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■ Volume 24 – Number 29 ■ 14 August 2020 ■ 24 Av 5780

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High death rate reflects an ageing community

TALI FEINBERG

The South African Jewish community has had an unprecedented number of COVID-19-related deaths, with a fatality rate higher than that of the United States and the United Kingdom. However, while it appears to be 11 times higher than the reported COVID-19 fatality rate in South Africa, it's due to the aged nature of our community.

In fact, the average age of those in our community who died was 82.7. The youngest COVID-19 fatality was 47, and the oldest 101. Thirty-nine percent were female, and 61% male. Seventy-one percent of all COVID deaths in Johannesburg so far occurred in July.

"To date, about 106 Jews are understood to have died from COVID-19, which would extrapolate to a figure of 2 038 per million [using the published estimate of 52 000 Jews in South Africa from the Kaplan Centre Jewish Community Survey of South Africa 2019]," says Professor Barry Schoub, emeritus professor in virology at the University of the Witwatersrand, and former founder and director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD). "This figure is greatly in excess of the 179 deaths per million for South Africa, 502 per million for the US, and 685 per million for the UK."

Jews, therefore, make up 1% of COVID-19 fatalities in South Africa, even though they are 0.09% of the population. If aligned to reported national statistics, the Jewish community should have only nine deaths.

However, the high death rate could have been much worse if it weren't for the organisations, medical professionals, and community members working together to save lives.

Dr Daniel Israel, a general practitioner in Johannesburg, says,

"There has definitely been a symbiosis between these three elements, with patients being aware of asking for medical attention, as well as many community members being socially responsible, organisations like Hatzolah treating and assisting patients, and doctors engaging intensively with both. We have done well because of our structures, and because of identifying deterioration quicker. There is no doubt that if our small community didn't have these elements, the numbers would have been much higher."

Professor Lucille Blumberg, the deputy director of the NICD, agrees. "The Chevrah Kadisha has been amazing in preparing its care homes for COVID-19, and when they had outbreaks, it responded quickly to contain them. We also saw this in Cape Town and Pretoria. Hatzolah must be commended for its active and aggressive home-support programme, monitoring deterioration, and quick provision of oxygen. General practitioners have played a key role, and the community

has come together, making sacrifices like closing shuls and supporting each other."

According to Chevrah Kadisha officials around the country, Jewish COVID-19 fatalities include 68 in Johannesburg, 27 in Cape Town, four in Durban, and seven in Pretoria. Records are meticulously kept because of the Chevrah Kadisha protocols implemented if the deceased is COVID-19 positive.

"The higher death rate is almost certainly a reflection of the age distribution in the Jewish population of South Africa. The median age for the general South African population is 26.4 years, against 45 years for the Jewish population in the country," says Schoub. "In addition, only 6% of the South African population is over 65 years of age, while 34% of Johannesburg Jews, 46% of Cape Town Jews, and 58% of Durban Jews are over 60 years, according to the Kaplan Centre survey. Studies have universally demonstrated older age to be one of the risk factors for a severe outcome in COVID-19 disease."

"One cannot compare the death rate in the Jewish community to the death rate in South Africa," says Chevrah Kadisha Chief Executive Saul Tomson. "In general, as a result of health, education, medical aid, lifestyle, and communal organisations, I would expect that the Jewish community has a life expectancy in the mid-80s, and broader South Africa is about 63. We also have a higher proportion of elderly people in our community due to emigration."

He says the Chevrah Kadisha and actuaries are running an excess mortality study, "and over time, we hope to gain a better understanding of the data and how our community has been affected".

Jeffrey Dorfman, associate professor in medical virology at Stellenbosch University, says, "This [high fatality rate] seems surprising considering that we have spent a lot of time in lockdown, and even when that was relaxed, many of the activities that facilitated spread were curtailed, particularly communal

davening.

"However, once COVID-19 was with us, the higher rates may have been hard to stop. It does seem that to keep our death rates as low as the general population, we, as a whole, would have needed to be more careful, particularly in Johannesburg. It's concerning that these deaths have come up so strongly relatively early in Gauteng's first wave. These revelations should also result in great caution when considering re-opening communal activities, particularly in Gauteng."

Almost all Jewish communities report disproportionately high COVID-19 death rates, although South African Jewry's rate is higher than some of these. For example, Britain's Jewish community of 264 000 people, which comprises about 0.5% of its population, has lost about 458 Jews. This is two and a half times the COVID-19 death rate of the British population, which has the third highest COVID-19 death rate in the world. But it's still lower than South African Jewry's fatality rate, equivalent to 90 Jews having died of COVID-19 in South Africa. France's 500 000 Jews, the largest Jewish community in Europe, has experienced a similar ratio of COVID-19 deaths to South Africa, with about 1 300 deaths.

The first death in Cape Town was on 28 March, and in Johannesburg on 28 April. "In July alone," Tomson says, "we conducted 110 burials, of which 44% were COVID-positive. This is more than double a regular July, and is an increase of 129% compared to the average over the past five years, which is 48 deaths. It is, in fact, the highest number of deaths since our digital record-keeping began in January 1994.

"In spite of a massive increase in deaths in Johannesburg in July, the staff and volunteers of the Chevrah Kadisha's burial services maintained

Volunteering to fight crime



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Shuls to reopen, but with strict conditions

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Shuls, shuttered since 18 March, are to reopen this month in some provinces, but they will have to comply with strict safety protocols, says Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein.

Goldstein said in a webinar on Sunday that shuls in the Western and Eastern Cape could start reopening this month on a gradual basis once they had implemented strict medical protocols. In Gauteng, shuls could reopen from 20 August, on the basis of the same restrictions, and depending on a reassessment of infection numbers closer to the time.

In KwaZulu-Natal, currently the epicentre of infections, reopening will probably be delayed until 12 September, just before Rosh Hashanah.

“It’s safer, but not absolutely safe [to reopen shuls]” Richard Friedland, group chief executive of Netcare, told the webinar, pointing out that the statistics, though improved, are still concerning.

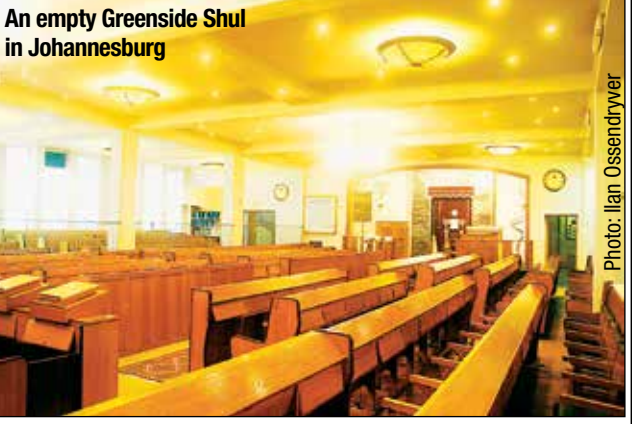
Goldstein said that COVID-19 infections were declining in most provinces, allowing for a cautious reopening of services. “Shuls are our most precious possession,” he said. “For months, we haven’t been able to say kaddish, hold Barmitzvahs and Batmitzvahs, and the community hasn’t been able to connect.

“The decision to close the shuls was taken in honour of *pikuach nefesh* [saving a life], which overrides all other *mitzvahs*. We have been blessed to have an outstanding medical team in Richard Friedland and [virology expert] Barry Schoub to guide us. Now, we are ready to return to shul in a phased and careful way.”

“Since we first updated the community on COVID-19 on 21 June, when there were 100 000 cases and 2 000 deaths, there have been 445 000 additional cases,

and as of last night, there were more than 10 000 deaths,” Friedland said.

Schoub, emeritus professor in virology at the University of the Witwatersrand and the former director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, pointed out that South Africa’s more than half a million cases of COVID-19 makes us a “global big hitter” for the disease, and there are still more than 7 500 new cases every day.



“The reported number of fatalities is [also] probably falsely low,” he said. “Based on research by the South African Medical Research Council, it’s probably two to three times that amount – about 25 000.”

Friedland said the risk measures the team took into account in reaching its decision were the average number of cases a day; the change in the active number of cases over 14 days; the number of cases per million people; the days taken to doubling the cumulative number of cases; and the reproduction (Rt) rate of the virus, which measures what stage of the pandemic we’re in.

All these measures show a positive trend, with the exception of KwaZulu-Natal. Across South Africa, including Gauteng, our most populous province, the daily number of cases and the number of active cases is in decline. Testing has also reduced – from 46 000 people a day to 30 000 people a day – and this could be a factor, but the ratio of people testing positive has declined.

The most important thing, Friedland

said, is that, according to a moving average of the number of active cases in South Africa over 14 days – the so-called lag indicator – experts expect the number of cases in the country to decrease. He emphasised that there is still significant danger in KwaZulu-Natal.

“As of 19 August, it will be potentially possible for *minyanim* to begin in Gauteng, and in the Western and Eastern Cape,” Friedland said. “But there is still great risk. We need to exercise an abundance of caution to ensure we don’t get a second wave.”

Friedland said that a key factor in determining the risk is the Rt number (which measures the infectiousness of the disease). COVID-19’s Rt number was between 2 and 4. A number below 1, provided preventative measures are maintained, means the virus will die out. South Africa’s Rt number has come down

over the past two weeks to below 1, at 0.65. However, it can rise to 4 or 5 in “superspreading conditions” like congregative environments.

“We want to prevent spikes, surges, and second waves,” he said. “That’s what happened in those places that became lax in their interventions.”

Shuls will implement more precautions than stipulated by government, said Efraim Kramer, a professor of emergency medicine and a FIFA senior medical officer, who has been appointed to draft the safety protocols for shuls in South Africa.

Kramer has visited shuls across the country to understand their needs, and the protocols are still being discussed. They will be shared with the community in due course, Goldstein said.

They include the appointment of a COVID-19 committee by every shul with clear roles and responsibilities; holding services outside if possible; compulsory mask wearing; hand sanitisation and

Continued on page 4>>

Torah Thought

The blessing of today

Exegetical license is a powerful tool in the hands of rabbis. (In simpler English, it’s the right to stray from the literal meaning of scripture in a *drosha* or essay). It even allows us to alter the punctuation of verses to drive a particular point.

The first words of this week’s *parsha*, “*Re’eh*” (see) lend themselves perfectly to this exercise. The literal translation is, “Behold I place before you, today, blessing.” Removing the first comma changes the word “today” into the object of the sentence, and “blessing” into an adjective, “Behold I place before you today, [as a] blessing!”

Humans are really good at reminiscing about the past or dreaming about the future. Sometimes, we forget that the most important gift Hashem has given us is to live today to the fullest. As the popular saying goes, that’s why it is called the present.

This is always true, but much more so in 2020. Nostalgia this year doesn’t mean thinking back to how life was a few decades ago or even a few years ago. We think back to how we lived just six months ago, of the many things we took for granted and were accustomed to. Possibly, for good reason, we long for the way it was. But we all know that life has now changed and that we can’t turn the clock back.

Nor do we have a magical machine that can speed up the passage of time and propel us into a future when life will resemble those good-old days once again. (Will it ever?) Postponing pursuits or activities until a later stage (Level 2? When we can travel abroad? When we can meet in person without fear? When?) is just a sophisticated, albeit understandable, procrastination tactic.

We need to appreciate the blessing of the now, even with all the challenges

it brings. We have to be the best that we can be, and do the best that we can do, within the restrictions of this crazy “abnormal new”. Each new dawn brings intense potential that we have to strive to maximise. We need to learn, grow, pray, connect (using the best contemporary tools we have), reach out, and care about others. Physical long distance travel isn’t possible but suddenly, the best speakers on topics, religious and secular, are on our screens with the click of a few keys. Many of us are finding ourselves with more available time to take on a quest we had always intended to do but never did.

