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Experts say plot to assassinate US ambassador is 'plausible'

NICOLA MILTZ

United States ambassador to South Africa, Lana Marks, may have to alter her Rosh Hashanah plans and lie low as the community prepares to usher in the New Year. This, as revelations of an alleged Iran-backed plot to assassinate her on home soil reverberated here and across the diplomatic world this week.

Some local terror analysts told the *SA Jewish Report* that news of the alleged plot was "plausible" and "wasn't surprising", while another said it was "unlikely".

According to a report in the American online journal *Politico* quoting two anonymous US officials, Tehran has contemplated killing Marks to avenge America's assassination in January of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, the head of the country's Quds Force, a unit of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Marks was probably chosen due to her closeness to US President Donald Trump, who ordered the killing of Soleimani.

"If carried out, it could dramatically ratchet up already serious tension between the US and Iran, and create enormous pressure on [US President Donald] Trump to strike back – possibly in the middle of a tense election season," according to *Politico*.

Willem Els, senior training co-ordinator at the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies, said America wouldn't make public this serious information if it didn't believe it to be credible.

"American intelligence would give out information like this only if it strongly believed it to be real and credible. It doesn't do something like this lightly," he said.

Els said there was also "too much at stake", with bilateral relations at a stage when America didn't "want to make waves" with the upcoming elections. "So, it must be a very real threat."

Terror expert Professor Hussein Solomon of the University of the Free State said the news came as no surprise. "This doesn't surprise me. Think about the Iranian strategy of using proxies, or how vulnerable South Africa is to these groups, or the fact that terror group Hezbollah operates here in South Africa. Or think of the terror attacks in Argentina [in 1992 and 1994] on Jewish targets because of developments in the Middle East. Or the Iranian involvement in South Africa during

our own urban terror campaign in 1998 in Cape Town. So, I think it's highly plausible."

A source close to the ambassador said Marks had known about the alleged assassination plot for "quite some time". He speculated that America, frustrated by the South African government's alleged failure to act on vital US intelligence, might have leaked the information to speed up investigations.

Jasmine Opperman from the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium said an Iranian assassination plot here was "unlikely".

She cautioned that it was impossible to interpret the *Politico* story thoroughly without more information being revealed from South Africa, Iran, and the US. She noted, nonetheless, that, she found the alleged plot improbable.

"This is highly unlikely. I cannot see why Iran would launch such an attack on South African soil when we have very good relations with Iran. I don't believe they will mess it up by making trouble here," she said.

Politico said that the US intelligence report wasn't clear why the South African-born Marks would be Iran's target for revenge, except that she is a close friend of Trump and a member of his exclusive Mar-a-Lago resort club in Florida. Some insiders believe it's also because she's Jewish.

Marks hit the ground running soon after being sworn in as ambassador in October last year.

The intelligence report pointed out that the Iranian government operated clandestine networks in South Africa, and might have considered Marks an easier target than US diplomats in other parts of the world, such as Western Europe, where the US has stronger relationships with local law enforcement and intelligence services.

Els told the *SA Jewish Report* that Iran's proxy, Hezbollah, was being used in other countries "to do its dirty work".

"This isn't something new for Iran. I'm not surprised at this revelation based on Iran's history. It's plausible that it would like to do

Iran propaganda".

South Africa's minister of state security, Ayanda Dlodlo, said this week the matter was "receiving the necessary attention" and that the State Security Agency was "interacting with all relevant partners in the country and abroad to ensure that no harm will be suffered

by the US ambassador, including any other diplomatic officials inside the borders of our country."

It's widely reported that US intelligence agencies have been tracking Iran closely since the assassination of Soleimani to try to identify likely targets for expected revenge attacks.

Jevon Greenblatt, the director of operations at the Community Security Organisation in Gauteng, said the information was concerning. "You cannot ignore something of this nature. We will be closely monitoring the situation. We recognise there are a myriad threats to the community, and it's our responsibility to protect it and empower it to protect itself."

He said he wasn't aware of any threat by Iran to the South African

Jewish community. "However, based on history and recent reports in the media from around the world, Iran is a threat to all diaspora Jewish communities. This is interesting timing considering it's Rosh Hashanah. We are on full alert."

Zev Kregel of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies said the news was "horrifying".

"Lana Marks has made an unbelievable impact on the lives of so many South Africans in a short space of time. That an American representative has been potentially endangered by Iran in our country is horrifying. If the allegations are correct, it's disturbing and concerning for the local Jewish community and all South Africans."



Photo: Ian Ossendryver

United States ambassador to South Africa Lana Marks

something like this.

"It's on record that conditions in South Africa are conducive for terrorists to operate so long as they don't perpetrate any violence here. There is a lot of organising and a lot of financing taking place here, and it seems like our government turns a blind eye."

What's more, he said, South Africa didn't have the resources to "monitor all the people that are operating at the moment here".

The US embassy has so far declined to comment on the reported assassination plans.

Tehran has vehemently denied them. The spokesperson for the Iranian ministry of foreign affairs, Saeed Khatibzadeh, called the *Politico* report "hackneyed and worn-out. Anti-

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Chief rabbis take on COVID-19

JORDAN MOSHE

"We have never had greater technological control of the human condition, and yet at the same time, one tiny little virus has brought humanity to a standstill. It's dramatic." So says Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the former chief rabbi of the United Hebrew

Congregations of the Commonwealth.

He was in an online conversation with Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein on Sunday, 13 September. The two of them unpacked the spiritual lessons we might glean from COVID-19 as we approach Rosh Hashanah.

Sacks points out that in Psalm 8, our true power in the universe is expressed in the words, "What is man that You are mindful of him?"

"We're absolutely tiny, and we know now how tiny we are, and I don't think previous generations really realised that," he says.

"They realised there are us and the stars, but I don't think they realised that there are billions of galaxies, each with a billion stars. We are terribly tiny, yet G-d has made us little lower than

angels."

Sacks says Judaism is effective at living with this paradox because it's capable of listening to truth across multiple perspectives, unlike the Greek and Hellenistic faiths which inform much of Western society today.

"For Plato, the ultimate human situation was contemplating a harmonious world of truth," Sacks says. "For Jews, the standard situation was at least two people having an argument."

The pandemic has better enabled us to see the hand of G-d in our world, Sacks and Goldstein say.

Says Goldstein, "Our journey over the past few months has been a spiritual one. In the past six months, the world has gone through a trauma that has affected us medically, financially, and religiously. However, it has given us an opportunity to look at our lives through different eyes and see the presence of G-d in the human universe."

One of the key lessons which have emerged over the past few weeks is the paradox of the human condition, they say.

"The Sages said that if human beings feel low, they should recall that all creation was undertaken for them," said Sacks. "They are the crown of creation. But if they ever feel too arrogant, they should remember that even a gnat preceded them in creation."

We see both of those things today, Sacks says. "This year, the Templeton Prize [an international award for harnessing the power of the sciences to explore the questions of the universe and human's place and purpose in it] went to an American scientist called Francis Collins for leading a project to map the

human genome," says Sacks. "He began the project as an atheist, and ended it as a religious believer. I find that fascinating. Here is a scientist who on purely scientific grounds looked at the human genome and realised that someone must have created it."

"It's extraordinary to think that people discovered that in every human body there are one trillion cells, that in every cell is a nucleus, and in very nucleus a division, and in every one of those is a copy of the human genome consisting of 3.1 billion letters of genetic code."

"It's fascinating



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

to see an atheist be persuaded of faith from science alone."

The rabbis believe that the pandemic has highlighted just how frequently we fail to appreciate what we have.

