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Community fire-fighting team hits the ground running

NICOLA MILTZ

When a family home burnt to the ground in front of its owners' shocked and bewildered eyes one Shabbos morning last year, a few members of South African rescue and recovery organisation ZAKA, who were present at the fire, decided to do something about it.

This week, the ZAKA Fire Containment Unit was launched. The organisation is made up of a team of volunteers who help to contain a fire while waiting for emergency services to arrive.

"While we were doing security duty at the Torah Academy shul, we saw smoke rising in Bagleyston," said ZAKA South Africa's head of operations, Josh Green. "We went to inspect with the aim of offering our services. There were a few people on the scene, and a couple of extinguishers, but no water. If you don't have water to put out a fire, it is going to burn."

So they watched helplessly as the small fire grew bigger and bigger, eventually ravaging the entire house. "There was nothing anyone could do as we waited patiently for emergency services to arrive," said Green. "We were heartbroken for the family who lost their home. That fire could have been contained, but it burnt the house down."

Shaken from the experience, Green, together with the civic minded Yosef Jameson and Yossi Lazarus, decided to start a community initiative to ensure that help is at hand when a fire breaks out.

"We agreed that we can't allow something like that to happen again. We may not be able to save a house, but we must at least be able to do something," said Green.

The three dipped into their private funds, and purchased two fire trailers to help them set up the unit.

A recent surge of fires within the community has further inspired the men to establish a team that now has the capability to contain a fire until local fire services arrive.

"The team is equipped with two fire trailers that can spray 2 000 litres of water onto a fire as well as the mechanism to connect into fire hydrants and even suck up water from a swimming pool should there be no hydrant within reach," said ZAKA's Netanel Azizollahoff.

"helped save the day".

"The fire started out small further up the hill, and then quickly started to move its way down closer to the centre. Within minutes, it was five times the size, and I began to worry. I honestly didn't know what to do. I wasn't sure who to call.



A member of the ZAKA fire
containment unit helping to
contain the spread of a fire
in Linksfield this week

"On Monday, there was a fire in Linksfield. The incident involved a serious veld fire that started at the N3 onramp and rapidly spread, endangering vehicles and property all the way up to Club Street," he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

"The ZAKA containment unit managed to arrive in time to contain the fire and, with the assistance of Sandton Fire Services, eventually managed to extinguish the fire. The ZAKA team was at the scene for more than four hours" he said.

Neil Meyerowitz, the owner of Plush Car Wash at the Linksfield Terrace Shopping Centre, said ZAKA

Before I knew it, this team from ZAKA arrived and immediately started to contain the fire. They jumped on it, and never left until it was over. If they hadn't showed up when they did, I shudder to think what would have happened."

Monique Friedland, the owner of the shopping centre, said ZAKA was first to arrive on the scene.

"The fire was getting dangerously close, so we were grateful when ZAKA arrived. We felt we were in good hands. It was comforting. The community is fortunate to have this. They will help save lives and property in the future."

The ZAKA volunteers insist they aren't firemen, they merely help to contain the spread of a fire. "We have basic training in fire dynamics. We won't be running into a burning building to save a *bobba* from the 10th floor. Our role is to help contain the spread of the fire with water, and assist the fire department," said Green.

Two weeks ago, there was another fire on Linksfield Ridge, and the ZAKA unit was dispatched to the scene.

"Had the wind changed direction, it would have taken minutes to burn down a nearby house. Fortunately, we were able to spray the surrounding area with water, and the fire eventually burnt itself out. Our team was on standby ready to act in this residential area where people live."

He said it was important for the community to be aware of the service provided because often people are at a loss about what to do in such an emergency, and have no idea who to call.

"We urge members of the community to call our control room first. Make the call the moment a fire breaks out. Our control room will then immediately alert all the relevant emergency services and dispatch members of the ZAKA team," said Green.

The unit reinforces the rescue services ZAKA offers.

ZAKA is an international rescue and recovery organisation based out of Jerusalem in Israel, with branches all over the world, including a South African chapter which started in 2015, headed by Daniel Forman.

It's a world-renowned non-profit organisation that's recognised by the United Nations, in which every member is a volunteer. Born out of the need to treat the dead and their remains in a halachic and dignified manner, they are made up of rabbis, doctors, business people, and paramedics who, at a moment's notice, leave what they are doing to assist where needed.

• For emergencies, contact the joint CSO 24 hour emergency control room on 086 18 000 18.



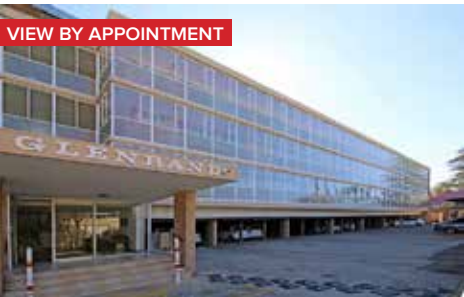
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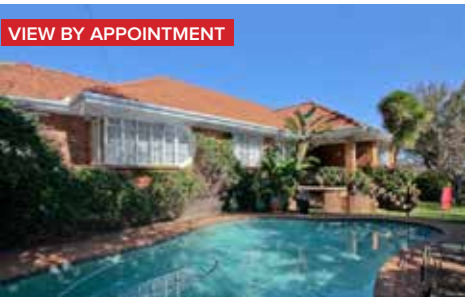


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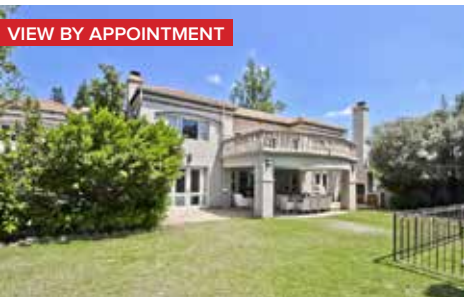


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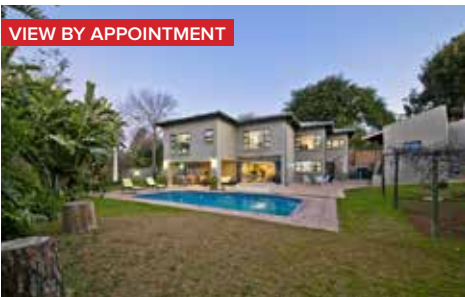


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Violent crime significantly lower in our areas

NICOLA MILTZ

Incidents of violent crime have dropped in the community, while soft crime and snatch and grabs are on the rise, security experts revealed this week in the wake of the recently released national crime statistics.

The official crime statistics released last Friday show an increase in various crimes including murder across the country for the period 2019/2020.

However, according to the Community Active Protection (CAP) analytics department, violent crime in areas affecting the community has reduced markedly in the past six months compared to previous years.

This is shown by statistics compiled since the beginning of the year, said Sean Jammy, the chief operating officer of CAP.

“This insight is valuable as it shows that COVID-19-influenced economic factors haven’t driven an increase in serious violent crime. It reinforces our belief that serious violent crimes are not influenced by economic factors, and perpetrators of the most heinous attacks exist

irrespective of the economic climate,” said Jammy.

“Violent crimes are perpetrated by criminals who are motivated by a substantial financial gain along with a propensity to commit these types of crimes. These crimes are not perpetrated by people who need the items to survive,” he told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

He said CAP had analysed statistics within the community since the beginning of 2020 to derive insight into crime trends affecting residents living and working in CAP-secured areas.

There had been a definite increase in soft crimes. “Soft crimes such as theft and attempted theft [of things like cameras, outdoor alarm sensors, wall lights, intercoms, bicycles, ladders, and tools] have increased.” These, Jammy said, are directly related to the economic environment. “These perpetrators do crime in order to survive. The number of criminals who commit soft crimes has increased during this time.

“To remove the opportunity to commit these crimes, residents need to assist in ensuring that these individuals are kept out of areas. Although it’s not easy to turn those in need away, we urge residents to support local charities instead of feeding and supporting displaced people in your suburbs directly from your home or at roadsides,” said Jammy.

Crime trends also reveal an increase in snatch and grabs.

“More people are exercising outside away from the gym during this time. Snatch and grabs greatly affect everyone in the household, ranging from residents going out for a jog, to helpers walking to nearby taxi ranks



to go home. These crimes are committed within seconds, and can be avoided with the community’s help,” he said.

Armed robberies particularly affect domestic workers, who are being held up for their cell phones in public places. It also affects people waiting outside for transport.

“A perpetrator sees a person waiting in the street, often they are on their phone, and are caught off guard when their phone is yanked from them, and the perpetrator quickly disappears,” said Jammy.

He advises leaving all valuables at home when exercising or walking outside.

“Less foot traffic throughout areas will disable opportunities for criminals. if anyone or anything seems suspicious, report it to your security company,” he said.

Security experts urge members of the public to open a case with the South African Police Service when they have been a victim of crime, regardless of how petty or small the crime.

“Since 1 January 2019, 113 suspects

apprehended by CAP were released due to cases not being opened. This is detrimental as these people can return to the streets to commit similar types of crime. The cycle can end with a case being opened which allows the suspects to be detained should they be apprehended,” said Jammy.

There were 21 325 murders between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, according to the statistics released by Police Minister Bheki Cele and National Police Commissioner General

Khehla Sitole last Friday.

This amounted to 303 more murders than the previous year – an increase of 1.4%. The 2019/2020 figures translate into 58.42 (rounded down) murders a day.

In this period, there were 49 murders in 46 incidents on farms and smallholdings, two more than the previous year.

There was an overall drop in reported crime in the most recently available crime statistics.

There were no bank robberies in South Africa in the period. However, carjacking and truck hijacking increased 13.3% and 1.7% respectively.

Jammy advised residents to get to know their neighbours, and know who is meant to be in the area. “This includes staff working on your property. Screening staff pre and post-employment is an effective way to ensure those working within the home are vetted. We also encourage residents to report nearby construction sites to the relevant security companies in the area.”

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Apology

In our story last week, “If you save one life, you save the world”, we erroneously referred to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda as “sectarian violence”. It was without doubt a genocide. In April 1994, extremist government-led Hutu militias began to execute a long-planned campaign to murder all Tutsis, as well as any Hutu who opposed their genocidal plan. In less than three months, about one million Tutsis were killed.

We also mistakenly referred to present day Rwandan President Paul Kagame as having been involved in stopping a massacre in an orphanage. The person involved was genocide period Rwandan Prime Minister Jean Kambanda and not Kagame who, as leader of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), brought the genocide to an end in July 1994.

The *SA Jewish Report* apologises for this error.

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:26	18:17	Johannesburg
17:54	18:47	Cape Town
17:09	18:02	Durban
17:30	18:22	Bloemfontein
17:25	18:18	Port Elizabeth
17:17	18:10	East London

Torah Thought

Me versus we

Who is more important, the Jew or the Jewish people?

In last week’s parsha, we read the first chapter of the *Shema*. This week, we read the second. Yet, there are many similarities between the two. Certain sentences are virtually identical. Why would the Torah, normally so cryptic, be so repetitious?

If one examines the text, we see a clear distinction between the two chapters. The first is in the singular, and the second is in the plural. Teach Torah to your son in the first, and to your

children in the second. Put Tefillin on your hand in the first, and on your hands in the second.

But why the need for both? The answer is that G-d speaks to the individual, but also to the community. He addresses the Jew, and the Jewish people. The first paragraph teaches

us that every single individual is important, even critical, and so G-d addresses every individual personally. The second paragraph reminds us that there is also a sum of all the parts; that together, individuals make up a community. And communities, too, are indispensable.

A community isn’t only a motley collection of disparate individuals. A community is an important entity in its own right. In some ways, a community is supreme; in others, we acknowledge the supremacy of the individual. And, yes, there is a tension at play here.

