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Chev calls for first emergency relief fund in 132 years organisations dealing with "Essentially we are on our facilities. "We are saying Kaddish come at a significant cost, a

or the first time in its 132year history, the Chevrah Kadisha is calling for emergency financial support as it battles on all fronts in the "perfect storm" of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have never before had to - or wanted to - put out an emergency appeal. Notwithstanding all of the challenges that it has faced, the organisation has - with the magnificent support of our generous community - managed to carry out its communal responsibility," says Chevrah Kadisha chairperson Colin Datnow, who has been in this role for more than 30 years.

"But COVID-19 has brought on enormous added costs and responsibilities, and we now have no choice but to launch a far-reaching emergency appeal to meet the significant demands on our resources. We are dealing with a 'black swan' event that has an impact on our organisation in every way."

The Chevrah Kadisha, best known as the Chev, is the oldest Jewish organisation in Johannesburg, and the largest Jewish welfare organisation on the African continent.

The organisation's chief executive, Saul Tomson, says that the Chev is unique in South Africa and possibly internationally, as it's one of the only Jewish

residential-care facilities and financial-assistance services. Both these sectors have borne the brunt of the devastating ramifications of

"Some organisations deal with residential facilities and are at the 'coal face' of the health risk, putting them under enormous pressure. Others are dealing with the economic impact. But it's unparalleled to be dealing with both," says Tomson. "We have nearly a thousand people in our care facilities ranging from children at Arcadia to the elderly at our aged homes, to the intellectually disabled, and people requiring mental-health support."

Meanwhile, welfare demands have dramatically increased, with more than 70 new applications from community members in need in May alone. "This is more than double what we usually deal with," he says.

An organisation assisting such a large number of people is unusual worldwide. Another unique factor is that the Chev is 70% privatedonor-funded, with the state being an almost non-existent funder. This contrasts with nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and care facilities in first-world countries, which are often 70% state-funded. It's especially stark considering how the South African government has "completely neglected" NGOs since the start of lockdown, says Tomson.

own," he says. "Without our private donors - who are already stretched - we wouldn't survive this crisis. The result is this emergency campaign which we hope will go beyond our borders. We are appealing to South African expats to contribute because even a small dollar-based donation has a big impact. We ask them to consider our unique position and the current favourable exchange rate to help keep our communal infrastructure stable."

The Chev's group rabbi, Jonathan Fox, says that the Sandringham Gardens aged home's minyan was one of the only *minyanim* in the world operating under lockdown due to the early lockdown of the Chev's

for more than 2 000 people from every corner of the globe, and have named dozens of babies. Many of those who reached out donated, and it made a significant difference," he says.

Tomson says that every aspect of residential facilities makes their residents vulnerable to the virus. Keeping it at bay has stretched the Chev to its limits. This includes the high cost of COVID-19 tests, the supply of PPE (personal protective equipment), the need to hire and rotate more staff (including nurses, carers, cleaners, and security guards), the reconfiguring of facilities, and catering for residents in isolation.

"We have conducted almost 1 000 COVID-19 tests, which

come at a significant cost, and this will continue to grow," says Tomson. The price is high, but the organisation has no choice. "We are fighting an invisible enemy, and in spite of every initiative and effort, there is so much that is beyond our control." Donations will go towards covering all of these urgent and unforeseen

Then on the welfare side, there is a wave of community members pleading for help. This includes many single mothers who worked in the teaching, beauty, and tourism industries that have now shut down. There are also many individuals who managed to become independent but are now once again asking for help. Finally, there are community members who were and still are completely reliant on the Chev. Some of them had a small secondary source of income from a part-time job or family, but now have lost this due to economic circumstances.

The Chev assists with basics like accommodation, healthcare, food, and even education on a monthly basis. Donations will also go towards all of those individuals who have nowhere else to turn and might not have an income for an extended period.

Balancing both of these spheres, Tomson says that the Chev wanted the hard lockdown to continue to help protect its residents in care facilities, but also for it to end to help those suffering economically.

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Comrades Ultra Marathon makes it to the Holy Land



Runners Shmuel Shantall and Avigdor Book putting on tefillin at the 60 kilometre mark of their HolyLand Comrades, at the same distance they would normally do so during the Comrades in SA





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Shuls stay shut for now

ollowing extensive discussion and consideration, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein has extended the moratorium on reopening shuls until 1 July.

In a letter to the community, he wrote, "Since announcing the two-week moratorium on shuls reopening, there have been ongoing discussions with shul leaders and leading medical experts. Given the volatility of the current situation, specifically, the rapidly rising infection rate in the country following the move to lockdown level 3, the consensus is that, at least for the next few weeks, there are too many unknowns and the risks of reopening our shuls is too great."

This is in spite of the fact that President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that South African places of worship may reopen under strict conditions during lockdown level 3 from 1 June. These include limiting attendance to 50 people per service, wearing face masks, sanitising and

Shabbat times this week Starts Ends 17:06 17:58 Johannesburg Cape Town 17:27 18:22 Durban 16:46 17:07 Bloemfontein 18:00 16:58 17:53 Port Elizabeth

17:46

16:51

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These decisions aren't easy. Shuls are so central to our lives. Our public prayers and reading of the Torah bring so much holiness and divine merit to our community. We are all affected by their closure.

social distancing, as well as routine cleansing of the prayer space.

"I'm convening a task team to develop different models and assess plausible timeframes for the potential reopening of our shuls, and to build a concrete framework that will enable this to happen," wrote Goldstein.

"The team comprises senior rabbis from across the country, community leaders from the Union of Orthodox Synagogues, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the Community Security Organisation, Hatzolah, and a team of leading medical experts and advisors, including Professor Barry Schoub and Dr Richard Friedland. Together, we will evaluate when and how we can begin a phased and highly regulated return to our shuls.

"These decisions aren't easy. Shuls are so central to our lives. Our public prayers and reading of the Torah bring so much holiness and divine merit to our community. We are all affected by their closure," he wrote.

"There are those of us who have a yahrtzeit or are in mourning and need to say Kaddish for a loved one. There is also the heartbreaking situation of Barmitzvah boys who, after months and months of preparation, aren't able to lein their parsha or recite their Haftarah in

"There's tremendous emotional and spiritual anguish at not having access to our minyanim, which is why we will continue to explore every possibility of reopening them safely. The agonising process of reopening our shuls

should be a powerful symbol of how seriously we should all take the health protocols. We need to continue to practice social distancing, wear masks, and be aware and alert in everything we do," he said.

"In the interim, while we are unable to open our shuls, let us realise that the gates of heaven remain open to our prayers at all times, wherever we are. Let us ensure we do everything we can to make our homes places of faith and prayer as we weather this crisis together."

Schoub, the founding and former director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases of South Africa and professor emeritus of virology at the University of the Witwatersrand, said, "The decision of the chief rabbi to defer consideration of the re-opening of shuls is, of course, to be commended. The

hardship, the spiritual deprivation, the isolation, and even the personal agony which has gone along with shul closure is a deeply regrettable consequence of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

"Unfortunately, however, the country is now truly entering into the upward surge, or logarithmic expansion, of the pandemic. The very rapid proliferation of cases is even close to overwhelming much of the healthcare system.

"Against this background and the status of the pandemic, one of the most hazardous threats of spreading the virus – the congregate environment of shuls – must, of course, not take place," said Schoub. "In the future, careful evaluation will need to be done to assess when it will be reasonably safe to consider re-opening

All hands on deck as Glendale meets coronavirus challenge

TALI FEINBERG

52-year-old resident of the Glendale Home for Jewish people with intellectual disabilities in Cape Town who tested negative for COVID-19 died unexpectedly on 17 June.

"We are all in shock as it was very sudden," says the home's chairperson, Judith Cohen. "We are deeply saddened and wish his family a long life."

Twenty-one Glendale residents tested positive for coronavirus just more than a week ago.

However, these residents are doing well in spite of the multitude of challenges of such an outbreak in a facility like this and the many co-morbidities of its residents. The 12 staff members who tested positive are also all doing well. The home has 50 residents and about 60 staff.

Of the COVID-19-positive residents, "One resident is in hospital on oxygen, and is stable. Four residents were put on oxygen, but two have since been taken off. Twenty out of 21 COVID-positive residents are showing very mild symptoms," says Cohen.

"Keep in mind that we are being extremely cautious. If a person is on oxygen, it's usually a cause

for concern, but we're taking no chances and will give the residents a small amount of oxygen the moment their levels dip. It's not a cause for alarm."

At the same time, "We're not on other side yet, and family members remain concerned. We are around day eight to 10 since residents started showing symptoms, and the doctors keep saying it's important to get to day 12, with the resident remaining stable. So it really is a critical point."

The father of one resident has described the past week as a "rollercoaster of emotions". His son, who tested positive, had to go on oxygen for 48 hours, but is now managing without it. The next few days will be vital to assess if he can continue without oxygen. This parent is also a doctor, and urges community members to "take this infection seriously and avoid risky meetings and behaviour. It's a very devious disease".

It's been all hands on deck at Glendale as the home has been short-staffed. "Bringing in temporary agency staff has been a risk for further COVID-19 infections in care facilities around the world, and we know residents will struggle to adapt to new faces,"

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Torah Thought

Humility is our strongest suit

wo centuries ago, Polish noblemen would do anything to avoid giving business to a Jew. Ivan the poretz was willing to make an exception. He needed to have an exquisite suit made for an important personal celebration, and Moshe was the best tailor in the region. As much as

it nauseated him, the squire knew he just had to use Moshe.

Moshe was, in fact, the best. And he knew it. Moshe revelled in the irony: the crabby landholder beholden to a Jewish tailor. "Ah, and what a suit it would be," will surely engage my services again, as will half the neighbouring squires."

Moshe worked quickly. Two days ahead of schedule, he proudly presented the finished product to the squire. He smiled inwardly, as he waited for the squire to step out wearing his

magnificent handiwork. Moshe's excitement turned to horror as the squire re-entered the room. The suit didn't fit at all. One sleeve was too long, and the waistline threatened to explode under the pressure of its wearer's girth. The squire was furious. He spewed antisemitic vitriol, and threatened to have Moshe killed. Panicked, Moshe pleaded for a chance to repair the damage and fled home, his ego shattered.

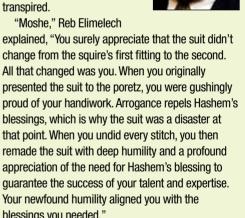
Moshe was dumbfounded. He knew that he had measured everything perfectly and simply couldn't understand what had gone awry. Worse, he couldn't conceive of a way to salvage the suit – and his future.

Without a plan, and with the squire's dire threats ringing in his ears, the desperate Moshe hurried to the great spiritual master, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk. In the rebbe's study, Moshe poured out his heart, and begged for a blessing to be able to turn things around. Reb Elimelech listened carefully, then spoke emphatically, "Go home and undo every single stitch of that garment. Then, sew it all back together, exactly as you had originally done. Do not modify any part of the suit."

Moshe was completely perplexed, but wouldn't dare to question the rebbe. He obediently followed the rebbe's advice, and anxiously returned a day later to the squire. This time, the suit fit perfectly. The ecstatic squire handed Moshe a handsome sum, and even complimented the Jewish tailor on his

Rabbi Ari Shishler, **Chabad of Strathavon**

Moshe, confused as before, returned to the rebbe to try and unravel the mystery of what had



COVID-19, and the lockdown it has brought, has made us all introspective. We feel uncertain about the future, about our families' well-being, and about our financial security. This is a deeply disconcerting period. Perhaps, Hashem has offered us a chance to undo, stitch by stitch, the fibre of life as we have known it. We now have a chance to re-tailor our lives with a new hierarchy of priorities and a fresh appreciation for our relationships. Rather than leave us despondent, hopefully this trying time will leave us feeling humbler. Humility, Judaism teaches, is the gateway to Hashem's richest blessings.

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'Wake up!' doctors say, as infections rise and rebellion sets in

NICOLA MILTZ

auteng doctors at the coalface of coronavirus have pleaded with the community to stop making light of the pandemic following a precipitous rise in the number of those testing positive and a flood of new hospitalisations.

In an open letter to the community, a group of frustrated and concerned frontline physicians at Netcare Linksfield Hospital have warned about the dangers of "reckless", "irresponsible" and "imprudent" behaviour by members of the community who are "ignoring the gravity of the situation".

The move to level 3 lockdown precipitated a dangerous misinterpretation that it signalled an end to the monotonous, restrictive regulations. Together with lockdown fatigue and complacency, many members of the community saw this as an opportunity to disregard the somewhat confusing regulations about social gatherings.

Many have openly flouted regulations by hosting things like mini birthday parties, drive-by gatherings, small braais, private *minyanim*, Shabbos dinners with close family, and pavement coffee meet-ups. It has resulted in a sharp increase in the number of positive cases in the community, experts say.

Johannesburg general practitioner Dr Daniel Israel said in a Facebook post that the number of social interactions within the community had increased dramatically, and this had increased risk. "By exposing yourself to more people, you are exponentially increasing your own risk and the risk you may be passing on."

In the no-holds-barred letter, doctors Carron Zinman, Anton Meyberg, Andre Pieterse, Sharon Goldburgh, Zaheer Laher, and Ian Hunt warned the community, outlining the severity of the situation.

