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## Chief justice slams anti-Israel group’s ‘underhand tactics’

**TALI FEINBERG**

Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng hit back at Africa4Palestine in a 19-page affidavit this week, describing underhand tactics of twisting the truth and targeting him individually after he expressed support for Israel as well as the Palestinians in a recent webinar.

Following the *Jerusalem Post* webinar with South Africa’s Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, Africa4Palestine submitted a complaint to South Africa’s Judicial Service Commission (JDC), accusing the chief justice of breaching the judicial code of conduct.

Africa4Palestine was formerly known as Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) South Africa, but the group was expelled by the international BDS organisation last year after it didn’t adequately address sexual abuse allegations within the leadership of the organisation.

Mogoeng described the group’s “smear campaign” against him as similar to those used to silence political opponents during apartheid. He emphasised that in its affidavit, Africa4Palestine purposefully excluded some of what he said in the webinar to “achieve its goal of making an example of me to any who would dare differ from them”.

He claims these omissions, and

the twisting of his words, are being used as weapons against him, and that he is being targeted by the organisation because he expressed love for Israel and Palestine, and his obligation to pray for peace.

“I never expressed any view on Zionism. This is a desperate twisting of what I said. Africa4Palestine knows this. This is why it was, in my opinion, very deliberate and intentional in leaving out the portion of my statement that contains my declaration of love for Palestine and the Palestinians.

“What must be guarded against is desperation to enforce agenda[s], by singling out a public figure to make an example of him or her, almost as if to say to all, ‘You better watch out. If we can deal with this one so viciously, just imagine what would become of you if you disagree with us,’” he wrote.

The *SA Jewish Report* has seen the Africa4Palestine affidavit, and confirms that the section of the webinar in which Mogoeng expressed support for both Israelis and Palestinians has been left out.

An advocate speaking on condition of anonymity says, “This is scurrilous. The chief justice made it clear that he supported both peoples. Excluding information, misleading the court, and quoting selectively to create an incomplete picture is a big

ethical breach.”

A senior member of the legal profession in South Africa commented, “I think Africa4Palestine and the BDS movement are underpinned by an element of antisemitism. That being so, there is an inconstancy with how it deals with Israel/Palestine issues compared to how it deals with other serious violations of human rights, for example in Syria, Yemen, and

other areas.

“Of course, as a general proposition, and in particular [regarding] the chief justice, one ought to be wary of involving oneself personally and in a judicial capacity with issues that are best left to other branches of the state. The chief justice’s comments in the webinar probably didn’t move into inappropriate realms. But of course, the BDS and Africa4Palestine movements

would seize on any perceived ‘violation’ of what they perceive is the correct human rights stance. The chief justice, in responding in the heavy manner that he did, probably felt the inconsistencies that the BDS movement represents.”

Addressing Africa4Palestine’s argument that a judge shouldn’t speak on such issues, as stated in the rules found in the Code of

**Continued on page 17>>**

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# Look back for guidance and optimism, says Israel’s chief rabbi

JORDAN MOSHE

If the Jewish people could survive centuries of hardship and remain strong, we can be assured that we will emerge from our current difficulties with a strong sense of hope and optimism.

So said Rabbi Meir Lau, Holocaust survivor and former Chief Rabbi of Israel last Sunday. Lau shared insights into Tisha B’Av with South African Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein in an online event watched by hundreds.

“When we came out of the slavery of Egypt almost 4 000 years ago, there were many nations and cultures around us – Greece, Rome, Assyria, Lebanon, Persia, and others,” said Lau. “Where are they today? The Rome of Julius Caesar?

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“The only one which exists from that time is the Jewish people, in spite of the fact that we suffered more than the others. Our history is mostly in exile, yet we’ve survived with the same language, the same holidays, and the same customs.”

The only thing keeping us alive is our heritage, Lau believes.

“Our language, our Torah, and our beliefs are passed from generation to generation,” he said. “I said kaddish as a child in Buchenwald for my parents. I survived with a brother who taught me to say it after him and repeat his words although I didn’t understand any of it. That’s heritage.”

Tisha B’Av this year marks the 75th anniversary of Lau’s arrival in Israel in 1945, a fact that’s certainly not lost on him. “I arrived here 75 years ago with 220 other orphaned Jewish boys from Europe,” said Lau. “We arrived in Haifa three years before the state was established.

“I look around Israel today and I see the continuity of generations, maintaining a culture even 2 000 years after the destruction of the temple. What other nation has such a history? This is the power of tradition.”

Only Jewish unity can guarantee the longevity of tradition, said Lau. Sadly, we too often resort to hatred rather than love for our fellow Jews.

“We are champions in dying together,” said Lau. “To die as we did in the camps, where there was no difference between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, rich or poor, frum or not. We’re experts at dying together.

“But as for living together, we haven’t even begun our first lesson. We need to live together in spite of our differences. This is the lesson

of Tisha B’Av.”

The temple can be rebuilt only if we develop a strong sense of Jewish unity, Lau believes.

“We are brothers of the same family,” he says. “Yet, I look around and can’t find baseless love, while there’s plenty of baseless hatred.



Rabbi Meir Lau

“Ashkenazi or Sephardi, we say the same *shema* that the 12 sons of Yaakov said when they came to their father’s deathbed. This makes us one family. Speaking good about one another is actually much easier because we are one family, so it should be the reality.”

Equally important is a continued sense of optimism that’s crucial for continuity and survival.

“Without optimism, we wouldn’t have survived,” said Lau. “We have to believe in a brighter future. Isaiah spoke about international peace in the future, with powerful nations who fought each other living in peace.

“Would you believe that Germany and France could shake hands after fighting each other in both world wars? Even Russia and America can stand together today. We in Israel want peace with all our neighbours, and we want them to see that we aren’t the enemy. We want them to

prosper and we don’t hate anyone. This is what we stand for.”

Lau’s earlier visit to South Africa and meeting with the late Nelson Mandela illustrated this lesson well.

“I met with FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela,” he recalled. “There were times I didn’t believe that two personalities like this could live together and find a common language, but they did. It was possible.

“I remember Mandela said to me: ‘We were both imprisoned, but I was luckier than you. You suffered more. I spent 26 years in prison, but they didn’t kill my parents like they did yours. Yet, if you became the chief rabbi of Israel and I the president of South Africa, we can be sure that the future will be good.’”

The same belief in a better future can be applied to our present reality of COVID-19. Lau stressed that our history and tradition as Jews are invaluable tools to help us.

“Before Moses passed away, he said to remember the days of the past, and to look at the generations,” said Lau. “Before he blessed the Jewish people, he told them to look back and to learn history in order to know our duty in the world and how to survive.

“If you respect the past, you have a good chance for the future. If you are connected to history, heritage, and the Torah it makes, you are part of a family.

“As one family with such a glorious past, we can overcome all difficulties, including this pandemic. We can hope for a full recovery speedily and soon.”

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:23	18:14	Johannesburg
17:49	18:43	Cape Town
17:05	17:58	Durban
17:26	18:18	Bloemfontein
17:20	18:14	Port Elizabeth
17:12	18:06	East London

## Torah Thought

### Honour your parents even if you aren’t grateful to them

The ten commandments are perhaps the most famous part of the Torah. They appear first in the book of Shemos/Exodus, and they are repeated in this week’s Torah portion as Moses continues to recount the history of the Jewish nation since the Exodus.

Respected by Jews and non-Jews alike, the ten commandments are touted as the guide for moral and ethical living. In truth, they are all that and more. But first and foremost, they are a statement of G-d’s expectations of us. If we count the ten commandments, we see that there aren’t ten *mitzvot*, but quite a few more. They are ten statements from G-d as to how we should define our relationship with Him. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the fifth commandment, “Honour your father and mother as G-d, your G-d, has commanded you.” (5:16)

“As G-d has commanded you,” indicates that the commandment to honour parents had already been given to us. This was actually the case

with most of the commandments, they weren’t new revelations to the Jews. The instruction to honour our parents was first given to us at a place called Marah on the way to Mount Sinai [Shemot 15:25], so why is it repeated in the ten commandments?

Logic would explain that the commandment of honouring our parents is reciprocation for the care they bestowed upon us as children. Torah, however, regards this as an erroneous rationale. By the time the Jewish people reached Mount Sinai, they were living a completely miraculous existence. Everyone, young and old, children and parents, were sustained through the manna which fell from heaven. Their clothes miraculously grew with them, and were cleaned and pressed by the clouds of heaven. The parents didn’t have to work to earn a living in order to be able to provide for their children. It was under these circumstances that G-d instructed us to honour our parents.

So, honouring parents isn’t an act of

reciprocity in which parents are paid back by their children, but even when they do nothing for their children, they must be honoured because G-d has instructed us to do so. When teenagers sometimes complain to me about their parents, I point out that it takes three to have a child, two parents and G -d. We all know times when, inexplicably, parents unfortunately can’t have children in spite of the best medical care, and on the other hand, parents who have had children in spite of their best intentions not to do so.

G-d is the one who gives the blessing of children, and for each and every child, He chooses the parents for that child. The ten commandments are statements in our belief in G-d. They are unlike any other moral code. They are a G-dly code that we should observe not because it makes sense or fits with our sentiments, but because it’s a recognition of G-d’s guidance and benevolence to us even when we don’t always understand His ways.

Rabbi Pini Pink,  
Chabad of Greenstone



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# Victory as Ehrenreich finally makes acceptable apology

TALI FEINBERG

Tony Ehrenreich, the former Western Cape provincial secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has finally apologised, six years after his Facebook post that attacked the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and the South African Jewish community, calling for violent revenge for the war in Gaza at the time.

“After noisily holding himself up as the champion of human rights, [Ehrenreich] has now had to go on record as having violated the democratic rights of the very organisation – and by extension the community it represents – he has so consistently insulted. For the SAJBD, this is both a political and a precedent-setting legal victory,” says SAJBD President Mary Kluk.

Ehrenreich’s original post in August 2014 called for revenge attacks against the SAJBD and other “Zionist supporters” in retaliation for the deaths of Palestinian civilians. He wrote, “It’s time for an eye for an eye against Zionist aggression. The time has come to say very clearly that if a woman or child is killed in Gaza, then the Jewish Board of Deputies, who are complicit, will feel the wrath of the people of SA [South Africa] with the age old biblical teaching of an eye for an eye.” He also accused the SAJBD of being “complicit in the murder of the people in Gaza”.

The SAJBD laid a complaint with the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), and after a protracted legal process, the commission found him guilty of prohibited hate speech, harassment, and of violating the Jewish community’s right to dignity and equality. It ordered him to apologise in writing in August 2018.

Exactly a year ago, Ehrenreich “apologised”, but the SAJBD didn’t accept it, saying it reinforced the

original intent. However, this time, both the SAJBD and the SAHRC have accepted his apology, made on 23 July 2020.

Kluk says the Board is satisfied with this apology because it “amounts to a public admission of guilt. The fact that Ehrenreich fought so hard and for so long to avoid having to make it indeed testifies to the significance he himself attributed to it. The wording of the apology itself is an unambiguous, unequivocal admission of fault without back-door attempts to somehow justify the impugned statements by rehashing the usual anti-Israel invective.”

In apologising, Ehrenreich said, among other things: “After due consideration of the findings and

construed to promote violence in this context.

“I further apologise to the Jewish community and all South Africans for the rash statements that I made, in relation to an ‘eye for an eye’. I commit myself to a more thoughtful and considered approach to my statements and utterances in future. I, however, remain committed to fighting oppression. I will strive to do this in a responsible manner which promotes the values of freedom, equality, and dignity. I am committed to the values of the Constitution. I thank the SAHRC for the manner in which this matter was handled, and for pointing out the error in this statement. The opportunity for honest reflection, which allows one to learn from past conduct, has been immeasurable.”

Kluk emphasises that the apology “didn’t just happen. It was arrived at and eventually accepted only after considerable three-way engagement involving ourselves, the SAHRC, and Ehrenreich.

“For six years, Ehrenreich tried everything he could to portray himself as the voice of justified moral outrage, and avoid having to apologise publicly to people he had persistently accused of being complicit in the cold-blooded murder of innocent Palestinians. For a long time, he tried to ignore the SAHRC’s directive that he apologise, then he refused to apologise unless the Board did so as well. When he could no longer get away with this, he then tried to water down his apology,” Kluk says.

“In the end, the Board wouldn’t budge, insisting on an unequivocal apology that fully acknowledged fault without at the same time qualifying it by repeating his previous anti-Israel invective. Whether Ehrenreich was sincere or not in doing so is almost beside the point. What is the point is that he was ultimately compelled to publicly back down and concede that he had been guilty of propagating hate speech against those who contest his views on Israel,” she says.



Tony Ehrenreich

recommendations of the SAHRC, that I have violated certain sections of PEPUDA [The Promotion of Equality and Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination Act], I have come to the conclusion that in the interest of promoting national unity and setting a good example, it would be appropriate to tender an apology for my statements on Facebook on 13 August 2014. Whilst it was never my intention to promote violence, I understand how my statement can be

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Rael Kaimowitz, the chairperson of the Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies, says, “The Cape Board welcomes the apology. It’s indeed a shame and shows a lack of respect for the democratic mechanisms of complaint in our country that it has taken so long for an appropriate apology to be issued. However, it highlights that a prolonged legal battle won’t deter the SAJBD from pursuing justice and fighting hate speech. There’s no place for hate in the Western Cape and in South Africa, and Mr Ehrenreich’s apology shows that he, too, ultimately had to admit this in a public forum. We call on all leaders and commentators to act responsibly, and to weigh up the consequences of their actions and speech.”

Milton Shain, emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town and an expert on antisemitism, says he was pleased when the SAHRC found Ehrenreich guilty. “I’m also pleased he has finally apologised,” says Shain. “He’s not the only opponent of Zionism who has declared open season on all Jews when disagreeing with Israeli actions. Many others have done so before him. It seems to me that hostility to the Jewish state is so deep among many South Africans that one has to ask if anti-Zionism is simply a fig leaf for Jew-hatred.”

Kluk says that the SAJBD has fulfilled its mandate of protecting the Jewish community’s rights in this case. “The outcome amounts to an admission of guilt that sets an important precedent, namely that antipathy towards Israel in no way justifies threatening or inciting harm against Jews,” she says. “While this particular case, for reasons beyond our control, took six years to conclude, it will make it considerably

easier for the SAHRC and other judicial bodies to adjudicate on any similar cases that might arise in future.

“It’s significant that even though Ehrenreich denied wrongdoing and refused to apologise for so long, from the time that the Board lodged its complaint, he made no further threats against the Jewish community and its representative leadership. Our experience has been that once formal complaints are lodged against antisemitic agitators, they back down so as not to give the Board further ammunition in its case, no matter how much they insist that what they said was justified.”

