (See article on page 16.)

I’m willing to roll with the punches when a genuine story touches a nerve, which does happen. That’s our job, and the truth is that right-wing folk sometimes see us as too left-wing, and the left sees us as too right-wing. The very religious see us as too secular, and so on. That’s acceptable. We can’t please all the community all the time, as much as we try to do so. It also means that we are positioned somewhere in the middle and don’t take sides, which is a good thing.

I do understand that we sometimes touch a nerve in the stories we write, but I believe that we are doing a service to our readers in giving you news, views, and information that’s valuable to you. We do it in the best way we can.

My team and I are so committed to this newspaper and this community, we spend many extra hours considering and labouring over what we present. We want to give you the best quality newspaper.

However, to be lambasted for a Purim Shpiel, and to be threatened and abused doesn’t seem logical.

There was truly so much of value to read in last week’s newspaper, so much to take seriously rather than a spoof that was simply meant to make us laugh at a time when we so dearly need it.

Having said all of that, if you were particularly offended by it, I’m sorry!

Shabbat Shalom
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Israel’s travel ban causes panic and confusion

A friend contacted me this week to ask if reports that Israel was isolating itself from the rest of the world because of the coronavirus were fake. They aren’t. Jerusalem has announced a 14-day home quarantine for all travellers arriving from abroad, and non-Israeli citizens have to show they have a place to self-quarantine before they’ll be allowed into the country. It doesn’t matter where you are travelling from – South Africa included – you need to go into isolation for two weeks. This means staying in your bedroom, or moving around your apartment with a mask on, but not going outside under any circumstances. You could get a seven-year prison sentence if you disobey this order.

Thousands of flights have also been cancelled. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it was a difficult decision, “but it’s necessary to maintain public health, and public health is above all else”.

As of Tuesday, eight new cases were diagnosed in the country, bringing to 58 the total number of Israelis who have tested positive.

But life goes on as normal. There is no panicked shopping like there is in other countries, most notably Australia, where there has been mass hoarding of toilet paper to the point where it has created a genuine shortage for some companies. And, typical in times of anxiety, jokes are making the rounds on social media.

These include, “I don’t like to brag, but I’ve been avoiding people since way before the coronavirus,” and memes showing a new greeting – the Wuhan Shake – with people clasping feet rather than hands. According to another joke, “This morning at the post office, while I was in line, two people with masks entered. Total panic! Then, they said, “This is a robbery!” and we all calmed down.”

Israel’s policy is more extreme than that of most developed nations, including those that have been harder hit by the disease. Restricting Israelis from travelling to major European countries and requiring people returning from these countries to self-quarantine has already caused enormous economic damage, particularly to tourism and airlines.

No surprise then that some claim Netanyahu’s



decision has political undertones. It’s transpired that the large number of Israelis who recently returned from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) convention in Washington DC weren’t required to self-quarantine. This, in spite of the fact that three people who attended the conference – where American Vice-President Mike Pence and a long list of senators and congressmen were also present – had been diagnosed with the virus.

Eyebrows were further raised when the Israeli tourism minister admitted during an interview that politics and diplomacy played a role in such decision-making when it came to the United States, saying, “The relationship is especially sensitive, and when we make decisions regarding the US, it’s in co-ordination. We won’t take any unilateral steps.”

Some charge that Netanyahu didn’t want to restrict entry from the US – Israel’s closest ally and biggest aid donor – as it would be

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier



interpreted as a slap in the face, especially as American President Donald Trump has downplayed the virus. Netanyahu is struggling to build a coalition government, and faces an impending corruption trial. The last thing he needs are angry tweets from a volatile US president. So instead of singling out America, he imposed a blanket ban on travel from all countries.

But there are many Israelis who believe Netanyahu went too far. The restrictions include large community events or mass gatherings of more than 5 000 people; no international conferences in Israel; and the recommendation that that older adults over 60 and people with chronic background diseases avoid gatherings and contact with international travellers.

The local travel industry has been worst hit. Many offices have been forced to close, and it’s questionable whether the smaller ones will recover. Ronnie Shabai, the branch manager of Jerusalem Talmach travel company, says he’s lost 95% of business.

“After the message circulated that all Israelis who don’t have to travel shouldn’t do so, 50% of our trips cancelled within hours. I had to give money back to people who had already paid. I’m closing my office, and I will leave only two agents for both the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv branches. We still have a small number of Israelis travelling inside the country, but that’s also decreasing, and many are cancelling the hotels they booked for Pesach.”

Shabai says it’s never been this bad, not after the 11 September attacks or even during the worst days of the *intifada* (Palestinian uprisings).

It’s created confusion and more than a little panic to say the least. I’ve spoken to several university students who have been unable to return to Israel as their holidays come to an end, and are stuck abroad wondering how they’ll catch up class. Exams are still underway in some schools, and there’s uncertainty if they will, in fact, take place. Will classes be held? No-one

knows, and it’s difficult to determine what’s true and what’s fake from the information being circulated online. The country has also been celebrating Purim, and people who returned from international destinations have been told to stay at home, even if they weren’t in quarantine. Better safe than sorry, so the adage goes. I saw a few costumed revellers dressed up as the coronavirus, and didn’t know whether to laugh or cry!

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has closed all

mosques in the Bethlehem area to prevent the spread of the virus. The PA Ministry of Wakf and Religious Affairs said the decision was in accordance with the state of emergency in the Palestinian territories that was announced by PA President Mahmoud Abbas after 19 people tested positive.

Many locals who work in Israel have been barred from leaving Bethlehem. Residents are critical of the measures, pointing out that they are stricter than those imposed inside Israel, with some suggesting political motives for the decision.

As for elsewhere in the Middle East, there are, at the time of writing, about 7 640 confirmed cases across the region. Iran has the highest number of infections, and its government officials are warning that the number could spike to more than 450 000 patients, many of whom are at risk of dying. Memes and jokes aside, these are sobering numbers.

Is democracy damaging Israel?

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



Winston Churchill said, “No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”

Israel, which promotes itself as “the only democracy in the Middle East”, has now held three legislative elections since April. It’s not inconceivable that it could face a fourth poll if a coalition can’t be cobbled together. How can all this democracy be good for the country as it sits without a mandated government yet again?

Like South Africa, Israel’s parliament – the Knesset – is elected through a proportional representation party list system. Unlike South Africa, where the African National Congress has received more than 50% of the votes in every election since 1994, in Israel, no single party has ever received close to the 61 seats needed to rule on its own. This has necessitated coalitions since 1948 – and all the horse-trading that goes with it.

How did Israel get here? Early elections were held in April 2019 after Avigdor Lieberman took his Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel our Home) party out of the government. In that election, both Likud and the new Kachol Lavan (Blue and White) party led by Benny Gantz won 35 Knesset seats each. President Reuven Rivlin then asked Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu to form a government. He was unable to do so, mainly because Lieberman played kingmaker but refused to crown the king. He wouldn’t back down on demands that ultra-Orthodox Jews should do military service.

The Knesset then voted for new elections in September 2019, cynically to avoid Rivlin having to appoint Gantz as prime-minister

designate. This was the first time in Israel’s history that no coalition could be crafted, and the first time the Knesset voted to dissolve itself before a government had been formed.

In the September do-over vote, Kachol Lavan edged Likud by 33 seats to 32. This was against the background of mounting legal problems facing Netanyahu. Kachol Lavan said it was open to a national unity government with Likud as long as it didn’t include Netanyahu. In the end, neither Netanyahu nor Gantz was able to form a government. The Knesset, incredibly, dissolved itself once again, setting a third round of elections for 2 March 2020.

In this third election, Likud surged to 36 seats to Kachol Lavan’s 33, but Netanyahu is still a few MKs (Members of the Knesset) short of forming a coalition.

Several Israeli commentators have said this political impasse is seriously undermining the public’s trust in a political system that was already highly polarised. Noa Landau in *Ha’aretz* wrote before the third elections were set, “Another round of elections, in addition to its dismal effect on the already deficit-heavy state coffers, would be a fatal blow to the public’s faith in the entire system. Even worse, based on the way the present round unfolded, another round of voting would likely mean an escalation in the tricks, lies, incitement, and election-law violations – mostly on the part of the person who is, more than anyone else, supposed to defend law and order: the prime minister. As the tension rises, increasingly desperate politicians have been pushing down the level of discourse and dividing Israel society.”

Ariela Ringel Hoffman wrote in *ynetnews*, “After three nasty and excruciating election campaigns, Israeli politics finds itself back in square one with an endless list of parties, all imposing tit-for-tat embargoes on each other, and if our lawmakers decide to stick to their guns, Israeli voters will find themselves going to the polls for another round that will,

he be in court during the day and run the country at night? Will Israel face yet another expensive, bitter, and indecisive election? How long can this continue? Is it time to review the electoral system?

Hopefully Israel’s politicians will be able to put the country before their parties or



ultimately, lead us to the same result.” She urged voters to boycott a fourth poll – if it happens.

So, once again, Israel sits without a government in its very dangerous neighbourhood. Unwillingness to compromise, and Netanyahu’s criminal indictment dominate the landscape. Will

their personal avarice, interests, and egos. Otherwise, it’s back to the ballot box again in a few months’ time. This can only play into the hands of Israel’s enemies.

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

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Travel in the time of coronavirus

TALI FEINBERG

“To go or not to go” is the question on the minds of anyone planning to travel this year. As the coronavirus (Covid-19) spreads around the globe, the risk of contracting the virus, being barred from entering a country, or being placed in quarantine means people are cancelling travel plans all over the world.

“My kids and I had booked to go to Bali over the Pesach break. We thought we’d combine an island family holiday with maybe finding a Chabad seder or if not, doing our own. We cancelled it in February when the virus broke [out],” says a member of the South African Jewish community who asked to remain anonymous.

“We felt it was just too risky, and also that international travel would be a nightmare with extra security and health checks on us and our luggage, adding to flight delays and frustration,” she says. “We managed to hold over payment for our flights to next year, and will rebook when things are clearer. We have lost about 30% of our accommodation payment, but decided to cut our losses in the interest of family health.”

Professor Amanda Weltman cancelled an upcoming trip to Singapore and Thailand. “To some extent, it was out of our hands because we were going to a conference, and yesterday [2 March] they decided to cancel it,” she says. “I also have a conference next week in Nairobi that isn’t cancelled, but it’s more than 1 000 people so I’m simply not going. Maybe I’m being conservative.”

So, should you cancel that Pesach holiday, business trip, or Rosh Hashanah getaway? “I don’t think international travel per se needs to be avoided at this time,” says Dr Barry Schoub, the professor emeritus of virology at the University of the Witwatersrand and the founding director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases. “Obviously, I would avoid travel to countries where there have been significant outbreaks such as China, Italy, Korea, and Iran.”

Asked if he thinks people with plans to travel later this year should cancel, he responds, “The situation is still very fluid, and circumstances can change and sometimes change rapidly. But, I couldn’t imagine that there would be a worldwide ban on travelling. I wouldn’t cancel travel plans. We are booked to travel to the United Kingdom in June, and I’m certainly not cancelling those plans.”

If someone is travelling, how can they protect themselves as much as possible from the virus? “Protective measures are essentially those of good hygiene practice. Distance yourself from any traveller or person at airports and so on who may be coughing or sneezing – by at least six feet [1.8m],” says Schoub. “Practice good cough/sneeze hygiene — into the crook of the elbow or a tissue which is then properly disposed.

Good hand washing practice is important: wash thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds.”

Meanwhile, the travel industry is already feeling the effects. “Guiding Jewish tourists in Israel, Jordan, Greece, and Berlin were all on my agenda for March through to 1 June. They have all cancelled. No work at all for the coming three months except for one family in mid-April,” says Julian Resnick, who guides international tourists in Israel and globally. His independent company, Journeys Making Meaning, focuses on Jewish history around the world and its relevance today.

“The stories of the Jews of Saloniki, the Jews of Berlin, and Moses’ final moments on Mount Nebo in Jordan will remain untold for a while,” says Resnick, who grew up in South Africa and lives in Israel.

“My clients from Northern California, New York City, and Birmingham Alabama are staying home. Why? Well, apparently there are two epidemics right now. One is coronavirus – apparently we should be fearful – and the other epidemic is called ‘panic caused by populism’. We are in an era where populist politicians are using every possible means to build their image as the ‘strong father who will protect us all from danger’. Will we get through this okay? One of my favourite sayings in Hebrew is, ‘If we got through Pharaoh, we can get through this.’”

