



Gold unmarked ring set with diamonds in the design of a vase of flowers on a blue enamel background
SOLD R36,000



London silver hot water pot with floral finial, maker James Charles Edington
SOLD R15,000

Jim Dine, Confetti Heart, colour lithograph with relief printing
SOLD R100,000



■ Volume 24 – Number 14 ■ 1 May 2020 ■ 7 Iyar 5780

South african Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

www.sajr.co.za

Leaders step up for a community in need

**TALI FEINBERG
AND JORDAN MOSHE**

Near the beginning of South Africa’s lockdown, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein heard about a member of the community “who owned a small business supporting himself, his family, and his widowed mother, and had to cash in a medical policy to get R150 000 to keep his business open. When I heard that, it highlighted for me how critical the situation is at the moment.”

This is just one of thousands of stories of community members trying to stay afloat in the stormy seas of lockdown and the coronavirus crisis. The chief rabbi is one of many leaders who are stepping up to find the funds to support such individuals.

“Our sages teach us that the highest level of *tzedakah* [charity] is giving someone financial independence. The greatest *mitzvah* is to help someone before they fall. We need to come together as a community to address this extremely urgent need,” says Goldstein. He has been working tirelessly with a team of community leaders to launch a fund that will offer interest-free loans to small businesses. He hopes to provide more details soon.

“Judging from the appeals we have received from our community, there is palpable distress, and this is a reality that we will be experiencing for some time,” says Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD).

In Johannesburg, the Chevrah Kadisha has had a drastic increase in applications for financial assistance. “This week alone, we had 40 new applications,” says Chief Executive Saul Tomson. “Just one example is a single mom who is a hairdresser. She hasn’t been able to work for two months, and won’t be able to work for the foreseeable future. She and her two young children are now completely dependent on the chev.”

Others asking for assistance from the chev include those who aren’t earning an income or who have lost jobs, people needing help to pay for food, rent, and increased costs like home schooling. Then there are those who were getting financial help from family but are no longer

getting it, or clients who had become independent requesting help once again. The organisation’s hotlines have also been inundated with calls from people saying they are fearful and lonely.

“These are early days, and we haven’t felt the full devastation. However, the chev has always been there, and will endeavour to always be there for Jews in need,” says Tomson.

In Cape Town, Hazel Levin, the director of Jewish Community Services (JCS), says, “We have had to deliver an extra 42 food parcels since 23 March. These are new clients who we have never heard from before, or people who were back on their feet and are now slipping through the cracks.” The JCS assists the vulnerable within Cape Town’s Jewish community.

“We have had many people say they can’t pay their rent. Then, there are financial needs for Wi-Fi and data, with children and parents working from home, and for providing 500 clients with masks,” says Levin. “We have also seen an increase in anxiety and frustration within families.” The organisation is still offering a full range of services, and is about to launch a tinned food drive.

The SAJBD has been working to assist those who are battling financially. “A high number of community members are self-employed, and this makes them particularly vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19,” says Kahn. “The board is working to point people in the right direction, whether it be government funding, banks, or some of the internal community offerings. We are also providing psychological support.”

Based on the feedback from the *SA Jewish Report’s* Tuesday night panel discussion on how to stay afloat during the crisis, “There is no doubt that the community is facing many financial challenges as a result of the lockdown,” says Herschel Jawitz, who chaired the event.

About 3 000 viewers tuned in, and many participated in the various live polls. In answer to the question if businesses had reach out for assistance, 13% said that they or their businesses had applied for government funding, 19% had applied to their banks for a payment holiday, and 7% had applied to one of the general funds for assistance.

In another poll addressing job and business security, 45% said they were worried about the future of their job or business, and 26% reported salary reductions.

Of those who responded that they could pay rent or bonds in May, 18% said that they had made payment arrangements with their landlords, 12% won’t be able to pay, and 11% have requested a discount. Many had already spoken to their banks about deferring a mortgage or other payments, and others were planning to do so in the next three months.

“When the virus hit four weeks ago, we created an emergency fund,” says Mandy Yachad, a trustee of the Rambam Charitable Trust, which has existed for 25 years to provide interest-free loans to Jews. With almost R15 million in capital (provided by various donors and initiatives), it lends out extensively across the community. “We committed R1 million of our own trust capital to the emergency fund, to which was added a further R1.2 million from donors,” says Yachad.

The maximum loan is R10 000, and includes a moratorium of two

to three months on repayment. Repayment is over 12 months. The requirement for surety has also been waived.

“Our form has been shortened, and basically asks applicants how the crisis has affected them,” says Yachad. “We have trustees available daily to review applications allocated to them for processing within 24 hours. Within that time, the applicant is interviewed telephonically, the prospect of repayment evaluated and, if the loan is approved, the funds are paid out.” The trust has already received in excess of 180 applications. About R1.5 million of the available R2.2 million has been paid out.

“We should also recognise that the economic impact on the community will have a knock-on effect on communal organisations,” says Kahn, and indeed, others are reaching out to support our community at the tip of Africa.

“The Jewish Agency for Israel has created a fund of \$10 million (R186.8 million) to support communities around the world,” says Liat Amar-Arran of the Israel Centre. “Umbrella organisations

that work with the Jewish Agency can submit requests for loans, which can be repaid within four years with no interest or collateral. The fund is there to ensure that organisations around the Jewish world survive this crisis. If we don’t have organisations, there’s no community.”

She emphasises that this fund is for large umbrella organisations, which can then decide how to distribute the funds within their infrastructure. “It’s amazing, as the Jewish Agency is also struggling, but it has made this a priority to ensure that diaspora communities stay vibrant.”

Resources

- Jewish Agency COVID-19 Crisis Loan Fund for Communities At Risk: www.jewishagency.org/communities-loan-fund
- Rambam Charitable Trust: www.rambam.co.za
- SAJBD: www.sajbd.org
- Jewish Community Services Cape Town: www.jcs.org.za
- Chevrah Kadisha: www.jhbchev.co.za or 24-hour hotline: 082 499 1010.

Food glorious food



Photo: Ilan Osseidryver

See story on page 9

Remembering that first democratic election

JORDAN MOSHE

“It was a major victory. All South Africans, except for the die-hard Nats [Nationalist Party supporters] felt a sense of triumph. We’d emerged from some of the bloodiest years of violence and rampant lawlessness to become a democratic country.”

So says Audrey Coleman, recalling the first democratic election in 1994, the day we now celebrate as Freedom Day.

Coleman is a former member of the Detainees Parents Support Committee (DPSC) and the former national secretary of the Black Sash. Hers is just one of many recollections by community members of this auspicious day. They spoke to the *SA Jewish Report* about how they felt then and now.

In lockdown in her home this week, Coleman vividly recalls feeling a sense of liberation and great excitement in 1994.

However, looking back over time since then, she reflects that the legacy of apartheid left the newly elected government ill-equipped to take up its new role, a factor which contributed towards the corruption which has tainted the African National Congress (ANC).

“We were idealists, and it has been a great shock to see corruption blossom,” she says. “However, I’m sure now, with Ramaphosa at the helm, we will come right, even after corona.”

Zev Krengel, the vice-president of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, was involved in the National Peace Accord aimed at preventing violence around that time. Stationed in Thokoza, Katlehong, he found voters remarkably peaceful.

“It was unbelievable,” he recalls. “Warring residents of the hostels who had literally been killing each other ten days earlier were standing in the same queue. We monitored those lines for three days, and cast our votes at the end.

“Looking back, I don’t think people realise how amazing it was, and how it could have been.”

Jack Bloom, the Democratic Alliance’s Shadow Health MEC, voted at Athlone Girls High School in Observatory, where he was also a polling agent for the Democratic Party (DP). “It was exciting to vote in our first non-racial election, but also worrying because of the difficulties in counting the votes,” he says.

It was heart-breaking that the DP fared so poorly, he says, but the inauguration of Nelson Mandela at the Union Buildings was exhilarating.

“There was a lot of hope in the air that has dimmed 26 years later because of massive corruption

and misgovernance. I think now of the opportunities lost to achieve genuine non-racism and prosperity for everyone.”

Like Krengel and Bloom, ANC stalwart Joy Coplan played a part in co-ordinating the election.

“Once [FW] De Klerk unbanned the ANC, we needed a structure to create an election,” she says. “People had the right to vote, yes, but we

who had watched police on motorbikes wield truncheons at African cyclists on their way to Alexandra, recalled the horrors of Nazi Germany while living in South Africa under the Nationalist Party. For this reason, the election was a landmark moment for him.

“As a survivor of four concentration camps, a death march, the murder of my father and

Africans – black and white, rich and poor.” Falconer, the principal of Herzlia High School, had been in the country for only three days after having returned from living abroad for five years.

“I remember standing in a queue of people waiting to vote, the chatter and excitement and the sense of possibility, feeling that we were all riding on a wave of history that could take us almost anywhere.

“There was a sense of pride in a country that seemed to have done something quite incredible and was a flaming beacon to the world. A sense of pride in a man who we knew would be our leader, the incomparable Nelson Mandela, and that for the rest of our lives, we would remember these times. It is also true to say that many of us knew there would be hard times ahead.”

Marc Lubner, the chief executive of Afrika Tikkun, says that time stood still as he queued to vote at Houghton High School. “We were one as we stood in line,” he recalls. “The mark of a cross on a piece of paper represented a statement and an expression of freedom. Our country was ours.”

He admits that he cried as he stood in the ballot box, remembering that cry being a “washing” kind of cry, almost one of disbelief. “There was a sense of forgiveness, and an understanding of the fear that forced humans on all sides to act in ways that were senseless,” says Lubner.

“Freedom Day wasn’t just a day to forgive, but not to forget. It was a day we all bought into the belief of a Rainbow Nation.”



Millions of South Africans lined up to vote in the country’s first multiracial democratic elections in 1994

had to ensure they could exercise it. We worked hard to create wards and districts to enable people to vote.”

Coplan devoted herself to the suburbs of Johannesburg, forming branches in minority areas. She voted at Orange Grove High School, and remembers queues of people eagerly clutching their voting numbers in anticipation.

“We’ve made major progress since then, but still need to work to achieve the ideals of our first election. We are still working towards the reality envisioned by our leaders, and need to preserve their values.”

Holocaust survivor Don Krausz,

24 close members of my family, and having been selected for the gas chambers on three occasions which left me still needing treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder after 75 years, the experience of democracy was most welcome.”

Capetonians Marc Falconer and Milton Shain both vividly recall standing in line to vote.

“Although I well recall voting, I have no clear sense of my emotions at the time,” says Shain, the emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town. “However, I remember a frisson of pleasure standing in a long snaking line in Camps Bay with other South

FRANK SOLOMON HEARING CENTRE

Have a love at first sound experience.

Phonak Audéo™ Marvel

A new all-in-one solution that improves your hearing in everyday life and even in the noisiest environments.

- Experience exceptional sound performance
- Connect seamlessly to Bluetooth® devices
- Rechargeable so you'll always stay connected
- Remote Support for the ultimate in convenience

SPECIAL PRICE FOR PENSIONERS

CONTACT US TODAY:
(011) 849-6256
082 953 4628

Fairmount
6 George Ave,
Sandringham

Additional branches in
Benoni and Germiston

- Affordable for Pensioners
- 2-Year Warranty
- No Follow-Up Charges
- Latest Technology
- Small and Discreet
- Extensive Wireless Communication Portfolio Available
- Supplements for Tinnitus

Treatment approved by the American ENT Association

Torah Thought

Who is Holy?

Who is holy? Is it the mountain-top mystic, the monk in the monastery, or the guru in the garage?

People today love spirituality, mysticism, and Kabbalah. Great! Judaism is certainly rich in spirituality, and the mystical perspective helps us to a deeper understanding of our faith and its practice. But how would Judaism define “holy?”

This week’s Torah reading in Kedoshim (Leviticus 19-20) begins with the injunction that you shall be holy. Then it launches into a litany of biblical laws from religious to ethical – respecting parents, elders, charity, honesty in business, observing the Shabbat, not dabbling in the occult, the famous “love thy neighbour”, not taking revenge, the forbidden relationships – all kinds of things not normally associated with becoming spiritual.

It seems clear that while we definitely believe in the spiritual component of Judaism, the road to holiness isn’t so much ethereal

or otherworldly, but practical and pragmatic. Holiness is to be found more in ordinary everyday things than in mantras and metaphysics. Self-restraint, discipline, honesty, decency, doing the right thing – these are the things that lead us to holiness. You don’t need a guru with a guitar, séances, incense, or long, flowing robes. You need to be a *mensh* (person of integrity), control your passions, and behave correctly. And that, as opposed to all the spooky stuff, is what constitutes holiness.

At the end of the day, the Torah is telling us to be different from those around us. Whether it was the Egyptians and Canaanites of old, or the hedonists and sensualists of today. Holiness means distinctiveness. A Jew must march to a different beat. It doesn’t matter what the rest of the world is doing. We are a people apart.

The same Torah that reminds us to keep Shabbos also cautions us to keep honest weights and measures in our shop, not to lie, to pay our employees on time, and not to gossip.

Rabbi Yossy Goldman,
Sydenham Shul



The same Torah that declares boldly “love thy neighbour as thyself” also

warns us not to get too lovey-dovey with everyone – not with your daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, father’s wife, nor anyone else’s wife.

Yes, there is something noble and holy about a young couple exercising self-discipline and waiting patiently until their chuppah in order to express their love for one another. And I have no doubt they will confirm that it was worth waiting for. I think married couples who work hard to keep their marriages and family life intact, as difficult as it may be, are acting in a G-dly manner. That, too, is holy.

Far be it from me to make light of holy men and miracle workers. I’m a great believer. But before we run to faith healers or buy red strings and holy water, perhaps we ought to try the bread-and-butter stuff of Judaism first. Let’s live with honesty, integrity, respect, honour, dignity, and discipline. Then we’ll be holy.

VEHICLES WANTED

Any make, any model, any condition

Accident damaged vehicles and non-runners also wanted

Arnold Orkin 082 823 7826

AUTO AFRICA

South African

Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

ceo@sajewishreport.co.za • **Advertising** Britt Landsman: 082 292 9520 – britt@sajewishreport.co.za

Design and layout Bryan Maron/Design Bandits – bryan@designbandits.co.za • **Distribution** Sandy Furman • **Subscriptions** Avusa Publishing (Pty) Ltd. Tel: 0860 525 200 • **Board of Directors** Howard Sackstein (Chairperson), Dina Diamond, Herschel Jawitz, Shaun Matisonn, Benjy Porter. Advertisements and editorial copy do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff and board of directors. Tel: 011 430 1980.

