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Pandor hints at more pragmatic approach to Israel

TALI FEINBERG

South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Naledi Pandor, has openly acknowledged Israel's right to exist in peace and security as a Jewish state, and that South Africa's planned embassy downgrade could be stopped or reversed.

She was speaking last Wednesday in a Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) portfolio committee meeting focused on recent developments in the Middle East.

"We believe the outcome must be a two-state solution, with two sovereign states existing in peace and security side by side. There has been no deviation from that objective. It stands as the policy of our country and our government," said Pandor, amongst other points.

"The moment there is a movement that indicates positive intent for negotiation towards a settlement, we will absolutely open arms, get the embassy going, and so on," she said. "It's not that we don't wish for engagement, and we continue to do so, by the way. We do have an embassy there, we just don't have an ambassador."

"We have a chargé [chargé d'affaires, which represents the country when there is no ambassador] who is engaged in the country. So we shouldn't give the impression that the South African government has given up on a two-state solution. We haven't."

She also acknowledged that issues in the region are complex, and said, "Israel

will exist, must exist, and will continue to exist, but not in its current form of oppressing the people of Palestine and denying them their sovereign rights."

The minutes of the meeting summarised her comments as follows, "The moment there is movement indicating positive intent from Israel for negotiation towards a settlement, South Africa is willing to rebuild ties with Israel."

The meeting wasn't completely positive about Israel. At one point, Pandor said, "Israel and Israeli citizens aren't just one homogenous negative entity", implying that Israelis and Israel are negative in essence. However she then added, "There are groups committed to peace that draw communities together, and we meet them from time to time."

She said the department would meet representatives from either side of the conflict in the coming weeks. The SA Jewish Report understands that this information session will be presented in parliament in the near future.

She also implied that peace is entirely dependent on Israel, and that the Palestinians are victims who don't need to make concessions, and are already waiting at the negotiation table.

Her more positive sentiments came after her department expressed disappointment in Israel's historic peace agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) last week. DIRCO said it noted those developments with "concern", describing the deal as "regrettable" on the grounds that the Palestinian people hadn't been "engaged".

After reviewing Pandor's comments at

the DIRCO portfolio committee meeting this week, local political analyst Dr Ralph Mathekga said, "It's not surprising that this is the tone she is now taking. She is being practical and thinking about state interests and not necessarily solidarity."

"When she made similar comments [around mid-July], I stated that South Africa has strong historical ties with Israel, and South Africa will tone down and take a more pragmatic and diplomatic approach. This is what I had in mind – a diplomatic position showing consideration for the interest of the state in a complex issue of international significance. South Africa and Israel also have strong trade relations – this is what is also driving this shift to pragmatism."

Sara Gon, the head of strategic engagement at the Institute of Race Relations, noted that Pandor's comment about the status of South Africa's embassy in Israel "is interesting, because it suggests that the development with the UAE changes things a bit, even though she mentions nothing about the normalisation. It certainly suggests that South Africa may reverse its decision to recall its ambassador because it cannot enter this space without actually being properly present."

Regarding Pandor's comment that "Israel will exist, must exist, and will continue to exist," Gon said, "This is really interesting. In the past, South Africa has been able to demonise Israel fairly comfortably while it sided with the Palestinians. This suggests that things have to change towards Israel."

Local political analyst Daniel Silke said



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Back to shul

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, like all other congregants, has his temperature checked before joining a *minyan* at shul.

See story on page 3

Pandor's comments "show she's trying to get to grips with the dynamic and rapidly shifting environment in the Middle East, and they partially open the door that was shut last week [regarding the UAE deal]. South Africa doesn't want to be on the wrong side of history, and the UAE may be the first of a number of countries moving towards diplomatic relations with Israel. These comments provide a hint that there is an awareness of the changing dynamic, and South Africa may be willing to play its part. However, South Africa has been so removed from the situation that it hasn't addressed the nuances, and was therefore caught off guard about what's happened in recent weeks."

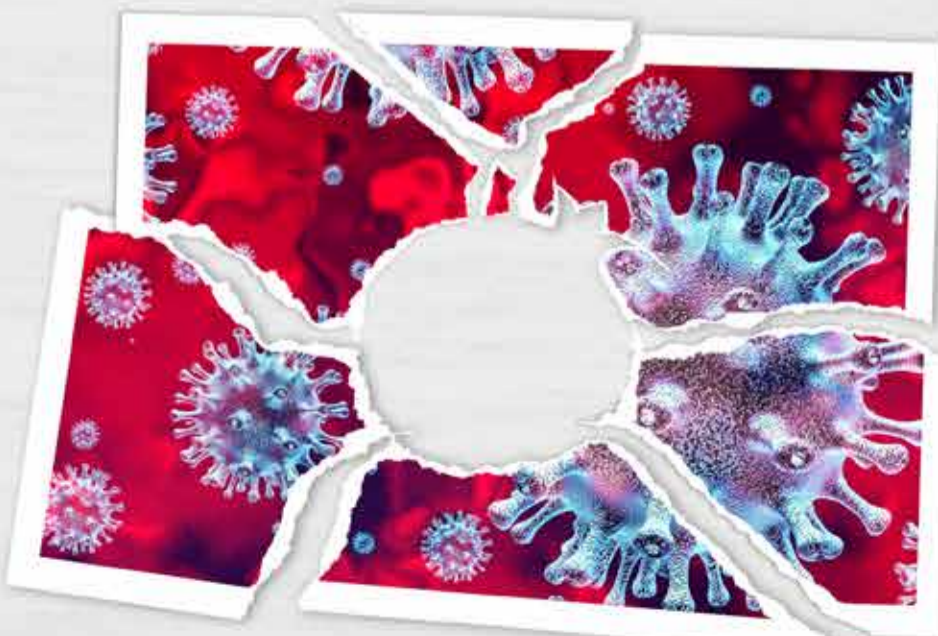
Wendy Kahn, the national director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) said, "We agree with the minister that the issues are complex, and that's why South

Africa should join other countries in trying to bring the parties to the negotiation table to address these complexities.

"However, completely absolving the Palestinians from responsibility also to be accountable impedes progress. While we understand the historical connection between the ANC [African National Congress] and the Palestinian people, it's regrettable that the South African government can't see that by apportioning all blame to one side, it's negating the role that it could play as a broker in this conflict.

"We all yearn for a two-state solution. Where we differ is the method of getting there," said Kahn. "Minister Pandor believes that only when movement to the negotiation table is observed, should South Africa

Continued on page 2>>>



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Blow our socks off in shofar contest

JORDAN MOSHE

Think you can sound a stupefying *shevarim* or that your *tekiah* is the talk of the town? Does your *tekiah gedolah* last from Rosh Hashanah until Pesach?

For the shofar blowers among us, it's time to show off our lung capacity and blow the community's socks right off.

As of this week, thousands of accomplished

shofar blowers across South Africa are invited to participate in the country's largest shofar sounding competition to date.

The competition, conceived by the SA Jewish Report, is going to find the greatest shofar blower in South Africa. The title will go to the most talented entrant, so if ever there was a time for breathing exercises, this is it.

"We want to encourage people during Elul to hear the sound of the shofar," says Howard Sackstein, chairperson of the SA Jewish Report. "Because of COVID-19, people have had to find new ways to ensure that their religious lives and practices can continue safely, and shofar blowing is no different.

"We want to ensure that the ancient tradition continues," Sackstein says. "The shofar embodies everything Rosh Hashanah is about, and we want our community to feel the spirituality of Elul in spite of the health and safety protocols. We love the ways in which people have embraced technology in order to continue practicing their Judaism, and this

competition is certainly part of that."

Entrants are invited to submit a landscape-orientated video recording of themselves blowing the traditional blasts of *tekiah*, *shevarim*, *teruah*, and *tekiah gedola*. Submissions will be played on a webinar hosted by the SA Jewish Report, and the most accomplished blower will receive the title of South Africa's best shofar blower.

Says Sackstein, "The shofar is an integral part of the Rosh Hashanah experience. We encourage our community to participate in the competition and stand a chance to win our exclusive prize, an exquisite Kudu-horn shofar."

The stakes are already high, Sackstein says.

"I and our vice-chairperson, Benji Porter, have wagered a bottle of whisky over who will win the competition," he laughs. "My money is on Rabbi Dovid Hazdan, whom I believe has the longest *tekiah gedola* in the country. Benji has wagered on Rabbi Yossi Goldman. As an incentive, I've offered to share my winning whisky with Rabbi Hazdan."

"The competition is certainly going to be fierce."

• Entry videos for the shofar blowing competition can be submitted via email to webinars@sajewishreport.co.za. The competition closes on 17 September.



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
17:36	18:26	Johannesburg
18:08	19:01	Cape Town
17:21	18:12	Durban
17:41	18:32	Bloemfontein
17:39	18:32	Port Elizabeth
17:31	18:23	East London

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Torah Thought

Kicking people from your seat is spiritually unhealthy

Kicking people out of one's seat in shul, and being kicked out of someone else's seat, as unpleasant as both interactions are, seem to be a not uncommon feature of the shul-going experience.

But being ousted and ousting others in shul is a serious matter, subject to clear halachic guidelines. The Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law states categorically, "One is to establish a fixed place to pray that should not be changed unnecessarily. And it's not sufficient that one has a fixed shul that one prays in; rather, in addition, within one's affixed shul, one must have a fixed place." (O.C. 90:19). Later authorities declare the fixed place to

be a distance of four *amot* (equivalent to two metres).

Thus, halacha emphasises the importance of a person's place in shul, and superficially, it appears to promote the practice of evacuating shul-seat trespassers.

But nothing could be further from the truth.

There are two questions that reveal this. First, what value is being expressed through this halacha? If you decide to choose a different shul or seat on a particular day, how does that make your prayers any less effective? Second, why did the halachic authorities decide on a distance of two metres? That's pretty big. Who needs such a large space to pray in?

If we look deeper, we realise that the requirement of a fixed shul and a fixed place within that shul isn't in order to fulfil our own prayer needs. For that, we need only a half a metre or so, and for that, we might as well shul-hop and seat-shuffle in search of new inspiration. Or stay at home, for that matter.

Rather, the reason for having our own fixed seat in shul is to take on the responsibility of looking after the needs of all those who extend beyond it, at least within a two-metre distance.

It should come as no surprise that the Talmud derives this halacha from the practice of none other than Avraham Avinu, known in

Rabbi Dr David Nossel



the Jewish tradition as "the pillar of kindness".

We are gradually returning to shul after the physical (and sadly, social) distancing resulting from COVID-19. Due to safety regulations, we return within a limited number of permitted places, with strict requirements to stick to our own designated seats and maintain a two-metre distance away from anyone else.

There seems to be a message in all of this. Perhaps the message is that something has gone wrong with our understanding of the halacha, our vision of what a shul is, and our place within it. Maybe we have lost the healthy mindset of it being a place to care for others, and have become infected by caring for our own needs instead.

Perhaps when we realise that our places in shul are to be used to make other people feel welcome, then our shuls and our places within them will be restored to the healthy, warm, and welcoming places of kindness that Avraham Avinu and the halacha intended them to be.

• This article is dedicated to the memory of Reb Nochum Coblenz, who went out of his way not only to me feel welcome at the Kollel, but all who entered it.

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Pandor hints at more pragmatic approach to Israel

>>Continued from page 1

become involved. The SAJBD believes that our country should play a role in creating that movement to the negotiating table.

"We are encouraged by the minister's comments regarding the ongoing functioning of our embassy in Israel," Kahn said. "In the past months, we have worked closely with the embassy, and concur that it is operating and has been incredibly supportive in assisting South Africans in distress in the country."

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African

Zionist Federation, said, "The South African government's fixed stance against Israel is increasingly out of touch with the changing sands of the Middle East that are warming towards Israel. South Africa should disentangle her fixation with Israel around the Palestinian issue, and work towards full re-engagement and improved ties with the Jewish state. We are pleased that the minister affirmed the presence and active functioning of the South African embassy in Tel Aviv, and we call upon the minister to return an ambassador to the post as soon as possible."

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Design and layout Bryan Maron/Design Bandits – bryan@designbandits.co.za • Distribution Sandy Furman • Subscriptions Avusa Publishing (Pty) Ltd.
Tel: 0860 525 200 • Board of Directors Howard Sackstein (Chairperson), Dina Diamond, Herschel Jawitz, Shaun Matisonn, Benji Porter.
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Congregants euphoric about reopening of shuls

JORDAN MOSHE

After five months of silence and stillness, the sound of prayer is once again reverberating around shuls across South Africa as doors are opened to welcome congregants back.

From Sea Point to Sydenham, daily *minyanim* have become a regular fixture once more, and though strict protocols have altered the *davening* experience, South African Jewry is celebrating.



Adass Yeshurun

The long-awaited return became official last Thursday, as many shuls resumed services at the beginning of the month of Elul, with *minyanim* resuming at different points on Friday and the weekend at various shuls. In spite of the implementation of several limitations, the feeling across the community was one of euphoria.

"Five long silent months have passed without the sacred words of *kaddish* and *kedusha*, without G-d's own word being read publicly in the Torah reading, without the collective power of others while we pray," Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein said last week.

"We were away from our shuls to save lives, to protect each other from harm, to fulfil the Torah's highest teaching – that life is more precious than anything else. But even knowing that we are fulfilling this great *mitzvah* hasn't alleviated the pain of separation, the unmistakable sense that our lives were emptier without our beloved shuls. And now, as we return, we appreciate them more than ever."

Shuls across the community celebrated the return to religious normality, with small *minyanim* of 15 to 20 men gathering on shul grounds in a socially distanced setting after undergoing virus screening and temperature checks. In order to avoid too large a gathering,



Sydenham Shul

many shuls implemented an online or WhatsApp booking system, requiring that congregants reserve a space within the permitted number of places.