The SAJBD hopes this will send a message to others who may make similar remarks that, “If they cross the line from simply bashing Israel to inciting harm against Jews who support Israel, there’s an organisation that will take them on and force them to publicly retract, regardless of political connections, and no matter how long it takes,” says Kluk. “Under the circumstances, we believe that most people so inclined will conclude that it’s simply not worth the price or the trouble.

“The SAJBD has zero tolerance towards antisemitism”, says Kluk. “The fact that levels of antisemitism in South Africa are relatively low isn’t only due to the culture of anti-racism in the country, but also because of the SAJBD’s determination to fight antisemites until the end. People read about the Ehrenreich case six years ago, and forgot about it. We have been fighting it every day, every month, and every year since then, eventually ensuring that he was properly called to account for his actions.”



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# Cliff under fire for hosting Icke-y antisemite

NICOLA MILTZ

Controversial broadcaster Gareth Cliff has come under fire for hosting a notorious antisemite and conspiracy theorist on his current-affairs television show, resulting in a heated online debate about freedom of speech.

Cliff faced a barrage of criticism last week, when he announced that David Icke would appear on his primetime television show titled *So What Now?* on eNCA.

Icke is an alleged Holocaust denier and a conspiracy theorist who claims that coronavirus doesn't exist. The former TV presenter and professional footballer has allegedly suggested that a Jewish group was behind the virus. He has been banned from YouTube and Facebook for repeatedly posting misleading information about coronavirus suggesting that 5G mobile phone networks are linked to its spread.

Icke has been called all sorts of derisive names for his oft repeated claims that an inter-dimensional race of lizards called the Archons have hijacked the earth to manipulate global events and keep humans in constant fear.

Shock-jock Cliff, no stranger to controversy, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "I'm a proponent of freedom of expression, even if I don't buy it. I'm fully aware he's a crackpot, and felt it necessary to interrogate him. If you ban these people, you push them underground, which is far more dangerous."

A promotion for the show on Twitter resulted in an ugly argument about freedom of expression.

Shevek tweeted, "Of all the experts this show could be promoting, you've instead chosen to platform conspiracy theorists and antisemite @davidicke to spew dangerous disinformation to the public during a pandemic. Completely on-brand for @GarethCliff, but repugnant coming from your network, @eNCA".

Vanessa Fisher said, "When so many South Africans are already misinformed about the pandemic, you throw reptilian shape shifters into the mix. When clickbait content is more important than actual information."

Guests appearing on the show before Icke included *Financial Mail* Money Editor Giulietta Talevi, commentator Phumlani Majozi, and comedian John Vlismas, all of whom faced criticism for appearing on the same night as Icke, albeit in a different segment.

Responding to the criticism, Talevi said, "Though I don't agree with the man at all, I totally agree with a platform that airs all voices, however abhorrent. And @GarethCliff is doing



his job by interrogating them/us." To which veteran journalist Max du Preez responded, "All voices, however abhorrent? No exceptions? We actually know for certain there are no lizard people, as Icke says. We know COVID-19 isn't a Jewish conspiracy. There's no 'other side of the story'. Why amplify these views and give a dangerous, raving lunatic respectability?"

Talevi argued further by saying, "Guys, just for the record, David Icke is clearly as mad as a balloon. And repugnant to boot. But you know what, it's @GarethCliff's show, and he can have who the fuck he pleases on it."

Journalist, author, and academic, Nechama Brodie, was appalled. "As a Jewish mom of two Jewish children, I just want you to know @GTalevi that when you decide being Icke-adjacent is a-ok, and that Gareth can 'have who the fuck he pleases' on his show, this increases the threat to me, my family & my community thanks (not)."

Earlier Brodie wrote, "Guys, it's not bold or brave or 'yay free speech' to platform David Icky in 2020. I interviewed him 25 years ago on 702 (ironically around the time Gareth was my producer) and challenged him as a Jewish journalist. Gareth et al are literally just doing this for trolling now."

"And while I still find the lizard people jokes quite funny in one way, I think it's obscene people use a free-speech argument to justify why they platform Holocaust deniers and racists. Just go ahead and say you hate blacks and Jews don't fucking abuse free speech for your cause."

"Almost every Jewish house of worship and school in the world has to have security because of real & continued threats to our communities."

You think it's trite to broadcast views of antisemites on your show? You think there are no real consequences?" she asked.

Cliff told the *SA Jewish Report* that the show had received attention before it went on air by those who were worried Icke was "going to say something revolting".

"I didn't get him on for the ratings. I believe we need to hear what people are thinking and saying so we can make up our own minds," he said.

Milton Shain, emeritus professor of historical studies at the University of Cape Town, said it was a fundamental issue of freedom of speech. "If Icke has not advocated or incited violence towards anyone, it would be difficult to stop

his ruminations, which are bizarre and of consequence in the murky world of conspiracy theorists.

"Ideas such as he expounds can be dangerous, but that concern has to be weighed against the concern of closing down speech. However, it does

seem to me that South Africans are inclined to oppose infringing on the dignity of individuals or communities. Icke certainly does this, hence his



## Celebrating real heroes

JORDAN MOSHE

In times of crisis, heroes emerge. It's our duty to acknowledge those in our midst, and ensure that they get the recognition they deserve for their acts of selflessness in trying circumstances.

These are the people this year's Absa Jewish Achiever Awards seeks to celebrate.

COVID-19 has given rise to a harsh new reality, putting everyday people under extraordinary strain. However, it serves as a litmus test to identify those everyday people who have achieved the extraordinary by rising above the challenges to help those in need.

"Ordinary people assume the mantle of leadership and provide inspiration and motivation to all of those around them," says Howard Sackstein, the chairperson of the *SA Jewish Report*.

"The same is true in business and in our professional lives. This period of COVID-19 has brought out the best in many people, and created heroes who have risen to lead, uplift, and inspire our nation."

These personalities are the ones deserving of

notoriety over decades. I'm sorry Gareth Cliff has given time to a such a dangerous individual."

Johannesburg advocate Mark Oppenheimer said the nature of Cliff's show was that he featured a variety of different views, "and part of it is the weird and wonderful".

"There is some value in having someone like Icke express his views so that you can interrogate them," said Oppenheimer. "To have someone on a platform isn't to endorse them, it's not to say you share their views. Often you have someone precisely because you disagree with them, and because you want to show they are mistaken."

"Cliff's claims about free speech are important. I think there's a lot to be said for having a variety of views publicly available so that people can interrogate them. You have to have some level of trust that bad views will be shown for what they are in the public discourse."

David Saks of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies said the fact that people had expressed offensive views on certain subjects didn't necessarily mean that they should be denied a platform when commenting on others.

"In this case, COVID-19 was the topic under discussion. That being said, one should be circumspect about giving platforms to people who peddle ludicrous conspiracy theories. In hosting Icke, Cliff at least arguably gave him a degree of credibility, which is a pity."

recognition by being nominated for the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, he says.

"We are living in very troubling times," says Sackstein. "Beyond COVID-19, racism and inequality in society have become dominant topics which have changed our lives tremendously."

"This is a time when people have a choice," he says. "They can choose to pretend that nothing has changed or is happening around them, or they can take the decision to make a difference in the world when we need it most."

"We want to celebrate the people who are standing up and making a difference."

Heroism can be truly recognised only by adjusting the award categories to reflect our changed circumstances, says Sackstein. For this reason, certain awards have been adapted to recognise leadership and accomplishment specifically in current circumstances.

"We want to make sure the awards are relevant for the times we're in," he says. "For example, instead of recognising a person for purely business-related accomplishments, we want to recognise the leadership people have shown in business at this very moment, those individuals who have stood up, led by example from a position of values, left a mark on people, and made a difference during these times. It's not a purely financial award anymore."

The same holds true in the professional excellence category, now the Absa Professional Excellence in the time of COVID award. "While we've always had accountants, lawyers, and doctors who have achieved the incredible, we want to find those who have specifically risen up and been counted, helping us emotionally, mentally, and in other atypical ways. These are our true heroes at the moment."

We don't have to look hard to find heroes, Sackstein says. "Children have given their pocket money to help others, philanthropists have funded protective equipment, businesses have seconded their staff to the Solidarity Fund, doctors have fought the COVID-19 battle on the frontline, epidemiologists have planned and built capacity, nurses have worked till they collapsed, and neighbourhoods have turned themselves into feeding schemes. Each day brings a new tale of awe-inspiring upliftment."

Sackstein concludes, "At the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2020, we want to celebrate our heroes, recognise those who have led and inspired us during these impossibly difficult times, and motivate others to join them in the charge into the uncharted waters of our future."

"Within each of us is a hero waiting to be revealed."

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# Antisemitism protestors give Twitter silent treatment

TALI FEINBERG

A host of politicians, celebrities, high-profile figures, and other social-media users took part in a two-day boycott of Twitter from Monday morning to protest antisemitic hate on the social media platform.

The protest began after an antisemitic rant by British rap artist Wiley was allowed to continue unabated on the platform, even as hundreds of users reported him for hate speech.

Under the hashtag #NoSafeSpaceForJewHate, local and international groups and individuals stepped up the pressure on social-media platforms to clamp down on hate speech. Wiley, 41, whose real name is Richard Cowie, posted a stream of antisemitic tweets on Friday, 24 July, claiming connections between the Jewish community and the Ku Klux Klan, as well as repeated tropes about Jews and money.

The tweets were up for 12 hours before Twitter finally deleted some of them under its “hateful conduct policy”, though others remain. Wiley also posted antisemitic content on Instagram, which at first appeared not to have been deleted. However, Facebook (which owns Instagram) has since deactivated both his Facebook and Instagram accounts. The musician, who has half a million Twitter followers, was suspended from the platform for seven days. Amid a backlash, his management company said it had cut all ties with him. He is also facing a police investigation, and there are calls for his Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to music to be forfeited.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) supported the walkout from Twitter, and posted its intention to do so as well on its Twitter account at 09:00 on Monday at the beginning of the boycott, writing, “#NoSafeSpaceForJewHate This will be our last tweet for the next 48 hours as we join a walkout against Twitter. Check our other social-media platforms for updates.” The South African Union of Jewish Students Western Cape branch and the Joburg Jewish Mommies Facebook group were other local groups that expressed outrage and joined the boycott.

SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn said, “The SAJBD has been working closely with organisations like the Anti-Defamation League for many years in addressing issues of cyber-hate involving members of the South African Jewish community. Social media is becoming the number one antisemitism platform, and it has become a priority for the SAJBD to address with its international partners. Twitter’s response to Wiley’s tweets was inadequate, and it’s this that we wish to highlight in this 48-hour walkout. While this is a UK-speared campaign, it has resonated with Jewish communities around the world as well as Jewish allies, including prominent politicians and civil society.”

Among the people and organisations going silent were British Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and his predecessor, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, members of parliament, Israeli elected officials, and leading Jewish organisations in Canada and the United States, according to JTA.

Mirvis posted a letter to Twitter Chief Executive Jack Dorsey calling for action against antisemitism on the platform that Dorsey co-founded more than a decade ago. “Your inaction amounts to complicity,” Mirvis wrote.

The protest has already yielded some concrete action. Twitter has temporarily banned Wiley from posting, and deleted his antisemitic tweets after leaving them up for nearly two days. And one of the United Kingdom’s most powerful politicians, Home Secretary Priti Patel, has called on the social media company to explain the delay.

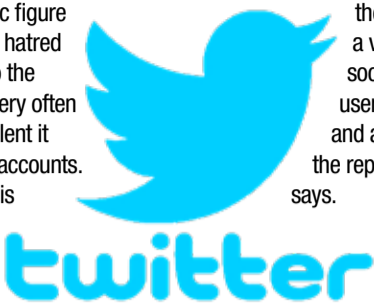
On the role of social media in combating hate, local media expert Gus Silber says: “Twitter is often stereotyped as a toxic swamp where hate speech, abuse, and harassment fester and thrive in short bursts of invective. There is some truth to this, just as there is truth to the counter-perception that Twitter is an engaging and open forum for civil discussion, the sharing of news and views, and free-form ‘social’ schmoozing.

“But there is no doubt that Twitter has struggled since its inception in 2007 to balance freedom of expression with the need to control and monitor hate speech. This latest incident of antisemitic abuse by a public figure is further proof of how far

Twitter has got to go to put a workable policy in place. It's only really when a public figure with a large following openly spouts hatred and abuse that the issue comes into the glare of the spotlight. Otherwise, it very often flies under the radar, however prevalent it may be on small and little-followed accounts.

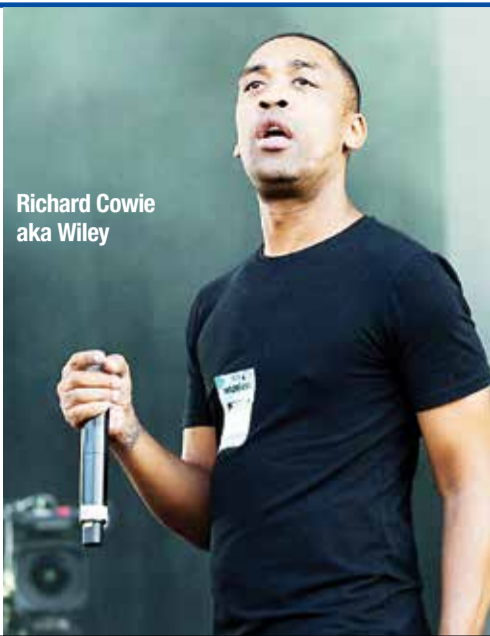
“This walkout, as a symbolic act, is powerful not because it's an organised boycott with a hashtag to match, but because it shines an even brighter light on the prevalence of hatred on social media, and increases the pressure on social networks to take strong and meaningful action.

“It will be almost impossible for Twitter to monitor millions of tweets for hateful content. To attempt to



do so would burden the network to the point that it would no longer be a viable platform for spontaneous social engagement. Rather, it's up to users to be on the lookout for hatred and abuse, and to alert Twitter using the reporting function on the site,” Silber says.

“Beyond that, as #NoSafeSpaceForJewHate has demonstrated, organised action by individuals or groups can play a vital role in ensuring that the issue of hatred and antisemitism is kept on the agenda, and that users are reminded that there is no space for hatred on a platform that is meant for social discussion and engagement.”



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## The real meaning of ‘sorry’

As South Africans, we are pretty famous for saying sorry. We say sorry if we want to get past someone, if we want to ask the time, if we accidentally bump someone, or brush past them. We even apologise if we want to ask a question, “Sorry, can you tell me where the nearest toilet is?” Sometimes we say sorry when there is absolutely no need for it, and sometimes when we think we should be sorry. At other times, we say it when we are genuinely sorry. We use sorry instead of “excuse me”. We use it so often, we mostly don’t think about its meaning.