Andrea Bonalumi owns Visa Box, assisting outbound visa applicants with the administrative side of their application process. “We have had a few of our clients cancel or postpone their travel due to the virus, and one had theirs cancelled by the cruise company

itself,” she says. “We are concerned about the two to three months leading up to the June/ July school holidays as this is the busiest time for travel other than December [generally it’s busier, as it’s summer in Europe]. We assume there will be a massive decline in travellers, especially those with kids and elderly co-travellers. Italy has always been a main travel destination for this period, and I now doubt it will even feature.

“I know of many independent travel agents who are having to facilitate many cancellations for their clients and for a lot of them, this is going to be a tough few months going forward unless something improves quickly. It’s hitting so many sectors hard including airlines, visa agents, travel agents, tour operators, accommodation services ... the list goes on!”

Jerusalem Marathon’s postponement a kink in the road for DL Link

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

“DL Link will bounce back and create something special because every day it deals with the unknown, it’s what it does,” said Niki Seberini, presenter of the Life Links by DL Link on *ChaiFM*.

Almost 80 runners, including Seberini, signed up to run the Jerusalem Marathon on 20 March this year to raise funds and awareness for DL Link, a non-profit organisation dedicated to providing support, comfort, healing, and guidance for the patients and families affected by cancer. However, the marathon has been postponed to October as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

Speaking on *ChaiFM* on the cusp of the postponement last week, DL Link’s fundraiser and events co-ordinator, Tammy Lewin, said, “It’s about the bigger picture. DL Link is more than the run. We’ve all taken it on to run for a warrior or in somebody’s memory, and any money still being raised in honour of the marathon in October will go directly to the daily meaningful work that we do at DL Link.”

Michael Rubenstein, a life, relationship, and business coach and marketing expert, was planning to run the 10km marathon for the first time in spite of a hip injury. He’s been working with a biokineticist and physiotherapist to get ready for the race.

Rubenstein decided to run during a DL Link runner’s get together, where he volunteered as a motivator. “There was a young cancer warrior of four-years who has a brain tumour. It struck me that as much pain as I’m in, there are people who are really struggling. I need to do something where I can make more of a difference.” Rubenstein plans to run on behalf of this child as well as another cancer warrior, friend and colleague Nicola McGowan. He’s also running in memory of his late father who had Alzheimer’s, as well as three cancer patients who have since died.

With the postponement, Rubenstein is planning to raise the stakes. “I’ve never run 10km in my life,” he says. “But anything that goes beyond your comfort zone gives you the opportunity to stretch yourself.” He’ll now focus on healing, pain management, and staying fit, and is hoping

to stretch himself even further in preparation for the October date. “If I can get my running on track and push myself a bit more, I might consider changing to the 21km.” He’s also using the date change to increase his fundraising target, thereby raising more money for DL Link.

Gillian Gresak, also a cancer warrior, has mixed emotions about the cancellation. “I have lung cancer, and was going to walk in memory of my cousin and a dear friend and raise funds for DL Link,” she says. “I’m disappointed that the marathon has been postponed, but I’m also relieved. Because the world, including South Africa, has gone crazy, people like me with a poor immune system who need disinfectant, masks, and so on, can’t buy stock for love or money. I was concerned about being on a plane for so long.”

Seberini was planning to run for two cancer warriors, her uncle Ben Rosenthal and a friend, Mandy Steinberg. “Ben isn’t at all well, and Mandy has just been diagnosed with cancer for the third time,” she says. Seberini isn’t a runner, and has always said she’d never take part in the marathon in spite of the unique and special stories she’s been told by past DL Link teams.

“But when DL Link said it would love me to run, I said yes because it’s an experience, and to do something for DL Link would be amazing.”

In training for the marathon, Seberini learned to apply the skills she teaches as a speaker and “mind-freedom fighter”. She helps people to control their feelings and gain mindfulness. “I’ve always hated running, but I put my head down, applied what I teach to myself, and the whole experience changed.”

Seberini hopes to run in October, but says it’s a long way off. “The coronavirus outbreak has caused fear and anticipation. It teaches us that we can plan for so much, but life gives us what it gives us.” No-one is more aware of this inescapable reality than the cancer warriors themselves, whose journeys can’t be postponed.



Michael Rubenstein

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Miracle Drive turns the world upside down

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Chabad’s 30th annual Miracle Drive Gala Dinner held at the Sandton Convention Centre on Wednesday, 4 March, proved the power of disrupting the status quo.

“In a time of darkness, one needs to bring light. If it bothers us that the world is in darkness, plagued by corruption and issues that drive us crazy, the [Lubavitcher] Rebbe’s advice was to turn the world upside down. Leave no stone unturned in the pursuit of bringing light and changing the world for good,” said Rabbi Michael Katz of Chabad Illovo, explaining the dinner’s theme – “Turn the world upside down”.



The evening highlighted how acts of goodness and kindness bring light. Having raised more than R21 million last year through the dinner and other fundraising activities, the Miracle Drive is perfectly placed to spread this ethos. The money raised is allocated to the organisation’s various innovative charitable initiatives benefiting people from all walks of life within and without the Jewish community.

With major sponsors including Nissan, Standard Bank, Liberty Life, and Yamaha, the evening was punctuated by amazing giveaways including a Nissan X-Trail. Drumming, dancing, and singing, a suspended violinist, and aerial acrobats performing while hanging from silks made up the entertainment. Delicious food was provided by Riva Flax Caterers.

Speaking on behalf of sponsor Standard Bank, Peggy-Sue Khumalo, a former Miss South Africa who is now the head of Standard Bank Wealth SA, gave an emotional but uplifting speech. Having recently lost her husband, beloved radio personality Xolani Gwala, Khumalo’s talk was an inspiring example of finding positivity in the most challenging of circumstances.

“In all the chaos we see around the world and in South Africa, I still feel positive about our country and about the world around me,” she said, pointing out that this was based on her experience of the goodness of humanity.

She highlighted the kindness she and her late husband had experienced from the Jewish community. “Stephen Koseff, the former chief executive of Investec, sponsored me when I didn’t know whether it was possible for me as a young girl from rural KwaZulu-Natal to go to an international university and acquire an education,” she said.

“I’m humbled and privileged that I’ve had that opportunity, and it was through your generosity and support via Mr Koseff that I was able to get that and be the person I am today.” Khumalo went on to work for Investec for 17 years before joining Standard Bank in early 2019.

Khumalo also thanked her Investec “family” for getting Gwala, who fought stage-four colon cancer, into a trial conducted at Sheba Hospital in Tel Aviv. “For us as a family, it was a privilege that Xolani was able to have access to the trial and to be with specialists at the forefront of advancing and shifting the treatment for cancer patients. All I wish for is that we spread such universal love and goodness widely, because there are so many communities that aren’t touched by

the support some of us are privileged to have access to.” While acknowledging that the world is “in chaos”, she said she reminded herself that the South African story has always been one of endurance. “Our proud heritage is a legacy of freedom, equality, the dream of shared prosperity, and the belief that the right to a better life isn’t just restricted to a few.” With despair recently being listed as a global theme, Khumalo spoke of a looming global financial crisis, corruption, sexual harassment, and unemployment. Yet to stay positive, she suggested thinking of the past, present, and future.

She’s inspired by the example of her mother, who sacrificed everything so that Khumalo could become the leader she is today, and by Nelson Mandela, who taught us that our humanity doesn’t lie only in one person, but in all of us.

“I reflect on the courage of my late husband, and his brave and lengthy cancer battle. When he was fighting to stay alive, Xolani used the mic to inspire, to advocate for early diagnosis of cancer, and to highlight how expensive and inaccessible treatment is for the poor.” Later this year, Khumalo will launch the Xolani Foundation. She plans to partner with government and private sector to make cancer testing and screening accessible and free at public and private hospitals.

Khumalo is impressed by the next generation, and its inability to settle for the status quo. “They’re labelled as rule breakers and non-conformists. Maybe some status quo needs to be abolished

and some rules updated. The energy with which they tackle the world’s problems leaves me comfortable in their ability to serve as custodians of our freedom and a better world. I choose to look a little more, and despair a little less.”

David Roberts, an American disruptive innovation expert and distinguished faculty member of Singularity University, expressed dismay at South Africa’s emigration crisis. Singularity University explores exponential technology to shape the future and solve the world’s problems. Roberts, who aims to transform a billion lives, was astounded when he learned that up to 80% of the South African students he had addressed at one of the country’s most expensive schools were planning to leave the country permanently after matriculating.

“A nation can’t afford to lose so many of its most educated students,” he said. After speaking to these students, he realised that they’d lost hope for the future. “They believe that it’s not going to get better. But belief and truth are two different things. Hope isn’t about the reality of the future, it’s about belief in the future. You don’t have to change the future, hope can be changed in an instant.” Roberts found that students’ biggest concern was crime. “To fix crime, you need to fix the source, not the symptom, and the source is poverty,” he said.

Instead of focusing on 50 different issues, he argued, South Africa should focus on just one – crime, and therefore poverty. Roberts believes that in 10 to 15 years, 90% of poverty can be eliminated. “It’s a real vision that’s absolutely possible,” he said. China and South Korea did it, and so can South Africa. He suggested a five-point plan including installing great leadership, providing high-speed internet to the underprivileged thereby facilitating access to education, and building housing in innovative ways, much like cars are built in factories.

It also comes down to individuals, he said, who

can make a difference in the world through small actions. “At Singularity University, we trace how the world is changed. It always goes to the same thing – a bystander like all of us who was

inspired to do a little thing one day, grew it, and changed the world.

“We create our own walls around what we think we’re capable of doing, but our potential is unlimited,” he said.

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Entebbe hero went in a Zionist, but came out a Jew

JORDAN MOSHE

For Rami Sherman, Operation Entebbe wasn’t just a national accomplishment, but a personal one. This former Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) operations officer played a critical role in the daring hostage rescue of 102 Jewish and Israeli hostages from Entebbe, Uganda, in 1976, but until 2016, he kept the story close to his chest.

Last week, Sherman concluded a three-week visit to South Africa to tell his story. The son of Holocaust survivors and a native of Kibbutz Lehavot Habashan received a spellbound reception at every venue he spoke at in Joburg, Durban, and Cape Town.

“I always wonder why people want to hear a story which they know from beginning to end,” Sherman told the audience at Sydenham Shul on 20 February. “People have seen so many movies about it, read books and more. I wonder what brought me here to Johannesburg?”

“I promise you one thing, it’s not me. This story contains one of the most important things – the connection between Israel and the diaspora. Without you, the story would be different. Israel would be weaker. I understood this connection only four years ago, and it was then that I decided to tell my story.”

On 27 June 1976, the 23-year-old kibbutznik was operations officer of the Sayeret Matkal commando unit. He had spent a weekend at home, and was returning to base when he learned that an Air France plane had been hijacked by four terrorists. A total of 248 passengers were on board (of which 106 were Jews), as were 12 crew members.

Sherman said that Israel believed that the flight would be routed to Tel Aviv, but quickly realised that it was being diverted to Africa. Two days later, the terrorists made their demand: release 53 incarcerated terrorists, pay a ransom of \$2.5 million (R40 million), and deliver both by Thursday, 2 July, or risk execution of the hostages.

After landing in Entebbe, the terrorists separated the Jewish and non-Jewish passengers, the latter being released and collected by French aircraft. The 12-member crew opted to remain behind with the Jewish passengers who were held in the old airport terminal. A furious debate erupted inside the Israeli cabinet about what, if any, action to take.

“Wednesday arrived, and there was only 12 hours until the passing of the ultimatum,” said Sherman. “There were demonstrations in the streets of Tel Aviv for the first time since the war of 1973, and it looked like Israel would have to reconsider its stance of not negotiating with terrorists.”

A debate raging between three Israeli personalities. Chief of Staff Motta Gur was opposed to any action on the grounds that Israel simply didn’t have the capacity for it. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin wanted to give in to the demands if no military action was taken, and Defence Minister Shimon Peres was determined to engage the terrorists in

combat. Israel bought some time by announcing that it would negotiate with the terrorists, but secretly resolved to mobilise the army. It had 42 hours to make it happen.