Thank you Hashem for the gift of today. It’s up to us to turn it into true blessing. And may He bless us in return.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin,
Oxford Synagogue,
Chairman, SA Rabbinical
Association



South African Jewish Report

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Tel: 0860 525 200 • **Board of Directors** Howard Sackstein (Chairperson), Dina Diamond, Herschel Jawitz, Shaun Matisonn, Benji Porter.
Advertisements and editorial copy do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff and board of directors. Tel: 011 430 1980.

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CAP marshalls say fighting crime is a calling

NICOLA MILTZ

When a young woman in the community was sexually assaulted and robbed at gun point in her home two years ago, it was an elite team of volunteer security officers who helped to track down her attackers. Working alongside the South African Police Service (SAPS), the men responsible for helping to apprehend her brutal assailants belong to the Community Active Protection (CAP) Marshall Unit. They are a team of highly trained volunteer security officers and unsung heroes who give freely of their time and expertise to safeguard the community. Attorney by day and member of the unit at night, Yosef Shishler said it felt good to be able to help that woman.

“These men give up their spare time to patrol the streets while many of us are in bed or out enjoying ourselves.”

“She wasn’t just another crime statistic, she was a member of the community, and we were able to help her in our way,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*. Father of three, Shishler volunteers for the Family Life Centre, and is also a volunteer paramedic with Hatzolah. “I recall the brutal attack. The woman didn’t live in a CAP-monitored area, but we came together as a team on the night to try to catch the suspects. Working with the SAPS and following intense investigations and a lot of township hopping, we were able to track down the suspects and bring the perpetrators to book. I felt a sense of fulfilment that we were able to do something.” Made up of former members of the SAPS, police reservists, military and security specialists, the CAP Marshall Unit comprises people

from diverse career backgrounds including a chef, an attorney, a couple of accountants, a few businessmen, and a paramedic. Doing what they do best – helping to fight crime in one of the most dangerous cities in the world – unites them. “These men are true heroes,” said CAP Chief Operating Officer Sean Jammy. The unit was established in 2018 to provide a way for community members to give back in an operational capacity, he said. Initially comprised of a handful of individuals with security, SAPS and or other relevant experience, the unit has grown to include 30

arrests of armed robbers and other criminals, and has recovered a number of hijacked vehicles and firearms,” he said. An incident that stands out for him occurred in June last year, when two armed men held up a member of the community in Darwin Avenue, Savoy Estate, having stolen various valuable items including the victim’s cell phone. “We were on regular patrol when we got a notification over the radio about an armed robbery. We got details from the victim, which helped us to track his phone to Killarney. We saw the suspects’ silver Hyundai parked on the side of the road. We surrounded them, and got them out



Members of the CAP Marshall Unit on patrol

volunteers who offer 16 to 20 hours of shift work a month patrolling from 18:00 to 23:00 and on public holidays. “These men give up their spare time to patrol the streets while many of us are in bed or out enjoying ourselves. They have been involved in several successful arrests. From patrolling and performing undercover operations to tracking and identifying criminals, they’re an asset to the community,” said Jammy. For civic minded Daniel Shapiro, this has become a way of life. “The unit has been involved in numerous

the vehicle. We recovered all the stolen items, and a fake firearm in the vehicle.” The two suspects were arrested and handed over to the police. “There was a feeling of immense pride in knowing that we had actively taken two dangerous criminals off the streets. It feels good knowing that our actions allow people to sleep safer at night,” Shapiro said. The unit deals with priority calls, and assists CAP’s special intervention unit. “This isn’t Mickey Mouse work, the more experienced the team, the better. We are all registered with the Private Security Industry Regulatory

Authority, and have firearm competencies to be able to assist the regular tactical operations of the organisation,” said Shapiro. “This isn’t a place for trigger happy, gung-ho cowboys. We take it very seriously. This is

have assisted the unit in making arrests. “On Sunday, 15 June, an LPR camera in the Houghton area picked up an alert for a white Toyota Corolla. CAP tactical officers together with the CAP Marshall team located the vehicle on Louis Botha Avenue, Orange Grove, and the SAPS were called to assist. The driver of the vehicle was arrested and taken with the vehicle into police custody. The suspect was wanted for serious crimes in the Yeoville area,” said Zwarts. In a separate and similar incident on 9 June, a number of LPR cameras along Louis Botha Avenue and Bramley flagged a white Chevrolet bakkie, which alerted the CAP command centre. The vehicle had apparently been stolen during a robbery in the Sandringham police precinct in 2018, said Zwarts. “CAP dispatched units and worked off the LPR network to pinpoint the vehicle’s location. The vehicle was spotted on Louis Botha Avenue on the corner of 12th Street Orange Grove. The CAP marshalls and the SAPS stopped the vehicle, and two occupants were detained for questioning.” Members of the unit describe themselves as *meshugena*hs, and told the *SA Jewish Report* that doing this work gave them the opportunity to give back to the community. “This is definitely a calling. Not everyone is cut out for this kind of thing. We feel this is an area where we have the skills and knowledge to make a difference. This is me, this is what I do, it’s part of who I am,” said Shishler.

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Coming to terms with a finale like no other

NICOLA MILTZ

“This was the year we were going to bring it home,” says talented first-team rugby captain, Joshua Pimstein, of King David High School Linksfield (KDHSL), lamenting the shattered dream of winning the Pirates School Rugby Challenge and the impact of COVID-19 on the matric class of 2020.

For vice-head boy Pimstein and others, nothing about the class of 2020 has gone according to plan.

“Our rugby team has made the finals three times throughout our high school career, and this was going to be our shot at making history for King David rugby. This was our time to win, and make our school proud. Sadly, the pandemic ended this dream,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

As a member of the Lions High Performance Squad, he also had high hopes of making the U18 Craven Week teams, which have also been dashed.

COVID-19 has upended the lives of matrics across the country. Many have referred to it as the lost year, or the year that was cancelled. It has exposed the glaring and utterly unacceptable inequalities in the education system and the country.

“It certainly is a year like no other,” says Johannesburg clinical psychologist Judith Ancer.

Every matric student, no matter their personal circumstance, will have gaping spaces in their photo albums. The pandemic has left an empty hole where coming-of-age milestones should be.

The executive head of Redhill School, Joseph Gerassi, says every student looks forward to being a senior.

“Everything culminates in your matric year. They have been robbed of this, and they will never get it back again. These kids are never going to captain teams, they aren’t going to be the lead in the final major production. There is a definite sense of loss and unfairness. But there is also a sense of gratitude and appreciation. Their eyes have been opened.”

One of his matriculants, Gemma Muller, expressed her feelings in an essay competition run by Professor Jonathan Jansen titled “Learning Under Lockdown”, which she won.

In it she writes, “I am a matric of 2020, and it is unfair isn’t it? Why does it have to be our year? I could very well sit here behind a R7 000 laptop with optic-fibre connection and complain that I am not getting the same education as I would be in class, or that I want a matric dance and miss my friends. If you are trapped in this mindset – stuck in a thunderstorm of why me? Why now?, I ask you to think about the students from the 5 369 high schools in South Africa that do not have internet access

– the students who cannot simply open a laptop and enter a writing competition.”

She writes that online learning has taught her so much – “the importance of essential workers compared to that of celebrities and sporting legends. It has taught lessons of empathy in the face of adversity. It has shown us the power of compassion and generosity in a battle with fear and greed.”

Gerassi says this years’ matrics will have the grit needed to face new challenges.

“They have had to learn to work in a world that is far from normal. Will this help them going out into a world that is changing every day, I believe it will.”

While matrics in well-resourced schools haven’t been disadvantaged from an academic point of view, Gerassi says it’s been incredibly tough from a social and emotional point of view. One student who wishes to remain anonymous says she feels an overwhelming sense of sadness. “It’s hard to feel joyful. I’m grateful for my blessings, I just don’t have anything

exciting to look forward to. COVID-19 has opened my eyes. It’s been heart breaking seeing so many people my age living in poverty. I want to do something with my life that will help alleviate suffering.”

In the meantime, for kicks, she and a few friends superimposed photographs of themselves with their prospective matric dance partners onto existing photographs of people dressed up for a red-carpet event.

“It was fun to envision what we’d look like if we had a dance,” she says.

One of the unintended consequences of the pandemic, says Ancer, is that it has helped teenagers see the broader picture.

“While their losses are meaningful and relevant, there is a broader context.”

There is a sense that they see themselves as the class that is living history as it unfolds.

However, the loss these children are experiencing is real,



Joshua Pimstein



Photo: Jeffiro Levy

Having fun at the 2019 King David High School Linksfield matric dance

Ancer says.

“We have to acknowledge that it’s a real loss for some. It’s unfair. It’s hard, but it is what it is, and this is the hardest thing to tell teenagers. Parents need to be the calm at the centre of their storm. They need to look after their own mental health, and be able to acknowledge the losses with their kids. There’s no point telling them to look on the bright side when they are feeling unhappy and angry.”

She says it’s time for parents to be creative.

“Mark an important occasion like a graduation or matric dance by hosting a special family meal or picnic. Celebrate and acknowledge lost milestones in different ways.”

KDHSL head girl, Erin Atie, says that while it has been a difficult year, there are many positives.

“Our matric experience is unique. There has been a great sense of camaraderie with everyone having to deal with something so big together,” she says.

“I learnt to think out of the box and implement initiatives in a creative and fun manner. KDHSL gave me the space and support to grow in ways I would never have grown in a non-COVID-19 matric.”

Says Pimstein, “It’s so sad that 2020 will be the first matric group that won’t have a rugby season. I do feel let down. I feel that the first-team rugby season was taken away from me.

“While it’s disappointing, I’ve learnt to appreciate the opportunities I’ve had, and cherish the memories.”

High death rate reflects an ageing community

>>>Continued from page 1

the highest levels of compassionate service,” he says. “At times, we had three teams working through the night ensuring the rapid collection of the *meis* [deceased] from homes and hospitals. Our *mitaskim* [the staff who collect the bodies] wore personal protective equipment for every collection to ensure their safety.

“Burials were conducted without delay [as per Jewish law], in spite of the immense pressure this put on our staff. They worked around the clock, sometimes having eight funerals a day. At this time, we recognise the tragedy of many family members not being able to attend funerals. This required heightened sensitivity and looking at alternative ways that the families could be included, such as Zoom calls.”

Gary Cohen, a volunteer at the Johannesburg Jewish cemetery, is a *gabbai*, ensuring a funeral is conducted according to halacha. He says they high number of funerals “really brings home the reality of how deadly this virus is, and how older people have borne the brunt”. Most funerals are tiny, with only close family members present, and often there will be volunteers to make up a *minyán*. He has only seen two or three funerals fill the full 50-person quotient currently allowed.

He emphasises that everyone from labourers to rabbis have worked to make the experience easier for the families. “The staff at the cemetery has had to literally double their workload, and this period must have taken a massive mental toll. However tired and depleted they are, they still show exceptional compassion towards the bereaved families, who may not have had contact with the deceased for several weeks,” Cohen says.

Tomson says that in the months prior to July, there were actually fewer deaths than usual. For example, in May, deaths were 24% lower than the previous five-year average for May. “The result is that although deaths in July were very high, overall deaths from January through July were up by 20% compared to last year, and 25% when compared to the previous five-year average.”

Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, says, “The COVID-19 death rate in our community is of great concern. We are acutely aware that each fatality is a tragedy for the family, and our hearts go out to all who have been affected. We need to stress the importance of protecting those most vulnerable in our community. While we see a glimmer of hope in the reduction in infections, and our schools and shuls beginning to open, we urge every community member to continue to stay vigilant.”