So, when a South African says he or she is sorry, should we believe them? Late last week, former Congress of South African Trade Unions Western Cape leader Tony Ehrenreich finally made an apology that was accepted by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD). This was six years after initially making the most hate-filled statements on Facebook. He called for revenge attacks on the SAJBD and South African Jews in response to Palestinian deaths during the violence in Gaza in 2014. However, while the Board accepted his latest apology, it wasn’t his first attempt to close this door with a “sorry”. A year ago, it was thrown back at him by the SAJBD, saying that his apology was fake and reinforced his original hateful intent. And, he responded with a tirade of hatred in return, which exacerbated the issue and created further antagonism. Clearly, this isn’t a man who is ever going to be our friend or change his mind about us or his hatred for Israel. He has made this clear.

So, why insist on an apology? There’s no doubt that being forced to say sorry is never going to result in a real, believable apology. However, what his “sorry” does amount to is a public admission of guilt from someone who was high profile. This is really important, according to the SAJBD, because it’s from someone who fought for six years to avoid doing this. And, after holding himself up as a champion of human rights, he is now on record as violating such rights. This is why getting him to say sorry publicly is a political coup. “The important point is that he was ultimately compelled by law to publicly back down and concede that he has been guilty of propagating hate speech against those who contest his views on Israel,” says Mary Kluk of the SAJBD. It also sets a precedent that if you don’t like Israel, it can’t and doesn’t justify threatening or inciting violence against Jews or anyone who supports or defends Israel. This is really important in the political climate today where there are many who use support for the Palestinian cause as a weapon of antisemitism. This form of antisemitism is particularly prevalent in South Africa, and so the outcome of this case is an even bigger victory for us.

What the conclusion of this case has clearly shown is that if you want to cross the line from bashing Israel to inciting harm against Jews who support it, you won’t get away with it. I commend the SAJBD for its work in fighting antisemitism and not backing down, not allowing the Ehrenreichs, the Bongani Masukus, the Marius Fransmans, and others who believe they have a right to incite harm against us, to do so. The SAJBD has fought hard in this case and others to ensure that nobody gets away with antisemitism, come what may. So, yes, there may be some people in our community who feel the SAJBD is too soft on antisemites and should rather indulge in thuggery to teach them a lesson. I disagree vehemently with them. We aren’t those people. We aren’t thugs. We are people of the book. We are people who don’t stoop to those lengths. We play it smart, and through the criminal justice system. Yes, it may take a long time, and yes it’s costly. And yes, having someone like Ehrenreich say “sorry” when you know he doesn’t mean it, may seem innocuous, but it isn’t. *Kol Hakavod* to the SAJBD!

On the flip side, we have Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng, who has been bullied, maligned, and degraded by the Africa4Palestine anti-Israel lobby and its cronies. This is the same organisation that was expelled from the international Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement after it “failed to properly investigate serious allegations of sexual harassment” by its leadership, among other things. Africa4Palestine put this esteemed judge under immense pressure to back down in statements he made about supporting peace between Israel and Palestine. It even laid a complaint with the Judicial Service Commission regarding his conduct. It so clearly took what he said out of context, and viciously targeted him as its enemy. However, it underestimated the judge, who wouldn’t say sorry simply because they were harassing him. No, he wasn’t sorry and, as a person of such integrity, he won’t apologise for something he’s not sorry for. Instead, he called the repulsive behaviour of Africa4Palestine what it is. He said its behaviour was “hypocritical”, “unrestrained irrationality and vitriol”, using his citation of the bible as “lubricating material for the vilification or smear machinery”. He accused them of “singling out a public figure to make an example of him or her almost as if to say to all, ‘You better watch out. If we can deal with this one so viciously, just imagine what would become of you if you were to disagree with us.’” And that’s just it. The chief justice has grown in my and others’ esteem in not allowing himself to succumb to this organisation’s ugly tactics, and telling it like it is. In this case, the judge’s lack of a “sorry” has spoken such volumes about integrity, justice, real freedom of speech, and the ability to embody the strength to stand out above the noise for what’s right.

**Shabbat Shalom!**  
**Peta Krost Maunder**  
**Editor**



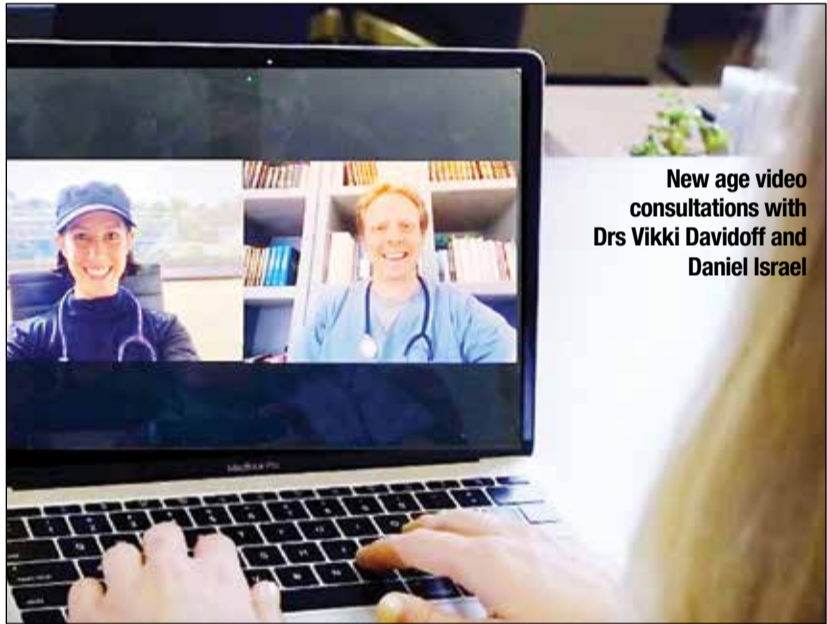
# Pandemic clears path to e-medicine

OPINION

DR DANIEL ISRAEL



A couple of years ago, a telephone call to your GP was a pre-emptive stab at whether you were on the right track with a problem. It was an unscheduled and often inconvenient effort that opened a small window for any meaningful assessment or treatment. The invent of e-medicine technology and the 2020 advent of COVID-19 has fast changed this reality. I have learnt through my developing clinical career that medical professionals are conservative by nature. This is a virtue to be extolled from a patient-care perspective. When it comes to making decisions about how sick a patient really is, whether to investigate a patient, and even which medicines to prescribe, doctors have felt that a good phone call with even a conversive patient just doesn’t cut it. Yet, technology has progressed, and the prospects of telemedicine and virtual consultations have repeatedly knocked on the door. Then, COVID-19 hit us, and forced doctors and patients to embrace this new modality. It’s so reassuring to note how much e-medicine technology is now enabling us to achieve.



**New age video consultations with Drs Vikki Davidoff and Daniel Israel**

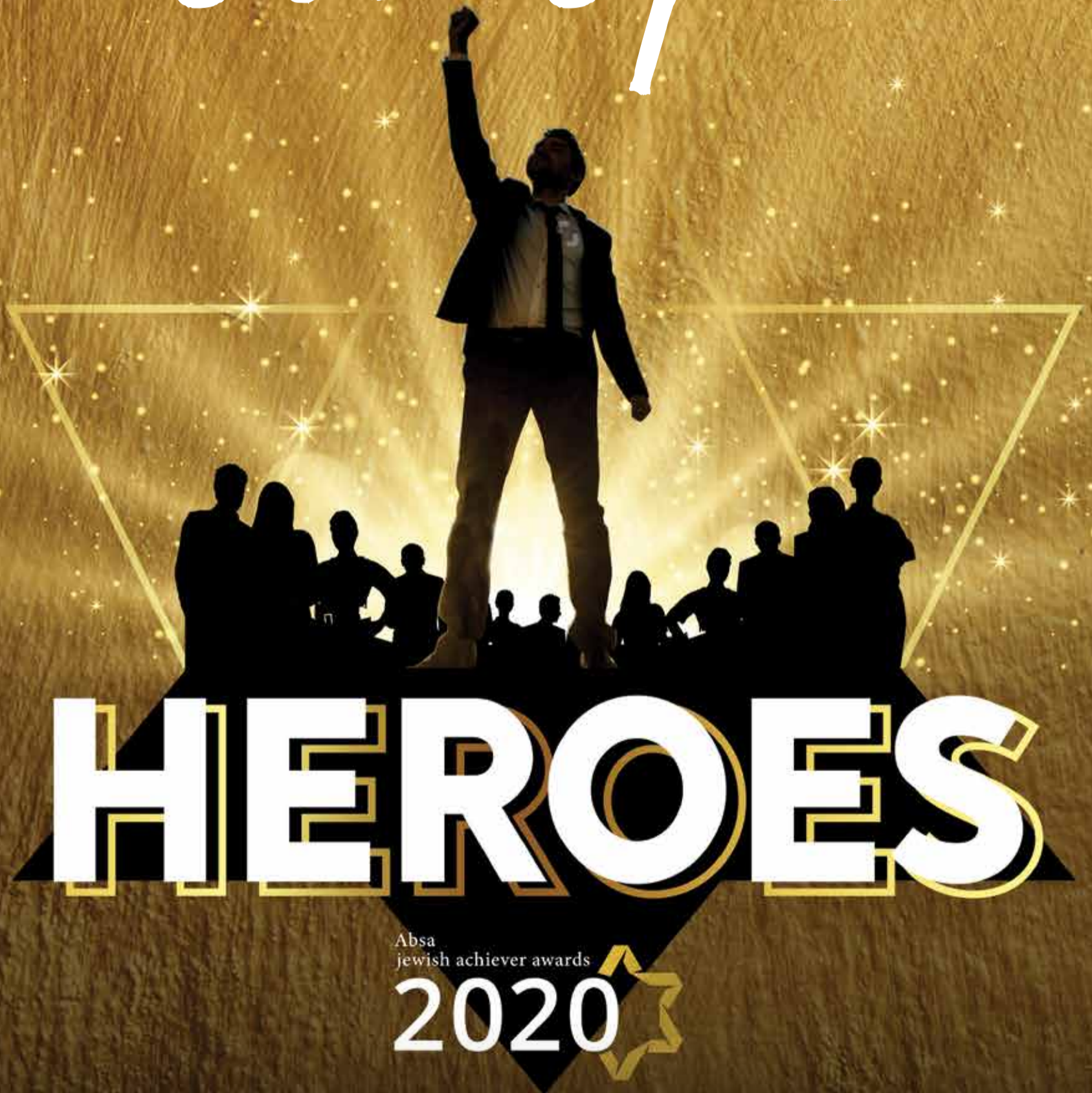
The first modality that is increasingly being implemented by GPs is the Electronic Health Record (EHR). Gone are the days of fumbling with cumbersome files that are illegible even to those who have written them! I started my GP practice with an EHR eight years ago, and I haven’t looked back. As managed healthcare companies pour resources into software development, EHR platforms have grown incredibly in capability. The developers of the software I use cleverly embraced a few GPs in their journey of research and development. Five years ago, I could only save my patient notes on a computer. Now, I can access clinical notes, blood results, radiology, referrals, and even account information from any device on the cloud anywhere. That enables me to offer patients informed e-medicine with great flexibility, even when I’m not in the office. Simple messaging, audio, and video platforms have been taken up by GPs across the country to treat patients in the pandemic at a safe distance. From sophisticated (but somewhat cumbersome) systems like Discovery’s DrConnect to everyday systems like Facebook’s WhatsApp, doctors are able to speak to their patients live, and often adequately assess and guide them. All over the world, COVID-19 patients are primarily being managed well at home, and telephone and video consultations have enabled that. In my practice, we’ve followed suit. Thankfully, we’ve guided more than 100 patients to recover from COVID-19 virtually, and have admitted only four on the phone. An important factor to weigh up in this discussion is the impact of screen visits on the patient-doctor relationship. We must first remember that the barriers of time and transport

in everyday life often prevent patients from engaging with doctors altogether. So, some relationship is better than no relationship. Second, research has shown that the “barrier” of a screen has helped patients to be more honest about their lifestyle habits with their doctors. This improves clinical outcomes, and may even enhance the patient-doctor relationship in the long run. It’s much easier to tell your doctor that you’re still smoking on the phone than in person. I must comment, though, that as is shown by the effects of the Zoom lives we now lead, nothing replaces real human interaction. To my mind, reducing patient-doctor interaction exclusively to a screen leaves much to be desired in the long run. I vividly remember one of my professors at medical school teaching me that ‘if you don’t have a good idea of the diagnosis after taking the history – before touching the patient – you’re not practicing well’. This speaks volumes for e-medicine. Contrary to common misconception, a Future Health Index (FHI) showed that a third of South African doctors say their patients reported more accurate diagnoses with e-medicine versus traditional consultations. This may be because more time is spent taking a thoroughly thought-out history. Where do the problems with e-medicine lie? Some medical problems need a pair of experienced clinical hands to be solved. For example, I consider how concerned I am about a patient having acute appendicitis by his/her physical response to my palpating (pressing) on his/her abdomen. You cannot press an abdomen through the greatest computer screen! GPs are also struggling with remuneration of teleconsultations. Illogically, medical aids pay a lower rate for tele-consultations than face-to-face consultations, even though the clinical skills needed to make accurate diagnoses on the phone are greater. Patients’ medical aids are often out of funds, and trying to recover debt from patients who haven’t physically visited the rooms is expensive and time consuming. E-medicine will need to be supported financially as committedly as it is technologically if GPs are to be motivated to embrace it fully. Another stumbling block in the evolution of this exciting medical space has been regulatory authorities. The Health Professions Council has always prohibited new doctor-patient teleconsultations – until COVID-19 hit. Now, out of necessity, it has “temporarily” allowed a patient who has never met a doctor to “meet” him/her on the phone. If the future of medicine beyond this pandemic is tele-medicine, making this modality permanent will need to be seriously considered. As I leave the comforts of my home today and enter my practice to solve one clinical problem after another, I know that my day will be mixed with traditional consultations and these new-age telemedicine consultations. Instead of shying away from telemedicine, I choose to embrace it. It may still be fraught with complexity, but its strengths are certainly providing our community with far more gains than the losses its weaknesses are causing. As doctors, we will continue to strive to ensure that tele-medicine develops well on all fronts so that it supports patients, doctors, and ongoing great clinical care.

• Dr Daniel Israel is a family practitioner in Johannesburg.

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# If you save one life, you save the world

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

If you ever doubted the ripple effect of one person's good deeds on the world, a recent webinar featuring the heroic actions of a few individuals would change your mind.