More than 800 years ago, Maimonides ruled that communal leaders were obliged to safeguard the community, and ought not to pay exorbitant ransom monies if one of its members was taken hostage. However, should a dangerous enemy demand that Jewish leaders hand over to them a particular individual lest they attack the entire community, it’s not permitted to sacrifice even one individual for the sake of the community.

So we need both sections of the *Shema*, because both are important, the individual and the community.

Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Sydenham Shul

COVID-19 has taught us the supreme preciousness of every soul. We closed all our shuls to save even a single life. But it also taught us how much we need our community. Yes, we survived without our congregations all this time. But we are missing the shul experience and craving our communal connections. The explosion of Zoom shiurim and events is inspirational, but it only confirms how much we really need each other.

According to the recently released survey on South African Jewry, 57% of Jews are affiliated to a synagogue. Rosh Hashanah is almost upon us. Our shuls have been battered by this pandemic. We need the other 43% to step up to the plate, and of course, committed families must stay the course.

The tension between looking after ourselves and our community has never been more tangible as we struggle to balance these two, seemingly exclusive, imperatives of Jewish life.

Let us keep reciting both chapters of the *Shema*. Then we can look forward to healthy individuals and wholesome communities.

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Kliprivier raid signals growing terrorism threat

TALI FEINBERG

A raid on a property in the south of Johannesburg on Friday, 24 July, may have uncovered a cell of South Africans sympathetic to terror organisation Islamic State (IS or ISIS). It's the fourth or fifth incident of possible terrorist activity linked to IS being uncovered in South Africa over the past five years. This threat has a profound impact on the South African Jewish community.



“I believe this has a direct and concerning impact on the safety and security of all South Africans. Anyone who doesn’t subscribe to this brand of radical thought is fair game or collateral damage,” say Jevon Greenblatt, the director of operations at the Community Security Organisation (CSO) in Gauteng. “Regarding our community, doctrines such as this strongly encourage adherents to attack Jews. Earlier this year, ISIS distributed messages to its supporters instructing them to liberate Jerusalem, and attack Jews around the world.”

Police reportedly seized ISIS-related materials during a search of a property in the Kliprivier area in response to the kidnapping of a 72-year-old Indian national, who was rescued during the operation. He had been taken on 2 July, and his captors demanded a ransom in Bitcoin. The crime scene contained illegal ammunition and firearms. Five suspects were arrested.

Says Greenblatt, “We have already seen how the Thulsie twins specifically planned to target Jews. Fatima Patel, who was involved in the murder of the Saunders couple, was originally linked to the Thulsies, so must have shared their world view. It has also been reported that the mastermind behind the Durban attacks is communicating with and possibly paying for the legal expenses of Patel, so he must be directly connected or ideologically aligned to such thinking.”

Greenblatt is referring to the Verulam mosque attack and pipe-bomb threats around Durban in 2018. The case was struck off the role, but is still being investigated.

“The possibility of terrorism in our country is very real, and is no longer something we can ignore. At the risk of sounding alarmist, the CSO has been warning about the growing terror threats in South Africa for the past few years,” he says.

“ISIS sympathisers planning attacks may target Jewish facilities. In the context of a heightened terror threat, one can say the threat is heightened against the Jewish community. Terrorists see Jews as a ‘high value target’ globally and on the African continent,” says Ryan Cummings, the director of Signal Risk, which specialises in risk management across Africa.

Cummings notes that both this group and

the alleged Verulam mosque attack group used a modus operandi of kidnapping civilians. He negotiated a number of hostage situations in Syria in 2014 and 2015, and says, “It’s a common ploy by ISIS for the purpose of extorting a cash ransom. There are also more macabre kidnappings, which lead to a ‘stylized execution’ to make a statement. This is commonplace enough across the African continent, and it’s possible for it to be replicated here.”

Says Greenblatt, “It’s becoming clear that many of the ISIS-related terror incidents we have seen since 2016 are in one way or another interconnected. This indicates that there is either a direct co-ordination of activities, or at least some communication and sharing of ideas between the different cells. My understanding is that at least one of the individuals arrested in this incident was also arrested in connection to the Verulam mosque case.”

Looking back at the drive-by shooting in Johannesburg in the early hours of New Year’s Day this year,

Greenblatt says, “We immediately thought it may be terror-related, but couldn’t be certain. It had many of the hallmarks of such an attack. CSO never let go of the possibility, and after the Kliprivier kidnapping and arrests, we were informed that it was, indeed, terror-related and linked to ISIS. Media reports state that some of the firearms at the Kliprivier house are possibly linked to the shooting, and that one of the vehicles was also found.

“This incident [the Kliprivier raid] flags a trend,” says Willem Els, senior training co-ordinator of the Complex Threats in Africa Programme at the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria. This includes the incidents mentioned by Greenblatt, as well as the case of a 15-year-old Cape Town girl who ran away from home to join IS in April 2015, but was taken off the flight at the last minute.

“What these confirm is that ISIS does have a presence in South Africa. What we don’t know is the extent of its presence. Press reports as well as comments by the national commissioner of police suggest that there may be links not only to other groups in South Africa, but also international links.”

Is South Africa taking the threat of terrorism seriously? “There are a number of highly competent and dedicated people working very hard to identify these threats, ensure terror-attack plans are disrupted, gather necessary information, and prepare sufficient evidence to prosecute the perpetrators,” says Greenblatt.

“I also believe that for the first time, South Africa’s leadership is beginning to recognise the possible danger to our country and region. Overwhelming evidence of numerous groups and individuals aligning themselves with ISIS’s violent brand of radical Islam proves that the threat is real and growing. Together with an expanding ISIS-linked insurgency just across our northern border with Mozambique and ISIS’s warning that South Africa should not get involved, we have no other option but to recognise it for what it is, and take the necessary measures to understand and address it.”

Els believes that South Africa is doing something about the terrorist threat. “The recent arrests demonstrate that. But we also know that the fight against terror can’t be done in isolation.

Not even so-called super powers like the United States, Russia, and China can fight it alone. International and regional co-operation should be embraced. Intelligence agencies and law enforcement should rise to the challenge and seize this opportunity to regain the trust of the public.

“The recent appointment of Robert McBride as head of the State Security Agency’s [SSA’s] foreign branch, and the intention to fill other key vacant posts at the SSA, demonstrates a willingness by the government to address the shortcomings and fill the gaps. We also believe that he and the new management team will bring about much needed reforms to effectively address the challenges posed.

“This recent incident provides the opportunity for law enforcement to regain the trust of the public with swift and thorough investigation. The manner in which it addresses the challenges of the Verulam mosque case will also give an indication of the political will of South Africa to overcome the challenges posed by radical groups in South Africa.”

Says Cummings, “Our government has stated that it’s taking the IS threat seriously. It’s acknowledging it exists, and is following up on intelligence. The threat becomes more acute if South Africa makes a commitment to deploy

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forces in northern Mozambique. This could lead to punitive attacks that would most likely be undertaken by ‘lone wolf’ South Africans that aren’t formally linked to IS, but are sympathetic to their cause.”

To empower ourselves in the face of such a threat, “South Africans need to recognise that this issue is real. As concerned citizens, we all need to insist that government provides the right support and resources to those tasked with identifying, investigating, mitigating, and combating extremist ideologies, organisations, and individuals,” says Greenblatt.

“Secondly, every individual needs to take responsibility for their own safety and security, and for each other. We can’t expect to be looked after if we aren’t prepared to get involved and learn how to look after ourselves and our loved ones. We no longer live in a world where we can leave things to chance or to others. We have to be vigilant, proactive, and prepared. Always report anything suspicious to security on site, the CSO’s 24 hour emergency control room, and the authorities.”

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Historic reforms to Cape Board’s election process

TALI FEINBERG

The Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape Board) is heading towards a groundbreaking election after it instituted election reforms that were recommended by the Seligson Commission three years ago.

“Coming out of the 2017 Cape Board elections, various complaints both from candidates running in the election and the public were sent in to the Cape Board. In good governance, it put in place the Seligson Commission,” says Cape Board Director Stuart Diamond.

“One of the most important recommendations was that a commission be set up to review the current structure of the organisation’s constitution, and possibly to re-draft it. A new constitution was passed in February 2020. It includes an important document called the electoral code, which essentially created rules around the election and put into play the electoral commission (EC).”

Advocate Anton Katz SC, advocate Doron Goldberg, and Richard Freedman make up this new, independent and impartial body that regulates the elections for membership of the Cape Board council in order to ensure the process is credible, free, and fair.

Diamond says that very few communal organisations have an electoral document and commission, or an independent body running the elections. “Another big change is the electronic voting platform,” he says. “Voting becomes incredibly accessible to every Jew in the Cape over the age of 18 on the communal register. That means that close to 11 400 Jews have

the ability to vote.

“It’s exciting to see eight inclusive, diverse, and strong candidates standing for election on the public ballot” Diamond says. They are: entrepreneur Justin Asher; gender activist Jacqui Benson; veteran lawyer and African Jewish Congress president Ann Harris; fundraiser and Jewish Democratic Initiative steering committee member

ensuring democracy is practiced, and choosing a board that best represents the diversity of our community. This is the difference between the Cape Board and other boards locally and internationally, where only affiliate organisations get to vote. Ours is a hybrid model and defines who we are as a community.”

Meanwhile, the EC was made aware of a defamatory message directed at

“There is obviously no problem with people holding strong and differing views. In fact, such debate is a welcome part of our Jewish community and society. The problem comes in when those with strong opinions don’t tolerate and denigrate persons with other perspectives. Those with strong views should be tolerant of others so that debate is not stifled,” he says.

Katz says a thorny issue has traditionally

do so, and were notified extensively ahead of the deadline.

“Once they applied, the electoral commission reviewed the organisation to decide whether it should be assigned more delegates. The organisations then had the chance to object to the EC’s initial decision. The commission reviewed these objections, and in certain instances amended its original assignment.

“Unfortunately, certain affiliates applied long after the original deadline, and even after the objection process had been finalised. The commission took the view that the late applications should not be considered, as it could have compromised the entire process, and would be unfair to those affiliates who had applied timeously,” Katz says. He acknowledges that the decision has caused some dissatisfaction, but he notes that it demonstrates the need for such a thorough process in the first place, conducted within a determined time frame.

“The commission hopes that by the end of this election, it will be able to sign off its report that the election was not only free and fair, but also credible, and that the Cape Board properly represents the diverse groupings of the Jewish community in the province,” he says.

Says Diamond, “Challenges regarding democracy and representation are always important for the community, and I think it’s critically important for the Board, especially in the Cape, to encourage the community to play its democratic role. The Cape Board calls on the community to make its mark, and we ask people to behave in a way that keeps the election free and fair.”



Advocate Anton Katz SC



Richard Freedman



Advocate Doron Goldberg

Barbara Miller; business leader Dawn Nathan-Jones; founding member of the Jewish Democratic Initiative, Raymond Schkolne; Zeitz Museum Africa head of philanthropy Michelle Stein, and scientist and digital advertising agency chief executive Ariel Sumeruk.

Nominees can’t stand for election on the public ballot if they have served on the board in the past five years, which enables fresh leadership. “In the 2017 election, we had no public-ballot election process, and we’ve always had a small turnout on these ballots, so it’s heartening to see eight candidates wanting to serve the community and make a difference,” says Diamond.

Community members can vote online for three out of eight nominees until 18 August 2020. “We’re also very excited by those that have started voting and have shown interest in

one of its public-ballot nominees last week, circulated to some members of the Western Cape Jewish community. “The EC is investigating the matter in terms of the electoral code. Smear campaigns against particular nominees are inconsistent with the code, and could compromise the freedom and fairness of the election,” says Katz, echoing an official statement. He said community members must report any smear campaigns to the EC, and that their anonymity would be protected.

Katz says the smear campaign is exactly why an EC is needed. “The commission must investigate all complaints, and there have been a number that have come in, targeting a nominee standing for election on the public ballot.

These organisations include shuls, schools, outreach organisations, youth movements, and more. They will vote on 6 September at the Cape Board’s conference, also online.