"The energy and excitement were tangible when we returned to shul on Thursday, and recited Hallel for Rosh Chodesh," Rabbi Yossi Goldman of Sydenham Shul told the *SA Jewish Report*. "We'd been having quasi-*minyanim* over Zoom for weeks from my house, and for the first time in a long while, we could

broadcast from a live *minyan* at shul. It was incredible."

Goldman said that the small *minyan* gathered in the campus' *shitib* for the service, wearing masks and observing two-metre distancing.

Services continued through Shabbat and the weekend, (with women attending some of the *minyanim* as well). A Barmitzvah was also

celebrated.

Rabbi Gabi Bookatz of Waverley shul had a similar experience.

"It was inspiring to arrive at that first *minyan*," he said. "You felt like you weren't just re-entering a shul, but becoming part of the community again. It was more than just a space. At last, here we were in person, *davening* together, hearing *leining* and the shofar.

"Being back at shul was like being back with old friends. Seeing the Torah was like seeing a friend you've not seen

for years. There was a real sense of home coming, and I could see the inspiration on people's faces."

Not to be outdone, even smaller shuls which couldn't accommodate socially distanced congregants indoors relocated their *minyanim* to outdoor spaces. Such was the case at Glenhazel's Beit Chana, where 15 congregants seated at individual tables used a roofed *brocha* area to

resume their *minyan* on Wednesday last week.

"It was a really powerful moment to be back," said the shul's rabbi, Ron Hendler. "So many little things you overlooked before really stood out. On Friday morning, one of our congregants asked if a friend of his could join the *minyan*. We screened him, took his details, and he joined us.

"We gave the man an aliyah, and when he started to say the *bracha* on the Torah, he began to cry. I felt like crying at that moment. I could see he had such a deep feeling after not having been in a shul all these months."

The *minyanim* people are joining differ considerably from those held pre-COVID-19. Beyond social distancing and sanitisation, no singing along is permitted, with only the chazzan permitted to raise his voice for others to hear and respond. Although congregants can again recite *kaddish*, practices such as Torah reading have had to be adjusted, with no one but the person *leining* allowed to approach and



Ohr Sameach Glenhazel

touch the Torah or the bimah, and no kissing of the Torah scroll allowed either.

Nonetheless, congregants have taken to the changes with commitment and responsibility, determined to keep themselves and their community safe.

"There are a lot of things we're used to doing that we just can't do right now," said Craig Stollard, a veteran Hatzolah responder who returned to his *minyan* at Adass Yeshurun, Fairmount. "It's very exciting to return to a structure and familiarity, but a lot has changed. It's strange that we have to remind ourselves not to do what we're so used to doing, like kissing the Torah or schmoozing with people after the service."

The lack of certain shul elements is made up for by an enhancement of others, Stollard said.

"What it means to *daven* has changed," he says. "The intensity of *tefilah* has

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increased greatly. People are really focused, and not allowing themselves to be distracted as they may once have been. They're staying until the end of the service, and whatever time constraints



The Base

they may have had pre-COVID-19, are suddenly not so constraining."

These watershed moments come after weeks of planning and strategising, with much discussion taking place between Goldstein, a shul support task team, numerous community stakeholders and experts. The latter include emergency medicine specialist Professor Efraim Kramer; renowned virologist Professor Barry Schoub; and Dr Richard Friedland, the chief executive of Netcare.

Kramer has spent the past six weeks travelling across the country to inspect shuls and help them prepare to welcome their congregants back. To date, he has visited 61



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like it. Rabbi Goldstein and our community leadership has achieved something remarkable.

"If a shul is opening, it's safe. Not all of them have chosen to open, but those which have done so are safe to visit thanks to community efforts."



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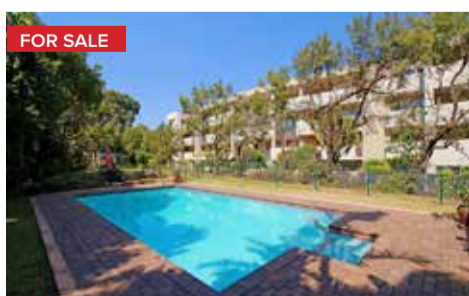


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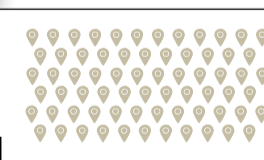
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Germans help Jews reclaim looted heirlooms

JORDAN MOSHE

Many Jews lost treasured heirlooms and assets when they were systematically looted by the Nazi regime. Finally, their descendants have a chance of reclaiming these prized possessions by contacting the newly established German Lost Art Foundation.

The foundation was established in January this year to help people locate their wrongly-seized belongings. Headed by art historian Dr Susanne Meyer-Abich, the help desk aims to direct those with a legitimate claim to the right place in their search whether they live in Germany, South Africa, or elsewhere in the world.

The founder and executive director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, Tali Nates, says this German initiative is important, and again shows how the country continues to grapple with its painful past.

“It’s never simple to confront one’s past, especially when it is that of a country that perpetrated genocide,” she says. “This is a continuous journey, and I think Germany’s path wasn’t without difficulties and challenges. This new office

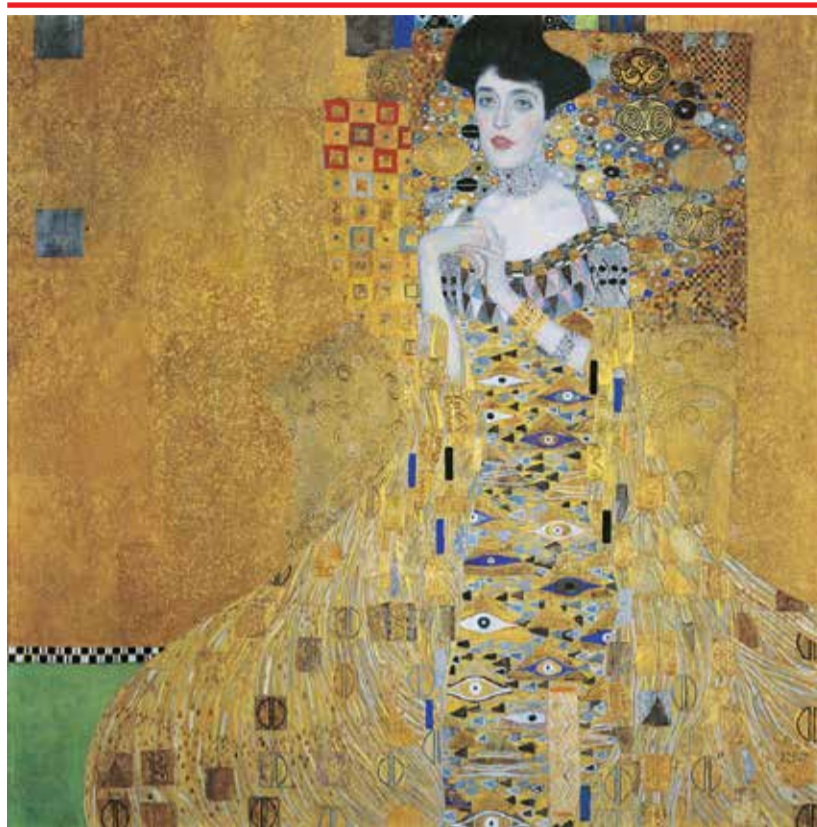
is certainly important for looking at looted cultural assets including art.”

Meyer-Abich told the SA Jewish Report that the help desk was created as a central contact point for international enquiries about cultural property seized by the National Socialists as a result of persecution, especially from Jewish owners, and which may be located in German public museums.

“As the families of the former owners often live abroad, the help desk offers assistance in finding the right contact person in the German federal system,” Meyer-Abich says.

She says German museums and the German government take the question of looted art in public collections seriously. While many objects were restituted after 1945, museum collections still hold looted items. The foundation not only funds the help desk, but also provenance research projects that aim to identify looted art in German public museums.

The foundation supports fair and just solutions in accordance with the Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art. These are international guidelines concerning the restitution of art confiscated by the Nazi regime in Germany before and during



The famed ‘Woman in Gold’ painting by Gustav Klimt which was restituted after a long legal battle at the American Supreme Court, forcing the Austrian government to return it to its rightful owners.

World War II. They were formalised at the Washington Conference on Holocaust Era Assets held in Washington DC in December 1998. The conference discussed Jewish losses such as artworks, books, and archives, as well as insurance claims and other types of assets.

“Many restitution cases in Germany were already resolved over the years with the help of various officials, mediators, or lawyers,” says Meyer-Abich. “Nevertheless, the recent 20-year anniversary of the Washington Conference prompted a renewed resolve to provide additional assistance to claimants by establishing a central point of contact.”

Meyer-Abich says the help desk aims to facilitate the search rather than conduct it itself. Given the obvious language and bureaucratic barriers, it offers help in connecting potential claimants with the museums, libraries, and officials in Germany most suited to the case at

hand.

“Our help desk is envisaged as a facilitator,” she says. “It can establish communication channels, help with language problems, assist in negotiating administrative mazes, and suggest next steps. The actual recovery usually requires more or less complex specialist research in historical archives, and the help desk can suggest researchers and options for funding.”

“We started at the beginning of 2020 by publicising the help desk nationally and internationally. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, responses slowed down between February and now, but enquiries are picking up again. Some recoveries are in the pipeline, but research and discussions can take some time.”

To date, the help desk has received a number of enquiries from North America and the United Kingdom. While it has yet to receive enquiries from South Africa, Meyer-

Abich encourages people to make contact, and says the help desk welcomes all queries.

“Contact can be made by email or phone to start a conversation,” she says. “There are no prerequisites, and each case will most likely be slightly different.”

Nates says that many Jews who fled Nazi persecution arrived on South African shores, leaving behind assets wrongly seized by the Nazi regime.

South Africa’s Quota Act of 1930 restricted immigrants from Eastern Europe, and as Germany wasn’t affected by this restriction, 3 621 German Jews were able to enter South Africa between 1933 and 1936. This immigration was stopped with the introduction of the 1937 Aliens Act, and during World War II only 220 Jewish immigrants were able to enter the country.

“The 537 German Jews on board the SS Stuttgart that arrived in Cape Town on 27 October 1936 were the last legal immigrants to arrive before the Aliens Act came into force,” says Nates. “After the war, some Holocaust survivors, including German Jews, made South Africa their home.”

“This help desk is significant because families in South Africa who had their cherished possessions stolen by the Nazis will hopefully be able to find out more details about their family objects and potentially get them back.”

“While the enormous loss can never be filled, some links to the past and to loved ones can be restored by trying to regain some of the significant artefacts and objects looted by the Nazis.”

“I call on descendants living in South Africa whose cultural assets were seized during the National Socialist era to contact this new help desk”.

• The help desk is accessible five days a week by phone during regular hours. Call: +49 (0) 30 2338 493 85 or email: helpdesk@kulturgutverluste.de



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Israel’s new wage-gap bill poses questions for SA

TALI FEINBERG

As Women’s Month draws to a close in South Africa, it’s clear there is much work to be done in this country to protect the lives and rights of women. But in Israel, there’s cause for celebration as WIZO’s (the Women’s International Zionist Organisation’s) Equal Pay for Women and Men Bill was passed into law by the Knesset this week.

The new law obligates employers to publish an annual report detailing the pay gaps between their male and female employees. This transparency will help women achieve fairness and equality in wages.

It’s the result of intense lobbying by the WIZO Israel, partnered by Knesset member Ety Atia, who sponsored the bill.

As Ora Korazim, the chairperson of WIZO Israel said in media interviews, “This bill is a key milestone in the ongoing and just struggle to reduce gender gaps in the labour market and promote equality in all areas of life. The wage gap between men and women in Israel currently stands at 32% in spite of the fact that there is a law on the books that requires equal pay for both sexes. From now on, every employer will think twice before discriminating when it comes to the wages of their male and female employees.”

The co-president of WIZO South

Africa, Tamar Lazarus, says that although the South African branch (WIZO SA) didn’t play a direct role in the initiative, “We take great pride in the achievement of WIZO Israel in this sphere. Every WIZO member, donor, and supporter in South Africa is a partner in this achievement. WIZO SA was founded in direct response to the needs of women and children in Israel.”

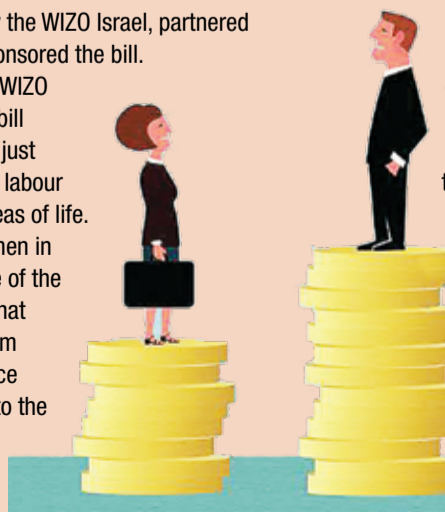
Shimon Barit, a research fellow at the University of Stellenbosch Business School, and an expert in gender and public policy, notes that the bill is a “step in the right direction, but it should be just the first step”. Barit published a paper titled “Gender pay transparency mechanisms: Future directions for

South Africa” with Professor Anita Bosch of Stellenbosch University in March 2020.

“The Israeli bill says that companies employing more than 518 workers will have to publish annual gender pay gap reports. This is obviously addressed only at large to very large public and private companies, and is most likely trying to avoid putting an additional administrative burden on smaller companies to file larger company reports,” says Barit.

“However, Sweden sets the minimum limit at 10 employees per company; Australia at 100; and the United Kingdom at 250. Smaller countries have smaller workforces,

Continued on page 8>>



Oudtshoorn's Jewish cemetery vandalised

TALI FEINBERG

Thirty-three gravestones have been vandalised in the Jewish cemetery of the town that was once called “the Jerusalem of South Africa”, demonstrating the uphill struggle to protect and maintain Jewish cemeteries in country communities around South Africa.