"The number of admissions related to COVID-19 have increased dramatically, and both the COVID high care/intensive-care unit as well as the COVID general ward have a much higher number of patients than a mere three weeks ago," the letter said.

"Ironically, as the numbers rise

anxious, people seem to be behaving recklessly. Instead of being even more vigilant about wearing masks, maintaining social distance, and washing/sanitising their hands, they are showing an alarming tendency to make their own rules."

While people were frustrated by the restrictions imposed by the rules of lockdown, the doctors said that "instead of behaving correctly, they are having their hair and/or nails done, having dinner parties and play dates, and getting together with their

They point out that the healthcare system is already stretched, and it's going to get worse.

"There is no doubt that irresponsible

frustrating and annoying to see the imprudent behaviour of members of the community who are ignoring the gravity of the situation and are conferring an unnecessary risk of becoming infected or infecting the people around them."

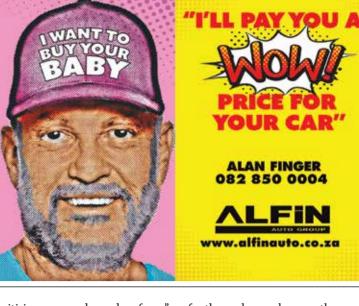
Hatzolah also issued a stern warning this week, following what it described as a "huge surge" in COVID-19 positive cases in the Johannesburg community in the past week. "You are advised not to leave your house unless you absolutely have to do so for essential reasons," Hatzolah warned.

As yet, there is no cure and no specific treatment for the virus. The Linksfield physicians stressed that the virus affects men and women of all ages, and people with asymptomatic infections

sanitising commonly used surfaces." Emeritus professor in virology at

the University of the Witwatersrand, Professor Barry Schoub, lashed out this week at those acting irresponsibly.

He said the country was currently



for themselves or, because they are young, don't they care about passing on the infection to their loved ones? These individuals need to do some deep soul-searching and reflection, or simply think beyond satisfying their momentary needs," he said.

Principals have urged parents to ensure that students observe all the safety protocols outside school.

King David Victory Park Principal Andrew Baker highlighted his concern in a letter to the parent body last month.

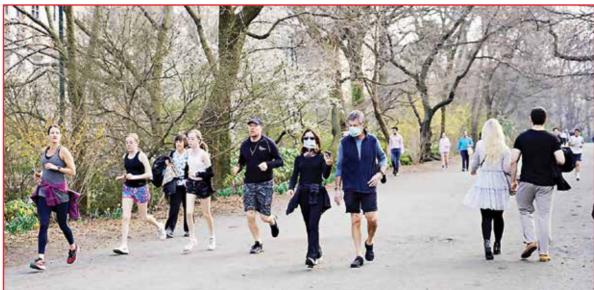
"I'm concerned to hear that students are meeting in malls and at one another's homes outside of school. We are still in level 3 lockdown. There should be no social visits taking place at all."

He shared the sentiments of a colleague of his, Jacinta Lucas, the executive head of Holy Rosary Convent, who made a desperate appeal in a letter to her parent

Children shouldn't "visit each other after school or over weekends, for any reason whatsoever. There should be no lockdown parties or sleepovers. There should be no popping in to visit a friend. There should be no socialising in the local shopping centre or local park. If those around us break the rules, we're all at risk."

One parent told the SA Jewish Report, "Everyone is worried that the kids will go to school and get COVID-19 there, as if school itself is what will make them sick. However, the kids will be the ones bringing COVID-19 into the classrooms, not the other way around."

At the time of going to press, there were 76 334 confirmed cases, 42 063 recovered patients, and 1625 deaths.



behaviour now will result in even more infections in our community than there are currently."

They "sincerely believe" the COVID wards will fill up further and will take over some of the non-COVID wards. "A time is coming where beds will not be as readily available, personal protective equipment will be more difficult to acquire, and healthcare workers will be burnt out. It's an exhausting way to practice medicine for nurses, doctors, and allied health workers who have all uncomplainingly just waded in."

While the Linksfield Hospital team is doing its best to protect itself and the people around them, the doctors say, "It's imperative that the more vulnerable members of our community are protected to the best of our abilities." They emphasise

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inadvertently infect the people around them. They say it's likely that individuals may be highly contagious 48 hours before displaying symptoms. There is also uncertainty about whether a person can become re-infected.

The appeals began last Friday, when Meyberg issued an alarming voice note to the Yeshiva College community in the face of rising positive coronavirus cases.

Meyberg and the team of Linksfield physicians further pleaded with the community not to throw caution to the wind in their open letter.

"We implore you to please behave responsibly by wearing a mask over your nose and mouth at all times when out in public [even when exercising], by maintaining proper social distance, by not going out unless it's really necessary, by not allowing play dates, not having dinner parties, not taking off your mask during tea breaks and meetings, and by

in a "schizophrenic situation" which could have tragic consequences. The economic necessity of loosening lockdown restrictions to level 3 with expectations of further relaxation during the coming week had engendered a misplaced sense of relief and even a "post-lockdown" euphoria.

"It defies logic, common sense - or is it crass stupidity or crass disinterest - to learn of private poker games, mini-parties, private *minyanim*, and other social gatherings taking place in Johannesburg. One needs to simply collar these delinquents and drag them into the intensive-care wards of one of the hospitals. There they will see the agony of patients alone, isolated from their loved ones and, in more severe cases, dying a lonely death. Is this what they would want

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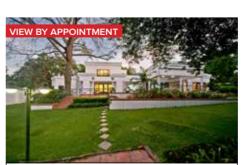
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19 - 26 June 2020 **4** SA JEWISH REPORT

Crises demand optimistic and ethical leadership, says Sinek

JORDAN MOSHE

ood leadership isn't about being in charge, but about taking care of those in your charge, Simon Sinek told South Africans at a SA Jewish Report webinar last

"There is a time for politics, but in a time of a global pandemic, unity is most important," he said. "A leader is responsible for their entire population, and they need to think of a way to help us get through this together."

Close to 30 000 people tuned in last Thursday to hear the perspective of the British-born author and motivational speaker on leadership under COVID-19. Sinek spoke from his home in Los Angeles in the United States, engaging with chairperson of the SA Jewish Report, Howard Sackstein, on the issues facing people in America and around the world.

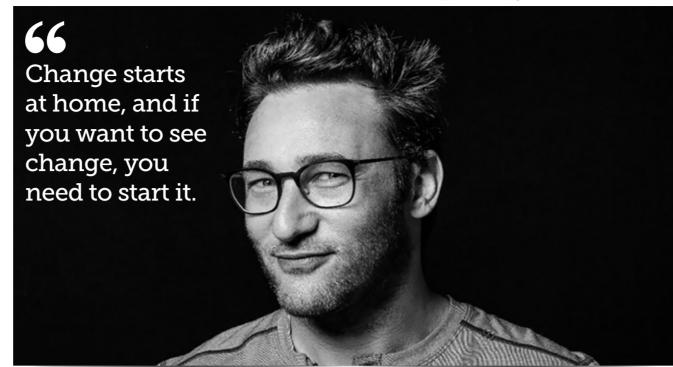
If our situation demands anything, it's the need to promote a new kind of leadership, Sinek said.

"No person on the planet has all the answers. Being open to counsel is important, regardless of whether you're a world leader or a leader of a team. We all have blind spots, and if we take counsel from each other, we can cover them.

"That doesn't mean we always have to agree with each other, but it does mean that we get to add other opinions to our point of view. That's part of the unity that we need."

Sinek said that like business leaders, world leaders must develop a forward-looking vision, and avoid fixating on the present if the pandemic is to be handled effectively.

"At times when the foundation is shaken, we need to be able to defer to a future vision," he said. "A mistake many



leaders make is insisting that we need positivity at a time of difficulty. We don't actually need positivity, we need

"Positivity is saying that everything is fine and good, and we have the situation under control. Optimism isn't denying the darkness of the tunnel we're in, but focusing from afar on the bright light at the end of the tunnel. It doesn't deny

the darkness, and will admit mistakes."

Sinek applied a similar principle to the calamities unfolding across the United States, saying that the debate about whether the protests over the killing of George Floyd are right or wrong can be had at a later point.

"Right now, we need to understand where the anger is coming from, and how we as a society bear responsibility for perpetuating narratives or not forcefully stopping some of the institutions that perpetuate racism. How many of us have actually taken hard steps to change the narrative?

"This has been like an argument between a couple. When there is tension, it affects how we treat each other and talk to each other. It makes things uncomfortable, and the tension usually bursts out in argument. If you can learn to hear each other and understand where the pain is coming from, the relationship can end up stronger because of it."

Sinek said the anger displayed was a very human reaction, and though it would subside, we all need to find concrete ways to address the root problem wherever we may be in the world. "We have to, otherwise all we're doing is supressing the anger all over again," he said. "I think this is long overdue."

In spite of the increase in violence and brutal suppression of protest, Sinek said that the US hadn't completely lost its ethical and democratic compass. It had deviated from its moral path because of individual selfishness and greed.

"Like any nation, there are speed bumps, but the nation lives on. The US has been marching this way for the past 30 years at least. The trouble really began when the Berlin Wall fell, and the US lost the existential threat of the Soviet Union and became selfishly focused. We became finite minded.

"In the 80s, economist Milton Friedman proposed the theory that the primary responsibility of business was to maximise profit within the limits of the law. What about morality and ethics? You see companies do unethical things today which are totally legal but highly unethical. They break no laws, but violate what we stand for. We've seen this steady drumbeat through the 80s and 90s, and that determined the path of the US."

This means that such behaviour has become normalised in our time. "This march away from acting ethically has now come to a boiling point in politics and business," Sinek said. "This isn't some anomaly, but part of a pattern that's all coming to bear at one time."

There is an increase in opposition to such behaviour, however, though it will take time before it yields any positive progress.

"The fact that there's pressure against this is positive," said Sinek. "These conversations are happening aloud now instead of in the privacy of people's living rooms. We're not there yet, but there's momentum and appetite, so I'm optimistic."

Sinek believes that if we really want to drive change, we need to put our good intentions into action at the polls and in our personal lives.

"The number of Americans who actually vote is small," he said. "A minority of the population is choosing who leads all of us. Politics has become about winning rather than governing, and good people who could be good leaders have no desire to enter politics.

"Our politicians reflect us - we get the leaders we deserve. We like to indict them, but if we hold up a mirror to society, we see we're like them. Change starts at home, and if you want to see change, you need to start it. We can't demand change that we aren't willing to implement ourselves."

Hold tight, it's going to be a bumpy ride

ust how is COVID-19 changing our lives on a personal and geopolitical level?

Toxic politics

As the *Economist* writes, at the end of this pandemic, people will generally be poorer, angry at the hardship they have gone through, and many of them will also have been sick. That will make for a very discontented population, and will create toxic

In such conditions, people do things and support ideologies they wouldn't normally. A simple look back to the 1930s bears this out in the fascist parties in Europe, who in the roaring 20s were generally seen as a joke, but suddenly came to power all over when the Great Depression hit. (Apart from Mussolini, who came to power much earlier, in the 1920s, but that was also due to general dissatisfaction.)

Things are already tense in the world with "strongmen" in power in countries like Turkey, Russia, and Brazil. Expect politics to become more angry and unstable as we come out of this pandemic. While hopefully, we won't see any fascist parties coming to power, traditionally mainstream parties will

move further to the extremes, and extremist parties/ protest movements will become more powerful.

increase

all over the world have run up huge deficits with stimulus packages and assistance to

the vast legions of unemployed. They are going to have to increase taxes to pay off this debt. In 1946,

after World War II, the top marginal tax rate in the United Kingdom was 86%!

Expect marginal tax rates to increase, but more importantly, the discussion about wealth taxes to start up again. Although wealth taxes in countries that have tried them have raised only small amounts of tax, and are complex and difficult to administer, they have political benefits in that they are seen to make the rich pay their share of any reconstruction.

The environment

Lockdowns have brought fascinating environmental changes. Nature has come alive again. We have seen jellyfish swimming in the canals of Venice, deer walking the streets of Eilat. But most importantly, a huge decrease in pollution and carbon emissions. The air in the major cities has become cleaner, and

rivers less polluted. Will people not want this to continue after we revert to some form of normality?

Already there are strong movements in London, Paris, and other European cities to keep many more streets closed to cars, and to increase biking tracks and trails in city centres. Alternative and renewable energy is being pushed all over, and this might well be its time, with advances now making renewable energy cheaper in many cases than fossil fuels.

As the Economist of 23 May states, the demand for renewables demand jumped 1.5% in the first quarter, even as demand for all other forms of energy sank. The magazine also stated that renewables are expected to surpass coal's share of power generation in the United States for the first time this year.

With electric cars starting to take off, is this the start of the great movement to clean energy? At the very least, expect this movement to become much more mainstream and gather much more support among ordinary people. This has already become evident at various company annual general meetings in the past few months, where environmental groups have become much more aggressive in demanding compliance with environmental regulations by boards and directors.

Healthcare

Although the pandemic will eventually fade, it has brought to the fore the importance of healthcare and workers' rights. Expect a major movement all over the world to improve access to quality healthcare, nd improve working condition This will undoubtedly become a major trend, and one of the themes of the 2020s.