“There are about 65 affiliate organisations, with a few new ones this year. Each gets one delegate to vote at the Cape Board conference in the affiliate ballot. However, some organisations are larger than others and can request more than one delegate to ensure they are more fairly represented,” explains Katz.

“In the past, the assignment of extra delegates has been opaque. To make the election free and fair, the electoral commission instituted a process where affiliates could formally apply for extra delegates. They had a number of weeks to

Killing the Red Prince on Women’s Day

OPINION

HOWARD SACKSTEIN



This year, Women’s Day falls on Sunday, and by edict of South African law, the following day will be yet another day where people just don’t go to work. In a world where time has lost its meaning, where days fold into each other like egg-whites, and where we struggle to decipher the day or date or time, Women’s Day this year may well pass unnoticed.

As a country, we have done very little to promote the lives of ordinary women or tackle the scourge of gender-based violence, rape, and abuse which punctuates the lives of so many.

While it’s easy to point fingers at others, our community doesn’t shower itself in gender-equality glory. Jewish women have been remarkably successful in academia, welfare, and community work, but there are very few female members of our community that lead large corporations, head accounting firms, design mega-projects, and stand out as entrepreneurs.

That’s one of the reasons we started the Europcar Women in Leadership Award at the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, together with Dawn Nathan-Jones, the former chief executive of Europcar. Dawn’s story, which she will tell during our Women of Substance webinar on Thursday evening, is nothing short of remarkable. Starting up a car rental company in Durban from scratch, night after night trawling through airport dustbins, like today’s waste pickers, to find competitor information and calling each client to win them over, is the sort of clandestine stuff of which true legends are made.

We need to tell these stories and celebrate not the ordinary, but the extraordinary.

On Saturday evening, during our *SA Jewish Report* lockdown webinar, we will celebrate the life of a unique woman, Sylvia Raphael, one of the Mossad’s most successful spies. People speak of Sylvia in the same breath as Eli Cohen, the Israeli spy captured and executed in Syria and made famous in the Netflix series *The Spy*.

She was one of the first westerners to meet Muammar Gaddafi, soon after he grabbed power in a military coup in Libya in 1969. It’s not known how Sylvia became baby-sitter to the current King of Jordan, or whether it’s true that she replaced Cohen as Israel’s lead spy in Syria. No one knows

what she did in Eritrea or in Mogadishu.

All those stories are still classified by the Mossad.

But Sylvia grew up in Graaff-Reinet, the daughter of a Jewish father and an Afrikaans mother. She was brought up Afrikaans, belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church, and went to Catholic school, where the nuns fought with her daily over being late for class. After matric, like many of the hippie generation, Sylvia landed up volunteering on a kibbutz in Israel, and later, while teaching English, got recruited by the Mossad.

We only know about Sylvia by accident, a tragic accident.

In 1972, the Olympic Village in Munich was attacked by the Palestinian Black September terrorist organisation. Eleven Israelis were massacred. The Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir, secretly authorised the Mossad to track down and kill those responsible.

Mossad teams spread out throughout Europe as Operation Wrath of G-d got underway. One by one, those members of Black September responsible for the massacre of Israeli athletes began to die.

Sylvia and her team arrived in Lillehammer, Norway, in hot pursuit of Ali Hassan Salameh, the head of operations for Black September, and the founder of Force 17, the special operations unit of Yasser Arafat’s Fatah movement.

The operation was a trap set by the Palestinians to ensnare the Mossad. An informer had identified Salameh posing as a waiter in the Lillehammer ski resort town. Something wasn’t right. Sylvia reported back to the Mossad, something was wrong. The Mossad gave the order to kill. Moroccan waiter Ahmed Bouchiki was killed. In 1979, the Red Prince, as Salameh was known, was blown up by a car bomb in Beirut. Finally, he was dead.

Sylvia was arrested in Norway, but I suppose if you want to know how this remarkable woman, operative, photographer, spy, and assassin landed up back in Pretoria, you’ll need to tune in to the *SA Jewish Report* lockdown event on Saturday night at 20:00, and register on bit.ly/sajr43.

• Howard Sackstein is chairperson of the board of the *SA Jewish Report*.

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103-year-old recovers from COVID-19

TALI FEINBERG

As 103-year-old Bertha Meltzer left Cape Town Mediclinic hospital on Monday, she waved to staff lining the corridors, as they cheered in celebration of her miraculous survival. The sprightly centenarian had beaten all the odds, recovering from COVID-19, double pneumonia, and respiratory failure in just more than two weeks. Her wheelchair was pushed by her son, Lionel Meltzer, who told the *SA Jewish Report* that the moment of leaving the hospital was an extremely moving experience. “It was overwhelming and emotional. It shows you just how caring they are. Words are platitudes. We can’t really appreciate what healthcare workers go through, and what they do. The video [taken by Cape Town Mediclinic] shows just a small sample of the care my mother received. We are so grateful.” He says that unlike many stories of families being left in the dark while their loved ones are in hospital

for COVID-19, he was regularly updated. “There was no euphemistic language. I was told what was happening, and how she was doing. I felt comforted knowing she was in competent hands.” He wants to pay special tribute to pulmonologist Dr Neville Govender, along with all the nursing staff at the COVID-19 ward. “If it wasn’t for the care and attention she got from them at Cape Town Mediclinic, she wouldn’t have survived.” Looking back over the past few weeks, he says his mother wasn’t feeling well. Her general practitioner was called to the residential-care facility where she lives, and after examining her, said she needed to go to hospital immediately. She went in an ambulance, and was admitted on 15 July. She was tested for COVID-19, which came back positive. “It came as a shock, obviously. It’s one of those things you think will happen to someone else, never to your family. We were very concerned,” says Meltzer. “That weekend was critical. If she made it through, there was hope that she would survive.

She had double pneumonia and another infection, and was put on at least three antibiotics. Thankfully, she never needed a respirator or ventilator. She was also treated with nasal oxygen. After that weekend, she made slow but steady progress, and 10 days later, she was discharged.” She then went to a step-down facility for further rehabilitation, and was well enough to leave there after five days. She returned home to her care facility on Monday, 3 August. He says his mother is generally in good health, physically and mentally, besides being gluten intolerant, and a smoker many years ago. She still goes for walks, plays bridge, loves reading, and was an excellent bowls player in her day. Born on 8 January 1917 in the Free State, her parents came to South Africa from Latvia. The family moved to Franschhoek in the Cape where she grew up with two siblings. When completing a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Cape Town, she met her future husband, Mannie Meltzer, from Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia). The couple married and settled in Harare, raising twin sons Lionel and Brian. Bertha assisted in her husband’s manufacturing business, and set down deep roots, including a wide circle of friends.



Bertha Meltzer taking part in state-capture protests when she was 100

Her husband passed away in 1973. Brian left for the United Kingdom in 1978, and Lionel moved to South Africa in 2004. Yet, Bertha chose to stay on in Harare, in spite of so much uncertainty. She lived there amidst the continuing unrest and economic crisis until her sons brought her to Johannesburg and then Cape Town in 2008. She has lived happily in the Mother City since then, but misses family members and friends who have passed on. She has six grandchildren and two great-granddaughters. “When someone has lived such a long and interesting life and seen so much, it’s tragic to think she could have been struck down by a virus. This episode has knocked her. She will need to regain confidence and strength. But her story continues, and she is making steady progress,” says her son. “It’s also been upsetting to hear authorities and others telling us that we must stay home and not see the doctor or go to the hospital. If we had listened, she wouldn’t have lived. So if you are symptomatic, get hold of your doctor, and go to hospital if you need to. It could save your life.”

Amidst TERS and suffering, change on horizon for labour

TALI FEINBERG

Coronavirus was just a blip on the horizon, confined to Wuhan in China, when Michael Bagraim, the shadow minister of employment and labour began checking if we could sustain a lockdown. He asked Labour Minister Thulas Nxesi and Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) commissioner Teboho Maruping if there was enough money for a million UIF claims if the virus hit South Africa and led to a lockdown. Bagraim, also the labour spokesperson for the Democratic Alliance, was assured that the R140 billion in UIF reserves would be more than adequate. He now realises he was asking the wrong question. “What I should have asked is if the system had the wherewithal and know-how to distribute it,” he said in a webinar hosted by the Gilah branch of WIZO (the Women’s International Zionist Organisation) on 30 July. He has since seen the tragic ramifications of a UIF system that simply can’t handle the influx of claims under lockdown. Bagraim described how his calls for clarity and attempts to assist hundreds of desperate South Africans in rightfully claiming UIF and Temporary Employee/Employer Relief Scheme assistance had destroyed his relationship with most people in the department. However, he assured that he won’t back down as he watches the haemorrhaging of jobs and the desperation of business owners and their employees under lockdown. “I’m a world-class nag,” he proclaimed proudly, and encouraged community members not to give up in ensuring that they and their staff are rightfully paid the money that they have contributed to UIF. “I hear horror stories every day. There are people who still haven’t been paid for April. At one point, it was suggested that the administration of UIF be handed to the South African Revenue Services (SARS) as it already had the system to do so.” Bagraim said some functions were handed over to SARS, but not the payout function. A second dimension of the problem is that people who were receiving UIF payments before lockdown suddenly stopped receiving them. Back in April, Bagraim wrote to *Business Day*, “For the past two weeks, I have received hundreds of emails, WhatsApp messages, and phone calls from people who are desperate, and many are on the verge of starving. These are people who have relied on the UIF in the past, and need their future payouts. Many are in the system for pensions,



dismissal, maternity leave, and other claims. “For some inexplicable reason, their payments, which were active before the lockdown, have been stopped. In addition, hundreds of people have contacted me to say that they can’t access the system either telephonically or electronically. This system has failed South Africa. Our government has failed the most vulnerable of our workforce.” As small-business owners fear for their workers, Bagraim has witnessed some paying salaries out of their own savings. One man even sold his second car to do so. “Our community has been exemplary,” he said. Bagraim said that even before the virus arrived in South Africa, we already had “the perfect storm” in terms of job losses and unemployment reaching an all-time high. This has been put on fast-forward by the lockdown, with three million jobs lost by the end of April. “Our treasury, which is usually very conservative, has now predicted that a further three million to seven million people will lose their jobs by the end of August,” he said. While he knows the virus is damaging and deadly, he believes the current economic circumstances

are much more destructive, especially in the long term. “The nightmare continues, and the frustration is enormous. We see shops being looted, and people taking over land because they are desperate. It feels like that story of a frog in a pot of water that is slowly boiling, and it doesn’t notice.” However, he said there were still “green shoots of hope” on the horizon. The first is in the figure of Finance Minister Tito Mboweni, who is looking into decoupling small business from bargaining councils. “This means that big business can’t determine the terms and conditions of employment for small business, whereas according to the present system, they can agree with the trade unions how much the minimum wage will be, that’s sent to the minister, who extends the agreement to all businesses in that industry,” he said. This change could create 2.5 million jobs. “If small businesses are deregulated, they can start expanding again,” Bagraim added. Another positive in his eyes is the weakening of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), “because the workforce is being

decimated, and many workers are moving their allegiance to other trade union umbrella bodies”. Then, there is the strengthening of NEDLAC (the National Economic Development and Labour Council). Although it has been dysfunctional for many years, Bagraim said its new executive director, Lisa Seftel, is looking at how to get people back to work and get the economy going. He sees this kind of organisation as leading the way forward, along with a strong reliance on business to adapt and be creative in creating jobs. Bagraim also believes that government is starting to recognise different parts of the economy and “atypical employment” – the “side hustles” or working three jobs that are so common in places like New York. “At last, it’s saying we need more entrepreneurs, which will take us into the fourth industrial resolution.” Finally, he believes that the International Monetary Fund loan is extremely hopeful. “Yes, people say it will be stolen or squandered, but not so fast. It comes with conditions, outside control, and guidelines on how it can be used. It’s a small loan in the scheme of things, but there may be more, and we should celebrate it.”