Titled, "One person can save the world", the webinar, hosted on 25 July by *SA Jewish Report* chairperson Howard Sackstein, looked at Holocaust Righteous of the Nations Chiune Sugihara and Oskar Schindler, whose courageous actions saved countless individuals during World War II, as well as Carl Wilkens, who helped save the Damas Gisimba orphanage in Rwanda during the genocide in 1994. "We teach the Holocaust through the lens of choices made by individuals, communities, and governments – the choice to be upstanders, not bystanders," said Tali Nates, the founder and director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre. "Most people are bystanders, but by being a bystander, you always help the perpetrator, not the victim."

Sugihara, known as "the Oskar Schindler of Japan" saved about 6 000 people by issuing handwritten transit visas to Japan, thereby assisting them to flee, but his actions actually translated into saving hundreds of thousands of people, said Rabbi Yossi Goldman, whose father, Simon (Shimon) Goldman, was one of those saved.

Shimon ran away from his Polish family at the age of 14 to Lithuania following the German invasion in 1939. In a book, *From Shedlitz to Safety*, he relates how he was saved as part of the visas issued by Sugihara to the entire Mir Yeshiva in Vilna, which he had joined. He was visa number 2 029 out of a total of 2 139 visas issued, which means he literally escaped by the skin of his teeth.

Sugihara, then the Japanese vice-consul in Kaunas, issued the visas in defiance of his government after he applied for permission, and it

was rebuffed. Some of the visas were issued even as the train was pulling out of the station in Kaunas.

"He said afterwards that he might have made the wrong decision as a diplomat, but he couldn't abandon people in need of help, and he didn't regret it," his granddaughter, Madoka Sugihara, told the webinar. Certainly, he paid for his decision by being thrown out of the foreign office and losing his pension. Thereafter, he worked as a porter on the docks, sacrificing his livelihood and his health.

"My grandfather showed important courage. My mission is to pass that down to the next generation," Madoka said.

Those he saved took a perilous global journey to safety which included Vilna, Moscow, across Russia to Vladivostok, and then by ship to Kobe in Japan. After Japan joined the war on the side of the Germans in 1941, the yeshiva boys went to Shanghai, where they stayed for a year, realising that most of them were now all alone in the world. Thereafter, helped by the Lubavitch headquarters in New York, they travelled to the city via San Francisco and Chicago.

Deren Chaskiel, the grandfather of Rabbi Asher Deren in Cape Town, was also on that list – visa number 2 031. Asher later married Rabbi Goldman's daughter, Zeesy, in a strange and wonderful closing of the circle.

Doron Goldstein, who lives in Manhattan, is related to another couple on "Sugihara's list". Although his parents had already made aliyah to Israel at the

outbreak of war, his aunt and uncle, still in Vilna in 1940, were desperate.

Goldstein discovered their nine-year journey to safety only two years ago, a journey made via Calcutta in India, where they spent three years before getting permission from the British government to go to Palestine. Eventually the family was reunited in the United States.

Describing their desperation, Goldstein said, "Imagine the feeling they had in getting that visa. There wasn't any time, they left in a hurry. The visa story is about escape."

Watching the webinar, the Japanese ambassador to South Africa, E. Norio Maruyama, said, "The strong belief and will of one man saved thousands of precious lives. As a Japanese, I'm so proud of him and his courage."

Nates has an intimate connection with heroism. Both her father and uncle were saved by Schindler, a complex and famous individual who ultimately saved about 1 200 men, women, and children by employing them in his factories in Krakow and Brunnitz.

Nates father, Moses Turner, was just 14 when war broke out. He was sent to a number of concentration camps, but he and his brother, Henryk Turner, survived after they were eventually listed as "barrack builders" by Schindler for his factory at Brunnitz, where they were liberated by the Soviets.

Schindler, a German and a member of the Nazi party, is described as a crazy adventurer, courageous



Rabbi Yossi Goldman with Nobuki Sugihara, son of Chiune Sugihara

and charming in turn. He profited from Jews, and helped them. But it was ultimately personal relationships with his Jewish advisers that helped him to understand the tragedy he was witnessing, and make the decision to defy authority to save lives.

"About 27 000 individuals are recognised by Yad Vashem as Righteous of the Nations," Nates said. "They come from many countries and did it for many different reasons – religious, values, adventure. Many times, it was just through human connection, which helped them to see a human being in need. That's why education is so important."

This theme appears once again in the story of Carl Wilkens, an American aid worker who helped to save the lives of 400 adults and children shored up in the Gisimba orphanage in Kigali, Rwanda, after sectarian violence erupted between Hutus and Tutsis in 1994.

Wilkens defied his government by staying in the country after Americans were evacuated. Once again, he did so because he had formed close relationships with the people who worked for him, and he feared for their lives. More than 20 000 Tutsis were being butchered every day by Hutu extremists following a toxic propaganda campaign.

Wilkens saved the orphanage from a massacre after it was surrounded by machine-gun wielding militia. He went to the colonel in charge of the city to appeal for their lives, and was tipped off by the colonel's secretary that no less than Rwandan President Paul Kagame was in the building. He managed to alert the president that a massacre was about to occur, and for various complex reasons, was assured of their safety.

"Survival happens one moment at a time," he said. "It takes courage and an ability to respond, but it also takes the ability to find allies among your enemies, and a network."

"One person might make the initial choice to do something, but that becomes an inspiration for others. These networks are crucial."

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# The heart of a child

## HOWARD SACKSTEIN

The COVID-19 stats rose by an extra few recently, as Solly and Cynthia Levin both succumbed to the merciless disease a mere week apart. I have known Solly most of my life.

Every Sunday for the past 50 odd years, he and my father played tennis together. They would never be good enough for Wimbledon, but the cup they were after was the cup of tea at the break between sets. During his 70-year career as a doctor and paediatric cardiologist, Solly had saved the lives of thousands of children, some of them my friends today.

Also on the tennis court with Solly and my dad was Professor Peter Thomson, who wrote the following about Solly:

Solomon Elias Levine was born in Johannesburg on 2 April 1929. He was an East Rand *boytyjie*, matriculating from Boksburg High School at the age of 15. When Solly graduated as a doctor at the University of the Witwatersrand [Wits] in June 1951, it was after a seven-month wait, because the previous November, he was deemed to be too young to graduate as a doctor. Along the journey, he collected a D.C.H. (London) in 1955, an M.R.C.P. in 1956, and a F.R.C.P. in 1972 (Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh).

In 1960, he completed his time as registrar in paediatrics at Baragwanath Hospital, then as a consultant in the same department. By the time he moved across to the Transvaal Memorial Hospital for Children in 1965, he was a senior paediatrician. From 1970 to 1992, he was a principal paediatrician at the latter and then at Johannesburg Hospital from 1978. He then went into private paediatric cardiology practice, but maintained

a specialist cardiology post in the department of paediatrics, finally retiring from provincial paediatric practice in 1998 after 41 years.

In 1974, he was appointed associate professor in the department of paediatrics, then in 1978 ad hominem professor of paediatric cardiology, and he registered with the South African Medical and Dental Council as a sub-specialist in paediatric cardiology.

Solly received four special awards. In 1995, the paediatric cardiology unit of Wits Medical School mounted a photographic portrait of him above the door of the paediatric cardiac laboratory at Johannesburg Hospital, "In honour and recognition of a lifetime dedication to the establishment of paediatric cardiology in Johannesburg."

In 1998, the Johannesburg branch of the South African Heart Association gave him a portrait painted by Dr Gordon Hersman, and a certificate in recognition for service in the advancement of paediatric cardiology. In the same year, the university conferred on him the title of emeritus professor of paediatric cardiology. Finally in 2002, he received an exceptional service medal from the Wits Faculty of Health Sciences.

At his inaugural lecture, titled "The heart of a child", Levine quoted from paediatric surgeon Willis Potts, "I'm convinced that the heart of a child sunned by love, security, and understanding will be able to withstand the storms of illness and pain."

Solly and Cynthia are survived by three accomplished children, many grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

# Home sweet office – a winning combination

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Once a hot commodity, office space is fast becoming the exception rather than the rule. COVID-19 may have sparked the shift to home offices, but it's the convenience and increased efficiency they offer that's giving them their staying power.

"Among our 30 staff, the preference for working from home is resounding," says Justin Lipshitz, the chief executive and founder of tech company Axon Wireless. "Employees are getting more work done, they're no longer frustrated and delayed by traffic, and they're spending more time with their families."

Providing software and devices to create a more secure version of RICA (sim-card registration) around the world, Axon Wireless has always had a flexible working environment. "We've never had full-time remote working though," says Lipshitz. With lockdown, working from home became essential and it's been so successful the company has given notice on its offices. "I didn't consider this before because I didn't think it was possible. Now it's happened naturally, everybody is doing it, and it works. The environment was right."

Many echo his sentiments. "Our average client now thinks they won't go back to an office after the pandemic ends," says organisational psychologist Yael Rosen, the co-founder and director of Ferva and My

Feedback Guru. Together with her team, Rosen partners with businesses to sustainably manage their human resources functions.

"Some who need offices to work as effectively as possible have put only extreme skeleton staff there while the rest of their staff work from home," she says. "Remote working has definitely become more normal. Like many of our clients who were renting office space, we have cut leases. We don't believe we'll go back to an office this year, and after that an office space will look different."

Rosen thinks there will be a mixed approach to the workplace. "Paying a significant amount to lease a permanent workspace is unlikely to define the future world of work," she says. "We'll probably rent out a shared working space where the team gets together twice a week to collaborate and share knowledge. That would be the space where we'd grow and learn together, but we'd be at clients the rest of the time. If they're not at an office, we'll work with them remotely. Our clients have similar sentiments in terms of how they'll run their businesses."

Technology is key to running a business remotely. "We've been using Google's G Suite tools for more than ten years," says Lipshitz. "We use Google Meet, we've set up Google Sheets, there's a tab for each person, and we can all see what anyone is working on at any time."

Remote working has also forced

chief executives to interact more effectively with their teams, says Rosen. Yet they need to resist the temptation to micromanage. "When we went into lockdown, I was forced to connect far more frequently with my team because I wouldn't see them at the office coffee station," she says.

really important now, and embracing things like Microsoft Teams is helping to address the need for people to work closely together because not everyone likes to work individually. That way they're not completely removed from the ecosystem."

Trust in such an environment

online via platforms like Zoom, which before was socially unacceptable, is the order of the day. Even bigger companies are enjoying it. Meetings actually run on time, and we cut out travel time."

The fact that remote working is a global consequence of



"This created a far more connected experience. In the beginning, we were probably spending too much time trying to touch base, but now we've found a balance between when to connect and when just to get on with our work."

In a remote working environment, chief executives also worry about the ability of their teams to collaborate. Says Michael Rubenstein, a business coach and the co-founder of The Resilience Lab, which offers strategic communications and marketing services, "The collaboration space is

is also crucial. "We've always had a strong business and work culture, and we put emphasis on our hiring, so we trust our people, which helps," says Lipshitz. For staff who miss the social aspect of work, Lipshitz hopes to find a balance. "When things clear up, we'll meet once a week or so, go for breakfast or hire a boardroom. You can incorporate that."

Meeting clients has also now become a far more streamlined process, says Lipshitz. "Meeting

**Michael Rubenstein and Yael Rosen** COVID-19 also makes it easier to connect with clients around the world, he says, eliminating the need for a five-day business trip for a one-hour meeting. "We recently pitched for a tender in Myanmar via Zoom, and because we had much more time to prepare, our presentation was much better."

That's not to say the shift to working from home hasn't been

**Continued on page 14>>**

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# When the cracks start to show

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Having largely been confined to our four walls over the past few months, many of us have finally tackled those home-improvement projects. Whether we’re doing it ourselves or enlisting the experts, repairs, redecorations, and renovations have become lockdown trends. “We used to leave our homes for work at 07:00, and we’d return only at 19:00,” says renowned interior designer and

amount, were essentially empty. Now’s the time for people to really enjoy their homes, to reflect on their hard work.” Yet, because we’re always home, we’re also noticing the flaws in our space. We’re seeing the chips in the paint, the rust on the bench, and the clutter that surrounds us. Whether you’re a DIY fundi or have a new drive to get fixing, it’s the perfect time to spruce up your home. Indeed, hardware stores have reportedly experienced an e-commerce boom.

Longtime amateur handyman Larry Nussbaum used lockdown to spruce up his home and teach his two sons – aged six and nine – the tools of the trade. “DIY work is a great hobby of mine,” says Nussbaum. “Over lockdown, I’ve done some plumbing and electrical work, but I also made it a point to get my kids involved. We did some plastering, and I taught them how to weld and spray paint. Together, we refurbished some old steel garden furniture. I wanted them to have something that they could see and play with so they could feel proud of what they’d accomplished.” While he’s a network engineer by profession, Nussbaum believes in the benefits of developing practical skills. “With basic skills, you can always earn an income,” he says. “My dad has always been into DIY, and in fact gave up his day job and used those skills to make a living as a handyman. I have ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder] and so does one of my sons. A big drive of mine is to give my sons, especially the one with ADHD, the skill and



confidence to know they can do anything.” Sivan and Ryan Lapidus’s offer to purchase a cluster house was accepted soon after lockdown began. “We asked ourselves whether we were making the right decision at the right time,” says Sivan. “But we decided to go ahead because if ever there was a need for a spacious family home, it’s now. We’ve just taken transfer, and we’re kicking off a big renovation. I have a background in design, so I always wanted a place that we could make our own.” Sivan has been planning the renovation throughout lockdown while juggling work and motherhood. “While it was hectic in the beginning, it slowed things down and gave me the time to think about what I really wanted aesthetically and practically. We’ll be spending a lot of time in our homes

for the foreseeable future, so it’s forced me to consider how to make a happy, open-plan space we’ll enjoy as a family.” Along the way, Sivan won a bathroom renovation through the DADOquartz Dream Bathroom Design Competition. “I put together a detailed mood board of what I wanted to be in our bathroom, and the judges chose my design!” Lockdown has brought challenges though. “Traditionally you’ll go from store to store looking for things like tiles,” says Sivan. “I’ve had to do a lot of browsing online.” She’s also had to rethink the renovation process, ensuring there are safety protocols in place and limited teams on site at one time. We may not all be renovating, but