Editor Peta Krost Maunder – editor@sajewishreport.co.za • **Sub-editor** Julie Leibowitz

Journalists Nicola Miltz • Tali Feinberg • Jordan Moshe • **Editorial co-ordinator** Martine Bass

editorial@sajewishreport.co.za • **Proofreader** Kim Hatchuel CEO Dani Kedar

abc

Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa

transparency you can see

The SA Jewish Report subscribes to the Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media that prescribes news that is truthful, accurate, fair and balanced. If we don't live up to the Code, within 20 days of the date of publication of the material, please contact the Public Advocate at 011 484 3612, fax: 011 484 3619. You can also contact our Case Officer on khanyim@ombudsman.org.za or lodge a complaint on their website: www.presscouncil.org.za

Community rallies behind toddler after freak accident

TALI FEINBERG

On 19 April, three-year-old Raphi Blatt was living happily under lockdown, surrounded by family and exploring his environment, when the unthinkable happened. Now, the Jewish community in South Africa and globally is rallying behind this little boy as he recovers from brain surgery after a freak accident. His father, Eddy Blatt, 41, describes the split second their world changed forever. “At the time, Raphi was nowhere near adults cutting wood, but in the flash of a second, he managed to sneak under the table and lift his head into the electric saw that they were using. It all happened so fast.”

Eddy is married to Leeat, 33, and they live with their extended family in Johannesburg. “We are, please G-d, expecting our second child in July,” he says. He emphasises that what happened to Raphi was a “freak accident”, and there is absolutely no reason to assign blame or consider any negligence.

“Raphi is a very independent, adventurous little boy. Just before the accident, he was outside playing in view of the adults who were doing jobs around the house. We have a large family, and there is always someone watching him.” Then, the accident happened.

“The minute we heard the commotion, Leeat and I ran to his aid. I applied pressure on the wound, and held his scalp together with my hands until Hatzolah arrived. Raphi was still conscious.

“Hatzolah arrived quickly, and acted immediately. The paramedics stabilised Raphi in the ambulance. If it weren’t for them, Raphi wouldn’t have had a chance of survival. We can’t repay Hatzolah,” says Eddy.

Leeat continues the story. “The decision was made to go to the Netcare Union Hospital in Alberton, which is one of two first-level hospitals in Johannesburg that could handle the injury. We had to enter the hospital separately to Raphi as we had to be screened and sanitised due to the coronavirus. The Hatzolah paramedic promised not to leave our son’s side.

“Once we got to the emergency unit, we were told that only one parent was permitted to enter. We decided that Eddy would enter as I’m pregnant and at higher risk of catching the coronavirus. The trauma surgeon sent Raphi for a CT scan. On assessing the injury, we were told that Raphi would require immediate neurosurgery. The incident occurred at about 16:00, and Raphi was taken into surgery at about 18:30.”

Raphi needed to have a craniotomy “as there was dirt, wood, and fragments of skull that needed to be removed from the wound. Initially we were told that the surgery would take about an hour.

fear and helplessness. We were advised not to wait inside the hospital as they were expecting a large number of coronavirus patients, so we waited in the car, but went in regularly to check for updates. The doctors and nurses were very compassionate.”

The surgery was successful, but the couple were told they couldn’t visit their son in the intensive care unit because of the coronavirus crisis. “I haven’t seen Raphi since his admission, which at the time of sharing this has already been 10 days,” says Leeat.

“Initially, when we were told we couldn’t visit Raphi, we were okay with it as he was already in an induced coma and ventilated, and all his brain

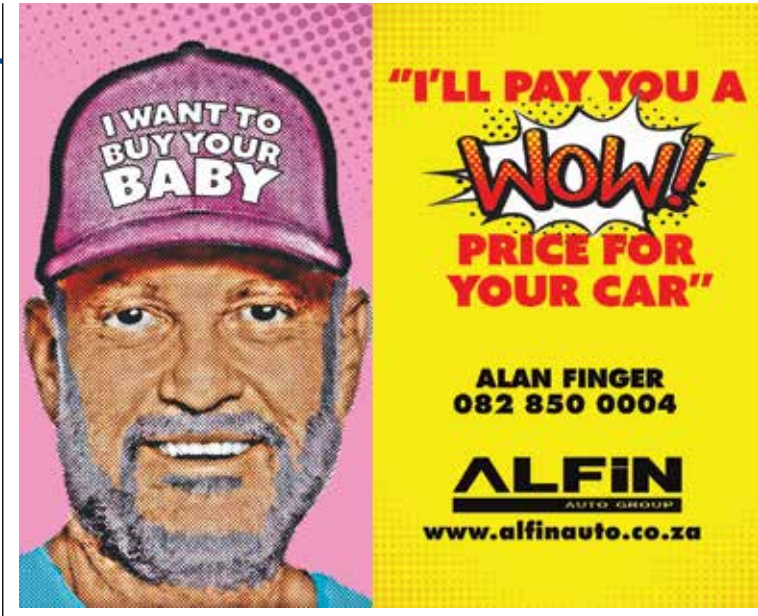


Eddy, Raphi and Leeat Blatt

After the first hour, the anaesthetist came out of the theatre to tell us that they would need an additional two hours. This wasn’t because there were any complications, but because the severity of the injury was greater than expected, and they needed more time.”

“Not knowing if your child will make it out of surgery, and in what kind of state, is terrifying,” says Eddy. “We were filled with breathless

needed was rest,” says Eddy. “But the minute they started to wake him on 23 April, we felt that we needed to be there for him. We asked for special permission to see him, and they granted me a short visit of 15 minutes. He was asleep when I arrived, and although he cried in my arms on hearing my voice, he didn’t open his eyes. He was still in a very fragile state, and on a lot of medication.” In this terrifying time, the



community has rallied around the family. “It has come together to support us at a time when we have needed it most,” says Eddy. “Every single gesture, from the shortest message to the grandest offering, as well as *tzedakah* [charity] in Raphi’s merit, has completely blown us away. We cannot begin to express our gratitude and appreciation.” Leeat would particularly like to thank everyone who baked challah for Raphi, while Eddy was blown away by a “virtual amen party” held in honour of Raphi’s *refuah sheleimah* (recovery).

Eddy says many miracles have occurred. “The injury could have been worse. The time it took for the ambulance to arrive; the fast action of Hatzolah; the trauma surgeon that we landed up with; the fact that Raphi didn’t lose consciousness; the fact that there were no complications during the neurosurgery; that he didn’t suffer secondary injury to the brain after the neurosurgery; and his progress to date, are all miracles.”

Eddy has given continuous updates on Facebook. “While Raphi was having his CT scan, I felt I had no option other than to reach out for as many prayers as possible,” he says. “I wrote a message to pray for Raphi, and I wasn’t quite sure where the journey would take us. But since Raphi was a baby, I have been sending a “Shabbat Shalom” message with a picture of Raphi to friends and family around the world. I felt that although many people hadn’t met Raphi, many of them had watched him grow due to the Shabbas messages, and even from afar, they would have had a subconscious connection to him.

“So, when the messages and prayers started to pour in, I felt that there was a massive community that had a vested interest in his recovery, and I had to let them know how he was doing.”

At the time of this interview, on 28 April, Raphi is still in the intensive-care unit and on a naso-gastric tube. “He was recently taken off oxygen. He still has some steps to go before they can move him out of ICU,” says Eddy.

“In terms of the injury to his brain, his right frontal lobe was injured in the accident. This affects the left side of the body,” says Leeat. “Today, we watched him miraculously lift both his arms above his head. He struggles to sit upright or hold his head up due to weakness in the left side of his neck, and general movement is difficult. Walking can’t be assessed yet. We know that recovery will take a long time.”

Says Eddy, “Before a person judges someone for an accident that has occurred at their hands, they should take a moment to consider the burden that Hashem has given that person to bear, and ask themselves whether they are invincible. The truth is that no-one knows what the next moment holds, and anything could happen to anyone at any time.

“Although Raphi has made steady progress in his recovery, it’s still too soon to tell what the long-term effects of his injury will be, if any. For this reason, we’d like to ask the community to continue praying for our little boy, and may Hashem bless Raphael Meir ben Leeat with a speedy *refuah sheleimah*.”

JAWITZ

PROPERTIES

INVEST IN PROPERTY IN ISRAEL
FROM R5 MILLION
Contact Herschel Jawitz in strict confidence
082 571 1829 | herschel@jawitz.co.za

REAL LIFE

Real Estate.



FOR SALE

GLENHAZEL | R 2.9 MILLION
Well-loved 4 bedroom family home in need of some tender loving care. Large entrance hall, open plan lounge and dining room with fireplace leading onto a patio and flowing garden with pool and trampoline. Family size kitchen with breakfast nook and scullery, 2.5 bathrooms, playroom, double garage and off street parking.

4 2.5

Web Ref: RL59785

Joel Harris 082 926 0287

Laureen Shalpid 083 789 0229

National Sales Consultant of the Year

FOR SALE

GLENHAZEL | R 899 000
Asking More. Spacious tiled Lounge and Dining room leads onto a balcony with glorious views. Huge bedroom with built in cupboards and modern Bathroom. Well fitted kitchen. One underground parking. Complex has 24 hr security, elevator and beautifully landscaped gardens with swimming pool.

1 1

Web Ref: RL61882

Joel Harris 082 926 0287

Laureen Shalpid 083 789 0229

National Sales Consultant of the Year

FOR SALE

MORNINGSIDE | R 4.65 MILLION
A real find. Wonderful youthfulness is the theme that is played out throughout this home. The 5 bedrooms and open-plan living areas give way to airy, delightful living. With this gem we offer the impossible, a modern cluster at an affordable price! You'll only get one chance, as this home will go quickly!

5 4.5

Web Ref: RL59989

Norma Robinson: 082 554 7260

Romaine Robinson-Buchalter: 082 685 5177

FOR SALE

SANDOWN | R 5.85 MILLION
A modern cluster offering great bedrooms, a landing study and gorgeous open-plan living areas leading to an entertainer's patio and an awesome, lush garden. Feel enveloped in the light dancing everywhere, with a kaleidoscope of interest at every turn. A stunning kitchen, double garage, staff suite, total privacy and an amazing position in the complex, complete this absolute dream.

4 4

Web Ref: RL63421

Norma Robinson: 082 554 7260

Romaine Robinson-Buchalter: 082 685 5177

Rabbi Liberow brought back from the brink

NICOLA MILTZ

Much-loved Johannesburg rabbi, Mendel Liberow, 58, said his recovery from the coronavirus was “miraculous” after weeks of uncertainty and a brush with death.

The humble and private rabbi of Torah Academy Shul shared his moving journey of recovery at a time when the community is desperate for uplifting news.

“It’s a miracle,” he said. He is filled with immense gratitude to Hashem and the Netcare doctors and nurses who “went above and beyond the call of duty” to save his life. He is also thankful to the community who steadfastly prayed for his recovery.

Liberow is described by those who know him as “highly respected”, and someone who always has a kind word or an inspiring story to share. He was the last rabbi of the Springs Jewish community, and has been a kashrut supervisor for the Union of Orthodox Synagogues for almost 30 years.

His scrape with death early in the pandemic brought the dreaded virus right into the community’s bedroom. It’s understood he contracted the virus after attending his nephew’s wedding in Crown Heights, New York, the epicentre of the virus in the United States, in early March.

He arrived back in South Africa on Purim on 10 March feeling fine. There were a reported seven positive cases of COVID-19 in the country (there are currently 4 996 reported cases and 93 deaths from the virus). At that stage, South Africans were beginning to distance themselves socially, airports were screening the temperature of travellers, and hand sanitisers were in high demand. On that day, Italy imposed a nationwide travel lockdown, but it was early days for South Africa.

That night, he partook in the traditional Purim *seudah* (feast) in shul where there was a large gathering of people who sat together. “The miracle is that no one contracted the virus [on that evening], no one picked it up,” he said.

He said the congregants were notified immediately when he was found to have COVID-19, and all of them went into self-isolation.

On Sunday, 15 March, the number of cases in South Africa had risen to 61, and Liberow had developed a cough. It was suggested that he be tested for the virus.

The last thing he remembers is laying tefillin (worn by observant Jews during weekday morning prayers) with his son-in-law, Rabbi Levi Avtzon of the Linksfield Senderwood Hebrew Congregation.

Everything after that is a blur. That night, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster, and Liberow was admitted to hospital, initially with a suspected case of pneumonia, but his test results later revealed he had contracted the coronavirus. X-rays of his lungs revealed him to be in critical condition. His symptoms got much worse, and he required machines to help him breathe and oxygenate.

He recalled what he could of his experience while being heavily sedated. “It all becomes hazy. I was in no state to feel fear. I woke up maybe two weeks later in the intensive-care unit. I had no idea what was going on, there was a lot of confusion, I had lost track of time.

“I was floating and travelling throughout the world visiting relatives in different places. It was a dreamlike state in which I never felt alone.”

He said he felt the constant presence of his oldest son, Yossi, next to him throughout the ordeal, and recalls his wife, Yaffa, visiting him one Sabbath. But none of this happened. He was allowed no visitors during his stay in hospital, much of the time in the intensive-care unit.

“I can only say they must have been a series of visions or dreams. To me they were real, but as it turned out, they weren’t”.

Liberow fought for his life, and eventually his fight took a turn for the better.



Rabbi Mendel Liberow recovering in hospital

Later, when he was able to speak, he was comforted by the fact that people had been praying for his recovery around the clock. It gave him strength.

Family members visited the holy resting place of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson in Queens, New York, and prayed for him there.

He recalls the doctor taking out the tubes when he was recovering saying, “*Shalom aleichem*” (peace be upon you) which isn’t a typical greeting from a doctor. He responded with, “*Aleichem shalom*”.

The doctor then said, “It’s going to be good. *Mazeltov!*” It took a while, but I then recognised the doctor with his mask, visor, and goggles. I asked him to share a *d’var Torah* (talk) with me. He thought for a while, and then quoted a five-word prayer

which pertains to healing. I felt exalted.”

Liberow feels renewed spiritual vigour. “The more you see and hear, the more you know with certainty that G-d is in control of this world,” he said.

“The purpose of any challenge in this world isn’t only to get through it, but to go onto a higher level to something bigger and greater. Our duty is to continue to pray for everyone to be saved, helped, and fully recover.”

He recalls crying on two occasions. “When the doctors advised me not to lay tefillin in hospital, it wasn’t easy for me. Later, I heard that a Johannesburg businessman undertook to lay tefillin for the rest of his life when he heard of my recovery and distress at not being able to do so. This moved me to tears.”

By Pesach, the Manchester-born rabbi who has eight children, five of whom live in South Africa, was able to sit up and eat. His wife dropped off traditional foods for him, and he conducted a seder alone “with matzah and bitter

herbs”.

He was discharged after being in hospital for just less than a month.

Avtzon told the *SA Jewish Report*, “As a family, we are beyond grateful to Hashem and the medical community for literally bringing my father-in-law back from the brink.

“The care and the prayers he received across the community really made a difference, and to have him back to full health is miraculous. It’s something in this time with so many challenges to see the hand of Hashem. To see such miracles isn’t only refreshing, it helps you regain your optimism and strengthen your faith,” Avtzon says.

“Beyond all of that, we are grateful to have him home.”