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Changing women’s lot in life

Years ago, I was talking to a female editor of an important mainstream newspaper, someone I held in high esteem, a mentor of sorts. She was a strong, independent, and powerful woman in this industry.

We got onto the topic of the plight of sexual abuse in South Africa, and she told me how she had been abused by a boss when she was a young reporter. He frightened her into silence, making her believe that he had control over her career, and if she spoke out, she would never work in media again. So she stayed silent.

I couldn’t believe someone so powerful and strong had been abused and then intimidated into silence. I was one of the first people she told because, she said, I made it easy for her to feel comfortable enough to be herself and to be vulnerable.

This stayed with me for many years, and made me realise that anyone, no matter how confident, powerful, or competent, can fall prey to sexual predators, abusers, or rapists. The reality is that more women than you realise have been abused in some way.

Also, it takes a massive amount of courage in South Africa – even today – to speak out and take a stand against your abuser. And so, the scourge of South Africa’s other pandemic continues unabated.

Sunday is Women’s Day! I’m so grateful that Professor Bonita Meyersfeld, one of the most esteemed gender rights activists I know, wrote the opinion piece on this page. She tells it as it is – horrific – and if we don’t know that now, we should because, as our president says, this is a pandemic in our country.

What’s more, a lot of lip service is being paid to gender violence and abuse from our leaders, but so little is actually being done to change the situation.

And as much as some of us hold responsible and significant positions, gender equality still evades us.

Following last year’s Absa Jewish Achiever Awards ceremony, a colleague of mine bemoaned the fact that the women who were nominated and won weren’t nearly as powerful as the men.

I hadn’t considered that before. I looked at our nominees, and he was right. There were some phenomenal women involved, and there are many hugely successful Jewish women out there, but not even close to the number and success of the men.

The reality is that women who are so hugely successful might not have the time to fill out the forms to take part in the awards. They are also likely to be so thinly spread over their careers, families, and lives, that their time is extremely limited.

I recall a chance meeting with a veteran Jewish woman business leader one evening at the theatre years ago. I had written about her many times in my career, and have huge admiration and respect for her.

I won’t name her, as she may not want me to. However, she noticed I was heavily pregnant at the time with my first child, and she warned me to take care not to neglect those precious moments with my children in favour of my career. I remember her smiling wistfully as she told me she had lost those moments, and was never able to get them back.

That, too, stuck in my mind. She was and still is an incredible and extraordinarily gracious businesswoman, but she taught me an important lesson.

It’s very difficult for women to have it all. The more you put into your career, the less you have for your family and yourself. Somehow, most men don’t have this problem. Hence, the existence of many extremely successful and powerful men who do so well at the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.

For career women, finding a balance is never easy – I can certainly vouch for that. Add to that being Jewish, and you are guilt-laden to the hilt because you can never have it all and do everything you believe necessary. Something always has to give.

I recently watched a clip of American actress Glenn Close accepting an Oscar for best actress in the 2019 Academy Awards. She spoke about women being nurturers, and that’s what’s expected of us as we have children and husbands. But, she said, “We have to find personal fulfilment, and we have to follow our dreams. We have to say ‘I can do that’, and we should be allowed to do that.” She had every woman in the audience give her a standing ovation, from Charlize Theron to Lady Gaga.

Every woman understands this, and every one of us wants to make our mark in some way, but we have many, many responsibilities, and it’s never going to be easy.

I would like to challenge all of you to look around you and find those unique and outstanding women who are high achievers and hugely successful in their careers, and nominate them for this year’s Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.

They are there, and they so deserve to be honoured and recognised. Over this weekend, think about who they are, and nominate them.

Let this year be the year where women dominate the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards in all sectors, not just the Europcar Women in Leadership Award.

Let’s find those women, and give them the *kavod* they deserve for the outstanding work they do that invariably means they have had to put in 10 times the amount of work as well as give up a great deal to succeed.

Send your nominations to nominations@sajewishreport.co.za or go to www.jaa2020.co.za, and nominate at least one incredible woman.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Women’s Day: no cause to celebrate

OPINION

PROFESSOR BONITA MEYERSFELD



In my husband’s family, everything is celebrated: a marginal increase in school grades; a lucrative month in the family business; a friend’s successful sporting accomplishment; even the pet’s birthday. Any of these, and more, trigger the champagne and dinner reservations.

There are good reasons for this quickness to celebrate. My mother-in-law took ill after she gave birth to her son, and has experienced a lifetime of increasingly poor health. Often, she wasn’t sure that she would make another birthday. So you can see that the family understood (and understands) the importance of celebrating all positive moments when they occur.

Societies around the world rush to celebrations for all manner of reasons. We celebrate mothers on Mother’s Day; fathers on Father’s Day; the earth on Earth Day; Nelson Mandela on Mandela Day. We have an array of religious celebrations, traditional celebrations, and inter-personal celebrations.

And then we have National Women’s Day. Women’s Day of course commemorates the anniversary of the great women’s march of 9 August 1956, where about 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against the carrying of pass books.

For me, however, Women’s Day evokes a sense of disquiet. This is so for several reasons. The first is because that which we have to celebrate is overshadowed by that which we have to mourn. The second is because the notion of a celebration for someone implies solidarity and recognition, and that is absent from women’s experience in South Africa. The third is because it’s superficial, and in the context of the lifetime of fear that so many women experience, superficial responses are dangerous.

We know the statistics. One in three women in South Africa has or will experience violence in her lifetime because she is a woman. She will be hit, hurt, raped, abused, mutilated, murdered, imprisoned, and harassed because she is a woman.



She will be humiliated for her sexuality and belittled because of her gender. Half of the women in the workplace will be sexually harassed, and only a fraction of them will trust the workplace to help them. Most of them will resign.

She will earn 18% less than men for doing the same work with the same qualifications. She will be confused with a personal assistant when she is in fact the chief executive.

She will be cat-called in the streets, and propositioned in taxis. She will be offered safety in mines underground in exchange for sex. She will have to flee an abusive relationship and choose indigency over violence. She will be left without any income when her husband dies because her customary marriage was never legally recognised.

And she will come to your gate during lockdown and ask for food because even though she has nothing, she is still the person who must educate and feed her children – and after her 13-year-old is raped by a neighbour – and her grandchild.

She will stop her maths degree at university because she is afraid of the all-male maths faculty. She will be told it’s her fault when she is raped at school by a teacher. And if she is one of the 6% of rape victims who report rape to the police, there will be a roughly 8% chance that the case will go to court. And of those cases, very few will result in punishment of the rapist.

When women at universities bewail the failure of

the university to stop sexual harassment and rape on campus, they will be excluded from that university for life.

When she has a great business idea, the bank will be more likely to advance her credit if she is a man, even though she is the one who balances the monthly household budget. She will be an emancipated, accomplished woman in the workplace who is still the parent responsible for her children’s well-being, and will still fear getting into an uber or taxi to get home at night.

And if you think any of these scenarios is hyperbole, I assure you that 90% of women reading this article will relate to one of these experiences.

So do we really have that much to celebrate? We have the highest rates of rape in the world, domestic violence occurs in every part of our society – not least of all in the Jewish community – and the level of femicide means that women really must fear for their lives, every day.

This brings me to the second source of my concern about Women’s Day. That’s the question of solidarity. We celebrate mothers and fathers on their respective days because we value and respect the role parents play in society. Is there truly societal respect for women?

Of course, there are men who are respectful of women and who don’t hit, hurt, or humiliate. The problem, however, lies not only with the men who hurt, but also with the men who are silent and complicit.

Complicity arises not only if a man sees another man hit a woman and does nothing about it. It arises when he sees his neighbour’s wife with a swollen eye, and pretends to ignore it. It occurs when he tells, laughs at, or remains silent in response to a sexist joke; when he says that a good woman is a woman at home; that women are not as competent at maths as men; that daughters should not become professionals because it will mean they will not be able to look after their children one day.

The negativity around women inheres in our daily rhetoric – don’t run/throw like a girl; boys don’t cry; don’t be so girly; women are “bossy”, and men are “leaders”; man-up.

These stereotypical tropes are as alive as they are harmful. So no, Women’s Day can’t be said to be a show of solidarity with women.

Of course, Women’s Day does have the vital role of bringing attention to the harm, bias, and violence that characterises many women’s lives. But what actually happens on this day? Companies have given female professionals sewing kits to celebrate Women’s Day; business organisations

have held high-tea events, or given women lectures about how to dress in the workplace.

But in the back of my mind, I have my mother-in-law insisting stubbornly that we must still celebrate. So here’s my challenge: let’s celebrate, but let’s do so honestly. Let’s celebrate that we have taught our sons never to hit a girl (or anybody for that matter), and that we have spent the same time teaching our daughters to throw a ball as we have our sons.

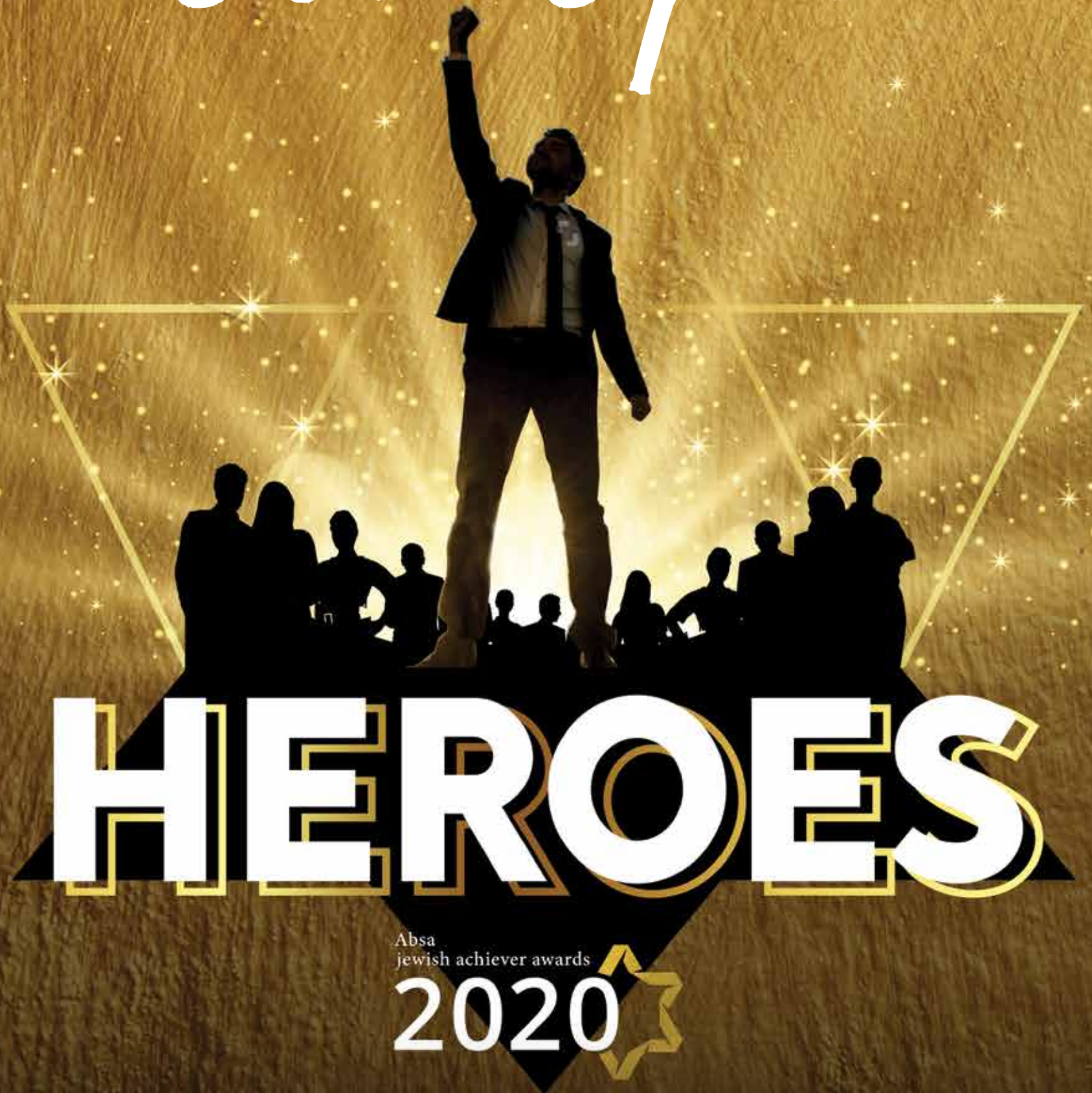
Let’s celebrate that we undertake to call friends or relatives whom we suspect are in a violent relationship and let them know that they can call on you any time, even if they have never said a word about the abuse. Let’s celebrate the determination to confront our male colleagues at work who make lewd comments about female co-workers.