Continued on page 12>>



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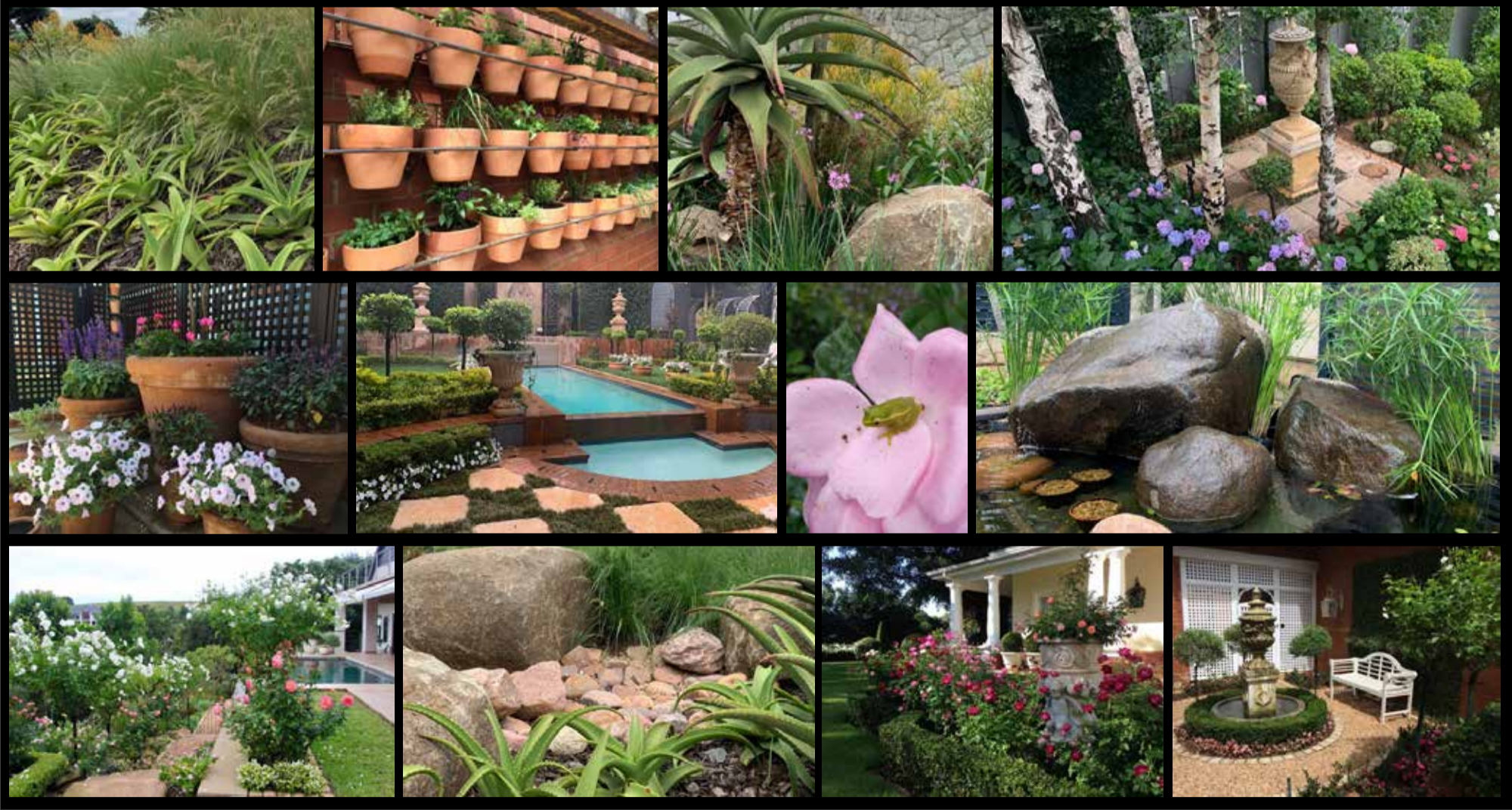
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Applicants for SALI membership are screened and evaluated in terms of the quality of work, company history, project history, client satisfaction and administration, legal, tax, and insurance compliance. In order to retain annual membership, members are required to participate in the SALI Awards of Excellence to ensure the high standards set by SALI are maintained.

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Feel free to get in touch with Alistair McWade, 072 743 7506 or [ally@mcwades.co.za](mailto:ally@mcwades.co.za), if you have any garden-related queries, or just want to chat about your garden.



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# Long-term lockdown can be ‘kids’ stuff

TALI FEINBERG

It’s been more than a hundred days since some children last went to school. Some briefly attended classes before returning to online learning, and others are at home for school holidays. As lockdown becomes a “long haul” experience, how can parents help their children remain positive, upbeat, and resilient, all while keeping screen time to a minimum?

“It’s clear that lockdown is now a marathon, not a sprint,” says human potential and parenting expert Nikki Bush. “I keep telling parents not to give children a date or deadline when this will end, as they will feel disappointed if it doesn’t happen. So much is out of their control, which is why it’s vital we focus on things they can control.”

She suggests that children decorate and make a “choice jar”, where they write on slips of paper anything they can do at the moment that would give them joy or satisfaction. Then, when boredom or anxiety arises, they choose an activity from the jar.

“For a small child, it might be playing in the sandpit, riding their bike, or talking to granny on Zoom. For an older child, it might be doing a puzzle, talking to a friend, spending their pocket money, or making art.”

It could be an activity with two parts, for example, cleaning your room and then donating clothes and toys to those in need. Cooking or baking, learning a card game, or going for a walk as a family are all choices that lead to satisfaction and bonding, which in turn leads to everyone feeling empowered. This in turn teaches resilience, showing children that they are more in control of their attitude and feelings than they think.

It’s vital to create a routine, whether it’s term time or holidays, and getting “back to basics” is the easiest way to keep busy. For example, no child is too young or old to make art, and the options are endless.

Any child can get involved in a long-term project, from a puzzle to making a series of paintings. Everyone needs fresh air and exercise, and this should be part of the child’s routine – whether it’s dancing to music or going for a walk.

Connecting with family and friends is vital for our mental health, and this too should be part of the daily or weekly routine, using technology to do so safely. A child is never too young to learn about giving to others, whether it’s making sandwiches for the hungry or donating old clothes.

Everyone from toddlers to teens can enjoy gardening, baking, or cooking. This is the time to try out those fun science experiments, make a time capsule, or read the books your teen has never got round to. They could even start a business, selling handmade jewellery or baked goods, teaching them vital skills of entrepreneurship.

“There’s so much learning on tap right now that will help prepare children for



Nikki Bush



the real world,” Bush says. “Trying to keep our children in a state of perpetual happiness isn’t realistic. Life is full of ups and downs, so we need to help develop them their ‘x-factors’ for success.”

In her book *Future-Proof Your Child for the 2020s and Beyond* with Graeme Codrington, Bush describes these five “x-factors” as innovation, resilience, loving learning, knowing yourself really well, and learning to be part of a team. Long-term lockdown provides

abundant opportunities to exercise these qualities.

For example, parents and children have the opportunity to be creative and resourceful in keeping boredom at bay and finding solutions to particular challenges. “Your child may want to have a play date with a friend and even though that’s not possible right now, there are solutions to make this a reality virtually.”

As children are forced to take more control and ownership of their own learning under lockdown, they can use this time to explore topics of interest to them. So much online is free, and as your child takes on a course, skill, or project that they are passionate about, they are gaining vital tools for their future.

Allowing kids to feel bored lets them get to know themselves better, as they fill the gap with something that makes them happy. “A pause isn’t a bad thing. It’s about reframing this time as an interesting part of our evolution. If you know yourself, you learn how to manage others,” she says.

Lockdown is forcing families to become

“teams”, and this in turn teaches children about being part of something bigger than themselves. “Within the ‘we’, they discover the ‘me’,” says Bush. “Furthermore, we now lie in a hybrid world of online teams and real-life teams. That’s not going to change, and this is the time to adapt that reality.”

Ultimately, lockdown is a time to gently expose your child to the “real world”. “We can’t protect our children from massive change. They are living in an era of disruption. Lockdown is teaching them to become comfortable with ‘small wins’. Playing a game as a family, using things around the house to bust boredom, or going outside together may become the highlight of their day, and it teaches them to value things differently.”

Bush emphasises that screen time isn’t “the end of the world,”

even if this has increased under lockdown. “It’s about what you are doing to balance it out. This means having dinner together with no screens – this includes parents putting their phones away – or reflecting on the day together.” It means going for a walk together, or teaching your child a card game or family recipe, or allowing kids to ‘just be’, after being on the busy treadmill of life for so long.

For parents, too, this is a time to face up to our fears and become full-time parents, often for the first time. This may feel scary after handing kids over to school, grandparents, or other caregivers for so long. Bush provides “boredom buster activities” on her Toy Talk website, which “help parents step into the space of being a source of magic, wonder, and surprise. We haven’t always been fun and playful, and these options show you how to use resources in the home and create fun out of nothing. Long-term lockdown is an opportunity to reinvent family life. It’s a gift.”

## When the cracks start to show

>>Continued from page 10

most of us have had to reimagine our space during the pandemic. “From a home for entertainment, we’ve changed to a home for functionality,” says Martine Abrahams, the co-founder of home decor company Interior Hub. There’s a move to multifunctional spaces, she says. Many of us have had to create home offices or repurpose the dining room to become our children’s base for online learning. “We’re buying plastic covers for tables so kids can draw on them, and updating our dining room chairs to make them more practical and comfortable.”

Creating a home-office space is often as simple as changing a room’s layout. “For one client who’d moved her desk to the lounge and was feeling claustrophobic, we made the space flow and created a separate work nook,” says Abrahams. “We took her desk to the sunny side of the room, and played with the layout of her living and dining room.”

Lunsky has also helped her clients rearrange their spaces. “Many are saying they’re tired of looking at their four walls and need to change something,” she says. “Often we’ve just rearranged paintings. We’ve shuffled around an entire house of pictures and hung them at the right height – eye level plus down because you look down into a picture. It’s made a huge difference, people can’t believe it.” Even placing a throw or quilt onto a couch, which many are doing, can make an impact, she says.

Lighting is also key, says Lunsky. “New lighting can transform a room and alter your mood.” It’s all about the right globes, light fittings, and the placement. “Great interior design or decorating is about how clever and talented you are, not how much you spend.”

When upgrading your home, it’s important to use people

that you know, says Lunsky. Working with a specialist will ultimately save you money. Like many industries, interior-design specialists are battling at this time, she says. Survival comes with networking, having multiple clients, adapting to people’s needs and budgets, and helping them to feel good in their homes.

As people clear their minds, they’re starting to clear out their homes, says Lunsky. They want efficient ways to manage and use space creatively. Often they realise they have too much furniture in a room which affects their headspace.

“People have decluttered and compartmentalised their lives since lockdown began,” says Abrahams. “Plastic boxes from West Pack Lifestyle and woven boxes from Mr Price are big sellers now.”

Many are also looking to artists to brighten up their homes. Megan Shapiro, who runs a dog walking business, rediscovered her love for painting when lockdown began. “I’m 35, and the last time I painted this much, I was in matric,” she says. Making a painting for her daughter’s room not only awakened Shapiro’s creativity, it eased her mind. “It was probably the calmest I felt during that period.”

Not expecting a huge response, Shapiro decided to advertise her paintings when lockdown eased. Her work has since become so popular, she’s started a painting business on the side. “Because my prices are so low, I captured attention. People want their homes to look beautiful, but they don’t want to spend a fortune. Money wasn’t my goal, I just wanted to paint, which resonated with people.” A great believer in energy, Shapiro hopes the catharsis she finds through painting passes on to those who purchase her work.

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Other features include the ability to control air conditioners remotely. This means that if the weather turns chilly, you can instruct the air-conditioner to

pre-heat a room. You will never come home to a freezing house again. The opposite is also true during our unbearably hot summer months. The system also has a "holiday mode" function, enabling certain lights to go on and off automatically at specific times while you are away – a massive enhancement to security.

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# While in lockdown, go for excellence

OPINION

DR RUTH BENJAMIN



How will we fill our time? That’s a question designed for boredom!

Looking at the lockdown this way, we see a long period of utter boredom, and trying to fill it with things that also become boring after a few days.

And what about the financial side? How does a person live? You are no longer working, and there are bills to pay. More than the boredom, it becomes obvious that you have to try and find a way to make some money.

The lack of money you might see as your biggest problem until you have worked out and set up some sort of side business, which helps, and eventually becomes a life-long friend.

There are many things you can do or make or write that you can sell. At the same time, it’s an ongoing problem, and a constant source of anxiety.

Perhaps now you have real time to look after yourself, to relax or do some of the things you have always wanted to do. Now you can be creative and draw and paint and write and do a whole list of things that you have thought about.

You have time to concentrate on your friends. Even when you don’t see them, you can talk to them. You can have great conversations with them. As there are fewer

distractions, you can talk to them more often, and more deeply.

Our children who are having online school are letting us follow their ways and making family study times. They have virtually turned our homes into schools. Here’s our chance to learn and achieve. If we are chess players, we can

become excellent chess players. We can write exams that can ensure we get a promotion when we return to work.

There are many online courses we can excel in. Also, if you have ever toyed with the idea of doing a degree, here’s your chance to start. You can also study almost any subject you want more intensively. You can take



things from the lockdown that you have learned and studied, but these lockdown achievements have to be meaningful. If they are just time fillers, they are set up for boredom.

Now that there are so many restrictions on shuls, the rabbis have tried to do everything they can to offer Jewish content on things like Zoom (which can be accessed on a cell phone), ranging from the deepest mystical parts of Judaism to the most practical and intricate parts of Jewish law. They have declared themselves ready and willing to answer all your questions.

One of the most exciting and rewarding things to do is to learn a new language, and I’m going to tell you about an older, retired couple who have four children, all married and all in Israel. Between them, they have several grandchildren.

At least once a year, they go to see their children and grandchildren and bring a lot of presents, but they couldn’t communicate in any real way.

They knew they had to do something about it.

The time for the next visit was coming up, and they went to various stores to buy presents. Hypermarket was having one of its DVD sales, mostly of children’s movies, and they found a movie with a Hebrew soundtrack as well as the English one. They immediately bought four of these for all the families, and then the lady of the house bought a fifth.

She listened to the Hebrew version and listened to it again and again, and then listened and watched the English version over and over, almost until she knew it by heart.

They went back and found another Hebrew-English dual soundtrack, and watched and watched or did the things they had to do, and just listened. Day and night, the DVD was playing. Hebrew, then English, English then Hebrew.

The day of the flight was coming up, and they flew to Israel, noticing on the flight that Hebrew was somehow more accessible to them.

Shortly after they got off the plane and interacted with their children and grandchildren, a son-in-law who could speak English turned to them in wonderment.

“Safta, you didn’t speak Hebrew before, and you were here only a few months ago. Why can you speak it now? And how can saba understand me? How did he learn? Where did you learn?”