Shuls to reopen, but with strict conditions

>>>Continued from page 2

frequent cleaning; social distancing of a minimum of two metres between people – even in shuls with fixed seating; restricting shul services to a minimum of 50 people; shul services not exceeding two hours (including on Yom Kippur); singing restricted to the *ba’al tefillah* (master of prayer) except for saying kaddish; no sharing of books and *tallisim*; no shul brochas; and mandatory screening of temperatures and collection of individual details at every service.

Kramer said that Yom Tov would require another set of protocols because it was a specific case.

Goldstein said the Union of Orthodox Synagogues (UOS) was considering innovations for bigger shuls like holding services in shifts, and repeated shofar blowing sessions.

“If a shul opens, that’s fantastic, if it doesn’t open, it’s also fantastic,” Kramer said, pointing out that there was no pressure on institutions or individuals. Vulnerable

people, including those over 60, are advised to stay home.

It’s not just COVID-19 that poses risks for those returning to shul. The Community Security Organisation (CSO) and security company CAP have warned about an uptick in antisemitic content online, an ongoing terror threat, and a rise in petty crime fuelled by the weak economy.

Goldstein said an advisory team had been set up to guide the return to shul made up of medical advisors, Hatzolah, the CSO, CAP, and the UOS. “Our medical teams and community organisations are deeply inspiring. All will partner with us in our return to shul.”

“Support our shuls,” he said. “Our rabbonim are providing an amazing support service. Pay for your membership, and make donations even if you aren’t going. Shul may not feel like it usually does, but we will get through this carefully and responsibly, and will come out of it at the end.”

We’re not out of the woods, but there are some spring shoots

OPINION

DR DANIEL ISRAEL



A palpable sense of anticipation has begun to permeate our homes. This isn’t uncommon for the latter part of August, for the renewal of spring and a new Jewish year awaits us.

However, this year, the focus of spring is on whether normal life will slowly begin to blossom. Schools have reopened this week, and we eagerly await the resumption of shul services.

The 1918 Spanish flu pandemic found itself in the same position in the autumn of 1918. We ought to learn valuable lessons from that chapter in history: history repeats itself.

The 1918 influenza pandemic, or Spanish flu, was the most severe pandemic in history. A total of 500 million people, or one third of the world’s population, became infected, and at least 50 million people died.

The pandemic coincided with the end of World War I, and it quickly became global due to the deployment of American troops across the world. However, interestingly, this initial spread didn’t cause the majority of deaths. The virus initially almost fully subsided, and then a second wave in the autumn of 1918 resulted in an exponential spike in infections and deaths.

There is debate as to the precise mechanism that led to the second wave in 1918. The city of Philadelphia decided to proceed with a war parade, and 1 000 unexpected deaths followed in just 10 days. The Royal College of Physicians at the end of the first wave announced that Spanish flu was no more threatening than the still well-remembered Russian flu of 1889, which lead to the relaxation of cautionary behaviour.

Even the *British Medical Journal* accepted that “overcrowding on transport was necessary to aid the war effort and should be quietly borne”. There are numerous reports about quarantine measures that were lifted at the end of the first wave. Their accuracy is still the subject of debate.

The common thread in the contributory causes for the second wave of the Spanish flu pandemic is clear: life needed to move on, and society opened up. Does this sound familiar?

Even though we have waited for and now eagerly embrace this phase of the relaxation of restrictions, it’s important that we follow basic principles to ensure that this time is safe.

The South African population is far from having herd immunity. Although the strides made in vaccine development are encouraging – with seven vaccines already in trial including three trials in South Africa, one of which is linked to Oxford University and is in phase 3 – the day of receiving a vaccine in the shoulder is still a little distant for the man on the street.

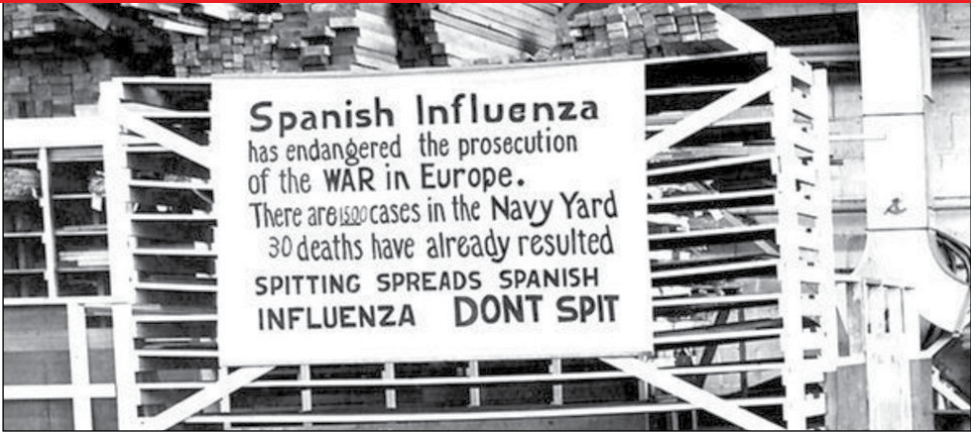
But, in contrast to 1918, this time we understand viruses and their spread much better. It has been unequivocally proven that physical barriers like masks significantly prevent spread. Proper social distancing reliably stops transmission. We have efficacious alcohols that kill coronavirus in contrast to the potash and salt used in 1918 that didn’t do much. These simple principles may seem hackneyed, but they work, and need to remain the ongoing focus.

Are we set for a second wave of infections of COVID-19, given that a similar picture is unfolding in Israel and arguably even the United States? Not necessarily.

Professor Salim Abdool Karim, the chairperson of the South African Presidential Advisory Committee on COVID-19, recently addressed this question at a Zoom meeting with the Gauteng GP Collaboration. He made it clear that although we’re “not out of the woods”, cases may have already peaked in Gauteng and even nationally.

He stressed, though, that to prevent a second wave we ought to be vigilant with the behavioural and societal measures we have implemented as South Africans already which have kept the morbidity and mortality of COVID-19 down.

Instead of questioning whether we are reopening our institutions too early, we need to question whether we are each as committed



to the principles of preventing infection as we would have been in April or May on a daily basis.

Businesses are in disarray; extended family relationships are strained; and individuals are

suffering from isolation. Just like after the first wave of the Spanish flu in 1918, there is no doubt that the time is now to water the garden and let the spring blossoms begin to sprout.

We will hopefully have a new lease on slowly re-establishing the lifestyles we had. The difference this time is that we will come equipped with lessons from the past, and with basic preventative measures that we must continuously and uncompromisingly implement until the pandemic is finally over.

• *Dr Daniel Israel is a family practitioner in Johannesburg*

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The numbers reflect caring for our elderly

Our community has felt the impact of COVID-19 hugely, what with 106 people having lost their lives to the coronavirus, and so many more becoming very ill with it.

And while there are many who literally didn’t even know they had it, there are those who, months later, are still feeling the consequences of this horrible virus.

The number, 106, may seem like just a number and not especially significant. However, we need to remember that each one of those 106 people was a person with a family, perhaps children and grandchildren, and friends who lost someone they loved dearly. Each one is a massive loss.

Each one had a significant life, and a phenomenal story to tell. Each one was loved and loved many. Some had long wonderful lives, while others may have had tough existences with much sadness. And while we now know that the average age of Jewish people in South Africa who have died was 82.7, there were many who were still in their prime with so much to live for.

What for me is very obvious about this high number and the average age of those who have died is that we look after our elderly. I say this because, if that’s the average age, there must be a great deal of people much older than that who were healthy before this pandemic. It’s a testament to how well we care for our elderly in our community. This explains the high death rate, rather than anything else. The price we have paid for looking after our elderly with kid gloves is a really high death rate during this pandemic.

So, yes, the number is high, and yes, it means these people have left us behind – and nothing can take that away – but it also means that we can really be grateful for how we treat our elderly. I believe that rather than self-flagellating, we should honour the people and organisations like the Chevrah Kadisha, among others, who go the extra mile in caring for our elderly.

It also speaks to something intrinsic in our community in how we honour our aged folk. I know so many people who, as their parents get older, do whatever it takes to give them the best years of their lives. Clearly this is why we have such a huge elderly community that is now so highly susceptible to COVID-19.

Every single one of those who died deserves to be honoured and remembered. And they will be, by those who love them, whether they are here or in other parts of the world.

This is a difficult time, and there have been too many deaths and too much illness. Most of those people who experienced loss at the hands of this virus weren’t able to be there for their loved ones in the end. In fact, their loved ones had mostly lonely deaths, and sitting *shiva* for them was equally lonely.

And, funerals have been sadder than ever because so few were able to attend. Through this COVID-19 time, we have paid tribute to many doctors, paramedics, people who have fed the starving, and others who have shone and been noticed for the work they have done.

However, those who work for the Chev and deal with burials and funerals are never recognised for the work they do. They are truly unsung heroes, and do work that most of us can’t even contemplate doing. These people go unnoticed, but they do their jobs with such compassion, professionalism, dedication, and pride.

Those who work for the Chev’s burial services have been working through the night for our community. They don’t complain in spite of putting themselves at risk and – especially in July – under such immense pressure. In the past month, they sometimes had as many as eight funerals a day that they had to plan and make happen. All a family has to do is call them, and the rest is ‘miraculously’ done.

Going to a funeral over this time is sadder than ever because when someone gets a good send off when they die, there’s a sense of the love and respect they inspired in their lives.

But now, COVID-19 funerals are so small, with so few there to say goodbye. In many of these cases, you can count on some of the closest relatives not being there because they tested positive. In some cases, they are sitting in their cars in the parking lot. So, during the funeral, the pressure is on the Chev to make it as pain-free and dignified as possible in spite of the size. And it does.

Going back to the number 106, I believe that because of our communal services, like Hatzolah, our doctors, and our hospitals, we have managed to save rather than lose more lives.

As the days go on, I hear more and more people being astonished that after being told that their loved one is unlikely to survive, they recover. This is clearly because over these past months, our medical and paramedic teams have learnt so much and are applying it to the best of their ability. They are saving many lives that they wouldn’t have been able to three to six months ago.

In this dark time, we have so much to be grateful for. I, for one, thank my lucky stars I was born into this community.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Constitutional democracy under threat

JORDAN MOSHE

South Africa’s political mechanisms are failing the country. Consequently, we rely too heavily on our courts, turning to judges to help secure rights which should be protected by the Constitution. Unless something changes, the future of constitutional democracy is at stake.

So said Judge Dennis Davis in a webinar hosted last week by the Jewish Literary Festival. The veteran legal expert and judge president of the Competition Appeal Court engaged with constitutional law scholar Pierre de Vos on his recently published book, *Lawfare: Judging Politics in South Africa*, co-written with advocate Michelle le Roux.

An imperfect political system in our country has left ordinary citizens no choice but to turn to the courts to secure their rights. This, however, is less than ideal, said Davis.

“Political struggles have shifted to the courts. People have used the law to produce results in politics around the world, and we in South Africa have known this for a long time since the days of apartheid, when people used the courts to achieve political gains because they couldn’t do so anywhere else.”

Whether it’s about the South African Broadcasting Corporation or political leadership, our judiciary hears cases from across the spectrum every single day. Many of these cases would ordinarily be handled by the legislature but the mechanism isn’t operating properly.

“So many issues we hear should be dealt with at a political level, but it doesn’t happen,” said Davis. “We fail almost every time, and the matter goes to court.”

This is by no means a good thing, he stressed. “I’m unable to manage my own office, so why would anybody want me to make decisions that should be made politically?” he said. “The courts take months to process cases. Is it a good thing to depend on judges? No. That’s that.

“Judges are being asked to make difficult calls on COVID-19 regulations. It’s so hard to know about these things as a judge. You’re not a virologist, nor are you an epidemiologist. You’re being asked to make calls on things that are often beyond you. Why should I be presumed to know better than anyone else?”

Overdependence on the judiciary takes the sting out of politics, Davis said.