Let’s celebrate that we can actualise a society of equality. If this is the basis of the celebration, then I will pop the champagne and make the (virtual) dinner reservation.

• Bonita Meyersfeld is an associate professor of law at Wits Law School; the recipient of the 2018 Jewish Achiever Europcar Women in Leadership Award; and has been awarded the Knight of the National Order of Merit by the French president for her work on human-rights and gender-based violence. She is the founder of Lawyers Against Abuse, and the author of the book, “Domestic Violence and International Law”.

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Rock-solid women lead the way

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Whether it be through healthcare, altruism, or leadership, many women have made their mark in fighting against COVID-19 or simply helping others survive this pandemic. There are too many to celebrate, so we have picked the following three inspirational stories for Women’s Day.

Managing an influx of COVID-19 patients, Dr Andrea Mendelsohn is a family physician and senior medical officer in a HIV/TB primary healthcare clinic in the Western Cape Provincial Community Health Centre in Retreat. “Since March, we’ve completely reorganised the hospital into COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 sides,” she says.

“Women in work still face a lot of complexities and self-imposed guilt. I find my work satisfying and challenging though, and I wouldn’t want to give up trying to find that balance.”

In addition to her work in facilitating these changes and managing infection control, Mendelsohn has been instrumental in setting up testing protocols. She’s raised money for an innovative COVID-19 testing booth as well as for cloth masks for patients. “With COVID-19, the fact that anyone can theoretically be symptomatic has taken things to a new level,” she says. “We’re the

first stop for patients, and easily have 100 people come in with symptoms daily. For us, the virus peaked at the end of June, when we were seeing an increasing number of very sick people who needed to be put on oxygen and then referred to hospitals as we don’t admit patients.”

While COVID-19 cases are now stabilising, among the enduring challenges Mendelsohn faces are the barriers to doctor-patient relationships. “As a primary care doctor, I’m used to sitting with patients and learning about their stories,” she says. “Yet, much of COVID-19 has been about seeing sick people as quickly as possible to minimise infection risks and send them home or to hospital.”

Constantly wearing PPE (personal protective equipment) is also exhausting, as is the intensity that each day brings. “We’ve all reached out for support in different ways, and we’re starting to think about how we move to a sustainable future beyond triage.”

Mendelsohn has also shared her expertise with Cape Town’s Herzlia School to help it formulate safe strategies for handling the pandemic. A wife and mother of two, Mendelsohn is aware of reducing the risk to her family.

Speaking of the unique challenges women face, Mendelsohn bemoans the societal pressure they’re subject to, especially when it comes to maintaining a work-life balance. “I don’t think I do it perfectly, I don’t think most people do,” she says. “Women in work still face a lot of complexities and self-imposed guilt. I find my work satisfying and challenging though, and I wouldn’t want to give up trying to find that balance.”



Dr Andrea Mendelsohn



Jayde Ronthal

For 23-year-old psychology student Jayde Ronthal, lockdown has been a chance to give back. Managing girls’ learning programmes at various educational institutions, she’s also the director of The Friendship Circle, a non-profit organisation for Jewish children with special needs.

When lockdown started, she and a group of four female friends sourced worksheets and made up educational packs for the students at Sandringham High School who weren’t receiving any work during the pandemic. The Emunah welfare organisation helped with printing.

“These students were stuck at home, with no work to do,” says Ronthal. “We’re all blessed to have roofs over our heads, fridges full of food, and desks and computers to work from. It was time to think of others, and how we could fulfil their needs.”

While they initially provided printed notes, it presented logistical challenges, so the group now sends PDF work packs via WhatsApp. To date, the group has distributed work to hundreds of students throughout Sandringham High School, as well as to a number of others at Northview High School and Maryvale College.

Together with her Israel-based friend, Dudu Azaraf, Ronthal also co-founded Ayekah. “We help struggling Jewish families get proper Shabbos meals,” she says. While these people are supported by Jewish welfare organisations, their need is so great that providing an adequate Shabbos meal remains a challenge. “Shabbos is so important to us personally, it’s a time for families. Just because these people are struggling doesn’t mean that they shouldn’t be able to enjoy a decent Shabbos meal with their families.”

Together with two volunteers, Ronthal packs meals for 48 families each week. Food comes from various kosher stores and caterers who either donate or provide their goods at cost price. These costs are covered through Ayekah’s fundraising

efforts. “This was something we could do to help change the lives of people in our community,” says Ronthal. “It’s incredibly fulfilling to help people at this time.”

For Jacqui Biess, the owner of renowned family business Charly’s Bakery, lockdown has been about innovation and supporting her 25 staff members. Sensing what was to come, Biess began planning for lockdown before it was even announced, looking into options regarding business bond repayments and UIF (Unemployment Insurance Fund) income for her staff.

In mid-January, as travel dwindled due to the pandemic, so too did the bakery’s turnover. “Our business has always been 40% to 50% tourist driven,” says Biess. So, from January onwards, Biess and her daughters, Alex and Dani, with whom she runs the business, stopped taking salaries. “To be able to pay our staff, we realised we wouldn’t be able to pay ourselves,” says Biess.

“When lockdown was announced, I contacted our suppliers, and ordered a survival box for each of our staff with non-perishable food,” says Biess. “We had no idea how long it would be until they got any income.”

Later, when UIF-COVID-19 TERS was announced, the team worked tirelessly. “It was a hell of a thing, but we managed to get all three months of UIF paid out in full for every employee,” says Biess. “We’ve worked together a long time, and I know that I’m literally their only lifeline. Although it’s been incredibly scary, our staff didn’t feel that desperation because they knew money was coming.”

When the lockdown was extended, Biess investigated crowdfunding options. “We worked frantically to create 36 different rewards and experiences in exchange for the money we raised.” From vouchers to learning experiences at the bakery, Charly’s also asked customers to fund random acts of kindness, which allowed the business to continue giving back. Ultimately, they raised R352 000 to keep afloat and cover pension and health benefits for their staff.

While Charly’s is now trading again under strict COVID-19 protocols, it’s making only about 30% of its usual turnover. “We’re trying to be as creative as we can to keep going,” says Biess. “We’re selling experiences and cupcake DIY kits for Zoom parties. I’m running the bakery from home because I have Crohn’s disease, so Alex and Dani are managing everything onsite. We’re all aware of what we’re fighting for – we’re fighting to survive. We hope and pray we will.”



Jacqui Biess with her daughters Dani and Alex



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Jewish Report

Elderly face pandemic of loneliness

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

During the COVID-19 crisis, we're battling three pandemics – a health pandemic, a financial pandemic, and an emotional pandemic. Nowhere is the pandemic of loneliness, anxiety, depression and despair more acutely felt than among the elderly.

So said Chabad House Director Rabbi David Masinter in a recent webinar titled, "Our Parents, our grandparents: the problems and the solutions".

"Many of our seniors here have their kids and grandchildren in other provinces and places in the world," said Masinter. "They've been very heavily affected by this." Even those who live around the corner from their loved ones are often unable to be with one another for fear of infection.

Rabbi Ari Kievman, who runs the Chabad Seniors Programme in Johannesburg, has had to adjust his offerings to deal with the challenges brought by COVID-19. A panellist on the webinar, which was a collaboration between Chabad House Johannesburg and Central Shul Chabad (CSC) Melbourne, Kievman spoke of the spiritual void seniors often experience. "Perhaps it's the soul crying out and asking for more meaning in its life," he said. "Chabad cherishes elderly wisdom, and has a mission to promote lifelong learning opportunities."

Before COVID-19, Chabad hosted daily shiurim, interactive lessons, and outings. "It's important to keep seniors active, motivated, and animated," said Kievman. "Yet, now we're in a different era, one that we didn't anticipate. Considering that we can't offer these activities, we're asking what we can do for the elderly to fill their time in a meaningful way. Personally, and with a team of volunteers, we at Chabad House have tried to reinvent ourselves in numerous ways. Whether dealing with seniors themselves, their families, nursing facilities, and

retirement villages, we've tried to fill that spiritual void."

Kievman and his team stay connected through daily online shiurim and phone calls to seniors, which serve as wellness check-ups. By delivering



Rabbi Ari Kievman bringing Shabbos goodies to residents at Willowbrook Retirement Home

weekly Shabbos treats or full food parcels for those who need them, Chabad also ensures that it visit its seniors weekly, while following COVID-19 protocols.

"One of the benefits of having volunteers deliver the food is that personal interaction," says Kievman. "We don't want to just drop off the food, we want to interact with people and address any problems we observe." This week, it's adding activity booklets to its packages to keep seniors' minds stimulated.

Dr Barrie Levin, a GP with a special interest in geriatrics, said it's vital to raise awareness about the difficulties the elderly face, and unite to try and address these during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

"I look at patients holistically, keeping track of their medications from different specialists, and their interactions and side effects. There are

communication problems in our system which specifically affect the elderly." While he believes in a multidisciplinary approach, Levin believes doctors, patients, and their families need to work together more effectively. "The psychosocial aspects of what the elderly experience are often neglected or not known," he said. "I feel so strongly that as a community and as doctors and allied professionals, we're failing the elderly." This needs to be addressed, especially at this time.

"The elderly experience a loss of independence on various levels," said Levin, "ranging from their car keys being taken away from them to losing the ability to walk and sometimes talk. I often get asked why the elderly are neglected. It's because they can't speak for themselves, and even if they can speak, they've lost their voice and ability to stand up for themselves, so they rely on others to do it for them."

The psychosocial problems the elderly face have been worsened by COVID-19, he says. "They have to eat on their own in their rooms at retirement homes. Things they looked forward to like bridge games and shul visits have been stopped. A lot of my work at this time has been helping patients and their families navigate these difficulties as compassionately as possible."

Dr Ryan Fuller, an old-age psychiatrist, echoed Levin's sentiments, especially regarding the lack of cohesive care provided to the elderly. Yet, he said, one benefit of COVID-19 is that it's forcing innovation regarding these issues. "These Zoom interactions weren't allowed by the Health Professions Council of South Africa before, but now such regulations have been swept away," he said. "We're forced to talk to each other, learn more, and be kinder, which is crucial."

"At the moment, we're taking it day by day,"

he said. "The COVID-19 crisis has really amplified problems. The elderly were vulnerable before, and now they're even more vulnerable. The emotional impact on healthcare providers and on nurses is also profound. One nurse said to me, 'There's no textbook here. We have to figure it out as we go along, and the only way we do that is talk to each other and learn from each other.'"

Physical contact is also a challenge. "Before the pandemic, there were studies saying many of the elderly don't have any physical contact for months, and that lack of tactile stimulation leads to further isolation on a physical and spiritual level," Fuller said. "We'd ask nurses and carers to take blood pressure regularly, and hold hands where appropriate. Now you look like an alien in protective gear, and patients are already anxious."