They had acquired something extremely important. They had gained the means to truly communicate with their precious family. That communication (which they continued to work on as time went on) had now opened up. They had achieved something priceless.

I share that story with you because it was something that, in their case, really worked. It was possibly the most unsophisticated method of learning Hebrew that I have ever come across. But it worked.

In spite of the fact that this method of learning would be essentially boring and repetitive, because it was pursued in a meaningful way towards a compelling purpose, it remained inspiring and motivating. And it worked!

These grandparents pursued excellence and found it.

• Dr Ruth Benjamin PhD is a clinical psychologist.

## Home sweet office – a winning combination

>>Continued from page 9

challenging. “Finding the balance in the juggle between managing work and home life was particularly difficult during the first few weeks of lockdown, especially for working parents,” says Rosen. “The irony that we’ve observed five months later is that families have found their groove to such an extent, there’s now anxiety about the possibility of going back to the office. They’ve found security, a support structure, and a routine that effectively works for them.”

This came about with a change in mindset. “Human beings under stress gravitate most strongly towards their natural preferences and competencies,” says Rosen. “In the beginning of lockdown, that meant that the amount of change and uncertainty led to heightened anxiety. Now the adjustment has happened. It took some time, but psychologically people have had to rethink what they want out of work and life. For different people that means different things. Many have had the realisation that life isn’t just about work. Finding some kind of work-life balance is really important.”

Yet, attaining this balance in this new normal is challenging. While productivity has increased due to the elimination of travel, says Rubenstein, such productivity is also often associated with stress because people don’t know how to take time out. “Employers have to encourage people to take breaks. Because we’re so caught up in busyness, we don’t have time to think. So how are we able to create? Companies

need to find a balance between productivity and mental well-being for themselves and for their employees.”

What are the long-term implications of working from home? There’ll be more emphasis

on speedy broadband, says Lipshitz. Virtual reality may also be accelerated. There’ll also be a lighter carbon footprint. Office real estate will have to evolve, as will industries built around business travel.

The most fascinating part of the shift to remote working is that it changes the world of work for South Africans, says Rosen. You are no longer limited to consulting within your own country as the need to do business face to face evaporates. “Service businesses like mine can now tap into an international market where South Africans are highly valued and seen as experts in their fields,” she says. “International clients can get the same services at a significantly better rate.”





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








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# End of an era dawns with passing of three survivors

NICOLA MILTZ

As the ambulance was about to whisk him away to hospital, Holocaust survivor Henri Meenz watched his beloved wife kiss the mezuzah on their front door imploring him to get well and return to her.

Sadly, Henri, who had been ill for a while, never returned. He passed away last Shabbos of complications from COVID-19 leaving his wife, Claudie, to sit *shiva* alone in quarantine as she recovers from the virus.

“I never got to say goodbye to my love. I had to keep my distance. The future seems so bleak, the pain is so severe. He was my everything,” she said.

Henri brings to three the number of precious Holocaust survivors who have passed away since the lockdown regulations plunged the country into a new reality. Two of them may not have contracted the virus, but were nonetheless severely impacted by it because they were elderly, vulnerable, and had to endure months of loneliness and isolation.

One (Henri) was a little boy when he spent three years in harsh conditions in a camp in Toulouse, France, with his parents and older brother. Another was hidden in a farmer’s barn in Lithuania, and a third survived in hiding in Lithuania before being deported to Tempelhof camp.

Henri Meenz, 90, Ascia Lieberman, 86, and Judith Mandelberg, 102 (approximately), all lived through the atrocities of World War II, and are no longer with us to share their eyewitness accounts, having taken their poignant stories of survival, courage, and faith with them.

Tali Nates of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) told the *SA Jewish Report* this week, “We are heartbroken about the passing of three of our dear Holocaust survivors. It’s especially difficult during lockdown as we can’t be there physically to see the survivors who played such an important role in all our education programmes, and of course can’t support their families and loved ones.”

Lieberman passed away peacefully last week at a care home for the elderly. She was

born in Lithuania in 1934, and according to her family, had a happy childhood. After the German occupation in 1941, her family was interned in the ghetto. Her mother and older sister, Mina, were murdered. Seven-year-old Ascia, her father, Wolf, her older sister, Sonja, and younger brother, Josef, were hidden in the barn of Lithuanian farmer Juozas Markevičius until the end of the war. Markevičius was later recognised by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Among the Nations.

“I followed her last breath on Facetime,” said her grieving daughter, Doris Bloom, from Copenhagen, Denmark.

“A wonderful nurse held her and guided me through her last moments. She had a small funeral with our closest family while many others watched via Zoom. It was surreal.

“The lockdown took its toll on my mother. She decided to close her eyes and not look out anymore.”

After the war, Ascia settled in Johannesburg. According to those who knew her, she was “a beautiful woman inside and out”.

She was artistic and poetic, and an active member of the Johannesburg Holocaust survivor group until she became too ill to join. Her inspiring story is part of the JHGC’s permanent exhibition. She is survived by her three daughters, Genena Lurie, Doris Bloom, and Rosalie Bloom, and four grandchildren.

“Our mother never spoke about the war until much later in her life,” said Doris, “My husband, daughter, and I took her to Lithuania in 2003, where we said kaddish for her late mother and sister near a mass grave in the forest where they were buried. It was the first time she had been back since childhood, and she was able to close the circle of pain and memory.”

Judith Mandelberg was born in Anikst, Lithuania. She survived in hiding, and was then deported and later liberated from Tempelhof camp.

She met her Polish husband, Moshe Mandelberg, at a displaced persons’ camp in Germany after the war. They had a



Photo: Julian Pokroy



Henri Meents



Photo: Julian Pokroy

stillborn child in Germany, and later had two children when they settled in South Africa, coming here with nothing but the clothes on their back.

According to her grandson, Ari Mandelberg, with whom she lived until her death, she always wanted to be buried next to her husband in Israel where there is a space reserved for her.

“Sadly because of COVID-19, this wasn’t to be. However, she’s buried next to my father, Rabbi Yehuda Mandelberg, and one day we hope to take her to Israel.”

“Judith was known by everyone as ‘bobba’,” said Ari. “My grandparents celebrated being alive although the war was always with them. They had survivors’ guilt after losing many loved ones during the war. But they carried on, and lived meaningful lives.”

Judith was described as a warm and generous woman, as well as being a superb chess player and teacher. She was dedicated to her family, and was a regular supporter and attendee of the Holocaust survivor group. She is survived by five grandchildren and many great-grandchildren.

Henri Meenz was born in Antwerp, and was 10 years old when he, his parents, and brother lived in a labour camp in France. Many of his family perished in the Holocaust, but Henri and his immediate family survived. Up until the lockdown, Henri loved meeting his brother, Louis, 96, for coffee.

“They loved seeing each other,” said Claudie, “but the virus kept them apart. Instead, they would phone each other regularly and reminisce, but they missed seeing one another. Henri was the most kind, caring, and gentle man. I’m not ready to outlast him.”

“It feels as if we are getting closer to the end of an era of Holocaust survivors sharing their first-hand testimonies with us, and cherish the survivors who are thankfully with us, hopefully for many more years,” said Nates. We wish the families of Judith, Ascia, and Henri a long life, and may their memory be of blessing to us all.”

## Chief justice slams anti-Israel group’s ‘underhand tactics’

>>Continued from page 1

Judicial Conduct of 2012, Mogoeng responded, “Article 12 isn’t a blind and purposeless banning order on judges from ever reflecting on foreign political controversies.” He points out that Justice Edwin Cameron commented on Israel/Palestine in 2015, but no one hauled him over the coals.

In the same context, according to Africa4Palestine’s logic, both former Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke and the late chief justice, Pius Langa, should both be taken to the JDC for their direct involvement in mediating conflicts in Lesotho and the Fiji Islands respectively. He described another retired Constitutional Court judge as being deeply involved in local politics, even



Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng

calling for the removal of a sitting president, and he, too, wasn’t criticised.

“Hypocrisy is a device we dare not institutionalise or normalise,” said the chief justice. “The approach of Africa4Palestine would certainly entrench

hypocrisy and enable partiality and the possibility to quietly push sectional agendas.”

Mogoeng emphasised that, “The Masuku recusal issue has got nothing to do with what I said. It’s about hate speech,” referring to the argument that

he would need to recuse himself from the case currently before the Constitutional Court because it addresses antisemitism.

“Only the Constitution, the law, and the facts will inform my decision on Masuku,” he said. He warned that Africa4Palestine “could reasonably be understood to be seeking to bring pressure to bear” on the matter. Furthermore, he wrote that Africa4Palestine’s approach could impinge on Christian South Africans’ rights to practice their religion.

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), said, “The SAZF is pleased that Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng has stood firm and responded

emphatically to Africa4Palestine’s disingenuous and contemptible complaint about his conduct. The chief justice’s response lucidly reiterates the fundamental constitutional rights and freedoms that are enjoyed by him and millions of South Africans with a religious and spiritual connection to the Holy Land. Any attempts by Africa4Palestine and others to undermine those rights should be vigorously rejected. The chief justice’s stance has set an example for all.”

For the full context of the chief justice’s argument, read his affidavit on: [https://www.scribd.com/document/470724030/Response-by-CJ-Mogoeng-Africa-for-Palestine#from\\_embed](https://www.scribd.com/document/470724030/Response-by-CJ-Mogoeng-Africa-for-Palestine#from_embed)

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# From pomp and ceremony to minimal ‘I do’

When Carryn Bukris envisioned her wedding day, she never imagined she’d be wearing a mask as she walked down the aisle with her husband, Shai.

In spite of severe limitations, however, this determined bride tied the knot in a ceremony which is sure to be remembered for years to come. Watched by masked guests sitting two metres apart, she and her husband got married on 5 July after postponing their wedding by more than a month.

“We were supposed to get married on 31 May at the Hebrew Order of David (HOD),” Bukris told the *SA Jewish Report*. “We’d planned almost everything, and lockdown prevented us from going ahead.”

“Everyone kept asking us what was happening, and when we’d be getting married. We waited for the chance to go ahead, and it wasn’t easy for us to live under such uncertainty.

“There was nothing we could do about the situation. We just had to wait.”

The onset of the nationwide lockdown in March has forced numerous couples to make hard decisions about their *chuppot* and wedding celebrations. Whereas some have postponed their simchas, most are opting to go ahead, says Rabbi Gidon Fox, the Beth Din liaison tasked with overseeing the implementation of restrictions on *chuppot*.

“In general, people have embraced the restrictions. Though not ideal, couples are happy to be able to have the opportunity to get married, which wasn’t the case for a long time from the beginning of lockdown.

“Maintaining protocols at the height of the simcha can sometimes be a challenge, but with correct oversight, management, and prior communication with participants, it’s possible,”

Fox says.

The Bukris wedding proved this to be the case. When lockdown restrictions eased towards the end of June, the couple discussed their options with Sydenham’s Rabbi Yehuda Stern, and approached the Beth Din to reschedule their chuppah. Their application was approved, and they were given a new date on which to get married – 10 days later.

“We had ten days to make it all happen,” laughs Bukris. “They let us know on a Thursday that we had the approval, and we just ran with it.

“At a time like this, the ability to reschedule was a gift, and it gave us something we could look forward to. We are all surrounded by so much negativity at the moment. The chance to get our minds focused on something positive for a week was a welcome change from reality.”

Because most of the planning had already been done in advance, the couple called up various service providers who had been booked and advised them of the revised date. The chuppah was relocated to the garden of Sandton Shul, and plans were made to accommodate a smaller gathering of guests with health protocols in place.

“We had to contact people on our guest list to tell them about the changes, and see if it worked for them,” Bukris says. “We decided to have only



Shai and Carryn Bukris at their wedding

family and close friends, and unfortunately had to explain to some people that they wouldn’t be able to join us.

“People were very supportive and understanding. We arranged a live stream so that people who weren’t there could be with us. Our guests welcomed the protocols, and there were fortunately no arguments.”

The process involved close consultation with emergency medicine expert Efraim Kramer, whose expertise has been essential to helping the Beth Din ensure the safety of religious gatherings, she says.

“We met Professor Kramer to understand the health guidelines that would ensure that everyone would be safe,” she says. “He worked closely with Rabbi Stern, and guided us on the do’s and don’ts for the day while making sure we still followed halacha at the same time. He also attended to the chuppah itself to make sure that the protocols were followed.”

## Arab-Israeli actor finds himself with *Fauda*

JORDAN MOSHE

For Arab-Israeli actor Ala Dakka, a character isn’t just a role. It’s another identity. Known to millions as Bashar the boxer from hit Israeli TV series *Fauda*, the 25-year-old superstar commits himself to acting in the most authentic way possible, and his career is on the rise.

Dakka shared stories from on and off the set with South Africans this past Saturday night in a live Zoom event hosted by the *SA Jewish Report* in partnership with the South African Zionist Federation and World Zionist Organization.

Born to Muslim parents, Dakka was raised in Be’er Sheva, surrounded by a predominantly Jewish population. “I grew up in the Jewish community, and throughout my life, I wondered where I belonged,” he said. “I didn’t know where to put myself. As a kid, I just wanted to be popular, so I decided to be friends with everyone.

“My life was pretty usual. I didn’t experience racism, though I knew I was different, and it made some things a little harder. I grew up in a beautiful mixture of all kinds of identities that you find in Israel. At the time, though, I cared only about soccer.”

Dakka auditioned on the Israeli version of *The Voice*, but his initial reception wasn’t too encouraging. None of the judges turned their chairs when he performed, casting doubt on his aspirations.

“It was heartbreaking,” he says. “It took me some time to be willing to try again as an artist. I haven’t been back on stage as a musician since then, but I decided then to become an actor. I’m still optimistic



Ala Dakka sparring with co-star Lior Rax on the set of *Fauda*

about going back to music one day but acting quickly became the best thing in my life.”

Dakka honed his skills, starring in productions at his local theatre in Be’er Sheva, slowly growing in ability and confidence. He eventually auditioned for roles in television and film, landing his first screen role in an Israeli comedy series before starring in his first film, *Beyond the Mountains and Hills*, in 2016. More was to follow.

“The roles came one after the other, and I started making a living as an artist, which is a lot more than you can wish for,” Dakka says. “My parents were very scared, afraid I wouldn’t be able to support myself or a family. They’re still scared, but they saw I could be successful.”

Dakka clinched his now famous role in *Fauda* last year after hearing about the role of Bashar in July.

“I signed up at the gym and started running, slowly changing my way of living,” he says. “I was a smoker, and used to wake up late. I realised I needed to give it 100%, so I committed to getting up to go to gym and change my state of mind. It wasn’t easy, but it gave me a new opening in life.”