Positive change

Every time the world undergoes a major crisis or historic inflection point, like World War II for example, although the crisis itself is difficult and painful, the period after that is almost always positive. Again referring to World War II, the post-war period from 1950 onwards ushered in a time of great and positive technological, social, and political changes. Technological growth and innovation increased rapidly. Many new countries became independent. This was a period of rapid economic growth all over the world, with many more people gaining access to education, and growth in social and political

So, the period after the pandemic will very likely be one of great technological advancement and positive growth for the world as a whole, but expect a bumpy ride along the way!

• Harry Joffe is a Johannesburg tax and trust attorney.

Cape Town and Durban communities call for emergency funds

TALI FEINBERG

"It's hard to believe it, but at this very moment there are families in our community who are hungry," says Barry Levitt, the executive director of the United Jewish Campaign (UJC). The organisation is the main

fundraising body of the Cape Town Jewish community, and has 35 beneficiaries.

Just like the Chevrah Kadisha in Johannesburg (see page 1), the UJC has launched an emergency fundraising campaign to address the dire economic situation of community members and the unforeseen costs experienced by communal organisations brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. The Durban Jewish community has also

launched an emergency fundraising campaign.

"The UJC Emergency Fund was established in March 2020 as the pandemic took hold in South Africa and it became apparent that our community organisations wouldn't have the financial resources to withstand the damaging effects of the virus," says Levitt.

"We need to raise R10 million to cover the most immediate and vital needs in our community including food supplies, COVID-19 testing, PPE [personal protective equipment], extra staffing of facilities, and financial

relief for families."

To date, the Cape Town Jewish community has spent more than R600 000 on COVID-19 testing (at R850 per test), more than R1 million on PPE with at least a further R2 million to be spent on this in the next three months, and more



An image from the UJC's emergency fund campaign

than R100 000 for on-boarding of additional medical professionals.

"We need help to ensure we have enough funds to continue testing, to ensure we have life-saving equipment, sufficient medical professionals on hand, and that crucial services such as our COVID-19 monitoring programme and helpline are available to our community," he says.

"Since lockdown, we have experienced a huge spike in requests for food, and the list of clients grows

The Tikvah Foodbank provides nonperishables, fruit, and vegetables to

community members in need. "The average monthly cost of receiving these deliveries is R1 500 per recipient per month. As a result of COVID-19, an extra 208 recipients have requested these services - this is an extra cost of R240 000," he says.

Meals on Wheels delivers precooked

meals to needy community members. Three thousand meals are being delivered a month at the total monthly cost of R48 000. The Cape Jewish Seniors Association also delivers more than 200 Shabbat meals a week to the elderly, each costing R100.

The Oranjia Jewish Children and Youth Centre is running on a skeleton staff. It currently provides permanent accommodation and a place of safety for 10 Jewish children aged between nine and 21 years. Meals for the children have been pre-ordered to alleviate some of the responsibility and workload of the carers

so they can focus on the needs of our children such as online schooling. This is a temporary measure, but has resulted in increased food costs all-

Meanwhile, Durban Jewish Social Services (DJSS) is assisting 127 people across the greater KwaZulu-Natal area, and this number is rapidly increasing, says the organisation's director, Janine Saperson. "Many Jews with their own businesses have been affected by the pandemic, or those who find themselves without jobs are being forced to ask for assistance."

The Durban Jewish community numbers between 1 200 to 1 500people. "For more than 65 years, no Jew has been turned away from the doors of the DJSS. We assist the most vulnerable in the community with food, shelter, rental assistance, medical costs, psychological-health support, and dignity," she says.

"Traditionally, most major fundraising has been managed by the United Communal Fund. A sad day has dawned as we have been advised that our funding is unsustainable. Jewel House, a home for the most vulnerable community members, as well as 127 people in the greater KwaZulu-Natal area are facing

harder times as our funding runs out," she says.

"We now need to reach out to the broader community and ex-Durbanites all over the world to ask for donations. Our call is urgent. Lives within our community depend on your generosity. Your donation will have an impact on those who seek hope from the DJSS. We can't turn any Jew away from our doors."

• To donate to DJSS, visit www.djss.co.za or its Facebook page, Durban Jewish Social Services. To donate to the United Jewish Campaign, visit www.ujc.org.za, or its Facebook page, UJC Cape Town



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All hands on deck as Glendale meets coronavirus challenge

>>Continued from page 2

says Cohen. "So some staff members offered to work an additional night shift; and our director, Shelly Korn, as well as our occupational therapist stepped in as carers."

This kind of sacrifice, commitment, and dedication is at the heart of the home's ethos, which is viewed by many as one big

Cohen says the residents are coping with staying in their rooms. "We have been teaching them about COVID-19 for three months. They understand that it's now in the home, and that some people are sick so they need to stay in their rooms. We've provided each of them with a small desk to do activities. Our occupational therapist has also been working closely with them."

There are a few "wanderers" who can't be kept in their rooms, but they have been contained in sections within the home. "Some

residents are extremely close to each other, and some are siblings and get upset about not being able to see each other, so staff use devices to help them communicate. We keep adapting and making plans to work around their needs," says Cohen.

A doctor visits the residents every day, and they are monitored throughout the day by nurses and carers. All staff are equipped with full personal protective equipment.

"Our staff have been incredible, and really come together as a team. We have had one-on-one debriefing sessions for all staff, and also offer counselling for family members who may need it. Families are kept up to date on WhatsApp groups and with individual phone calls."

Cohen says the community has been a real source of support and comfort to the home.

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19 - 26 June 2020 **6** SA JEWISH REPORT

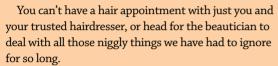
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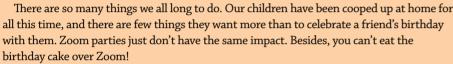
It's not worth flouting the lockdown laws PINION

are in a precarious position. We are gatvol with lockdown, and want to get on with our lives as we knew them. Some of us are throwing caution to the wind simply because we believe

However, it's way too soon to do so.

I understand why people feel conflicted about this. How does one accept the president saying children can go back to school and prayer meetings of less than 50 people can be held, but you can't have a dinner party with 10 people? You can't have coffee with your sister or "bestie"





It has been three long months, and lockdown seems interminable. For the most part, any enjoyment we had in the cosiness and comfort of our families, with fewer time pressures, has come and gone.

We all want to interact. We want to hug our people. We want to resume our lives, but we can't just yet.

We have managed to reclaim a few things from our old lives. We can now buy a bottle of wine to drink with our meals and get takeaways to enjoy at home. Many of our children have gone back to school, albeit in a different format - with social distancing, regular sanitisation, and masks. Many of us who weren't able to work from home are now back at work.

We can also now run, cycle, and walk for exercise on the streets at any time of the day. So, there have been some slight improvements in the quality of our lives, but those give us only a taste of what we so long for. They remind us of what our lives were like.

The urge to break lockdown exists in truckloads. However, we can't succumb to it no matter how much we want to.

Let's look at the statistics first to see why not. South Africa is fast working its way up the international COVID-19 infection list. A few weeks ago, we were way down the list that ranks countries by numbers of infections and deaths.

We are now ranked number 21 in terms of numbers of infections, with 76 334 confirmed cases and as of Wednesday, 17 June, we have had 1 625 deaths. We are now just two below China, which was the initial epicentre of COVID-19, and where it all started. Remember how shocked we were at the huge numbers of infections and deaths from coronavirus. Well, now China's 83 265 overall infections don't seem so high. It's less than 7 000 more infections than we have, and we're climbing fast.

Until recently, we also kept looking at what was happening in Israel, which was initially way ahead of us in infections and deaths. Well, now, Israel has passed its peak of the virus, and numbers 47 on the list. Interestingly, its overall infection rate to date is 19 637, with 303 deaths. Its numbers are much lower than ours and, as our medical experts keep telling us, our numbers are on the steep upward trajectory. We are at least a month away from our proposed peak of infections.

So, are we ready to go back to shul? Are we ready for dinner parties? Are we ready to take any unnecessary risks? We certainly aren't.

We need to keep in mind - no matter how hard it is for us - that we need to avoid adding to the death toll. Any risk we take could increase the numbers.

I have no doubt that not one person we know in or outside of our community would want to do that. However, this secret killer doesn't wait for us to do something on purpose. It doesn't wait for us to have regrets about the chances we took. It goes wherever it can, and if you just happen to be a match for what it's looking for, you could be next on its list. And, who's to say exactly how your body will react? Who's to tell how your mother, aunt, best friend, boyfriend's body will react.

Last week, we wrote about the secret home minyanim that are taking place. We had lots of feedback from people claiming we are targeting the frum by writing about this.

Can I honestly say that whether you are frum or secular, right-wing or left-wing, whatever your beliefs are, we at the SA Jewish Report care about you and your lives? We don't want the number of community members who contract this virus to go up any more than it has to. We want to curtail more unnecessary deaths.

We are fully aware of the numbers around the world of *frum* people who have contracted this coronavirus in shuls, minyanim, and yeshivas, and they are ridiculously high.

If one article we put in this newspaper makes people feel a little uncomfortable about going to one of these secret minyanim because they aren't sure it's a good idea, then I'm grateful. I feel the same about someone sending their child to a birthday party during level 3 lockdown, or going to a dinner party.

As a newspaper, it's our responsibility to do what's best for the community. I accept that not everyone agrees with everything we do. That's fine. We can't be all things to all people, but we try.

If people are flouting the lockdown laws, our role isn't to humiliate them by naming and shaming them, it's simply to tell you what's happening and what the experts say about it. You then have the information at hand to make your own decisions.

So, before you take your child to a long-awaited party or invite guests for Shabbos dinner, something you have longed to do for three months, think about what you could be doing. And then, don't do it. Let's stick together and save lives. Let's not risk our lives and that of the others we care about.

Shabbat Shalom! Peta Krost Maunder Editor

Ubuntu – the philosophy we need right now



s a philanthropist rather than a psychologist, I know more about people helping each other than why they do it. At the moment, we're seeing much more in the way of actual help for those affected by coronavirus than I've seen for any other cause anywhere in South

I'm not saying that South Africans aren't usually a generous bunch. My experience is that many of us give what we can financially when a cause captures our attention, whether it be a monthly debit order to the charities of our choice or R5 every time we park our car in a public space, but we don't often



give time or intelligence. We're too busy or don't have the headspace to think about what's actually required.

Let's be clear about this: money is much appreciated, and always gratefully received. That said, I often wonder how much better our country would fare if our brightest minds got together and came up with long-term solutions to the very real problems so many of our people face on a daily

But with coronavirus, it's different. Everyone is doing something to help, and not just financially. Coronavirus has spurned a hands-on approach to helping that we've not seen in South Africa since the demise of apartheid, and I've spent a lot of time thinking about why.

My simple answer is because of *ubuntu*.

Ubuntu literally means humanity towards others, and it's not some crazy tribal construct, it's a real philosophy that permeates this country and all that live here.

For the first time ever in this country, everyone feels the same sense of helplessness. In situations like this, the human condition is to freeze or fight. It's relatively easy to bury your head in the sand - or write a cheque - when you're not personally involved in something. But with coronavirus, everyone is involved. Everyone is afraid and everyone is affected in some way. It's impossible to freeze when you're surrounded by very real suffering.

No one has a choice but to fight and get involved because every one of us knows someone who is hungry. There's nothing more sobering than a closeup view of the extreme poverty in our country. We really need to pay attention, because more than one million people are on the brink of food insecurity in our country right now.

I'm actively involved in running several philanthropic organisations that operate across townships, public hospitals, and healthcare. At the start of lockdown, we put all our money into creating 40 000 food parcels to get people through a month of hardship. That was back when we

> thought the lockdown was going to last three weeks. As we head for more than four times that length of time, what now? An estimated 30 million South Africans require food parcels. And don't get me started on the volume of masks and sanitiser required.

As all of our personal and corporate financial reserves start to wane, those of us with something are going to have to learn to do with a great deal less so that we can share with those who don't have any.

What does that look like? Maybe we buy four cabbages instead of one tiny punnet of asparagus and give three cabbages away.

Maybe we learn to grow food and teach others how to do it. And maybe we learn to listen to what people need, which may well be a bag of pap rather than a bag of sandwiches.

The ingenuity we've already seen amongst our fellow South Africans has sustained us - sort of. It's the clothing factories converted into production lines for masks, ensuring continued employment for their workers and health safety for others, and the food manufacturers creating low-cost, highnutrition, easy-to-distribute food packs, and the generosity of the neighbour who shares what they have with those that don't that will keep us limping

Everyone, in the true spirit of *ubuntu*, needs to keep coming up with new ideas. For instance, you know all those loyalty points you collect but never use? Most loyalty card schemes are now allowing you to donate them to feeding schemes. Do it! Apply your mind and come up with your own ideas about how you can make a meaningful difference.

As South Africa heads into week 13 of lockdown, the needier our people become. As you give, give enough so that your recipients can share with a friend or neighbour. In other parts of the world, that's called conscious capitalism. In South Africa, it's called ubuntu.

· Marc Lubner is the chief executive of Afrika Tikkun, a South African non-profit organisation focusing on youth development from cradle to career.

Chev calls for first emergency relief fund in 132 years >>Continued from page 1

The organisation has also had to walk the fine line between enforcing clinical regulations to keep people safe, and not negatively affecting their mental well-being. It continues to take a researchbased approach, consulting an independent medical advisory committee chaired by Netcare Chief Executive Dr Richard Friedland for each and every decision in this complex situation.