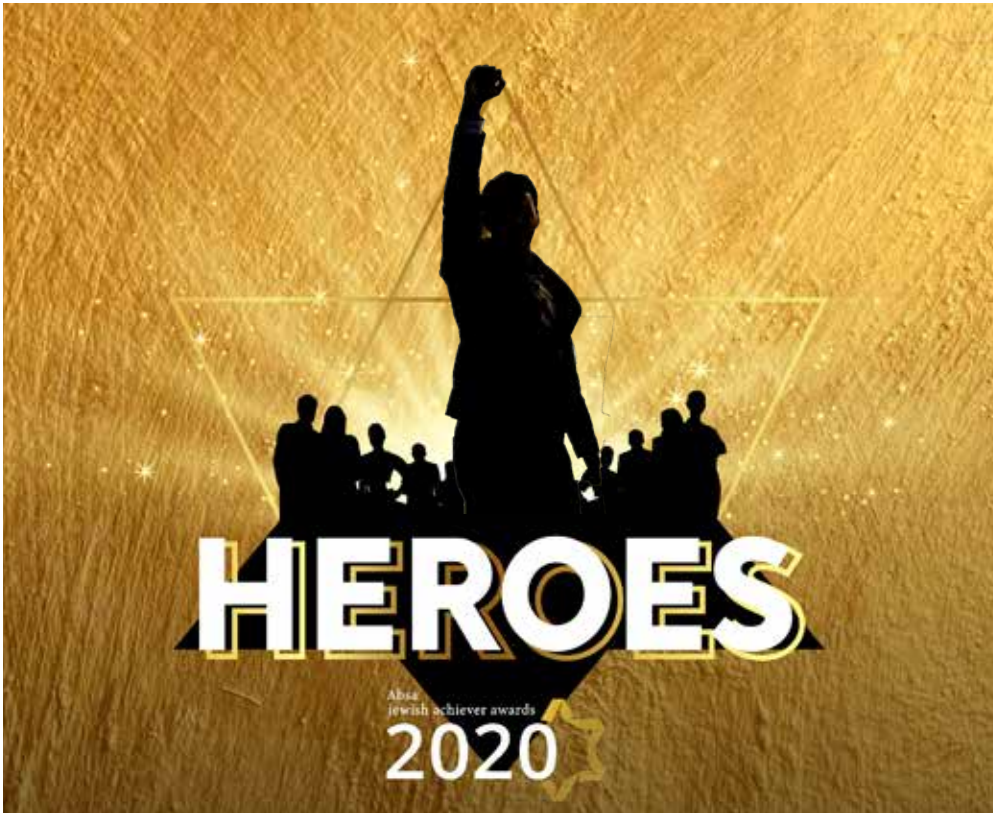
Yet, carers and medical professionals hold patients' hands where the risk is manageable, obviously taking all COVID-19 precautions. "Sometimes people just need a hug, we need to be human," said Fuller. "It's important that we don't lose that at this time. Netcare even has a compassionate policy where it allows families in protective clothing to see loved ones in hospital. There's a perception that people die alone, and we're working hard to ensure that doesn't happen. It's also important for carers to understand this isn't just some geriatric, there's a life and a history."

Rabbi Yitzhok Riesenberberg of CSC Melbourne said that South African expats living in Australia are anxious about not being able to travel to see their parents. "The children of the elderly are also adversely affected by the tyranny of distance," he said. Among the suggestions made by experts is to ask nurses to facilitate video calls for seniors who aren't computer or cell phone literate. Even if it's just a telephone call, staying in touch and being proactive is vital. "We must ensure that the elderly have a voice, and we don't forsake them," said Fuller.



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From drover to diplomat: Israel’s man in Eritrea

STEVEN GRUZD

Israel’s newest ambassador used to tend sheep in the green hills of the Galil. The ambassador-designate to Eritrea in the Horn of Africa is a Bedouin Muslim named Ishmael Khaldi.

“If it were true that Israel is an apartheid state, I wouldn’t be here,” he said. “The accusation comes from extremists who have the goal of attacking Israel. Israel isn’t a perfect democracy, but nowhere else is either.”

Khaldi was speaking last Thursday night in an online event hosted by the South African Zionist Federation Cape Council.

Arabs make up about 20% of Israel’s population, and the 260 000 Bedouins are a minority within that minority. Most are based in the Negev desert in the south, with a smaller number in the Galil in the north. Khaldi’s family hails from Syria. He says they have always had excellent relations with neighbouring kibbutzim, even before Israel’s formation in 1948.

Bedouins are traditionally a nomadic shepherd society, with strong values of respect, community, loyalty, hospitality, and helping others. While they are Muslim, formal religion plays less of a role in their lives, Khaldi said.

“Israel is the leading democracy in the world when it comes to religious freedom,” he said.

“While Israel is a Jewish state, it’s also a multicultural country with people from all over the world. People actually know very little about the different communities. But we have mutual respect. We have to learn to live with each other for a better future.”

He has written a book about his life, titled *A Shepherd’s Journey*.

Khaldi grew up in a tent in a tiny village as one of 11 children. He tended sheep from a young age, but longed to get an education, and was always curious about what lay beyond the village. He walked three kilometres each way to attend school, and still enjoys running today. He went to high school in Haifa, and was the first person in his family to attend university. He worked on a kibbutz to help finance his studies. He later spent time in the police and the army. Many Bedouins, like the Druze, volunteer to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces.

“The younger generations are becoming more integrated into Israeli society compared to our parents and grandparents. It takes a long time for a nomadic people to settle down,” Khaldi said.

Being a diplomat was a dream that developed slowly. It gained pace after he spent three months in the United States, having never even travelled to Tel Aviv or Jerusalem before. “I realised my fate was tied to the state of Israel.”

When he joined the diplomatic corps, he was posted to San Francisco and then London. He experienced personal abuse. “People called me a traitor, an Uncle Tom, and even Joseph Goebbels. But it was only a small minority, usually on university campuses.”

“We have to stand up to BDS [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement] and make every effort to reach the wider community with the facts. We need to strengthen ties with Jewish communities and Christian friends of Israel.”

He doesn’t consider himself Palestinian. “Bedouins came from all different parts of the Middle East. My family came here from what became Syria. There were no nation states

then. I’m a proud Israeli citizen.

“Sometimes I feel than being a Muslim and a Bedouin is a plus, a tool to promote my mission as a diplomat. We have to connect people and build relations and trust. I’m writing a new book called *The Diplomat in the Lions’ Den*. Being an Israeli diplomat is a hard job!”

He is encouraged by Israel’s growing ties with African states, and has spent time in countries such as Angola, Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria. Khaldi sees South Africa’s souring relations with Israel and desire to downgrade its embassy in Tel Aviv as “going against the trend”.

“Preserving our traditions, heritage, and



Ishmael Khaldi

culture is a challenge in the modern world,” he said. He’s working on establishing a Bedouin cultural centre to tell the history of the 28 Bedouin tribes now in the Galil.

Khaldi donated his honorarium to the COVID-19 fund to feed the hungry set up by the South African Friends of Israel.

Should Black Lives Matter to Jews?

STEVEN GRUZD

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, founded to protest police discrimination against black people in the United States (US) in 2012, hit the headlines this year after the police killing of George Floyd in Chicago went viral on social media.

While most American Jews oppose racism and police brutality and hence support the sentiments of BLM, they have found it difficult to support the BLM movement itself as its leadership is overtly antisemitic and implacably opposed to Israel.

So said Dovid Efune, the editor-in-chief of *The Algemeiner* Jewish news site in the US. He was speaking in a Zoom panel discussion on Monday night hosted by Sydenham Shul on the subject of Israel, the Jews, and BLM.

Rebbetzin Ann Harris, barrister, activist, and the widow of the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, said when her husband would speak about being good Jews or supporting Israel in shuls across the country, congregants nodded. “When he spoke about doing something for their fellow South African citizens, it didn’t go down so well. He joked that they turned off their hearing aids. Perhaps we didn’t try hard enough to change the attitudes of the Jewish community on [race] issues.”

Harris recognised that many individual Jews fought apartheid, but communal efforts were wanting. “He firmly believed Judaism wasn’t just for inside the shul; it was a code of morals and ethics, as he wrote in his book *Jewish Obligation to the Non-Jew*.”

“Where do American Jews stand on BLM?” Efune asked. “There has been support, outreach, and solidarity with the black community, and many Jews have joined protest marches. But the BLM movement – the organisation and platform itself – has been both antisemitic and opposed to Israel. They call Israel an apartheid state perpetrating a genocide on the Palestinians. They tie the injustices black people experience in the US to the alleged injustices faced by the Palestinians. This makes it problematic for most American Jews to support it.”

Efune recalled how in 1965, Rabbi Avraham Joshua Heschel marched for civil rights with a Sefer Torah, together with Dr Martin Luther King Jr in Selma, Alabama. Heschel believed that everyone was created in the image of G-d, and had the right to be treated equally.

However, for years, demagogues like Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam, have spewed vile antisemitism. On 4 July, Farrakhan delivered an antisemitic diatribe, referring to the “Synagogue of Satan”, and calling Jews “termites”. Efune described the battle on Twitter between celebrity supporters of Farrakhan’s views (with 73 million followers collectively) and those opposed to them. He cited Nick Cannon (host of *America’s Got Talent*) who at first endorsed the antisemitism, but

after being castigated, was contrite and undertook to learn more about the issue. “We should be accepting of his *teshuva* [repentance]. It shows that deep ignorance can be overcome.”

Olga Meshoe Washington also joined from the US. She is chief executive of Defend, Embrace, Invest (in) and Support Israel International (DEISI), and is a strong African, Christian Zionist. Her father is Reverend Kenneth Meshoe, the leader of the African Christian Democratic Party. “Farrakhan fills an ideological void” for some black people, she said, but his bigotry towards Jews and Israel must be opposed.

“Africans have a great affinity with Israel. We sing songs about Zion in church, and know our scriptures. Jews and Africans are bound by a history of sorrow and oppression. But I realised that praying for Israel wasn’t enough. I needed to speak up for Israel. People need to be educated about the issues. For post-colonial Africa, one of their main friends was a tiny little country called Israel,” Meshoe Washington said. “It sought to empower African states.”

Turning closer to home, Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation, emphasised that South Africa has one of the lowest rates of antisemitism in the world. “What we have in a year, France has in a month.”

He also pointed out that in South Africa, antisemitism manifests among elites – at universities, in political parties and trade unions, and in the media. The general population has been shown to be indifferent. Citing a study by the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies, 72% of black people surveyed didn’t know there was an Israeli-Palestinian conflict; only 4% had heard of BDS (the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement), and only 2% had heard of pro-Israel organisations.

He said that, generally speaking, South Africans aren’t racists. “The danger is that the racialised nature of wealth and poverty will get worse with our stagnant economy.”

About 10 years ago, the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) was created to connect with Christians who had an interest in supporting Israel. “SAFI was one of the few organisations prepared to defend Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng’s right to speak up for Israel,” Shulman said.

Shulman suggested three practical ways to improve relations between black people and Jews in South Africa. First, build bridges, not walls. Create opportunities for people to become educated and skilled. “You want a relationship where they can come to your defence when the chips are down.”

Second, watch the *loshen hora*. Jews need to be confronted when they use pejorative language to describe other human beings. Third, get involved. There are many opportunities to follow the lead of other Jews who are really making a difference in all spheres of this country. “And if you can’t do it, please pay for someone else to!”



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Repurposed Robertson shul still supports the community

TALI FEINBERG

When community members saw the former Robertson shul in the Western Cape advertised for sale as a one-bedroom cottage this week, many were shocked. But the history behind its transformation from a shul to a holiday home is fascinating and meaningful.

The building has been listed for sale by the current owner since September 2019, but the advert came to the attention of community members only this week.