Oudtshoorn resident Bernard Herman discovered the destruction on Wednesday, 19 August. He doesn't think it's an antisemitic attack as about 20 gravestones were also vandalised in the general cemetery nearby.

“We are fighting a losing battle in our small and shrinking Jewish community,” he says. “We surrounded the entire boundary wall with hundreds of metres of barbed wire at great expense some time ago, and every inch has been removed and stolen since.”

He blames the vandalism on substance abuse in the general Oudtshoorn community, with individuals wreaking destruction while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

There are more than 800 graves in the cemetery, reflecting a community established 138 years ago. “Cemeteries are an easy target for vandalism and antisocial behaviour, but that doesn't mean it's any less upsetting [than if it was an antisemitic attack],” says Stuart Diamond, the director of the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

“There must be dignity in death. We are trying to work with municipalities to protect the cemeteries, as this vandalism comes at an immense cost to the community. However, the municipalities generally don't have the funds to do so. We are seeing this kind of vandalism more and more, both in Jewish cemeteries and in general cemeteries nearby. It's very concerning.”

“The municipality used to maintain the cemetery, but it no longer does so, so we bring in private gardeners and maintenance workers,” Herman says. “Our recent expenses were incurred working around the southern boundary wall, removing old trees which were damaging graves and recreating the many children's ground mounds, which date back to the 1918 flu epidemic.” These plots – the graves of about 30 children – have no gravestones and were deteriorating.

There is now an urgency to lay flat the hundreds of Jewish gravestones in this cemetery, as well as restore the graves that were damaged. “This will incur major costs.



Some of the vandalised graves in the Oudtshoorn Jewish cemetery

Maintaining the cemetery over the years has been a costly affair with no particular assistance from any party,” says Herman.

He says people visit the cemetery from all over the world, as hundreds of South African Jewish families originated in the town, and he hopes that they will donate towards the massive project that lies ahead.

The Small Jewish Communities Associations' Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft says this isn't just a problem in the Western Cape, as 125 gravestones were recently found smashed in the Bloemfontein Jewish cemetery. That small community has now begun the project of laying flat as many of its 1 300 gravestones as possible from funds raised by former members now living locally and abroad. Silberhaft says it's vital that future gravestones in any Jewish cemetery are laid flat to prevent this kind of extensive vandalism in future.

“It feels like Wellington all over again,” says Diamond, referring to the destruction of 63 gravestones at the Jewish cemetery in Wellington in the Western Cape in 2018. Coincidentally, Herman has family members buried there, and contributed to its restoration.

Diamond says the Cape Board has a network of contractors in various country towns that keep an eye on the maintenance of cemeteries, while some Western Cape Jewish country communities are able to do it themselves. He planned to visit the Western Cape country communities this year, but it was put on hold

due to the pandemic. However, “We have built a closer network, and have regular Zoom meetings with our country communities, assisting them and staying connected.”

Some of the vandalised graves impact couples or families. The Finkelstein, Rabie, Bliss, and Segall families all had two gravestones affected, probably belonging to husbands and wives. Others that were vandalised are related, for example, David Zelick Schneider and Esther Finkelstein were siblings.

Herman was born in Oudtshoorn and still lives there. “My father was born here in 1913, and I have grandchildren who are the fifth generation living here. At the height of the community, we had 500 families. It was the *Yerushalayim shel Drom Afrika* (Jerusalem of

South Africa), with many families coming from Latvia and Lithuania. Forty years ago, when I got married, there were still about 50 to 60 families here. We are now down to 40 souls. We still celebrate *yomtovim* and bring a rabbi from Johannesburg over the high holidays, but I don't think that will happen this year because of the pandemic.”

Oudtshoorn became a new home for a thriving *Litvak* community, many who made their fortune during the ostrich-feather boom in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and until World War I. The town is located in the Klein Karoo about 420km east of Cape Town. Among the migrants was Max Rose, who arrived in 1890 and after 10 years became an unrivalled feather baron in the country.

Many well-known South African Jews have roots in the town. One of the vandalised graves is that of Morris Lipschitz, grandfather of the late Moira Lister who was a famous actress. He was a renowned feather merchant who had 30 farms. The late chairperson of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, Max Borkum, was born in the town, and world famous sculptor Moses Kottler spent time there as a youngster.

The town's museum has a section devoted to the role of the Jewish community in the development of Oudtshoorn's feather industry. It includes the reconstructed *Aron HaKodesh* from the now demolished St John's Street Synagogue.

“We forget how deep the roots are, and that these communities are where many of us come from,” says Diamond. “They contribute a great deal to the Jewish community of the Western Cape. They punch above their weight, and have important stories to tell.”

Drive-by shofar makes Elul great

JORDAN MOSHE

The *mitzvah* of hearing the shofar daily is integral to the month of Elul, which occurs from now until Rosh Hashanah. And it isn't easy, not being able to go to shul whenever we want.

So, in partnership with Chabad House, the *SA Jewish Report* is planning drive-by initiatives that will enable the community to hear the shofar with ease.

“We want to make sure that every member of our community has the opportunity to hear the shofar this year,” says Sackstein. “We submitted various ideas to Professor Efraim Kramer, who has been overseeing our community's health and safety protocols, and he has approved two of them.”

The first is the drive-in shofar, an initiative which has involved many of our shuls in designating at least one Sunday in the coming weeks on which the shofar is blown every half hour on the shul grounds.

“People can arrive in their own vehicle, wind down the window, and hear the shofar like a drive-in movie,” says Sackstein. “No one may leave their car, but they will be able to hear the shofar being blown from the safety of their own vehicle.”

The second planned initiative involves the

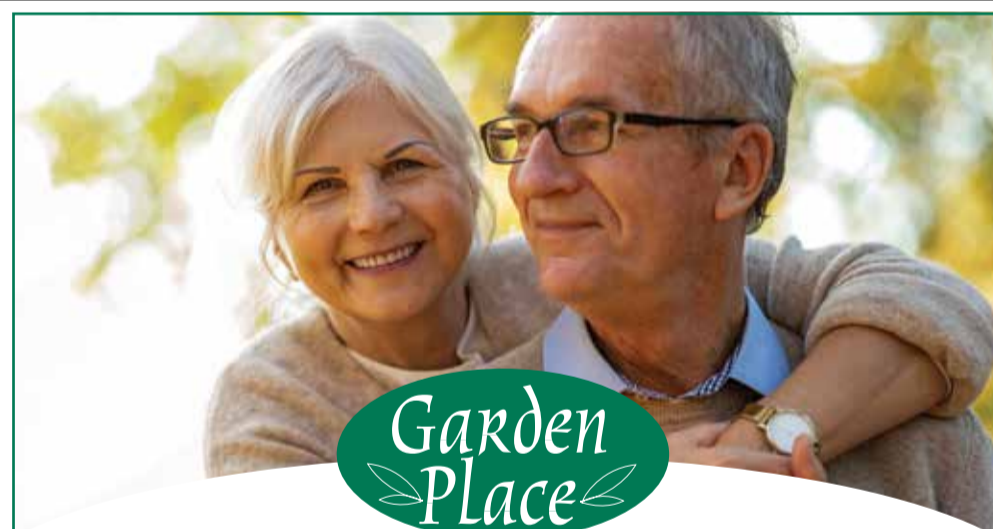
sounding of the shofar at different locations in our community – from the back of a convertible motor car. Sackstein says a map of the community is being prepared, with various roads and locations identified as central locations at which to sound the shofar on Sunday mornings during the month of Elul.

Shuls have been asked to provide volunteers willing to assist, with Chabad also training 50 additional volunteers for the purpose. Over Yom Tov itself, these volunteers will venture to various locations within our community on foot to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah.

“The sounding of the shofar can't be overstated,” says Rabbi David Masinter, the director of Chabad House in Johannesburg. “It's a coronation ceremony and by blowing, we ask Hashem to be our king yet again. It's a deep cry from the heart in which we commit to better our ways and come closer to Hashem. All the blessings for the year ahead come to us through the shofar.”

There has never been a more important time to hear the shofar than in 2020, says Masinter.

“It's more crucial than ever. We're calling for volunteers able to help our community fulfil this incredible *mitzvah*, and asking those who know someone who needs to hear the shofar blown to let us know. We want to reach every Jew in our community.”



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Still protesting the same old epidemic

“I can’t believe I’m still protesting about this,” reads one of the thousands of different posters carried by women protesters in Rabin Square, Tel Aviv, this week.

The women were furious that yet another young girl was raped. This time it was a 16-year-old at the hands of about 30 men. Even the thought of it makes my skin crawl. What kind of animals do this? How do human beings do this to another human being? How do men do this to a woman?

I find it so horrifying and yet the very same incident could just as easily have happened here in South Africa in fact, it stands a better chance of happening here. Or in Turkey. England, perhaps.

Just one week ago – as Gabriella Farber writes in her opinion piece on this page – a first-year student at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) was brutally murdered in front of her 10-year-old sister by someone alleged to have been her boyfriend.

These are just two incidents that have been made public in the past week of Women’s Month, but there have been countless such murders and rapes in South Africa and the rest of the world.

In fact, South Africa has a femicide rate that is more than five times the world average. That refers specifically to the intentional murder of women because they are women, it doesn’t even touch on rape and other gender-based violence (GBV). How horrifying is that, and how great is its implication for the safety of every woman in this country?

We have a GBV epidemic here that is left to run rampant in spite of many an inspiring speech by our leaders. Internationally, we have a GBV pandemic. However, it’s not being dealt with any way close to the way the world is tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. Not by a long shot.

This is partly because it’s about women’s lives, not men’s, and because it’s not something borne in the past year. It’s a situation that has been around a long time, and has grown as our society has got more and more violent.

In fact, there have been short bursts of enthusiasm for the campaign against rape and femicide when the details of a particularly violent incident is made known to the public, but it never seems to last. It never seems to amount to any real action taken that even slightly stems this scourge on humanity.

As Dr Nechama Brodie said recently when she launched her latest book, *Femicide in South Africa*, we only ever hear of a fraction of cases of femicide and rape because the news media latches onto certain cases and not others. It isn’t even always because they are the most gruesome.

On Wednesday this week, *Eyewitness News* reported that five women had been killed in Gauteng in the past 48 hours, allegedly by men they knew. You are unlikely to hear more than that about the cases.

However, the first-year Wits student – herself a GBV activist – who was murdered made news and inspired a protest that wasn’t just about her, but the thousands of women attacked this year.

Such a burst of enthusiasm or fury occurred in Israel this past week following this teen being gang-raped in a hotel in Eilat. The country – mostly women, it appears – was outraged. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it a “crime against humanity”, and demanded a thorough investigation. However, as horrific as this incident was, it was just one case and the numbers, even in Israel, are ridiculously high.

According to Orit Sulitzeanu, the director of the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, it’s a manifestation of something very bad going on in the country. Rape is rife, and nine out of 10 rapists go unpunished, with 84% of such cases being closed without prosecution, Sulitzeanu says.

The numbers are nowhere near as bad as in South Africa, but clearly there’s a problem.

I’m curious to see if anything comes out of the outrage in Israel other than the conviction of a few of the animals who forced themselves on this teenager.

As the woman carrying that poster I mentioned above, I find it hard to believe that we still have to protest rape and sexual abuse. How long do we have to do this before something is done to prevent it?

How do we make sure that we don’t carry it to the next generation? How do we teach boys to respect girls and women, and know that when they say ‘no’ it means ‘no’, and that violence is inexcusable, especially against women?

Sometimes, hearing teenage boys talking about girls, I get extraordinarily uncomfortable because many of them – even in our schools – objectify women and speak of them with no respect. I rarely keep my mouth shut.

But I wonder why they do this, and where it comes from. Mostly they come from wonderful families with seemingly enlightened parents. Is it the society? Is it the fact that violence and misogyny is so entrenched in our psyche that we don’t even realise what we are doing or saying?

How many times have you heard women say, “She shouldn’t wear such a short skirt, she’s asking for trouble” or similar retorts? From people we know and love.

We have to prioritise this epidemic. We have to consider what we and our children say and do in terms of gender disparity and violence.

I love that young women like Gabriella are unafraid to stand up for women’s rights, but we should all – men and women – do this in our everyday lives. This is all of our problem. GBV could have an impact on your mother, sister, wife, girlfriend, or you.

It all begins with respecting women. This can’t be something we do only in August, Women’s Month.

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Stand up for the women felled by femicide

OPINION

GABRIELLA FARBER



On 24 August 2019, a 19-year-old female student at the University of Cape Town named Uyinene Mrwetyana was brutally raped and murdered by a male employee at a post office when she went to pick up a parcel.

On 18 August 2020, a 19-year-old female student at the University of the Witwatersrand named Kwasa Lugalo was brutally murdered by her boyfriend in her own home in front of her 10-year-old sister. This same Kwasa had said in the past that she couldn’t smile because “women are dying every day, and people are doing nothing about it”. Kwasa, who was an activist against gender-based violence, has now become one of its victims.

These were two students with unfulfilled ambitions. One girl standing up for the other, but beaten down again. How many times will a university student, in their few years on campus, stand in front of the Great Hall and march for the same cause, but just different women?

I’m writing this article wondering where to start, and how we got here.

I wonder if it started with Tamar, King David’s niece. This is a story that is kept from being read as a Haftarah portion like a well-guarded family secret.

Amnon, the son of King David, lusted after his half-sister, Tamar, knowing all too well that she was off-limits to him. Yet in spite of this, he found a way to get Tamar alone in a room. Amnon faked illness, and informed his father that the only thing that would make him feel better was if Tamar brought him food.