Investec Bank founder and former Chief Executive Stephen Koseff has seen the community face many challenges, and says this moment is unprecedented. "The consequence of this pandemic is playing out right in front of our eyes every day, with many more vulnerable members of our society battling to survive," he says.

"The Chev has always supported those members of our community who have fallen on hard times. It provides a significant safety net to many, and it's incumbent upon those of us who are fortunate to be in a privileged position to do whatever we can to increase our support."

In a message to the Chev's dedicated staff who see their work as their calling, Tomson wrote, "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality." He believes the community will overcome the current challenges, but it needs urgent and ongoing help to get there.

"In 1888, The Chev made a commitment to be there for every South African Jew when they had nowhere else to turn, and to catch them when they fall," he says. "Please partner with us to continue that commitment in these unprecedented times.

"For 132 years, the Chevrah Kadisha has been at the forefront of supporting the Jewish community," says Marlene Bethlehem, a community leader of many years and the president of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. "This proud history can continue only with the support that it needs during this devastating pandemic in which the demands have multiplied exponentially. To save a life is to save an entire world."

• To donate, visit www.jhbchev.co.za See page 5 for more about emergency fundraising.



long4life





8 SA JEWISH REPORT 19 – 26 June 2020

Stop Israel from making a terrible mistake

srael has reached an historic junction. It's now able to expand its legal borders and declare its sovereignty over parts of the occupied territories it has held since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Unlike East Jerusalem that immediately after the war was added as an undivided part of Israel and its capital, the rest of Judea and Samaria were kept in an unclear disputed status. Now, the Trump Peace Plan opens an unprecedented window of opportunity to "make Israel great again" (Trump's election slogan) with American support.

The coronavirus crisis might help to blur the chances of a political and violent explosion following Israeli annexation. If it's good for Israel, we shouldn't be afraid of a new intifada, terror, cancelling the peace agreement with Jordan, or even worldwide sanctions. We should be worried about our dream of a Zionist Jewish and democratic state.

Since 1967, hundreds of thousands of Israelis have settled in Judea and Samaria, creating big cities like Ma'ale Adumim or Ariel as well as dozens of smaller communities. Five percent of Israel's population lives across the "green line" (in the occupied territories) but under Israeli jurisdiction.

Now, Israel wants to add some of these areas formally to Israel. Basically, according to Trump's plan, Israel can annex almost 30% of the land without waiting for the Palestinians to negotiate. Because as we know, "The Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity," as the late Cape Townborn Israeli statesman, Abba Eban, once said.

Judea and Samaria are areas that the Jewish people inherited. Like Transjordan, Sinai, and further afield, they form part of our so-called Promised Land, parts of David's kingdom, and are sites of our history and legacy.

In the past century, the nations of the

world recognised our national aspirations, but as is the case with real-politik, they limited our geographical "playground". This zone – Palestine – Eretz Yisrael – was a rural, undeveloped corner of the Ottoman Empire before it became a British Mandate. More importantly, it wasn't empty of a population.

From the first minute, we didn't get along with our cousins there. Therefore, the only serious solutions proposed to deal with the conflict were based on a partition of the land, not a shared binational state.



Our views aren't racist, but based on legitimate national dreams that must be fulfilled one next to the other.

Each side was to have his own nation state. In the past century, the Zionist movement made the impossible a reality. The international resolutions started with less than 17% of the country being designated for Jews 100 years ago. Now, the opposite is true: we hold about 70% of the country, and the annexation might lead us to 85% of our Promised Land.

Within Israel, Arabs are full citizens. Still not equal in practice, but they amount to one-fifth of the population. However, what about the more than two million Arabs that live on the West Bank "in-between" the Jewish settlements? We also can't "ignore" approximately another two more million Palestinians who live in the Gaza strip. If Israel wants to expand its domain and stay a democracy, do we really want two million more full citizens?

Are we ready to have now – not in decades – 35% to 40% Israeli-Arabs (even without Gaza?) The Zionist dream is to have a Jewish homeland with a stable majority of Jews and not a binational state, a solution that hasn't worked out even in civilised Europe.

So, if we want to keep those two million extra Arabs away from Israel democracy but we do want to include Jewish settlers in Israel, we'll adopt the good old successful Zionist policy of "step by step". First, we'll take Gush Etzion, then we'll take the Jordan Valley. Small victories on the ground.

The only problem with this gradual expansion is that any step further makes us more and more responsible for those two million Palestinians. Now, the Palestinians in the territories are citizens of the Palestinian Authority – the interim self-governing entity that was established under the Oslo Accords.

This fragile political power we perceive as an autonomy is based only on Israel's will. The funds, the resources, the security, the roads, the infrastructure, are all controlled by Israel. With the coming annexation, we will leave the Palestinians dozens of small, isolated enclaves we will create unilaterally.

Israel isn't an apartheid regime. Our views aren't racist, but based on legitimate national dreams that must be fulfilled one next to the other. This annexation makes partition impossible, and as an Israeli left-wing Zionist, I can tell you, I'm losing my arguments to defend our policies and to protect our country as Jewish and democratic.

Building so-called free Palestinian regions responsible for their own fate but completely dependent on Israel, sounds more and more like South Africa's apartheid bantustans. We can persuade ourselves that the natives there are free to do whatever they want in their homeland, but for me, it resembles those distorted ideas more and more.

The world might be silent about this right

now. This would be due to different circumstances and priorities that would be

COVID-19-related. And the Palestinians are making so many mistakes, so much so that Israel can go on for a decade or two without any real consequences. But then, one day, the Palestinians will shout out that slogan you all know well here in South Africa, and we won't be able to continue to ignore – "one man, one vote" – from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean. One democracy, zero Jewish state.

It's still my Zionist dream to prevent this national nightmare. If we destroy the option for attaining real Palestinian sovereignty, as we are doing now, we would have no choice but to follow the moral, humanitarian, and democratic imperative.

My brothers, South African Jews, Israel lovers, especially those on the right wing in this country who believe we can't be conquerors in our homeland: please, help me remind your siblings in Israel that we can't ignore other human beings who were created in G-d's image. We can't create a fiction, and convince ourselves how generous and enlightened we are. We have to keep the option open for two homelands in order to save one. It's still my Zionist dream to prevent this national nightmare. Speak up now before it's too late to save the Jewish state. Do it quietly with your Israeli friends and counterparts in order not to arm our enemies.

Help us to not go one pace ahead. It's either one state with no Jewish dominance or democracy or two nation states. Anything in between is a dangerous, short-term illusion.

• Zvika (Biko) Arran is a publicist, social entrepreneur, lawyer, advisor to philanthropists, and the host of the Berl Katznelson Center podcast. He currently lives in Johannesburg with his wife and four sons.

I won't stay silent as Israel becomes an apartheid state

OPEN LETTER TO WORLD JEWRY

s a young boy growing up in South Africa in the 1980s, I was acutely aware of the stigma attached to being South African. I remember watching the protests as we woke up early in the morning to watch the Springboks tour New Zealand in 1981. I remember seeing protests around the country and the world, as people acted against the terrible system that was apartheid.

As a young football player, I dreamed of playing professionally, but never at the World Cup because we had been banned. As the country became more stigmatised and isolated, I recall friends in high school talking about starting their lives in other countries once they left school. Some of my favourite artists and bands demonstrated and wrote songs about this unjust system. Finally, when I travelled abroad to study in the United States, it really hit home, as people asked me if I hated black people, and made fun of me by quoting lines from Lethal Weapon 2 and asking if I had "diplomatic immunity".

Then an amazing thing happened. In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison and two years later, after years of continued internal struggle and international pressure, the white minority voted to end white minority rule and allow South Africa to become a fully-

fledged democracy. Suddenly it was "cool" to be South African. I would happily go on to achieve my dream of playing professional football and representing my country at international level.



I want to live in a country where I proudly send my children off to compulsory military service to defend this country..., but not to help take away the dignity of other human beings.

Five years ago, I brought my family on aliyah. I believed in the project of creating a homeland where Jewish people of all persuasions could be free to live and practice their religion in the face of growing antisemitism around the world. I was proud of what the Jewish people had accomplished just 70 years after the Holocaust, and held it up as an example to my South African friends.

I vehemently defended Israel to acquaintances and friends around the world when asked about Israeli occupation of the West Bank or our treatment of the Arab minority who are citizens of this country. I was quick to refute the commonly

used argument that Israel was an apartheid state. Whatever your views on occupation or the standing of our fellow Arab citizens, I argued that you could not compare that to the state-orchestrated oppression of black people in South Africa, where there was no vote, the Group Areas Act, poor access to quality education and healthcare, separate transport, and more. Regarding the West Bank, you might call it occupation, but you couldn't call it apartheid as by definition, that refers to separate laws for inhabitants within your own country.

I can't claim that I played any role in the downfall of apartheid. Yes, I may have attended the odd protest as a student, I may have argued my position in opposition at family occasions and amongst friends. Feeling opposed to the system, I readily jumped at the opportunity of a scholarship abroad to avoid compulsory military service with the plan of not going back, but I certainly don't think I had the courage to become a conscientious objector and spend years in prison.

Most white South Africans my age claim that we were born into the system. We didn't create it, and after all, what could we do to change it as young people? Over the years, I realise I could have done more.

A week ago, I read an insightful article by a fellow South African

oleh, Benjamin Pogrund, a real fighter against the injustice of apartheid. It expresses everything I feel. If Israel annexes territory and forces Palestinian people to live in enclaves so as to navigate the issue of withholding citizenship whilst taking their land, we will become no different to apartheid South Africa. If we don't grant people full rights, or force them into homelands and steal their hopes of being full citizens - be it in Israel or by taking their hopes of their own viable state - like Pogrund, I can no longer defend this country as not being an apartheid state.

As he says it, the word "apartheid" is emotive, and carries a lot of weight around the world. Until now, I feel it has been misused by those who would oppose Israel. If we continue with unilateral annexation, this is no longer the case. We will become a pariah state like the country of my birth, isolated by other democratic nations, and perhaps able to garner support only from other rogue nations.

"Ah," we boast. "But Israel is a leader in technology. The world needs us." You are wrong. We are not the only budding tech nation in the world. There are other countries who will develop the technology and take the opportunity to usurp us as the "start-up nation". Our gifted young people will jump at the chance to

WARREN LEWIS

work abroad and

leave these shores.

Businesses will take the millions – if not billions – to relocate, and rob the country of much-needed foreign

investment. I will not abide this culture of omerta, where it is frowned on as Jews to criticise the wrongs of Israel because we are afraid to be seen to be giving ammunition to our enemies. I want to live in a country where I proudly send my children off to compulsory military service to defend this country from those around us that would unjustly seek our destruction, but not to help take away the dignity of other human beings. I may not have a loud voice in this country – I can't even speak the language properly – nor have any platform, but I will add my voice to the multitude of those who oppose it. I will not be guilty of the sin of apathy. As the 18th century Anglo-Irish philosopher and statesman Edmund Burke once said: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

 Warren Lewis was a professional soccer player in South Africa. He played for Orlando Pirates, Moroka Swallows and AmaZulu, as well as for Bafana Bafana. He now lives in Israel. This letter has been shortened for editorial purposes.

COVID-19 nightmare ignites Canadian Jewry

hen Canadian lay leader Joel Reitman's uncle passed away as a result of COVID-19, Pesach was only three days away.

At the time, under Canada's lockdown measures, only five people could attend the funeral held on the eve of the holiday, with Reitman's mother having no choice but to watch her brother's funeral via Zoom.

For the past three months, Canadian citizens have lived under a challengingly restrictive lockdown, few of them untouched by the medical, psychological, or financial implications of the rampant virus.

Comrades Ultra Marathon makes it to the Holy Land

STAFF REPORTER

ormer South Africans Shmuel Shantall and Avigdor Book, who both live in Modi'in in Israel, had planned to take part in the 2020 Comrades Ultra Marathon, but found another way to tackle this incredible annual challenge.

Shantall, born and raised in Pretoria, would have taken part in his tenth run, earning him membership of the esteemed Green Number Club. Avigdor, who hails from Durban, would have been halfway to that goal. But it wasn't to be. For the first time in 75 years since World War II, the Comrades was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The motto of the 2020 Comrades was "Iphupho Lami" (Dare to Dream). It attracted a global response for a virtual Comrades that was made up of 43 788 runners from 86 countries, participating in a 5km, 10km, 21km, 45km, or 90km virtual race.

Shantall and Book realised their dream by completing a 90km Israel Comrades Marathon through the footsteps of time in 8 hours, 55



Runners, Shmuel Shantall and Avigdor Book, with Orva Shantall and Joyce Pantow at the end of their **Holy Land Ultra Marathon**

Keeping with this year's Comrades down-run route from Pietermaritzburg to Durban, a similar course from Jerusalem to Jaffa, Tel Aviv, was designed for their 90km journey.

The race began in Jerusalem on Sunday, 14 June, at 00:15 on the heights of Mount Scopus, going down to the Mount of Olives, hugging Mount Moriah via the Western Wall, ascending Mount Zion through the Old City, and up toward Mount Herzl, and past Yad Vashem.

They then ran onto the scenic undulating peaks and valleys of the Jewish National Fund's forested mountains, culminating with a fast flat finish through the coastal plain to Jaffa, ending with a well-earned dip in the blue waters of the Mediterranean on the Tel Aviv beachfront.