Young star bounces back from COVID-19

TALI FEINBERG

Jaxon Cohen is only 11 years old, but he has already been talent-spotted, played a lead role in the musical *Matilda*, travelled overseas, caught coronavirus, and recovered from it – just since December.

The talented Johannesburg youngster recently appeared on the *SA Jewish Report* and Excel Academy webinars *Lockdown’s Got Talent* and *Yid Kids Got Talent*, and from his confident performances, one would never know that he had just recovered from the virus that has turned the world upside down.

Cohen was performing as the character Bruce Bogtrotter in *Matilda* in Manila (the Philippines) when coronavirus started spreading in that country. The tour had just started, and was meant to continue throughout Asia until February 2021, but it was decided to cancel the show and send everybody home. “The kids were upset, but they understood that this is a world pandemic and not about us or a show,” says his mother, Hailey Fox, who goes by her maiden name.

“We arrived home in the middle of March, and went straight into quarantine with my husband and two other children for 14 days, as most people on international flights were advised to do. No one was allowed in or out of our house. My husband set up an office at home, and our friends were amazing – dropping off food for us and crafts for the kids, and just being available when we needed

things done,” she says.

“After being home for about four days, Jaxon had a slightly high temperature, so we called the doctor who advised going for a test. We got the results the following day. Jaxon had tested positive for COVID-19. Luckily, his symptoms were mild, and his temperature broke within 24 hours. We used only Panado, and he had no other symptoms. My test came back negative, and no one else in the family has had any symptoms since then. We entered a further 21 days in quarantine as is the rule when someone has tested positive,” says Fox.

Jaxon has remained upbeat throughout this rollercoaster ride. “He thinks he’s pretty cool right now, having recovered from coronavirus. He can’t wait till school goes back one day to tell his buddies about his adventures in the beautiful Philippines, which included swimming with baby turtles, performing on a professional stage, and making some great new friends. He

hopes that everybody stays safe and healthy, and that this pandemic finally reaches an end. Then, maybe he can get back to eating some more chocolate cake as Bruce Bogtrotter!”

Being infected with coronavirus is just one aspect of a whirlwind few months for the

youngster, who is in Grade 6 at

King David Linksfield (KDL).

“He’s obsessed with bugs and reptiles and has always loved to sing and play guitar. He’s been playing at [King David Linksfield music teacher] Margi Kopping’s after-school music lessons for about three years,” says Fox. “In the December

holidays, Jaxon decided to join one of his best friends for a week of fun at Vicky Friedman’s Fame Academy. It’s a musical theatre holiday workshop where they sing, dance, and act. Vicky saw potential in Jaxon, and approached us to see if he would be interested in taking it further.

“After introducing Jaxon to Duane Alexander, the co-founder and director of the Luitingh



Jaxon Cohen during rehearsals in Manila

Alexander Musical Theatre Academy (LAMTA) in Cape Town, he went through various auditions that covered singing, acting, and dancing, and eventually was offered the part of Bruce Bogtrotter in *Matilda* the Musical by GWB Entertainment.”

The character is most memorable for the scene in which he is forced to eat a giant chocolate cake, and the role is extended in the musical. It’s the most prominent male child role in the show, with many songs and scenes.

Fox says that Jaxon’s principal and school were very supportive of him taking on this amazing year-long opportunity, and GWB provided travelling tutors so the kids could do school work on the road.

“Jaxon moved to Cape Town for a month of training at LAMTA with the other new kids who were joining the production. He loved every minute of this, including the beach time after rehearsals.”

Jaxon says that the highlights of being in the show include travelling overseas, exploring new places (including their insect life), performing on stage with such a talented cast, and signing autographs. He feels like “the luckiest kid in the world” to have been given this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

It’s not the end of the story. “*Matilda* is such an amazing show – taking the audience through an array of emotions that you can’t help but fall in love with,” says Fox. “When the world has healed and returned to normal, it will be back.”

Jerusalem
Properties
plus many more

NEW PROJECT
NEW PROJECT
NEW PROJECT
NIS 2,000,000
NIS 2,300,000
NIS 3,500,000



Bat Yam
Properties
plus many more

FOR SALE
NIS 2,500,000



Tiberias
Properties
plus many more

NEW PROJECT
NIS 1,070,000



Modiin
Properties
plus many more

NEW PROJECT
NIS 2,500,000



Netanya
Properties
plus many more

NEW PROJECT
NIS 1,870,000



R'anana
Properties
plus many more

NEW PROJECT
NIS 2,500,000



Ramat Beit Shemesh Daled
Properties
plus many more

NEW PROJECT
NEW PROJECT
NIS 1,270,000
NIS 1,200,000



Ramat Beit Shemesh Hey
Properties
plus many more

NEW PROJECT
NIS 1,270,000



Tel Aviv
Properties
plus many more

NEW PROJECT
NIS 4,100,000



Contact us for more information
Tel/WhatsApp IL +972 50 446 9515
Tel/WhatsApp SA +27 82 608 0168
trevor@israel-properties.com
www.israel-properties.com

ISRAEL

PROPERTIES

BY STAMELMAN & PARTNERS

EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE
EXTRAORDINARY TRUST

Property Sales | New Projects
Land Sales | Investments
Rentals | Property Management

Welcome to Israel Properties by Stamelman & Partners. Our focus is on Local and International Buyers, Sellers & Investors .

We work with teams of Expert Lawyers, Builders, Developers, Mortgage Consultants, Banks, Currency Providers and more to offer you all you need with regards to property purchases, sales and investments in Israel and abroad.

Focusing on Beit Shemesh and Ramat Beit Shemesh A, G, D, H, Modiin, Jerusalem, Ranana, Tel Aviv, Netanya and other select areas across Israel.

We also offer select International property investment options in Cypress, Greece, South Africa and others.

When it comes to property in Israel, we are able to assist you every step of the way. We look forward to offering our products and services to you.

Contact us today!



Help us to survive and thrive

Last week, we had a full-page advert on page 3, asking for donations to keep publishing the *SA Jewish Report*. I have since fielded a number of questions about this, mainly about whether our newspaper is in trouble, and whether we will survive.

People seemed shocked that this newspaper, a mainstay of the community, something our community relies on and loves, might be in trouble. I must admit I found it gratifying to know how much people love this newspaper and want it to survive.

Can I say, so do we? The team of the *SA Jewish Report* – and to be honest, there aren’t too many of us – and our board of directors are going to do everything in our power to keep bringing you insightful news, intelligent articles, thought leadership, and in-depth stories about and for the community for a very long time. We are 100% dedicated and committed to doing this for you.

For those who may not know it, the *SA Jewish Report* survives on advertising. We do get money from the annual Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, but it doesn’t sustain the newspaper.

Right now, many companies can’t afford to advertise, nor do they want to spend their dwindling finances on advertising. Others are battling to pay for adverts that they have taken out. We understand. So many of us are in the same boat. We are all just trying to survive. However, this has had a huge and extremely distressing impact on our newspaper.

How did we get to this?

It’s crazy to think that not long ago, we were concerned about South African Adam Wolov in lockdown in Wuhan. In desperation, he was selling t-shirts online with “Pray for Wuhan” printed on them to survive. He and his wife’s money had dried up, and they didn’t know how they were going to feed themselves. This was the third article we published on Wolov, and it was 40 days into lockdown in Wuhan. It appeared on 6 March, less than two months ago.

At the time, the situation in Wuhan seemed so far from us. We were certainly not contemplating financial issues to do with COVID-19.

I know I keep coming back to Wolov, but he has become a marker for me as to how our lives have changed in such a short time.

The truth is that we can get used to living in lockdown for however long it takes, however the financial pressure of not earning the money to feed one’s family is unbearable. There is no way to get used to that.

In the Kaplan Centre research we have been bringing you since last week, there was a section on the socio-economic condition our community finds itself in. The story was written by Jordan Moshe, but I realised when I went through it that the number of people battling financially was no longer correct because so many more are struggling since lockdown. Our financial well-being has changed drastically. While for some the situation will ease soon, for others it will take a long time to recover.

Flipping that reality, as you can see from our front-page story, our community leaders, those who can afford to help us and World Jewry, are making all sorts of plans to help those in dire straits. This community is astonishing! We won’t let our brethren starve or their businesses die.

What other community does this? As dire as the situation is, we can be so proud that we belong to this community.

Then, looking inside this edition, you can read about Jewish people who are finding remarkable and innovative ways to help those who are far more disadvantaged than us.

Nicola Miltz and Ilan Ossendryver also take a trip into areas where people are desperate, to see what’s being done with some of the donations made. It’s heartwarming!

Because of what South African Jews do for ourselves and for others, this community will survive and remain strong. We are a community of incredibly kind and generous people who not only help each other, but others in need.

As for the *SA Jewish Report*, our writing budget has been cut drastically, and we have had to have some difficult conversations that nobody ever wants to have. However, we are determined to keep our newspaper going and to make sure it’s the best possible publication. Our team is committed to bringing you what you are used to: a publication filled with independent, unbiased, in-depth, fearless, balanced reporting, and exceptionally well-written stories.

Who else is going to hold leadership to account and ensure that you know what’s going on in and around our community? It’s in everyone’s best interest to continue to have a solid Jewish publication. However, now we need your help to keep going.

Those of you who can, please support us so that we can keep bringing you the news, views, and the exceptional stories you are used to.

Over this time of COVID-19, fake news and misinformation abound. When quality journalism – like the kind we bring you – disappears, fake news thrives. This is devastating to any community. Help us to avoid this.

On page 7, there is an advert that gives you various contribution options.

Here’s hoping the easing of lockdown will ease the financial pressures on all of us.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

*This week’s SA Jewish Report will be available at retail food outlets. Check our website, **sajr.co.za**, in the top right-hand corner, to see which outlets stock it. You are also always able to download a digital copy from our site.*



Will Israel head to the International Criminal Court?

As if the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the crisis in Israeli politics isn’t enough to keep senior policymakers and military officers awake at night, there’s another important debate.

By the weekend, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, is expected to announce that the court will investigate Israel for possible “war crimes” in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israel isn’t a member of the ICC, but the Palestinian Authority (PA) was allowed to join it in 2015. Jerusalem’s position is that the latter isn’t a sovereign state and as such, it can’t delegate to the court criminal jurisdiction over its territory and nationals. What’s more, it argues that the two sides have already agreed on the matter being resolved through negotiation, and ICC involvement undermines the process.

But already back in December, Bensouda said she had “reasonable basis to believe that war crimes were committed” by both the Israel Defense Forces and Hamas and other “Palestinian armed groups”. Acknowledging that The Hague might not have the jurisdiction to deal with the issue, she asked for a ruling by three ICC judges to determine the scope of the court’s territorial jurisdiction. It is their decision we are awaiting.

As for Bensouda, she believes the ICC possesses legal jurisdiction to operate in the Palestinian territories. According to a Jordanian news site, *Jafra*, what we are seeing now is a charade,



Fatou Bensouda, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

and the decision is a foregone conclusion – not in Israel’s favour. The paper claims Bensouda decided to initiate an investigation a while back, and quotes a PA source who is in contact with the general prosecutor’s office. The source says the request of the prosecutor to the pre-trial chamber was initiated only to protect “the ICC’s public image in a sensitive investigation such as this” but in fact, the court has already decided there is jurisdiction.

Palestine Liberation Organisation Executive Committee Secretary Saeb Erekat has expressed confidence “that a judicial investigation of Israeli senior officials on the issue of the settlements and other war crimes against the Palestinian people will be launched”. Erekat told PA TV that not only had the PA been involved in preparing the case for the ICC, but that internationally designated terror groups, including Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), also participated.

According to Palestinian Media Watch, an Israel-based nongovernmental organisation and media watchdog, the *Jafra* news report “suggests that the ICC prosecutor is biased, lacks integrity, and therefore is incapable of conducting a fair proceeding concerning Israel”. The group echoes Erekat’s comments that there have been contacts at the highest level between the ICC and the PA, although the content of the meetings hasn’t been publicised.

The court itself has an abysmal record. It has made few convictions since it was established in 2002, but it has spent more than \$1.5 billion (R28 billion).

In 2018, the *Washington Post* wrote that the

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier

ICC had completed nine cases in its history. Two resulted in convictions, and one in a guilty plea. Eleven other cases were still under investigation.

Besides its inefficiencies, the ICC has other major failures. Everyone it has investigated so far has come from an African country. Yet, since the court was established, hundreds of thousands of people from many other locations around the world have been murdered or driven out of their countries as a result of war crimes. The ICC hasn’t concerned itself with any of their cases.

Choosing the Israeli-Palestinian issue over dozens of other cases arguably much more in need of investigation by the ICC is seen (particularly by Israel and her supporters) as a heavily biased political decision. In order to gain relevance, the ICC had to get away from Africa, and Bensouda thought Israel would be a winnable target.

This isn’t the first time Israel has been confronted by international bodies cloaking political agendas behind pseudo-legal procedure. One example was the 2004 International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the Israeli security fence. Another concerned the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), which gave the Goldstone Commission a biased mandate to

investigate actions by Israel but not Hamas.

To date, many organisations and governments have submitted arguments showing that according to international law, there is no “state of Palestine” and therefore the court has no jurisdiction. Australia, Canada, Germany, Hungary, and the Czech Republic are among those who have publicly backed Jerusalem’s position.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called the ICC “anti-Semitic”. Many argue that Israel should confront the court as an enemy, and expose that its multiple deficiencies far exceed its merits.

NGO Monitor, a non-governmental organisation that analyses and reports on the output of the international NGO community from a pro-Israel perspective, has published a report analysing the claims submitted by about fifty NGOs against Israel. It argues that the claims are highly inaccurate from a legal standpoint because they are based on unreliable and biased sources while erasing or inventing historical facts and ignoring Palestinian terrorism.

Anne Herzberg, the legal advisor of NGO Monitor to the Hague, says these organisations have a decisive influence on the ICC, and their activities are sponsored by European governments such as Switzerland, Holland, Sweden, and the European Union.

Palestinian Media Watch said, “If the ICC indeed wishes to protect its image, it should immediately terminate further activity regarding the sham request of the prosecutor. In addition, it should initiate a thorough investigation of the contacts between the prosecutor and the PA committee comprised of Palestinian terror organisations who have undeniably committed crimes, the nature of which the court would deal with if it had jurisdiction.”

Nonetheless, this is, as Israel’s Channel 12 called it, “the most significant legal battle the state of Israel has faced since its founding”. The implications will be far-reaching.