Protestors at the 2019 Wits University #AmINext campaign

King David, wanting to make his son happy, unwittingly put his daughter into Amnon’s devious hands. As Tamar approached Amnon’s bed, he grabbed hold of her. “Come lie with me, sister,” he pleaded. Sadly, I don’t even need to quote the text for you to guess what unfolded...

Tamar’s story is painful to digest, not only because it’s hard to figure out exactly what moral lesson we are supposed to learn from this explicit display of sexual violence, but because so many of our women can relate to this depiction of power and manipulation.

How did we get to the point where 51% of South

African women have experienced violence at the hands of someone with whom they are in a relationship?

Is it because we don’t want to be “that feminist at the Shabbos table” who calls people out for making derogatory comments about and to women? Or is it that we slip it under the rug and agree that all is fine because “boys will be boys” and we don’t want to “make a big deal out of nothing”? Or maybe it’s because we spend too much time telling girls to be careful, and not enough time telling the boys to care?

The 2019 interfaith prayer at Wits University for the #AmINext campaign in memory of victims of gender-based violence



Unfortunately, I don’t know how we got to this point. So, while I am still searching for my answer, I have made the decision to put more effort into finding out where we are going, and how we going to get there.

I can no longer scroll through my phone to see countless stories of women and girls suffering and know that I am doing nothing about it. I can no longer say, “Och shame, did you hear about that girl?” I can no longer sit down and not stand up against this.

I go to protests, in places that I know my parents would freak out about, so that I can speak for those who died before they could be heard. I visit the

family of Tshhegofatso Pule (who was eight-months pregnant when she was stabbed to death and hanged from a tree) so that I can pay my respects to her family. I’m part of the African National Congress Women’s League Young Women’s Desk so that I can bring justice to all the women in our country. I answer boys back, and I call men out because I have a voice.

But this isn’t something that just a few women in our community (a shout out to all of them) should occupy themselves with. Gender-based violence is the real epidemic our country faces, and our community isn’t immune.

It’s time we all started getting involved, showing up, and standing up for our sisters, daughters, friends, and mothers. For all the South African women out there – whether we know them or not – they are one of us!

Miriam made tambourines while the Jewish nation were slaves in Egypt. Devorah led a successful war, and Esther lived in a critical time, but rose to the occasion. I stand,

and every Jewish women stands, on the shoulders of redeemers, warriors, and saviours. They have entrusted us with a legacy, and passed the baton on to us.

So I ask my South African Jewish community, where are you? Because here I am, and I don’t want to be standing alone. Let’s make sure that Kwasa can smile in heaven, because even if women are dying every day, we’re doing something about it.

• Gabriella Farber, 22, is studying BA Law and International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand.

'It's a calling,' say nurses on the frontline

NICOLA MILTZ

Before COVID-19, the World Health Organization declared 2020 International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife to honour Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing and sanitation, who was born 200 years ago.

It's a fitting tribute, considering nurses' critical role as frontline workers at this historic time.

While Nightingale found herself on the frontline during the Crimean war, her legacy has had an impact on the lives of a handful of young Jewish nurses who are following in her footsteps at the coalface of a different enemy – the novel coronavirus.

Four such nurses told the SA Jewish Report nursing was a "calling" for them, and they want to make a difference. In response to the outbreak, they have put aside fear for themselves and their loved ones to answer a call to action.

"When people find out that I'm a trauma nurse in intensive-care, the common reaction is nose crinkling, followed by 'Eeuw! You must see a lot of hectic stuff'. Yes, I do. But I also save lives and see a lot of miracles," said Ricki-Lee Serebro.

Serebro, 26, is a registered nurse in the trauma intensive-care unit at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital. All her patients are critically ill, many on the brink of death from gunshot wounds, car accidents, stabbings, failed suicide attempts, and falls.



Natanya Joseph

"People associate nursing with wiping old men's bums and bed baths, but there's a whole lot more to it. You are literally holding life in your hands," she said.

She has 12-hour shifts from 19:00, and it's a stressful, demanding job. "I'm on my feet for 12 hours. There are moments of heartbreak, pain, and sadness. I do cry sometimes, it takes its toll, but when a patient on the brink of death makes it, there are no words to describe the joy at saving someone's life."



Lara Kaplan

Many of her patients are heavily sedated or on ventilators, so pain control is crucial. "I rely on non-verbal cues for pain like a facial grimace or a high heart rate. The situation can change fairly quickly, so I need to be on my toes. As there are no family visits, my role is also to provide emotional care."

COVID-19 has added a whole new dimension of stress.

"Many of my colleagues have tested positive, so it's always at the back of my mind that I might be next, and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) for 12 hours is tough. We now have a runner who fetches things like medicines because otherwise we would be doffing and donning our PPE several times a shift. This adds to staff shortages and overall stress," she said.

Student nurse, Tali Nathan, 23, works the COVID-19 ward at Netcare Milpark Hospital.

"It was daunting in the early days of the pandemic. Everything was new and uncharted territory. I was initially freaked out about wearing PPE for 12 hours. Feeling for a vein wearing two pairs of gloves comes with its own set of challenges, but you adapt quickly," she said.

Nathan loves the adrenalin, and there's no hint of exhaustion after a long, busy shift. "I know it's a cliché, but I genuinely love what I do. It's an honour and a privilege to be needed during this dreadful time," she said. However, it's never easy.

"Recently, a sweet elderly patient asked me for a new bar of soap during a bed bath which I said I would buy her. When I went back on shift two days later, she had passed away. I still carry her soap in my bag.

"Even though we have learnt so much about treating COVID-19, and the recovery rate is high, some days are frustrating because there's only so much you can do. There is no cure or pill or textbook for this."

Both women strip down completely when they get home after a long shift, and head for the shower to decontaminate before doing anything else. Then they eat, relax, and sleep for a long time until their next shift. Family and friends are a vital support.

Mother of three, Lara Kaplan, 29, is a registered nurse and midwife who runs a private mobile baby clinic. She spent many years in public hospitals where, in spite of the high incidence of HIV, Tuberculosis and things like gunshot wounds, she chose nursing over becoming a medical doctor, never looking back.

"There is a part of me that knows this is what I'm meant to be doing," she said.

Having had a baby at the start of the pandemic eight months ago, she empathises with her patients, many of them anxious and stressed.

"It's a scary time for new moms bringing life into this pandemic. I walk into a room suited up with mask, visor, and gloves, and it's hard to engage, it's alienating, there are no cuddles, there are no toys, even my smile is hidden. Things have changed. It's an intense time."

Third-year nursing student

Natanya Joseph, 22, is practising midwifery, and moves between the Hillbrow Clinic and Charlotte Maxeke.



Ricki-Lee Serebro



Photos: Ilan Ossendryver

Tali Nathan

People are shocked when she tells them she is studying to become a nurse.

"They say, 'That's not a degree for a nice Jewish girl in South Africa', but I wouldn't change it for anything in the world," Joseph said.

Working in the public sector has exposed her to the harsh reality of public-healthcare in the country. "It has opened my eyes, and taught me so much," she said.

She recalls a mom giving birth to a stillborn baby after being in labour for 16 hours.

"There was nothing I could do to take her pain away. I just had to be there, hold her hand, and listen. Doctors make patients better, nurses make patients matter, more so now when visitors aren't allowed. Nurses become the patient's family on their worst and best days. Nursing has taught me what it means to appreciate each breath you take, the importance of taking care of your body, the impact of visiting the sick, and how to love another as yourself – true Jewish values."

As of 4 August 2020, 240 healthcare workers have died due to COVID-19 and 27 360 have been confirmed to have contracted the virus. Nurses made up the majority of cases, accounting for 52%.

Like the Lady of the Lamp before them, they are spreading light during this dark time, united by a desire to help where help is needed.

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SA doctor makes history with spinal surgery

JORDAN MOSHE

A South African doctor in Chicago has made spinal surgery history through the use of futuristic technology.

King David alumnus, Dr Frank Phillips, used the technology for the first time when performing a complex spinal operation unlike any ever performed, effectively using x-ray vision.

With a focus on minimally invasive procedures, Phillips has been entrepreneurial about developing a number of spine procedures that have become widely adopted. He is also the founder of a number of successful start-up companies.

This led him to partner with Augmedics, an Israeli start-up which, six years ago, began developing xvision, a novel “spine visioning” technology. The company’s chief technology officer is Stuart Wolf, who also happens to be South African, and is the son of Jeffrey and the nephew of Elliot Wolf, the legendary twin brother former principals of King David schools.

“The technology involves the use of augmented reality to facilitate spinal surgery,” says Phillips. “It gives surgeons the ability to see a patient’s spine in three dimensions through the skin, similar to x-ray vision.”

Using a headset, a patient’s

three-dimensional spinal anatomy and two-dimensional CT scan images are directly projected onto the surgeon’s retina and superimposed over the surgical field. This allows for unprecedented augmented visualisation of the patient’s spinal anatomy while placing surgical instruments through a 5mm incision.

Raised in Johannesburg, Phillips attended King David at primary and high schools before attaining a medical degree at the University of the Witwatersrand and emigrating to Chicago in 1987 with his wife, Denise Walt, a psychiatrist and a King David primary alumnus.

“I trained in orthopaedic surgery at University of Chicago Hospital, and did my spine training at Case Western University Hospital in Cleveland,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*. “I have been in practice as a spine surgeon in Chicago since 1995, and am also professor of orthopaedic surgery and the head of spine surgery at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.”

It was at the Rush University’s Midwest Orthopaedics in Chicago that Phillips made history recently.

“I was fortunate to be the first surgeon to use the xvision technology for a minimally invasive spinal procedure. The

procedure took place on 15 June on a patient who suffered from spinal instability requiring a lumbar fusion and spinal implants [screws and rods] which were placed using the augmented reality technology.”

The precision that the augmented reality visualisation provides allows surgeons to place minimally invasive spinal instrumentation extremely accurately and efficiently, Phillips says. This precision means that patients require less anaesthetic, and gives them other advantages.

“It reduces surgical time and complication risk, which are critical to improving outcomes for spinal surgery,” he says. “The Augmedics technology is also being developed for brain and cranial applications.”

This procedure differs considerably from traditional surgical navigation systems, which provide only 2D images of the spine, displayed on a monitor away from the surgical field.

“Augmedics provides both 2D and 3D heads-up images of the spine overlaid over the surgical field,” says Phillips. “We performed cadaver testing as part of the FDA [Food and Drug Administration] clearance, and the xvision system demonstrated a 98.9% overall accuracy in implant placement through the skin.

“It eliminates the attention

shift of referring to a separate screen, and reduces the radiation exposure that occurs with traditional fluoroscopy-based [x-ray guided] procedures.”

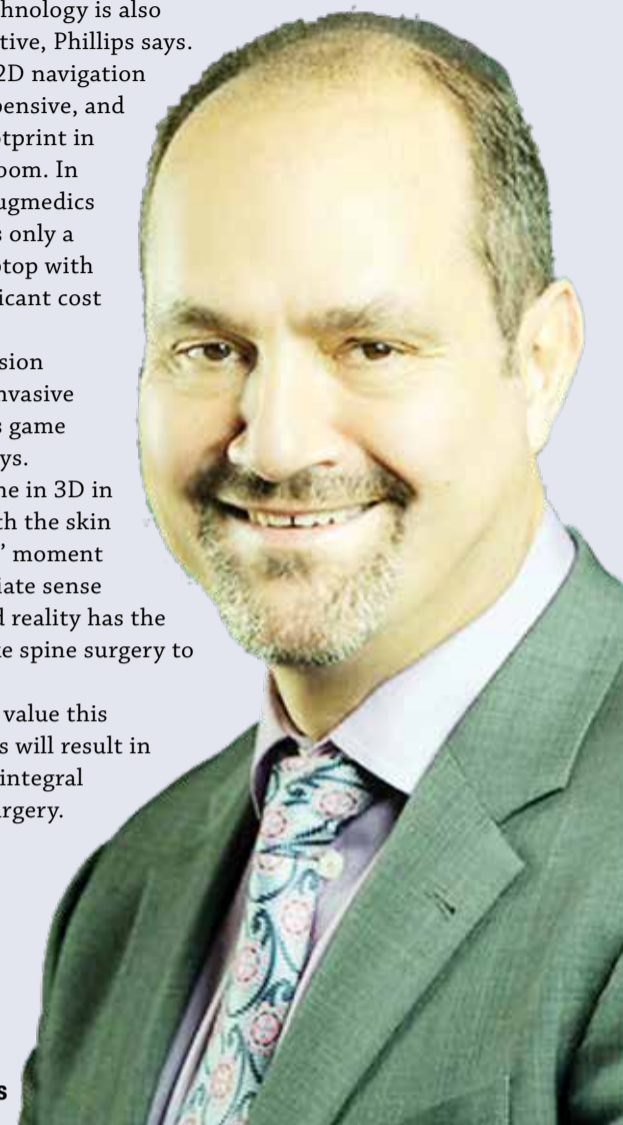
The novel technology is also more cost-effective, Phillips says.

“Traditional 2D navigation systems are expensive, and have a large footprint in the operating room. In contrast, the Augmedics system requires only a headset and laptop with resulting significant cost savings.”

Using the xvision for minimally invasive spine surgery is game changing, he says. “Seeing the spine in 3D in front of you with the skin intact is a ‘wow’ moment with an immediate sense that augmented reality has the potential to take spine surgery to the next level.

“I believe the value this technology adds will result in it becoming an integral part of spine surgery. As with most of these novel technologies, initial

commercialisation will focus on the United States and Europe, but with a robust spine community in South Africa, I would expect it to make its way there.”