Said Sherman, “The order came for 240 soldiers to head to Tel Aviv. We

terrorists by surprise, arriving at the terminal using a Mercedes convoy made to resemble that of Ugandan President Idi Amin. Such cover would not arouse suspicion, as Amin had previously visited the hostages in this fashion.

Peugeot, and the Mercedes – four paramedics, 40 airmen, a five-member refuel team, and 180 soldiers. Sherman remembers an incredibly uncomfortable flight, one pervaded by a sense of doubt about the eventual success of the mission.

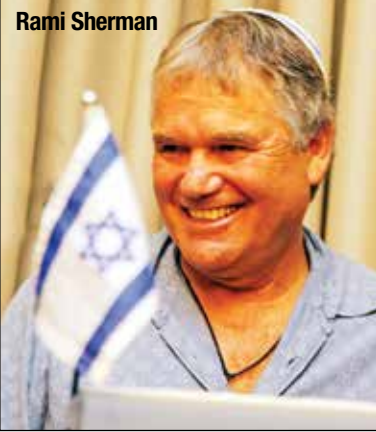
Sherman was in the first Hercules to land, and with 33 others, scrambled into a jeep behind the Mercedes. He said, “I remember thinking to myself that it was beautiful night to be in Africa. It felt like a dream, until I suddenly felt that we were heading for a catastrophe.”

Announcing their presence in three languages to the hostages, the soldiers stormed the terminal. Sherman’s team was responsible for firing at the control tower to stop gunfire from Ugandan soldiers stationed inside. A gunfight ensued (during which Yonatan Netanyahu, brother of Israeli

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was critically wounded) as the Israelis pressed onto the building and reached the hostages.

“It took seven minutes,” said Sherman. “The terrorists were killed, as were 20 Ugandan soldiers.” Unfortunately, three of the hostages also died in the crossfire. Sherman took Netanyahu to the plane, but it proved too late to save him.

Sherman described a strange sensation as he led the hostages to the Hercules. “I was the son of



Holocaust survivors leading fellow Jews to safety,” he said. “My family had been murdered in Poland, and here were Jews walking out in a march of freedom. I was proud.”

Fifty two minutes after arrival, the three jets took off from Uganda, returning to Israel via Nairobi. The operation was celebrated in Israel, condemned by the United Nations and Uganda, and taught Sherman a valuable lesson.

“I flew to Entebbe as a staunch Zionist Israeli, and I flew back as a Jew, but it took me 40 years to understand that,” he said.

“The operation taught me about the connection between world Jewry and Israel. If there was no connection, I wouldn’t have been sent to Entebbe, nor would Israel have rescued Jews from Ethiopia in later years. The Entebbe story illustrates our unique and continuing bond.”



Rami Sherman addresses an audience at Sydenham Shul

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

were told on Thursday night that it was up to us to free the hostages from the old terminal at Entebbe.”

“There was no Plan B. Still, we were confident that we could rescue most of the hostages and bring them home safely.”

And so it was that after initial intelligence was gathered by an undercover Mossad pilot, preparations were made. Behind locked gates at a military base, Sherman and the other soldiers learned that they would take the

“The Mossad sent soldiers to a garage in Tel Aviv to find a car,” recounted Sherman. “They opened the gate to find an old, white Mercedes [Amin’s was black], an engine that hardly worked, and no wheels.” Fortunately, a workshop with the necessary parts on hand was found, the vehicle was painted, and made ready for transport.

At 13:00 on that Saturday, three Hercules jets were loaded with eight cars – two Land Rovers, four light armoured vehicles, an old

Documenting untold stories of SA’s country Jews

ADRIENNE KOLLENBERG

Twenty eight years ago, a small group of dedicated volunteers began a project to research and write the history of the Jews in South African country towns.

They believed the project, under the auspices of the South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth, would take a couple of years to research and complete.

Volume six of the books, titled *Jewish Life in the South African Country Communities* was launched on Sunday (8 March). This edition covers the East Rand, Midrand, Southern Highveld, and Southern Escarpment.

Initially, the team didn’t anticipate the wealth of archival material available to it. As the project evolved, it became apparent that a number of professionals were needed to formalise the information into a coherent and systematic structure. They also realised it wasn’t a quick job...

They enlisted additional volunteer researchers and professional staff, including a librarian who accessed and catalogued all archival information, a full-time and part-time researcher, as well as a part-time secretary.

For purposes of research, the project was divided into seven regions, and a book has been published as each region is completed. The books include wonderful anecdotes and photographs, many from private family collections.

The books already published have received academic acclaim and international recognition. They are available in national libraries, including the New York and London libraries, and at museums and bookstores locally and abroad.

More than 1 550 places have been identified where Jews once lived – even if there was a single Jew living in a village. However isolated they were, these early Jews mostly supported the Zionist cause, long before there were Zionist societies in the small towns.

As soon as there were sufficient men to form

a minyan in a country town, services were held in private homes. Eventually, communities grew and formed congregations, and some even built synagogues. In smaller communities, Jews went to the nearest town which had these facilities. These early Jews were determined to carry on their religious beliefs even in this strange and unknown land.

There is a file on every town researched, with the smaller villages attached to larger places in their designated regions. The project methodology follows specific guidelines. A research questionnaire is completed, which includes information gathered from the South African Jewish Board of

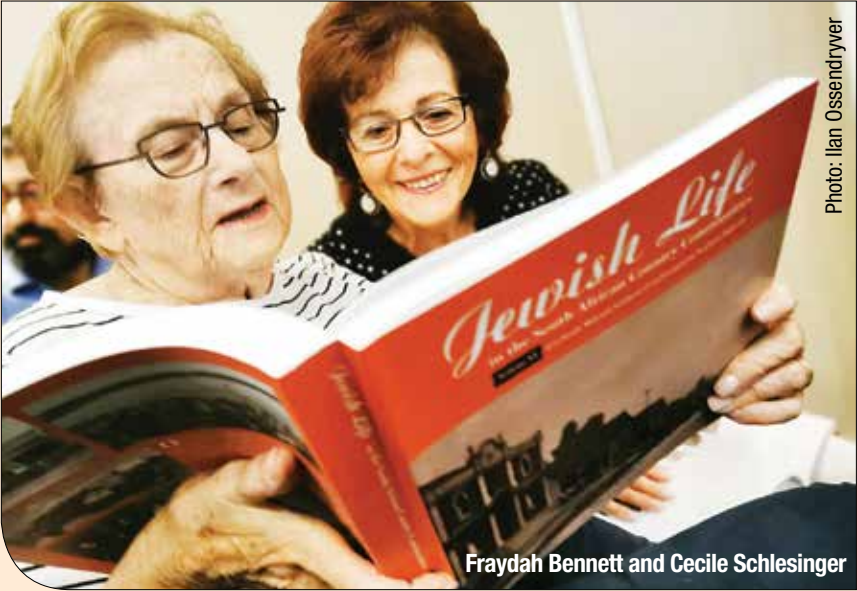
Deputies’ archives, reports of country community rabbis, and from the Johannesburg Jewish Resource Centre (formerly the Beyachad Library). Among the sources are huge handwritten, leather bound books of shipping records, immigration records, and naturalisation records, which were invaluable to researchers. A list of published sources is also consulted for each town.

The information is then entered onto a computerised database by professional researchers who examine and verify the data, which is fully referenced. Old telephone and trade directories were a useful source of information, and interviews with former residents offered interesting and amusing

anecdotes. Once the project is complete, the database will be available on the internet.

The seventh and last book will cover the Bushveld, Magaliesberg, South Rand, Western Highveld, Western Witwatersrand, and West Rand.

This research has recorded for posterity the almost unknown and undocumented stories of what Jews accomplished outside the main urban



Fraydah Bennett and Cecile Schlesinger

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

centres. It includes the fostering of a Jewish heritage and, often as pioneers, the development and culture of the South African country districts.

The Jewish contribution to farming is also of great significance, specifically in the Southern Highveld. The research has further contributed significantly to South African historiography in a wider sense by recording the stories of many hundreds of settlements that for most people had been, at most, no more than just a name on a map.

• *Adrienne Kollenberg is the chairman of the SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth. Call 011 645 2598 for more information.*

Tragedy helps family live in the moment

JORDAN MOSHE

At the age of seven, Stefan Brozin lost his father to a brain tumour. Forty-three years later, his wife died of a similar condition. In spite of the enormity of these losses, Brozin found a way to handle adversity by learning to live in the moment.

His experience led him to write *You Are Here*, a story of overcoming tragedy by taking possession of your life.

“Growing up, I was always fearful and anxious,” Brozin told the Saltzman Community Centre in Linksfield on Sunday evening in a talk hosted by the Jewish Women’s Benevolent Society. “I was an obsessive thinker for whom everything was scary. Everything was a potential threat.”

It was his father’s untimely passing that shook his confidence. His father was diagnosed with the tumour when Brozin was four years old, and in spite of undergoing extensive surgery, he passed away three years later.

Says Brozin, “Your father is a support, and suddenly he wasn’t there. Everything changes when you lose that figure in your life. I lost my trust in the universe.”

Growing up, Brozin feared the worst, and sought greater control over his life. The spectre of a brain tumour loomed large in his mind, creating a debilitating

paranoia which prevented him from enjoying life. He seldom lived in the moment, consistently fearful of the future and the challenges it might bring.

“I read thousands of books,” he recalls. “It was my thing to go to Exclusive Books and read books on dealing with anxiety, how to control things and think positive thoughts. I was always in my head, never really enjoying the moment.”

At 16, he met Jodi, the woman who would become his wife ten years later. Their marriage was a happy one, and they had four children together. However, he remained fearful of what might happen, and was determined to stay in control. While out shopping one day, he came across a copy of Eckhart Tolle’s *The Power of Now*, a book which changed his life altogether.

Says Brozin, “This was a foreign concept for me. Now? There was always only the future or the past. However, the ‘little me’ Tolle spoke about, the one who was fearful and never living in the present, was me. It changed my perspective.”

As time passed, Brozin learned how to regain the confidence he had lost by living in the moment, realising that there was more to life than obsessing over what might happen. He became more self-aware, rooting his mind firmly in the present and nowhere else. Motivated by his progress, he even

wrote a book, *Tree*, in which he shared the lessons in trust he had learned with his children.

Tragically, history repeated itself in 2018, when Jodi was diagnosed with a brain tumour. The diagnosis came after Brozin’s wife experienced recurring episodes of forgetfulness over a number of weeks.

“It started when she forgot to fetch the kids from school,” said Brozin. “After that, her Pilates instructor called me to say that she had been forgetting classes and was arriving very late.

“I didn’t think too much of it until I woke up at five one morning to find that she wasn’t in bed next to me. It had never happened before, and I went looking for her. I found her at the computer, and when I told her what time it was, she said she had lost her concept of time.”

A test result received on *erev* (the evening of) Rosh Hashanah that year confirmed a tumour, turning Brozin’s world upside down for the second time in his life.

“What I’d feared for such a long time had become a reality,” he says. “I didn’t sleep that night. The ‘little

me’ was back, and life felt terrible again.”

This time, however, Brozin chose to embrace the situation, and address it with positivity. When his wife underwent surgery to have the tumour removed,

he walked the hospital grounds with his children, and together they committed to rise to the challenge. Says Brozin, “We embraced the situation. I’m not saying it was easy. I cried often. But we made the most of every moment we had.

“We took our time at meals, and sat for hours laughing and just enjoying each other’s company. As a family, we made use of every moment, laughing and smiling even when we took Jodi for her chemo sessions.”

Brozin says he learned to let go, allowing circumstances beyond his control to unfold. Whether at home or on a family holiday, every moment was maximised, and the time spent together was cherished. With time, Jodi’s condition worsened, and when a test showed that the tumour had returned, chemotherapy was discontinued.



Stefan Brozin

Even then, the family remained resolute. “We continued laughing, smiling, and having fun as a family,” says Brozin. “When the hospice stepped in to help, the nurse taught us something profound.

“He told my children that their mother was giving them the gift of consciousness, an appreciation of life that no other children would experience. He told them their hearts would break, but would grow back twice as big.”

Jodi Brozin passed away on 5 March 2018. He remembers her final words well.

“I told her how anxious I was about continuing alone and raising four children by myself. She told me that she knew I’d pull myself together, for myself and the kids. ‘I want you to be happy’ was her mantra, and they were the last words she said to me. She helped me embrace her final moment.”