"We were in danger of taking everything around us for granted," says Sacks. "It's a huge mistake and reminds me of an exercise I used to use when speaking to audiences."

"I would take a piece of paper and put a black dot on it, hold it up, and ask what they see. They all said they saw a black dot, but I asked them to consider how much is really covered by the dot. You only notice the one dot, but take for granted the 99% of white paper."

It speaks to how we take for granted all the good, but only notice the bad.

"In a pandemic like this, we've stopped and noticed the good again, the wonderful things we hadn't seen before. We were getting blasé, things were getting too easy. Things won't be easy for the next 10 years, and I hope we learn to foreground the background which we don't typically notice," Sacks says.

Goldstein says we also need to see the interconnectedness between people, something we might not have fully appreciated in the past.

Continued on page 6>>

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18:22	19:15	19:15	Cape Town
17:32	18:23	18:24	Durban
17:52	18:42	18:43	Bloemfontein
17:54	18:46	18:47	Port Elizabeth
17:44	18:36	18:37	East London

CL – Candle-lighting YTE – Yom tov ends MS – Motsei Shabbat

Torah Thought

Understanding our mission

Today [Rosh Hashanah] is the birthday of the world. Everything we know came into being on this day except the creator of all things. Why did G-d create the world? He desired a dwelling place in the lower realm. Ours is the lower realm. Why was man created? To be partners in creating the dwelling place for G-d in the lower realm. How do we achieve that? By fulfilling the mitzvot, thereby elevating mankind and the world, and by studying Torah, thereby drawing true wisdom and knowledge into our hearts, minds, and into the lower realm.

What then is Rosh Hashanah? It's the day on which we renew our commitment to this purpose. We may have erred in the past year, but by making a decision to realign with our mission, we make ourselves worthy of a good judgement and blessing for the year to come.

Rosh Hashanah is actually the day Adam – mankind – was created, the sixth day of creation. Why do we call it the birthday of the world? Because the

world without man was like a superficial, picturesque painting. Only with the consciousness of the human soul did the world have its real purpose. A stage without actors is a decorated room with no life.

Why is the world G-d created so difficult and replete with hardship and pain? For two reasons. Just being on the lower realm means that doing good comes with difficulty as existence is uncultivated, and the process of transforming the lower realm into a place of light is a major challenge. The other is that being part of the lower realm (unlike angelic creations), mankind has two impulses – good and bad. Man acting on his "bad" desires, emotions, and thoughts brings pain and darkness onto the stage.

That said, man's soul has a special power to triumph over challenge and adversity. The soul is rooted in the highest source of divinity, and as such can overcome all hardships and transform darkness to light.

Rav Ilan Herrmann, Soul Workout Shul and community centre



The other reason man is able to succeed is because G-d "stands" at man's side always and when man makes a movement towards good, he is aided by G-d and in this way, is able to prevail. Furthermore, man is never given a challenge he isn't able to withstand and overcome. Thus in every circumstance, we can be assured that we have the capacity to overcome the challenge we are facing.

The tools that enable us to rise and achieve our divine mission in this world are the study of Torah and fulfilment of mitzvot. These tools must be specific to the dwelling place we want to create.

So, as we go into the new year, we should acknowledge and accept the primary mission for which we were created; resolve to access more frequently and deeply the manual to realise this mission; and adopt the activities (mitzvot) that actively create the dwelling place for G-d in our world.

Jewish Report

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Trolls add insult to injury on SAJR webinar

TALI FEINBERG

As people were giving heartbreaking accounts of life after tragedy at the SA Jewish Report webinar last Thursday, 10 September, the live stream on YouTube was attacked by internet trolls. Nonsensical phrases, anti-Israel blasts, cruel taunts, and antisemitic outbursts flooded the comment section.

It was all the more upsetting when contrasted with the poignant and painful stories the webinar's guests were recounting, which had nothing to do with politics, Israel, or religion.

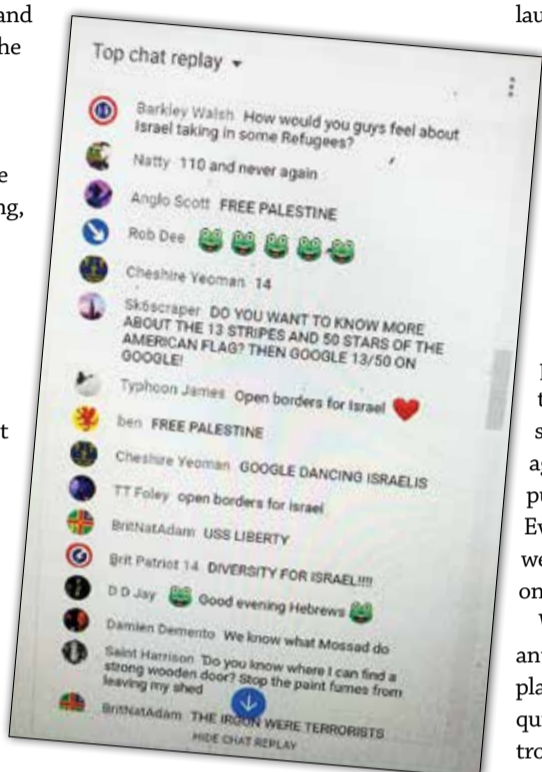
"Jodi Seef, I hope you have a great life" wrote Tushyan Panchel, addressing the devastated mother of Adam Seef who committed suicide last year. She was describing how she has managed to carry on since her son's death (see story on page 4).

It was followed by a flood of nonsensical comments supposedly from a plethora of users. They were mixed with anti-Israel and antisemitic phrases like "kvetch central"; "Google King David hotel bombing"; "How would you guys feel about Israel taking in some refugees?"; "Free Palestine"; "We know what Mossad do"; and "I wake up with a nice mug of Zyklon B", among other nonsensical and derogatory statements.

Said tech expert Arthur Goldstuck, "The event fell victim to a well-known tactic one can call 'suicide trolling', in which abusers trawl the internet looking for targets whom they taunt or bait, either to try to drive them to suicide, or to gloat over a suicide that has already happened. It's an extreme form of trolling, which is usually aimed at creating arguments, 'flame wars', and general chaos in online forums."

Goldstuck, the founder of a leading independent technology market-research organisation, said, "Little psychological study has been done on the phenomenon, but a 2017 Australian study linked it to psychopathology and sadism. The main motivation? Creating mayhem

online. The standard rule is 'don't feed the trolls', as in never respond to them in online forums and social media. However, this is easier said than done when it happens in an online event. For this reason, great care needs to be taken in how events are moderated, particularly when they deal with sensitive subjects."



"Trolling a live-streamed event is, sadly, totally normal", said Liron Segev, known as The Techie Guy, who spoke to the SA Jewish Report from Dallas in the United States. "It happens all the time. It doesn't matter the topic. How it works is that once these people find a link to a live stream, they share the links among themselves, and when it's live, they attack it. It's how they get their kicks, and they are from all over the world. It can be the most benign of topics. It's not a co-ordinated plan as such, they just saw the link, shared it, and raided it."

There are tools and settings to prevent this from happening. These can be found on YouTube, and there are free apps that can be used like Nightbot, he explained. Preventative measures include blocking certain words or phrases from being used in the chat, which is tricky if you want your audience to comment. There is also a setting that stops links from being shared.

It is also vital to have moderators that you trust to monitor the chat, who can block users or hide spam messages that get through protective measures. They can prevent people from posting for, say, the next five minutes, or block them altogether.

You can also turn off comments, which big brands usually do if they are launching a product on YouTube live.