Dr Frank Phillips

KING DAVID JUNIOR SCHOOL LINKSFIELD

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100 Club Street, Linksfield

Situated in Linksfield, King David Junior Primary School is an Independent co-educational Jewish Day School, from Grade 1 - 3

The Junior Primary School invites applications for the following position, effective January 2021

MEDIA CENTRE / RESEARCH SPECIALIST

King David Junior School Linksfield, would like to make an appointment of an ICT Educational Specialist who will administer the Media Centre and be responsible for teacher and pupil development and training, sourcing and development of resources and research.

Experienced in tablet teaching and ICT integrated teaching would be an advantage. A competitive salary and a stimulating teaching environment are offered.

The successful applicants must be:

- Prepared to embrace the ethos of a Jewish Day School.
- An inspirational teacher, forward thinking and passionate about children.
- Prepared liaise as a team-player across the curriculum.
- Registered with SACE.

A Curriculum Vitae, and contact details of 2 referees should be emailed to: kuperi@sabje.co.za

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted for an interview. Should you not hear from the school by 01 Nov 2020, please accept that your application has not been successful.

Closing date for application 01 Oct 2020.

Israel's new wage-gap bill poses questions for SA

>>Continued from page 4

and thus set lower thresholds for reporting. Thus, the reporting requirement for Israel set at 518 is disappointing and is much higher even than South Africa’s current 50 employee threshold for designated employers. Such a high requirement needs to be progressively lowered so that the benefits of gender pay gap reporting are also felt by those working in small and middle-sized businesses.”

Barit examines these points in his paper, which says that, “If South Africa is to dislodge its stagnant gender pay gap, pay transparency – making gender differences in wages known to employees, government and the public – can compel employers to remunerate fairly and equally.”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, Barit says that, “In a recent study by Mosomi, the gender pay gap in South Africa was shown to be between 28% and 30%, meaning women earn on average nearly 30% less than men for the same or similar work, or work of equal value. The pay gap has been decreasing since 1994, especially among lower paid workers, but has been shown to be increasing at the executive level. This is especially so in the private sector, as standardised wages are present for those working in public institutions.

“Legally, in South Africa unequal pay for women and men for the same or similar work or work of equal value is an unfair labour practice and also labelled as unfair discrimination. In terms of the Employment Equity Act, certain ‘designated employers’ need to disclose an annual Income Differential Statement as part of their annual reporting to the Employment Equity Commission.

“This document does provide some detail regarding differences in wages between men and women in these companies, but only at racial level, and only at predefined occupational levels. More importantly, such documents are not made public, but are made available to trade unions during wage negotiations. This makes it difficult for a female employee to adequately prove that she has been unfairly discriminated against based on differences in pay with male employees at a certain occupational level.

“The use of public gender pay gap reporting has been recommended by the European Commission as a means of increasing transparency in this regard. In South Africa, this would mainly mean a strengthening of the existing reporting requirement for designated employers to include more detailed information, as well as including public and private employers.

“This information must be more easily digestible when comparing between male and female employees in a company,” says Barit. “Furthermore, this information must at least be available to employees themselves, and more progressively, to the public at large. The reporting framework needs to be backed up by penalties for failing to report adequately in order to give teeth to such reporting requirements.”

Gender activist Lisa Vetten agrees that even though South Africa has legislation aiming to prevent wage-gap discrimination, in reality it’s a lot more complicated. First, occupations are “very gendered”, but there is no law comparing wages in different professions, even if they require the same level of training.

The issue is complicated further by women having children, which leads to them “falling behind” their male counterparts if they take time off. Even if they don’t take time off, men generally spend longer hours at work, which lead to promotions. Finally, race plays a role in pay discrimination. Vetten says that a woman earning less means she’s more dependent on her partner, which may lead to conflict or even abuse.

Human rights lawyer Professor

Bonita Meyersfeld says, “The bill is an excellent approach and one that would be seminal in South Africa. In South Africa, unequal pay for the same work with the same qualifications is staggering.”

South African businesswoman Joan Joffe commended the Knesset’s passing of the bill. Although she never faced pay discrimination while working in the corporate world, she says, “I think it’s a bill that needed to be passed. *Kol hakavod* to WIZO for initiating it and motivating for it.”



Buenos Aires' lockdown continues to bite, but some are thriving

JTA STAFF

Since 20 March, Argentina has imposed one of the world's strictest COVID-19 quarantines, and its capital city, home to most of the country's Jewish community, isn't opening up anytime soon.

Jewish schools and synagogues have been closed for five months, but so have most of the city's industrial and commercial activities. It has led to a local economic crisis that's affecting most of the city's businesses, Jewish and non-Jewish. The first half of 2020 showed an inflation rate of about 20% and now the peso, the local currency, is quickly losing value. In January one needed 63 pesos to buy one dollar, now it's more than 120 pesos.

In spite of the shutdown, the virus is still advancing in Argentina. The national health ministry reported a new high death record (283) in one day on 19 August. Since the start of the pandemic, nearly 312 000 people have been infected with COVID-19, with 6 330 fatalities.

Frustration has boiled over in the Jewish community. Early on in the crisis, in March, members of an Orthodox congregation were arrested for trying to operate a *mikvah*, or ritual bath, and later a bride and groom were arrested at their own wedding for convening such a large gathering. One Orthodox rabbi recently commented that "Judaism in Argentina has reached a low point".

For the first time ever, the normally widely-attended events commemorating the deadly Israel embassy and AMIA (Israeli-Argentine Mutual Association) Jewish centre bombings that took place in the city in the 1990s were broadcast online.

But there have been bright spots too, such as an agreement between the Orthodox community and the government on how to keep rituals going safely, and an operation that brought in nearly 100 Israel rabbis to certify a backlog of thousands of tons of kosher meat.

Here's how some other local Jewish institutions are faring as the pandemic drags on.

Synagogues can reopen – slowly. Many have clamoured for the government to restart some recreational and economic activities, and since 18 July, the city has had a few gradual reopenings. Synagogues can open for 10 members at a time as long as masks are worn and sanitary protocol is followed.

But in spite of the new measures, many temples remain closed to the public and will continue to offer online services over the fear of the virus' continued spread.

Leading conservative synagogues such as NCI Emanuel, Bet El, Bet Hillel, and Amijai will remain closed.

"The government and society are seeking some normalisation, but the risks still exist," said Ariel Stofenmacher, 57, the rector of the Conservative Latin American Rabbinical seminary.

"The flexibility is motivated by economic needs – people are fed up. But we are still in the middle of winter, and without a vaccine. I won't call the people to gather," said Alejandro Avruj, 50, the rabbi of Amijai, which has put Kabbalat Shabbat services featuring prominent musicians online.

The Orthodox Chabad Lubavitch movement opened its institutions with the mandatory sanitary protocols in place. "We will open our temples to 10 people with strict measures of sanitisation and all the requirements of the government regulation to protect our people," said Tzvi Grunblatt, 66, the general director of Argentina's Chabad chapter.

Kosher food here – which has mixed Sephardic and Ashkenazi immigrant flavours with traditional Argentine meat – has become an attraction for Jewish tourists.

The local market for kosher food is worth about \$25 million a year (R425 million), according to information provided by the city. The city has held a kosher festival since 2013, and 11 city hotels have kosher certification, with employees trained to help the kosher tourist.

Restaurants have been closed since 20 March, and many of them are struggling to survive, but some have surprisingly found an opportunity to grow. Brothers Leandro, 42, and Esteban Olsztajn, 44, opened a kosher deli three years ago in the heart of the Orthodox "El Once" neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, just between the Orthodox Toratenu school and the Maccabi Jewish community centre.

The "Oh brothers", as they're called, aimed to recreate some of the atmosphere of a Manhattan



Hebraica JCC President Jonathan Lemcovich, centre left, and Pilar Mayor Federico Achaval, centre right, at the COVID-19 hospital at the Jewish organisation's Pilar campus

Jewish deli at their restaurant that bears their nickname, but they sell all kinds of Jewish food, kosher sushi, and other fusion food. After expanding their delivery service during the pandemic, they have tripled their sales.

When Esteban was asked why he thought that happened, he replied, "I believe in G-d, do you?"

Esteban is Orthodox, but his brother and business partner isn't. He offered another explanation.

"After the shutdown, we started to receive orders from every corner of the city, and not just from our close neighbours," Leandro told JTA.

The Buenos Aires Jewish community centre, called Sociedad Hebraica Argentina, is one of the city's biggest Jewish hubs, home to youth sport leagues, classes, professional classes, adult programming, and more. It had to shift all of that online quickly, but it found another way to be useful.

Part of its 420 acre open-air site in Pilar, a city of 300 000 just outside of Buenos Aires, was turned into a temporary hospital. The municipality of Pilar ran the site, which had 230 beds available for COVID-19 patients. And this was just one example.

According to the Argentine Jewish umbrella organisation, DAIA, all of its 140 institutions across the country offered its facilities and volunteers to national and local governments to help with the crisis. They did so while undergoing an economic crisis of their own, as members have found it harder to pay for membership fees.

Like Hebraica, another well-known Jewish community centre is Hacoaj, a sports and cultural club with about 7 500 members in Tigre, a city in the north of Buenos Aires province (besides the city of Buenos Aires, which is the capital of the country, there are also a province with the same name). Hacoaj has organised an array of "at-home" activities and discounted membership by 20%. Some members have donated their discounts to help other members in greater need.

Buenos Aires is home to about 159 000 Jews, according to the 2018 World Jewish Population study by expert Sergio Della Pergola, giving Argentina the largest Jewish population in Latin America.

Local Jewish businessmen, artists, professionals, and creatives have been hit hard by the general slowdown and the strict prohibitions on social gatherings and events.

Among the event and show cancellations was the country's 72nd Israel Independence Day celebration, organised by the Argentine Zionist Organization. The main attraction was going to be local klezmer band "La Kosher Nostra", a group that started small in 2011 but now plays to thousands of fans at stadiums across the country. In 2016, the group played two shows to crowds of 10 000 in South Africa.

"To honour Israel, we recorded a video with the participation of more than 60 Argentinean artists," Jonathan Strugo, 27, one of the creators of the band, told JTA.

Every week, the directors of the city's largest Jewish schools such as Scholem Aleijem, ORT, Martin Buber, Tarbut, Beth, among others, have Zoom meetings to discuss the situation. Most of them have reduced their costs, but the financial crisis isn't getting any easier.

Prior to the pandemic, the AMIA Jewish group fielded about 40 new requests every month for economic assistance. Since the quarantine was established, that figure jumped to more than 500 a month (an increase of 1 200%).

The office of AMIA that co-ordinates activities with communities all across the country, called Vaad Hakeilot, launched a platform that allows people to donate to different Jewish institutions.

A special section focused on education got mainstream media attention, and raised \$400 000 (R6.7 million).

"The request for help has grown three times," economist Miguel Kiguel, 66, the president of the

Tzedaká Foundation, a non-government organisation focused on charity, explained in a recent interview. "There are lots of cases of people that had jobs, that had a social life, but since the lockdown, all those fundamental structures began to fall."

Tzedaká has implemented an emergency programme called Guesher ("bridge" in Hebrew) to help Jewish families in Buenos Aires with temporary economic assistance to cover their basic needs such as food, health, and housing for a maximum period of six months.

Jonas Papier, 50, runs Motivarte, one of the world's

most-awarded photography schools. It has 2 000 students and has earned a record seven nominations for the World Photography Organisation's Student Focus prize. A Motivarte student won the 2017 edition.

The school has entered into teaching agreements with Betzalel, the famed Israeli Academy of Arts and Design, and Papier has travelled to Israel several times to teach. In 2019, he took to the Tel Aviv streets to give his famous-at-home class on street photography in Spanish, Hebrew and English.

He had planned a 2020 edition in Tel Aviv with new projects to engage other Israeli institutions.

"We miss the trip to Israel. The school building is empty. Now I'm very busy transforming the whole concept of the school into a virtual platform," Papier said. "The good news is that we are recovering our staff of teachers with some professionals that have taught here in the past and are now living in Europe and Israel."

Over the past 16 years, the Buenos Aires Jewish film festival has debuted 250 movies by Israeli directors such as Yosef Shiloaj, Dan Wolman, Ayelet Bargur, Igaal Niddam, Ilan Heitne, David Volach, and Jorge Gurvich, and Americans Ann Coppel, Hilary Helstein, Adam Vardy, Gaylen Ross, and Adam Zucker.

The creator of the festival, Luis Gutman, 73, told JTA that the devaluation of the peso made it difficult for him to buy the rights to movies to exhibit at the festival. For 16 years, the festival showed films at the Cinemark cinema chain for two weeks in November.

"Cinemark cannot assure yet whether cinemas will reopen this year, and it's not profitable for me to purchase the rights of movies and exhibit them online, so if the cinema industry remains closed, I'm thinking that there won't be a festival this year, and we will resume activities in 2021," he said.

One thing is certain, though.

"[F]or sure, it won't be an online festival," Gutman said.


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Schlesinger: early Joburg innovator with a 'kop' for business

JORDAN MOSHE

What do amusement parks, fizzy drinks, ice cream, women's makeup, and the suburb of Killarney have in common? They were all introduced into South Africa by a shrewd, uncouth, and enormously successful Jewish businessman, Isidore William Schlesinger.

The life of this extraordinary individual was outlined in a talk given by veteran journalist Irwin Manoim as part of the Taste of Limmud lecture event held on Saturday, 22 August.

"If you were to take Donald Gordon, add Raymond Ackerman, add to that Sol Kerzner, and then Sammy Marks, you would get a rather irascible and fanatical man by the name of Isidore William Schlesinger," said Manoim.

Although largely forgotten, Schlesinger loomed large in the early years of 20th century South Africa, when he owned 90 businesses, employed 120 000 staff, and farmed a million orange trees. In fact, his achievements were so great that the only person to attempt a biography of him died on the job. He left a lasting mark on the country as we know it today.