After his wife’s death, Brozin’s children convinced him to write another book. It would not only contain his experience, but would help others learn how to seize the present.

This is the lesson Brozin wants others to take to heart. “You are here,” he concluded. “Grab what you have right now, and don’t let the ‘little me’ take over. We all find ways to deal with adversity, and as a family, we’ve become stronger and wiser because of it.”



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Rabbi – Melbourne Australia

The Shule

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The Role

We are seeking new Rabbinic leadership who, together with the committee of the Shule, will invigorate and grow the congregation. The Rabbinic leadership will comprise a Rabbi and Rebbetzin team to engage the community and influence growth of membership, attendance and religious observance. An ability to connect with the younger generations is essential as is an ability to attract and develop a more observant core to and from within the Shule.

The Rabbi is required to provide an approach to modern Orthodox Judaism and must be accepting of Jews of all levels of observance.

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Encourage reading by example

OPINION

PATRICIA SCHONSTEIN



My parents read all the time. I remember my father in his armchair and my mother at the dining room table, each absorbed in a book at the end of their working day.

They did not belong to the library, but got their books from book exchanges – shops where you’d pay something like a shilling for a second-hand book that you could either keep or swap for another when you’d read it.

My father read novels, biography, politics, and comparative religion. My mother enjoyed historical romances. They both read the classics and books by authors like Ernest Hemingway, Leon Uris, John Steinbeck, Betty Smith, Carlo Levi, and Carson McCullers.

There was a small selection of classics at home that I began reading from a young age. Through these books I met formidable personages who, between them, led amazing lives, overcame calamity, solved mystery, fell in love, triumphed over all manner of travails, and shared their deepest thoughts. It was through Anne Frank’s diary that my father managed to tell me about the Holocaust, because he found no words to do so himself.

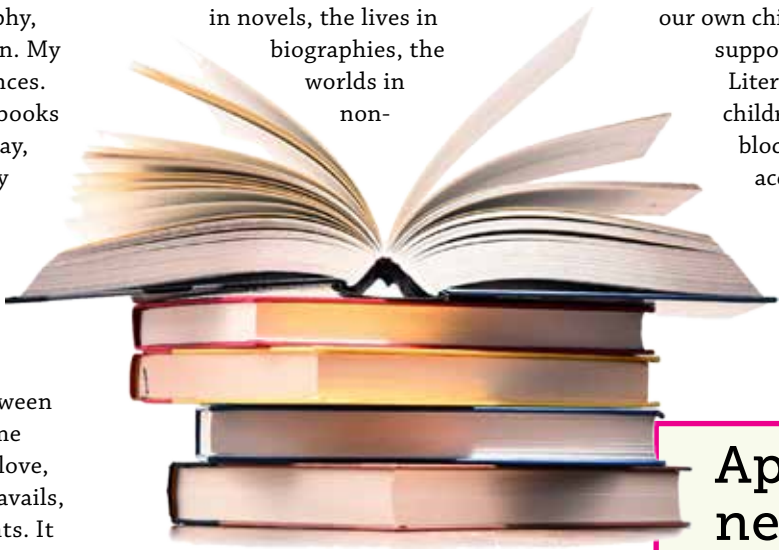
I became a voracious reader because of

my parent’s example. They never told me to read. It was just something one did. My own children had this example of parental reading too. We read to them each evening when they were little.

School played its part. We had a full library at school, with trained librarians, and my children also had this privilege.

I cannot imagine life without reading. I think I’d be a husk of a person without access to the stories presented

in novels, the lives in biographies, the worlds in non-



fiction. I’d rather live on bread and water, than forsake what literature feeds me. I would certainly not have become a published author had I not read.

So I believe every effort should be made to encourage children to read for pleasure. In these modern times, one hears constantly that children won’t read. Those growing up in households where there is no example of adults reading for pleasure have no module to follow.

Those who attend schools with no libraries are also severely disadvantaged. Those of us who know the importance of books should go all-out to encourage this fine pastime in our own children. And we should consider supporting projects such as Shine Literacy and FunDza, which help children overcome all the stumbling blocks preventing them from accessing stories.

The important thing is the story. Schools should be mandated to encourage reading. Parents should reward it. Not encouraging our children to read and to grow through

literature deprives them of so much. Society as a whole is deprived when it doesn’t read. Reading allows for reflection and introspection. Above all, it stimulates imagination and creativity. It’s the best banquet.

Perhaps we should re-think the printed book for the moment, and offer young people stories through audio books, and Kindles, even films that are based on novels. Whatever we do, we must get young people reading.

Example is a great way to start. Let them see you reading!

- *Poet and author of both adult and children’s books, Patricia Schonstein will be participating in the Cape Town Jewish Literary Festival in three sessions. She will be giving a novel writing masterclass, participating in a discussion on bringing fictional characters to life, and reading and discussing poetry.*

Apartheid’s atrocities should never be forgotten

OPINION

TONI STRASBURG



Toni Strasburg, the daughter of anti-apartheid activists Rusty and Hilda Bernstein, recently wrote a book about their experiences. She tells us why it’s important to keep these anti-apartheid stories alive.

Dr Neil Aggett was tortured and died in jail in 1982. He was the 51st person to die in detention. Many more died after him, and many more disappeared or were murdered by the apartheid regime before him.

The new inquest into his death this year has sparked many articles about his death and the struggle. I wonder how many South Africans who were born since apartheid are following the inquest.

We have so much to contend with in our country: failure of delivery, corruption, and the remaining inequalities of the apartheid race system. Why is the past still relevant?

Since 1994, a number of books have been published about the struggle years. Many who took a leading part have written autobiographies or had biographies written about them, their part in the struggle, and what they endured inside the country and in exile during that time.

Is it still pertinent for this sort of material to be written 26 years after the 1994 elections? Do we still need to know what went on during the apartheid years when we have so many new and current problems?

It’s easy to forget what apartheid did and what it stood for now that it’s so long in the past. Under apartheid, non-white South Africans – the majority of the population – were forced to live in separate areas and use separate public facilities – buses, public benches, and entrances to many shops.

From 1961 to 1994, more than 3.5 million people were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to the Bantustans into poverty and hopelessness. Black men were forced to carry passes that restricted their movement. No non-white had voting rights. South Africa was divided on racial lines, and the non-white population was considered second-class citizens.

An interesting narrative emerging in South Africa makes the comparison between the failure of the post-apartheid government and the “efficiency” of apartheid. A common line is that things were better under apartheid. This shouldn’t be confused with the problems we face as a democracy today.

Things were always good for the white population at the expense of the majority

of the people. In 1973, the United Nations General Assembly defined the crime of apartheid as “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them”, and declared it a crime against humanity.

All this is well known to the middle aged and older generations. What is shocking is that so little of recent South African history is taught in schools. We now have a generation of young people that know little or nothing about apartheid and why it existed.

The failure of education under apartheid and the complete disruption of education in the 1970s and 1980s still affects much of the education system now. This needs to be understood in order to understand what is happening today.

History doesn’t need to be dry, boring, and confined to facts. It can be told in a number of ways. To make it accessible and bring it alive, it needs to tell the stories of the people who lived through it. South Africa has many heroes other than Mandela.

We need these stories to be passed on to the generations who come after apartheid so that they can learn from history and understand it. Personal stories, family stories, and novels are a great way to learn history.

In the same way that the Holocaust and the genocides in Rwanda and Cambodia must never be forgotten, so too the iniquities of the apartheid system need to be remembered.

Studying history allows us to understand our past, which in turn allows us to understand our present. It can provide us with a greater understanding and increase cross-cultural awareness. Learning history can help us shape the future. Without history, we can’t know where we came from or where we are going.

- *Toni Strasburg will be speaking with Daniel Browde at the Jewish Literary Festival on 15 March on “Unparalleled access: biographies written by relatives of legendary South Africans”.*

South African fights for his life in Haifa

>>Continued from page 4

for Juan’s parents. He spent his first birthday in hospital undergoing a major kidney operation.

“He was a fighter from a young age,” says Jacques, who has to return to South Africa imminently to look after his vegetable farm that he left at a moment’s notice.

“We have to be strong. It’s not easy, but we have good support. We read the Bible, and believe that Juan’s progress is because of religion. In the beginning, the doctor told us that if he survived, he might wake up in a few months or a year. He’s responding now the way they thought he’d do only after a few months. It’s a miracle. The people from the kibbutz have also embraced us like family.”

When not at the hospital, the Van Niekerks have spent time visiting Kibbutz Bar’am and meeting the many friends the 19-year-old made during his gap year.

“His friends are traumatised,” says Traci.

“He has made friends from all over the world, and he’d been making plans to visit a girl in Spain. His friends told us he was also planning to be a lifesaver in Hawaii. They said he was someone that whenever a new person came to the kibbutz, he’d immediately make them feel welcome. He’d spend his days loading boxes of apples onto a conveyor belt. He’d get up early, drink coffee, and play music. They told us he’d spend all day in the apple factory singing and happy.”

Juan was planning to return to South Africa to do a trade before enrolling in university next year. It was at a braai at a friend’s house that someone who’d just come back from a kibbutz first mentioned it as an option. Within a week he’d organised everything.

“We didn’t know anything about Israel. My husband’s a farmer, we live in a farming community, and many people have gone to kibbutzim from South African farms. Juan liked the idea because it meant he got to travel and meet people from all over the world. He used to go to church, but he knew

nothing about Israel before he came here. He researched a lot, it was an adventure for him. It was the first time he was on a plane.”

In their last telephone conversation, Juan told his mom he’d be sad to come home and meet only South Africans.

“He said he was calling to say hi, and that he was working on the kibbutz while he spoke to me. He said I mustn’t forget to come to the airport with biltong to fetch him. He never once phoned to say he wanted to come home. He stayed for the longest time he could.”

The Kibbutz Program Center (KPC) represents about 250 kibbutzim throughout Israel. Volunteers, aged 18-30 spend anywhere from two months to one year on a kibbutz living and working with Israeli youngsters as well as other kibbutz volunteers from around the world.

Annie Laine Marstro, Kibbutz Bar’am’s “volunteer mom”, has been a G-dsend to the family.

“I’m in contact with them all the time,” she tells me when all of us meet in Haifa. “I visit the hospital every day with Traci and Jacques, and translate everything the doctor says. For now, the KPC and Kibbutz Bar’am are paying his hospital fees, but the question is what will happen afterwards. No-one knows.”

This is what keeps the Van Niekerks awake at night – in addition to everything else.

“We are panicking about what will happen when the insurance runs out,” says Jacques. “If possible, we prefer him to stay in Israel because we don’t know what’s available at home. If he has to go home, he’ll have to go to some hospital until he can start rehabilitation. It’s not easy to accept money, but this is our biggest obstacle. We just need a magic wand.”

- *If you can be a part of that magic wand, please donate money to <https://backabuddy.co.za/champion/project/juan-van-niekerk>*

Teen emissaries take Joburg by storm

JORDAN MOSHE

Imagine leaving your family for a year to live with three people you’ve never met, in a country you’ve never visited, to teach hundreds of school children in a language you hardly speak. This is the reality for Israelis Noga Yadin, Linoy Ben Basat, Maya Yitshak, and Lior Knino.

The young women arrived on our shores in August last year to serve as *shinshinot* in the Jewish community. A *shinshin* is an 18 year old, post-matric Israeli emissary sent by the Jewish Agency to a community abroad with the goal of educating people about Israel. They have been located at King David Linksfeld and Victory Park over the past seven months, and their enthusiasm today is as infectious as it was on their first day.

“[Coming to Africa] was my dream from when I was younger,” says Knino. “I’d been to Miami on a partnership programme before. I fell in love with the Jewish diaspora, and wanted to do more.”

Their journey began during their Grade 11 year in May 2018, when they joined more than 4 000 applicants for the programme. Complete strangers to one another, each of them hoped to be one of the 206 successful students who would be posted somewhere abroad for an opportunity of a lifetime.

The process was gruelling. The *shinshinot* say they underwent months of rigorous training exercises, each of them geared to test their interpersonal skills, ability to educate, and general suitability for the programme. Applicants are matched with appropriate diaspora communities based on their skill and level of religiosity. They aren’t given any say in which country they are based.