When home isn't sweet home

OPINION

ROZANNE SACK

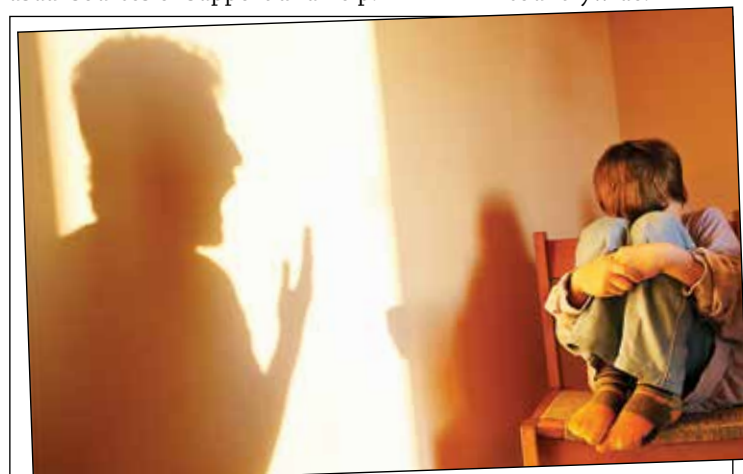


One of the positive consequences of lockdown for those living in a normal functioning household is time to connect with family members without the pressure of our normal, hectic lives. But what of the households where there is dysfunction and abuse? What of the children whose safe space is school and the ability to be with friends outside of the home?

The sad reality is that for women, men, and children in abusive domestic relationships, lockdown means a likely increase in domestic violence and child abuse.

At the heart of any abusive environment, is the element of control and power.

Lockdown offers a perfect environment for the abuser to increase control over his or her victims by being able to micromanage them. The victim loses access to time away from the abuser through work, school, or outside interactions with friends and family members. It becomes a struggle to keep safe while being cut off from the usual sources of support and help.



With lockdowns in place across the world, there has been an increase in domestic violence and child abuse globally. South Africa is no exception, especially in the light of our staggeringly high rates of violence against women and children. As much of the offending is done by someone close to the victim – often a family member – there is a significantly increased risk for the victim who is literally “locked down” with their abuser.

It's well documented that psychological strain has a strong association with mental-health problems, increased anger, and violent incidents. If we examine the lockdown regulations in South Africa, the banning of alcohol, cigarettes, and outdoor exercise poses the danger of increased psychological strain and domestic violence.

According to Police Minister Bheki Cele, the police received 2 320 gender-based violence complaints in the first week of lockdown. This is 37% higher than the average weekly domestic violence cases reported during 2019. The national Gender-Based Violence Command Centre said that it had received triple the usual number of calls.

These figures are extremely worrying, particularly in light of the fact that the victims of domestic violence are less likely to report the offences during lockdown because they are never alone, may fear retaliation, or may be financially dependent on the abuser.

The South African Medical Research Council has found that 56% of murder victims in South Africa were killed by their intimate partners, and almost 45% of child-murder victims die as a result of abuse or neglect, often at the hands of their mothers. How much higher the risk must be in a lockdown situation!

Eyewitness News reported on 7 April that the Teddy Bear Clinic for Abused Children had been alerted to more than 25 children

who had been abused since the lockdown started.

According to the clinic, many of these children witnessed their mothers being assaulted, while many were themselves raped and physically assaulted.

Dr Nthabiseng Moleko, a development economist at the University of Stellenbosch Business School, said that global reports show a link between pandemics, disasters, and gender-based violence. The picture emerging in South Africa is bleak, but what of our own community? Abuse statistics in Jewish communities worldwide usually parallel those of the wider community in that country.

In the case of this pandemic, it's hard to know what the reality is in our community. At Koleinu, we have taken very few calls over lockdown, most of which are from concerned community members about a friend or neighbour. We don't believe this represents the reality of the situation. Our community isn't immune to the trend countrywide.

If you find yourself in a potentially explosive home environment and it's difficult to get immediate help, work out where the “safer places” are in your home, and stay out of the kitchen, garage, workshop or other room where items can be used as

weapons.

Create a plan with your children for what to do when violence occurs. Tell them not to get involved if the abuser is hurting you since that may hurt them. Decide on a code word to let them know that they should leave the house and get help. Have a phone-call code word that you share with a trusted family member or friend which you can use during a cell phone call to alert them to your need for help. A knock at the door can stop an abusive incident in its tracks.

Get a bag together that you can grab when you leave that includes your children's important paperwork, medication, and a change of clothing. Keep a copy of important papers such as your and your children's birth certificates and passports in a safe place in case you have to leave in a hurry. If you have children who need a car seat, make sure the car seats are always kept in the car, and that you have a full tank of petrol.

It's vital that support structures in place for victims are clearly communicated and easily accessible. Within our community, there is the Koleinu helpline for victims or concerned community members to turn to for support. The number is 011 264 0341 in Johannesburg, and 074 180 5687 in Cape Town. The Chevrah Kadisha social-services number is 011 532 9616.

Government support structures include the Gender-Based Violence Command Centre, which can be reached on 0800 428 428.

The domestic abuse helpline number is 0800 150 150, and Childline South Africa can be reached on 0800 055 555. The Teddy Bear Clinic for Abused Children can be reached on 011 484 4554

• *Rozanne Sack is the co-founder and director of Koleinu, a local support service for victims of abuse in the Jewish community.*

South African Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

www.sajr.co.za

We need ***your*** help to keep the ***SA Jewish Report*** publishing...

DONATE NOW

zapper™



Scan here to Pay

GO TO

<https://www.walletdoc.com/pay/SAJR>

EFT Details:

SA Jewish Report | Nedbank

Account No: 1984514865

Branch Code: 198405

Strong Jewish identity, greater religious affiliation

JORDAN MOSHE

South African Jews have a stronger identity and are more religiously inclined than those in Australia or the United Kingdom, according to the findings of the survey on Jewish life in South Africa released by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) and Kaplan Institute last week.

More than 80% of South African Jewry is proud to be Jewish, and a majority continues to perpetuate a Jewish way of life, from performing circumcisions to fasting on Yom Kippur.

While the study found a remarkably high level of Jewish consciousness among the South African population, it pointed out that Jewishness and religious observance aren’t necessarily synonymous in South Africa. Jewish identity is a “multi-dimensional concept and no single measure can describe it satisfactorily”, according to the study.

In terms of age, however, the pattern is striking. Whereas older people are more inclined to identify ethnically with Judaism, younger respondents show greater agreement with statements relating to religious belief.

This bodes well for the future of our community, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein told the *SA Jewish Report* recently.

“The global trend in the diaspora is for Jewish identity, affiliation, and practice to wane gradually with each succeeding generation,” he said. “South Africa has reversed that trend. Not only is Judaism not waning among the younger generation, in

fact, it’s getting stronger. Indeed, the proportion of Jewish South Africans who describe themselves as committed, practicing, proud Jews is highest among those between the ages of 18 and 40.”

Goldstein believes there is so much that is heart-warming and positive about the findings of the survey. “Once again, it has emerged that compared with other English-speaking diaspora communities, South Africa has the lowest rates of intermarriage and assimilation, and the highest rates of Jewish identity, Jewish practice, beliefs and values, and Jewish affiliation,” he says. “The high proportion of Jews in South Africa who live with *mitzvot* (commandments) like Pesach and Yom Kippur and who also keep kosher and Shabbat is particularly noteworthy.”

The survey also identified an increase in both Orthodox and progressive observance. Almost 30% of respondents identified as Orthodox, and while traditional identification remains high at



32%, the study found a marked increase in progressive identity and a thinning of the traditional middle-ground.

Dr David Graham, the author of the report, said, “Times have changed, and individualism and the centrality of personal choice have become important aspects of modern thinking and behaviour, hence people are increasingly choosing to step outside this middle ground.”

He said that some move along more Orthodox paths because they feel that it’s more meaningful or authentic for them. For the same reasons, however, some choose more secular pathways which they, too, view as more authentic. Still, he points out that the process is gradual, cannot be overstated, and that traditional is still the largest, self-identifying group.

Given the diversity of Jewish identity, the survey sought to determine the extent to which respondents felt accepted by the Jewish community. Sixty-seven percent said they felt well accepted, but less religious respondents or those adhering to non-Orthodox denominations reported feeling less accepted, although they were in a minority.

However, Rabbi Greg Alexander of the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation said that in spite of their differences, progressive Jews do feel part of the broader Jewish community.

“As long as there have been different denominations there have been tensions between them,” he said. “That’s not to say that there aren’t also many examples of collaboration and acceptance, but historically, Orthodoxy has been the denomination that most South African Jews affiliate to, even if their own beliefs and practices have been more progressive.”

Alexander said that many progressive Jews participate in the wider Jewish community through communal organisations like the CSO (Community Security Organisation), the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the South African Zionist Federation, and youth movements without experiencing any lack of acceptance.

“There are also many who do experience a feeling of Orthodox Jews looking at their practice as inauthentic, just as you will often hear complaints of modern Orthodox Jews experiencing something similar from Haredi Jews.

“In my opinion, this is such a waste of energy. All of us should just get on with what we do, and focus on how we can better serve Hashem and our communities. The best way to show that your Judaism is authentic is to practise it passionately and proudly.”

This is clearly something an overwhelming majority of South African Jews of all denominations do well now, and will continue to do in the future, something Graham is cautiously optimistic about.

“I believe one of the main reasons Jewish communal life is thriving to the extent we see is because the barriers to assimilation are much higher in South Africa than other places,” he says. “In the United States, Jews aren’t very different to the American mainstream, and are seen as social equals. For better or worse, such ‘acculturation’ is a key step towards assimilation. But that’s not the case in South Africa where there are massive barriers in terms of economics, education, language, location, and culture.

“It seems unlikely these will be lowered anytime soon, so if religious life can be sustained up until now, why not going forward?”

Goldstein, too, is positive, believing we need to approach the survey with an open mind, drawing strength and inspiration from the positive findings, and looking squarely at the challenges that have been identified. In doing so, we can chart a path for the future.

“We need to look at the areas where we are doing well as a community and draw encouragement from our strengths and resolve to deepen and reinforce them,” he said. “At the same time, we need to confront the areas where we are falling short with honesty, and devote concerted effort to turning them around.

“Ultimately, in doing so, I believe this survey can be a catalyst for greater strength. Most importantly, we must continue to work together as one community with unity.”

Push away from South Africa, not toward Israel

JORDAN MOSHE

South Africans emigrating to Israel are mostly doing so to get out of South Africa, rather than because of a strong desire to live in Israel.

That’s according to the research report, “The Jews of South Africa in 2019: identity, community, society, demography”, released last week.

But that doesn’t mean that the bond between South African Jewry and Israel isn’t meaningful and close. It’s very close. So much so that there is an increasing number of people interested in making Israel their home in the near future rather than other countries. They choose Israel in spite of the linguistic and cultural differences between the two countries.

The Jewish Community Survey of South Africa (JCSSA) study is a collaboration between the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), a London-based independent research organisation, and the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research at the University of Cape Town.

About 89% of respondents have visited Israel, most having done so more than once. As many as 21% of Johannesburg Jews have visited Israel 10 or more times, with Cape Town and Durban following at 15% and 10% respectively.

Almost a third of respondents indicated that it was likely that they would settle in Israel in the future, far exceeding the percentages of those interested in moving to other destinations abroad.

The caveat, the report says, is that while more than half of the respondents cited Israel as the country they hoped to move to, it’s “notable that any pull factors of Israel don’t appear to be as potent as some of the push factors from South Africa”. In other words, there is potentially more pushing people away from South Africa than drawing them towards Israel.

Dr David Graham, senior research fellow at the JPR and the author of the report, says that the data suggests that the choice of Israel as a favoured migration destination isn’t matched by the smaller proportion who express a desire to live there for more idealistic reasons.

“Not all those who want to make aliyah do so because they love Israel, and that’s perfectly fine,” she says. “You don’t have to be a Zionist to want to live in Israel.”

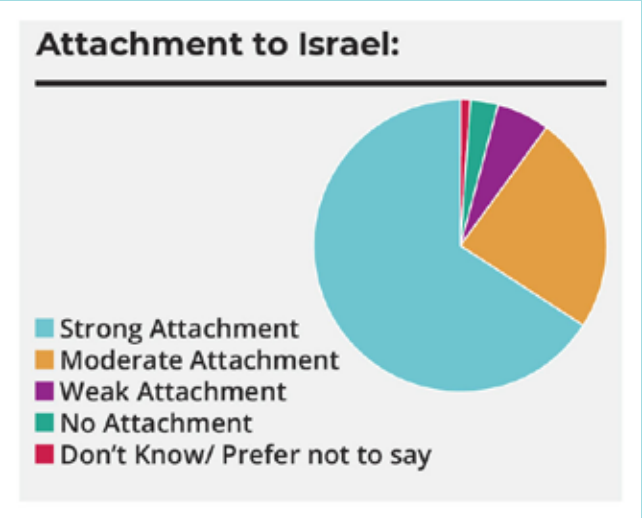
Ideology aside, Amar Arran says that it’s acceptable to want to relocate based simply on a desire to improve one’s prospects. “It happens when people go to any country, and Israel is no different. We have people who want to go on aliyah to find a spouse, for a job opportunity, or just because they hope that Israel will give them a new lease on life.

“We accept this, and as long as someone realises that he still has to contribute to Israel and not just take, we help them get there. Zionist or not, we support them.”

Moreover, while younger respondents are more likely to show an interest in moving to Israel, the younger they are, the less likely they are to feel a strong degree of attachment to Israel. Indeed, while an average of 66% overall feel a strong attachment to Israel, only 58.3% of those between 18 and 29 feel such an attachment, with older age brackets expressing greater attachment.

This, too, is unsurprising, says Amar Arran, and is a reality to which the Israel Centre responds regularly.

“We deal with it all time when we interact with Jewish kids at school,” she says. “The best way to connect to Israel is by being there. That’s it. To speak about it and create a vision without actually visiting it doesn’t really work.”



Older people feel more strongly because they’ve mostly been to Israel, she says, and youth who have yet to visit the country on a programme or for a gap year are at an understandable disadvantage.

Still, before they get there, younger people need to be encouraged to develop their relationship with the Jewish state where possible.

“In this generation, we all need to work harder to make younger people want to be involved in Israel,” Amar Arran says. “We need to make it attractive and meaningful if we even want to begin exploring any Jewish connection to Israel. If this was easy, there’d be no need for shlichim (emissaries) to come from Israel to help.”

Projects like school twinning and partnership programmes are key, she says. We need to strive to find ways to connect the South African Jewish community to Israel all the time.

“Young Jews here have an idea about Israel, and we need to be involved in strengthening it. Because they live in the diaspora, South Africa is a priority next to Israel, so it’s not easy. The engagement must be consistent.”

Realising the heartwarming good that is being done

NICOLA MILTZ

As the coronavirus crisis deepens, our locked-down community has come together (at a distance) with cash donations and acts of solidarity that are spreading hope to desperate people far and wide.

With the endless drumbeat of morbid stories and pictures of pain and suffering, communal organisations and ordinary people in the community are making an extraordinary impact.

The SA Jewish Report this week went into the dark heart of extreme poverty to see where the community's cash, kindness, and compassion lands up.

The journey begins at the Children's Memorial Institute (CMI) in Braampark, Johannesburg. On an icy cold Freedom Day, a motley gathering of inner-city dwellers arrives for their week's supply of ePap – a pre-cooked porridge powder made from whole grain maize and soya bean with added vitamins and minerals.