There is also the option to slow down the chat, making it take, say, 10 seconds, for a comment to appear, which is easier to control and frustrating for the trolls. There is also a setting to prevent people from copying and pasting the same text over and over.

Ultimately, "If you have a live stream without any settings to prevent such an attack, then expect that this will happen", said Segev. He said it would almost definitely happen again if protective measures weren't put in place, as the trolls know the link. Even if people have to register for a webinar on Zoom, if it's streamed live on YouTube, then it's open to attack.

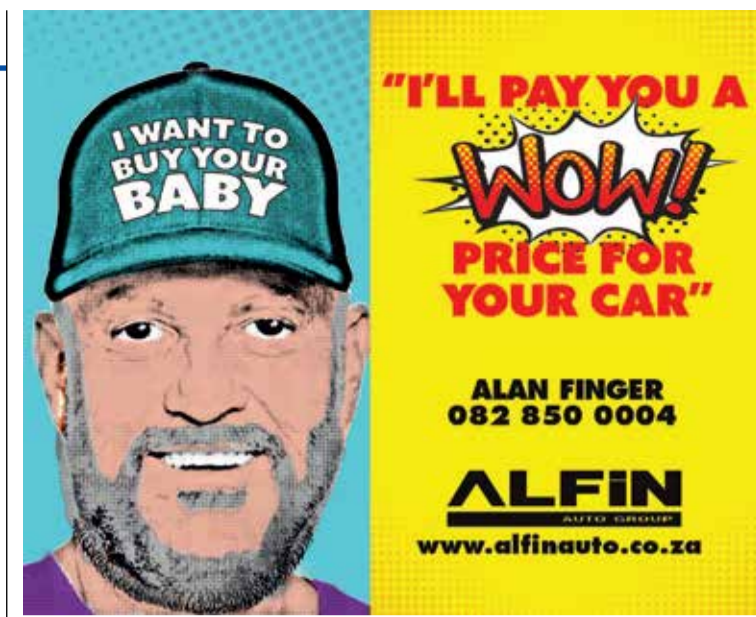
While some of the content was antisemitic, it wasn't necessarily planned as an antisemitic attack, but quickly evolved into that because the trolls picked up that it was a Jewish forum. Anything to do with Israel, Jews, or sensitive topics like suicide are kryptonite for these trolls, who milk the topic for all it's worth to make viewers feel uncomfortable. At the same time, a similar attack could have happened on a livestream webinar about something as uncontroversial as knitting.

"The phenomenon exists on anything live. It's saying to the world, 'Come and comment,'" said Segev.

SA Jewish Report chairperson and tech guru Howard Sackstein disagrees that the attack was undertaken by human beings. "If we analyse it, there were multiple accounts all posting multiple messages and the same thing at the same time. Messages ranged from pro-Palestinian to fascist to Neo-Nazi to complete nonsense. To me, they weren't human controlled, these were bots."

Bots (short for robots) are computers that have fake accounts and a set of messages, and they trawl the internet to see where they can post them.

"I think these bots were programmed to find something Jewish with a live broadcast. Even though the content was



about mental health, for the bots it was enough that it was Jewish channel with a livestream, which gave them an opportunity to post in quick succession. Their aim is to create conflict and influence society."

Sackstein said certain countries specialised in this, for example Russia, China, Ukraine, and Iran. But he is adamant that turning off the comments section isn't the answer. In the SA Jewish Report's case, he says, "We have built a digital 'Times Square' for people to interact and comment, and sometimes we have 1 000 comments during the

show. We don't want to stop that."

Social media expert Sarah Hoffman of Klikd said it was "definitely in line with any kind of trolling behaviour. It's disruptive, inflammatory, provocative, and malicious. It's to be expected if the webinar is on a link that is well-publicised. Platforms like YouTube are user-generated, which means that offensive content is usually removed only once we are alerted to it. While the platform does screen for grossly inappropriate or explicit content, nothing is foolproof."

Khaled's invitation to speak at publicly sparks disgust

MOSHE RAAB – JTA

As my calendar announced the approach of September, I began to relive an event that took place exactly 50 years ago. On 6 September 1970, my mother, my four siblings, and I were on a plane that was hijacked by terrorists.

TWA flight 741 was one of three planes successfully hijacked by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) that day. The hijacking of an El Al plane was foiled by onboard sky marshals.

At the time, I was a 14-year-old kid living in Trenton, New Jersey, whose only care was how the Baltimore Orioles were doing. This event changed my life, as well as the lives of the other 350 people who were on those planes.

I agonise over the subsequent acts of terror that have been committed all over the world ever since my personal experience. What cause can justify the threatening and taking of innocent lives?

Imagine the horror and disgust

that I, my family, and other hijack victims experienced when we read that Leila Khaled, one of the hijackers directly involved in the 1970 attacks, had been invited by San Francisco State University (SFSU) to address a forum on gender, justice, and resistance.

Khaled is a convicted terrorist. She is a member of the PFLP. She is a symbol not of justice and resistance, but wanton terrorism and death.

Khaled spent only a few days in jail. After her failed hijacking of the El Al plane, she was transferred by the Israeli sky marshals to the British police and released in exchange for hostages when a fifth plane was hijacked to secure her freedom.

Had Khaled ever apologised for her role in the hijackings or taken steps to show that she is committed to nonviolent efforts to achieve her desired end, I wouldn't object to her speaking at SFSU. People who genuinely learn often make the best teachers.

But even after 50 years, Khaled

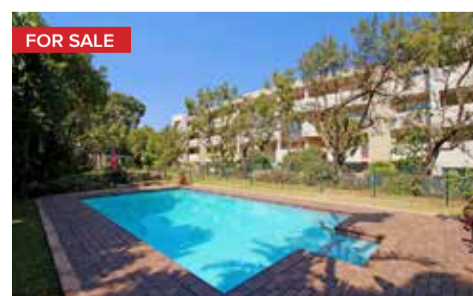
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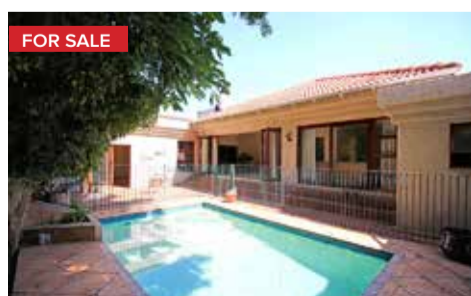
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TALI FEINBERG

When 19-year-old Johannesburg medical student Adam Seef took his own life on a trip to Israel in June 2019, it rattled the community to its core. Since then, many have attempted to find their way back from that dark day.

On a recent *SA Jewish Report* webinar, they shared how they manage to get up in the morning, put one foot in front of the other, and try to make meaning out of the tragedy.

Describing the moments her world changed forever, Adam's mother, Jodi Seef, recalled how she was on her way to work when her husband called her at 07:15 to say: "something's happened to Adam, you better come home". As she approached her front door, she just saw "a sea of Hatzolah" (medical rescue personnel).

"I was whisked upstairs. I'll never forget it. It was my mother-in-law, my daughter, and my husband, Justin. It was one thing to hear I had lost my child, then I had to hear how he died, and then I had to hear the note."

In his suicide note, Adam wrote, "I can't hold on any longer. I have finally reached rock bottom. I feel so alone no matter how many people I am surrounded by and cared for by. Ending my life is no one's fault but my own. I am so sorry if my death may greatly affect many people, but no one will ever understand what it's like living with a depression as great as this. People can say what they want, but I seriously cannot bear living another second like this," before his violent death.