“The balance is vital. You need a stable, coherent political system to ensure a political democracy as much as you need the courts. The fact is that you can’t ask the courts to drag you into a sound constitutional reality. You need politics, but we don’t have that. This is where we are right now.”

He stressed that unless South Africa has a legislative framework that works, it doesn’t matter what the courts do.

“The whole system will collapse anyway,” he said. “The legislature needs to function and uphold the Constitution. There’s a strong critique of the dichotomy between the majestic claims of the Constitution and the degrading reality in which most South Africans live, and COVID-19 has only compounded the problem.

“Without a true constitution, we cannot have democracy. However, you cannot sustain a constitutional democracy if there’s no vindication of the Constitution by an effective legislature, not the court.”

The Constitution is no panacea, and it’s heavily compromised by a lack of concrete policy at political level.

“I haven’t spent 22 years on the bench not to believe in the Constitution, but I do feel that criticism of it is understandable if it’s not being properly implemented,” Davis said. “This can happen only if we plug the gap effectively. If we don’t, we’ll have big problems.”

Every one of us should worry about the lack of development of constitutional democracy, he stresses.

“If you look at when we got our Constitution,



Judge Dennis Davis

there was massive optimism around the world,” said Davis. “Everyone was getting a constitution, and almost every country pledged to be a democracy. Many did, but some that are now facing disaster were once shining lights of democracy at the time.

“Look where we are now. Poland, India, Brazil are all countries which have completely lost constitutional traction. All of them show that we are living in a world where the enterprise of constitutional democracy can’t be taken for granted. Unless we think of ways for politics to sustain our democracy, we’re looking down the barrel.”

Davis said that that the issue needed to be comprehensively addressed as a matter of urgency. The fact that South Africa continues to grapple with corruption is a case in point.

“We had an almost seamless transition of corruption from the old regime of apartheid to the new one,” he said. “But why am I so surprised? At the very dawn of democracy, an arms deal was already at the fore. We’ve faced corruption for a long time because the political mechanisms haven’t developed to deal with the problem.”

With legal instruments failing us, we need to seriously re-evaluate the structure of our government and how the political system ought to operate, Davis believes. This could include a restriction of our electoral system, and a re-evaluation of the role of the legislature.

On a broader level, it’s just as important to find ways for ordinary people to engage with political institutions in a meaningful way that will make a difference.

“Look at COSATU [the Congress of South African Trade Unions] in the 1980s,” said Davis. “People were intimately involved. The trade-union movement was remarkable, and there were ways for people to march as a real countervailing power. We don’t have such a thing today.

“If I were no judge, where would I go to do something and make a difference? Where can I contribute or protest? We are going to have a painful reconstruction of civil society, and we need to implement change.”

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The Mossad spy from Graaff-Reinet

STEVEN GRUZD

Sylvia Raphael’s story isn’t well known in South Africa. This remarkable, vivacious woman, born in Graaff-Reinet in the Karoo in 1937, became a Mossad superspy. Raphael’s efforts to assassinate the perpetrators of the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics landed her in a Norwegian prison cell.

Her life in the shadows was unpacked in a



Sylvia Raphael

Zoom discussion on Saturday night hosted by the *SA Jewish Report*. While Raphael’s father was Jewish, she was baptised Dutch Reformed, her mother’s church. Lynette de Villiers was her friend since kindergarten. “She was always different. She was tall, striking, with long black hair. She had an answer for everything, and was extremely

funny. She made up the most amusing stories about why she was late for school. She loved acting. Her father, Ferdinand, owned the bioscope [cinema] and we sold tickets there to get a look at the boys!” After studying at Rhodes University, “Sylvia went to Israel to look for her roots,” De Villiers said. “She was the most adventurous person I ever knew. She was up for anything. She spoke many languages – English, Afrikaans, French, German, Hebrew, Arabic – and fluent Norwegian, which she later learnt in jail.” Working on a kibbutz, she was just what the Mossad was looking for – an attractive gentile who could speak Hebrew and Arabic, and who loved Israel. The Mossad sent her to Canada, where she assumed the identity of photographer Patricia Roxborough, and then onto Paris. Journalist John Swain was a young reporter for Agence France-Presse in Paris in the 1960s. “I unwittingly fell for her, in a Mossad honeytrap,” he said. “We became lovers. I suppose she saw me as an entrée to the Anglo-Saxon press corps in Paris. She was often away for many days and not entirely reliable in that sense. No one had any idea of her real identity.” Both the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Mossad were active in Paris. “She gave me no hint that she was firmly on one

side of the Arab-Israel conflict,” Swain said. They had planned to go to Libya to interview the charismatic Muammar Gaddafi who had just seized power, but this did not materialise. The operational details of what Raphael actually did are shrouded in mystery and secrecy, as is much in the world of espionage, said David Kaplan. He is an ex-South African journalist now living in Kfar Saba in Israel, who has unearthed much of Raphael’s story. Filmmaker Saxon Logan, who made a documentary about her life, *Sylvia – Tracing Blood*, said she was known to have operated in Cairo, Mogadishu (in Somalia), Asmara (in Eritrea), Djibouti, Beirut, Amman, and Damascus. She is said to have replaced Eli Cohen in Damascus, who pierced the top echelons of the Syrian establishment and was publicly hanged for it in 1965. “Sylvia had to fool the best, and she did. She managed to get into the inner sanctums of the Arab world. She was chameleon-like; she could blend in anywhere,” said Logan. She was the nanny to the children of King Hussein of Jordan at the time the PLO was trying to take over the country. Fifty thousand Palestinians were killed by Jordanian forces in September 1970, and the PLO was forced to flee to Lebanon. Raphael met Arafat, and infiltrated the PLO. After the 1972 Munich Massacre, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir authorised Operation Wrath of G-d to assassinate the perpetrators. Rafael is considered responsible



for the bomb that killed the head of the PLO in France, Mahmoud Hamshari. She is also wanted for killings in Rome. In the Steven Spielberg film *Munich*, Rafael’s character is played by Daniel Craig. Apparently, Spielberg didn’t realise the South African on the team was a woman. In 1973, she was involved in a plot to assassinate “The Red Prince”, Ali Hassan Salameh, from the Black September terrorist group, and Arafat’s heir apparent. Mossad intelligence placed Salameh in Lillehammer, Norway. He was killed by 14 shots in front of

Continued on page 9>>

Women’s struggle to survive the Holocaust

TALI FEINBERG

All Jewish people fought to survive and care for their families as their world was ripped asunder when the Nazis rose to power, but Jewish women stood out for the particular burdens they had to bear. This was the premise of a talk given by Rabbi Moshe Cohn, the head of the Jewish World Section at the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, on a webinar hosted by the Cape Town Holocaust Centre. “The story of war is a story of rupture – ripping asunder everything we hold dear. From their role in society, to their jobs, to the minute-by-minute reality of their lives, Jews faced drastic change,” says Cohn. According to Warsaw ghetto diarist Emanuel Ringelblum, “It changed with the speed of a movie. Future historians will have to dedicate an appropriate page for women in the war for her courage and steadfastness. Thanks to her, thousands of families have managed to surmount the terror of the times,” he wrote in June 1942. Cohn notes that there is a “great movement towards revisionist history. There are many who believe that we should change the way we understand history to fit today’s sensibilities.” He disagrees with this, emphasising that we need to understand history in its context. So, even though women are extremely liberated today, they weren’t then, and we need to accept this point if we are to understand the challenges they faced. “Women’s roles were very well-defined. But from the 1930s onwards, many Jewish men lost their jobs, leading women to go out and find work. This led to role reversals, of women becoming breadwinners and men staying at home.” However, it wasn’t a simple switch, with many men being unable to accept the situation and often sinking into depression. They couldn’t partner equally with their wives, which meant women now had to play the role of breadwinner and mother. “Women wanted to survive. Men tended to collapse. While this is a generalisation, there was a sense of men ‘folding onto themselves’, unable to accept their new position in the household. It was a foreign concept,” he says. Then, after Kristallnacht on 10 November 1938,

more than 30 000 Jewish men were arrested – almost 10% of the Jewish population in Germany. Many women were suddenly on their own, and had to try to rescue their husbands by protesting, writing letters, and so on, as well as working and taking care of the home and children. When Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, many Jews fled towards the Soviet Union. Two thirds of these were men, leaving even more women alone to assume the role of both parents. “They also had to make impossible decisions on their own,” says Cohn. He showed a clip of one survivor saying how her mother’s role in life changed on 1 September 1939. She went from an elegant woman who had never worked, to one who did, battling every day to put food on the table and keep her children safe. As Jews were forced into ghettos, they faced hunger, overcrowding, disease, and the ever-present threat of deportation. It was women who often had to navigate the horrendous choices and dangerous reality of ghetto life in order to keep their families alive. Cohn explained that the black market was a key aspect, and women used it as a strategy of survival. However, this differed in each ghetto. In Warsaw, the ghetto was surrounded by Poles, many of whom also saw the Germans as the enemy. This allowed a black market to thrive. However, in Łódź, those outside the walls were occupying Germans. There were no ‘friends’ outside, and no black market. This drastically changed the strategy women had to use to stay alive and keep their family alive.” Delving into some devastating statistics of life in the ghetto, Cohn says that 30% of Warsaw’s population lived in 2.5% of city, with six to seven people per room. In Łódź, conditions were even worse, with up to ten people per room, no gas to cook with, and tiny calorie intakes. In both ghettos, there was no privacy, even when going to the toilet. Hunger was all-consuming, and it was women who waged war with it. Cohn showed extracts from survivor testimonies and diaries, describing how mothers went out to try and find food while their children huddled home alone, and the devastation when they found nothing. One woman brought back some parsley, and told her

children to suck it in their mouths for a long time. Another survivor described a 14-year-old teenager crying from hunger like a baby to his mother. A survivor discussed how his mother ensured their food lasted until the next rations were handed out, and others described how women tried to provide special or extra food for Shabbat. Many testimonies discuss the choice women faced whether to allow their families to eat unkosher meat if this was all they could get. The testimony of



Woman and children during the Holocaust

Sara Selver-Urbach in the Łódź ghetto describes her mother choosing to give her ill brother the unkosher meat, and attempting to keep a kosher and unkosher section of her tiny kitchen. Eventually, the entire family consumed the meat to try to survive. Another survivor described his father saying that they must eat the unkosher meat to survive, fulfilling the commandment of *pikuach nefesh* (saving a life above all else). His mother disagreed, saying they would survive if they didn’t eat it. It was a “ferocious fight”. This attempt at continuity in the face of death is something many women took on. However, in this family, the husband forced his wife to prepare the meat, although she never ate it. The battle created a rift between the parents that they never recovered from. Vladka Meed described how his mother chose to pay his brother’s Barmitzvah teacher with bread, even though it meant more hunger. This was her attempt at rising above her circumstances. “How

much strength a woman needed! To be able to think in those days about my brother’s preparation for Barmitzvah!” he writes. “Women had a willingness to connect with the past in order to create a future, which helped many families survive,” says Cohn. There are other instances like this, from making Shabbat special, to women leading a seder in the place of a man. Naomi Winkler Munkacsy described how a fellow Auschwitz prisoner told her, “I just lit the Sabbath candles – I saw two electric bulbs and said the blessing on them.’ Another time, on a Friday night in the factory, I saw a woman whose job was polishing small iron hoops and rings take some of the rings and arrange them into candles and candlesticks, as it were, and then cover her face with her hands and silently recite the blessing.” Another survivor described an incident in which Nazis searched

a house and removed the parchment from the mezuzah, threatening to burn it. “In her perfect German, my mother followed him, asking him not to burn the parchment, until he eventually threw it back at her. She risked her life for a piece of parchment. in my mind, it was *Kiddush Hashem* [sanctifying G-d’s name],” he said. Cohn agrees. “It was an act of insane bravery and an exquisite statement of continuity and the battle against dehumanisation, saying, ‘I am a person and I demand you respect the symbols of who I am.’” “From what magical stream does my mother draw strength for all of this? There must be some great hidden force, a force of love, a force of tremendous will to hold on and watch out for us,” wrote survivor Irene Liebman. Indeed, surmises Cohn, “Women worked to mend the rupture and maintain continuity, all to allow their families to be able to live as human beings and as Jews.”