"This is where I get my power," says Lukholo Ndlangalavu, 23, a slender-built boxer who attends Fight With Insight, an inner-city community boxing project for young kids (many of them offenders) who live rough in nearby Hillbrow. It uses boxing to teach life skills.

Dressed in a floor-length black

leather jacket and black mask and beanie, Luke Lamprecht, a well-known child activist and the director of Fight With Insight, takes charge. He calls out the names of his athletes first, carefully taking each one's temperature – fever being the tell-tale sign of coronavirus – and then logs their weight.

"It's a Dali-esque landscape," says Lamprecht, who hands out "let me pass" cards to the kids in case they are harassed by law-enforcement officers on their way to him.

"How's this for irony: a pass on Freedom Day! They are 'born free', but where are their rights now – the right to food, shelter, and education?" he asks.

He moves onto mothers with babies on their backs – people somehow connected to the CMI, which is a community hub for child health and well-being consisting of several non-governmental organisations that provide specialist services to vulnerable children and their families.

A group of desperate car window washers, waste recyclers, and



Photos: Ian Ossendryver



nyaope addicts who have emerged from the nearby Pieter Roos Park in filthy rags have also come for a hand-out. They have no income under lockdown, and are clearly desperate.

"By each of us doing our little

bit, we can truly help each other a lot during this pandemic," says Marilyn Herson Bassin of Boikanyo The Dion Herson Foundation, who is there to help with the ePap handout. Generous community donations have enabled ePap to reach far flung places, she says.

"By the end of this week, 19 000 people – many in rural areas – will have received ePap. Without it, many would surely starve to death."

She shows us a photograph of people lining up in the township of Acornhoek in Bushbuckridge to receive their packets of fortified porridge. "Some walked for 20km," she says. "This is where the donations have spread to."

Next, we make our way through the eerily quiet streets of a locked-down Hillbrow, where young, homeless men beg and scrounge for anything. Further along, there is an air of wild expectation in Kliptown, Soweto, the spot where the Freedom Charter was signed in 1955. The collateral damage of coronavirus deprivation is clearly visible here.

Generous parcels of food are

handed out on this day, and excited, hopeful children have gathered to watch.

Here, you can clearly see the goodwill of Gauteng suburbs reaching across the great social divide through the Collective Action Networks (CAN) initiative.

Resident Portia Mokgethi has proudly offered her home as the collection point for the parcel handout. She wants to be involved. She keeps her home spotless in a losing battle against the surrounding squalor of porta loos, illegal electrical connections, and shared water taps.

"I want to open a soup kitchen when this corona is finished. That's why I have opened my house to help," she says with pride.

It's in her yard that large green dustbin bags containing groceries, packed by dedicated members of our community, are handed out to 30 local families. They have been carefully selected by local man-on-the-ground community activist, Sithembiso Yingwane, 37, who "knows exactly where help is needed most".

Yingwane set up the non-profit company, Freedom Charter Foundation, in Kliptown, and says he has a hard time sleeping at night when there are so many mouths to feed.

He has earmarked those most in need, and drawn up a list of recipients.

Continued on page 10>>

MOST SA JEWS (BOTH OF ASHKENAZI AND SEPHARDI HERITAGE) ARE ELIGIBLE TO REINSTATE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND, ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT.

A common misconception is that European citizenship and EU passports can only be obtained if one has documents providing his/her lineage. The fact is that not having any documents proving lineage, doesn't lead to disqualification of eligibility. Jews of Ashkenazi heritage can rely on documents obtained in Lithuania or Poland.

Jews of Sephardi heritage need no proof at all!

In his experience, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived, and therefore they are entitled to reinstate it, and accordingly obtain an EU passport.



Ashkenazi: This ad refers to Jews of Polish & Lithuanian heritage only. The most important things is the understanding that prior to the end of WW-I, the European map was very different than the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania did not exist as independent countries, and until 1918 these territories were only known as Lithuanian or Polish regions/counties of the Great Russian Empire who ruled all of north eastern Europe. Accordingly, until 1918, residents of these territories were Russian citizens, as Polish and Lithuanian citizenships didn't exist. Therefore, since applications for reinstatement of these citizenships can only be based on whether one's ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen, whoever is a descendant of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 will not be eligible.

In addition, it is highly important to remember that since borders in Europe were shifted once again during and after WW-II, one's eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor hailed. Horesh explains: Shifted borders resulted in cities changing nationalities, and that the resultant effect for descendants of Jews left Vilnius is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined whereas a similar



Adv. Avi Horesh is an Israeli attorney, who lived in Poland for seven years. Horesh is recognised in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship may very well be approved! Horesh has an in-depth knowledge and a full understanding of European immigration laws.

Sephardi: This ad refers to all Jews of Sephardi heritage – Jews who arrived from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, as well as many descendants of Jews who arrived from Holland and the UK. Most descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are eligible to reinstate Portuguese citizenship and, accordingly, an EU passport. If applicable, Adv. Horesh will apply for (on behalf of the applicant) an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which, an application for Portuguese citizenship is most likely to be approved.

Horesh resides in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – enabling him to travel to Poland and Lithuania, as well as to Portugal, where he collaborates with local professionals who assist him in tracing documentation required for successful applications of reinstatement of European citizenship.

Adv. Horesh closely collaborates with professionals who assist him in tracing documentation in Europe required for successful applications of reinstatement EU citizenships.

I VISIT SOUTH AFRICA EVERY ONCE IN 3-5 MONTHS. MY NEXT VISIT IS PLANNED FOR AUGUST 2020. WHATSAPP ME ON +48-783-953 223, OR EMAIL ME ON ADV.AVI.N.HORESH@GMAIL.COM

Performer rocks the balcony with heartfelt ballads

PETA KROST MAUNDER

We all have different methods of coping with lockdown, and Cape Town singer and entertainer Dani Bitton’s way is by entertaining others. With theatres closed around the world, she has found a new outlet to make people’s day – the balcony of her Sea Point flat.

Not only do those living in Sea Point’s flatlands get the benefit of this, but the balcony performances of this 35-year-old talented actress who is undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer have gone far and wide on social media.

For Bitton, entertaining people is “everything to me ... it’s my soul purpose”, she says. “When I sing, I’m in my element. It’s my divine expression. To use my gift to bring joy to others is special.”

Bitton was performing the lead alternate role in the international tour of the musical *Evita* in China when she was diagnosed with breast cancer and returned home in December 2019. Two operations later, in substantial pain, undergoing chemotherapy and under total lockdown, Bitton still felt the need to perform.

Her first Sea Point show was on 10 April, two weeks into lockdown, when she ventured onto her balcony to great applause through the suburb with her microphone, “rocking her new

chemo look”, and the voice of an angel.

“I have a sound amplifying setup at home for singing and DJ-ing so I put my speaker outside and launched into song, singing “Don’t cry for me Quarantina” she told the *SA Jewish Report*. “My neighbour had to come and press play, but don’t worry, we kept our social distance! I spread the word on social media, Facebook and Instagram that day.”

Initially, 500 of her Facebook friends watched her livestream, and many of them and the fans on Bitton’s Facebook music page shared it with their friends. Social media and word of mouth showed their muscle. “I really didn’t think it was going to reach so many people. I was blown away at the response,” says Bitton.

The reaction was astonishing. Those in flats in the vicinity were out on their balconies in their droves, clapping and cheering for more. Bitton was also so excited about the incredible social media response that she decided to do it again the following night, a Saturday.

“For my second concert, my neighbour, DJ Wulfsohn, had some proper gear in his garage and volunteered to set up a bigger rig and some lights for me on the balcony,” she says. “It was a misty night, and the sound and lights travelled down from above High Level Road, many blocks over to the left and right, and all the way down to Beach Road. It was magical!

“The response from my Sea Point neighbours

was amazing, and even more people came out to watch, clapping, cheering, and singing along to the up-tempo songs.

The social media response was “even more overwhelming, with both videos going viral”, she says. “I’m truly humbled by the kind words, amazing messages, love, and support I have received from people. It has given me so much strength during this time, and going through this breast cancer journey with its challenges, tough treatments, and uncertainty, I feel so blessed to still be here, still strong, and able to bring some joy to my community during lockdown.”

Bitton says she was inspired to sing on the balcony because in *Evita*, Eva Peron sang from the balcony of the Casa Rosada in the show. “I miss playing the role so much, and haven’t sung for a while and decided, while I had this window between chemo sessions and was feeling good, I wanted to sing.”

Also inspired by the artists performing on their balconies in Italy, she chose the time just before the 20:00 nightly expression of gratitude for frontline service providers in Cape Town.

Bitton lives on her own, but her mom looks after her for a few days after her chemotherapy when she is particularly weak and sick. Her mother and sibling shop for her as, as being immunocompromised, she may not leave her flat except to go to the hospital for treatments.



She misses being with her family and friends, especially the physical contact. “I just want to hug the ones I love,” she says. “When this chemo and corona is done, I’m going to have a big hugging party.

“When I started my breast-cancer journey, I was petrified about losing my breasts and even more so my hair, but I realised it’s a small price to pay compared to losing my life,” she says.

“I always felt like I had to look perfect, I used to obsess about my weight, and I was highly self-critical. Since I’ve gone through this ordeal, I’ve been stripped of my vanity and ego, and I’ve surrendered to it. I’ve lost my two best physical assets, my breasts and my hair, and the truth is, I’ve never felt more liberated and happy because I’ve truly learnt the meaning of loving myself unconditionally.

“I’ve kept a journal throughout my cancer treatments, and have shared my rollercoaster of emotions openly and honestly in a public blog. No mask!” she says.

“That being said, never in my life did I think I would be singing from my balcony with a bald head and not wearing a wig, baring all! But here I am, real, raw, and not wearing any masks. I love singing so much. The performances came from my heart and soul to spread love, hope, and gratitude to our healthcare workers.”

Bitton did a further three balcony concerts on 24, 25, and 30 April. They won’t be her last.

Realising the heartwarming good that is being done

Continued from page 9

“It is hard to turn people away, but I’m honest with them. I say this isn’t from the government, this is from communities in Joburg who will help us again, and you will get your turn.”

Resigned residents walk away empty handed, hoping they will make it onto his next list.

According to Glynne Wolman of the Angel Network, there are about 55 CANS operating in Johannesburg, of which 40 are being run by members of the (Jewish) community.

“The response has been incredible. People either want to be a team member of a CAN, or they want to be a volunteer. While it might feel like a drop in the ocean because there are so many people to feed, thousands are being fed through the CAN initiative,” she says.

The Angel Network has partnered with companies like Fruvas and KitKat Cash & Carry in a collaboration called Gauteng Together. They are involved primarily in making and delivering food parcels to the value of about R350, which can help to feed a family of four for two weeks.

“While the work is unbelievably rewarding and purpose driven, it’s also backbreaking and soul destroying. The stories are endless, as is the need,” Wolman says.

But on this day, many in Kliptown will go to bed feeling content.

“I’m so happy,” says one mother who wishes to remain anonymous. “Now I can sleep knowing my children won’t cry from hunger.”

Round and round the garden – and we’re all uplifted

JORDAN MOSHE

Every time Johannesburg graphic designer Bryan Maron has gone shopping for the family during lockdown, he has passed an intersection in Morningside where people wait for work. He noticed the number of desperate people growing. As it did, so did his desire to help them.

“There are always guys waiting to be picked up for causal labour,” says Maron. “Since lockdown, it’s become a hundred times worse, and the place is swarming with desperate people.”

Last Friday, he had an epiphany. He would run 21km on Freedom Day (Monday) in the confines of his garden to raise money to help these and other desperate people.

Unsure how to help those he saw daily at the intersection, he felt a contribution towards an organisation equipped to help others would be worthwhile.



Bryan Maron on his 21 kilometre home run

So, Maron chose to run in support of the Angel Network, a charity which aids established welfare organisations in need of help. He shared his pledge in a Facebook post on Friday, encouraging friends to support his run by donating to the organisation.

“We’ve been walking around our garden for exercise throughout the lockdown, so I measured the distance of a lap. I figured that 21km is roughly 270 laps, and I decided to do it,” says Maron, a running enthusiast. “There was no planning involved.”

While most of South Africa was still fast asleep, Maron stepped out of his front door at 05:30 on Monday into the pre-sunrise chill. In spite of the cold and dark, he was armed with his favourite playlist on his phone, and set out to conquer the unique track ahead of him.

The oldest of his two sons, Jamie, 11, got up with him to take a pre-run photograph, and went back to bed after Maron got started. “I was alone until 07:00, with just Metallica and Bruce Springsteen for company.”

Although he had run 21km races before, his garden posed a new kind of challenge. “Our garden isn’t flat, so I went up and down. I climbed about 260 floors on stairs alone. To make it a little easier, I changed direction every ten laps.”

Maron got innovative when working out how to count his laps, and

used a large slab of chocolate to track his progress. His family gave him one piece of chocolate after each ten circuits, and though he says he didn’t eat every piece, they helped him to count his total of 263 laps.

As tough as it was, he didn’t think of throwing in the towel. “Give up?”, says Maron. “Never. You don’t start something you don’t intend to finish.”

In total, his 25 300 steps took him three hours, 20 minutes, and covered 21.2km. Maron says he felt an immediate sense of accomplishment. “I wasn’t doing it for me, but for those I’m supporting,” he says. “I love running, so I really enjoyed the experience. Now that it’s done, I’m not feeling exhausted, but I’m expecting to feel it in my thighs tomorrow.”

Although it’s not yet clear how much money Maron raised for charity, he says the figure doesn’t matter to him.

“My purpose was just to get funding for a good cause,” he says. “It wasn’t to see how much could be raised.”

Maron’s commitment to helping others is his defining attribute, says his wife, Jodi. “That’s exactly who he is. He’s a gentle giant who would do anything for anyone. He’s always looking to help someone, and he puts others before himself.”

Equally blown over is the Angel Network’s Glynne Wolman, the organisation’s founder, who found out about the pledge only when Maron tagged the Angel Network in his initial Facebook post.

“It was so touching and heart-warming that he would do it for us,” she says. “Especially because he chose to do something which requires an enormous amount of energy. He wasn’t doing it just for likes or shares, but because he was committed to helping others.”

Wolman expressed her gratitude in an online post after Maron completed his run on Monday.

“We don’t ever nominate a hero of the day because there are just too many incredible people doing amazing things all day, every day,” she wrote on Facebook. “Were we to,

though, today’s hero would undoubtedly be Bryan Maron who ran a half marathon in his garden so that starving children wouldn’t go to bed hungry.

“How do you ever thank someone for doing something so selfless? Bryan you are our hero, and a real legend. We salute you.”

Wolman says that, like Maron, members of the Jewish community have been particularly eager to support the organisation in whichever way they can, offering to run various events and sessions at no cost to raise money.

“People are coming up with ingenious ways to raise money, and it’s incredibly touching,” she says. “For some, it’s not easy to send a donation of R10 000, so they find other ways to give.”