Also on the webinar was Daryl Brown, who lost his legs when he threw himself in front of a London underground train in a failed suicide attempt, and who went on to rebuild his life. Seef thanked him for sharing his path back to hope, and said, "If only Adam had heard your story. There are so many parallels. If only he knew how loved he was. His suicide rocked the community because no one expected it. He had it all. His achievements were off the charts. But it was never enough for him."

She said that she and her husband had never pressured Adam to do well academically, but as a perfectionist with huge drive and ambition, he pushed himself.

"No one knew the demons he was grappling with. I think his actions were a way to try get away from the unbearable pain. We tried to get him help, and he had so many opportunities to talk to those around him, but in the end he wouldn't talk to anyone. I think I was a good parent, but of course, one can always do better. Adam was complicated. I had an idea of the breadth of challenges he faced, but not the depth. He was a master at hiding it."

"There are definitely days when I don't want to get up in the morning, and some days, I don't. My therapist says this is normal, as long as it's not every day. I get up because Adam would have wanted me to. He was so proud that I went to university and got a degree. He was proud that I'm a working mom. I'm still trying to make him proud. I also do it for my husband, my daughter, and my sisters, especially my sister who is in the battle of her life

with cancer."

She does three things every day to connect with Adam. First, she exercises. She walks every day, often with her twin sister. "Every time we walk, we find a dandelion. I have a precious photo of Adam blowing a dandelion. These flowers represent emotional healing. So we blow the dandelions, smile, and think of him.

save the life of one person, then he didn't die in vain," she said.

Adam's cousin, Adam Wolpe, spoke about one of these initiatives, Adams Forum. "We felt that the only way to move forward from the tragedy was to channel the emotional pain and build something that may save a life. I grew up with Adam, so it was very scary for me how good he was at hiding the

a sixth stage: finding meaning. She said that the support offered by Adams Forum contributed to healing, and provided a path and purpose for those struggling with tragedy.

Adam's friend, Dylan Jacobson, said that the pain "never gets easier", and that mental health must be taken as seriously as physical health if we are to prevent a similar tragedy.

Also on the webinar was Bryan Schimmel, who went from being an HIV-positive drug addict to South Africa's most celebrated musical director. He, Brown, and Seef all spoke of how pride stops people from getting help or making the right choice. After years of self-destruction in New York, Schimmel knew he would die if he didn't return home, but at first, his pride stopped him. When he eventually came back to South Africa he managed to build his extraordinary career, something that may never have happened had he tried to soldier on alone.

All three also spoke of the role that institutions, leaders, and communities must play in making all people feel accepted. Schimmel and Brown spoke of how society's judgement of their sexuality was a key factor in their feelings of worthlessness, and Adam wrote of the same feelings in his suicide note.

Said Seef, "I've spoken to many families, and I've found that many young people are grappling with the same feelings that Adam went through. They need to know that it's okay not to be okay, but get help before it's too late. It could have saved my son's beautiful life."



"Second, I have a lit candle that never goes out. It's next to the most magnificent picture of Adam, and on a tray made for him by a friend. The candle symbolises how his light will never go out in my heart.

"Third, I leave my bathroom light on every night. Adam was often out late, and then would come home and brush his teeth in my bathroom. So he would be the last person to switch off that light. I'm still waiting for my boy to come home, to switch off that light."

The conversations and initiatives that have emerged from his death also keep her moving forward. "If these can

pain he was in and how terribly alone he felt."

The Adams Forum website provides a space to write anonymously about what you are going through, ask for help, or simply be heard. "We're not professionals, but we hope to be a beacon of light. We have heard stories of people who have visited the site, and it's done something for them, given them a spark of hope," said Wolpe.

Celebrity psychologist Dorianne Weil commented that the five stages of grief are well known, but a few years ago, grief expert David Kessler added

Schoub heads government advisory team on COVID-19 vaccine

JORDAN MOSHE

The South African Jewish community's own Professor Barry Schoub has been selected to chair the most recently created Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19.

The appointment was made by Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize, and announced in a COVID-19 update released by the department of health on Monday, 14 September.

Along with eight other leading experts, Schoub has been tasked with advising the government on vaccine-related matters to ensure that decision makers remain abreast of all critical developments internationally.

"The idea of a committee is to create coherent strategies for advising government on the procurement and equitable distribution of vaccines when they become available," Schoub told the *SA Jewish Report* on Tuesday.

"Only a limited supply will initially be available when the vaccine is found, and we need strategies for how South Africa will go about acquiring and distributing it locally."

A retired expert in vaccinology and virology, Schoub has already played a significant role in combatting the pandemic to date, advising the office of the chief rabbi and shuls on matters related to COVID-19, alongside Netcare Chief Executive Dr Richard Friedland and emergency medicine specialist Professor Efraim Kramer.

Schoub said he was asked to head up the newly created MAC at the end of August,

reporting to Mkhize and other senior officials on developments concerning a vaccine.

"The advisory committee really began working two weeks ago," he said. "It consists of experts in different fields, including immunologists, epidemiologists, ethicists, and others who will lend their professional skills to the task at hand."

He said the committee had already held several meetings, and had drafted an advisory to the government. He also made a presentation to South Africa's National Coronavirus Command Council earlier this week illustrating various vaccine-related issues to senior cabinet members.

"Right now, our job is to advise the government on various procurement options and engage in discussions with different manufacturers," he said.

"Our other responsibility is to prepare local filling and distribution capacity with the facility in Cape Town called Biovac. Finally, we need to create a procurement mechanism through the World Health Organization's COVAX initiative, aimed at ensuring equitable distribution of the vaccine across the globe.

"At present, wealthy countries are stampeding to put in orders for vaccines, leaving others in the lurch," Schoub said. "A proper procurement mechanism will ensure the procurement of vaccines for certain middle and lower-income countries."

Much of the strategy is preliminary at this point owing to the lack of any vaccine on the market. Although the situation is unusual, Schoub believes that the early planning of an effective strategy is crucial to ensure that no country is left behind.

"It's a very complex procedure that needs a lot of advanced planning. This isn't like typical

ordering from a store that already has stock. We need to take a lot of candidate vaccines into careful consideration, examining their efficacy, safety, and appropriateness for South Africa, including an assessment of their storage, stability, ethical considerations, and the like."

Schoub stresses that the committee can offer only advice to the government, saying that the group is essentially made up of individual experts who are looking at various issues and offering their opinion.

Khaled's invitation to speak at publicly sparks disgust

>>Continued from page 3

has never expressed remorse or disavowed her actions or those of her comrades.

The most distressing and disheartening thing, 50 years after this horrible experience, is that the world hasn't eradicated this type of terrorism. As recently as January 2020, the PFLP (through Palestinian nongovernmental organisations) receives financial support of millions of dollars from European countries, the United States, Canada, Japan, UN-OCHA (the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), and UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund).

In theory, SFSU President Lynn Mahoney is correct in stating that a university is a place where different ideas are presented, discussed, and analysed so that individual conclusions can be drawn. But does that justify giving an unrepentant terrorist a forum to address students?

What will she teach them? The proper way to hijack an aircraft, based on her success in 1969, and what mistakes to avoid based on her failure in 1970?

When I was a student at university, I often faced new ideas that ran contrary to my beliefs. But these perspectives were presented by knowledgeable, respectable academics. Some

"Many vaccines are in trial stages right now," he said. "So we'll need to evaluate the data very carefully before anything is put out to the population in general. This is our chief challenge. From there, we'll need to determine adequate dosage, actual local distribution, and the prioritising of certain groups for initial rollout."