After auditioning in July, Dakka was informed that he had landed the role only in December. He says he took to the role immediately, finding a boxing coach and giving himself completely to the part. Even his family seemed to welcome the development.

“My family admits that I’m talented, and my dad says I should be proud of myself,” Dakka says. “Since I started, my family has started believing in me more and more, and it’s brought me closer to them. They really like the show, and

As per the Beth Din’s directive, that included socially distanced seats (each labelled for use by a single guest only), sanitisation, and temperature check upon arrival, and the wearing of masks by every one of the 50 people in attendance. No food could be served, nor was dancing allowed.

Says Bukris, “It took some getting used to. Naturally, you want to hug and kiss people, and it felt a bit weird not to. But everyone followed the protocols and stayed safe. That was most important to us.”

While the chuppah wasn’t what she would have imagined, the occasion made her and her husband see what truly matters at a wedding.

“We got a chance to understand what a chuppah is really about,” says Bukris. “Because of the situation, you get to see that it’s not about the glitz and glam or a huge party, but about the people.”

The couple has no regrets about the way they chose to celebrate their wedding.

“The whole day was perfect from start to finish,” Bukris says. “We got to celebrate with the people who matter to us, and while we did miss people who couldn’t be there, their safety mattered to us more.”

*Chuppot* should go ahead as planned where possible, says Fox. “There is a discussion in halacha regarding the propriety of postponing a wedding,” he says. “While there are circumstances when it is allowed, the ideal is for the weddings to go ahead at the planned date and not be postponed. The wedding day is but one day, the marriage on the other hand is for life.

“There’s no question that the wedding isn’t going to mirror their dream wedding. But realisation of the import of the marriage over the import of the wedding is central, and couples opting to go ahead are to be commended and encouraged.”

Says Bukris, “If couples who are planning a wedding have the chance to hold their chuppah, they should definitely go for it. Occasions like this bring back the true meaning of a marriage without all the unnecessary additions which typically surround it.”

are proud of what I have done.”

“The role in *Fauda* taught me how much you need to put yourself through for a role. I was never an athlete, so I needed to learn how to be one first. My commitment has enabled me to make a living and be proud of what I do, so I enjoy every moment.”

While shooting scenes can be gruelling, Dakka enjoys the time he shares with his co-stars on and off set.

“It’s a 12-hour day,” he says. “It’s tough, but it’s fun, and it’s what we love doing. We want it to be unique. We always try to make it the best we can for the audience so they can enjoy it and feel it’s authentic.”

There’s is a real bond on set, he says.

“We spend hours together. We’ve had parties together, and we’re still in touch today. As an actor, you work with a team and have to make sure everyone feels comfortable. If one person is upset on set, we all feel it. We build connections between us, and we share the same love.”

Dakka has received mixed reviews from fans and detractors of the series, but says he welcomes all views because the show itself presents a variety of viewpoints.

“*Fauda* talks about a conflict and its complexities,” he says. “How good people become evil or how evil people become good. The good and bad is so mixed, you never know what’s actually good or bad.

“The fact that it talks about the complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is what’s making a change. People are talking about it, and the fact they are is a good thing.”



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# The truth behind the lockdown Next Door

PERSONAL STORY

ANTHONY SACKS

“Hey guys! You ready for the protest? We gotta get the tables and chairs into the street before 12:00. We’ve got 15 minutes before kick-off, so let’s move!”

We wanna get some attention, so blocking the street is the way to go. It’s a little hardline, and the letter Wendy (Alberts from RASA – Restaurant Association of South Africa) wrote to the national police commissioner letting him know about the protest and requesting permission was denied, so it’s a little dicey.

Squinting into the distance (in Grant Avenue, Norwood), I can’t see any of the other restaurants doing anything. Lemme just run over to the guys at The Schwarma Company to see what they’re going to do.

Look inside, ya, there’s Marwan or Wafi or one of them, I never can tell which – only been neighbours for 17 years – get my temperature taken, 36.6, still good. I look him earnestly in the eye, he looks back just as earnestly. Maybe he will, maybe he won’t ...

Back to the restaurant, we band together, this table’s big and heavy, on the white line is perfect. If we put them here and run them up the road with the line down the centre, and the chairs on each end, we can still get traffic through. Perfect, peaceful, traffic slowing a bit, but flowing. Back to the shop, we need placards or something. If you’re going to picket you’ve got to have placards, no?

Pizza boxes, write on them with magic marker, “30 staff laid off, exclamation mark, exclamation mark”. Big and bold, write a second one. Don’t forget to remind Cyril (Ramaphosa) about the three months of no UIF payments received. Not a cent, 30 employees laid off since 27 March, no salary for April, May, June, now the end of July.

We’re trying to help with whatever we can, get vouchers from Pick n Pay so the guys can buy food, not giving cash because they might pay landlords and not eat, and they don’t have to pay landlords. It’s illegal to evict during the lockdown. The government promised so much, but the restaurant industry is lagging way behind and there’s no money for food. The landlord will have to go to the government to get paid because these guys sure as hell can’t pay. That’s what we are protesting about.

I saw Nkosi the other day when he came to collect his voucher, emaciated, nothing on him. He says he’s good, but you can’t be that skinny and good. Such a beautiful smile, but how can he be smiling when he’s starving.

I get him back into his old position because take-away sales are increasing. I get him some transport money, staff meals, and sanitiser, new masks, and screen him, and he’s okay. He’s working now.

I’ve got to try get as many guys as possible back into the restaurant, but we have got to wait for people to feel safe to come back in, and they’re not coming yet. Take-aways and platters are doing well.

I better get Onios back into the kitchen. He is also *skraal* as hell, but up-beat and ready to work.

Everyone’s on half hours so jobs are kept and we can break up into two teams. That’s everyone from waiters to managers to scullery to mashgiachs to chefs. So, if G-d forbid one member gets sick, that team can go into quarantine and the other can take over. That way, we can all stay working and alive.

Business is a bit better now, but we’re still 70% down from our worst turnover, and we’re running on take-aways and platters. That’s about a triple load of take-aways compared to pre-lockdown, which is a new normal for us with a skeleton staff as we can’t have as many people in the kitchen. We need to stay safe and keep social distance, so staff are multi-tasking, learning new skills, and taking on multiple positions.

With staff on half hours, salary cuts, and layoffs, we still have a massive shortfall every



Anthony Sacks and his staff protesting in Norwood

month and are struggling to get salaries out. We still help laid-off staff, who call at 06:00 telling me they’ve been kicked out of their apartments because we aren’t paying their salaries and UIF hasn’t been paid. That’s where Onios was for two nights – unthinkable – sleeping on the streets because we can’t take him back as there isn’t enough work.

The team is totally swamped with new procedures, with massive loads of take-aways and platters to dispatch, and drivers to control. Then, there’s a WhatsApp line, four phones ringing, an internet order system, and our own delivery system so we can employ waiters as drivers and save the crippling 25% chunk of every sale plus VAT that Mr Delivery takes.

Our waiters are back, not running tables because there’s only one table, but running the

phones. Table 11’s order is getting mixed up and they are trying to remain patient, but aren’t managing, just like we aren’t.

The most difficult thing to do is to see things in context so we don’t sweat the small stuff and have compassion. Like the 11 complaints we got after a huge and overwhelming trade on Youth Day. Every one of the 11 were real angels. We refunded, and some wouldn’t take refunds, just wanted acknowledgment of their inconvenience.

Mr President, listen to

the cries of the millions of us who put our seats in the streets across the country last Wednesday, lift the curfew, and get UIF to staff who stayed home because you asked them to.

Lift the alcohol ban because ten thousand extra trauma beds are needed every month for alcohol-related incidents, but hundreds of thousands of restaurant employees around the country are laid off and starving. The math doesn’t add up. Restaurants can’t survive without liquor sales. Please, Mr President, hear our cry.

• Anthony Sacks is the owner of RTG and Next Door kosher restaurants in Norwood.



Anthony Sacks protesting in Norwood

# How the bottom fell out of the world of theatre

PERSONAL STORY

GINA SHMUKLER

Most people in the entertainment industry begin their year with a somewhat blank calendar, and tons of faith. The shows will go on, and we will have work.

My month of March was ideal. I had three corporate theatre jobs, two in Gauteng and one in Nairobi. I was directing a beautiful play of restorative personal hope, and another collaborative work, based on the Life Esidimeni scandal, was booked for two play festivals.

Then COVID-19 happened, and the work evaporated.

I found myself, like many of my colleagues, pondering the bleakness of what was ahead. “Hello wall,” as Shirley Valentine would say.

I am a theatre baby and a purist, and the virtual theatre space wasn’t for me. I would have to wait it out, and have faith.

It’s always more possible to be resilient, to consider a transfer of skills, when there’s a little reserve in the bank. It’s important for me to mention, that in spite of much criticism, I was fortunate to receive some relief funding from government.

As time passed, I walked my driveway. A lot. While listening to TED Talks and podcasts – and by the way, I’ve loved the *SA Jewish Report*’s brilliantly curated series of webinars. I questioned what was to become of our industry. Was it even relevant?

I comforted myself in the knowledge that post COVID-19, people will need community, and theatre provides that in the most essential and magical way. However, will our audiences have enough confidence to return when public spaces eventually open?

This time has taught me the value of community; acceptance that I can’t control timelines; and it has forced me to dig deep into my actor faith that the wheel will turn.

Amidst the questioning and introspection, I created a narrative project, which I carried out with two corporate clients and another focus group. The idea came to me in response to author Arundhati Roy’s statement, as quoted in the *Financial Times*, “Historically, pandemics have forced

suffering isn’t in vain.

And what of hope?

Perhaps artists in society who bring joy, make meaning, provoke thought, and give voice, perhaps in a post COVID-19 world, they will have real value. And that value will be supported by grants for new works, for old works told in new ways, for artists to have financial reserves, so that when the next crisis hits, they can survive.

At the last event I did – a family day with 2 000 people – I so vividly remember watching the technicians, and thinking that on Monday, they would be retrenched. Surely they would prefer to get COVID-19 and keep their jobs than get sick and have no money for food?

Sadly, this is the reality for many of the brilliantly talented people who grace the entertainment spaces with passion and love and a will to make meaning and joy.

We are a hand-to-mouth industry. I remain privileged that I have resources to hold me in times of crisis. But there are many who find themselves unable to cover rent, car payments, their cell phones – a source of livelihood – medical support, and groceries.

This is the reality of many who brought you community and catharsis as you stood to applaud their South African brilliance on our stages.

This Saturday, 2 August, you can applaud once again by watching the Open Spaces Concert. For booking details: <https://www.quicket.co.za/events/108032-open-spaces/?preview=t>

• Gina Shmukler is an actress, director and theatre maker.



Gina Shmukler performing in Cape Town Opera's Showboat in Sweden

# Joburg – city of architects and dreamers

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

In spite of its reputation for being the “engine room” of the country, Johannesburg has many elegant, experimental buildings designed by Jewish architects.

Johannesburg Heritage Foundation’s Flo Bird and Brian McKechnie recently took viewers on a virtual tour of many of these buildings, downtown and uptown. Some of them have fallen into disrepair, but they are still a testament to innovation, and continue to contribute to the lives of those who live and work in them.

The tour, unusually, linked the buildings to their creators’ graves at Westpark Cemetery, with epitaphs contributing to our understanding of who they were.

“This tour was inspired by encountering the graves of architects whose work I loved,” Bird said, pointing out that a virtual tour allows us to traverse the large Westpark Jewish Cemetery with ease.

It started with Morrie (MJ) Jacob, who died in 1950. Jacob designed the Doornfontein Synagogue (1905) otherwise known as the Lions Shul, named for the bronze lions on either side of the stairs. In its day, Doornfontein was a desirable address for Jews. Though today the shul is squashed up against Joe Slovo Drive with an ugly fence, it’s still loved for its beauty and unusual touches like minarets, stone columns, and basilica-like space.

Another one of Jacob’s buildings, Cohn’s Pharmacy in Pageview (1906), is an example of the city’s obsession with corner buildings, which tended to be far more elegant and accentuated than those in the middle of the block. Jacob’s Jewish Guild War Memorial building in the old city centre (1922/23) is a pile of an Edwardian building which also celebrates its corner status.

Israel Wayburne (1983) is known, among other



Jewish architects buried at Westpark Cemetery, and their contribution to the cityscape

things, for employing famous activist and communist Rusty Bernstein. He’s responsible for a number of the maisonette flats (two down, two up) in Yeoville.

“Each building contributes to an interesting and varied landscape [compared, say, to monotonous Fourways],” said Bird.

One of his most well-known buildings is, in fact, the *ohel* at Westpark, which has a religious and aesthetic function (in spite of an unsightly drainpipe addition at the front). “Luckily Issie doesn’t have to see it as his grave is on the other side of the building,” Bird commented.

Louis Theodore Obel (1956), who was in partnership with his brother, Mark, was a graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) – as were many of the architects mentioned. Obel and Obel made a great contribution to art deco architecture, including the Barbican Building (1930), which was the tallest building in Johannesburg at the time, Astor Mansions, one of Joburg’s first skyscrapers, and Beacon Royale flats (1934), at the bottom of Yeoville

on Louis Botha Avenue.

Maurice Cowen (1990) contributed to the decorative facades of many of Joburg’s best-known schools, including Parktown Girls and Jeppe Boys, and the panels gracing 1930s-era Dunvegan Chambers, Roehampton Court, Shakespeare House, and Broadcast House in the Johannesburg CBD. The latter was the original home of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. The crazy antennae designed for the top of this building didn’t have any real function, McKechnie said, though it copied the antennae on top of the BBC, and there was briefly the idea of using it to dock airships.

Another Wits graduate, Leopold Grinker (1973), was an anti-establishment figure who disliked modernism. Grinker’s Normandie Court (1937) in Delvers Street, Newtown, combines art deco with his obsession with the streamlined form of ships. So too does Daventry Court in Killarney (also built in the 1930s), which was Killarney’s first modern block of flats.

Harold Leroith (also a Wits’ alma mater) is best known for designing Temple Emanuel in Parktown (1954). This minimalist, modern building has concrete recesses which make it sculptural and provide shade for its windows. It also shows concern for materials like stone and face brick.

Leroith also designed Redoma Court, which architects consider one of Johannesburg’s best buildings, and the iconic, shiplike San Remo (1937). Both are sadly in a dilapidated state in Yeoville.

Monty Sack, an architect and artist and another Wits graduate, (2009), incorporated the work of artists in Killarney Hills built on top of Killarney Ridge, built to house actors for the studio of American financier Isidore Schlesinger.