Among those who have found novel ways to help are motivational speaker Dean Murinik, sound healing guru Jason Katz, and meditation instructor Cody Gordon. They and others have offered to give their time to support the Angel Network, delivering online sessions at no charge, and encouraging participants to make donations to the cause.

“It’s touching that people find ways to help under the circumstances,” says Wolman. “Bryan is a hero to us. His achievement is extraordinary, humbling, and meaningful. We’re incredibly grateful.”

Going pro bono with a GoPro

TALI FEINBERG

“This is a great example of tikkun olam, which is an ancient Hebrew concept meaning ‘repair the world’. It’s imperative that we continue to take care of one another at a time like this.”

So said Chad Nathan to his 24 400 followers on his Instagram profile @gingerwithagopro, after he raised R150 000 in less than 38 hours for welfare organisations in the Mother City.

A photojournalist and cinematographer, Nathan has captured spectacular images of the empty city under lockdown. But he has taken it one step further, using his profile to help others see that people are suffering economic hardship, and that every person has the ability to help.

He has since raised his fundraising target, first to R200 000 to help 650 refugees in South Africa, then to R250 000, all of which was raised in days. He has now raised a total of R315 000 in one week for welfare organisations, and is setting his sights on half a million or even R1 million to help those on the frontlines of civil society.

On his BackaBuddy campaign page, “Raising Hope”, Nathan wrote, “I have been documenting the coronavirus lockdown since 27 March 2020. I have seen the impact this disease has had on the less fortunate in South Africa. I have been working alongside Cans With Purpose, Ladles of Love, Breadline Africa, and the Courage Foundation over the past few weeks, and have witnessed all the amazing work they are doing for those in need.

“What started as an initiative to raise R100 000 to help these four organisations has led to much more money and awareness. We are now able to give money to other organisations in need. We are approaching winter in South Africa, and the cold weather presents even more hardship for those lacking essential items, especially those without a home.



Chad Nathan handing out food in Langa, Cape Town

“We are all going through this unprecedented time together, and it’s unclear how long it will last. Every cent counts, and each additional R50 000 will be given to a different charity helping to combat the effects of coronavirus in South Africa.”

Nathan isn’t one to stay on the sidelines. If he wants something done, he goes out and does it. At the young age of 26, he has built a successful career in photography and cinematography, and has previously raised funds for people and organisations.

When he hits the streets, he has no formal plan, but shoots in the moment, striking up conversations with ordinary people to understand their story. At the launch of this latest fundraising initiative, Nathan was worried that people wouldn’t be able to give. But with his trademark chutzpah, he decided to go ahead anyway, and the results have been astounding.

Nathan told the SA Jewish Report that documenting the lockdown was “insane ... filming a city that’s usually bustling with energy where there is now absolutely nothing – it’s eerie. I was allowed to document it because I reached out to the Cape Jewish Chronicle and said I would love to document the lockdown [for it].”

On the road, Nathan was confronted with the reality of what lockdown means for the average

South African. “The emotions have been pretty hard-hitting. Documenting it made me realise I wanted to help.”

At the same time, a friend asked if his aunt’s organisation, Ladles of Love, could use one of his videos. Nathan made contact with the organisation, offering to document some of its work and help raise funds for it. Interactions with other outreach programmes soon followed, and before he knew it, Nathan was on the streets and in the townships, capturing the faces and the stories of those who needed help.

Nathan knows that his work is a powerful medium to get attention and support, and feels obligated to use it to as a means to help others. This is why he photographed Mama Silvi, a refugee who gave birth to her son in a tent in Cape Town on 19 April. Along with the photo, he quoted the late German-Jewish philosopher, Hannah Arendt, on the experience of being a refugee.

He added, “There are more than 650 refugees living in this stretch tent. They have been through a lot, and I’m happy to say that the Raising Hope Campaign is donating R50 000 to these people. The money will be used to help feed them, and should last for about four to five weeks.”

Looser lockdown, but danger still lurks

OPINION

PROFESSOR BARRY SCHOUB



“Death threat: special report: inside the global race to avert a pandemic.” This was the cover of Time magazine of 17 October 2005. I was director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) at the time, preparing South Africa for the impending pandemic of H5N1 influenza.

The fear was of a devastating pandemic akin to the Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918/1919 (responsible for more than 50 million deaths). Fortunately, H5N1 petered out. However, the fear of a pandemic has come to pass in 2020, not with influenza this time, but a completely new virus to humanity, coronavirus.

The total novelty of the virus to humans, its infectiousness through respiratory transmission, and a virulence considerably greater than influenza, has made the SARS-CoV-2 virus a formidable enemy indeed.

The reality is that until a widely available, safe, and effective vaccine is delivered, hopefully sometime during next year, the only defence we have against this virus is social co-operation and personal hygiene.

Misunderstandings of reports in the lay media of a “breakthrough” in vaccine development, (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) protection, and malaria drugs, simply lead to unfounded false optimism and disappointment.

We can thank the wisdom and foresight of the South African government, which gratifyingly, has listened to the counsel of the best scientific expertise in the country. It’s now a world leader in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its strict control measures in the form of legislated lockdown regulations have largely slowed down the speed of the virus.

Economic and social pressure has now necessitated the release of some of these restrictions. Potentially this could come at the price of leaking hitherto confined virus into the susceptible population. At present, the disease in this country is largely inapparent, unlike countries to the north of us, and the enemy itself, unlike air pollution, is invisible.

As a consultant on the pandemic in our community, I have seen people respond in two

opposing ways. Some have been overtaken by uncontrolled apprehension and anxiety to the point of despondency and depression. In others, especially a small section of our younger folk, there has been a lackadaisical dismissal of the threat as something of concern only to the elderly and sickly.

Make no mistake, as the director-general of the World Health Organization recently stated, the young aren’t invincible. Data coming from the epidemic elsewhere in the world have clearly revealed many cases of severe disease and fatality in young, otherwise fit and healthy individuals.

This country, like others which are starting to loosen severe lockdown regulations, is now entering a particularly vulnerable and sensitive phase of the epidemic. The release of some restrictions is far from a signal that the epidemic is heading towards decline. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The virus, penned up by the lockdown, could potentially invade and fully establish itself in the community, and even develop exponential growth if social distancing and personal hygiene aren’t meticulously maintained. Lockdown has simply restrained the spread of the virus. The great majority of the population remains vulnerable, and the virus will still run its course. The worst may still be to come.

Hopefully, if everyone in the community pulls together in this fight, the epidemic will grow at a rate that the healthcare system will be able to manage to treat patients satisfactorily and minimise mortality.

Regulation and legislation can, of course, be bucked. Ultimately, effective control of the epidemic depends on the goodwill, sensitivity, and the co-operation of everyone in society. No one has the right to arrogate to themselves the liberty to endanger other people’s lives and health.

What we do now will determine how successfully we can prevent a New York-style tragedy in this country.

• *Professor Barry Schoub is emeritus professor in virology at the University of the Witwatersrand, and the former director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD).*

AUDIT • ADVISORY • TAX

CLARITY. ORDER. DIRECTION.

Our team of over 1 400 professionals, operating from 7 offices in South Africa, offers a unique combination of local market knowledge coupled with an international network, personal service and a professional approach. We shine a unique lens on clients' businesses to see the people beyond the numbers and establish where they are going.

www.bdo.co.za

© 2019 BDO South Africa Services (Pty) Ltd.

Commemorating Yom Hazikaron with Israel and the world

JORDAN MOSHE

“Daniel, the things that you’ve requested from me for almost 16 years have been nearly impossible to do. You want me to be strong. You want me to be happy. You want me to go on. I’m doing all of it, but shit, it’s hard.”

This is what Cheryl Mandel, said on Monday night, as she addressed her son, Daniel, who gave his life to defend the state of Israel. This Canadian mother said these words in an international online Yom Hazikaron ceremony. Like thousands of others, her Daniel didn’t come home. By making the ultimate sacrifice, he, like others, leaves a void that can’t be filled.

Jews around the world honoured 23 820 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers and 3 149 people who died in terror attacks in the online ceremony. Uniting Israel and the diaspora, the poignant ceremony was hosted at the Yad La-Shiryon memorial site in Latrun, Israel, by Masa Israel Journey (an Israeli organisation that enables young diaspora Jews to experience Israel), and broadcast globally.

Thousands of viewers from around the globe paid tribute to Israel’s fallen, observing a moment of silence as a piercing siren wailed in homes across Israel, South Africa, and beyond. As the flag was lowered and the last post sounded, Jews were united from afar and joined collectively in their grief in spite of being confined to their homes.

“On this day, we all wish to remember, to feel, to unite,” said Maya Yohanna Menachem who hosted the event. “For the bereaved families, today amplifies the pain felt daily. It’s a painful reminder of their grief and the unfathomable sacrifice of their sons and daughters.

“Tonight, we stand together with the bereaved families, hurting as one nation, hurting as a people, in Israel and the diaspora. The whole world really does feel like a very narrow bridge.”

The ceremony included the lighting of a memorial candle, laying memorial wreaths, and musical performances. The Israeli government, diaspora communities, and the Jewish Agency for Israel shared recorded messages.

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin explained that in Israel, joy is often tinged with sadness. “Laughter and tears go hand in hand,” he said. “We celebrated the founding if the Jewish state while grieving for our sons who lost their lives in battle.

“Today, 72 years later, we still bear pain alongside the joy, memory beside hope. We become excited at the sight of the blue and white flag while at the same time, we remember the dear ones who gave their lives for us. The possibility of living here in peace and security is only thanks to them, and for that they are imprinted on our hearts forever.”

Central to the ceremony was the commemoration of soldiers who emigrated to Israel from across the diaspora to serve in the IDF. Poignant words were shared by the mothers who lost their children, among these Cheryl Mandel, who recalled the moment she learned that her son



The lighting of the memorial torch at the Yom Hazikaron ceremony held in Latrun, Israel

in battle, in Shechem.’ That’s it. Your whole life changes.”

Argentinian Alicia Hofman, whose son Alejandro was killed at the age of 19 in a helicopter disaster in 1997, said that for 19 years, she had the privilege of raising a happy child. “When he would come home, as big as he was, he would sit next to me, put his head on my shoulder and say, ‘Stroke me, mom’,” she recalled.

She remembered the day he died. “We used to live on the Lebanon border,” she said. “When I heard ‘noise’ in Lebanon, I knew the phone would ring, and he would tell me, ‘Mom, everything is OK.’ [One day] ten minutes passed, the phone didn’t ring. Then, we knew it wouldn’t ring.”

Israeli mother Varda Pomerantz said she drew strength from celebrating her son’s life every year. Daniel Pomerantz fell during Operation Protective Edge in 2014.

“I’m doing what he would expect me to do, starting with his request to commemorate him

in a special way and make a party of it each year,” she told the massive audience around the world.

“[People say] what party? How can you have a party for a dead child? You just do it. It’s about getting up each morning to do something good for someone. That is what Daniel would expect me to do.”

The volunteers who arrive in Israel from abroad to defend the Jewish state are part of a unique legacy, said Isaac Herzog, the executive chairperson of the Jewish Agency. “My late father, Chaim Herzog, always recalled the bravery of the many foreign volunteers and new immigrants who gave their lives in the fight to save Jerusalem and liberate it.

“Many of you young soldiers of today are following in their footsteps,” he said. “Since 1948, young Jews have continued to come from around the world to help defend the Jewish homeland. Many have paid the highest price of all, and today we mourn with their families and friends, and remember their smiles, their voices, and their dreams.”

Herzog believes that these men and women embody the foundational value of mutual responsibility between all members of the Jewish family. “I know that these virtues are alive in you, the participants and friends of Masa, who every day contribute to Israeli society,” said Herzog. “Mutual responsibility and unity are the key to our strength and resilience.”

“On this Yom Hazikaron, as we feel unending pain at the loss of those who fell, we recommit to the values for which they stood. May they continue to serve as a guiding light to all us,” he said.

‘I survived to tell their story’

JORDAN MOSHE

For army veteran Yoseph Haddad, Yom Hazikaron, the day of remembrance for Israel’s fallen soldiers, is especially painful.

The 34-year-old Arab-Israeli experienced conflict first-hand, losing close friends and even his own foot during military service.

For Haddad, the day reminds him of those he has loved and lost. It drives home the fact that, “I had a chance to continue living, and they didn’t.” These were his words to a South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) audience over Zoom on Yom Hazikaron on Tuesday morning.

“Every year, I have the same struggle. However, when I speak to people, I feel my energy return because I can tell them about the real heroes of Israel.”

Haddad enlisted in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) at 18. During the 2006 Lebanon War between Israel and Hezbollah, he was sent to the Lebanese border.

While based in a village in south Lebanon, he and his unit took shelter in a house one evening. Early the next morning, a nearby Israeli tank was hit by a missile, sending soldiers rushing to assist the men inside.

“It was still dark when we heard a massive explosion about a kilometre away,” recalled Haddad. “One of our tanks had been hit by Hezbollah.

“When we arrived, we saw a horrific sight. Four crew members were badly injured, and their commander was in very bad condition.”

Haddad says he will never forget the man’s scream or the agony on his face. “He called for help, but we didn’t focus on that. We had to evacuate him and his crew as soon as possible.”

His unit placed the wounded men on stretchers, and bolted towards their shelter, where a reservist doctor administered first aid. He told Haddad that unless they were evacuated to Israel, the injured men would die within a few hours.

“It was 05:30, and we had few options,” says Haddad. “We communicated with high command, which said a chopper should come to evacuate them. The whole mission was supposed to take half an hour, and we’d be back in our shelter by 06:30, before light.”

However, the evacuation took almost an hour, and Haddad’s

unit had to return to the shelter in broad daylight.

“We went back at 07:00,” he recalls. “By that time, we were sitting ducks.” Indeed, on their return, the men were spotted by Hezbollah operatives, who launched a missile in their direction.

Haddad says that in darkness, soldiers in the field maintain a short distance between themselves, keeping only an arm’s length away. In daylight, however, they keep a considerable distance, staying only within sight of each other. Haddad realised that his unit was still keeping the distance used at night, meaning they were more vulnerable to being hit.

“A real miracle occurred,” he says. “A minute before they launched the rocket, I yelled out that we must switch to day distance. We scattered, and a second later, the rocket hit.

“If we hadn’t changed our distance, 50% to 60% of the unit would have been hit. Instead, only I was injured when the rocket hit a wall close to me. The explosion threw me in the air, and I landed on my stomach.”

Haddad knew that he was injured, feeling blood on his face. When he turned over onto his back, he saw his foot. It had been cut off. “I yelled out, and my soldiers rushed in and took me to the shelter, where the doctor started treating me. I had shrapnel in my legs and hands, my foot was placed next to me, and I was choking on my own blood.”