Men also suffer gender-based violence

TALI FEINBERG

A Jewish man from the South African Jewish community gave a heart-wrenching, anonymous account of how victimisation by Jewish females from a young age had a negative impact on his life, demonstrating how men can also be victims of gender-based violence.

He was speaking at a webinar titled, “Toxic Humanity”, hosted by Koleinu SA, the Union of Jewish Women, and Shalom Bayit. This webinar, the first part of the two-part series, focused on “challenging the narrative in our community”, asking, “Are our boys victims or villains? Are our girls promoters or preventers?”

“I was drawn to speak at this webinar because it addresses toxicity and our community,” said the anonymous man. Looking back, he described his primary school years as “a breeze”, but when he was in high school, he began to be bullied, subjugated, ridiculed, and victimised because of his appearance, particularly the fact that he was overweight.

“The adolescent years are when you form your sexual identity, and two particular incidents stand out that affected me deeply. The first was at a ‘social’ [event] at the beginning of high school. I was standing by myself, and a girl came up to me, touched me, said how attractive I was, and asked to go out with me.”

Sensing he was being used in some kind of dare or game, he stammered that he would go out with her. “She turned to her friends and started laughing,” clearly showing it was just a ploy to humiliate him. Then at the end of the year at a camp, “two girls passed, and looked at me and a friend, saying we were a ‘2’ and a ‘3’. We realised we were being rated.”

From that point on, he was always excluded or judged by girls, and developed a phobia about talking to them. It became such an issue, that he decided to become frum (religiously observant) just to avoid interacting with girls. He also left his co-ed school, attending an all-boys school until matric. “It was easier to be disconnected from girls, but in my 20s, when I wanted to get married, I realised I had no idea how to interact with women.”

Doubting he would ever marry, he eventually met his future wife who “was profoundly spiritual and had a deep sense of self. She was also very attractive.” But instead of seeing her as his *beshtet* (soulmate), his past made him view the match as simply lucky.

For the next ten years, he endured comments from people implying that someone like him should never be with someone as attractive as her. “Our sexual life was also in shambles as I had no idea what I was doing. I never took it



seriously, and was only focused on myself.” It all came to a head, as his wife eventually said she “felt dismissed in our marriage and intimate life”.

The couple are now working to fix their marriage, and also to raise their children, especially their boys, to have a healthy relationship with the opposite sex.

“My story isn’t one of violence, but I wonder if it would have been different if those young girls who rated and mocked me had been taught differently. People need to know that boys and men in the community may be suffering, but we can change things for the next generation,” he said.

Matric students Dani Sack and Daniel Strous shared how they witnessed male and female teens around them perpetuating gender stereotypes and micro-aggressions on a daily basis. Strous, in particular, commented that females and males both objectify each other, calling one another terms like “snack” or “chick”, and touch each other inappropriately in a way that is “invasive and dehumanising”.

“I have witnessed what others call ‘locker-room talk’ or ‘dark humour’, and as a male, I would like to press for change. Everything needs to be re-evaluated. If we refuse to look at the greater picture, we will be kept in the past. I applaud Koleinu SA for what it does, and what we are striving for as a collective. The work has started, but we haven’t done nearly enough.”

Rees Mann, a male survivor of sexual abuse and gang rape, and the director of South African Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse, said that men need to support each other more. For example, when male pupils at a South African school testified that they had been sexually violated by their coach, people said they were bringing down the name of the school. “They didn’t rally around them, they ostracised them. Men have no empathy towards each other in times of crisis.”

Clinical psychologist Ruth Ancer emphasised that domestic and gender-based violence is a reality in the South African Jewish community. She said recent research shows that Jewish women take far longer to change their situation if they are victims of abuse, taking seven to 15 years to take action as opposed to three to five years for other women.

This could be because they “sense that a woman’s role is to keep *shalom bayit* [peace in the home], and that violence and chaos is their failure. They may feel that they are bringing shame to their family or themselves. They may also believe it’s lashon hara [derogatory speech about a person], even though reporting abuse doesn’t fall into that category. It may also be because of community support networks and resources, they cope better.”

“Violence isn’t just men abusing women. It can also be men to men, women to women, or women to men. We need to ‘role model’ quality relationships, based on respect,” she said.

Clinical psychologist Leanne Stillerman Zabow

focused on the role of parents in nurturing children who feel safe and secure in the world, which will in turn lead to them becoming adults that are comfortable with themselves.

“If we have adverse life experiences we may develop a ‘shell’. That can lead to toxic rage as adults. There are many people, particularly men, who may be adults but have a ‘wounded child’ inside. So parents need to create a home environment for children to be safe with their own vulnerability and to express their feelings. It must be a place to process emotions. It’s hard to be perfect, but we need to be mindful. We tend to repeat what we haven’t resolved, so think about how you were socialised and what you witnessed between your own parents. To avoid carrying it forward, invest in therapy or one of the many organisations that can help.”

Clinical psychologist Yochi Ress, who is also involved in the Mankind Project, said that as a leadership consultant, most successful leaders have the core qualities of vulnerability and emotional intelligence. “While historically leaders were more patriarchal, this has now been overturned,” Ress said.

He spoke of the archetype of masculinity as defined by Carl Jung, an archetype being a “universal and enduring pattern in the psyche across time and geography”.

“In modern society we don’t always have spaces or rituals to express the male archetype in a healthy way, so the Mankind Project helps men do this,” Ress said. “We work with men to reclaim the ‘sacred masculine’.”

He would like to see this done in the Jewish community. “For example, the Barmitzvah is a very outwardly focused celebration, but there could also be an inner focus of mastering ourselves and changing the narrative. We need to be able to ‘go sit in the fire’ and do the deep work to create something new.”

SAJBD 2020 GAUTENG COUNCIL CONFERENCE

Rising above lockdown

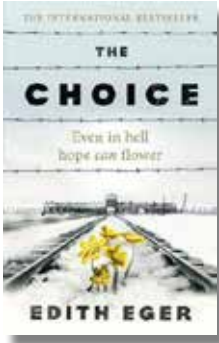
with Dr Edith Eger



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Join us on 16 August, where she will address us at the SAJBD Gauteng Conference.

The Mossad spy from Graaff-Reinet

>>>Continued from page 8

his pregnant wife. But the victim turned out to be Ahmed Bouchikhi, a Moroccan waiter. Kaplan believes it was a trap to expose the Mossad. Salameh mocked Mossad for killing a pool attendant (one of Bouchikhi’s other jobs). Two greenhorn Mossad operatives soon cracked under interrogation, and Raphael was captured.

Swain was in Saigon, Vietnam, and saw the story on the Reuters wire. “I was flabbergasted,” he said. He had no idea his former girlfriend, Roxborough, was an Israeli spy.

On appeal, Raphael got a light sentence of 5½ years, and only served 18 months. She quipped, “I went from 007 to 005½.” She was allowed to go shopping, and spent much time with the female warder in her office. Raphael later survived at least three assassination attempts by the PLO.

After her release in 1976, she married her appellant advocate Annæus Schjødt, and they lived in Pretoria for a long time. It was there that she reached out to her nephew, Derek

Watts, the veteran *Carte Blanche* journalist. “She was warm and companionable, and had so many stories to tell,” he said. “We bonded as fellow ‘journalists’.”

Raphael died of leukaemia in 2005, and was cremated in South Africa. Her ashes were taken to Kibbutz Ramat Hachofetz. The who’s who of the Israeli intelligence community was at her top-secret memorial service. One writer said, “When true peace eventually comes, they will write books, make movies, and name streets after her.”

Logan said, “She did what she did in reaction to how Jews were treated in the 1930s and 1940s. She was horrified, and made her own private pact to protect the Jewish people and their homeland.”

In Logan’s film, Israelis are urged to lay wreaths on her grave due to the debt Israel owes to her. They do that to this day. The film has been shown worldwide, except in South Africa. He surmises that celebrating an Israeli superheroine is, unfortunately, politically unpalatable.

Silent enemy taught me the importance of real friends

PERSONAL STORY

OWEN GARBMAN



From the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I worked on the frontlines as a pharmacist. Each day, I would go to work, much to the opposition of my wife, Jackie, and my children here and overseas.

This alone caused stress within our household. Little did we know that we would become “another two of the statistics”. At work, I wore a mask, gloves, sanitised, and frequently washed my hands. In my mind, this would be enough to keep me safe.

We knew that there was a war out there against a silent enemy that had no regard for gender, religion, colour, or financial standing. Towards the end of May 2020, we learnt that a colleague of mine had tested positive.

We immediately booked tests. Our worst fears were confirmed, as we both tested positive. What could we do but to isolate ourselves and take paracetamol every four hours as instructed?

At this point, we had no temperature, but both had body aches with hot and cold chills and bronchial coughs. My breathing was very shallow.

We then remembered an email that was sent to us about the Community Security Organisation (CSO’s) COVID-19 Wellness

Monitoring Programme. We promptly signed up.

Monday came, and Jayden from CSO brought us a thermometer and an oximeter. He told us to monitor our oxygen levels and temperatures, and he would phone us later in the day.

We did as instructed. My

reading was in the mid-80s, and Jackie’s was in the low 90s. When Jayden phoned and my readings were still the same, he said he would contact our GP.

After consultation between our GP and the CSO medical team, I was instructed to get to hospital. I put some things together, said goodbye to Jackie with an elbow nudge, and off I went with my daughter to Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital. Unbeknown to me, Jackie was told by the doctors that they didn’t think I would survive.

Jackie was anxious. She was alone and scared. She had morbid thoughts about my health, thinking that I wouldn’t pull through, and she would be alone.

I was dropped outside the hospital, and said a tearful goodbye to my daughter. This is when the loneliness began. I was admitted via a shipping container parked on the side of the building and taken via a backdoor and

special elevator to the COVID-19 intensive-care unit (ICU).

There I stayed for 16 days, battling the virus. I was put onto a CPAP machine with high volume oxygen, and on antibiotic treatment for the infection in both my lungs.

According to my pulmonologist, my lungs were in a bad way, and it was going to be a slow and long process. Each day, depending on my SATS, oxygen levels were adjusted. Some days I would use the nasal canula. Besides the oxygen, I was given other medication including vitamins.

The ICU was like a scene out of a sci-fi movie, with flashing lights and the continual beeping of monitors. The staff and doctors in their personal protective equipment working under stressful and difficult conditions are to be highly commended.

Lying in bed, I started to feel concern not for myself, but for Jackie sick at home. Here I was being cared for and having my every need seen to. Who was caring for Jackie? How was she getting food? What if I didn’t make it, as she didn’t hug and kiss me before I left for the hospital?

Here again, the CSO came to the rescue via a compassionate twice-a-day call to Jackie from Dani to enquire about her health. Just this daily contact kept her spirits up.

Our friends rallied around, and dropped food at our door. WhatsApp messages from around the world kept her busy, and Jackie was also comforted by messages from acquaintances. The assurance by our friends that prayers were being said, and Jackie reciting *tehillim* each day, gave her spiritual support.

Our children overseas were anxious, and they wanted daily updates. Thankfully, my pulmonologist kept Jackie and my children in the loop. What helped me get through it was my positive attitude and determination to beat the virus, and the thought of getting home to my family.

I responded well to the treatment, and thanks to Hashem and the timely intervention by the CSO, I was discharged on 18 June to an emotional reunion with my family.

Life threatening situations like this make us realise how fragile life is, and how important family and friends are.