Sidney Abramowitch (2016) passionately lobbied to save Joburg’s historical buildings such as the Markham Building, and is known for designing Innes Chambers in 1963, now used by the National Prosecuting Authority. This unusual building with Y-shaped columns representing the scales of justice, was covered with mosaics, which recently had to be painstakingly restored.

Lastly, the tour touched on the work of Gerald Gordon (2016), also a Wits graduate, who the group described as “an outstanding brain who was unable to limit himself to any single factor”. Gordon, who incubated many of South Africa’s best-known architects in his many years of lecturing at Wits, is best known for designing mountain houses on Linksfield Ridge, such as 7 New Mountain Road (early 70s), which literally cling to the edges of cliffs.


He’s also known for developing a new construction method he named “thin-skin architecture” which uses no bricks and is extremely strong because of its monocoque construction (a type of construction used in cars and aeroplanes).

Like many others, the brilliance and bravery of these Jewish architects leaves a legacy that can’t be eradicated.

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# Jewish actors in line for starring role at Emmys

EMILY BURACK – JTA

Though much about the 2020 Emmy Awards ceremony isn’t yet known, one thing is clear: Jewish TV stars are well positioned to clean up.

Dozens of Jewish actors and creators were on the list when this year’s nominations were announced on Tuesday. Read through to see who could take home prizes when the awards show airs in September.

One notable show that was shut out was *The Plot Against America*, the HBO miniseries that depicts an alternate history in which isolationist Charles Lindbergh wins the 1940 presidential election, and encourages antisemitic attitudes throughout the United States.

*Unorthodox* makes its mark on the drama category. The hit Netflix drama based on Deborah Feldman’s memoir of the same name, came away with eight nominations, including best limited series. Anna Winger was nominated for writing, and star Shira Haas was nominated for lead actress in a limited series or movie.

Haas, an Israeli, learned Yiddish for the role. Playing Esty was “probably one of the most, if not the most, complex character that I had the chance to play. It’s so rare to get such a main and amazing female role. I was so lucky to get it.”

Winger told *Kveller* that working on *Unorthodox* was the first time she worked with a predominately Jewish cast.

“I usually say it takes a village to make a show,” Winger said. “For *Unorthodox*? It takes a shtetl.”

**Tiffany Haddish’s *Black Mitzvah* is nominated alongside Jerry Seinfeld**

The Netflix special was nominated for outstanding variety special along with fellow Jewish comedian Jerry Seinfeld, who was

tabbed for his 23 *Hours To Kill*.

Haddish spoke to *Alma* about her journey to claiming her Jewish heritage (her dad was an Eritrean Jew), and her decision to study Torah and become a Batmitzvah.

“When I came up with the concept for my special,” Haddish said, “I was trying to figure out a way to tell my truth, my experience in life, and also maybe open other people’s eyes to the fact that in African American culture, there is nothing that says, ‘OK, you’re officially a woman’, or ‘You’re officially a man.’ There’s no ceremony. There’s no rite of passage. Knowing who you are, knowing where you come from, that’s what makes you an adult. And being able to share your story. That’s what I love about Judaism, because it’s all about sharing your stories and questioning and learning from each other.”

***Schitt’s Creek* was also recognised for its final season**

Created by the Canadian Jewish father-and-son duo Eugene and Dan Levy, the series walked away with 15 nominations for its critically acclaimed final season. The show was nominated for best comedy series, and all four stars were recognised: Eugene Levy for lead actor in a comedy series; Catherine O’Hara, lead actress;



Tiffany Haddish: *Black Mitzvah*

Dan Levy, supporting actor; and Annie Murphy, supporting actress.

The younger Levy was nominated as well for writing the finale episode, *Happy Ending*, and for direction of the episode.

*The Marvelous Mrs Maisel* leads the comedy pack. The third season of the Jewish comedy scored 20 nominations, including for outstanding comedy series, and lead actress Rachel Brosnahan in her portrayal of Midge Maisel. Jewish actress Alex Borstein was nominated again in the best supporting actress category. She has won the last two times she was nominated. Borstein will be competing against her follow *Maisel* star, Marin Hinkle. Other *Maisel* acting nominations include Sterling K. Brown, Tony Shalhoub, Wanda Sykes, and Luke Kirby.

Amy Sherman-Palladino was nominated for directing an episode, as was her husband and co-creator, Dan Palladino. As Sherman-Palladino told JTA earlier this year, “I’ve always viewed comedy, especially at this time, as a Jewish creation – like the rhythm, the cadence.”

**Even more Jewish comedy creators are recognised**

The vampire mockumentary comedy *What We Do In the Shadows*, co-created by Taika Waititi, a Jewish Māori director, writer and actor, and Jemaine Clement, earned eight nominations, including one for outstanding comedy series. (Waititi was also nominated for his voice-over performance in *The Mandalorian*.)

Waititi tweeted, “The idea that never dies. Congrats to everyone who decided to drag this joke-turned-movie into the world of

television. Especially to @AJemaineClement who I tricked into doing it in the first place. Suckaaaaa!”

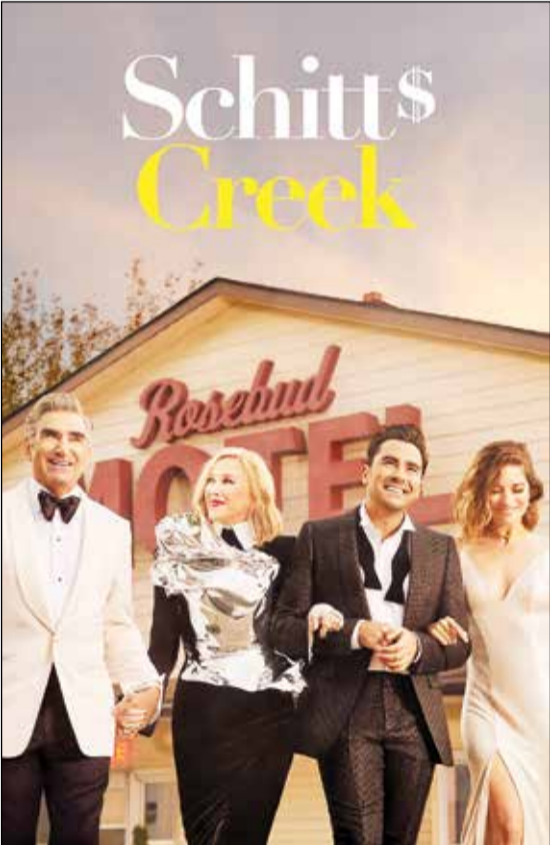
Jewish showrunner Liz Feldman’s *Dead to Me*, which scored four nominations, is also competing in the outstanding comedy series.

Also in the comedy category, *The Good Place*, which ended this year, helmed by Jewish showrunner Michael Schur. Schur also earned a nomination for writing. *The Good Place* earned a total of seven nominations.

Animated shows by Jewish creators also score nominations. *Big Mouth*, the Netflix animated show about puberty, was nominated three times, including for best outstanding animated programme. Season three featured a very Jewish episode at a Seder in Florida. The show was co-created by Nick Kroll and Andrew Goldberg based on their Jewish childhoods in suburban New York’s Westchester County.

*BoJack Horseman*, which wrapped up its sixth and final season this year, will also be competing in the best animated series category. The show’s creator, Raphael Bob-Waksberg, is Jewish.

Maya Rudolph is competing against herself in the guest actress in a comedy series role for her role on *The Good Place* and her guest appearance



as Senator Kamala Harris on *Saturday Night Live*. She was nominated as well for her voice-over work as Connie the Hormone Monstress on the very Jewish animated show *Big Mouth*.

Tracee Ellis Ross received her fourth nomination for lead actress on the ABC sitcom *Black-ish*.

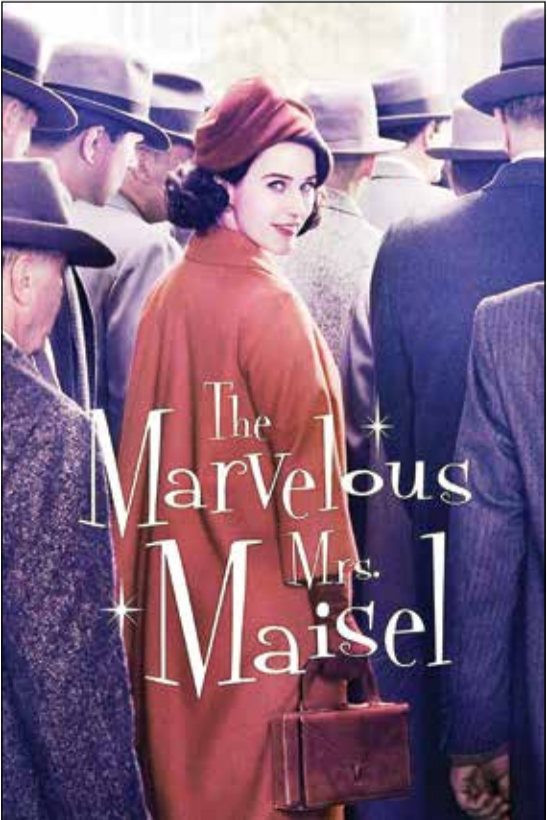
Julia Garner was nominated for outstanding supporting actress in a drama series, a category she won last year.

And while not portrayed by Jewish actresses, Margo Martindale’s portrayal of the legendary Jewish politician Bella Abzug and Tracey Ullman’s of Jewish feminist Betty Friedan both received nominations. *Mrs. America*, the FX show about the fight for the equal rights amendment, walked away with 10 nominations.

As do two shows about cranky old Jews. Larry David’s “Curb Your Enthusiasm” earned four nominations, including outstanding comedy series, but David himself was not nominated.

*The Kominsky Method* earned three, including one for Michael Douglas’ portrayal of Sandy Kominsky, a Jewish acting teacher, and Alan Arkin’s Norman Newlander.

The Emmy Awards will air on 20 September on ABC in a virtual ceremony hosted by Jimmy Kimmel.



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# Saying much more by saying nothing

Remaining silent has never been a talent of mine. From as early as I can remember, I was unable to just to “shut it”, even when I knew it was maybe more sensible to do just that. It’s like I never received that gene. It was unquestionably missing from my mother’s DNA, and I’m sure my father’s is recessive rather than dominant.

In short, I stood little chance of keeping quiet, and have more or less accepted that it’s unlikely that I ever will.

Which is why I was so uncomfortable in taking part in the Twitter campaign that required Jews and friends to remain Twitter silent for 48 hours. At first, I struggled to understand how remaining silent could ever be helpful. As someone who spends considerable energy in speaking out, how would silence help?

The 48-hour Twitter campaign had its roots in the United Kingdom following a series of antisemitic tweets from a rapper called Wiley. He was, in a sense, the proverbial “final straw” that ultimately broke the back of the already burdened camel. Jews have been faced with torrents of antisemitism on social media, and have been asked to tolerate levels of hate that almost no other group has been asked to.

When Louis Farrakhan referred to Jews as “termites”, it took enormous pressure to have the tweet deleted. No difference in Wiley’s case, who believes without any doubt that Jews control the world. The irony, of course, being that we clearly don’t control Twitter. If not, he would be the second one to go.

And so, I grappled with the dilemma about remaining silent. And decided that even if it didn’t sit comfortably, I would stand alongside fellow Jews who had had just about enough of the constant barrage of abuse (I certainly have). But,

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



as an observant Jew and one used to the specific laws (halacha) on just about everything, I found the lack of clear direction alarming.

The 48 hours were due to begin at 09:00 on Monday, and run until 09:00 on Wednesday.

- Was it 09:00 in the United Kingdom or local time? And would this mean that Americans would be silent way after we were happily tweeting again.
- Would there be 18 extra minutes (as with the start of Shabbat) where we could quickly finish off some tweets?
- Does one have to send a tweet declaring the start of the 48 hours, or would it be enough to simply go silent?
- Are we allowed to look at Twitter during this time and read other tweets, or is the platform prohibited in its entirety?
- What if there’s an emergency tweet? And what constitutes such?
- If I run a Twitter account for a business (not in my Jewish name), am I allowed to engage on the platform?
- Do people outside of the United Kingdom need to keep an extra day in case of travellers crossing time zones?
- And why during the 48 hours did so many New York Jews continue to tweet?

There is little doubt that silence is a powerful tool. Especially because by saying nothing, we often say more – as long as it’s used sparingly, and doesn’t become a habitual sulk. It will be interesting to see what impact the 48 hours of Twitter silence has, and if it took silence finally to be heard.

## A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Ehrenreich ruling proves power of words

Some items appear to have been on the agenda of the council of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) forever, and one of these has been our case against former Congress of South African Trade Unions Western Cape leader Tony Ehrenreich.

Last week, we were finally able to draw a line under this six-year-long matter when we accepted a suitably worded apology from Ehrenreich for inciting violence against the SAJBD and others who express support for Israel. The significance of Ehrenreich’s apology shouldn’t be underplayed. It amounts to a public admission of guilt on his part, putting to an end all previous attempts to justify his unacceptable conduct by posing as a champion of human rights. It further establishes a crucial precedent, namely that it’s never acceptable to threaten and incite violence against those who disagree with you.

In spite of the many lengthy delays, we stuck to our guns through every stage of the process until it reached a satisfactory conclusion. In doing so, we will have sent a strong message that regardless of political connections and no matter what spoiling tactics are resorted to, when our community’s civil rights have been infringed, the Board won’t rest until those responsible have been held properly accountable.

In its statement on the acceptance of the apology, the SA Human Rights Commission made the critical point that words have immense power, and that therefore the consequences of irresponsible speech can be extremely negative, particularly in a society as traumatised as our own. Consequently, all people, but especially those in leadership positions, have a responsibility to be mindful of the manner in which they communicate, whether on



## ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

social media or any other public forum. This, indeed, is an area in which the SAJBD has been continuously active over the years, from the level of unsavoury comments made in a junior school playground right through to the Constitutional Court. The right to freedom of expression is a cornerstone of democracy, but not when it crosses over into incitement of hatred and causing harm.

Today, the vast majority of hate-speech incidents reported to us occur on social media, which has on the one hand given ordinary people a vast public platform on which to air their views, but which by its very free, unregulated nature lends itself to all kinds of abuse. Confronting these issues has become a global challenge, to the extent of boycotts being called for against such online giants as Facebook and Twitter. The owners of such platforms do, indeed, have a responsibility to prevent them from becoming vehicles for propagating hatred, but it’s also incumbent on individuals to refrain from misusing them in this way. Whatever is posted online amounts to publication, and consequently, it’s no defence to claim simply to be airing your private opinions.

I urge you all therefore to ponder before you post, and think before you tweet. Publishing a comment can be a matter of a few seconds, but its negative consequences can last for a very long time indeed. Just ask Tony Ehrenreich.

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

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

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