He overheard the doctor say that he must be evacuated immediately. Haddad was placed on a stretcher, and hurried to the waiting helicopter. Though the soldiers carrying him came under heavy fire, miraculously, none of them were hit. “We arrived at the chopper, and when I saw the unit who helped to evacuate me, they looked like angels,” he said. “Until today, they are wearing white in my imagination.”

Haddad got back to Israel, where his foot was surgically reattached.

“I was lucky,” he said. “I came close to being among the soldiers killed in battle for our country. I’ve asked myself repeatedly since then why I was saved, and I come to the same answer every time: so that I can share the story with others, and tell people about the bravery of the IDF.”

Among them, he includes Roi Klein, a commander under whom he served during the Lebanon conflict, and who gave his life when he jumped onto a grenade thrown by terrorists at his men.

“People tell me I’m a hero,” says Haddad. “I’m not even close to being one. The heroes are those who saved me, people like Roi. Israel’s soldiers become family within seconds of meeting, and remain family for life.

“Every soldier that dies defending Israeli doesn’t do it for nothing. He does it for all of us, Jews and Arabs.”



Yoseph Haddad

I was happy to go, *Bachelor SA* contestant says

TALI FEINBERG

When multi-talented artist Rikki Brest exited *The Bachelor SA* on M-Net recently, she felt relieved. Although she had dreamt it would lead to her finding love, she told the *SA Jewish Report*, “I was leaving that night regardless of whether he gave me the rose or not.”

One of the main reasons she wanted out of the second series was cyber-bullying. “Although there has been such an incredible amount of love shown towards me, the biggest challenge has been cyber-bullying,” she says.

She was one of 22 women competing for the affections of Marc Buckner, the bachelor, in the series. Every week, roses are given to women chosen by the man of the moment to remain on the show, while one contestant is eliminated. In the tenth rose ceremony, Brest, 34, didn’t get a rose.

Brest has had an illustrious career, co-presenting a show with the Top Gear team; playing many DJ gigs; drumming up a storm in popular South African bands; creating her own band, Chix with Stix; hosting her own radio show; and building a successful career as a marketing expert and lecturer.

She has also appeared in numerous music videos and commercials; played the lead role in the South African-made movie *Eternity*; and has appeared in several South African soap operas. She knows her cars, and has featured in several television motor shows.

Brest decided to enter *The Bachelor SA* because, she says, “I wanted to send a message to the

universe that I was ready to meet my person. I wasn’t meeting anyone in a traditional way. I’m not a fan of meeting people on social media, and don’t like the idea of Tinder, so, I decided to try something completely different.”

When she found out she had been selected, she

says, “I was excited and nervous. Excited because potentially, I was going to find love, and nervous because putting myself out there and being vulnerable in front of millions of people is scary. It took a lot of courage.”

The show hasn’t changed her life, other than adding stress and anxiety. “You don’t know how they are going to edit you in the show,” she says. “You don’t know if the viewers are going to love or hate you that week based on the five minutes that they see. Hopefully in future it leads to me

Continued on page 13>>



Rikki Brest

Photo: Sean Brand

When supporting Israel became more than writing cheques

JORDAN MOSHE

For retired American lawyer Mark Werner, Israel is the lifeblood of the Jewish people. The son of a Holocaust survivor, he grew up with a strong appreciation for the Jewish state, doing whatever he could to support it from a distance.

With time, however, he wanted to do more than write cheques. In 2002, Werner donned army fatigues and became a volunteer for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), supporting its soldiers in a non-combatant role.

Since then, he has volunteered on Israeli military bases annually for the past 18 years and, although 67, he has no plans to stop. “I need to support the state of Israel,” Werner told the *SA Jewish Report* this week. “That’s that. It’s no coincidence that no mass persecution of Jews anywhere in the world has occurred since its establishment. People don’t realise how unusual this reality is, and it’s down to one thing – the existence of Israel.”

Over the years, Werner has packed supplies, painted buildings, and prepared combat gear at bases across Israel. He has captured his 14 years of volunteer work in an upcoming book titled, *A Passion For Israel: Adventures of a Sar-el Volunteer*.

This is the second book he has penned based on his experiences on military bases working through Sar-el, an organisation that co-ordinates volunteers wanting to support Israeli soldiers.

Like his previous book, *Army Fatigues*, Werner’s upcoming book draws on the journals he keeps each time he volunteers. He illustrates the daily routine of volunteers from America, Australia, South Africa, and others who spend three weeks on a military base supporting soldiers in different ways. Their duties are manifold, but each is carried out with passion. “I enjoy every moment,” Werner says. “The physical nature of the work, wearing the uniform, eating with soldiers in the mess hall, it’s all an experience.

“This is noble work, no one pays you to do it. You pay to go, and there’s no glory in any of it because the work is often dirty and demanding. People do it because they believe in the cause.”

A resident of North Carolina in the United States, Werner’s commitment to Israel goes back to his childhood. “I was raised in Vineland, the closest thing to a *moshav* (co-operative agricultural community) anywhere in North America,” he says.

“Everyone there was Jewish, and many of them were Holocaust survivors. We all had a strong sense of attachment towards Israel. It was part of my upbringing.”

In spite of his youthful passion for Israel, Werner’s first trip to Israel occurred only in 1996, when he embarked on a Jewish Federation mission at the age of 43. He continued to support Israel philanthropically, but determined to be more hands-on, and decided to return as a Sar-el volunteer in 2002 in the wake of the Second Intifada.

“My friends warned me to be vigilant, but I felt safe from the moment I arrived. Today, I feel safer walking the streets of Israel than those of major cities in the US. You feel at home there, and being there feels natural to me. I’ve yet to feel unsafe in Israel.”

Three subsequent volunteer missions followed, culminating in the publication of his first book, which Werner hoped would inspire more volunteers. When *Army Fatigues* proved successful, Werner decided to publish again, ever eager to strike a resonant chord with supporters of Israel and inspire others to become more involved in supporting the country.



Those who step in to help are marked by their enthusiasm and commitment, Werner says. Coming from across the globe, volunteers are grouped together according to language, and devoted to certain tasks that help the base operate smoothly. They share a common goal: to be as helpful as possible.

“Work that is supposed to take a day is often finished within hours,” says Werner. “That’s the power of a volunteer’s motivation. I was once on a base where we worked so fast, we cleared the schedules of soldiers, cancelled additional shifts,

and enabled them to go home early because they weren’t needed on base.

“It’s important work,” he says. “The soldiers see our commitment, and believe that the government pays us to volunteer.

“When you volunteer, you free up a soldier to do so much more. In fact, officers have found that volunteers are so careful, they do a better a job than soldiers. When we do it, we do it right.”

Beyond the direct benefits for Israel, Werner has found another level of significance to the volunteer service: boosting the morale of soldiers.

“Most Israeli soldiers feel that the world is against them. They see what is said in foreign media, and believe they have no support. When they see foreigners come in to help them, they’re stunned and their spirits are lifted.

“When I arrived at a paratrooper base in 2006, I had lunch with troops who had just returned from Lebanon. They were exhausted, down, and disheartened. When they found out who I was and what I was doing there, they lit up. Their sergeant explained to me that to them, my visit was sweeter than the air they were breathing. This is the impact a volunteer can have.”

Werner hopes his book will help people understand the impact volunteers have, and would like more English-speakers to take up the opportunity, Jewish or not.

“Volunteering is an opportunity for people who are pro-Israel to do something meaningful and concrete,” he says.

“It’s fine to write a cheque, but if you’re able-bodied, want to do more, and are willing to step beyond your comfort zone, this is the way to do it. It can be tough living in barracks and sweating in the heat, but when it’s done, you feel good in the knowledge that you’ve done something to support Israel.”

Muted online motivation



SCHOOL SAVVY

Dani Sack

Life has picked up a rhythm. It seems a distant dream that we used to be able to have lunch dates at Frangelicas, or have family Shabbos lunches. Lockdown is the new norm, whether we like it or not.

I’ve become quite accustomed to my lockdown lifestyle, having established a routine of sorts to prepare myself for a gruelling day of online school and tackling piles of schoolwork.

The problem is that my routine, which is meant to motivate me to be productive, doesn’t achieve that. In fact, not much does.

In a recent Zoom “check-in” with school social workers, several of my classmates expressed the same concern – we’re completely demotivated, unproductive, and full of unanswered questions.

School over Zoom is simply too different to school in real life. There’s no classroom atmosphere, with that crushing pressure that we complain endlessly about, but which really does push us to get on with our work.

However, the lack of motivation and productivity has ended up being a uniting factor. Worldwide,

students are relating to one another, conversing over several social-media platforms, and sharing their stories of online school and the struggle that comes with it.

I recognise that I am blessed to be able to do online school – so many fellow matrices who live in rural areas have missed out on crucial work time – but I feel as much in the dark as I did before we started with online lessons.

I’ve probably digested more information from TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram than I have from my 40-minute lessons. My teachers are working tirelessly, for which I’m grateful, and the lessons I’ve been able to focus on have been quite effective. But more often than not, I wind up with my camera and microphone off, watching my class go crazy with questions or jokes.

We share funny posts about Zoom and Google Classroom rather than facing either of them because we’re in a no-mans-land of sorts. I can only hope that our matric year isn’t jeopardised by our lack of productivity or motivation, lockdown, or the coronavirus.

In spite of how much I wish regular school could commence, it’s simply not safe, so I’ll push myself to concentrate, get on with my work online, and to keep healthy and sane.

But I think I’ll go watch some Netflix first.

• Dani Sack is a Grade 12 pupil at Yeshiva College

I was happy to go, Bachelor SA contestant says

>>Continued from page 12

finding my person, but other than that, I’m really glad it’s over!”

The hardest part, she says, was the fact that “People think that just because you put yourself on TV, they are entitled not just to disagree with something, but literally to tear you apart and send you messages telling you to ‘go die’. People don’t understand that it’s an extremely difficult environment where we are pushed to our absolute limits, and sometimes we slip up. We’re only human, but that doesn’t make cyber-bullying acceptable.”

There were also many highlights, such as “making the most incredible friends I have no doubt I will have in my life forever”.

The most difficult aspect was having no control over the narrative. “The other challenge

is that we aren’t allowed to explain ourselves when something has been taken out of context.”

Brest spoke of her sense of relief at not getting a rose. “I wasn’t even getting to know him [Buckner], and I wasn’t prepared to introduce him to my family if I didn’t know him. So that morning, I wrote a letter to say goodbye to the remaining women, and hid it for them to find after the rose ceremony. When you see the close-up of me with my mouth moving, I was whispering, ‘please don’t give me a rose’. I was leaving that night, regardless.”

Her message to readers is to “be brave with your life, and find the courage to be vulnerable. Push yourself outside of your comfort zone so that you are forced to learn and grow.”

south african

Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

www.sajr.co.za

Struggling to get a hard copy of the paper?

We are here for you...

You can download the weekly digital edition of the South African Jewish Report

GO TO

www.sajr.co.za

Under lockdown, love is a spare room

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Your husband or boyfriend is driving you mad. You want some time out to breathe, but you can't leave home. The truth is, whether you're an old married couple or young parents, newly cohabiting, or living apart, under lockdown, your relationship will face challenges.

In these conditions, relationships have changed, says clinical psychologist Amanda Fortes. While our homes were once our safe space, finding a sense of calm when we're forced to stay put is difficult. "Everything outside is crazy, so people think everything inside should be rock solid because it usually is," says Fortes.

But normal rules no longer

apply. "What you bring to a relationship is who you are in yourself," she says. "Many are anxious, so they bring that home. Yet each individual has a different way of responding to these feelings based on their history and skills." The problem is that while our reality has changed, our expectations of one another haven't.

Accepting that there's no normal

will bring a necessary mindset shift, Fortes says. Couples have to express their feelings and needs. Communication is key.

Responses are heightened, so it's easy to take our frustrations out on one another. If things get heated, take a break, Fortes suggests. "Conversations need to run according to different rules than they did before because of where we are."

"Currently our number-one goal should simply be to manage and cope," she says. "Couples need to see their different coping styles as resources to bring balance to their relationship and create unity." Voice your appreciation of one another's strengths.

Couples need to find a balance between giving one another space when necessary, and deepening their connection through shared activities that take the focus from the coronavirus. Before, couples may have encouraged one another to spend time pursuing separate interests, yet under lockdown, there are feelings of guilt if they don't want to spend all their time together, says Dorianne Weil, known as "DrD", a clinical and organisational psychologist.

"You're entitled to want some time to yourself," she says. You and your partner need to negotiate what needs to be done to make things work in the best possible way.

Teacher and rebbetzin Wendy Richard and her husband of 17 years have found this balance.

"I love our busy lives, but lockdown has provided a much-needed island for our family," she says. "It's also been wonderful for my husband and myself. We're both working from home, so we're not together 24/7, but we have much more time in each other's company. We eat meals together, and we have time together to chat or just to sit and read."

Under lockdown with their 18-month-old twins, Ifat Talbot and her husband have also pulled together. It helps that they're both used to working from home. "At a time like this, we each do our part to make life easier by taking turns to do chores and take time out," says Talbot. "We've had to learn how to interact with toddlers more than we ever did, and for that I'm grateful."

For others, lockdown has been a bigger adjustment. "One of the hardest things has been being on top of my husband for weeks when we're used to not being together all day," says Marli Goldberg. "It's also challenging to work and care for our three-year-old. We've had so much quality time together though and we've learned to appreciate the little things that we generally miss."

While they're used to seeing each other every day, Samantha* and her boyfriend of four years decided



Wendy and Rabbi Rodney Richard

to spend lockdown apart. "We're both still living with our parents, and felt a responsibility to be with our families now," she says. "It would have been difficult to invade another family's space for so long."

While technology has helped, nothing replaces the value of actually being with one another. "Having built such a strong relationship, you find a lot of comfort and strength through your partner. It's difficult to go through such uncertain times without them there," Samantha says.

"Yet it's been a good time to focus on strengthening our emotional connection, and it's made me realise how much I love my partner's company."

Tarryn* and her new boyfriend chose to move in together over lockdown rather than spend so much time apart. She says living together means the mystery inevitably fades. "You start noticing things about each other sooner than you would have otherwise. We've both expressed concern that we're shortening the honeymoon phase. Instead of dressing up to see each other, we're living in different sets of pyjamas, so it makes the relationship more real."

While many couples have grown under lockdown, others are battling with one another. "Whatever you were going through before becomes absolutely magnified," says Weil. "It can be a time to have courageous conversations and clear the air of things that you've been avoiding, to develop clean space where it's become murky over time."

But it can also be dangerous to do that under lockdown when there's nowhere to go. "The build-up of unmet needs can explode under these very tight and extreme conditions. There are cases where it's been destructive, and couples reach the point of no return. If it does get explosive, stop the conversations. Agree to do the best you can, be respectful to one another, and perhaps see a professional afterwards."

Emotionally and physically abusive relationships are also intensified under lockdown, cautions Weil. "If you're worried about your safety, that takes priority. You don't have to resolve every problem now, you actually have to walk on eggshells if necessary," she says. "If you can't leave, do what it takes to keep yourself safe."