"The committee is already active, negotiating with manufacturers and planning every step that will be needed to get the vaccine out in South Africa," he said.

were Nobel Prize winners. None were terrorists.

Neither Mahoney in her published response nor the university indicated that anyone would be presenting an opposing view, one that is against terrorism and radicalisation. I cannot imagine how Mahoney, or any decent person, can claim Khaled's presentation will be an educational experience.

SFSU is no stranger to antisemitism. It has prevented the presentation of pro-Israel and Jewish ideas. In fact, SFSU has recently been sued by Jewish students who claimed that they were victims of systemic antisemitism. Not long ago, SFSU prevented then-Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat from speaking at a public event, and San Francisco Hillel was excluded from a fair on campus.

Inviting Leila Khaled to speak is a dishonour to all those who suffered at her and the PFLP's hands, and it glorifies terrorism, which is unacceptable.

• *Moshe Raab is a software consultant who lives in Ma'ale Adumim, Israel, with his wife of 41 years. Along with his mother and four siblings, he was on board a plane that was hijacked by the PFLP on 6 September 1970. This is 100% his opinion.*



Professor Barry Schoub

SA silent on historic Israel-Bahrain agreement

TALI FEINBERG

The Kingdom of Bahrain has joined the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in recognising the state of Israel, an agreement formalised with the historic signing of the Abraham Accords at the White House on Tuesday, 15 September.

As this small Arab country joined hands with the small Jewish state, South Africa's department of international relations and cooperation (DIRCO) was silent on the matter – in stark contrast to its condemnation of the UAE-Israel agreement a month ago.

The *SA Jewish Report* repeatedly asked DIRCO for a statement on the Bahrain-Israel agreement, but none was forthcoming.

It seems that this silence on South Africa's part could be because "South Africa was caught off guard on the UAE announcement, and I think the addition of Bahrain and other Arab countries to the accords could put South Africa in a very awkward spot, having to re-evaluate its somewhat myopic stance on Middle East relations," says local political analyst Daniel Silke. "South Africa was diplomatically unprepared for this rapid turn of events, and is probably scrambling to form some kind of new strategy."

Steven Gruz, political analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs, agrees that this is a "fairly unexpected development. Almost at the last minute, Bahrain also decided to normalise relations. However, it's not as if South Africa hasn't had time

to respond, so it could be that it doesn't want to give more attention to this. We know that South Africa is on the side of the Palestinians, who feel betrayed by these developments. South Africa has made its views clear. Maybe Bahrain wasn't 'important' enough to comment further."

Gruz says the agreement is significant in that this is the fourth Arab state to recognise Israel – along with Egypt, Jordan, and now the UAE. "Israel has long strived for recognition and normalisation in the region. Bahrain is a small but wealthy country, and like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, is opposed to Iran. There are business and cultural opportunities. It is the 'second domino' to have fallen. At the signing ceremony, both United States President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hinted that five or six Arab countries may follow, and Netanyahu spoke of the 'circle of peace' that he wants to expand."

Furthermore, "While these are the first Arab nations to recognise Israel since Jordan and Egypt, those have generally been a 'cold peace' amongst elites and leaders. There hasn't been much 'people to people' contact," says Gruz. "It seems like the Abraham Accords formalised what was already happening in the background. For a decade or more, there has been extensive Israeli investment in both the UAE and Bahrain, but it has been below the radar. This now brings it out into the open."

He says the agreement benefits Netanyahu in distracting attention from his domestic problems back home like the corruption charges and his

handling of the coronavirus crisis. For Trump, it may benefit his election campaign, but "seven weeks is a long time in politics, and foreign policy doesn't always have a strong impact on voters. It's definitely a big deal, and credit is due to both Trump and Netanyahu. However it isn't as big as peace between Israel and the Palestinians, which is a long way off."

In terms of the impact this will have on Israel and the Palestinians, Gruz says the Palestinians have largely rejected these developments, which they see as a betrayal. However, if they see the "dominoes falling" and normalising, there will be pressure on them to come to the table and compromise. "At the signing ceremony, both the UAE and Bahraini foreign ministers talked about their support for a two-state solution and the Palestinians. However the Palestinians have now withdrawn their ambassadors from both states in protest, and have warned they will do so in other Arab countries that recognise Israel," says Gruz.

He notes, "At the signing ceremony, the body language showed that this was genuine, and based on a confluence of interests. No one was dragged there kicking and screaming."

Silke says the agreement with Bahrain is possibly a "supporting act for what will be the big



Jared Kushner gives the King of Bahrain, Hamad bin Isa bin Salman al-Khalifa, a Torah scroll for a synagogue in Bahrain

prize: Saudi Arabia joining the accords".

As David Ignatius writes in the *Washington Post*, "The significance of Bahrain's action is partly that it wouldn't have happened without the blessing of Saudi Arabia, which is joined by a causeway to the small Persian Gulf state. The Saudis have historically exercised what amounts to a veto over Bahraini policy. In this case, the Saudis silently endorsed their tiny neighbour's decision, rather than vetoing it."

Writing in the *New York Times*, David Kirkpatrick elaborates, "Bahrain's announcement that it would become the fourth Arab state to normalise relations with Israel was arguably the most significant clue yet that Saudi Arabia – the heavyweight of Gulf politics – might be moving in the same direction, albeit on its own slower time scale."

Continued on page 12>>

White House ceremony celebrates new era for Israel, UAE, and Bahrain

RON KAMPEAS – JTA

Benjamin Netanyahu has complained for years about Arab leaders telling their people one thing in Arabic, and diplomats saying another to Western audiences in English.

Not on Tuesday.

Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was on the White House lawn speaking – in Arabic – about the "innate principle" of peace, and thanking the Israeli prime minister for helping to bring it about.

that reinforces our shared will to achieve a better future for generations to come," Bin Zayed said.

Netanyahu, who didn't mention the Palestinians in his remarks, couldn't quite shake them or their claims to territories he hopes to annex. The agreement with the UAE calls for a "just, comprehensive realistic and enduring solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict".

Reports were circulating that the US had provided assurances to the UAE that Israel wouldn't move ahead with annexing parts of the West Bank until at least 2024.

The deals, released hours later by the White House, didn't mention annexation, instead pledging co-operation in a number of areas including security, trade, tourism, the economy, education, and healthcare.

Gilad Erdan, the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations who was present at the ceremony, said Netanyahu's pledge to annex parts of the West

Bank wasn't moribund, but acknowledged that it was dependent on the Trump administration.

The other matter of substance that may have unnerved Netanyahu were the talks between US and UAE officials over the sale of F-35 stealth combat jets. The Israeli government is opposed to the sale. Trump made it clear he wasn't.

The day was marked repeatedly by signals that Netanyahu owed much to Trump. He sat silently as Trump disparaged his rival in the November presidential elections, Joe Biden, as "sleepy Joe" three times, effectively becoming a prop for Trump in his re-election campaign.

For all of those concessions, there was much for Netanyahu to celebrate. The Trump administration teased some of the contents of the deals in a news release, saying the UAE, Israel, and Bahrain had "committed to the exchange of embassies and ambassadors, and to begin co-operation across a broad range of fields including education, healthcare, trade, and security".



Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump participate in the signing of the Abraham Accords

If the agreements signed on Tuesday, 15 September, by leaders of the UAE, Israel, the United States, and Bahrain were historic, it was because of this: two Arab leaders were praising peace not simply as a means of ending bloodshed, the precipitate for the cold peace that Israel has had for decades with Jordan and Egypt, but as an end in itself.