Native Israeli ultra-distance runner Eden Paz joined Shantall and Book for the 90km adventure. These three seasoned ultra-marathon athletes were supported by family and friends along the route including four running friends – to bring them home as part of their own 21km virtual marathon.

This historical Comrades, run on the ancient pilgrimage route between Jerusalem and Jaffa, was guided while running by Shantall, who is also a licensed national tourist guide in Israel, and shared live on his Facebook page.

Stunning aerial footage was captured by Ben Stern, a friend to the runners, also a resident of Modi'in.

Their dare to dream has now made the Comrades Ultra Marathon a historical fact in the Holy Land. Next year in Pietermaritzburg with Jerusalem!

community is no exception, its members maintain a sense of defiant optimism.

"I don't think we can see the light at the end of the tunnel just yet," said Reitman, the cochairperson of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), the advocacy arm of the Jewish Federations of Canada.

"They're talking of a second wave, of opening the economy up in steps. Life isn't going to be like it was pre-COVID-19 for a long time, but negativity isn't an option. Shrivel up and die? Not a chance."

Reitman this week outlined to the SA Jewish Report the reality faced by Canadian Jewry, recounting how lockdown began in March this year, and effectively brought life to a standstill. To date, more than 90 000 cases of the virus have been identified in Canada, with 48 000 resolved and 7 200 deaths.

"It's been a surreal experience," he said. "In Canada, we have a March school break during which many people take a vacation, and most of us were abroad at the time in North America." Reitman and his family were also on holiday, and came home early owing to talk of an impending lockdown at home, returning to Toronto only a day before the country shut down on 14 March.

"When they announced the closure of the American border, it really hit us," Reitman said. "It's the longest border in the world, and it has never once been closed in the years since Canada became a federation. We couldn't quite come to terms with it."

Closer to home, Jewish centres and shuls were also ordered to close immediately, with authorities clamping down on the number of people who could attend an essential religious gathering. It was for this reason that Reitman's uncle's funeral was severely restricted.

"My uncle was 82," said Reitman.

Smoked Rainbow

Trout-

80g R44.85

500g R241.50

"He passed away alone in hospital, without any of his family around him. We watched his funeral on Zoom. It was one of the most difficult and gut-wrenching experiences I've endured.

"A rabbi, two gravediggers, and only two family members could attend. It drove home for all us just how personal this virus really is. It's more than just a statistic - it's

In spite of the emotional upheaval, Reitman remained committed to his community, working with CIJA to mitigate the devastating effects of the virus on the wider Jewish community as much as possible.

"While we had to close our offices, CIJA was very much part of advocating for help from the government for our community," said Reitman. "We ensured money flowed through from major charities and was being received directly by people in need."

The process has required ongoing conversation with political leadership, encouraging the involvement of various levels of government in assisting the Jewish community where possible. Reitman said that CIJA had engaged in several round-table meetings with local, provincial, and federal leadership to make sure that the Jewish community continued to be heard.

"We want them to know what our community's needs are on a general and individual basis," said Reitman. "It's vital to ensure that our community feels engaged in what is happening and that it's heard at different levels."

Reitman has also strived to assist those in need beyond the Jewish community, donating supplies to foodbanks and raising funds wherever possible.

"Let's face it, this isn't just touching our Jewish communities, but hundreds across the country. Toronto had a special campaign asking those who could to give a little more when necessary, and

Salmon & Trout

Shavings-300g

R69.00

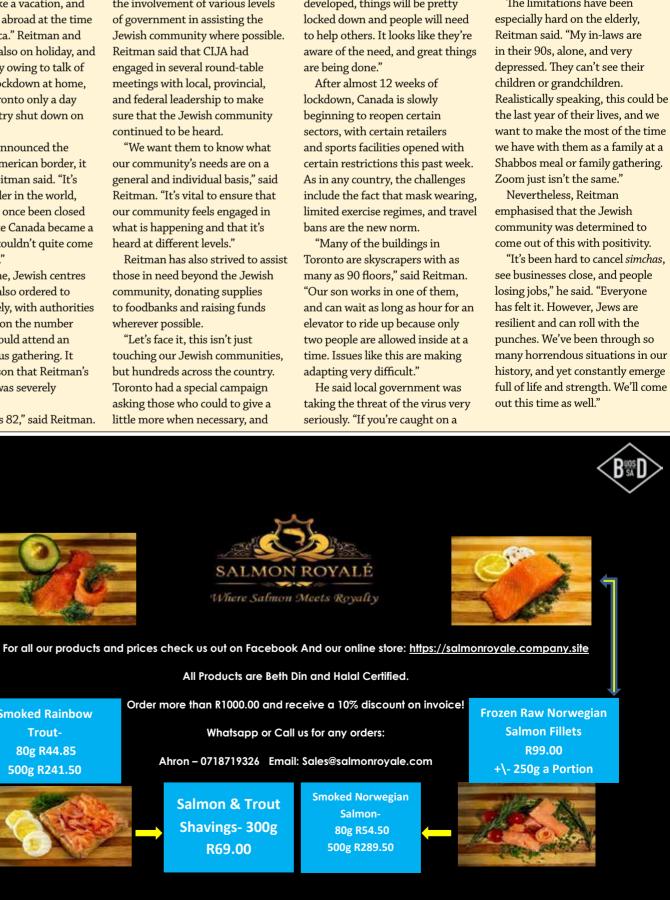
people in our community take out their wallets and help others in

spite of the circumstances.

"COVID-19 knows no rules, borders, or protocols. If it wants to attack, it will. Until a vaccine is developed, things will be pretty

park bench with people, or are seen walking too close together with them, police can issue you with a ticket and a C\$1 500 [R18 782] fine. They warn you first, but they've already issued plenty to people who don't follow the rules."

The limitations have been Reitman said. "My in-laws are





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Saving a school tennis coach from being homeless

TALI FEINBERG

icholas Ngoma was an orphan and living on the streets before he fought his way to dignity through a talent for tennis. He has been coaching Jewish schoolchildren for years, but this ended overnight with the closure of schools and the beginning of lockdown.

On the day that Dani Silbermann and Julia Marcus heard about him, he was about to be evicted, landing back on the streets that he had fought so hard to escape. Although he had worked at King David Schools, he was not employed by them, and didn't want to reach out to them for help.

Silbermann heard about his plight from a mother in the community. Thanks to her new initiative with Marcus, Aloan Together, they were able to help him with funds after they put out a call to the community.

"The response was unbelievable. We literally raised the funds overnight. People couldn't stop raving about this *menschedike* man who pulled himself out of poverty and found tennis to be his calling," says Silbermann. "One mother said he used to buy her son a Coke after every tennis lesson, out of his own pocket. Another said her child idolised him. Many said their kids saw him as a 'big brother' or mentor.

"We got donations ranging from R50 to R5 000. Children donated their pocket money. Our community stepped up and took Nicholas under their wing. People offered him a place to stay, a tennis court to work from, and coaching for their kids. Donations came from Australia, England, and New Zealand. People who had finished school years ago remembered him and donated."

Ngoma now has a secure future, and the funds will also contribute to his advancement in tennis coaching accreditation with Tennis South Africa. "All we did was create the platform. Without our community opening their hearts and wallets, we wouldn't have been able to help him," say Silbermann and Marcus.

Their initiative began when Silbermann was thinking about the individuals who would lose their single-person businesses and income streams as South Africa went into lockdown. In her mind were the people she interacts with on a daily basis, such as Uber drivers or beauticians.

"I was thinking about the sectors most affected by the overnight shutdown in their ability to earn, and was most struck by individual income earners that rely solely on their self-created trade. These people survive day to day, their sole access to income their particular trade," she says.

"For example, the Uber driver who has stretched himself to finance a car and create a microbusiness suddenly can't drive under lockdown, which means he can't pay his car instalments. What then? It made me profoundly sad. This is the forgotten sector," says Silbermann.

She saw no other option but to help such individuals. Realising

she couldn't do it alone, s
called on the only person
she knew who would
take on such a task
without question
– her childhood
best friend,
Julia Marcus,
a senior
strategy
manager at
AIA Health,
who lives in
Melbourne.

"I'm quick to get
overly invested and
dive head in without
much pragmatism," says
Silbermann. "So I knew I needed
Julia to make it a viable reality.
She's the smartest person I know.
Our skill sets work well together."

Marcus agreed without hesitation, and within days, they had set up *Aloan Together: A partnership of mutual dignity* – "a platform whereby everyday people lend to everyday people, so that these individuals can survive and recover from the loss of income and future uncertainty that threatens everything they have built".

Since the women began this work in April, they have secured 12 loans for South Africans in need. "Not one of these people has just accepted the help without question. Every single one has such pride in what they have built, and promises to do their best to pay back the loan in time so that someone else can be helped," says Silbermann.

They identify individuals who need help, and do a thorough background check. Silbermann manages the marketing and social media to raise the funds needed, while Marcus handles the financial side. "Together we balance each other out!"

Talking to the SA Jewish Report from Melbourne, Marcus explains why this cause is so important to her even though she is so far away. "I remain deeply connected to South Africa, and I will always be committed to contributing to the well-being and success of its people. South Africa has given me so much, and will always be a place I call home.

"During a major economic crisis, one can't help but feel a pull to help the most vulnerable. While there are so many incredible initiatives and charities doing amazing work at the moment, there are still so many people with nowhere to turn, and I want to do what I can to help.

"The sector we have focused on is un-salaried, low-income earners, many of whom fall through the cracks between support funds, non-profit organisations, and government-relief schemes," she says. "It's devastating to think of this sector, whose members are active contributors to the economy and usually earn their own income, but are now facing crippling financial hardship due to being unable to earn at all. It's crucial to sustain them through the crisis, and help them to retain their ability to earn an income so that once the COVID-19 crisis passes, they can go back to earning a living."

She explains that the loans are raised through crowdfunding,



where "many small contributions come together to have a profound

impact on someone's life. In this way, we can unlock the barriers to accessing traditional loans that would usually prevent this sector from the short-term funding they need.

"The loan concept is central to the structure. Not only does providing an interest-free loan create a genuine partnership of mutual dignity, but the same amount of money can go a lot further. We work on a pay-it-forward system, which means that loans that are repaid can be re-invested into the fund [if the sponsor elects to do so], and the same initial contribution can be used to help the next person in need. And so the cycle goes. In this way, a given amount of money can

help a multiple of the number of people a once-off donation can."

"I didn't know people cared about me," Ngoma says. "Things were very bad, but now I'm okay. I really

appreciate everything."

Aloan Together will keep going
as more people reach out for
help. To the South African Jewish
community, its founders say a
"profound thank you. It's a privilege
to fundraise with you."

To support this initiative, visit www.aloannotalone.co.za

• If a member of the Jewish community needs financial assistance, please approach the Chevrah Kadisha, the Rambam Trust, or the newly established Gesher Fund.

Fighting fires on two frontlines

TALI FEINBERG

"I was out fighting the deadly bushfires for weeks on end during the summer months, and now my wife, Kate, is on the frontline in the fight against coronavirus," says ex-South African Noel Kessel.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* back in January, the photographer and volunteer firefighter described his near-death experience in one of Australia's massive bushfires in Buxton, New South Wales. Surrounded by walls of fire and with his vehicle alight, he said the *Shema*, and expected to be engulfed in flames. But by some miracle, he and his fellow firemen were rescued by another fire crew, who water-bombed the encroaching blaze.

When out fighting fires, "You always have in the back of your mind that things can go wrong very quickly. You always think of your family," he says. "The most dangerous part of fighting fires is falling trees. Out in the field we call them 'widow makers'. On numerous occasions, we had near-misses. Every now and then, without warning, you would hear a loud crack and then a boom as a large tree crashed to the ground. That's probably one of the scariest parts of the job, especially at night."

Now, his wife, Kate, is in another frightening but very different environment as a registered nurse at

one of Sydney's largest hospitals. "I work mainly in the infusion clinic, treating mostly cancer patients," she says. "As the COVID-19 pandemic began to escalate, the daily routine at the hospital began to change. Within days, certain wards were shut down and transformed into intensive-care wards in preparation for the influx of the predicted thousands of COVID-19 cases.

"As the number

of cases climbed, so did our preparedness. Staff was shuffled around the hospital, and strict treatment procedures and protocols were implemented. We were instructed to treat every patient as if they were carrying the COVID-19 virus, which meant wearing full personal protective equipment including surgical gowns, masks, gloves, and eye/face protection. Every person who entered the hospital was also required to have their temperature checked. The health department estimated that about 45 000 people would contract the virus."

By 17 June, there were a total of 7 370 cases in

Australia, and 102 deaths. "All in all, I'm grateful that Hashem has been looking after us here in Australia, and life is slowly returning to normal," Kate says.

But the double blow of both parents putting their lives at risk has been hard on their children, Liorah (13) and Avishai (11).

"After we were involved in the fire overrun at Buxton, I tried to keep it quiet from my children. This didn't last long, as it was all over the news the next day along with the tragic details of the five firemen who suffered serious burns and the two who died when a tree fell onto their fire truck," says Noel.

"Not only did it send a shiver up my spine, it really spooked Avishai. He became very clingy, and was anxious and emotional whenever I would head off to the fire station. On one occasion, he grabbed me, crying and refusing to let go. Clearly this was all having an effect on him.