“*Shinshins* are based in communities across America, Europe, and South America,” said Yitshak. “It’s funny to see the map. You see dots

representing where we’re based, and there are plenty of them across these countries. Africa is empty except for four dots in South Africa. Those became us.”

The four were notified in June last year that they had been selected to come to South Africa.

Says Yitshak, “I couldn’t believe it. I had also applied to be part of a programme in Canada, and I was sure I would get in. When I didn’t, I was devastated. Two days later, I got a text message while sitting in maths class which said, ‘Would you like to see giraffes from your window in the morning?’ I called my mom, and asked if she’d heard about a Jewish community in South Africa.”

The others were also notified of their acceptance, and together, they undertook country-specific training which prepared them to live in a place about which they knew almost nothing. Some of them had to bring their parents around to the idea by convincing them that South Africa wasn’t as bad as they had been told.

Says Knino, “I thought that South Africa was like the *Lion King* – a country with a lot of straw houses and that’s it. When they told me that I was going to Johannesburg, I didn’t know where that was or what I would actually do there.”

The group heard various and conflicting views of South Africa. During their security training, for example, the instructor repeatedly referred to South Africa as a “special case” which demanded its own safety protocol.

“Every time he said that, everyone in the room looked at us, and we were like, ‘We’re going to die,’” laughs Ben Basat. Others praised the country’s beauty and the community’s warmth, but in spite of conflicting reviews, the four excitedly jetted off for Johannesburg in August.

They were put to work almost the moment they landed. Operating primarily within King

David schools, they play a role in educating students about Israel and establishing personal connections through activities. Their duties include Hebrew support and enrichment classes, informal activities, educating people about Israel, running various events, and participating in school *shabbatonim* (weekends away). They attended Bnei Akiva and Habonim camps in December, and have even engaged with people beyond the Jewish community, volunteering at Afrika Tikkun and other similar organisations.

“The whole idea of the *shinshin* is to let people learn about Israel through us,” they say. “They typically hear about Israel from sources like school or local news, but we give Israel a personal face. We make connections with the kids, and establish lasting friendships with them through interaction and education. It’s special.

“We’re part of many circles, and interact with many different types of people. We feel like we’re getting to know the real South Africa, and we’ve even picked up slang and Afrikaans. When we go back to Israel, others will be using American slang, but we’ll go back saying, ‘*Hoe gaan dit?*’ and ‘*lekker*’.”

When they’re not working (a rare occurrence, if ever), the four Israelis make time to go hiking, visit local attractions, socialise, and go shopping at Sandton City. They also spend time with local families who “adopt” them for certain meals and



Maya Yitshak, Lior Knino, Linoy Ben Basat, and Noga Yadin

Shabbat, but they mostly take care of themselves in the flat they share in Hazelwood, Glenhazel.

“I don’t think make we very good neighbours,” laughs Knino. “We’re Israelis, so we’re a bit noisy. Israelis don’t have inside voices, so we get loud when we’re talking to each other and don’t notice. We also sing together, and I’m sure the neighbours are suffering. I think all of Hazelwood knows us.”

They are unanimous in their love for the South African Jewish community. “People are always friendly,” says Yadin. “We had the softest landing imaginable, and the best integration I could have asked for. They hugged us when we arrived, gave us food, and made us feel welcome without even knowing us.”

Although these *shinshinot* won’t return to Israel until August, they are already dreading saying goodbye, and are planning a return visit. Apart from Woolworths, biltong and Flings, they agree that they’ll miss the people most of all.

“They’ll have to drag us onto the plane,” they say. “We’ve made such special connections here, and all we’ll be able to tell people In Israel is that they have to visit South Africa themselves.”

Learners in limbo as March of the Living postponed

TALI FEINBERG

Organisers of this year’s March of the Living in Poland on 8 March announced that the event would be postponed due to the spread of coronavirus.

The announcement has disappointed many South African learners who were booked to go on the march.

“They have no idea if it’s a postponement or a cancellation because logistically, they don’t know how to plan for later in the year,” said Lana Levin in Johannesburg, whose daughter was one of those going on the march. “A lot depends on the American and European delegates. South Africa is the smallest delegation. So we wait and see. Cost wise, we have no idea where we stand, but those who already have their Schengen visas won’t be refunded.”

Adam Levin, whose daughter was to be a participant, says whether the event will be postponed will depend on a lot of variables such as the availability of accommodation, whether local services refund March of the Living organisers, the amount already paid for, whether there is agreement to apply those amounts to a date later in the year, and the availability of suitable dates, as school kids in different countries write exams at different times of the year.

March of the Living World Chairperson Dr Shmuel Rosenman said, “After consulting with the relevant health bodies and officials, it’s with a heavy heart that we are forced to announce the postponement of this year’s March of the Living in Poland. Our primary concern is the health of the many participants and the Holocaust survivors who would be joining them. Given that this is an international event involving 110 delegations from

around the world, we have a responsibility to take precautionary measures in accordance with the guidelines given by authorities in various countries.”

The organisation’s South Africa co-ordinator, Rene Pozniah, said that the decision had been deliberated for weeks at the organisation’s New York headquarters. “It’s definitely the most difficult challenge March of the Living has ever had. We marched during the *intifada* (Palestinian uprising), in snowstorms, and when a volcanic eruption halted travel in Europe. This is the first time it has been cancelled since its inception in 1988.”

She said there was no adult contingent this year, but 43 Grade 11 learners were to participate from Cape Town and Johannesburg. “We understand that people are devastated. The most important factor at play is the safety of the kids.” Air tickets aren’t being refunded by the airlines, but participants will be given vouchers for tickets valid for a year.

If the event is postponed, it won’t have the same dynamic as having it over Yom HaShoah, Yom Hazikaron, and Yom Ha’atzmaut, Pozniah says. At the same time, going later in the year is better than not going at all.

“I’m in awe of the professional manner in which the organisation has dealt with this. We acknowledge everyone’s disappointment, and guarantee that these participants will have a place on the next one. We also appreciate the support and understanding of the parents. We’ll keep everyone updated,” said Pozniah.

March of the Living is the largest annual international Holocaust education programme. Each year, more than 10 000 Jewish and non-Jewish youth from 40 countries participate in the march.

Against the backdrop of the postponement, the organisation will launch a campaign encouraging youth across the world to combat anti-Semitism and racism.



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Breaking the stigma around ADHD

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

“OMG! My child has ADHD!” was the topic of a recent ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) workshop presented by Dr Tamara Jaye, a medical doctor and the mother of a child with ADHD.

Attention issues. Socially withdrawn. Difficult. Children with ADHD are covered in so many labels that it’s often hard to see beyond them. And for parents, the labelling process is no different, said Jaye. From becoming a nervous wreck to an insomniac, Jaye initially found her child’s ADHD diagnosis hard to handle.

A medical doctor with diplomas in allergology and child healthcare, Jaye holds a Master’s degree in childhood neurodevelopment. The topic of her thesis was ADHD.

At the workshop, she shared her expertise with parents who find themselves bombarded with information about their child’s ADHD diagnosis. Among South Africa’s general population, there is a 10% prevalence of ADHD. This exceeds the international average, which is about 6%. What’s more, studies show that gender might influence diagnosis, with boys four

times more likely to be diagnosed. “Parents of ADHD children find it very difficult when a diagnosis is made,” said Jaye. “We’re not coming with blood results or a brain scan, we’re looking at the child and their behaviour, and based on that, making a diagnosis.” There are no typical or physically observable features that indicate that a child has ADHD. To make a diagnosis, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5) criteria are used, which evaluate whether patients display a certain number of symptoms.

Before 2013, a much more limited group of patients could be diagnosed through DSM-5.

“Previously, children needed to be under seven to be diagnosed. This has now been extended up to the age of 12,” said Jaye. “Symptoms may now also manifest in adolescents and adults.” There is now also a broader definition of ADHD. “Previously, they said there needs to be a clinically significant impairment. That’s also changed in that now we’re saying it needs to reduce the quality of academic, social, or occupational functioning. That’s why we’re seeing so many more ADHD children because we’ve opened up the diagnostic parameters.”

The number of preschool children being diagnosed doubled between 2007 and 2016.

“We’ve also found that many of these preschoolers are now getting medication which in the past was never the case,” said Jaye. She mentioned a study showing high rates of recovery within three years when children between three and a half and four years old were medicated. Each case needs to be assessed individually.

Children entering primary school are diagnosed with ADHD more often and receive more treatment than their older peers, said Jaye. “Seventy percent to eighty percent of adolescents who had ADHD in childhood may still face social, academic, and emotional challenges,” she said. At this age, there is also the issue of decreased compliance with treatment, as teens often don’t want to take medication.

“We’re dealing with bigger issues if the ADHD isn’t sorted out – things like depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, especially among the risk group of adolescent girls.”



Adults suffering from ADHD are often completely disorganised and easily distractible, and relationships are often a problem. “They’re not like typical ADHD children, they won’t be running around and jumping all over the place, they just always seem edgy and tense,” said Jaye.

ADHD medication has become a controversial topic. “Parents are worried about giving kids medication, and we want to have a solid diagnosis when dealing with the brain. Doctors know that medicine is changing, and we need

to be humble enough to acknowledge this. We also need to provide parents with the facts and research about the medication, and explain safety and side effects.” In terms of treatment, she said, a combination of medication and behavioural therapies have been found to be most effective.

Jaye explained how ADHD medication works. In ADHD sufferers, she said, messages don’t filter through the brain because dopamine, essential for message transmission, is released but then sucked back up. “Therefore, no dopamine can go into receptors and electrical signals can’t be sent. Dopamine isn’t going where it needs to, and therefore ADHD children don’t hear instructions.”

Methylphenidate in the form of ritalin or concerta therefore works by blocking transmitters so that dopamine can’t be sucked back up. This leaves more dopamine in the synaptic cleft, which allows messages to be sent.

“Parents know medication will help the child to become a successful adult, they know that it will increase the likelihood that the child will finish school and that it will control ADHD behaviour,” said Jaye. “Yet, the majority of parents in a recent study said that in spite of this, they’re worried and think the side effects outweigh the benefits of the medication.”

While she acknowledged the side effects, including loss of appetite, sleep issues, and social withdrawal, she argued that these either normalised or could be managed. Regarding the common concern about whether we’re turning our children into drug addicts with ritalin, Jaye said the answer was a resounding no. “There is no danger of drug dependence if it’s used as prescribed. If we give ADHD children ritalin, we’re in fact lowering their risk of becoming drug addicts.”

In terms of a cure, there is a window of opportunity between the ages of six to nine, and perhaps earlier, which is why early intervention is key. “Yet, we still see that 60% of child ADHD patients go on to be adults with ADHD,” said Jaye.

Let’s get rid of the stigma, she concluded, reflecting on her daughter’s progress. “ADHD doesn’t define my daughter, it’s just a part of who she is.” When kids have ADHD, let’s help them. If they need medication, give it to them. Help them to become successful adults through effective interventions.

Camp Keshet, a lesser known Jewish youth *machaneh*

JORDAN MOSHE

Most of us are familiar with the Habonim, Bnei Akiva, and Netzer *machanot*, but few know of Camp Keshet, another Jewish youth camp that takes place at the end of every year.

Keshet was founded more than 75 years ago as a safe and fun place for kids from 8 to 17 who need a smaller environment and more individual attention, according to camp leader, Meir Spector.

“We aim to grow individual children into the best they can be in a small, intimate environment, while giving them an experience that will forever have a positive impact.”

Keshet maximises the potential of its small size by making sure that *madrichim* (leaders) give each camper constant care, according to Spector.



“*Madrichim* at Keshet have very little downtime,” Spector says, giving an example. “We once had a *channich* (camper) whose father passed away before camp. During the *shloshim* [30-day period following burial], he wanted to learn Pirkei Avot in his father’s memory. He continued learning while on camp, and always had a *maddie* to learn with him, making sure he completed his learning in time.

“Our *maddies* give support no matter what *channies* are going through,” he said.

Keshet endeavours to make camp affordable for all. The fees last year were R10 000, including flights, food, and outings. “We have a policy of

never turning a child away for financial reasons,” says Spector. “This means that often we give full subsidies. We don’t want any child to miss out on this life-changing experience because they can’t afford the fees.

“Any Jewish child is welcome to attend provided they meet some standard criteria. Unfortunately, we cannot accept a child where a psychologist or social worker advise us otherwise. Every prospective child meets a member of the organising committee before camp so that we can assess their fit for camp.”