"We are witnessing today a new trend that will create a better path for the Middle East," Bin Zayed said. "This peace accord, which is a historic achievement for the United States, the state of Israel and the United Arab Emirates will continue to have a positive impact as we believe that its reverberations will be reflected on the entire region."

It was a shining moment for Netanyahu, and he was pleased to bask in the vindication.

Except, Bin Zayed clearly saw it as peace for something more than just peace.

"Thank you for choosing peace, and for halting the annexation of Palestinian territories, a decision



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Making real change for 5781

As we step into 5781 in the Hebrew calendar, we witness what appears to be genuine change in the Middle East and an about-turn in attitudes towards Israel. The timing is uncanny, or so it would seem.

As we draw to the end of a year that has been like nothing we have never experienced before and head into Rosh Hashanah, real change is happening in our world. And it has mostly come as a surprise.

I'm sure that behind-the-scenes negotiations between Israel, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – chaperoned by the United States – may well have been ongoing, but success still came as a surprise to most of us.

And I'm quite sure Israel haters never thought they would see the day that Israel and Muslim countries in the Middle East agreed – in writing – to be peaceful friends and allies. It must really rankle them as it goes against everything they want the world to believe about Israel.

Indeed, this is a wonderful change that for so long seemed impossible.

Most South Africans are fed by media and a strong anti-Israel lobby, which includes high ranking members of government, that Israel is the Arab world's pariah and the cause of everything bad in the Middle East.

These people would prefer us all to hate Israel.

It just goes to show that Bahrain and the UAE believe there is more reason to ally themselves with this tiny Jewish state than there is to have it as their enemy. They aren't wrong.

And unlike local judges, outspoken radio hosts, and the like, the anti-Israel lobby can do nothing to stop this. It can't bully these two countries into submission. It can't use any of its preferred tactics. It can't call them racist, or attack their integrity, or even their positions of employment.

What's more, it appears that the UAE and Bahrain are just the first of many such countries to ally themselves with Israel. Even – as we wrote in last week's newspaper – Malawi is countering this anti-Israel stance.

Here's hoping a new day is dawning, and our own government heeds the call to take a neutral stand on Middle East politics and gets involved in working towards peace, thereby ensuring that it's on the right side of history.

It's such a huge change at the end of a year in which the world has been turned on its proverbial head with the COVID-19 pandemic! This past year has brought us death, lockdown, job losses, economic chaos the world over, and so much more.

I, for one, won't be sad when a new year dawns, one that will bring positive change as well as healthy and happy news on a communal, national, and international level. Bring it on!

But change isn't something we sit in shul – or at home, as the case may be this year – and consider. Change is never easy. Real change requires much more than just thought and great ideas.

When we contemplate life changes or even personal growth, while it does require planning, it's more about hard and persistent work.

You can't decide today that you are going to treat your staff better, get fit, or stop yelling at your children – and then it just happens. I wish it were that simple. It requires the changing of long-entrenched habits and a lot of conscious work.

What's more, genuine change requires courage and conviction so that it doesn't become yet another fast-fading New Year's resolution.

The reality of change becomes a question of just how much you want to make it happen. We can't change other people, we can only change ourselves. We certainly can't change ourselves because someone else wants us to be different. We can change only because it's something we're personally determined to do.

However, the truth is that change is growth, and unless we're willing to change, we can't develop and improve. And it does start with a simple decision to make a move, and the rest follows from there.

So, far be it for me to scare you off from changing and improving your life, I'm merely telling you that contemplating it on Rosh Hashanah simply isn't enough.

But, as we have seen in the Abraham Accord signed this week in the United States by Bahrain, Israel, and the UAE, change is possible and, while difficult, is ultimately positive.

And, as we see the blossoms on our trees and smell the jasmine in our gardens, we watch the dawn of a new year approaching. We may have been looking forward to a life unchanged from previous years, but alas, this isn't going to happen.

The world as we know it has changed. Our reality will never be exactly what it was, no matter how much you and I may want it to be. Our "normal" will from now on be the so-called "new normal".

In this instance, change has happened, and we have no control over it. The world's growth may not feel like a positive move right now, however, it is as it is. And change is positive. We just need to find the good and uplifting in it.

We need to grow with change. We need to find our own way in the new normal of 5781.

I have to admit, I'm grateful to move away from the new decades. The year 5780 and 2020 hasn't been easy. It has brought much hardship and pain. So, hopefully, 5781 and, down the line, 2021, will bring joy.

May 5781 bring each and every one of you, our readers, the courage and perseverance to make the changes you want in your own lives, and the strength to make the new normal work for you.

Shabbat shalom and shana tova to you all!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Treaty between Israel and UAE leaves others in the dust

OPINION

HARRY JOFFE



How warm are relations between Israel, Egypt, and Jordan? A few articles on the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies' (BESA's) website analyse these treaties.

In the first one, dated 3 September, Professor Hillel Frisch makes the point that the peace treaties between Israel, Egypt, and Jordan are limited to narrow diplomatic and security relations. He describes them as a cold peace. He goes on to note that the previous Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, never made an official visit to Israel throughout his 30 years of rule.

Neither has King Abdullah of Jordan. In spite of being in power for more than a decade, Abdullah has never visited Israel, even though it's only slightly more than 200 kilometres from Amman to Jerusalem. More recently, it was reported that the king refused to talk to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the phone.

On the cultural side, Frisch notes that Israel has been at peace with Egypt for more than 40 years, but no Egyptian soccer team has ever played against an Israeli team either in Israel or anywhere else. No delegations from an Egyptian university have ever visited an Israeli counterpart, or engaged in a joint programme.



Then, in a second BESA paper dated 6 September, Dr Edy Cohen notes that although there is close security co-operation between Israel and Egypt, the Egyptian media is virulently and bitterly anti-Israel. He gives a detailed account of how difficult it is for Egyptians to visit Israel as tourists (from the Egyptian side). The process includes first having to get permission from Egyptian intelligence, and being warned against making such a trip. For Egyptians wishing to live in Israel – there are about 6 000 doing so – the process is even more difficult. Clearly although there is a formal peace between the countries, relations aren't warm.

Will the treaty with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) turn out to be any different? Although of course it's too early to know for sure, there are many reasons to hope that this particular treaty will be different and relations between the two countries will be much warmer.

First, Israel and the UAE have never fought a war against each other, and they have no shared borders or any land disputes. There is therefore no history, unlike in the case of Egypt and Jordan.

Second, Egypt and Jordan are poor countries.

If you look at nominal gross domestic product per capita, Egypt is at US\$3 046 (R50 784), with

Jordan only slightly higher at US\$4 200 (R70 024). Israel and the UAE tower over them, with per capita GDPs of US\$42 000 (R700 241) and US\$37 750 (R625 215) respectively, with the UAE much higher on a purchasing power parity basis. Israel really has very little in common with Egypt and Jordan, and apart from water and gas, the trade opportunities aren't that vast. The UAE, on the other hand, is a dynamic and wealthy economy, much more similar to Israel when it comes to growth industries, and this means there will be far more opportunities for both to benefit from expanding trade. Industries like technology, medicine, green energy, agriculture, and water immediately come to mind.

Third, the UAE is a much more worldly country, with an integrated and open economy. It's a tax centre in the Middle East, a modern and thriving economy that's an important part of the global system and international trade.

Its citizens travel widely, and it's also a country which has always been used to entertaining and hosting foreigners. Emiratis constitute only roughly 20% of the total population, making the UAE home to one of the world's highest percentage of immigrants.

Accepting Israelis is unlikely to be much of an issue

for the local populace who are used to having foreigners and people that are different. Indeed, Israelis have always been present in the UAE, just not on an Israeli passport up to now.