"Schlesinger is one of many Jewish immigrants who arrived in Johannesburg dirt poor and, in a single generation, became prosperous," said Manoim. "Antisemites would say he, like other Jews, rose to the top through cheating. Jews would say he was born with a kop for business. The fact is that

he just happened to arrive in the right place at the right time."

Schlesinger's luck was partly the result of opportunities afforded by 20th century innovation and mass consumption, a time when a growing middle class had enough spare cash to buy cheaper goods. Mass markets were left wide open by the Anglo-dominated market, which aimed to provide high-end goods to the wealthier classes only.

"The people who first took notice of this in South Africa were immigrant Jews because they were the outsiders," said Manoim.

"It was second nature to them to look for opportunities where the more powerful didn't deign to pay attention. Schlesinger's career illustrates this."

Born in New York in 1871, Schlesinger left his home at 23, leaving his mother a note that he wouldn't return until he was a millionaire. He arrived in Johannesburg eight years after its establishment, and found a job selling the new-fangled invention, chewing gum, a product whose virtues South Africans couldn't be persuaded about.

"The shop owner told Schlesinger that if he could sell the gum, he could sell anything," said Manoim. "He

departed laden with boxes of Beeman's Pepsin gum, and two weeks later, he had sold the lot.

"He set a precedent. Isidore Schlesinger would become a multimillionaire by persuading reluctant South Africans to adopt American goods and culture over the course of his lifetime."

was outrageous.

"Schlesinger accepted it. People thought him mad buying a stretch of vacant land outside town. He named it Killarney."

In spite of his love for Killarney, Schlesinger lived at the Carlton Hotel on Commissioner Street, occupying an entire floor of 18 rooms. From this space, he conducted his business, terrorised staff, and continued to innovate.

"He was sparing with compliments, and never known to say thanks," said Manoim. "He made no effort to engage with the Jewish community, largely of *Litvack* origin, and one which he had little in common with. He never lived among them, but did give generously to Arcadia and the Sandringham Jewish Aged Home."

In 1914, Schlesinger entered the entertainment industry when Barclays Bank persuaded him to take over Johannesburg's Empire Theatre, the first in the country to screen movies in 1896. He agreed, soon realising that he'd bought a disaster which couldn't make money.

"Anyone else would have bailed out," said Manoim. "But Schlesinger went on to buy all South African theatres and the international rights to screen films exclusively in his cinemas. He launched a magazine promoting his cinemas, bought an advertising agency, and introduced advertising in films."

Schlesinger also produced his own films, shooting at a studio he built in Killarney where dozens of films were produced, including the famed title dramatising the Great Trek, *De Voortrekkers*. Fifty years later,

his son would demolish this studio and replace it with the Killarney Mall.

Another masterstroke attributable to Schlesinger is the transformation of radio from a crude system of wires into a viable mass media platform. In 1927, South Africa had only three stations with a modest following, and no one could figure out how to make money from the service. Schlesinger changed that, buying all three stations, securing the government broadcasting licence for 10 years, and forming the African Broadcasting Company (later the South African Broadcasting Corporation).

Schlesinger reformed radio programming, adding children's shows, quizzes, news coverage, and more. "He changed the culture," said Manoim. "Radio became a status symbol, a wooden case replacing the fireplace as a centre point of the lounge. Staying at home to listen to radio became an acceptable form of entertainment."

Schlesinger continued to trailblaze across various industries over the decades. After a stint in newspapers, he modernised the Carlton Hotel (introducing novelties like telephones, en-suite bathrooms, and Johannesburg's first escalator), opened the first fast food takeaway, and American-style drugstore, and donated to Johannesburg its first traffic light.

Although Schlesinger died in 1949, his legacy certainly lives on.

"He refashioned central Johannesburg," said Manoim. "He took it from rather staid Edwardian to copycat Manhattan skyscrapers.

"He wasn't a man of refined taste, and introduced an eclectic mix of styles in central Johannesburg. He basically prefigured the architectural trickery of later hotel showman Sol Kerzner."



Killarney Film Studios where Schlesinger produced 43 movies

Schlesinger quickly moved into insurance, becoming the most successful salesman of policies in the country by going from farm to farm to seek out clients instead of trying his luck in the wealthier suburbs of Johannesburg.

After the Boer War, he founded a property company which effectively established the suburbs of Orange Grove, Parkhurst, and Parkmore, and which encouraged the less affluent to invest in property by changing the typical practice of upfront payment.

It was also thanks to Schlesinger that Killarney came into existence, said Manoim.

"He fell in love with a stretch of land outside town which the owner, a Mr Cook, wouldn't sell," he said. "Finally, Cook demanded a sum of £60 000, assuming Schlesinger would turn it down because it

Rabbi teaches Hasidim to thrive in the modern world

TALI FEINBERG

When Rabbi Menachem Bombach turned 20, he had no knowledge of the Hebrew or English alphabet, couldn't do basic maths, and only spoke Yiddish.

This was because he grew up in Mea Shearim, the ultra-Orthodox and insular enclave of Jewish religious life in Jerusalem.

After making the choice to educate himself beyond the confines of his community, he went on to graduate from Harvard Business School at the age of 26. He also became a rabbi, and made it his life's work to help other Hasidim get a more well-rounded education. He hoped it would benefit them and Israel as a whole, and help ultra-Orthodox Jews to become less isolated from Israeli society.

Introducing him on the webinar hosted by the *SA Jewish Report* and

Limmud South Africa after Shabbat on 22 August, Ryan Davis of Limmud said Bombach was a "pioneer in education, and one of the most important voices in Israel today".

Bombach recently told Momentum magazine, "Sixty percent of Haredi families live below the poverty line. In 2059, according to government estimates, 40% of all first graders in Israel will be Haredim. Given the growth of the community, we need to make changes in their education before it's too late."

On the webinar, he shared that he had experienced a backlash, but believes the lack of secular education in ultra-Orthodox communities is "damaging the future of Israel", with so many ultra-Orthodox families needing state support. He therefore decided to start a school in the Hasidic community that would teach Torah and secular studies. Only five people turned up to his first information evening, but the initiative eventually grew.

He now runs ten schools for boys and girls that give them a Torah education should they want to continue to study at yeshiva, but also gives them the skills to survive and thrive in the modern world. The first cohort of graduates recently went out into the world, including a man who may be the very first Haredi climate-change activist.

Bombach explained that not every Hasid has the ability to study at yeshiva, but those that try to go to university usually

drop out. He shared a heartbreaking story of a religious Jewish student who badly wanted to succeed at university, but dropped out because he simply couldn't keep up. "There are too many gaps to fill," said the rabbi. He therefore started a preparatory programme for Haredi students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Bombach said he saw himself as part of the diaspora because Mea Shearim is so separate from modern Israeli society that it might as well be in another country. One of his goals is to help Haredim build a connection to other Israelis and the country they live in.

He showed a powerful video of young boys at his school learning about Yom Hazikaron, something they had never commemorated before. Each boy was given information about a soldier who had died for Israel, and said psalms for him. They then lit candles in memory of the soldiers. The video went viral in Israel.

Bombach said Haredi girls who grow up with little education face particular challenges and often land up doing menial labour in roles that can be exploited.

"Less than 7% of Haredi women have a full secondary school matriculation certificate [the Israeli matric or bagrut]. They have some English and maths, but without the bagrut, they can't get good jobs." He knows many women who could have had careers, but now work in factories and in homes.


Both boys and girls in his schools complete the official Israeli matriculation exam, allowing them to join the workforce, study, or start businesses. This will benefit them, their families, and their country while still allowing them to retain their Haredi identity.

Bombach said there would always be extreme elements of Israeli society, but the moderate middle of each community must work together for the benefit of the society as a whole. "The conflict isn't between secular and non-secular, the religious and non-religious, but between knowledge and isolation. The Haredim can't be isolated anymore. To isolate ourselves is crazy. Israelis are our brothers, with the same destiny," he told Momentum.

"I'm not an agent of change. I wish to preserve the community," he said. "The challenge is to deepen our values and identity while at the same time becoming a part of the world."



Rabbi Menachem Bombach



KING DAVID JUNIOR SCHOOL LINKSFIELD

Situating in Linksfeld, King David Junior Primary School is an Independent co-educational Jewish Day School, from Grade 1 - 3

The Junior Primary School invites applications for the following position, effective January 2021

Remedial Therapist - HOD

King David Junior School seeks a dynamic, innovative and experienced Remedial Therapist with relevant qualifications, for this full time position.

The successful applicant will be:

- Able to communicate well with children
- Able to show empathy and understanding
- Persistent and structured
- Innovative, collaborative and able to lead a remedial department team
- SACE registered
- Have remedial qualifications with a minimum of five years' experience
- Able to provide statistics reflecting benchmark assessments

The applicant will:

- Support mainstream learners who have barriers to learning
- Work collaboratively with teachers, therapists and parents to improve skills

A Curriculum Vitae and contact information of two referees should be emailed to; kuperi@sabje.co.za

The school reserves the right not to interview an applicant. Only shortlisted candidates will be interviewed.

Closing date for application: 16 September 2020.

Never a dull moment in Middle East 2020

JORDAN MOSHE

As if the Middle East wasn't already complicated enough, the events of 2020 have added yet another dimension of complication to the region. Historic peace treaties, assassinations, and COVID-19 have all had a considerable hand in shaping the realities of Israel and her neighbours, and it's only August.

Such was the overview offered by Miri Eisen this past Saturday night, 22 August, at a Taste of Limmud. A retired Israeli colonel and expert in security, intelligence, and diplomacy, Eisen offered her virtual audience a sweeping summation of the Middle East's version of war and peace as it has unfolded over the past few months.



Miri Eisen

"We're only in August," she said. "In January, we saw the assassination of the commander of the Al Quds force, Qasem Soleimani. Now, we've watched as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a historic peace deal with Israel, making travel to various countries for Israelis possible after years of being forbidden.

"What has changed so dramatically in 2020 that brought about two very different events?"

In order to understand the shift, we need to grapple with the broader events which have had an impact on the Middle East, Israel, and its Arab neighbours, Eisen said. Aspects such as COVID-19, regional conflicts, demographic changes, and local politics have all had a hand in shaping this new state of affairs.

"In the Middle East of 2020, the biggest change is in demographics, particularly the youth," she said. "In Israel, regular secular families will have three to five children. Egypt has more than 65 million citizens under the age of 40. Across the Middle East, the majority of the population is under the age of 25."

Roughly half this young population wants to live in the UAE, its attractions being job stability, a vibrant Arab culture, prestige, and Arab pride.

"The UAE is the primary country which the youth of the region want to move to," says Eisen. "Even before COVID-19, the majority of the youth was unemployed, and the situation has only worsened. They are looking at the UAE as the one place where they can grow."

Another major factor shaping

developments in the region is religion, an area where COVID-19 has also had a considerable impact.

"The pandemic has affected the way the Arab countries look at Islam and their priorities," said Eisen. "It's not just about religion and belonging anymore.

The Haj pilgrimage to Mecca which typically sees millions of people every year is a prime example, with the holy sites closed off because of the virus. We saw only 10 000 people enter a religious site which would typically hold three million." Saudi Arabia was responsible for the mass

closures, having an impact on the lives of tens of millions of Muslims from around the world, not just in the Middle East.

Said Eisen, "This is an issue of war and peace. The events of COVID-19 and the move of Saudi Arabia affected millions. When it stopped the Haj, it didn't just affect Saudis but every Muslim globally. One kingdom affected an entire religious arena."

Add to the mix failing governments across the Arab world, and an even more complicated picture emerges.

"Several Arab state leaders have failed at governance," said Eisen. "When I say failed, I mean they have created no jobs for youth, nor contended with COVID-19. The only Arab state which has really delivered is the UAE, making the recent peace treaty even more interesting.

"Syria is still a warzone, with refugees still existing in 2020. While we may think that the Islamic State has vanished, it still exists, and COVID-19 has made matters worse. Most of its operatives in Syria dispersed after the physical territorial destruction of ISIS and went home to countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia. They've had plenty of time sitting at home during lockdown to find their voices again. They are re-emerging."

The Syrian issue also raises the complex matter of Lebanon's role in the region, along with the involvement of Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah, whose charisma and eloquence have left their mark on 2020 as well.

"Hezbollah has been rebranding itself for the past 20 years, and it's coming out now in 2020," said Eisen. "However, it's doing things that don't add up.

"Hezbollah has been at the forefront of Shiite revolution, leading the charge as far as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. At the same time, it has chosen to involve itself in the Lebanese

Continued on page 14>>

Documents found in armchair show role of 'ordinary Nazis'

TALI FEINBERG

A new non-fiction book, described as a detective story and a thriller, explores the life and motivation of a low-ranking SS Nazi officer, whose name would never be known if his papers weren't found hidden in the upholstery of an armchair decades after the Holocaust.

Dr Daniel Lee, the author of *The SS Officer's Armchair: In Search of a Hidden Life*, spoke to Tali Nates, the director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, in a webinar hosted by Limmud South Africa and the *SA Jewish Report* on the evening of Saturday, 22 August.

"We know about the so-called 'desk killers' [like Adolf Eichmann], the Einsatzgruppen [the mobile killing units who rounded up and shot Jews as the German army advanced east], and the camp commanders, but we don't know many of the 'ordinary Nazis' whose names you might not find on Google, but who played just as an important part in the Final Solution," said Nates in introducing the book, which centres on the previously unknown story of Dr Robert Griesinger.

An historian of World War II, Lee explained how the story "literally came out of the woodwork" when he was living in Florence. A stranger who became aware of his profession, asked for his help in finding out more about swastika-covered documents that her mother had discovered sewn into her old armchair when she took it to be re-upholstered.