The *madrichim* are trained to be prepared for many eventualities, including dealing with children who are bullied or come from broken homes.

Because Keshet caters for children who might be different, a misconception exists that the camp is only for troubled youth or children who have severe social issues, or children who can’t afford other camps. “In truth, Keshet is a safe, accepting space for children who need more attention in a camp environment. It’s a melting pot of children who come from various backgrounds and income levels who come to be accepted and heard.”

Cindy Kree, the executive director of the Union of Jewish Women and a social worker, said her experience at Camp Keshet motivated her to make her life something she could be proud of. “Camp Keshet gave me hope that I could live life to the fullest, and that anything is possible.”

Kree went on camp for the first time in 1996, at that stage a rebellious youth who challenged her Jewish identity. Keshet changed that.

“It gave me an opportunity to go on a holiday that my parents couldn’t give me, experience things, and make new friends,” says Kree. “To this day, I know that a huge part of why I have my home filled with the warmth of *Yiddishkeit* is due to the *madrichim* at camp.”

The earliest records of Camp Keshet date back to 1946. “The camp was originally called the Bikkur Cholim Camp, in line with the name of the non-profit organisation it falls under,” says Spector. “The name was later changed to reflect the essence of camp – which is creating connections with fellow Jews.”

The camp is held in December at a site in Muizenberg, and is usually 17 to 20 days long. Campers engage in a variety of activities, including two daily outings which can involve hiking up Table Mountain, exploring Seal Island, enjoying water slides, and many other fun experiences around Cape Town.

“As a parent, we want our children to experience life to the fullest,” says Kree, today the mother of three boys. “I know for many parents the cost of school is high, and giving our children similar experiences and memories to the ones we had as kids is difficult. Camp Keshet makes it possible for all children – finances and social circumstances don’t matter.”

In addition to the December camp, Keshet also runs a weekly learning programme known as Torah and Chill, hosts camp reunions, and manages a programme in which *madrichim* are encouraged to take their *channichim* out periodically. “All of this ensures that the connections from camp carry on throughout the year,” says Spector.

Pandemic for peace

Picture the scenario: it’s winter in Europe. Snowing. Young men – soldiers – are in the trenches, at war with one another. And then midnight strikes on 24 December, and for a moment, they are just young men, very far from home, celebrating Christmas.

In World War I, on Christmas day during the early period of the war, French, German, and British soldiers crossed the trenches to exchange seasonal greetings. Men from both sides ventured into no man’s land to mingle and share food and souvenirs. They sang carols and played football. And then, all at once, it was over, and the men got back behind their cannons and bayonets to continue the war business.

A positive similar side-effect to global crises today like the coronavirus is that, in a world which doesn’t seem able to end its disputes, the virus might create a form of “peace” because it doesn’t respect borders. Your foe is as vulnerable as you. What happens to him might directly affect what happens to you.

International co-operation to fight the virus is occurring on a scale almost unprecedented in history. Although the pandemic hasn’t yet come anywhere near previous major pandemics in which the death tolls were staggering, the warning signs are there. The death toll crossed the 4 000 mark on Monday; the infection rate exceeded 113 000. Spanish flu, however, which occurred after World War I, caused 50 million deaths, according to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The most deadly epidemic of contemporary times, has been AIDS, which UNAIDS (the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) says caused 32 million deaths from 1981. Fiery sexual politics stirred by moral grandstanding, religious dogma, and exploitation initially bedevilled the response to AIDS, as it has with coronavirus in the rhetoric of some religious figures.

Politics creeps in where it can, and

TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin



coronavirus is no exception. In the United States, disputes between health officials and President Donald Trump over whether his administration has done enough to combat the coronavirus are rife. He says he has everything “under control”. In a tweet, he blamed the media for trying to damage his government’s image, saying, “The fake news media is doing everything possible to make us look bad. Sad!”

It was reported by Ynet last week that when Israel was considering adding America to a list of countries from which visitors would be required to spend 14 days in isolation upon entry, the move was delayed by some government ministries for fear of compromising ties with the US and concern about Trump’s response.

But on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a press conference that he was instead considering a wider step. On Monday evening, Israel drastically ratcheted up its efforts to protect the country from coronavirus, requiring all those arriving from any country to go into self-quarantine for 14 days with immediate effect. Crisis can sometimes force even politicians to do what’s necessary, even those who don’t normally agree.

Similarly, the climate crisis has the potential to cross borders, and bring people on opposite sides together. Increasing droughts in sub-Saharan Africa, new hurricanes in the Indian Ocean, and a rise in the global temperature are signs that if humankind doesn’t get its act together for the environment, the future is bleak. Through all the haze, a common enemy is becoming identified: the people who spew carbon into the atmosphere, plastic into the oceans, and the international companies supporting them. Will climate change, coronavirus activists, and World War I Christmas revellers be a model for how to handle other human disasters?

Shark-infested waters and macho men

A few years ago, when it wasn’t as windy in Muizenberg, and when great white sharks would still hang around the False Bay area, it was fairly common for the siren to sound and for swimmers to be told to get out of the water. The “shark spotters” would keep a close eye out, and then signal when the danger had passed.

I recall one such event clearly. An older (and wiser) member of my extended family was about to go for his daily swim when the siren sounded. Without hesitation, he took off his t-shirt, and went down to the water. His wife, unimpressed, tried to reason with him and begged him to wait until the shark had reached Sunrise Beach at the least. He was horrified at the thought, and before diving headfirst into the water, turned to her and said the immortal words, “No shark will keep me out of the water.”

I was younger, and I was impressed. At that moment, he appeared brave and strong, and his logic was flawless. It took me years to realise that although his statement was accurate and true (because no shark did keep him out of the water), it could be equally true that a shark could eat him.

There are a number of ways to approach danger. Whether it’s the threat of a shark attack or the coronavirus, our response says a lot about who we are.

On the advice of Dr Anton Meyberg, who I interviewed on my morning show, and on the instruction of the chief rabbis (both in South Africa and Israel), I have

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



refrained from shaking hands with people. The idea is to try and contain the virus, and not spread it to the more vulnerable in our community.

The reaction has been fascinating. Whereas some share this approach, some don’t. A few of those who don’t are still able to respect my choice, whereas a number of people even managed to be offended by it. “Oh, are you one those?” is the refrain I have heard repeatedly. For the first time, I can appreciate what being vegan feels like.

The absurdity of it is that this reaction appears in some way to be a consistent South African male response to conflict. In this case, their refusal to be cautious must imply that they are stronger, more manly, tougher, and better endowed than the virus.

The harsh reality is that this virus is new, unpredictable, and virulent. And it presents a significant danger to the compromised and elder members of our society. It’s our moral imperative to do what we are able to in order to contain the spread. Simply put, it’s one thing to make the decision to swim in shark-infested waters when it’s only you who might get eaten. It’s something completely different to introduce the great white to someone’s swimming pool.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Putting our money where our mouth is



There is an unfortunate tendency for people to resort to irrational scapegoating when confronted with threats they are unable to fully understand. History has shown time and again how collective fear can lead to the emergence of all kinds of noxious prejudices, usually aimed at those faced by those very same threats. Almost invariably, scapegoating targets vulnerable minority groups who are seen as an alien element in society and therefore somehow untrustworthy. In our own history, the blaming of Jews for the Black Death and the horrific persecutions that resulted is a particularly grim example of this phenomenon.

The global coronavirus crisis has regrettably provoked a new wave of xenophobic prejudice, in this case targeting people of Chinese origin. However illogically and unjustly, the mere fact that the pandemic originated in a province of China is being seen as a reason to shun, defame, and even physically attack Chinese people.

We are all feeling anxious and uncertain about the coronavirus threat. This is normal. Clearly, we need to be concerned in order to protect ourselves. However, when legitimate concern spills over into unfounded prejudice, discrimination, and the stigmatising of an entire community, we have a duty to take a firm stand against it. This was the reason for the South African Jewish Board of Deputies’ (SAJBD’s) #ShoppingAgainstPrejudice initiative, in which Board representatives, as a public gesture of solidarity with the Chinese community in Johannesburg, arrived en masse at the Chinese market in Amalgam in the south of Johannesburg on Monday to do their pre-Purim shopping.

ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



A demonstration of solidarity with Chinese South Africans was worthwhile in itself, but in order for it to be truly effective, it needed to be adequately publicised. Our media statement detailed the reasons behind the initiative, also making reference to how it resonated with the themes and lessons of the upcoming Purim festival. In interviews with, amongst others, Radio 702, eNCA, and Africa Newsroom, SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn explained how Purim was intrinsically linked to the themes of human rights, anti-racism, and acceptance of diversity. One of its universal lessons is the evil of prejudice, and what it can lead to if left unchecked.

Kahn also stressed how Purim is also about fostering bridges of friendship and understanding between people, as shown by the practice of exchanging gifts. In the same way, she said, the aim of the board’s pre-Purim shopping visit was to express our community’s support and extend a hand of friendship to our Chinese fellow citizens.

The Board’s gesture was greatly appreciated by representatives of the Chinese community, who are concerned at the way its members are being maligned and boycotted by the public at large. We can be proud that our own community has taken the lead in standing up to this irrational chauvinism, and hope that it will inspire others to do likewise.

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

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

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Letters

SLOW-LOUNGE STORY MERITS PUBLIC APOLOGY

I'm a Jewish teen in Johannesburg. I read your slow-lounge article (*SA Jewish Report* 6 March 2020), and don't understand why the newspaper is mocking Jews.

I'm only 15, my brother is 19, my parents are nearly 50, and my grandparents are all over 70. None of us found it funny. In fact, my grandparents were so horrified by it, they were put off supporting the *SA Jewish Report*. So am I.

I've sent the articles to my friends at King David, although most of them have already seen it. I've sent it to friends at Yeshiva, Herzlia, and Crawford. Even my non-Jewish friends didn't find it funny.

First, I want to know why you think it's funny to hate on a Jewish school, one that's probably giving you most of your business.

Second, I'd like a public announcement. Not just a small apology written in the paper, because I refuse to support the *SA Jewish Report*, not after this article. I want to hear you go up on stage at King David Linksfeld (and the other King Davids you publicly hated on, if possible) and apologise to all of us hardworking students, teachers, and staff.

Furthermore, your company needs to make an overture to Ms Srage and Morah Sacks. Ms Srage is principal of King David Linksfeld. She has helped many of us get through tough times, she has made many of us laugh, she has celebrated our successes, she puts all her time and energy into making our school one of the best. She doesn't deserve this hate after all her hard work.

Morah Sacks, our deputy principal as well as the head of our Judaica committee, has put hours of work into our school. She has made a huge effort to make us a school without any harshness, where we are all equal. She has done this so that we will be the opposite of what your article said we were.

Finally, does it bring you joy to make students at King David feel worthless? Just smokers, vapers and drinkers. Does it bring you joy to look down on us, and make us feel like we are a disgrace to Judaism? Does it bring you joy to make 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18-year-olds read this article and feel that this is the only name they will ever have, that even their own community views them as drunks, partying vapers, and nothing more?

I enjoyed reading the *SA Jewish Report*. I would read every article on a Friday. This article was heartbreaking for me.

We hope you read this email with courage, and put our complaints to rest by apologising publicly.

I believe in the work that the *SA Jewish Report* does. You amaze me with your incredible articles sometimes. I hope that you take this email seriously, and make some changes.

– The slow-lounge students.

'BUSINESS-CLASS LOUNGE' JOKE IN EXTREMELY BAD TASTE

I refer to your “Business-class lounges open at King David” article published on 6 March 2020, and formally lodge an unreserved letter of contempt. In your highly un-funny Purim joke, you have managed to portray King David students as uniformly precocious, monied, entitled, and lazy. You have insinuated that they are drug and alcohol users, that they are narcissistic, shallow, and promiscuous, and that somehow, the school not only condones but encourages and facilitates this behaviour.

As a proud King David parent, I can't be more disgusted by this scurrilous and unfounded caricature of our children, their teachers, and the institution in which we have chosen to educate them. While any or all of those descriptors may be true of some teens anywhere in the world, by laying these accusations exclusively at King David's door, you have committed slander and defamation. If your mention of “Zev Lupo” is somehow a veiled reference to Rav Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik of blessed memory, then this ironic farce is even more shameful as you have deliberately associated one of the greatest rabbinic figures and halachic authorities of his generation with behaviour that most decent people would find reprehensible.