"On the upside, whenever I would return, he would greet me with a huge embrace. My daughter, Liorah, seemed to handle it all pretty well, even to the point that she has joined the Rural Fire Service Cadet Program.

"In March, things started to settle down, but then we were faced with heavy storms and days of attending storm-related incidents all around Sydney. And just when we thought normality was returning,

we were hit with the coronavirus pandemic."

Once again, Kate's work on the frontline has taken a toll on their children, particularly Avishai. "Going to work meant potentially contracting the virus. Both children were scared of that scenario," she says.

In addition, "both children qualified for the Chidon Sefer Hamitzvot competition in New York, and we were all meant to fly over there in late March. More than 5 000 teens from around the world converge on Crown Heights for a week of activities and outings, culminating in a huge Shabbaton and the final game show. Liorah has participated for the past three years, this was meant to be her fourth time.

"Avishai had studied for almost

two years before undertaking the series of gruelling exams. We were all were ecstatic when he qualified for the first time. He was really looking forward to it – quite rightly so. Sadly, two days before we were meant to fly out, it was all cancelled. He was extremely disappointed."

However, there have been bright moments for the Kessels even when things seemed so dark. They have been supported practically and emotionally by their families, as well as their rabbi and community. "We have seen the best come out in people," they say. "Everyone has been looking after each other."



Islamist insurgents in Mozambique on region's radar

STEVEN GRUZD

ince October 2017, young armed Islamist fighters have been carrying out vicious attacks on civilians in the northeastern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado. Victims have been tortured, beheaded, and their homes have been burned.

But due to restrictions on journalists and researchers visiting the area, "there is a lack of empirical data" on exactly who this mysterious movement is, and what it wants, said Dr Liazzat Bonate, a lecturer in African History at the University of the West Indies.

"They have become more and more secretive as they have been driven deeper into the bush. We don't know who their leaders are, and we don't know their objectives. They rarely appear in public compared to, say, Boko Haram in Nigeria, to announce their platform or agenda. Details are so sketchy. We need to know the history and biography of the leaders."

Bonate was speaking last
Wednesday in a Zoom webinar
titled, "Unpacking insurgent
violence in northern Mozambique"
hosted by the Afro-Middle
East Centre. Dr Yussuf Adam,
a lecturer from Universidade
Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo, also
participated in the panel discussion.

Outside of Mozambique, this conflict has been ignored for a

long time. But recent attacks and pictures of the insurgents sporting Islamic State (ISIS) flags has made the region sit up and take notice.

A high-level meeting in May of the security body of the Southern African Development Community pledged assistance to government efforts to eliminate the threat. Bonate said, "It's not clear if the link with ISIS is very firm, or a strategic alliance for now."

She said the movement sought to challenge the state, "to delegitimise it, and make people not abide by state laws, to defy police, courts, and secular justice. They want Sharia law [Islamic jurisprudence] applied instead." Some have called the group "Al Shabaab", which means "the youth" (not to be confused with the movement of this name in Somalia). It has also been called "Ansar al-Sunna" or "Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo", translated as "adherents of the prophetic tradition".

Bonate said repressive government tactics had worsened rather than improved the problem, and had drawn more disaffected youth to the insurgency. "The government unleashed unprecedented violence on these youths, their wives, their families. Many were arrested and then released on lack of evidence. The insurgency has entered its third year, and the situation has

worsened as it has become more violent and gruesome."

Said Adam, "Problems between religion and state have a long history in Mozambique. Under the Marxist regime, it was an anticlerical state for many years."

Bonate also noted that this region, with a Muslim population of 58%, had been riven with

8th or 9th centuries. The question, therefore, is why the conflict has broken out here, and why now?"

Bonate believes the answer lies in the discovery of enormous oil and gas fields of the Cabo Delgado coast about a decade ago. The exploitation of these resources has enriched outsiders at the expense of the indigenous population. The timeline mercenaries, there is a lot of collateral damage, a lot of lives lost."

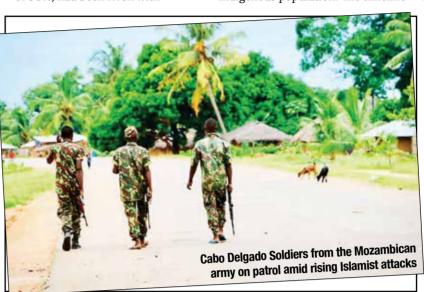
"The north has always felt abandoned, undermined, and ignored," Bonate said. The hope after the end of the civil war in 1992 soon dissipated as young people grew disillusioned with the government. They have become more radicalised as opportunities have dried up, land has been taken away, and they have been brutalised by public and private security forces. Nearly 1 000 people have been killed and more than 100 000 displaced by this conflict. Funding has reportedly come from the heroin trade, illegal logging and mining, and human trafficking.

Both speakers doubted connections with Renamo (the Mozambican National Resistance), Mozambique's long-time liberation-movement-turned-opposition party.

"Muslims from Mozambique are known to have fought in the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. I know this because they come home to be buried, and I have a friend in the casket business," Adam said.

"There is a combination of being marginalised in the country and seeing huge wealth that they get no benefit from. The discontent is rising, and latches onto an Islamist ideology."

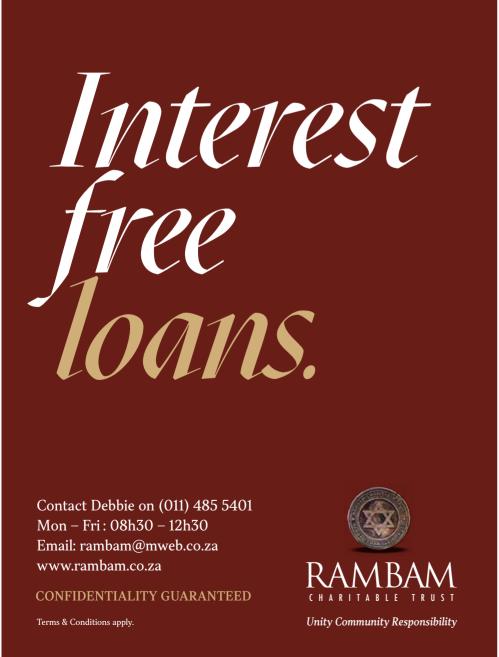
It's a threat the region can no longer ignore.



internecine ethnic and political conflict for centuries. "Scholars have described the escalating violence as something new, emanating from neighbouring countries. But this region is in the Swahili-speaking world, and it's not a new thing. Muslims have lived on this coastal belt from Somalia, through Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique for more than 1 000 years, since the

of the escalating violence ties in with these extractive industries. Conflict has also brought in

private security companies – often thinly-veiled mercenaries – from Russia, the United States, and South Africa. Adam said their involvement has complicated the picture. "There is an opportunity for business. There is a market for security. With cowboy-type



MEDICAL · HOME · EDUCATION · SIMCHA · CAR



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Kathrada's activism inspired by European antisemitism

JORDAN MOSHE

olitical activist Ahmed Kathrada's staunch opposition to the racist policies of the apartheid government was inspired by his exposure to the tyranny of Nazi Germany against Jews, a historian told a Zoom audience on Tuesday,

Dr Roni Mikel Arieli, a cultural historian of Jewish history in Southern Africa, explored Kathrada's perceptions and reflections on the Holocaust in a meeting hosted by the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC).

Using Kathrada's memoirs, an interview with him in 2016, and an array of archival material, Arieli fleshed out Kathrada's insights on the Holocaust through a distinctively internationalist perception of colonialism.

"[Kathrada's views] speak for the encounter between Holocaust memory and traumatic memories of racism and their potential to promote solidarity and justice," she said.

The historian recounted Kathrada's visit to Europe, notably Auschwitz and Warsaw in 1951, and assessed the impact of his reading of the diary of Anne Frank during his imprisonment on Robben Island. Collectively, they brought the lens of the Holocaust to bear on South Africa, and created a sense of solidarity with the oppressed across continents.

Kathrada was born in 1929 in Schweizer-Reneke, a town in North West Province, to a traditional Indian family. They were no strangers to legislated oppression and discrimination, a reality which worsened with time. In 1939, when the South African parliament decided to enter World War II on the side of the Allies, it placed further restrictions on Indian citizens, Arieli

"In response, a new, communistaligned Indian leadership developed, with Dr Yusuf Dadoo joining the party in 1939," she said. "Kathrada was drawn to communism as well."

By the mid-forties, he was admitted to the South African Communist Party (SACP), and it was here that he learned about the atrocities being committed against Jews in Nazi Germany.

Said Arieli, "He told me that he became conscious of the world outside South Africa, and that's how he learned of Nazism and later on, of course, of the Holocaust and the ghettos."

Although the SACP initially opposed the war, it shifted its position after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, and became a staunch defender of human liberties in the face of Nazi terror.

"Kathrada testified that the party's anti-fascist message had a great impact on him, especially in light of the right-wing Afrikaner support for Nazism at the time," said Arieli. "He asserted that the sights of war he witnessed later during his European trip reinforced his beliefs."

Kathrada became a prominent youth leader, organising the 1946 South African Indian Congress's passive-resistance movement against the Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, also known

the political representation afforded to Indians at the time, and confined their living areas.

Said Arieli, "The use of the term 'ghetto' here was, of course, charged with resonances of its use in Nazi Germany." Indeed, this notion was reinforced when the National Party won the 1948 election, and perpetuated rhetoric which was eerily reminiscent of the Nazi regime.

The general election in 1948 marked the beginning of a new era in South Africa, Arieli said.

In their interview,

Kathrada told Arieli that

the legislation which followed "might have been taken straight from Hitler's Third Reich, as some of the most prominent members of the Nationalist Party had unashamedly supported Nazi

Kathrada's understanding of the

Holocaust and other war atrocities was heightened in 1951, when



he left to serve as head of the Africa desk at the World Federation of Democratic Youth in Budapest. He travelled Europe

extensively, including Poland, where he witnessed first-hand

> war. In Prague, he learned of a village which had been destroyed by Nazi forces in response to the assassination of Nazi leader Reinhard Heydrich in 1942

Arieli quoted Kathrada's journal, "Thoughts of bloody and cruel retribution exacted by the Nazi henchman darkened edges of my consciousness." The same thoughts pervaded his mind when he visited the site of the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland shortly thereafter.

"When I visited what had been the ghetto, I was reminded of the Nazi

atrocities in Czechoslovakia. The Jews had been crushed as ruthlessly as had the villagers, consigned to an area of the city behind a wall almost three metres high," Arieli quoted Kathrada as saying.

"The Jews had been warned by an escapee from Treblinka that extermination waited at the end of a nightmarish journey. When I visited the site of this blot on humanity, only a modest monument marked the murder of tens of thousands of Jews and paid tribute to those who fought back and died."

Said Arieli, "While his memoires specifically described the Warsaw victims as Jews, he also recognised the non-Jewish victims of Nazi atrocities," she said. "He points to similarities between the crushing of the resistance of the ghetto and the oppression of others."

These stories of resistance gave shape to Kathrada's universal perception of the cost of the war, and although it depends to a large extent on particularities, he applied it universally.

"He recognised the specific Jewish identity, but placed their resistance alongside broader ideas and also reflected on his own struggle in South Africa," she said.

Former lecturer has classic time as undergraduate

JORDAN MOSHE

Germany".

ormer University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) lecturer Dr Ittamar Avin retired from the university's English department after 30 years of teaching in 2002, so few expected him to return as an undergraduate 14 years later.

The 77-year-old veteran academic and Durban resident was among those who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) undergraduate degree from the UKZN in a virtual ceremony last week. He has devoted the past four years to studying Latin, determined to continue his pursuit of knowledge in spite of being in retirement.

"I loved it from the start," Avin told the SA Jewish Report. "I taught at what was then Natal University for almost 30 years, and served as dean of students in the Humanities faculty between 1996 and 1998.

"As a teacher and administrator, thousands of students passed through my hands. I always loved their company, and this was an opportunity to learn alongside them."

Born in Cape Town to a traditional Jewish family, Avin matriculated from Herzlia High School in 1959, his father also serving as the school's second headmaster. He attained his undergraduate degree at the University of Cape Town, and subsequently pursued his postgraduate degrees overseas.

Avin returned to South Africa in 1975, joining the English department at Natal University, with a speciality in 17th and 18th-century English literature.

When he retired in 2002 at the age of 60 (as per the university's policy at the time), he maintained his passion for the pursuit of knowledge and learning. While he read extensively, travelled widely, and pursued many interests, he yearned to return to studying. In 2011, he enrolled for a master's degree at the University of the Free State (UFS), where he completed a thesis on Holocaust literature, graduating in 2014.

Determined to continue, he enrolled at UKZN as an undergraduate student in 2016 for a BA at the age of 73, taking up a formidable subject even for literary scholars: the ancient classics.

"The literature of the 17th and 18th centuries throughout Europe was saturated with the influence of the classics," he says. "It bears the legacy of ancient Greece and Rome.

"It irked me throughout my career that I could never range through those sources in their original languages. I felt such a sense of deficit. Studying them wasn't possible while I worked, but I resolved to address the deficit when I retired. It was time.'

He took up ancient Greek and Latin, also choosing electives that he had never engaged with, including linguistics and comparative religion. After a year, he chose to drop Greek, and forged ahead with Latin as his major.