The woman wasn't a relative of Griesinger, and had bought the armchair many years previously. But when he began to find out more, Lee managed to find a number of Griesinger's family members, who had no idea of their relative's Nazi past.

Lee said Griesinger was ordinary in every way, and would have been lost to the annals of history had these documents not been discovered. "He was a typical SS member who came from a very middle class family, had a university education, and was Protestant. He ticked all the boxes of what an SS member should be."

But when Lee dug deeper, he found that Griesinger didn't have deep roots in Germany, but his family had lived in New Orleans in the deep south of America for a number of generations. With in-depth research that brought late family members to life, he demonstrates that Griesinger could have inherited his white-supremacist ideas from his grandmother, whom he adored, and who had grown up with enslaved people in her household.

The family returned to Germany only in the late 19th century, and Griesinger was born in Stuttgart in 1906, in the middle of the "war youth" generation that grew up with the defeat of Germany in World War I as a defining factor of their identity. "I managed to find his mother's diary who wrote every day and collected photos and newspapers," which showed how "this generation witnessed the absolute collapse of the values and certainties of their parents' world."

Lee traces how Griesinger went on to study law, eventually working as a public servant for the Gestapo in enforcing the Nazi state's racist laws. "Griesinger's work at the Gestapo rendered him a significant link in the chain of the Nazi police state," he wrote. He worked in Stuttgart's Gestapo "Hotel Silber", where just a few floors below his feet, so-called enemies of the state were interrogated and tortured.

His career flourished as a lawyer and public servant. "He joined a group of lawyers who wore ordinary suits, not SS uniforms. He wasn't going out and rounding up Jews, but

he was responsible, and knew what was going on as he sat at his desk," said Lee.

His career peaked at his posting in Prague in the ministry of economics and labour. "It was his dream come true to go to Prague. His kids went to the best schools, and they got the best rations. But his work put him in charge of Czech workers being sent to forced labour camps in terribly debilitating conditions. In 1943 in Prague, most Jews were incarcerated or sent to concentration camps. Of those that were still there, they were also sent to do forced labour under his auspices."

How did the documents end up in the armchair? When Lee tracked down the late SS officer's daughter, Barbara, she surmised that as a German in Prague in May 1945, he was under no illusion about the dangers he faced.

"Barbara described a scene in which a scared and frantic Robert, wanting to hide his identity papers, somehow opened the cushion and placed the documents inside," he writes. He had reason to be frightened, as Lee looks into what his fate might have been at the end of the war.

Lee spoke about how he found that when Griesinger was newly married, he lived right next door to a Jewish couple, the Rothschilds. In the book, he recounts this Jewish couple's astounding story, and finds their granddaughter, who says her grandparents would have lived a religious Jewish life – right across the wall from Griesinger's home. Lee surmises that the couples probably interacted on a regular basis, and wonders how Griesinger separated this reality from his Nazi worldview. Mrs Rothschild, who survived the Holocaust, lived in London and "died in Wembley in 1983, the same part of London and in the same

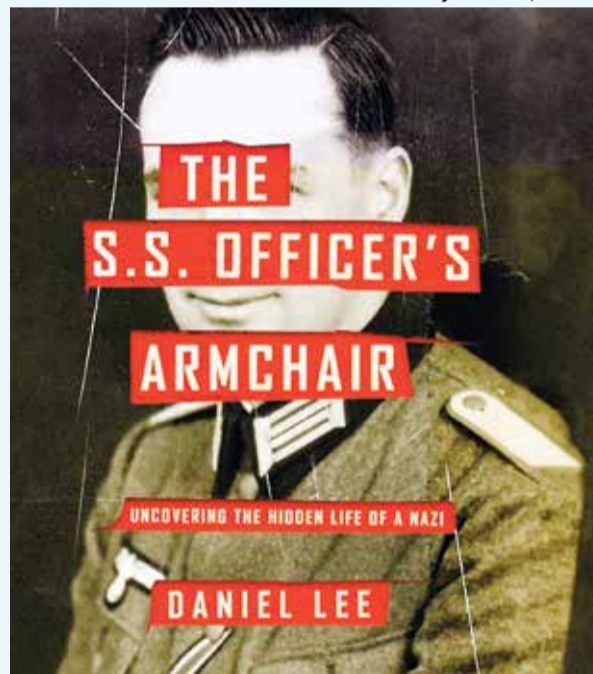
year in which I was born," writes the author.

He recounted how he found another personal coincidence in his research. Although he tries to keep a personal distance from his work, he was startled to find that in July 1941, Griesinger's Wehrmacht unit happened to pass through the shtetl that his maternal grandmother's father came from in Ukraine. The SS officer had been called up to serve in August 1939. "For a fleeting moment in July 1941, Griesinger looked out on the district of Tarashcha, and experienced the same sights and sounds that for centuries had given familiarity to my ancestors' everyday lives," he writes.

The book also explores multiple issues arising from World War II and the Holocaust, such as the "wall of silence" that faced the next generation who asked questions about their parents' role in those events. It examines the little-known fact that the Wehrmacht played a role in killing Jews, even though for decades after the war, historians and the German public believed it wasn't involved in these mass murders. It questions our sometimes one-dimensional ideas of figures and organisations during that period.

In telling this story, Lee demonstrates that, "We still know far too little about how low-ranking officials experienced the 1930s and 1940s, and Griesinger's life helps us to understand why Nazi rule was possible. Ordinary Nazis such as Robert Griesinger entered into loving personal relationships and made professional decisions to better themselves and their families. Men like Griesinger effortlessly switched from being kind, gentle, and funny to displaying cold-blooded cunning and indifference," he writes.

Lee said that the research for the book took him five to six years. "I was never clear what I was after. There were so many threads and possibilities." Indeed, the book spans way beyond Griesinger's story, weaving in multiple fascinating narratives that demonstrate the impact one person's life can have on the world.



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Rollercoaster ride to keep from starvation

PERSONAL STORY

Ronan Keating sang, “Life is a rollercoaster, just gotta ride it”, and never before has this been more true than over these past five months. Not an adrenaline junkie myself, I far prefer to be on *terra firma* than even contemplate bungee jumping, sky diving, or taking a rollercoaster ride.

Yet here we are, unwilling participants on a ride we didn’t sign up for, and our choice is to scream blue murder, or let the ride just take us where it must. When President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a three-week lockdown (which turned into five months), I had visions of catching up on Netflix, reading, and enjoying quality family time, but Hashem had other plans. Certainly a very scary ride didn’t feature, although looking back, I’m not sure how I could ever have imagined otherwise.

I have never worked so hard, yet felt so fulfilled. I find it amazing to believe that pre-COVID-19, I thought I knew what busy was. I had no clue. The work we do is hard, yet rewarding. It can kill you, but it also makes you stronger. You lose sleep, but you gain humility and gratitude. You feel stretched to your limit, but you learn so much about resilience.

You see the best and the worst of humanity. You meet incredible people who enrich your life in ways you never thought



Packing food parcels and soup packets for distribution on Women’s Day

possible, and you break when you hear about the death of a starving child. What we do is purpose-driven and humbling. I have always maintained that we get far more from giving than our beneficiaries do. How lucky we are to get to take from those who want to give, to give to those who need it most.

When Midnight Oil sang, “How do we sleep when our beds are burning”, it couldn’t have imagined thousands who weren’t only frightened by COVID-19 and being able to feed their starving children, but stressing about how to keep them warm and provide a roof over their heads when the fires came.

We have seen children eating dog food, and babies receiving only water. We have taken flack from our community for not assisting our own, which we most certainly do, and from white squatter camps who feel marginalised.

As much as we wish we could ensure that nobody goes to bed hungry or cold, the reality is that people are dying on our watch, and there is nothing we can do about it. We become emotional when we realise how many millions still need assistance.

To say that we went into overdrive when COVID-19 hit, would be an understatement. Working 15-hour days

became the norm, and with no help other than my amazing husband, cleaning, cooking, and laundry became the things I did in the spare time I didn’t have.

Surprisingly, I found it to be far more therapeutic than I would have expected. Our recruitment company certainly took a back seat, and I have relied heavily on my extremely capable business partner and close friend, Leigh Brouze, to hold down the fort.

Personal grooming hasn’t been a priority, and I haven’t

had my hair, nails, toes, or eyelashes done in five months. I miss being pampered, and look a sight, which is only a problem when people pop past to drop off things and I find myself apologising for my appearance. Now, I have a few more wrinkles, a little more grey.

Before April, I wouldn’t leave the house without makeup, and certainly wouldn’t have been caught dead in Uggs boots that must have got their name from being so ugly. Now, on the extremely rare occasion that I venture out to get groceries, lipstick isn’t required thanks to our masks, and I honestly forget that I’m in Uggs with no

makeup. Truthfully, nobody cares.

Zoom meetings have now become a way of life for us all, and it’s the only time I feel compelled to put on lipstick.

From the start, every day was Monday, as we scrambled to feed hundreds of thousands of people who had no other way of receiving food. Thankfully, Wendy Kahn and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) chose to partner with us in distributing R9 million from an anonymous donor, something we will be eternally grateful for and humbled by.

This enormously generous donation has helped to save millions from dying of starvation. Our community has always been and continues to be incredibly proactive and generous. Without it, we could never have done what we do.

We are also truly grateful to the dozens of ex-South Africans who contribute to our appeals. Before March this year, the biggest single donation received was for R211 000, so I feel a great sense of responsibility to have been entrusted with millions.

Initially, being far too busy even to think of seeing people, five months down the line, I would love nothing more than to visit my ageing mom in Port Elizabeth or host a Shabbos dinner. I crave the smells of freshly chopped liver and roasting lamb that symbolises guests on the way, and I miss our table being full of loved ones and laughter.

My family have been unbelievably supportive, not complaining about how our garage has become the official Angel Network headquarters, or how often the bell rings daily. They do, however, miss time spent together and bemoan how inaccessible I often am.

I may not be baking banana bread or keeping the house spotless from all the hair of our three Labradors, but I do know they appreciate the work I do.

I’m extremely fortunate to have the support of the most amazing team of women who form our executive. I could never do what I do without every one of them on my side and in my corner, fighting the good fight, and I salute them all.

Working closely with more than 45 CANS (community action networks) set up by ourselves and the SAJBD, we have provided millions of meals to people across all nine provinces of our country. We have also assisted more than 150 000 citizens with clothing, and hundreds with housing and education. There are no to-do lists, and we hit the ground running from the moment we open our eyes every morning.

The good, the bad, and the ugly may be the name of an epic Western from the 1960s, but we have certainly seen it firsthand. We have encountered the good in people whose paths we may never have crossed without this pandemic, experienced the bad through corruption, and dishonesty and thieving are the ugly.

This too shall pass, painfully, like a kidney stone, but it will pass, and we will all have to look ourselves in the mirror and know that we did whatever we could with what we had.

I will never, ever use the words “freezing” or “starving” again to describe how cold or hungry I am, having looked into the eyes of those who really were experiencing it. “Life is a rollercoaster, just gotta ride it”.

• Glynne Wolman is the founder of The Angel Network.



GLYNNE WOLMAN

COVID-19 turned me from a donator to a doer

PERSONAL STORY

TANYA KAHANOVITZ



My mother is very much a doer. She would venture into the ashrams of India and visit strangers in hospitals to spread love and healing. This year became the time for me to follow in her footsteps – albeit with baby steps.

Before COVID-19, I was one of those who always supported the less fortunate from afar. While I had empathy for the plight of others, I always took the easier road by making monetary donations or contributing to the occasional sandwich drive.

Then came COVID-19, and I realised how truly blessed I am to have enough food on the table, a warm bed, and a safe home with a garden big enough to feel “free” during the lockdown.

Community Action Network (CAN) project.

CAN had just been introduced into Gauteng by the Angel Network and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. They were appealing to people to come forward and register a CAN in their area to support communities that were in desperate need of help.

I decided it was time for me to wake up.

Through my professional journey and close relationship with Mandi Fine over the years, and the work of her communication strategy consultancy F/NE, I knew about the inspiring organisation, Ikageng. Headed by the fearless Carol Dyantyi, this remarkable non-profit organisation supports children in Soweto who have been orphaned or affected by HIV/Aids.

It had been operating as an essential service

strategically with COVID-19 communication and networking, but it desperately needed support to fund food and other essential items. I decided I couldn’t help from afar any longer, and registered CAN Ikageng on 20 April.

We immediately started collecting from various drop-off points around Johannesburg, including in Orchards and Glenhazel (headed by another angel – my sister-in-law Ruth Lasarow). The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre opened its basement as an additional collection point, and Selpal came on board to assist with delivering weekly parcels to Soweto.

These generous partnerships ensured that Ikageng could continue the extraordinary work that it has been doing for the past 20 years.

CAN Ikageng continued to grow through the guidance, nurturing, and encouragement of so many angels, including Glynne Wolman and her wonderful team from the Angel Network.

Nicky Barnes, beyond being an incredible support, also led to the evolution of CAN Ikageng into Illovo CAN Ikageng, and brought in the generous Illovo community, as well as a partnership with Thrupps & Co.

As the months have passed, the constant and unwavering support of our incredible Illovo CAN Ikageng team leaders: Andrea Orlin, Julie Treger, and Nicky Barnes, as well as Kim Nates from F/NE For Good who continues to provide strategic guidance, has ensured that our CAN is in a position to keep much-needed essentials coming in.

It has been an incredible gift to work with all these women as well as the greater CAN communities in Gauteng. All of them prove daily how small things really can make a huge difference. Together we help to heal each other to push through these challenging times to ensure that our community will come out the other end stronger and with more love and hope for the future.

Most importantly, I learnt that life is too short to sit on the fence. I needed to jump off and get involved. This is what we are here to do.

• Tanya Kahanovitz is an independent consultant specialising in project management and systems.