Finally, what has been interesting already, is the high level of cultural acceptance in the UAE of Israeli and Jewish values and norms. On 8 September, AP [Associated Press] showed pictures of an Israeli model wearing an Israeli flag while doing

a shoot in the Dubai desert of a new collection of lounge wear. Probably of even more importance, the *Jerusalem Post* reported on 9 September that the Abu Dhabi department of culture and tourism had advised all hotel establishments throughout the emirate to include kosher food and beverage options on room service and dining room menus for incoming tourists and visitors. This wasn't something that ever happened in Egypt and Jordan.

Then, last Thursday, the Sheba Medical Center became the first hospital in Israel to sign an agreement with the UAE, announcing a deal with UAE's APEX National Investment. Under the memorandum of understanding, Sheba and APEX will collaborate on a range of healthcare projects. The two agreed to co-operate on battling COVID-19, and on medical research and innovation. Sheba's director general was quoted as saying this would change the dynamics of healthcare and innovation.

There is every reason to believe, and the early signs are certainly very encouraging, that this peace will be different to the others. It will be a warm peace, and lead to a thriving relationship between the people of the UAE and Israel, not one just between governments.

• Harry Joffe is a Johannesburg tax and trust attorney.

Chief rabbis take on COVID-19

>>Continued from page 2

Sacks illustrated this contrast by referring to earlier crises in world history, namely World War I and the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, and the end of World War II in 1945.

"The responses to these two events were completely different," Sacks says. "After 1918, the West tried to act as if the war and pandemic hadn't happened. It wanted to be back where it was, living in an 'I' based society. The result was the 'Roaring Twenties', wild parties, and a very selfish society."

The end result was the Great Depression, economic fallout, the growth of Nazism and fascism, and, a mere 21 years after the war to end all wars, the world was at war again.

"That is a key lesson of how not to respond," says Sacks. "1945 was different. Britain enacted the Education Act, which ensured everyone had

a secondary education, an act of major inclusion. America made legal provision to support those who had made sacrifices in the war, and its foreign policy offered loans to the shattered countries of Europe. People were driven by a sense of 'we'."

The end result was 75 years of peace, Sacks says.

"It's that clear. If we go back to selfish society, we will have learned nothing from all this. We have to become more collectively responsible, developing a stronger sense of common good.

"I really believe that Jews are a good example of this. Everything holy in Judaism is communal. Davening is 'we', and even when we're saying, 'I've sinned', we speak in plural and say, 'we've sinned'."

"A communal emphasis is what the world needs right now."

Getting to know Bizos: a play in two acts

OPINION

VICTOR GORDON



It was a hot December afternoon in 2017 when I entered a driveway on 13th Avenue, Parkhurst, the home of Advocate George Bizos. Finally, I would meet this icon as arranged by his son, Damon, an eminent Johannesburg surgeon who now approached me from the veranda of his father's rustic-looking home which, I was to learn, George had built with his own two hands about 50 years earlier.

At a table on the veranda, awaiting my arrival, sat Advocate Bizos dressed in khaki shorts and short-sleeved shirt. The welcome was warm and cordial.

After some initial chit-chat, I addressed the reason for my visit. I reminded him that I was the playwright who had called him some weeks earlier and, by way of introduction, provided a summary of previous productions of my work, locally and internationally. I explained that I wished to write a play in the form of a monologue based on his fascinating life. Clearly, however, I needed his blessing and co-operation to go ahead with this project.

Realising that he needed something on which to base his decision, I had written the opening scene amounting to approximately 10 pages which I offered to read to him. Somewhat bemused, he readily agreed and listened intently while I somewhat self-consciously worked my way through the script. Glancing at him now and then, I could tell that he was fully engrossed. Much to my delight, with the completion of the final paragraph, he smiled and said, "You may go ahead. You have my full support."

What followed was three hours of coffee, cake, and unending anecdotes and reminiscences, many of which were already known to me from his two books, *No-one to blame?* and *Odyssey to Freedom*.

Sadly, George won't be able to view this tribute to his wonderful life but, hopefully, will watch from the heavenly wings and enjoy the incredible legacy he left behind.

One story that he repeated more than once, concerned Cecilia Feinstein, a young Jewish school teacher who entered the store where, at the age of 12, the young George worked behind the counter loading stock onto shelves. He and his father (who was employed on a mine) had arrived in Durban after escaping Nazi-occupied Greece, and had accepted whatever jobs were available in Johannesburg. When Miss Feinstein learned that the young boy's father had failed to enrol him in a school, she approached the principal of the school at which she taught who readily agreed to George joining her class. Had Miss Feinstein not entered the store and intervened, there was every chance that George Bizos might have fallen by the wayside and never reached his potential as one of South Africa's leading jurists.

Three months later, with the play now complete, I visited Bizos again. This time, I read him the complete work. At the end, he wept and squeezed my hand through a whispered "Thank you". Much later, I departed, having spent five inspirational hours in the sole company of a man who exuded integrity, generosity, and humanity. I also took the opportunity to view some exquisite paintings, the work of his late wife, Arethe, who had passed away just months earlier.

George had asked that The Market Theatre produce the play due to his long association with it as a member of the board. However, delay followed delay, and valuable time was

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver



George Bizos

lost. Finally, I withdrew from any further negotiations, and offered the play to The Johannesburg Civic Theatre, a mere week prior to the COVID-19 shutdown. At the time, it seemed that my timing couldn't have been worse.

For almost five months I heard nothing from the artistic director, which, under the circumstances, came as no surprise. However, just a week before Bizos' death, I received notification that The Civic Theatre planned to stage a rehearsed reading of the play before an invited audience on 16 October as part of its re-launch

programme.

Sadly, George won't be able to view this tribute to his wonderful life but, hopefully, will watch from the heavenly wings and enjoy the incredible legacy he left behind. I, on the other hand, am fully aware of the privilege I was afforded in getting to know him, to some degree, for that short period during which we shared a project unique to us both.

• Victor Gordon is a playwright and retired businessman.

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55
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"We are so grateful and emotional. What a special way to name our baby girl."

Ian & Lara
Johannesburg, South Africa



"Just watched the video of our granddaughter's naming this morning - just want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

Howard
Toronto, Canada



"It was very special to us to have a sense of normalcy with our daughter's naming being done in a proper Minyan. This will always be part of our daughter's story and I hope that she will always remember that all of Klal Yisrael is one united people."

Stein Family
New York City, USA



"It was incredible and meaningful for us to be able to name our princess in the Sandringham Gardens Minyan, a place which is very close to our hearts."

Ethan and Yael
London, UK



"So touching to have our baby Tzivia named by your holy minyan."

Bader Family
Montreal, Canada



"Someday I want to thank you all in person for this amazing gesture."

Ezi & Galit
Uruguay



* Photograph taken prior to masks and social distancing became mandatory.

KADDISH FOR
3500
NESHOMAS

"Sandringham Gardens held a special place in my father's heart and he would be moved to know that the organisation that he gave so much to is now facilitating that kaddish be said for him."

Farrel
Melbourne, Australia



"I know your shul as I myself said kaddish there some years ago. Very special mitzvah! Thank you."

Manfred
Boca Raton, Florida



"We are the main Jewish aged care facility in Sydney Australia and unfortunately have had to cancel all synagogue services. It was so wonderful to know we can ask the residents at Sandringham Gardens to say Yahrzeit for the father of one of our residents who was very distressed that he could not say Kaddish here."