The advert acknowledges the history of the building, and says amongst other things, “The synagogue in Robertson needs a new owner! This historic building was built during 1895 and 1896 for the Jewish congregation who lived in Robertson. The building is in absolute excellent keep and totally original, except for the fact that the ground floor has been replaced with new wooden floors.”

According to Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, former country communities rabbi of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, “The shul was established 124 years ago. When the last congregants left the town, they entrusted the shul and its assets to the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies [SAJBD] on condition that the funds from the sale went towards maintenance of the cemetery and general community needs.” Some of the funds went towards the Cape Board’s bursary fund for needy Jewish students.

Silberhaft is the spiritual leader of both the African Jewish Congress and the Small Jewish Communities Association, where he also fills the role of chief executive.

“The shul was sold in 2009 by the Cape Board to a member of the public who turned it into his holiday home but maintained all the original structures,” he says.

The photographs in the advert are startling and somewhat unsettling. The ladies’ gallery is a bedroom, and a lounge has been set up in front of the *aron kodesh* (ark), which is still there, but without a curtain. A menorah is in front of it, but Silberhaft said this was probably bought by the current owner.

Some shul pews also remain in place, while the rest are now in the Hermanus shul, as are the lecterns. An Anne Frank poster alongside the stairs going to the gallery is also visible. A small bathroom and kitchen away from the former areas of worship make the space possible for human habitation. A fireplace has also been installed.

Silberhaft says the owner kept the shul in perfect condition, choosing to keep as much of the original structure in place as possible. He has also always welcomed visitors to view the shul. He hopes the next owner will do the same.

The Robertson shul’s transformation into a residence is one of a long list of mostly country shuls that have been transformed into other facilities. For example, former shuls in Caledon and

Middelburg in the Cape have also been turned into houses. The Standerton shul was a bottle store when it was first sold, but is now the head office for the department of higher education and training. The Colesberg shul has been turned into a bank. In Willowmore, the shul is now a furniture shop. In

proudly hangs in its foyer. Its bimah was given to the shul in Mauritius, where it’s used today.

Most shuls that have been converted into other facilities still look like shuls from the outside, as the facades can’t be altered because of their heritage status.

Back in Robertson, there are a handful



Robertson shul

of Jews that have moved there since the original community left, but they don’t have any formal community structures, says Silberhaft. The cemetery has been completely restored, with headstones laid flat, although there was an incident of vandalism last year.

The late Becky Saacks, with her late husband, Leslie, and fellow Robertson Jewish resident, the late Louis Rosenzweig, managed the affairs of the synagogue and cemetery from 1987. She also supervised the restoration of the cemetery and synagogue after floods in 2005, and founded, developed, and ran the Robertson Museum and its collections from 1972.

Her son, Mark Saacks, who resides in Cape Town, says he has fond memories of attending services at the shul, and “swinging on the metal gate at the front with the other children”.

He says his mother was involved in the sale of the shul, and was unsentimental about the change from

shul to house. “She was much more concerned about the preservation of the history of the community and cemetery. I was quite surprised to see that it has been kept in such good condition. She would have been fine with seeing the photographs of it as a home today.”

Stuart Diamond, the director of the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies, says, “Once a shul is deconsecrated, it’s no longer seen as a holy site. While it’s sad to see country communities close and these assets move into others hands, I’m grateful to the new owner for ensuring that the building remains intact and for highlighting its history. It’s also heartening that the funds from the sale of the shul still have a positive impact on our community today.

“We have an incredibly good relationship with the Robertson community, and a local member of the community cares for the cemetery. After COVID-19 we will push on with cleaning and maintenance. If you have family buried in the cemetery, please contact us. We are looking for donors to assist with upgrading and maintaining Jewish cemeteries in Robertson, Montague, Caledon, Uniondale, Malmesbury, Worcester, and Wellington.

“The communities in Paarl, Stellenbosch, Somerset West, Strand, George, Oudtshoorn, and Plettenberg Bay are maintaining their own cemeteries. We will continue to take care of all Jewish cemeteries, funding dependent, in the Cape boundaries as a commitment to our Cape communities.”



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‘Like a military operation’, say doctors at state hospitals

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Jewish doctors who are on the frontline of COVID-19 in the public sector are conveying a message of teamwork, innovation, and hope that goes against the prevalent sense of disarray in the sector.

Professor Mervyn Mer, the head of intensive care at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital in Parktown, one of the major referral hospitals for the disease, has managed to double the size of the intensive care unit (ICU) at the hospital in six weeks, and his teams have created a level of care that will improve outcomes in the unit long after the virus has come under control.

regimen. Part of its therapeutic armamentarium – the use of corticosteroids – has changed outcomes significantly and is so innovative, it has been documented internationally.

Contrary to the perception of lack of planning in the sector, Mer says the unit benefitted from months of planning and advances in respiration and intubation in other parts of the world.

“We started preparing in January, after hearing about COVID-19 in China,” he says, pointing out that there was always concern that critical care services in the country weren’t sufficient for the number of possible cases. To put it in perspective, Mer says that currently, South Africa has only 70-80 qualified ICU specialists (in a population of about 60 million), and of those, only roughly half are practicing.

However, mortality rates at Charlotte Maxeke are lower than in the first world. “Elsewhere, the mortality rates of patients on respirators has been greater than 80%. In South Africa, it’s far lower. Part of it relates to having a particular academic interest in Johannesburg on when to intervene, how to intervene, and how to maximise

therapeutics.

“It also has to do with communication, interaction, fabulous teamwork, wonderful nursing, daily debriefing sessions, and being around all the time [Mer says he has been in the hospital every day and night since January].

“We currently have a packed ICU, with all patients ventilated, bar one. We are hoping to relieve the vast bulk of them from their ventilators soon,” Mer says.

Preparation and dedication have also assisted Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto, says

Dr Daniel Brozin, an internal medical registrar working in the hospital’s COVID-19 ward.

“It’s been crazy, but it’s amazing how we prepared for this. We went from one ward and half an ICU to eight full wards and a full ICU. The team includes doctors from all sectors, including internal medicine, orthopaedics, and ENT. It’s like being in the military. We’ve banded together, and hit the virus running.”

“Hopefully, we’re on top of this now. It’s down to teamwork and the hospital’s tenacious and spirited leadership. COVID-19 has removed boundaries. Seniors are on the ground, doing grunt work. It’s

shown what a leader is.”

“It’s an inspiring time,” says Dr Lara Greenstein, the head of a general medical unit at Helen Joseph Hospital in Auckland Park.

Greenstein says one of the reasons this hospital is working well is that “we are so used to working with limited resources. This wasn’t the case in other places in the world.”

Like the others, practice and planning were key. “Helen Joseph has very good leadership. The COVID team revamped the hospital. We went from an empty ward being renovated to a full COVID-19 ward. Before

Continued on page 13>>

Now’s not the time to drop your mask

After 134 days of lockdown, the pervasive sense I get from my patients is that they are “over it” and just want to get on with their lives. People have become desensitised to the large numbers of new cases reported so that when we have a day with “only 7 000” new cases and “only 120” deaths reported in our country, it feels like we are doing well.

Remember when the numbers of infections in China seemed so frightening, people, illogically, wouldn’t shop at the Chinese market or enjoy their Chinese takeout? Yet with lockdown fatigue setting in, people are tired of the restrictions, frustrated with not seeing friends and family, and starting to take more risks than before. With no way of knowing for sure when we will peak, and no end in sight, we need to learn how to live our lives safely as we get used to a “new normal”.

As you venture out of your homes, I urge everyone not to become apathetic over the next few weeks, and not to put yourselves in risky situations. Joburg doctors are puzzled and frustrated at the complacency of people who continue to socialise without the use of masks and distancing measures.

- Plan safe outings for the children to combat cabin fever – walk to the park, do a short hike, go for a bike ride, or take a day trip to the lion park. Choose outdoor rather than indoor activities where ventilation is good, and there are fewer people. Drive in your own car. Try to choose days and times that are quieter so as to avoid crowds, and stick to the well-known triad of keeping masks on, physical distancing, and excellent hand hygiene;
 - Keep in regular contact with friends and family using video calls and Zoom. From experience, I know that at my Zoom book club, where everyone has a G&T, it feels like we are all in the same room. The bonus is that our members from Cape Town and Israel can join too. My teenage daughter does online exercise classes while on a video chat with friends. They giggle and groan as if they’re in the gym together;
 - I strongly discourage play dates and sleepovers amongst children at this time. It’s impossible to do this safely, maintain physical distancing, and keep masks on, especially for younger kids;
 - Quarantine for 14 days if you have been in contact, and isolate for the correct period of time (10 days if mildly ill or asymptomatic) if you have been diagnosed with the virus (either based on clinical symptoms or with a positive test result). This will keep everyone around you safe;
 - Avoid stigmatising anyone with COVID-19, and be kind so that people are open and upfront about who is infected;
 - Try to keep up good routines, balance work and leisure time, limit online exposure, eat healthily, and exercise. This will help to keep you in a good state of mind;
 - Visit the Gauteng General Practitioners Collaboration Facebook page for evidence-based information on living safely and coping in the time of COVID-19. Many of its articles are written by GPs from the Joburg Jewish community; and
 - Remember that these measures aren’t forever. A time will come when we’ll look back with memories of quality family time and having survived a shared experience.
- As a community, many sacrifices have been made to try to control infection rates – shuls remain closed, funerals are lonely affairs, Barmitzvahs are celebrated online, and chagim are spent only with our nuclear families. We need to encourage continued community spirit, vigilance, and ongoing compliance at a time when we are all feeling fatigued.
- What’s clear is that we can’t rely on the arrival of a vaccine. We need to learn to live with the pandemic as it affects us now. Prevention is better than cure in all disease. We need to take personal responsibility for putting in place the measures of distancing, hand hygiene, and mask wearing, together with maintaining healthy lifestyles and nutrition. We need to all do this unselfishly to protect our elderly and vulnerable populations.
- Once our infection rate has peaked and we head towards summer, I’m hopeful that the worst will be behind us and the sacrifices we have made will have been worthwhile.
- *Dr Sheri Fanaroff is a GP in private practice in Johannesburg.*



Mer spoke about his work in a webinar on 2 August titled “On the frontline: in conversation with heroic doctors”, a tribute to health workers hosted by Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein.

The team at Charlotte Maxeke has engaged with partners to maximise facilities in under-resourced conditions, upskilled nurses, ensured sufficient equipment, and benefitted from the experience of international partners.

Mer chairs a global forum for the fight against COVID-19, which has assisted the teams’ therapeutic

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Jerusalema hits hearts and souls across the globe

TALI FEINBERG

Amidst the doom and gloom of the past few months, an exciting phenomenon has emerged, with people around the world recording themselves dancing to the smash hit *Jerusalema*. With lyrics expressing longing for the holy city, it's performed by South African artist Master KG (Kgaogelo Moagi) and female vocalist Nomcebo Zikode.

On 28 July, the pair was officially named as young ambassadors for the country by the department of sports, arts and culture for bringing millions together through their music, according to local news outlets.

They were congratulated by sports, arts, and culture minister Nathi Mthethwa at a virtual event. Mthethwa said the song was evidence of the strong impact that the creative arts had on people irrespective of nationality, language, age, or borders. The song has more than 53 million views on YouTube.

After being named ambassador, Master KG said he was surprised at the massive interest in the song, and he believed its success could be attributed to how he was "led to it by G-d".

"Music doesn't need a visa to travel. It doesn't matter where you come from, and the type of music you do. It's possible to be heard all over the world," he says.

A gospel hit that pays tribute to Jerusalem, the dance has been compared to the Macarena craze of the 1990s. People of all ages from around the globe have shared videos of themselves doing the moves. From youngsters in Jerusalem itself, to a wedding in Spain, to a Jewish school in Cape Town, to healthcare workers in France, and to a beach in Brazil, the phenomenon has spread

almost as fast as the pandemic.