"These days, the study of classics is highly selfselective," Avin says. "It's a kind of study that will attract those who are highly motivated, diligent,

them unfazed by his presence. "In theory, I was intimated," he says. "But once theory became practice and I was mingling amongst students, I enjoyed every moment. We respected each other, and I found them all congenial.

"Some of the African students routinely called me 'Baba' and 'Nkulu' (Zulu terms of respect for the elderly), and I found my place among them

Over his four-year degree, one of Avin's greatest challenges was sitting down to a time-sensitive exam after years of research and writing.

"It felt unusual to sit an exam after 50 years of being a research student," he laughs. "I didn't manage my time very well in my first year, and I was useless at budgeting time in exams. I paid for that. I managed in the end, though."

While many have hailed his graduation as

remarkable, Avin says his achievement isn't notable in the least.

"It isn't notable even though it may be newsworthy because of my age," he says. "My whole working career has been in an academic setting, so my studies and graduation shouldn't be remarkable. The fact that I am 77 is an extraneous fact. What I have done is pursue knowledge."

The really notable performers are the young students with whom he graduated, he says.

"Many of them come to university with a deprived educational background, set shoulder to the wheel, and manage to resist the many temptations and distractions around them to pursue a

degree. Those are the individuals who should be interviewed as they are the unsung heroes who deserve to be sung."

Avin says Jews have always placed a high premium on the pursuit of learning. "The greatest insult you could level at a fellow Jew in Eastern Europe was to accuse him of being illiterate," he says. "Study has been a Jewish tradition over the centuries.

"The Jewish notion of a learned person is talmid chacham. If you parse that, it means the disciple of a learned person, and the learning one accumulates is a credit to one's teachers.

"I like that. I'm simply a disciple who owes his teachers so much."



and able. Such people are sadly few."

Avin says his undergraduate experience was incredible. "I enjoyed the rare privilege of being taught by really good teachers in tiny classes with the luxury of individual attention, in the company of classmates who were superb and extraordinary,"

"How many undergraduate students are so lucky? It was a gift. There I was, a white-haired old man surrounded by forbearing fellow students, old enough to be their grandfather, and they were willing to put up with me and my idiosyncrasies. It was a privilege."

Although Avin initially feared his presence would intimidate other students, he found

Murder and memory in Bethlehem a compelling story

JORDAN MOSHE

hen multi award-winning South
African author Jonny Steinberg set out
to write a story about a man wrongly
accused of a heinous crime, he believed he had all
the facts. Only later did he understand how fickle
human memory really is, and how we all struggle
to tell fact from fiction at some point in our lives.

"The very act of memory is reconstructive," Steinberg says. "We select, reconstruct, and tell stories when we remember. A story isn't reality. When we remember, we reshape the real world into a story."

This perspective informed the writing of Steinberg's latest novel, *One Day in Bethlehem*. He recently shared insight into the book's creation with journalist Jonathan Ancer in an online discussion hosted by the Jewish Literary Festival.

"Steinberg wrestles with dark and difficult subjects," said Ancer. "His books have helped us get to grips with some of the fundamental issues facing South Africa, from farm murders, prison gangs, rural life, to the immigrant experience, and more. He makes invisible people visible."

This is certainly true of his latest work, one concerned with Fusi Mofokeng, Tshokolo Mokoena, and what happened at a trial in South Africa on 2 April 1992.

"I was inspired by an article I read in the *Sunday Times* in 2011," recounted Steinberg. "Two men had just walked out of prison. They had been in

jail for 19 years for a crime which, by the time they were released, everyone believed they hadn't committed. Those who committed the crime agreed that these men were innocent."

Steinberg reached out to Mofokeng, and after extensive interviews, set out to commit the story to paper.

"If you're going to write intimately about somebody, it helps if they talk a lot," Steinberg said. "The silent person is incredibly hard to write about. Fusi is a silent person. He was polite and quite concealed when we first met, and he stayed that way.

"I had to work with his silences, and what they really meant. I listened to the quietness of his responses. That's where his depth really came out."

Steinberg unravelled a complicated tale.

"Fusi was an ordinary young man living in the rural town of Bethlehem in the Free State," he said. "He only had a Standard 7 [Grade 9] education, and worked as a cashier. One morning, he received a visit from his brother-in-law from the East Rand of Johannesburg, joined by a group of anxious looking men.

"The men stayed a few hours, and drove off," said Steinberg. "By evening, they're back. Fusi's brother-in-law reveals he is part of an [ANC] self-defence unit, and was on his way to deliver arms to comrades. He says, 'The police stopped us, we opened fire, and killed one of them, and now I'm hiding.'"

Later that night, security police find the men, and haul them all off to jail. Steinberg says the accepted story was that the men had been brought into town to carry out a robbery.

"Fusi was charged with murder through common purpose, found guilty, and put in prison," he said. "His entire 19 years in prison he spent putting sweat and blood into proving his innocence. He finished school, studied law, and learned to write and speak English.

"Finally, he was let out on parole, and I later set out to write the story of this innocent man."

Or so Steinberg thought. After three years of working with Mofokeng, Steinberg was given access to the transcript of the trial at which the accused man had been convicted. Rather than affirm his story, Steinberg says the information Mofokeng shared with him wasn't only unreliable, but wrong.

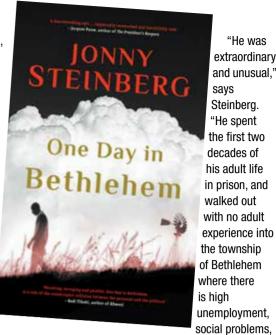
"It dawned on me what actually happened to his memory over the years," said Steinberg. "Mofokeng had taken what was said six years later at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, all of which had been fabricated just to get people off, and he had transposed that testimony onto the day of the incident.

"That put me in a quandary. I came to believe his story was untrue, and that that he didn't know it was untrue."

Steinberg never found out what really happened on that day, but believes there is a very strong possibility that Mofokeng was involved in the murder.

"I put down the book, and didn't want to write anymore," he says. "Still, it just sat with me and felt wrong. I had spent years on it, and it was going to waste."

More than that, Steinberg felt Mofokeng was a remarkable individual in spite of his flawed memory and possible wrongdoing.



and huge alcohol abuse."

Mofokeng not only survived, but flourished, says Steinberg.

"He fell in love, adopted his new wife's children, started work as a mechanic, and shot through the ranks. He was an incredibly skilled, decent person, and to spend 20 years in prison and walk out like that is unusual.

"I had a hunch there was a connection between his bad memory and his decency. I said, 'If I cannot write this story, what am I doing?' I felt an obligation to him, the story, and my craft."

Ultimately, Steinberg believes that reality spools across time only with the meaning we attach to it because of memory.

"We always have a purpose in telling a story, and it's often self-justifying," he says. "We are dark and complex beings. We hide things from ourselves, and often don't know the truth of who we really are. Those are the things worth writing about."

Jewish Report

Hakhel wins prestigious prize for incubating communities

JORDAN MOSHE

this month awarded to Hakhel, the world's largest Jewish intentional community incubator project, which has ties to South Africa. An intentional community is a collective with an intention and goal, but which operates in a flat structure in which every voice has a say.

Hakhel received the prize for its work to cultivate emerging Jewish communities all over the world, and for forging a connection between them and Israel. The coveted prize was awarded at a ceremony held at Israeli President Reuven Rivlin's residence.

Hakhel actively cultivates emerging Jewish communities by providing seed funding and mentorship. It has reached more than 130 communities in 30 different countries since its creation in 2014.

Jews," says Sussman. "We strive to make our shrinking Jewish community here more vibrant and sustainable. Addressing expressions of our identity is central to that mission."

She says 9th Street is intended to fill a cultural gap in Johannesburg Jewish life, especially among younger Jews.

"While there is community life here, little of what goes on really captures the younger Jewish population. So much of what we do is directed at the supposed 'apathetic' millennials whom people say aren't interested in being Jewish. We show this isn't true, that they actually lack a way to express their Jewish identity in a way beyond traditional modes."

9th Street came to Hakhel's notice shortly after its inception in May 2018, when Sussman and other community leaders applied for the support of the Israeli community incubator. The South African group was accepted into the network

> in September that year, establishing a cultural and mentoring bond with Hakhel and its general director, Aharon Ariel Lavi.

Says Sussman, "Aharon helped to provide the opportunity for leaders within these intentional communities from around the world to join forces and engage at conferences held in Israel and the United States. It was extremely formative for us as a new entity.

"Every person at 9th Street contributes ideas and energy that they want to instil in the community, and so much of this has been driven by

Hakhel. When I attended the Jewish Intentional Community Conference in April 2019, it was eye-opening to see the full diversity of Jewish life from across the world in one place. From South Korea to Argentina, ultra-Orthodox to secular, all Jews were represented. They all strive to work together to create a cohesive community life network."

Sussman says an intentional community needs to be peopled by individuals who live in close proximity to one other in order for it to be effective.

"It's easier to get together and make things happen that way," she says. "We cannot take this online – it wouldn't work. It needs to be based in a certain locale to meet the needs of the people in that place specifically." For this reason, 9th Street operates primarily out of Norwood and Orange Grove, including members within a 5km radius.



The 9th Street intentional community members on a Tu B'Shvat seder excursion in Paterson Park

"Hakhel has been instrumental in helping us here in Johannesburg, and really deserves the recognition," said Leigh Nudelman Sussman on Sunday. "It has given Jewish communities in the diaspora unique tools and support that enables them to make a difference and help Jews to express a uniquely individual Jewish identity."

Sussman is the founder of 9th Street, a community of multidisciplinary Jewish artists based in Johannesburg. The group aims to promote high-calibre Jewish artwork, and comprises emerging and veteran Jewish artists who collaborate in projects aimed at disrupting the way Johannesburg Jews think about their Jewish identity.

"Our Jewish identity here is fraught. We wanted people to ask questions about who they are as



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Is it the *frum* or the virus we're targeting?

t has become my routine each Shabbat morning during level 3 lockdown to go for a walk with my family.

This past week, on the way home, I walked past groups of men who had clearly been to . If I was tempted to say anything to them, I was stopped in my tracks by one of my sons, who reminded me that I'm not a COVID-19 "street prefect". For that reason, I didn't point out that they, and some runners we had walked past, weren't wearing masks either.

For clarity sake, not wearing a mask is illegal, having a *minyan* with less than 50 people, where rules are adhered to, isn't. But that doesn't make it smart either.

The lead article in the SA Jewish Report (12 June 2020), "Defiant private minyanim happening despite high risk", was criticised on social media. The allegation was that media (including Jewish media) are quick to point out the behaviour of Orthodox Jews, while the non-observant seem to receive a free pass.

Shops, they claim, are full, people are breaking lockdown rules by having play dates and gettogethers, but the focus has been on places of prayer. A similar allegation was made in relation to the Israeli press where those living in Tel Aviv weren't singled out for going to the beach, while those in religious communities were vilified.

In New York, similar accusations were made. It's even more noticeable when tens of thousands of people have been allowed to participate in marches across the city, but playgrounds in religious neighbourhoods have remained closed.

There is a perception among some within the religious community that they are being targeted. There is a sense that whereas most people break the rules in one way or another, when it comes to the religious community, there seems to be a vehement intolerance.

If the concern is accurate and there is indeed more of a focus on "frum" Jews, is this because of a bias, because religious Jews are easily identifiable, or because there is the expectation that they should INNER VOICE Howard Feldman

know better?

While there might be an element of truth to it, the danger is that it allows the conversation to shift towards a "hostile press" and away from the very real dangers of gathering for a *minyan* or anything else. In the same way that difficult questions are being asked of the media, the issue of compliance and resistance to regulations in some sections of this community should also be examined. And those who are involved in the so called "secret *minyanim*" need to take an honest look at themselves.

Over the past week, the number of infections has increase significantly in our community. Hatzolah has issued a warning pleading with people to stay home, and it remains to be seen how long schools will be able to stay open. The pandemic has already had an impact on the Muslim community following Eid celebrations, which illustrates the danger of gathering in groups.

All shuls have remained closed, and the chief rabbi, although keen to find a way for them to open, has decided that now isn't the time to do so.

Lessons learned around the world have taught that religious get-togethers are dangerous, and have resulted in the spread of the virus in communities that defied the rules.

Not everyone agrees. My father, who is 83 and has comorbidities, is one of them. He is of the view that we need to have more faith in G-d, and that we are pretty much a weak and neurotic generation.

On Tuesday, when chatting on the phone, he lamented the fact that shuls aren't open. His new concern is that people are being trained not to go to *minyanim* anymore. "What's more," he said, now fired up by the subject, "Do you know how long it's going to take to get people back to shul?"

"Yes," I agreed wholeheartedly, "Especially the dead ones! They will take the longest."

We have agreed to disagree on this. We have also hidden his car keys. ----- A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Jews a convenient scapegoat for communities under stress

hen societies are under stress, there is heightened risk of racist conspiracy theories and scapegoating. This is particularly true in societies where historically speaking, the population has been divided along racial, religious, or other such lines.

Currently, conspiracy theories relating to COVID-19 comprise a significant proportion of antisemitic discourse around the world. This isn't exclusively being pushed by the usual rogues gallery of right-wing extremists, but also by the Iranian regime, and in some cases by radical anti-capitalist leftists.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies and its counterparts overseas have set up information-sharing platforms to keep each other abreast of developments in our own backyards and to provide advice and guidance where possible.