Illovo CAN Ikageng with the Thrupps & Co team

I also recognised how important it is to show my children that we could do so much more to help those less fortunate than ourselves.

The opportunity presented itself on 13 April, when one of the many guiding angels in my life, Robyn Smookler, sent out a message to our learning group about getting involved in the

during lockdown, providing food for hundreds of vulnerable beneficiaries. With food security being especially important for those on ARV (antiretroviral) treatment, it was crucial to get food to them over lockdown.

F/NE’s non-profit upliftment wing, F/NE For Good, was already supporting Ikageng



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Love blossoms in the time of coronavirus

JORDAN MOSHE

Surprising though it may seem, COVID-19 hasn't dampened the thriving dating scene across the Johannesburg Jewish community.

Lonely hearts are finding love in spite of social restrictions, and Jewish singles from across the religious spectrum are discovering new ways to meet and forge meaningful relationships.

"Just like businesses, dating has had to pivot under the circumstances," says clinical psychologist Dorianne Weil (affectionately known as Dr D). "You'd think that the situation has narrowed opportunities, but people have shown tremendous creativity in getting on with their dating lives."

Under ordinary circumstances, she says, the process of meeting a potential significant other often falls prey to dramatic acceleration, with people rushing into a relationship because they're not in a headspace to reflect properly.

"Your brains are fried, and the chemicals are surging, and suddenly you're close to making the most important decision of your life," says Weil. "People tend to make snap decisions based on immediate physical attraction, and mistake that for love."

"You're supposed to grow in love, get to know a person, and determine if you have enough in common. You need to feel it out as it goes along, relying on conversation to guide your interaction as you get to understand who the person is."

COVID-19 has enforced this dynamic in the dating space.

"In many cases, people are finding that the new reality has forced them to take things



slowly instead of [acting] immediately," Weil says. "People are taking the time to get to grips with the process of connection, and many of them are actually finding that they're relieved by the change."

Because of social distancing protocols, many are opting to take their dates online, a conversion which is actually less awkward than you might think. Moving beyond text-based interaction, Zoom dates are becoming more prevalent, and while they're not perfect, they're proving effective.

"People recognise the potential of Zoom, and are trying to maximise it," Weil says. "While not the same as meeting in person, it enables them to see what a person looks like, whether they put effort into their appearance and dress for the occasion."

"Lacking a restaurant setting, people are watching movies together online, arranging

to eat the same food, having a casual coffee, or playing online games. Some are even taking their date on a virtual tour of their homes. All this is giving people time to get to know each other better and creatively."

It's not without its setbacks. Weil believes that while virtual dating may offer a good start, it can't be maintained indefinitely. "You need to meet that person and see if you can engage with them, checking if your initial impression was correct," she says. "Zoom may be a good start, but actual contact is still best."

Still, she feels positive about the new normal. "If you are really looking to meet people and find a date, you can," she says. "People are doing it. The fact is that this new reality has forced us to slow down and not just swipe left or right."

Love continues to blossom among the more religious in our community as well, with *shadchanim* (matchmakers) finding that dating candidates are committed to finding their special someone.

"People are dating, but doing it very differently," says local *shadchanit* Cindy Silberg. "They've adapted to the changes, and made *frum* dating dynamic, moving through lockdown and doing what they can to meet other people."

Although they're not necessarily using online platforms, religious people seeking to date have approached COVID-19 with creativity, navigating curfew and social distancing while adhering to the health protocols.

"When the lockdown was stricter, people started using garden spaces to have their first dates," says Silberg. "Many people in the community offered their private gardens for the purpose, and some used their own gardens. Many people have said it's a welcome change from a hotel lobby, and though it initially felt awkward, it was actually far more

relaxed, casual, and fun."

With more spaces opening up over the past few weeks, an increasing number of outdoor venues have become popular for dates, with hikes in Modderfontein and picnics at Zoo Lake growing in popularity.

"It's becoming a new normal," says Silberg. "I'm not sure if we'll actually go back to using hotels the way we did before, although some people still prefer it. The date has been reinvented because people realised that life can't be put on hold indefinitely, and the mindset of many has changed with it."

"Because of social distancing, some people are choosing to meet at their chosen venue instead of being fetched. While they may be wearing masks, I've suggested that they show one another their faces when they first meet, and then keep their masks on the rest of the time if they feel more comfortable that way. People are making it work, and staying safe."

It seems the changes are working. Silberg says that plenty of engagements have taken place over the past few weeks, with couples pushing ahead with their lives in spite of the uncertainty and stress.

"People are taking the time to get to grips with the process of connection, and many of them are actually finding that they're relieved by the change."

"People are carrying on," she says. "COVID-19 has also changed the dynamic in that boys who would usually be away at yeshiva are stuck in South Africa and are on the dating scene. Girls would usually be waiting for the boys to come back, so this has worked in their favour."

Silberg agrees with Weil's assessment that more meaningful conversations are taking place on dates.

"The lack of activities to do on dates has meant that couples are talking properly," she says. "They've begun their meaningful discussions sooner rather than later. With fewer distractions, couples are making more of an effort to communicate, and I feel that this will make for stronger relationships moving forward."

"Finding the right person is the most important aspect. This situation has made people realise what actually matters in dating and what it means to make an effort and give of yourself. It's no longer about where we go or what we do on a date, but whether I want to be in a relationship with this person."

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Never a dull moment in Middle East 2020

>>Continued from page 11

government politically and even hold the health portfolio, making it responsible for the Lebanese response to COVID-19.

"Is Nasrallah a Lebanese political head tasked with medical intervention or the leader of the Shiite revolution? This is a horrific combination of incompetence and identity crisis. Who does Hezbollah want to be?"

Iran is no simple matter either, Eisin said. "Iran isn't only exporting arms, know-how, and wars, it's exporting COVID-19 as well," she said. "The number of virus deaths in Iran has surpassed 20 000. It has been at the epicentre of exporting COVID-19 within the greater Middle East."

Sadly, not even a pandemic can encourage the Palestinian Authority (PA) to change its approach to Israel. In spite of the war against COVID-19, the PA has ceased all co-ordination with Israel. This is really about cutting your nose to spite your face," said Eisin. "They

wouldn't accept medical supplies from the UAE because they came through an Israeli port. Instead, they've chosen to respond with a spike in terror incendiary balloon attacks.

"You'd think we'd all have something in common because of the virus, but that's evidently not the case here."

All of these factors collectively suggest that in a world of war and peace, things aren't always easy, nor are they clear.

"When we look at the greater Middle East in 2020, we see many different layers and dimensions coming together," Eisin said. "We're seeing the UAE signing a peace treaty with Israel as the Jewish state stands up to Turkey and Iran. We're seeing Jews in Israel receive a Shabbat shalom message from the government of the UAE for the first time ever."

The Middle East of 2020 is certainly made up of extremes – and the year isn't over yet.

Emunah girls thrive in trying times

The Emunah Batmitzvah Course

has thrived this year in spite of the challenging circumstances. The course, run by Jayde Ronthal and Diasha Gershuni, is part of World Emunah, which promotes the status of women

Each Batmitzvah girl has had numerous sessions on Zoom that focus on encouraging growth and leadership. In addition, the girls were asked to create their own *chesed* project and find



Micaela Radomsky with her *chesed* project called Bake it Forward

ways to do good in this dire time. They invented heart-warming and special initiatives for change within and outside of the Jewish community.

KDVP High elects new student leaders

King David High School Victory Park (KDVP) last week appointed its student representative council (SRC) for 2020/2021 following a rigorous selection process which involved voting by pupils and staff, and a final interview with the school executive.

Mazaltov to the following students: head boy: James Norwitz; head girl: Dannica De Aguiar; deputy head boy: Gabriel Katz; deputy head girl: Aerin Cohen; chief whip: Amira Karstaedt; Judaica: Jayden Arenson/Evan Koton/Dina Kay; arts and culture: Aron Lazer/Paris Obel; sport (including spirit): Michaela Grasko/Rowan Mervis; outreach: Mia Martheze/



Miya Ichikowitz; global awareness: civic and social awareness: Judd Greenhill, environment: Talia Sitsakis; school service: public relations and communications: Micayla Taylor, foundation and mentoring: Amber Michel/Sarah Nathan.

The SRC leads the student community and is an important link between students and staff. KDVP is blessed to have young men and women of the highest calibre to take up this role with passion and enthusiasm. The school looks forward to another excellent year with this fabulous team of leaders.

Yeshiva gets going with garden of *middot*

Yeshiva College held its first virtual assembly at school on Thursday, 20 August. Pupils watched the assembly from class, showing how the school has had to think out the box with the 'new normal'.

The school's 2020 leadership started strong with an exciting committee launch for all the grades, including a *middot* campaign every morning. Three *middot* gardeners

have been appointed. Mazeltov to Gabriella Swartz, Oriya Mandelberg, and Ayala Sifris who planted the first flowers in Yeshiva's garden of *middot*. May we all grow together this Elul.

First virtual assembly at Yeshiva Boys High School



December youth camps on a cliff edge

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) and Zionist youth movements Bnei Akiva, Habonim, Netzer, and Betar are in discussion with medical and security advisors about the feasibility, and form of the December *machanot* as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been examining whether the *machanot* can or will take place this year.



Fun in the sun at previous end-of-year camps

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1939 = R500 Up to R30 000
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1931 = R500 Up to R3 000
1939 = R10 000 Up to R30 000



3D
1923 to 1964 = R5
1931 = R10 000 Up to R50 000

Gang rape: what's wrong with our boys?



INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

police said the woman retracted the rape allegations. They all returned to Israel, and were greeted with scenes of celebration. Some of the young men even donned kippot in gratitude as they were reunited with their families. The footage was, in my view, extremely distasteful. There was little in their behaviour that warranted celebration. On the contrary. They did no one proud. Least of all their religion.

Consider further the separate case in which two Israeli soccer players were suspected of statutory rape earlier this year, and there can be little doubt that it's time to acknowledge that there is a problem. And it's a serious one.

Although these incidents took place in secular Israeli society, there are also incidents of abuse in the religious sector. It seems that Israel, like many other countries, needs to face up to the fact that greater education is demanded, and that families need to take responsibility for the education of their boys.

The situation in terms of gender-based violence back home in South Africa is even more dire. It matters not if it is Women's Month or any other time. Women are at risk. And it is the men who are placing them in this position. One way in which we can begin to address this, is to begin to address it. Whether it's comfortable or not. Whether it pains us or it doesn't. If we don't have these conversations with our children at home, we might be having them outside of it.

It pains me to write this. It pained me to speak about it on my show, and even more so to discuss it with my family. It would be much easier to ignore it completely, and hope to never hear of it again. But some stories need to be discussed and understood whether we like it or not.

The recent event that is said to have taken place in Eilat is one of them. That up to 30 men allegedly stood in line outside a hotel room in order to take turns with an intoxicated 16-year-old child woman, is not something that we can afford to ignore.

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "crime against humanity", and has demanded a full enquiry into the incident. Expressions of outrage and horror were echoed across the political spectrum as well as within civil society along with calls for the harshest of punishment to be meted out. But to my mind that's not even the half of it.

The enquiry needs to begin further back. Very simply, what went wrong with the education of these boys or men that could allow them to behave the way that they did? And what does it say about the lessons and the values they have absorbed?

Consider the 2019 case at the Ayia Napa holiday resort in Cyprus, where a group of Israelis were suspected of raping a British tourist. The British tourist was ultimately found guilty of lying about the alleged attack, but has stood by her account of the 2019 incident, saying Cypriot police gave her no choice other than to retract her claim.

All 12 of the Israelis were initially arrested, but were released after

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Gauteng Council gets going with new executive



ABOVE BOARD
Shaun Zagnoev

At the first post-conference Gauteng Council meeting on 24 August, Professor Karen Milner was elected chairperson, and Harold Jacobs and Dani Mofsovitze vice-chairpersons. I congratulate them on being entrusted with these important leadership positions, and look forward to working with them in their upcoming two-year term of office. All three have been an intrinsic part of the Board's core work. Professor Milner, in addition to heading up the council's anti-racism campaign and involvement in counselling initiatives introduced to alleviate stress and depression during the lockdown, has been intricately involved in the Board's more serious antisemitism cases. We wish her and the new council continued success in addressing the key challenges that the community is facing and will face as we progress into the post-COVID-19 era.

Adjusting to life under level-two lockdown

From the time the hard lockdown began to be eased, the Board has placed great emphasis on guiding the community in terms of maintaining a continued high level of care and vigilance. As the old saw has it, we are by no means out of the woods yet, and will not be for some time to come. The risk, indeed likelihood, of a second wave of infections as South Africa gradually gets back to "normal" is something we must all keep constantly in mind and adjust our behaviour accordingly.

For our part, meetings by communal leaders to discuss best practice going forward continue to be held regularly, as always with

the participation of medical experts. At the last meeting, the discussion centred on the impact of the new regulations with the move to level two, especially in the context of the reopening of shuls and schools. Last week, National President Mary Kluk, Gauteng Council member Sheri Hanson and National Director Wendy Kahn also met with the South African Union of Jewish Students and Zionist Youth Council leadership to look at a campaign for behavioural change around COVID-19 with younger community members. On the national stage, Kluk continues to represent the community on the COVID-19 Ministerial Advisory Committee on Social and Behavioural Change. Alongside our work within the Jewish community, our partnership with the Angel Network in supporting critical humanitarian projects to alleviate the economic impact of the pandemic is also ongoing.

We commend the way in which the reopening of the shuls last week was implemented. In particular, all credit is due to Professor Efraim Kramer, who has travelled the country and worked tirelessly to create protocols and work with communities to implement safer ways to attend shul. Beyond attending shul, it remains crucial for all of us to adhere to the rules of social distancing, mask wearing, and hand hygiene in every single interaction.

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

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