In a time of fear and isolation, *Jerusalema* is bringing people together to celebrate some of the things that the virus can't take away – dance and music. In particular, residents of aged homes appear to be enjoying the phenomenon as a way to combat boredom and celebrate life as they live



Herzlia Constantia pupils in Cape Town showing their moves to *Jerusalema*

under strict lockdown. While most people in the videos aren't wearing masks, the layout of the steps means they can keep at a distance.

Some of the lyrics translated into English are, "Jerusalem, my home. Save me, and go with me; do not leave me here. I'm not perfect; I came from ruthless times. Save me; do not leave me here. Look into my eyes; see pain and sacrifice; what goes on my mind; struggling to survive. Save me; do not leave me here. My place is not here; My kingdom is not here. Jerusalem, my home."

There must be thousands of such songs with accompanying steps, so what is it that made this one go global? "*Jerusalema* was already a hit in

South Africa before it went viral globally thanks both to a danceable beat and powerful lyrics that resonate. For those who understand the words, it speaks to the need to find a home where one can be at peace," says local internet expert Arthur Goldstuck, the managing director of World Wide Worx and editor-in-chief of *Gadget*.

"Amazingly, even if you don't understand the words, it still resonates as a vibrant, powerful song that allows you to dance your sorrows away. Simply being in the song and dance is uplifting and motivating, and this is partly what has gained such traction around the world," he says.

"All credit must go to Master KG for recognising the potential of a popular church hymn put to a dance beat, and then bringing in the ideal female vocalist in Nomcebo to give it listening appeal to any audience. The music videos have been a key part of its viral success, almost acting as

a training video – as so much YouTube content does – on how to get something right.

"Finally, Master KG pulled off a brilliant coup in doing a remix with Burma Boy, a massive star in Nigeria who broke out globally over the past five years, and was nominated for this year's Grammy Awards," says Goldstuck.

"If it resonated for Burma Boy, it is clear that its success was no accident, but down to the musical instincts of Master KG combined with an infectious dance video that showed the world how to be happy. It's fascinating that the song's yearning for Jerusalem as a metaphor for yearning for a real home has such powerful resonance for the Jewish community."

'Like a military operation', say doctors at state hospitals

>>>Continued from page 12

it hit, we did practice runs. When it hit, everyone played their part."

"Being on the frontline, wearing protective gear, in the heat, sweating, and working relentless hours, the nurses – who carry on day in and day out – are the real heroes," says Professor Barry Jacobson, the clinical head of the haemostasis and thrombosis unit of the department of haematology at Charlotte Maxeke.

Jacobson has also been on the forefront of innovation. Through his work in haematology and expertise in thrombosis, it became evident that patients with COVID-19 were getting microclots in their lungs. As a result, Jacobson started two trials treating patients with anticoagulants, one of which is ongoing, and is a world first.

Good organisation is critical to meeting the surge in patients in primary healthcare, says Dr Andrea Mendelsohn. Mendelsohn is a senior medical officer in a HIV/TB primary healthcare clinic in the Cape Flats. This year, she has spent much of her time managing COVID-19 patients presenting to the day hospital.

"We've had to reorganise the hospital to deal with a massive influx of patients," she says.

That included reorganising into COVID and non-COVID sections, screening at the door, and delivering chronic medication to people's homes. Forty percent of the doctors at the hospital shifted to the COVID side. Non-emergency treatment was put on hold.

"A month ago, things were looking frightening, with numbers going up," Mendelsohn says. "It got to the point where five people would show up, and I had five oxygen ports, and that was it. But things have started to plateau. We're starting to think of a 'co-COVID' world, where we have to manage COVID-19 and other emergencies."

It's an inspiring story of grit and teamwork in an under-resourced sector.



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A column of WIZO South Africa

WIZO celebrates women every day

World WIZO (the Women’s International Zionist Organisation) celebrated its official centenary on 11 July 2020. There were greetings and celebratory messages from the 50 WIZO federations around the world, including ours. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli President Reuven Rivlin sent personal video messages of congratulation to the organisation and all its federations, acknowledging them for the critical role they play in uplifting Israel, and paying homage to WIZO’s incredible longevity.



The Women’s International Zionist Organisation - WIZO - founded in London 1920

WIZO founders Rebecca Sieff, Edith Elder, and Vera Weitzman recognised an urgent need to uplift women and children in the early days of Palestine who were living in dire circumstances. In 1920, they formed the Women’s International Zionist Organisation to establish education and social-welfare infrastructure in Palestine.

Through the years, WIZO has stepped in to do what the government can’t do itself. In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, WIZO helped to integrate new immigrants to Israel. In the 1970s and 1980s, WIZO created the first shelters for women and children suffering from domestic violence. WIZO was a pioneer in this area, setting up many programmes, and uses a holistic approach which takes care of victims and abusers.

In the present time of COVID-19, WIZO was a first responder in opening up emergency shelters for women at risk due to the confined spaces in which

they have been forced to live with perpetrators of violence and abuse. WIZO also made sure that its day care centres were fully operational at hospitals for the medical teams on the frontline fighting the pandemic in Israel. WIZO continues to lobby the Knesset for the advancement and empowerment of women and children in all spheres of society in Israel.

We are proud to be active participants in this worldwide movement of women dedicated to strengthening the fabric of Israeli society, especially now when health, work, schooling, finances, and food are everyday concerns.

We are proud to support issues affecting women and children in South Africa. From our Wheelchairs of Hope initiative (light-weight, brightly coloured, wheelchairs, from Israel, designed specifically for children, giving them the dignity of mobility), to joining local non-governmental organisations in collecting blankets, toys, hygiene packs for rape victims, and more whenever we have been called on to offer support.

As Women’s Day approaches, we are aware of the desperation facing women and children who suffer abuse in this country, and we stand with all women – those who struggled under the harsh laws of apartheid, those who became struggle heroes, those who set out to help others even though they had so little themselves, and those who still face hardships.

We salute the generosity of women in South Africa, the spirit to move forward, the ubuntu.

May we continue to be proud volunteers, raising awareness, giving support, and empowering society’s most vulnerable citizens here and in Israel.

“It does indeed take a village to raise the child, but it takes a global sisterhood to build the Israeli nation.”



This column paid for by WIZO SA

Starting conversations



SCHOOL SAVVY

Dani Sack

I’ve been told I’m quite shy. I talk only when comfortable, amongst loved ones, or in familiar spaces. I’m also passionate. I love learning new things, and often invest time in the things that I love, like music and writing.

However, in recent years, I’ve become a lot more outspoken and seemingly, I’ve come out of my shell. I’m more vocal about the things that bother me, which ultimately led to the Gender Based Violence (GBV) talk my friend, Lexi Price, and I initiated on Zoom at the beginning of July.

I’d heard about a similar initiative from my mother, and was inspired, so much so that I immediately messaged Lexi, and together, we put together a programme for our own school. We spent hours reading through articles, watching videos, organising a speaker, and test-running certain aspects with boys in our grade to make sure that everything would run smoothly and sensitively.

We were passionate about what we were doing, but simultaneously riddled with anxiety that we would be mocked and belittled for speaking out.

We soon realised that this anxiety was part of the broader issue of sexism and patriarchal ideas, one of the main subjects of our discussion, and we comforted each other throughout the process. It was difficult for two 17-year-old girls trying to make their mark, and we wondered whether we should be doing it at all.

But when that Friday morning came and we logged onto Zoom with more than 80 other people, it all came together. We watched a video about toxic masculinity and patriarchy, and how that perpetuates GBV. We had Josh Winer, Bnei Akiva’s rosh machaneh in 2020, speak about what he believes men and women can do to fight GBV.

We facilitated a discussion in which we addressed the phrase “toxic masculinity”, consent, and how this affects relationships. We watched as people nodded, frowned, laughed, and scratched their heads in thought. Overall, we had an honest and open discussion about GBV and all its vices.

It was a reality check to hear boys say that they, too, had been victims of “ratings” and derogatory comments from girls, and how it affected them. We also explored how difficult it is for us to raise the issue with our friends of making demeaning comments about the opposite gender

or anyone considered different. We explored how to do this in a way that doesn’t imply social suicide, but rather changes the narrative, and becomes the norm.

Participants were encouraged to have these conversations around the supper table with their families. We spoke about how we, as the youth in our community, can address the often ingrained prejudices and ways of thinking in our parents and grandparents. We were happy with the outcome, and logged off an hour later with a sense of accomplishment.

We also realised that it would take many more of these conversations to bring about any meaningful change, but what did come out is a need for us all to be part of the solution. It was admittedly very hard when, a few hours later, there was criticism in spite of our best efforts at sensitivity.

Our main criticism was that we had attacked the boys and overlooked their stories of abuse and maltreatment. So we took everything into consideration, admitted our faults, and committed ourselves to doing better.

In spite of all the anxiety surrounding our discussion, three weeks down the line, we have definitely seen results. It has sparked dialogue about the issues that really bother us – girls and boys – and about what we, as the youth, can do about GBV, how we can combat the division between genders and the sexism we are still suffering from years after the suffragettes and women’s movement.

The whole experience has left me feeling empowered as a woman. As someone who has only recently found her voice, I’m honoured that other women felt that they could trust Lexi and me to relay their stories. I’m also grateful to my school for giving us the platform to engage our peers and have this important conversation.

With Women’s Day coming up, this discussion becomes even more critical as the number of femicide cases in our country continues to rise, horrific story after horrific story. Regardless of your gender, GBV should bother you, and it most definitely should anger you. Whether you think it affects you or not, you should educate yourself about the many issues that perpetuate GBV, and try to make a difference in your own way.

We need to tackle this issue as a collective. It’s not just a women’s or a men’s issue, it’s a human issue. In the words of our great sage, Rabbi Hillel, “If I am not for myself, who is for me? And when I am for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

• Dani Sack is a Grade 12 pupil at Yeshiva College.

Herzlia elects leaders in uncertain times



Herzlia High School elected its student leadership council (SLC) on Friday, 31 July, which will be in place until the elections midway through 2021. At this stage, it’s difficult to imagine what Herzlia will look like then; it’s difficult to imagine what the world will look like.

What we do know is that it will be a different school to what it is now.

As we discussed at our truncated Shabbaton, during which we did various team building activities, drafted vision statements, and allocated portfolios, it became clear that this is probably the most important moment in Herzlia’s life and the wider world around us, for student leadership.

It won’t involve only role modelling the usual Herzlia leadership attributes, it will also require individual and group agility and uncommon reserves of resilience and fortitude in formulating and carrying through plans and projects.

We have a strong and united group this year, more so than many, and we wish its members well in this challenging but hugely exciting time.

Congratulations to the SLC of 2020/2021: Benjamin Zar, head student; Jonty Schkolne; Shallya Samakosky; Rachel Wohlman; Ariella Cohn; Benjamin Daniel; Dylan Friedman; Daniel Marsden; Eron Norrie; and Jake Whitesman.

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The Power to Surprise

Gauteng conference on track and online



Shaun Zagnoev

In terms of the format of the Gauteng conference, the first hour (19:00 to 20:00) will include the chairperson's report, the announcement of election results, and an opportunity, through a virtual "town hall"

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

We hope as many of our community as possible will join us on this important occasion, and participate as much as they can in the proceedings. To save your spot at the SAJBD virtual 2020 Gauteng Council Conference, go to our Facebook page. The link for the town hall booking is <https://bit.ly/333l05X>, and for Dr Edith Eger <https://www.excelacademyinc.com/sajbd-2020-editheger>

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

When protest becomes a drama

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it's that there's no need for additional fluff. The global spread has had most of the world confined to its homes. It has all but collapsed the economies of the most powerful countries, and has deprived our children a year of their youth. It has turned parents into teachers, teachers into IT specialists, and social-media users into virologists. It has forced the medical

Howard Feldman



And so, when teachers march with coffins and guillotines in the United States to protest the opening of schools, the best thing to do is to roll our eyes, and then go back to baking banana bread.

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