We have seen COVID-19-related antisemitic rhetoric surface in South Africa during the lockdown, but not to a great extent. On the other hand, after a relatively quiet start to the lockdown, there has definitely been an uptick in verbal attacks and harassment against members of our community over the past several weeks. One of these cases has since been resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned, and the Board continues to follow up on the others, the most high-profile of which has been that of Simone Abigail Kriel, reported on in previous columns.

Ostensibly, the resurgence of racial tension abroad (as shown in particular by the nationwide protests in the United States) isn't a specifically Jewish issue. In practice, however, Jews are

being brought into the equation by those convinced that they are at the bottom of a global plot to destroy the white race. This has become something of an obsession in ultra-right whitesupremacist circles, and a dangerous one.

ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

Amongst the many lethal racially motivated attacks that have been carried out around the world in recent years, three have been against synagogues, this in addition to planned attacks against Jewish targets that were nipped in the bud. Thankfully, no actual attacks have taken place in South Africa to date, but the potential is very much there, particularly given our own troubled history. There are, indeed, numerous online platforms which persistently lay the blame for the demise of white rule in South Africa on Jewish communists, capitalists, and liberals, and this needs to be carefully monitored.

As always, we rely on members of our community to assist us by bringing all instances of antisemitic behaviour to our attention (sajbd@sajbd.org). While we can't guarantee that each case will be brought to a neat, satisfactory conclusion, with the perpetrators appropriately punished, we will ensure that each matter before us is thoroughly considered and, wherever possible, acted upon.

 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

Jewish soup kitchen desperate for help

n the midst of the current economic crisis, many Jewish families would have succumbed to pangs of hunger had it not been for the uninterrupted food assistance they receive from Yad Aharon & Michael, Johannesburg's leading, independent Jewish food fund.

Yad's Soup for the Soul, a key project of the organisation, is South Africa's only kosher soup kitchen. It opened its doors in 2015.

"I identified a pressing need to introduce a soup kitchen to the community after witnessing people hungry to the point that they would start to eat something out of their food boxes before even exiting our premises," said Alice Friedman, the managing director of Yad Aharon & Michael. Yad was forced to close its soup kitchen temporarily in March, but now, with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, there is much awaited relief for hundreds of families who can once again look forward to that sought-after hot meal.

Yad's Soup for the Soul has resumed operating on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, which coincides with the collection and distribution of food parcels to its 660 families in need.

However, in line with the requirement for social distancing, the celebrated wholesome and nutritious soup has been pre-packed, to be heated up at home and enjoyed with fresh rolls. In time to come, Yaddies looks forward to reinstating its on-site soup kitchen which gives recipients the



opportunity to mingle and socialise in a unique, congenial ambiance.

The ongoing increase in applications for food assistance will undoubtedly have an impact on the number of people needing additional meals from

the soup kitchen. The need has never been more urgent, and turning people away is simply not an option. The survival of Yad's Soup for the Soul is totally dependent on communal funding and, as the traditionally cold weather grips Johannesburg, Yad is appealing to you to donate generously.

You can assist in sponsoring pots of soup via the organisation's website. This is a project which literally warms body and soul. To donate, go to: www.yadaharon.co.za

Letters

COVID-19 MINYANIM IN BREACH OF THE LAW

The phenomenon of COVID-19 *minyanim* gives rise to, at least, the following material considerations: the well-known principle that all Jews are responsible for each other; and the legality of such *minyanim*. Assuming, for the moment, that COVID-19 *minyanim* don't breach the first principle, what of the legalities?

Let's start by giving those responsible for setting up and conducting COVID-19 *minyanim* the benefit of the doubt: a sincere belief on their part that the recent level-3 relaxation in relation to conducting religious services permits the conducting of COVID-19 *minyanim*.

Current level 3 regulations permit attendance and gatherings at "places of worship/faith-based institutions". Attendance and gatherings are, however, subject to adherence to health protocols and social distancing measures, and these are set out in extended regulations published at the same time as the alert level-3 regulations (on 28 May 2020).

The extended regulations define a "place of worship" as any place or premises "usually used for religious purposes". I suggest that a COVID-19 *minyan* set up in a private residence or place not usually used as a shul/*shtiebel*, isn't a "place of worship", and would therefore appear to be illegal.

The extended regulations place direct legal responsibility on the religious leader (rabbi) or person in charge of the place of worship (the home-owner). They are responsible for ensuring at least the following: sufficient quantities of sanitiser with at least a 70% alcohol content; facilities for washing hands; a register of all attendees for at least six months and screening of all attendees for COVID-19 symptoms; face masks worn at all times; no physical contact between attendees; no communal singing; that any portion of the service requiring personal contact isn't performed (reading from the Torah, kissing the Torah, kissing mezuzot); attendees keep a distance of at least 1.5 metres from each other and 2.5 metres where a face mask cannot be used; all surfaces and equipment are cleaned before and after the service; there is no sharing of objects (siddurim, chumashim, taleisim); and toilets, common areas, and door handles are regularly sanitised.

Having given the benefit of the doubt to those rabbis and homeowners who believe that their home, non-shul, or *shtiebel*-based COVID-19 *minyanim* are legal, are we also to assume that those persons who are conducting all *minyanim* are adhering to the myriad and detailed protocols and measures? – **Terence Ossin, Johannesburg**

PUT YOUR EGO ASIDE, AND ABIDE BY CHIEF'S RULING ON *MINYANS*

I write this letter unafraid to reveal my identity.

If one of the rebel *minyanim* were to go down with COVID-19, then, without any detective work, the source would be easily detectable. But by then, the horse would have left the stable, and the

promise to close the *minyan* would be academic. What the rebels fail to realise is that even if less than 21 people participate, should they pick up COVID-19 at the *minyan*, it would be easy for them to transmit it to a vulnerable member of their

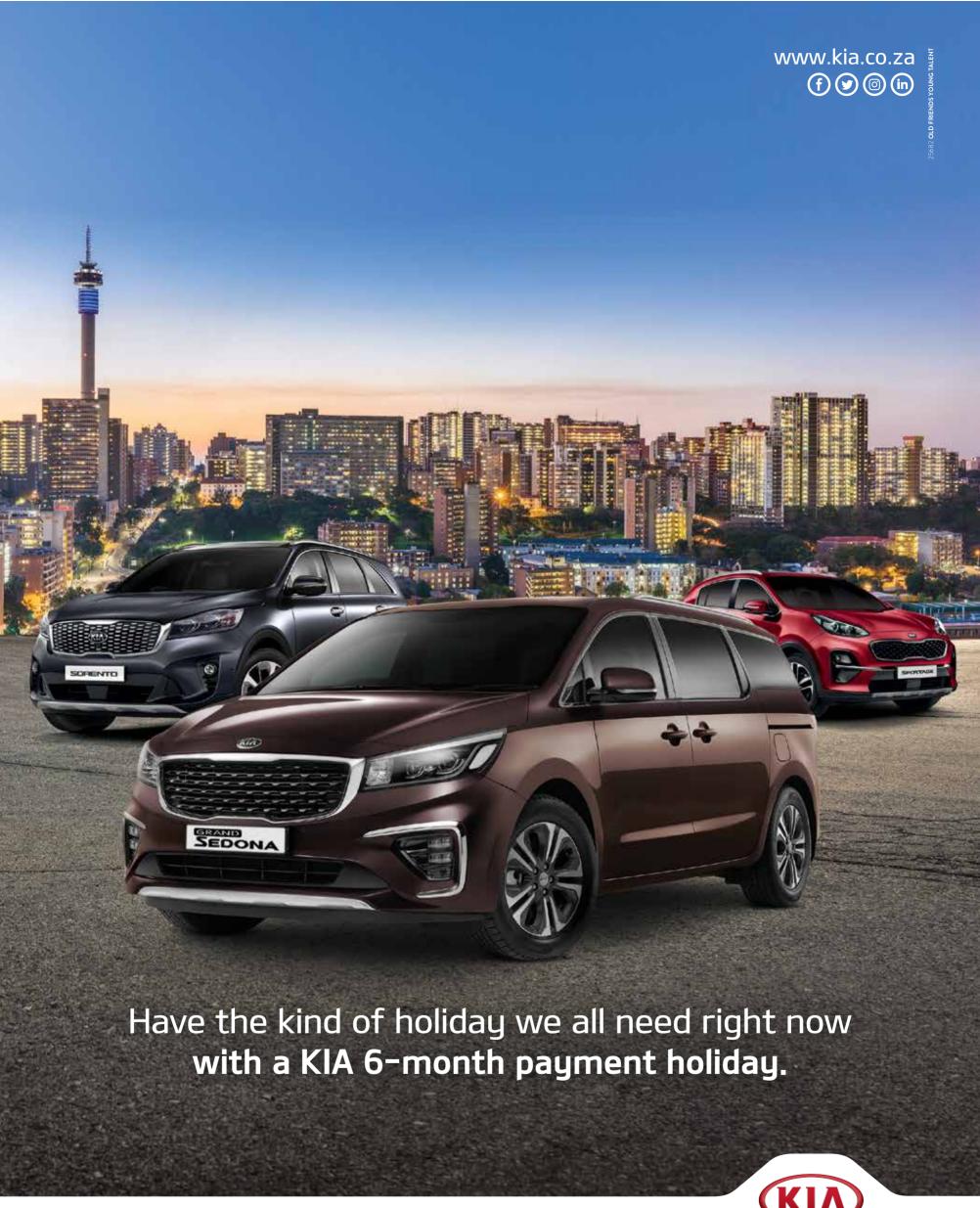
death statistics.

Let's put our egos aside, and abide by the ruling of the chief rabbi.

family or the community, which could add to the

Finally, please don't try and surpass New York, Lakewood, or London in terms of fatalities.

There are enough angels of death in the world at the moment. I appeal to the rebels not to add to their numbers. – **Lionel Stein, Glenhazel**





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The Power to Surprise

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Photographing the invisible enemy

aving been a photojournalist in the Middle East who has covered many conflicts, I find that the COVID-19 pandemic has given conflict photograph a new, surreal dimension.

Just as governments, doctors, armies, and police are all learning to fight this new enemy, so we photographers are learning to document the invisible enemy in a new way.

When a war photographer is sent to cover a war, there is a set routine. The photographer will pack his passport, camera equipment, Imodium, and portable music, head to the airport, and fly into some inhospitable city or area to document the conflict. At the landing zone, he will be met by an immigration officer who will probably see him as a

nuisance or someone crazy enough to put himself in danger, not understanding the journalist mindset. Photojournalists need to tell a story. Many photographs have influenced public opinion or changed the behaviour of governments. Take the Vietnam War, for example.

"settle down" in the war zone, we study the battle lines - how to cover the conflict, who can be trusted, and who definitely can't. In most cases, there are two



opposing sides. One firing in one direction, and the other firing back. You have to know where to position yourself to keep safe and capture the best possible images in dangerous conditions. Both sides, you learn, don't really want you there unless

Once we photojournalists Israeli artillery fire into Lebanon in 1985 in response to terrorist attacks on Israel

you're on their side. It's the same with the virus - it doesn't care if you are a photographer, nurse, or day care teacher.

With COVID-19, there are no enemy lines and no visible warring groups or armies to photograph. It's a blank canvas. With COVID-19, everyone around you has the potential to be your enemy. Your grocer, butcher, the man or woman on the street, the door handle of your car or bicycle, even your wife and children! We don't know who is carrying the virus, how it will somehow get to us, enter our lungs, and eventually kill us. The new war zone is our city, neighbourhood, even our home.

Conflict photography has now evolved into street photography, but with a twist. The streets, once heavily congested with traffic and people, have become quiet and lonely. It's silent, as opposed to the exploding of bombs, passing jet fighters, the rumble of tanks, or the sound of guns being cocked and fired. In a war zone, tensions are high and adrenaline is

pumping. Finding a place of safety to photograph is important - normally getting behind a wall will keep you safe. Today, the wall is called "social distancing".

Documenting COVID-19 causes mixed emotions. The streets are quiet, relaxed, and then, you wonder, "Where is it?" You just don't know, and it makes you nervous. The gun becomes the cough or sneeze. The war-torn streets become the corridors of the

intensive-care unit or isolation room. Even soldiers are finding it strange to not see the enemy.

We photojournalists now pack differently. Instead of a traditional flak jacket (to protect us from



shrapnel

or a stray bullet that perhaps is aimed at us) and helmet (in case we get hit in the head by a brick or a projectile), today's war photographer dresses like

ILAN OSSENDRYVEF

everyone else. We take photographs wearing a flimsy

face mask and some hard-to-put-on plastic gloves that always land up tearing. The best thing about the gloves is the part when you blow into them so they expand to make it easier to slip on. They are quite comical filled with air (potentially the enemy).

The flak jacket is now our tissue or elbow used to cough into. Today's essentials include hand sanitizer and a mask – in the past, I would have just brought onion to counter the effects of teargas. The difference is that we are out there with a camera taking photographs while the average person just wants to get home safely as soon as possible to escape the

invisible enemy.

When covering conflict, some photographers think they're invincible and nothing can happen to them. Seasoned photographers say this can be a lifethreatening attitude. In all situations, like the doctors working with coronavirus patients, the police on the street, the people working

the tills, we need to heed basic precautions. Keep indoors, and when you do get home, wash your hands. I spray my cameras to get rid of the invisible enemy.