In a world torn apart by baseless hatred, jealousy, and divisiveness, your article does nothing but serve the cause of division in a community desperately in need of unity. King David schools – and the Linksfeld campus in particular of which we are a part – is a place that encourages excellence, community outreach, sensitivity, and service not just towards the Jewish community, but the greater Johannesburg area in which we reside. It upholds standards of morality, and utterly condemns behaviour that doesn't bring honour and integrity to the school.

Your crime is further compounded by the cowardice of having your chairperson hide his real identity behind a perceived clever Purim *nom de plume*. Behind this mask is a spinelessness and vindictiveness that's offensive. I suppose everyone is entitled to their private joke no matter the extent of their tastelessness, but then that's what they should stay – private.

You owe the South African Board of Jewish Education, King David schools, their principals, teachers, pupils and parents a complete retraction and unreserved apology. – Dr Tali Frankel, Johannesburg

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

Time to chill in the Purim Slow Lounge

OPINION

HOWARD SACKSTEIN



One of my favourite components of Purim each year is the “Purim Shpiel”, a Purim tradition going back centuries, equivalent to the secular April Fool's joke. Jewish media around the world prank their readers once a year just before Purim with a patently obvious nonsense story in homage to the tradition.

Over the years, the *SA Jewish Report* has participated in this annual frivolity, producing increasingly bizarre and ridiculous stories that no normal person could ever take seriously. These include the newspaper being bought by the Gupta family – which led to us being inundated with concerned calls – and that Jacob Zuma had expropriated the Jewish old-age home at Sandringham Gardens to build a holiday home called “Nkandla of the North”.

Internationally, the Israeli press announced that Israel would give up the shekel and move to the US dollar; the *Jewish Telegraph Agency* ran a story that Israel was going to re-locate to Mars; and the *British Jewish Chronicle* announced that Russian Oligarch Roman Abramovich would buy United Synagogues.

This year's *SA Jewish Report* Purim Shpiel had to be so outlandish and unbelievable that an all-out effort was made to write the most implausible, preposterous story ever published. Written by Professor Shpiel Pu Rim, the newspaper announced the opening of business-class lounges at King David Schools where students could go for massages, alcohol, marijuana, and Kosher KFC while bunking maths class. To make the story even more ridiculous, there would be computer games with marksmen trained by the CSO (Community Security Organisation), the billiard room would become a coronavirus isolation ward, and Stan & Pete had narrowly missed out on the catering contract.

King David was notified of the shpiel prior to publication. We certainly didn't ask their permission to publish, and we were aware that they were concerned that somehow the shpiel “does nothing to enhance our brand and ... felt really uncomfortable with it”. We believed that the Purim Shpiel was so ridiculous, so over the top, and so nonsensical, that no reasonable person could ever take offence and would regard it as nothing more than light-hearted Purim satire.

Just to make sure that no one could ever take this Purim Shpiel seriously, the business-class lounge would be open only on Purim. But, of course, some people still just didn't get it. Actually it may be that many people never read past the headline.

At King David school's assembly on Friday, the *SA Jewish Report* came in for much abuse. People present reported to me that the paper was being accused of printing fake news, being disgraceful, and bringing the school into disrepute. Similarly, someone who clearly didn't read or understand the Purim Shpiel launched a broadside attack on the newspaper on the Joburg Jewish Mommies Facebook page. It was a deep and long motivation into the merits of King David and the values for which the school stands.

Then came the accusations of anti-Semitism, and someone even created a convoluted argument that somehow the reference to “Zev Lupo” was, in fact, a blasphemous attack on Rav Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik. Forgive me for not knowing the rabbi's middle name, but I'm aware that Zev translates to “wolf” in English, as does *Lupo* from Latin. The criticism, to be honest, was sometimes more entertaining than the initial shpiel itself.

I asked the members of the Joburg Jewish Mommies page who felt affronted to please contact me on Facebook. Seventeen people availed themselves of this opportunity, and all of them were actually unconditionally supportive. One of them described it as “a storm in a kiddush cup”, and another told me that they wished they themselves had written it.

On a positive note, this reaction and over reaction caused so many young people to look for the article on the web and in hard copy, that we think it has spurred a new generation of pupils who would not normally visit news sites to read the news – even though this was an annual piece of satire rather than real news.

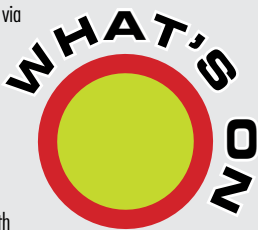
This is a wonderfully teachable moment: to teach people the lessons of Purim, to understand our culture and tradition, and to take a step back and be able to laugh at ourselves. If we can't do that, we may have to ask the chief rabbi to cancel Purim in 2021.

There are some who thought that the Purim Shpiel touched a nerve, and was too close to home. As a proud King David graduate and great fan of both King David Linksfeld and its principal, Lorraine Srage, I find this deeply offensive. The school produces quality students (I may be the one exception), most of whom are critical thinkers who are able to understand satire and take a joke. Nonetheless, I apologise to those who feel affronted by the Shpiel. That was clearly never intended. I offer myself as the butt of the joke for your own personal Purim Shpiel this year.

And so, to those few who got a little hot under the collar in reading our Purim Shpiel, we would like to offer you a free voucher to the non-existent Slow in the School Business Class Lounge at King David Sandhurst, where you can kick off your stilettos, have marijuana-infused edibles, lie back in the “messy room”, and have a good laugh at yourselves.

• Howard Sackstein is the chairperson of the *SA Jewish Report*, and in his spare time is unrepentant as he impersonates Professor Shpiel Pu Rim.

<p>Saturday (14 March)</p> <p>• Bet David hosts <i>From Soweto to the Wilderness</i>, a personal story by Ke-tu-rah Dlamini. Time: 12:00.</p> <p>Venue: Bet David, Middle Road, Morningside.</p> <p>Contact: 011 783 7117.</p>	<p>Venue: 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. Free admission, donations welcome. Spaces limited.</p> <p>RSVP essential to dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100.</p> <p>• Professor Krondorfer will also give a talk titled <i>Memory and family history in post-war Germany, exploring the effects of the Holocaust and war on German society, family, and German post-war generations</i>. Time: 14:30 for 15:00. Venue: The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. Free admission, donations welcome.</p> <p>RSVP to dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100.</p>	<p>10:00. Entrance fee: R100 (delicious tea included). Bring your own folding chairs. For venue, call 011 648 1053.</p> <p>Tuesday (17 March)</p> <p>• Second Innings hosts a theatre outing to the ballet <i>Don Quixote</i>. Time: show starts at 11:00 sharp.</p> <p>Where: Joburg Theatre, 163 Civic Boulevard, Braamfontein. Cost: R120 for the best seats.</p> <p>Enquiries: Book with Ros Berman, Fay Smaller, and Laura Sher. Contact: 011 483 7425.</p> <p>• ORT Jet hosts an introduction to graphic design with Nicholas Nesbitt. Time: 18:00 to 20:30.</p> <p>Venue: 44 Central Street, Corner 10th Avenue, Houghton. Cost: R100 members, R200 non-members.</p> <p>Contact: admin@ortjet.org.za or call 011 728 7154.</p> <p>• WIZO (the Women's International Zionist Organisation) Forum – <i>Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions – a real threat!</i> Guest speaker Wendy Kahn from the South African Jewish Board of Deputies will discuss the facts of this important topic during Israel Apartheid Week. Time: 09:30 for</p>	<p>10:00. Venue: Beyachad, 2 Elray Street, Raedene. Cost: R50 (including tea and refreshments).</p> <p>Bookings: 011 645 2515 or wizojhb@beyachad.co.za</p> <p>Wednesday (18 March)</p> <p>• Second Innings hosts a guided tour to the Pretoria Zoo. Time: bus departs at 09:00. Meet the bus in the parking area below Golden Acres. Cost: R180 per person, includes bus and tour. Bookings: Betty Kowal and Fanny Baumann 011 483 7425.</p> <p>• Join HOD (the Hebrew Order of David) Lodge Negev for a night of fun and laughter in support of Kosher Mobile Meals, the flagship project of the UJW. Time: 19:30 for 20:00. Venue: HOD Centre, Orchards. Cost: R200 donation (includes refreshments).</p> <p>Bookings: call HOD on 011 640 3017.</p> <p>Thursday (19 March)</p> <p>• Join the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre for a book launch with Jeanine Hack, whose book <i>Epitaph of No Words</i> tells the story of her great-grandparents' escape from Nazi Germany in</p>	<p>June 1941 via Siberia, Shanghai, the United States, the former South West Africa, ending in Johannesburg. Time: 19:00.</p> <p>Venue: The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, 1 Duncombe Road, Forest Town. RSVP to dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100. Free admission, donations welcome.</p> <p>• Join WIZO every Thursday for a <i>Lunch & Learn</i> shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz. Time: 13:00 at Beyachad. Contact: WIZO office: 011 645 2515.</p> <p>• Learn Yiddish every Thursday with Tamar Olswang and the UJW. Time: 10:00 to 11:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Cost: R100 per person, R80 for pensioners and UJW members. Includes tea/coffee and refreshments. Contact: 011 648 1053.</p>
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Letters

WORLD FALLS FOR ANTI-SEMITIC PROPAGANDA

I am the chairman of the concentration camp survivors of the Shoah in Johannesburg. Your article on the decline of anti-Semitism in South Africa (*SA Jewish Report* 6 March 2020) makes interesting reading.

David Saks reports that according to a December 2018 survey, the European Union’s Fundamental Rights Union found that 89% of Jews living in countries that had been under Nazi occupation felt that anti-Semitism had increased in their country over the past decade. This isn’t surprising.

Anti-Semitism in the countries listed predated the entry of the Germans, and was exacerbated by virulent Nazi propaganda. I had access to one of the foremost Nazi newspapers, the *Volkischer Beobachter*, even in the camps, and found its anti-Semitic articles very convincing.

My father came from Hungary, his mother was fanatically *frum* (observant), and her father was a rabbi. Because the Hungarians were allies of the Germans, Hungarian Jews weren’t obliged to wear the yellow star until the German occupation. My father was blond and blue-eyed, spoke fluent German and, unlike us, had access to cinemas. He reported that after viewing Nazi anti-Semitic films, he would have become an anti-Semite himself had he not been Jewish. You can imagine the effect on non-Jews. There is something called “dislike of the unlike”.

These days, there are large Muslim communities throughout the world, and they are notorious for their hatred of Jews. Muslim countries have fought many wars against Israel, and lost each one. Their wars of propaganda have been ceaseless, as have their terrorist attacks. They have been cunning enough to picture themselves and their families as victims each time they suffered a defeat of their own aggression. The world has fallen for this falsehood, duly prepared by its own latent anti-Semitism. *Of course Jews would shoot and bomb innocent women and children!* – **Don Krausz, Johannesburg**

SAJBD’S OPACITY RAISES QUESTIONS

No matter what explanations Mr Zagnoev tries to spin (Letters: *SA Jewish Report*, 6 March 2020), the facts can easily be determined by simply examining the Joffe Report, the opinion of Cecil Wulfsohn, and the PAIA (Promotion of Access to Information Act) documents. I therefore challenge the leadership of the Board/National Executive Committee to make the Joffe Report and Wulfsohn opinion in their full and original form available to anyone wishing to examining them.

These documents, together with my PAIA application, which I explained are already in the public domain, will reveal all. The Board claims transparency and good governance. If it has nothing to hide, it should release these reports. It would then be incumbent on every interested member of the community to acquaint themselves with the contents of the documents, reach their own conclusions, and if necessary, demand a forensic audit of the trusts and the Board.

The second paragraph of Zagnoev’s answer further muddies the waters. His statement that the “SJCA [Small Jewish Communities Association] was formed for the purpose of assuming responsibility for the national Board’s country community function” implies that the Board has become irrelevant to country communities. Why, then, is it still reluctant to transfer to the new organisation all of the remaining assets of the individual community trusts let alone making good the damages it caused to these trusts? Zagnoev seeks to have it both ways.