**Names have been changed*

Gift of the breath of life

MIRAH LANGER

A simple breath of air is the greatest affirmation of life for Tali Isaacs, a 34-year-old double-lung transplant recipient for whom gratitude is a daily practice.

"I can breathe, and it means I can get through anything. My outlook on life is different. Sometimes I'll wake up and I'll just have a flash of overwhelming amazement that I got through this, and that I'm capable of doing something that I simply couldn't do before.

"I have control over my own life now. That gives me hope."

Reflecting on the coronavirus pandemic, Isaacs feels acute empathy for those suffering. "I know what it's like not to breathe, and I know what it's like to have pneumonia. I don't think people realise just how bad it is. The people in intensive care don't want this for themselves, and they don't want it for anyone else. When you can't breathe, you can't live. We need to be cognisant of this reality."

She urges the public to remember that ultimately, this is a time of "stepping up to keep one another safe, and protecting all those around you".

Isaacs has travelled a long road of recovery in the

approximately two years and four months since her transplant in December 2017.

Before that, she describes herself as an "ordinary King David girl from Johannesburg" who was simply enjoying all the usual milestones of life.

"In 2015, I was a healthy 29-year-old, just married with my future planned. Just one year later, things took a turn for the worse."

Her life was disrupted when what started out as blisters in her mouth

resulted in her being admitted to hospital struggling to breathe.

"The next day, my neck collapsed and my diaphragm. I landed up in the ICU [intensive-care unit] on a ventilator."

Eventually, Isaacs was diagnosed with an auto-immune disease called Myasthenia Gravis.

She received the correct treatment, and "everything became 100% perfect again".

In mid-2016, during a routine scan, a tumour was found in Tali's abdomen. It was isolated and, when removed, found to be benign.

However, in September that year, Isaacs began to struggle to breathe again.

"We didn't know what was going on because it was different – this was a constant struggle. I would walk a kilometre, and it would get hard, or I would walk up a steep hill, and I would struggle. It progressively got worse."

Yet, scans couldn't pick up any specific problem.

"Eventually, it deteriorated to the extent that my lung function reached 14%. Normal lung function should be 80% and up."

By then, Isaacs was on mobile oxygen, and also had to have oxygen to sleep at night.

"That was quite traumatic – having to lug about an oxygen tank. However, you get over it. You have to get out of the house – you can't sit at home!"

Eventually, doctors diagnosed Isaacs as having a syndrome called BOOP.

"The only way to solve it is to have a transplant. It's degenerative. Your lungs get worse and worse, so eventually you need one no matter what."

By September 2017, Isaacs was re-admitted to hospital. She now weighed in the low forties, and had to work with a biokineticist daily to try and build up sufficient muscle and body

mass to be suitable for a transplant.

For the next few months, Isaacs said she lived "day by day" as she waited for a possible donor.

"I was trying not to pity myself because then you get into these conversations of 'poor me', and that isn't going to help the situation; it's only going to help to be positive. My family were incredible. They didn't leave my side," she remembers.

"I cried to my mom probably every afternoon. She gave me a little pep talk, and I got over it. She always believed that I was going to be okay, and if people believe in you, you can also believe in yourself."

She was also inspired by the support of the community. "I was on every single davening list in the world. It helps to keep you motivated."

Isaacs says she hadn't really accepted that a transplant was necessary until about two weeks before it occurred, at which point she acknowledged how serious her deterioration was.

"Then, in my head, I was like, 'This is it. I need that transplant. I need those lungs.'

"And then, two weeks later, I got them, so I do believe there's a bigger power looking after us. I definitely believe in G-d, and

this was truly a miracle."

Yet, Isaacs also pays tribute to the medical staff that implemented the miracle. "Your doctor, nurses, and transplant team becomes an extension of your family.

"I was in ICU for six months; the nurses looked after me like I was their own child." For her, the doctors'

expertise and the humility with which they approached their work was awe-inspiring.

"How can you thank these people enough?" she asks.

Doctors told her family that at the time of the operation that her lungs were the size of ice cream scoops, and black in colour. With the transplant, "I could breathe pretty much straight away."

The first night out of hospital was all about the sheer luxury of the ordinary pleasures of home: "The first shower; sleeping in your own bed."

She gives the poignant example of being reunited with her husband. "In hospital, I used to sleep in this little bed and wake up and feel for my husband who wasn't there. Now, I can reach out to him any time. I just check that he's still there."

A key life goal is to promote organ donation.

She says there are many misconceptions about how the body of a donor will be treated in the event of using their organs. Everything is done with dignity, she affirms.

Furthermore, if a person is willing to be an organ donor – whether they are registered on a donor site or not – the decision always rests with the family.

"They respect the family more than anything."

As such, anyone who is willing to be a donor needs to tell their family their wishes.

Isaacs says that while Jewish people can donate organs, there are restrictions involved in doing so, and she urges people to consult their rabbis.

Recipients of organs are asked to write a letter to the family of the donor, but beyond that, the gift of life is anonymous for various psychological reasons.

Yet, for Isaacs, the donor remains first and foremost on her mind.

"That's my hero for the rest of my life," she says.



Tali, her husband, Jono, and Caesar when she came home from hospital

It's a biblical life

You know how we read medical articles with the disclaimer that they aren't offering medical advice, and it would be best to consult a qualified medical professional? Well, the following article carries the disclaimer that I offer no sound biblical advice, and it would be strongly recommended that you consult a local rabbi (assuming they aren't on Zoom), for sound traditional guidance.

Not that being unqualified has ever stopped me from voicing an opinion before.

That said, it's difficult to ignore the "biblical" feeling that surrounds COVID-19. The viral plague, along with the fall-out it has caused, encapsulates so many themes that it's difficult to be surprised by anything.

News of the splitting of the Zoo Lake (or Emmarentia Dam) is hardly likely to survive a news cycle (if it were true) and would probably gain as much press coverage as the fact that the oil price is hovering in negative territory.

We have been through so many bizarre things that we have become desensitized to pretty much any event.

We have been locked in our homes for nearly 40 days and 40 nights. We have been told that the world is a dangerous place, and that we need to take our families (and animals) and remain there until we are told that it is safe to re-enter. When we emerge, as did Noah, we will find that the world we are likely to encounter will be forever altered, and it will be our job to rebuild it in a way that is different to the one we left behind. Much like Noah, we miss our alcohol, and whereas we might not plant a vineyard, a quick visit to Norman Goodfellows is likely to be an early order of business.

Although much of the news about dolphins frolicking majestically in the pristine waters of the channels in Venice is overstated to the point of being fake, there's no doubting the positive impact

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



on the world.

Air pollution is down, and restoration is taking place simply because of our absence. If that doesn't sound biblical to you, then you might be forgetting about the concept of the *shmita* year, where every seven years, farmers (in Israel) are commanded to let their land lie fallow. True story. Anyone who has tried buying a Jaffa orange in Israel during that time will know what I mean.

I should also mention the strange concept of biblical leprosy that placed people in quarantine until they were given the all clear by the *kohen* (priest). And the fact that if he wasn't certain, he would ask them to remain isolated until he was certain that the PUI (person under investigation) could rejoin society.

More than anything, the age of COVID-19 has demonstrated how not in control we are. Although Netflix and Bill Gates might have predicted the possibility of a pandemic, there's still the feeling that it was more the product of a Steven Spielberg movie than something that was likely to be enacted in the streets of Glenhazel, Sandton, or Brooklyn.

And whereas we might be adjusting to the bizarreness of it all, we still continue to shake our heads in disbelief. It's all so fantastical, that the only possible explanation is that this is way bigger than us.

One of the positive aspects of not being qualified to mete out either medical or biblical advice is that anyone who does heed my words does so at their own peril. Which is why, come Level 3 (or is it 2), I advise you, much like Noah, to meet me down at the nearest bottle store, where I won't be planting a vineyard.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Six weeks and making us count



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

Six weeks of lockdown have imposed a formidable range of challenges upon the South African people, both practical and moral. The moral aspect goes beyond simply adhering to the official regulations that have been imposed to minimise the spread of COVID-19, important though this is.

Just as critical is the pressing need to assist those who face total destitution as a result of the lockdown to the point of being unable to put food on their tables. While it's up to government to assume the leading role in this regard, the magnitude of the challenge means that everyone who is in the fortunate position of being able to contribute should strive to do so.

At both individual and organisational level, it has been inspiring to see how wholeheartedly the Jewish community has thrown itself into this crucial work. The regional branches of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) have all taken on this challenge.

In Gauteng, we have partnered with the Angel Network and others in implementing the CAN (Community Action Network) project, in terms of which a group of people – it could be a study group, book club, or simply a group of friends – works together to assist people in need, particularly in alleviating hunger. It's a genuine ground-up initiative, operating through community partnerships between suburb, informal settlement, and township.

The members of the SAJBD Gauteng Council, for one, are championing Loving Classroom South Africa, which donates food parcels, hand sanitisers, and face masks to the children of schools they work with; the Yenzani Vuka Skhokho non-profit organisation, which provides for 600 recyclers currently unable to pursue a livelihood; and assisting families and a school

in Riverlea, an extremely poor coloured area of Johannesburg. The Temple Israel Heritage Centre is involved in helping Congolese, Nigerian, and other foreign migrants in Hillbrow, Yeoville, and Bellevue, and supporting a children's home in Midrand. This is in addition to raising funds for relief organisations such as the Angel Network itself, in which members of our community are playing a leading role.

The SAJBD is documenting the various relief initiatives that Jewish organisations and community members are involved in, whether under the CAN banner or otherwise. We welcome all feedback on what is being done to point others wishing to get involved in the right direction, as well as to record how South African Jewry has responded to the challenge of these times.

In tandem with helping to alleviate severe hardship in general society, the Board has continued to look to the needs of its own constituents. Throughout this difficult period, our COVID-19 online platform has provided guidance about the community's decisions, ongoing medical guidance, mental health and support, and legal advice where necessary. Now, as we approach a phased lifting of the lockdown, our focus has turned to financial relief. We will regularly post guidance on critical issues relating to relief offerings. I urge everyone who has been affected to avail themselves of this resource.

• 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

MOST SA JEWS (BOTH OF ASHKENAZI AND SEPHARDI HERITAGE) ARE ELIGIBLE TO REINSTATE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND, ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT.

A common misconception is that European citizenship and EU passports can only be obtained if one has documents providing his/her lineage. The fact is that not having any documents proving lineage, doesn't lead to disqualification of eligibility. Jews of Ashkenazi heritage can rely on documents obtained in Lithuania or Poland. Jews of Sephardi heritage need no proof at all!

In his experience, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived, and therefore they are entitled to reinstate it, and accordingly obtain an EU passport.



Adv. Horesh has been operating in SA market with the Jewish community since March 2018. He arrives regularly to South Africa, and can meet in person with Jews who are interested to do so.

Ashkenazi: This ad refers to Jews of Polish & Lithuanian heritage only. The most important things is the understanding that prior to the end of WW-I, the European map was very different than the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania did not exist as independent countries, and until 1918 these territories were only known as Lithuanian or Polish regions/counties of the Great Russian Empire who ruled all of north eastern Europe. Accordingly, until 1918, residents of these territories were Russian citizens, as Polish and Lithuanian citizenships didn't exist. Therefore, since applications for reinstatement of these citizenships can only be based on whether one's ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen, whoever is a descendant of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 will not be eligible.

In addition, it is highly important to remember that since borders in Europe were shifted once again during and after WW-II, one's eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor hailed. Horesh explains: Shifted borders resulted in cities changing nationalities, and that the resultant effect for descendants of Jews left Vilnius is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined whereas a similar



Adv. Avi Horesh is an Israeli attorney, who lived in Poland for seven years. Horesh is recognised in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship may very well be approved! Horesh has an in-depth knowledge and a full understanding of European immigration laws.

Sephardi: This ad refers to all Jews of Sephardi heritage – Jews who arrived from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, as well as many descendants of Jews who arrived from Holland and the UK. Most descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are eligible to reinstate Portuguese citizenship and, accordingly, an EU passport. If applicable, Adv. Horesh will apply for (on behalf of the applicant) an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which, an application for Portuguese citizenship is most likely to be approved.

Horesh resides in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – enabling him to travel to Poland and Lithuania, as well as to Portugal, where he collaborates with local professionals who assist him in tracing documentation required for successful applications of reinstatement of European citizenship.

Adv. Horesh closely collaborates with professionals who assist him in tracing documentation in Europe required for successful applications of reinstatement EU citizenships.

I VISIT SOUTH AFRICA EVERY ONCE IN 3-5 MONTHS. MY NEXT VISIT IS PLANNED FOR AUGUST 2020. WHATSAPP ME ON +48-783-953 223, OR EMAIL ME ON ADV.AVI.N.HORESH@GMAIL.COM



YOM HA'ATZMAUT

יום עצמאות שמח

Celebrating Israel

OFFERS VALID TILL 6 MAY

Feigels
EST. 1968

103⁹⁹

OSEM
VEGETABLE
SOUP
400G



Eat-In Israeli Style

- 6 PITA BEADS
- 18 FALAFEL BALLS (HEAT & EAT)
- 250G HUMMUS
- 250G TAHINI
- 250G PICKLED CUCUMBERS
- 250G CABBAGE SALAD
- 250G ISRAELI SALAD

R275

74⁹⁹



ACHVA HALVA
MARBLE & VANILLA
454G EACH

20⁹⁹



OSEM
TOASTED COUSCOUS
250G

78⁹⁹

KEDEM
CONCORD
GRAPE
JUICE
946ML



129⁹⁹



ELITE
INSTANT
COFFEE
200G

31⁹⁹



THE OLD
STONE
ZA'ATAR 100G

56⁹⁹



THE OLD
STONE
TAHINI 400G

54⁹⁹



OSEM
FALAFEL
MIX
180G

21⁹⁹

MANAMIM WAFERS
ASSTD FLAVOURS 200G



34⁹⁹



SALAD FARM
ASSORTED
DIPS
250G
EACH

77⁹⁹

THE OLD STONE
SUMAC SPICE
125G



75⁹⁹

MONTAGU
MANGO STRIPS 250G



YAVNE CUCUMBERS
LARGE 7-9 560G

YAVNE CUCUMBERS
MEDIUM 10-12 560G

YAVNE CUCUMBERS
SMALL 13-17 560G

YAVNE PICKLED
HOT PEPPERS 540G

YAVNE OLIVES
ASSORTED FLAVS 540/560G

YAVNE EGGPLANT
540G

YAVNE PEPPERS
RED STRIPS 540G



28⁴⁹



36⁹⁹



44⁹⁹



33⁴⁹



44⁹⁹



35⁹⁹



35⁹⁹

Actual offers may differ from visuals shown.
We reserve the right to limit quantities.
While stocks last. E&OE

KOSHER AT EVERYDAY PRICES

1 Long Avenue, Glenhazel | 011 440 9517 | info@kosherworld.co.za | www.kosherworld.co.za