We are blessed to have an organisation like the CSO and all the staff and responders, especially Jayden and Dani. They are there for us. We must be there for them. They need our support either financially or by volunteering.

For us, the aftermath was different. I’m back to full health, while Jackie developed a blood clot and vascular problems in her leg, which is being treated.

To everyone, we say the virus is real. Stay home, sanitise, and wear a mask if you have to go out.



Jackie and Owen Garbman

COVID-19 seemed so far away – until it wasn’t

PERSONAL STORY

ELINOR SASSOON



It’s Sunday, 14 June, just more than 11 weeks after South Africa has gone into full lockdown, and so far, no one I know has COVID-19. My husband was working from home, my three little girls are going completely out of their minds. We all feel trapped and bored, getting on each other’s nerves.

We’re bitter about missed holidays, netball tournaments, birthday parties, spending time with family from overseas. We missed a family wedding that after months of planning, was reduced to 20 people. We miss our friends, our activities, restaurants: normal life.

Besides being bitter, I’m full of fear and anxiety. I’m worried about my children’s education. I have a clear picture in my head of their rotting brains from hours of TV and internet, lack of socialisation, stimulation, and organisation.

I’m neither teacher nor therapist. I’m not their school chum who can play all day. I can’t relieve their loneliness. I can’t manage their meltdowns.

My four-year-old doesn’t want to do her lessons on the computer, and I haven’t the time or the energy to force her. Never have I felt like a worse mother.

lockdown on 13 March prior to the president’s first address to the country. The home has very strict policies on access control, sanitisation, distancing, masks, and shields.

Instead of playing bingo, quizzes, karaoke, organising outings and entertainment, I brought a tuck-shop trolley to the residents to buy various items, with daily activities that the programming team put together. I went from room to room, careful not to go close, sanitising constantly. Just wanting to make sure they had some relief from the depressing loneliness of being confined to their rooms even though video calls with family were organised for them.

In spite of all of this, the virus still seemed far away from me.

Back to Sunday, 14 June. My nose was a bit runny, body a bit achy. I get flu pretty often, so I didn’t feel like it was anything different. Unfortunately, that night, the symptoms got

I was in shock, I felt like a leper. “Where did I go wrong? I tried to be careful!” Of course, I hadn’t been perfect, but I tried the best I could! What about my father? My heart sank. What if I gave it to someone, what if someone died because of me?

The next week was a blur. I felt really sick for three days, and slept the rest. My husband was holding the fort with no help. I tried to isolate from him and the children, but it was impossible.

My husband took them all for a COVID-19 test, and they all tested positive. So it was official – we were a COVID family. And we faced another two weeks of isolation. Now that I was out of my sickly haze, two weeks stuck at home seemed like torture! But the truth was – it wasn’t.

There was so much support and love from friends and family, making meals and doing shopping, from Dr Daniel Israel and Hatzolah monitoring our health, to the people I work with at the Chevrah Kadisha, their concern for me, and their swift action in protecting staff and residents as best they could, knowing I was positive.



Elinor Sassoon

We learned to pull together as a family, and I feel so much closer to them because of it. We learned to make do, to enjoy each other’s company, puzzles, books, games, art, drinking tea in the sun and chatting, watching the kids play in the garden. I was actually a bit sad when the isolation ended.

During our isolation, COVID-19 began spreading like wildfire through the Jewish community. My father tested negative, *baruch Hashem!* A few of my colleagues from OPH had contracted the virus at the same time as me.

I was grateful that we all made sure to wear full PPE when around the residents. There is no way of knowing who gave it to whom, and I stopped playing the blame game.

Unlike many, we survived. This, we learned from this experience, is the most important thing! We got off lightly. However, the fear and worry for our loved ones continues, and we pray for an end to this insane pandemic.

Then there is the fear for my father, who is diabetic, and for my in-laws, who are also in their 60s. One of the biggest sources of fear is going to work.

You see, I work for the Chevrah Kadisha in the programming department (the department responsible for all the activities across the group) at Our Parents Home (OPH) as well as the Sunshine Circle (the dementia facility at OPH). I have come to love the residents with all my heart, like my very own *bobbas* and *zaidas*.

With the outbreak of COVID-19, these people became the number-one enemy of this disease, and here I am, going in every day, trying to make their lives better, but unavoidably putting their lives at risk.

The inherent challenges of an ageing facility are real and compounded when you work in a dementia facility, where distancing and mask wearing is hard to enforce with residents in spite of the staff being vigilant in wearing PPE (personal protection equipment) and taking all necessary precautions.

The Chevrah Kadisha has been extremely proactive, instituting an organisation-wide

worse, shivering and shaking, pounding head, and extremely cold feet.

So the next day, I went for a test, thinking it was probably just flu and I was probably overreacting. Less than 24 hours later, I got my positive result.

• Elinor Sassoon is a programme and activity coordinator at Our Parents Home and Sunshine Circle. She is also a wife and mother of three.

• Owen Garbman is a pharmacist in Cape Town.

SA cyclist hopes to win Tour de France for Israel

TALI FEINBERG

South African cyclist Daryl Impey has signed on to join Israeli cycling team Israel Start-Up Nation (ISN) in 2021, with plans to help the team win the Tour de France.

“Our goal is to win the Tour de France [TDF] with [fellow future ISN new team member] Chris Froome. That’s our primary objective,” said Impey, speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Poland on the last day of the Tour de Pologne, where he was cycling with his current team, Mitchelton-Scott.

ISN announced on 9 July that four-time TDF winner, Froome, will lead the team, starting next season.

“The Israeli team and the legendary champion will sign a long-term contract on 1 August that will see Froome wear ISN’s blue and white until the end of his illustrious career,” said ISN. “This is an historic moment for ISN, Israel, Israeli sports, our many fans all around the world and, of course, for me personally, a moment of enormous pride,” said the team’s co-owner, Sylvan Adams, when Froome signed.

Impey quickly followed in his footsteps. The first rider from South Africa to wear the yellow jersey in the TDF, he signed a two-year contract with ISN on 5 August.

“I will be a road captain, and use my experience of racing the TDF to help guide the team as best I can. Apart from the Tour and chasing my own goals, we are also trying to develop cycling in Israel,” Impey says.

The move is all the more meaningful in the face of constant pressure from Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movements to convince South Africans to avoid joining hands with Israel in any way. Africa4Palestine (formerly BDS South Africa) has been unusually silent on the matter, and Impey also chose not to comment on this.

“I decided to make a fresh start,” he said in a statement, when asked what drove him to make the move to the Israeli team. “I feel like I need to step out of the comfort zone of Mitchelton-Scott. I had great success with the team, formed many strong friendships, and made amazing memories. I can’t thank them enough for getting me this far in my career.

Daryl Impey



Photo: Getty Images

“Although the team is relatively new on the scene, they are building a really strong team for next season. With ambitions of winning the TDF with Froome, it won’t be seen as a start-up team,” he says. “It’s not a risky move. I was looking for a new challenge and a change. It’s a fantastic opportunity.”

In his official statement, Impey said, “It certainly wasn’t an easy decision. I gave it a great deal of thought. But it’s exciting to work with a new team, with new energy and new ambitions. The most crucial reason is the challenge that is waiting for me at ISN. After speaking to ISN co-owner Adams and the team’s management, I got the sense that they see other aspects of me as a bike rider. I will have the opportunity to play a leadership role, and as team captain, I’ll be given more responsibility and a huge challenge at the same time.

“Team ISN has moved through the ranks quickly. Now, it’s about trying to create a winning culture. I will use my experience over the past decade to

instil this in the younger guys, and make sure we are always progressing. I’m excited about it.”

Adams pursued Impey after the dramatic move to sign Froome.

“Impey is a strong rider who has won big races, twice conquering the Tour Down Under. We also expect that given his experience, he could be our TDF road captain. He started his career riding with

his friend, Froome, on Barloworld, so we’re hoping that Impey will be a trusted ally for Froome as we race to make history together at the Tour,” he said.

Impey has made no secret of how Froome’s decision to lead ISN starting next season played into his own decision. “It’s not often you get to race with one of the greats in our sport, so when Chris called me and said he trusted me, and would like to have me by his side, I appreciated it, and knew he meant it. I’ve known him a long time, and our careers have come nearly full circle. We started out together at Barloworld, and we are continuing at ISN. I know he can win another TDF, and it will be great not only to be part of that team, but to play an important role.”

ISN was founded in 2014 by Ron Baron and Ran Margaliot to elevate and popularise the sport of cycling in Israel. It began as Israel Cycling Academy (ICA), and grew to become a WorldTour team under the name Israel Start-Up Nation. With its goal of developing Israeli cycling talent, ISN/ICA operates two teams: the Israel Cycling Academy development team for younger riders which races at continental level, and the senior Israel Start-Up Nation team that competes at the highest level of the sport, the WorldTour.

The ISN team includes riders from 16 nationalities, making it one of the most diverse in the world of pro cycling. The team’s riders have

been designated ambassadors of peace and sport by the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation, founded by late Israeli president and Nobel Peace prize winner, Shimon Peres. This designation requires that riders race with exemplary sportsmanship and act as ambassadors for Israel.

The Giro d’Italia opening stage took place in Jerusalem on 4 May 2018, the first time in the Giro’s 101 years of existence that it has started outside of Europe. Adams was the driving force behind the Giro’s “big start” in Israel, having financed a significant part of the race budget.

Impey told the *SA Jewish Report* that he had never been to Israel before. He expects to have a training camp there sometime soon. “It’s all new to me. All the racing happens mainly in Europe, so I will still be living in Spain. Nothing really changes for me other than new sponsors, new goals, and new team mates.”

His time on the bike started in 1997, “when I was asked by my father, Tony, to join him and my brother, Grant, on a mountain-bike ride. I was busy playing soccer at the time, but decided to try out mountain biking for the first time. Negotiating tricky descents, single-track riding, and the sudden pain in my legs was quite appealing, and I decided to prove to my dad that this was what I wanted to continue doing after playing soccer.”

He hasn’t stopped since then, in spite of many ups and downs in his career. He started his professional career in Team Barloworld, and raced for RadioShack and MTN-Qhubeka. In 2012, he joined Green Edge (now Mitchelton-Scott). In 2013, he became the first South African to lead the TDF. In 2015, he had to abandon the race after being involved in a massive crash. He bounced back in 2019, winning his first stage. He has won four other tour races – the Tour of Turkey in 2009; the Tour of Alberta in 2014; and the Tour Down Under in 2018 and 2019. Now, with the world at his feet, he’s ready to get Israel to victory.

Meet the nominees for the SAJBD Gauteng Council for 2020-2022:



LIZA ESSERS



REEVA FORMAN



LESLEY-ANNE GATTER



MARC POZNIAK



SHERI HANSON



RABBI DAVID HAZDAN



HAROLD JACOBS



DAVID KUMING



BERNARD SHULL



MONICA SOLOMON



DANIELLE (DANNY) MOFSOWITZ



MENASHE NICHOLAS 'NICK' SELAMOLELA



RABBI DAVID SHAW



SHAUN MATISONN



PROF KAREN MILNER

To see their full bios visit [SAJBD.org](https://www.sajbd.org)

Honouring the heroes among us

JORDAN MOSHE

Amidst the COVID-19 chaos, heroes deserve to be celebrated more than ever before. Only a week remains before the close of nominations for the 2020 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards. Now is the time to recognise the heroes among us.

Hundreds of nominations have already been received as the *SA Jewish Report* gears up to acknowledge those who made it their mission to make a difference. COVID-19 has pushed countless individuals to make extraordinary contributions within and beyond the Jewish community, setting the bar especially high this year.

“Under any circumstances, you’ll always find people who give back to the community and stand out for their contributions,” says Dina Diamond, a director of the *SA Jewish Report*. “This year, however, people have gone beyond the standard and made an impact in the lives of others under completely new circumstances. We want to recognise them.