It’s time for the Board to account for its actions, and demonstrate precisely what it really stands for when transparency, accountability, and governance are concerned. Continuing with its opaque approach raises obvious questions. – **Dennis Wiener, Israel**

ISRAEL APARTHEID NARRATIVE A CASE OF CROCODILE TEARS VERSUS WHOLESALE SLAUGHTER

This month, the South African chapter of the “Zionism equals apartheid” gang is girding its loins to play its role in delegitimising Israel. Their crocodile tears as they invoke the plight of the Palestinians carries no weight against the backdrop of the slaughter going on today in the Middle East and North and East Africa, a human tragedy that escapes their attention. It’s wearying once more to point out the deceitful propaganda posing as facts.

Much ink is expended in accusing Israel of being an apartheid state, citing the checkpoints, the security fence, and segregated roads, but nothing is said about pass laws, forced segregation, anti-gay legislation, and racial laws, which don’t exist in Israel, but in surrounding countries. Critics focus on the border between sovereign Israeli territory and the disputed territories of the West Bank, ignoring the efficacy of controls that keep civilians from being murdered.

There are those who say that they are offended by Israel’s actions. I too am offended, not by trumped-up accusations of disrespect, but by more mundane things like the beheadings of civilians, cowardly attacks on public and private buildings, attacks on Westerners for the crime of drinking beer at their local pubs, suicide murders, murders of Christian priests in Middle Eastern countries, the burning of Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, the continued persecution of Coptic Christians in Egypt, the imposition of Sharia law on non-Muslims, the rapes of Scandinavian girls and women (called “whores”), the murder of film directors in Holland and elsewhere, and the rioting and looting in Paris, Brussels, New York, London, and Spain. This is what offends me and many, many of my friends. – **Rodney Mazinter, Cape Town**

SEARCH FOR DESCENDANTS OF NATHAN KLASS

I’m trying to locate any descendants of my great-uncle Nathan Klass, born in Zagare, Russia, in 1874. Nathan married Fanny Marks, and they emigrated to South Africa in 1912. They had five children, all born in Lindley in the Free State. Klass died in 1933.

- I would like to locate the grandchildren or great-grandchildren of Klass’s children, namely:
1. Samuel Jacob Klass, born 13 January 1915, died 10 October 1990. Buried in West Park Cemetery, Johannesburg. Samuel may have married Irene.
 2. Ruby Klass, born 22 January 1916, died 5 July 2011. Ruby married Sydney Solomon Hoffman.
 3. Muriel Klass, born 22 December 1921, died 21 February 2007 in Ontario, Canada. Muriel married Wilfred Duchon.
 4. Hannah Klass, born 14 April 1924. She may have died in 1957. Hannah Klass married Gerald Bennet Miller.
 5. Morris Klass, born 11 January 1931. Married Lorna Felicity Jansen who was born in 1941. I don’t know if they remained in South Africa.
- Contact ancestrymail0@gmail.com with any information. – **Maxine McCarthy**



YOUR ANCESTRAL LINK TO LITHUANIA AND POLAND

THE GATEWAY TO YOUR FUTURE

OBTAINING AN EU PASSPORT

Your ancestors who were born in Lithuania and Poland immigrated to South Africa, Israel or elsewhere to start a new life and thus broaden their horizons.

In so doing, they have GIFTED you, the chance of receiving citizenship of the country of their birth. The Lithuanian and Polish Governments are restoring citizenship, They are giving you the opportunity to broaden your horizons With over a decade of success, with clients in South Africa, the UK, Australia and the US and Israel, we look forward to sharing our knowledge and expertise with you and obtain your EU passport



Contact me:
Rose Lerer Cohen PhD
rlerercohen@kin-search.com
www.kin-search.com



I will be visiting Cape Town and Johannesburg in March.
Contact me for a free consultation. It will include assessment of eligibility, reviewing documents, discussing supporting documents, and answering questions.
Call me on 087 551 0790, or email rlerercohen@gmail.com to set up an appointment. We can also have a Skype or Whatsapp consultation. View my website www.kin-search.com to view my professional services which include Polish, Romanian, German and Sephardi passports.

Going to town on Purim



Eden College



Sydenham Pre-Primary School



Crawford Preparatory Sandton



King David Pre-Primary School Victory Park



King David Pre-Primary School Linksfield



King David Primary School Victory Park



Herzlia



Rosabelle Klein Nursery School



Torah Academy Primary School



Minnie Bersohn Nursery School



King David High School Victory Park



Entertainment at Sandringham Gardens



King David Junior Primary Linksfield



King David Senior Primary Linksfield



King David Sandton

King David Ariel

Slain Jewish police officer remembered as a superhero

>>>Continued from page 1

Marla, who has a PhD in communications and is an executive at The Da Vinci Institute School of Business Leadership.

The hardest thing she faced was telling their little boy.

“I told him that ‘Meme’ didn’t want to leave us, but Hashem needed her. I said she is in a place we cannot see, but it’s a good place, and she is happy but she can’t ever come home again. She will live in our hearts, he can always speak to her, and she will always watch over him.”

Rabbi Julia Margolis of Beit Luria Shul officiated at Wednesday’s funeral. She told the *SA Jewish Report* that Delene had devoted her life to protecting children.

“It was her calling. This was her passion. She fought for children’s rights,” she said.

“I met Delene when she was studying to convert to Judaism with Rabbi

Robert Jacobs. I also had the privilege of teaching her. I attended her Beth Din exam, which Delene was very nervous about, but she passed it with flying colours. I did her *mikveh* (ritual immersion), and we became friendly. Delene had tears of joy when she passed her conversion. I was moved by her sincerity.”

Hicklin said her world was shattered when she heard the news.

“This is beyond a loss. Delene was a shining light. She was a *mensh* among *menschen*. She was an absolute gem of a person who would give the shirt off her back to anybody who needed it. Her life’s work was keeping women and children safe,” she said.

“I lost the sister I never had. That’s how keenly I’m feeling her loss.”

The South African Police Service held a memorial service for Delene and Herbst on Tuesday at the Tshwane Police Academy.

Messages and memories at 106th WIZO AGM

Liat Amar-Arran, the director of the Israel Centre and a Jewish Agency representative, spoke about the “women who influenced her life” at the 106th annual general meeting of the Women’s International Zionist Organization (WIZO) recently.

Arran, who gave the keynote address, spoke about her grandmother and mother, giving insights into Jewish life in Tunisia, her mother growing up in a household of 15 children – 13 girls and two boys – and the early days prior to the formation of the state of Israel. Her vignettes kept everyone enthralled.

The AGM included Andrea Wainer who welcomed representatives of communal organisations, members and guests and presented the chairperson’s report, and Rabbi Zusman Uzvolk, who intoned the *dvar Torah* (words of Torah), highlighting the story of Purim and its meaning today.

Goodwill messages were brought by Benji Shulman from the South African Zionist Federation, who reminded everyone of the historic connection WIZO has with Zionism in South Africa. Gavi Sacks of the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) spoke about the meaningful relationship WIZO has with SAFI through the “Wheelchairs of Hope” project, which gives mobility to disabled children. This initiative has put smiles on the faces of many impoverished children. Wendy Kahn of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies told the story of a Holocaust survivor she had met, and shared the emotional story of her survival.

WIZO Johannesburg administrator Lauren Phillips took the audience to World WIZO’s 100th anniversary



Anat Shevel, Joceline Basserabie, and Nava Gonen in Tel Aviv, held in January. Seeing is believing, she said, and knowing where our money goes brings home the importance of WIZO’s work. The event hosted 800 women from 39 countries working for a common cause – *am Yisrael* (the Jewish nation). The exciting, high-level speakers, and fabulous opening and closing celebrations created a wonderful spirit of camaraderie. Phillips ended by saying that whoever had the opportunity of attending a WIZO EGM (extraordinary general meeting) should do so, as it was so inspirational.

Maxine Laffer presented the treasurer’s report. In 2019, WIZO Johannesburg operated with a rotating chairperson, and in spite of the difficult and depressed economic climate, achieved its quota through innovative fundraising.

The executive committee for 2020 was announced, with new co-chairs Joceline Basserabie, Nava Gonen, and Anat Shevel.



Sports Page

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The little Jewish American Caddy who made a big difference

LUKE ALFRED

The name “Sally Little” will be well-known to a generation of South African sports fans, but the name “Kathy Gorchoff”, Little’s former caddy and current manager, might not slip off the tongue quite so easily.

Before the two teamed up, they were members of The Hamlet Country Club in Delray Beach, close to Fort Lauderdale in Florida, with Little playing at rarefied levels and Gorchoff hacking down the back nine in relatively happy obscurity.

She can’t have been that obscure, however, because the two eventually met in the club parking lot after she’d played a couple of times in Little’s annual charity golf days.

Gorchoff didn’t play at Hamlet all year-round. She was a “snowbird” who spent Ohio’s winters in Florida’s sunnier climes, but one thing led to another and before long, the extrovert Gorchoff was carrying Little’s bag. “Sally calls me her JAC, which stands for Jewish-American-Caddy,” says Gorchoff, with a smile in her voice.

Little’s request to Gorchoff came at a challenging time in Little’s long and illustrious career. She wasn’t enjoying her golf as much as she might have, and Gorchoff’s arrival gave her a much-needed fillip. “Sally’s peers were retiring, and she wasn’t really enjoying her time on the course that much,” says Gorchoff, “so I said, ‘Sure, I’ll caddy for you, we’ll have a ball’, which is pretty much what we did.

“I just thought it would be an unbelievable experience to be inside the ropes.”

Being a caddy to a professional isn’t as simple as it might appear. Carrying a bag for hours can be back-breaking (Gorchoff is a small woman who put weights in a backpack to train) and the instant demands for a caddy to calculate accurately the distance from where the ball is lying to the pin – called “yardage” in golf – can be intimidating.

Little prefers that her caddy doesn’t impart a great deal of information, but she does demand accurate yardage, so Gorchoff needed to calculate the yardage both to the front of the green and the pin pretty smartly.

She also needed to understand Little’s quirks. Little, for example, plays golf right-handed, although in everything else she does (like holding a pen or playing tennis) she’s a lefty.

In spite of playing right-handed, she likes the clubs in her bag set up as they would be if she played left-handed, which might seem like reverse engineering, but is the way Little likes it.



Kathy Gorchoff and Sally Little at the French Lick Resort in French Lick, Indiana

She also likes to walk with her putter in her hand in the approach to the green because it gives her a feeling of comfort and calm, so it must be given to her the moment she’s completed her approach.

Finally, Gorchoff needed to master the subtle art of keeping quiet, something most of us find difficult to do. Little didn’t like it if she said too much or parted with too much information, which wasn’t always easy for someone with such an effervescent personality.

“Having her alongside certainly made it more palatable,” says Little. “I was able to get in a few more good years of golf.”

Although there was always chemistry between Little and Gorchoff, their partnership on the course wasn’t universally welcomed. Caddies can be a clannish lot, with a pecking order to rival any fraternity club, and Gorchoff was greeted with civility rather than being openly embraced.

It didn’t help, of course, that she was allowed in the club house after a round, while caddies weren’t.

Sometimes they were dismissed as being “too old” or “grannies” who had no right to be where they were on the course, something which they can chuckle about now but which they found annoying at the time.

Their pairing also coincided with the rise of any number of barnstorming young Asian or Asian-American golfers on the tour. For example, Gorchoff recounts with amusement the story of the long-hitting Little hitting the ball further down the fairway than a frustrated Christina Kim, who prided herself on her booming drives and couldn’t believe the kind of yardage that Little was consistently getting.

“Time and time again, she was going to the long ball only to discover it was Sally’s,” says Gorchoff with a chuckle. “Then finally, on the 18th, she hit her ball a foot in front of Sally’s. We laugh about it now because we’re all good friends, but Christina was pretty relieved to have

finally hit it further than Sally.”
Gorchoff and Little campaigned on and off

for four years together on the LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association) Tour before Little retired to devote herself to her trusts and charitable causes. She re-located to Cape Town in 2009, and nowadays Gorchoff visits South Africa “three or four times a year”.

Their labour of love at the moment is the Little Golf Trust, which was started five years ago and is based on the old Peninsular Driving Range in Maitland. The aim of the trust is to use golf as a mechanism for uplifting the previously disadvantaged – with emphasis on girls and young women – through the game of golf.

Golf teaches values that can be used in all walks of life, and Little is passionate about discovering champion golfers in communities that have seldom produced them. Long may her search last.



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