“The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards seeks to acknowledge heroes who have contributed to our society, going above and beyond what’s expected of them. Individuals among us have left their mark in areas like medicine and social welfare, keeping people healthy and fed. They’ve gone beyond their comfort zones, and enhanced our community.”

Nominations have been received from across the spectrum of categories over the past few weeks. Business boffins, medical mavericks, professionals, and humanitarians from all walks of life are among those being nominated for various awards, all submitted by a community eager to pay tribute to those who are making a

difference.

South Africans from across the country and even living beyond our borders will be recognised for their tremendous impact, joining an illustrious honour roll of previous winners.

“Throughout the years, household names such as Sol Kerzner, William Kentridge, Johnny Clegg, Stephen Koseff, Marc Lubner, Thuli Madonsela, George Bizos, Pravin Gordhan, and others have been among those recognised for the indelible marks they have made on our community and country,” says Diamond.

“Our winners this year will be those individuals who have truly epitomised the word ‘hero’. The nominations we’ve received so far illustrate that our community wants to recognise people who are committed to other people. The calibre is extremely high under normal circumstances, and we’ve been astonished to see how it has risen in our new reality.”

The new reality has also changed the way nominations are being made.

“More people are now making use of our online platform to submit their nominations,” Diamond says. “Our link is being used daily by people uploading nominations, and we’re eager to see many more come in over the next few days.”

For this reason, the nomination deadline has been extended until 21 August.

The awards play an additional role of inspiring hope in dark times, says Diamond. “People are in lockdown and lacking inspiration. We need light and motivation. We need to lift spirits and engage people. The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards always uplifts and inspires, but this year its impact will be far greater than before.”

Tourism holds on for dear life

TALI FEINBERG

Members of the tourism and hospitality industries protesting harsh lockdown measures were dispersed with water cannons and stun grenades by police in Cape Town on 24 July.

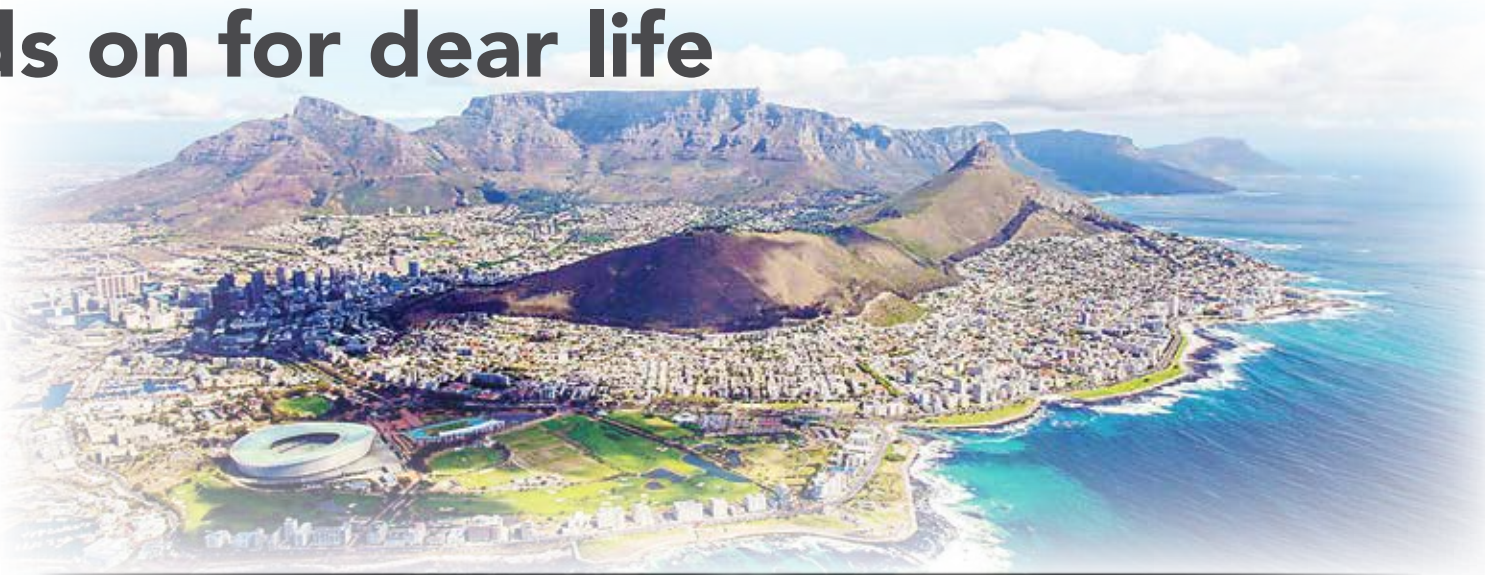
This moment symbolised the battle by these industries for survival in the storm of COVID-19, and the fighting spirit of many individuals who believe that tourism in South Africa will survive and thrive in future.

Before the coronavirus crisis, “the overall South African tourism landscape was on a positive trajectory, and Cape Town was on track to have record international arrivals,” says Searl Derman, the owner of Aquila Private Game Reserve. “The first real impact of the global crisis was felt here the moment the president addressed the nation and announced a state of disaster. Demand was literally wiped out overnight.”

Derman’s company had to wind down its operation and cut overheads and expenses to the bone, and his staff has borne the brunt. “Although government announced massive stimulus packages, these weren’t applicable to the many tourism owner-run businesses. More than 500 loyal staff have been put onto UIF (unemployment insurance fund) programmes due to temporary business closure, and many of them are still awaiting the TERS (temporary employer/employee relief scheme) benefits for May and June.

“The tourism industry is on its knees, and the sector is dragged about even further by ongoing litigation and legal battles with insurance companies,” he says. “The net result is that many businesses will close.

“Many articles and industry leaders have said that South Africa might be set for a strong recovery with its outdoor activities, but the reality is that



Cape Town is a long-haul destination using hubs across the globe. Various governmental quarantine measures might halt these travel plans, and it will take time for the airline industry to recover its international routes. We might not recover for years. But as with any veld fire, it gives rise to new life in the aftermath.”

Marco van Embden’s company, Timeless Africa Safaris, operates as a bespoke inbound travel company, planning trips throughout Africa and South Africa for guests from all over the world.

“In mid-February, we started feeling the effects of our international guests wanting to postpone their travels. Our last guest left South Africa on 26 March. Along with the entire tourism industry in South Africa, we are effectively under 100% lockdown. We have projected zero revenue for 2020.”

The company has implemented a number of measures to survive. “We have managed not to retrench anyone thus far, and all staff have taken significant, voluntary salary reductions to keep everyone employed for as long as we are able. All staff work from home at reduced hours. In February, we implemented an emergency budget

and cut costs to the bone. We established a war cabinet which meets monthly, the focus of which is to manage these turbulent seas.”

He believes his company will survive “if government opens tourism this year or at least gives an indication of its intentions to open tourism in the short term”.

He also thinks that the tourism industry in South Africa can survive COVID-19. “The industry is resilient as it is based on the positive principles of improving the lives of the people and wildlife it supports. How well it survives depends on our government and the regulations. The industry is ready to welcome overseas visitors in a safe and responsible manner.”

Van Embden believes “there will be a long-term negative effect”.

“Many businesses won’t survive or re-open. The industry on the other side will be very different to the beginning of 2020.

“In the medium term, everything depends on the willingness of government to be supportive of the industry, and of course, it will depend on the airlines taking to the skies once again. South Africa can ill-afford to lose the momentum of our tourism industry, which allows more than one million people to be employed and contributes more than 8% of the GDP of our country.”

Navigating a storm with no end in sight, Van Embden says, “is very tough on all of our mental health. We have implemented a mental-well-being initiative for all staff, as this toll is often unseen while not working within an office environment.”

Van Embden says the community could support tourism by being “ambassadors for your country. Sing its praises, share its good stories, and ask your global connections to help us thrive.

“Our community has been most supportive during these times. Our welfare and communal organisations are doing a superb job at many levels,” he says. “The Geshel Fund has been established to assist companies like ours who are in distress – this will save businesses, jobs, livelihoods, and lives.”

For Terri Garfinkel, the lockdown couldn’t have come at a worse time, as her lifelong dream, Mdluli Safari Lodge, opened in January in an exciting and unique partnership with the local community.

“We were off to a brilliant start. Because there’s nothing like it inside the Kruger [National Park], forward bookings were really strong – reaching occupancies of more than 60% in year one. Six weeks after opening, we were required to close the lodge in accordance with the lockdown. The impact has been devastating – not only can we not re-open yet, but almost all forward bookings have been cancelled.”

The lodge is a 50-50 partnership with the local Mdluli community, who live in villages adjacent to Numbi Gate. The land on which the lodge is built is owned by the Mdluli Community Trust. It’s located inside the south-western borders of

the park, she says. The community were forcibly removed off the land in the late 1960s, and have since been issued a successful land claim. The lodge’s operations have a direct and indirect impact on this impoverished community. More than 90% of the lodge’s team are employed from the community.

In May, the lodge launched a relief effort for the local community, raising close to half a million rand and distributed food parcels. The lodge staff received salaries for March, April, and May. For June and July, they received a reduced amount supplemented with the TERS claim from government.



Mdluli Safari Lodge infinity pool

“We are hopeful the lodge will re-open late this year,” says Garfinkel. “The opening in January was the culmination of a 20-year journey fuelled by tenacity, commitment, and passion – and we see this challenge as another hurdle. Our sole focus at the moment is on domestic travel, and we’ve implemented numerous campaigns to drive awareness.”

She also believes the tourism industry in South Africa will survive, “but it will take time, and it might look somewhat different”.

“It’s no secret that this has been a massive blow to the sector – and the lockdown regulations seem ill-conceived and inconsistent when it comes to tourism and leisure travel. This is causing huge damage with a significant ripple effect. The year 2020 and probably 2021 will be very difficult for the sector, but things should return to normal by 2022.

“Ultimately, South Africa has a highly desirable portfolio of tourism destinations which will come back into their own in due course.

“Industry bodies have developed comprehensive guidelines to ensure optimum safety for staff and guests. This is more than PPE (personal protective equipment), it’s a whole-of-lodge experience both front and back of house,” Garfinkel says.

On dealing with challenges on a day to day basis, she says, “A crisis like this really tests what you have – as a team, as a brand, and as an offer to guests. We work closely and collaboratively, tapping into the multi-disciplinary skills of each team member. If I reflect on what we’ve achieved since lockdown, I feel proud of how we’ve rallied. It’s pushed our creativity and lateral thinking.”

Says Derman, “There’s light at the end of the tunnel. The exact deadlines are uncertain, and the situation is fluid. But the pandemic will end, and the fear of the virus will subside. We learn to reinvent ourselves during these times and every day, however difficult, must bring us hope.”

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COVID-19 claims the life of Judge Ralph Zulman

TRIBUTE

ANTHONY CHAIT



ANTHONY CHAIT

The Honourable Justice Ralph Hirsch Zulman passed away in Johannesburg last Shabbat from medical complications caused by the coronavirus.

At the feet of this man, many (including myself) learnt so much. We read in the Ethics of the Fathers, Pirkei Avot, “Let thy house be a house of meeting for the sages, and sit in the very dust of their feet, and drink in their words with thirst.”

This depicted my association with Zulman for more than 35 years, in which he freely shared his knowledge of the law over countless cups of tea. He told of aspects in previous legal cases, and how they have a bearing on today’s practices. I drank in his words, and the wisdom they imbued. It shaped my thinking to this very day.

Yet Zulman, too, with boundless humility would himself “sit at the feet” – as it were – at the regular *shiurim* he attended. This was recounted by Rabbi Yossi Chaikin of Oxford Shul, Johannesburg, in Zoom prayers which were held in his memory. Zulman’s parents, the late Mosie



Judge Ralph Zulman

and Annie Zulman, were founding members of Oxford Shul after they moved up from Durban where he was born.

Chaikin tells how Zulman was an absolute sponge at the *shiurim*, and would debate and seek an understanding of the teachings that, quipped the Rabbi, would always keep him on his toes.

A further tradition upheld by Zulman – and he was indeed the last remaining congregant to do so – was the wearing of a Homburg hat at the Kol Nidrei Yom Kippur service, says Rabbi Chaikin.

As an advocate (barrister) beginning in 1962, he had a well-established practice as senior counsel at the Johannesburg Bar. Paying tribute to his colleague in a spontaneous written message over the live Zoom funeral service, Judge Ezra Goldstein, the father of Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, told the story of how as advocates they opposed each other in a case on a restraint-of-trade matter that came before the court. Zulman won the action. Goldstein, as the opponent, encountered no adversarial hostility, only

respect and kindness from his peer.

During prayers, Judge Percy Blieden told how he and Zulman appeared alongside each other before a very pompous judge. Zulman delivered to the court a powerful, stellar argument. He indicated that he had three further points to put to the court. The judge asked him if his first argument was so strong, why he had three in reserve? “Well, M’lord, you see it’s like chicken soup, it can’t do any harm!”

My memory of Zulman’s advocate chambers in Pritchard Street was of an entire wall of shelves containing tens of lever arch files pertaining to a single case. It involved the battle of the titans, and Zulman was in the camp of one of the giants, Lever Brothers, as it was then known. It was Colgate Palmolive versus Lever Brothers. One toothpaste manufacturer was suing the other for what was considered baseless claims that the product of the opponent had better protection from decay-causing plaque.

As my late paternal grandmother would say in Yiddish, “*Unt fun dis het geworen un ganse case!*” (And from this an entire case arose). The matter ran for five years around 1967, and was settled.

Later, Zulman was appointed to the Bench as a Supreme Court (now High Court) judge. In August 1996, about 24 years ago, then President Nelson Mandela appointed Zulman to be a judge of the then Appellate Division (now Supreme Court of Appeal) in Bloemfontein.

That was the pinnacle of his legal career. He enjoyed his time there the most. The caseload was reduced as sitting times were less than the lower courts. They heard cases as a panel of five judges, and if the decision was unanimous, only one judge would be tasked to write the judgement with which they all invariably

concurred.

In 2010, Zulman was invited by the Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services (JAMS) Weinstein Fellowship Foundation to present a fellowship lecture on conflict resolution in the United States.

Zulman was an internationally renowned expert on cross-border insolvency matters. He represented South Africa at the forum of cross-border insolvency of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (“the Model Law”).

A highly esteemed colleague, The Honourable Michael D Kirby AC CMG, who retired from the High Court of Australia in 2009, presented Zulman a copy of a book he had authored. In it, Kirby inscribed, “For Ralph, whose big-heartedness, generosity of spirit, good humour, and high intelligence are an example to other judges, and an inspiration.”

Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, who fondly referred to Zulman as “my boss” in a Facebook post this week, outlined his considerable “dedicated communal service” that he performed with “great zest and loyalty”. Zulman was a member of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies constitution and legislation subcommittee, a member of the editorial board of *Jewish Affairs*, and the former chairperson of the South African Yad Vashem Foundation.

Zulman is survived by his wife, Lynette, whom he married in 1965, son Jeff Zulman, daughters Adrienne Louise Kaplan and Charlene Hilary Wingrin, and their families.

• *Anthony Chait is the chief executive of Zeridium, a niche tax and exchange-control consultancy.*

Three years since Charlottesville, we’re suing

AMY SPITALNICK – JTA

Three years ago today [12 August], the country watched in horror as neo-Nazis and white supremacists attacked Charlottesville, Virginia.

My organisation, Integrity First for America, is supporting a coalition of Charlottesville residents in a federal lawsuit against the individuals and groups that orchestrated the violence. The trial is scheduled for October.

These extremists didn’t come to Charlottesville to peacefully protest the removal of a Confederate statue, as they claimed. Rather, for months in advance, in private social-media chats, they

Neo-Nazis and white supremacists encircle counter protesters at the base of a statue of Thomas Jefferson in Charlottesville



Photo: Shay Horser/NurPhoto via Getty Images

justice protesters, it’s all part of a larger effort to distract and deflect.

Finally, we must treat the crisis of violent extremism with the urgency it deserves.

Antisemitic and other forms of extremism tend to fall out of the news until the next attack. This is compounded by a federal government that won’t treat far-right extremism with the urgency it requires.

In the absence of federal leadership, it makes brave private plaintiffs like ours especially vital.

• *Amy Spitalnick is the executive director of Integrity First for America.*

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Zooming to world’s top 10 in debating

JOSEPH ZELEZNIK

I and four other high school students gathered on 7 August to represent South Africa at the annual Worlds Schools Debating Championships but unlike previous years, we weren’t in the same room in a country across the world surrounded by fellow debaters and judges. Rather, we were gathered together on Zoom.

Every year in South Africa, dozens of students go through a rigorous selection process for the national team and every year, five are chosen. Usually what follows is a series of boot-camps, in-person training sessions, and trips around the world, but due to COVID-19, this year’s national team, made up of myself, Chisu Momberume, Ivan Buckland, Rohan Naidoo, and Janya Kaur, would never even debate together as a full team in person.

But that doesn’t mean we were idle. Over the course of six months, our team trained weekly over Zoom, and attended multiple tournaments with great success – winning the inaugural Gwalia Open, breaking at the Vancouver Worlds Schools Debating Championships, before finally attending the Online Worlds Schools Debating Championships (OWSDC). At OWSDC,



we continued to blaze a path of success by winning five out of six preliminary rounds, and breaking as the second top team in our division and the fourth top team in the world. Team South Africa was sadly knocked out in the Octofinals, with a split panel of judges, two siding for Team SA and three for Team Israel.

But in spite of this, we still managed to leave a lasting impression on the international circuit, with three members ranking in the top 10 (Ivan Buckland,1st; myself 7th; and Janya Kaur,10th).

The WSDC is a space where young minds deliberate over incredibly deep and controversial issues. Some of the issues discussed in this year’s championship were legalising drugs in certain non-residential areas; whether governments should hold individuals liable for not helping others in need; and the role of corporate sponsorship of academic research.

My journey to the national team hasn’t been short. I started debating at primary school in Grade 6, but it was during my eighth year that I truly fell in love with it. I was scouted by a provincial coach at my local school league, and invited to take part in provincial trials, where I managed to get placed on the World Championships

Junior A team. That year, I got my first taste of intense competition at the national championships, where my team managed to win the junior division.

In the following two years, I managed to attend the national championships as a part of a Western Cape provincial team two more times, one time ranking fourth in the country as a speaker, and the next managing to win the entire tournament. At the same time, I also got accepted into the South African squad as a part of its junior team.

These teams and tournaments were all stepping stones to the one final achievement – managing to make the South African national team. Without the training given to me by my provincial and national coaches, and without the experiences of multiple local and international tournaments, I would never have been able to make it. But with dedication and time, anything is possible.

A virtual trip from Jozi to Jerusalem with endorphins

It may be almost impossible to get from Johannesburg to Jerusalem now because of lockdown, but the Jozi2Jerusalem project will enable people across South Africa and the globe to virtually traverse the 9 191 kilometres between the two cities between 16 and 30 August.

Participants can take part on home treadmills or outdoors. You just need to register via WhatsApp or email, stating what distance you’re signing up for and which sport/s you’ll be doing, says Ilan Herrmann of Soul Sport who, together with West Street Shul, is organising the project. “The options are walking, running, rowing, and swimming. “The event is flexible,” says Herrmann. “You can do 1km or 100km. You can break up the distance over the two-week period. You just have to go the distance you committed to in your registration, and provide a picture of yourself at the start.” Everyone and anyone is invited to join in. “This is a perfect challenge for lockdown. It’s

putting an energising and dynamic health and sports incentive in our reach,” he says.

Jozi2Jerusalem was the brainchild of Alan Nossel, a West Street congregant. The initiative has built cross-continent bridges. Telfed, an organisation that engages expats in Israel, is one of its partners. Telfed has to date committed 250km towards the distance.

Another partner is Tikvot, a non-profit, volunteer-based organisation that rehabilitates Israel’s wounded soldiers and victims of terror through sports.

Tikvot has reached out to many rehabilitated soldiers and victims of terror to participate in the challenge. “We are creating a magnificent link between South Africa and Israel, and are journeying this distance together,” says Ronnie Kaplan, the chairperson of West Street Shul.

To enter Jozi2Jerusalem, WhatsApp 083 273 7876, email jozi2jerusalem@gmail.com, or go to www.soulsportsa.com



Eitan Hermon Paralympic World record holder was severely injured in the Second Lebanon War in 2006 when an explosive blew up near his tank

KDVP poet’s work in online journal

King David Victory Park Grade 11 pupil Liora Scop’s prowess as a poet is being recognised. Her poem, “7 Billion People”, is to be published in an online journal called *Write the World Review*. This journal is a vibrant online community where students aged 13 to 18 from around the world can draft and publish work.



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Letters

PLEASE GIVE MY SON A CHANCE

My son, who is nearly 24 years old, is struggling to find even a basic job due to not having a matric. He graduated from Finkelstein Torah Learning Centre, a division of the Johannesburg Chevrah Kadisha, in 2014. His name is Adam Rubin.

He has academic challenges, so he followed its curriculum. He has a professional drivers permit license Code EB (light motor vehicle) and wants to work, but can’t find work.

He is a conscientious, hardworking young

man who wants to work, but nobody will give him the chance to do even a basic job.

Is there anyone in the broader community who is willing to give him a chance? He’s computer literate in email and the internet, and is willing to learn more.

I would appreciate anyone giving him a start in life.

Adam can be contacted on 082 928 8771. – **Would-be-grateful dad, Johannesburg**

LUCKY ANC IS SO INCOMPETENT – WE COULD BE LIKE ZIMBABWE

Thanks for the article on the scurrilous Tony Ehrenreich (“Victory as Ehrenreich finally makes acceptable apology”, *SA Jewish Report*, 31 July). It only took six years for him to do this, and he had to be forced into doing so.

Did your readers see Brendan Seery’s good article, “The bright side of ANC’s incompetence” (*Citizen* 27 July)? Zimbabwe is in the state that our genius, Julius Malema, and the Economic Freedom Fighters would like us to be in. Years ago, I said that Robert Mugabe should be excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church for having murdered

20 000 Matabele, but it only did that if you distributed condoms! Too late that Malema wants the Zimbabwean embassy closed because Emmerson Mnangagwa isn’t up to his high liberal standards.

Let me mention that BBC World News recently showed the condition of Livingstone Hospital in Port Elizabeth, with rats running around, toilets blocked, rubbish on the floor. And this government wants to run a National Health Service! Hell, it can’t even run a bath! – **Peter Onesta, Johannesburg**

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The Power to Surprise

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies



It's the small gestures that come our way many times in a day. A greeting. A smile. An enquiry after someone's health or well-being. A text message. An offer of assistance. These are things that change the world. We just have to open our eyes to see the impact, and our hearts to experience it.

Zulman was a stellar example of someone who had reached the very top of his profession, yet was still willing and able to put his skills, time, and energy at the disposal of the Jewish community he cared so much about. It's thanks to him, and people like him, that the SAJBD has been able over the decades to realise its mandate of ensuring the safety and upholding the civil rights of South African Jewry, while also preserving and promoting the heritage of the community in general.

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



The link for the town hall booking is <https://bit.ly/333I05X> and for Dr Egar, <https://www.excelacademyinc.com/sajbd-2020-editheger>

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TRULY KOSHER

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