Lynda
Sydney, Australia



"I cannot tell you how much it means to me knowing that kaddish is being said for my dear mother Z"L. while I am not able to say it myself."

Raymond
Liverpool, England



"You did a true chesed, and on behalf of my family, we greatly appreciate it."

Leora
Tel Aviv, Israel



A FEW GOOD MEN

The miracle of the Sandringham Gardens Minyan

When worldwide lockdowns began in March, shuls around the world were instructed to close their doors. Anticipating the virus's onslaught, the Chevrah Kadisha had already closed its facilities to outsiders two weeks before South Africa's own lockdown was announced. For several months, the Sandringham Gardens minyan was one of the only places on earth with ten men left standing together.

At first, the minyan, headed by Rabbi Jonathan Fox, fielded local prayer requests, filling members with pride at the opportunity to give something priceless back to the community that supports them. Then requests began to pour in from countries around the world as the minyan's fame spread far and wide.

No doubt it's very existence brought tremendous spiritual strength and protection to our residents, community and the world. It ensured that the chain of minyanim that had begun in South Africa in 1841 remained unbroken.



Some of the babies named in our minyan.

Sir Ronald Harwood makes his final exit

TALI FEINBERG

Sir Ronald Harwood (formerly Ronald “Ronnie” Horwitz) passed away in London last week at the age of 85, after a lifetime as a leading writer, playwright, screenwriter, and actor.

He won the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for *The Pianist* in 2003, and was nominated for an Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay for *The Diving Bell* and the *Butterfly* in 2007. He was knighted for his services to drama in 2010. His love of the stage can be traced back to his childhood in Cape Town.

“I grew up with Ronnie Horwitz,” says Abel Levitt, speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Israel. “We started school at the Kings Road Primary School in 1941, in the same class of Sub A. We completed our schooling at Sea Point Boys High in 1951. Throughout our school lives, we were in the same class, at Kings Road, at Sea Point Junior, and at Sea Point Boys High. We lived close to one another, Ronnie in Victoria Road, and I in Brompton Avenue. We were in the Cubs and Scouts together, we played tennis together, and watched cricket at Newlands together. At school, Ronnie took the lead in the school plays. He was outstanding.”

Harwood’s childhood friend, Gerald Masters, recalls, “My father was very good at making things, and made me a large model theatre which Ronnie and I made good use of.” Masters’ original surname was Mosselson, which he was asked to “anglicise” by his employer when he went to London because it was too Jewish. Indeed, the *New York Times* (NYT) reports that Harwood also “anglicised his Jewish surname as part of his effort to become a British stage actor”.

Writing in his memoir *What Ever Next*, Masters described how as children, they named this model theatre “The Royal Acropolis”.

“We mutually agreed to Ronnie becoming ‘Sir’ many years before he was actually knighted. Our programmes always had ‘Sir Ronald Horwitz’ as the star.

“Ronnie had long decided to go to London to train

and eventually star in the West End. Just before he left South Africa, we were invited by the American rabbi, Dr David Sherman, to take children’s services [at the Progressive Synagogue in Cape Town]. He even suggested we might consider training for the rabbinate!”

However, they both headed to London, which the NYT says Harwood saw as “the centre of the universe”. They shared accommodation. “My late uncle was celebrated concert pianist Lionel Bowman,” says Masters. “He and his partner, Raymond Marriot, got Ronnie’s career underway.”



Sir Ronald Harwood

“Ronnie had left the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) before completing his three years,” Masters says. “Money had been a problem, but an opportunity arose which would change his life. The opportunity was that Marriot, a great admirer of actor-manager Donald Wolfitt [later Sir Donald], had heard that he was auditioning actors for small parts in his Shakespeare season. Ronnie got the job and the first play I saw in London was that night. He popped up in various small parts, some non-speaking.

“Ronnie’s famous and very successful play [later a film], *The Dresser*, is based on his time with Wolfitt, whose dresser had left him. Ronnie asked me if I would like the job, but I ruled myself out. Ronnie decided to propose himself, and was accepted. It turned out to be a move that would change his life forever. *The Dresser* was his ‘golden pension’.”

However the two friends struggled at times, and Masters relates a hilarious story of them working in the kitchen of a hospital, where he once “hid a small cooked chicken under my pullover, and Ronnie may have had some other food items under his. At the exit gate, my chicken slipped out onto the pavement. If the official at the gate saw the creature, he said nothing, and we beat a hasty retreat. We ate well that night.”

From these humble moments, Harwood would go on to befriend royalty. “Whilst my dad was HRH [Harold Ralph Horwitz], it was Ronnie who was friends with His Royal Highness Prince Charles and Camilla. They hosted a dinner to honour him on his 80th birthday,” says his niece, Tessa Gnesin, from Sydney. Says Masters, “I know Ronnie was truly surprised to win the Oscar, but his real delight was being knighted. He once said to me, ‘Here I am, little Ronnie Horwitz from Sea Point, a knight who can call Prince Charles a friend.’”

“He had a great love for cricket, and was a regular at Lord’s. Whilst not a practicing Jew, Ronnie went to shul every year to say Kaddish for my dad,” says Gnesin. Indeed, Harwood’s interest in his Jewish identity would blossom in later life. Levitt and his wife, Glenda, have spent 20 years working to protect the memory of the Jews of the Lithuanian *shtetl* of Plunge (Plungyan) who were killed in the Holocaust, and educate youngsters there about this history, and Harwood became intricately involved in that story.

Levitt recalls, “It was whilst reading his novel *Home* that I learned for the first time that Ronald’s father, Isaac Horwitz, had emigrated to South Africa from Plungyan, where my father also came from. In half a lifetime, our fathers’ ancestry wasn’t a subject of discussion. I called Ronnie. ‘What about you and [Harwood’s wife] Natasha joining us in a trip to our *shtetl* Plungyan?’ I asked. The reply was immediate. The meeting at the airport was emotional. He had recently been awarded the Oscar for *The Pianist*, and here he was in Lithuania.”

“Upon our arrival, our first stop was at the apartment of Yacovas Bunka, who has welcomed

hundreds of Plungyan Jews. Few would have been of the international stature of Ronald Harwood. There was an immediate warm relationship. The following morning, we proceeded to the mass graves, where 1 800 Plungyan Jews were murdered in July 1941. Ronald did not have family who had remained in Lithuania, but he walked around, silent, as he absorbed the sanctity of the moment. He was profoundly moved.

“Our next visit was to the Saules Gymnasium. Every class had seen *The Pianist*, and they were riveted by Ronald’s charm and dynamic personality. In the evening, there was an event where Ronald related his experiences of working on the film. The following morning, we met with the mayor. I remember Ronald’s words, ‘Mr Mayor, I know that you have difficulties with budgets. I appeal to you, whatever you do, don’t reduce the budgets for culture. To do so will be to the detriment of your society.’”

This moment motivated the Levitts to create an art competition, titled “The Ronald Harwood Holocaust art competition”, where children in the region would explore Lithuania’s Holocaust history through art. “It has grown from a local event, to a regional national event, and all forms of art are part of the competition: painting, drawing, sculpture, drama, music, and writing,” says Levitt.

“For us, that experience of being with my lifelong friend in the land of the birth of our fathers, and to witness young people’s appreciation of the artistry of Ronald Harwood, inspired us to display the winning artworks in countries around the world, including South Africa and Lithuania.”

The moment that Harwood won the Oscar was an emotional one. “I sat together with my family glued to the TV until all hours in the morning,” recalls Gnesin. “He brought incredible pride to the family, and from humble South African Jewish beginnings, achieved the highest honour possible in his field. How we wished his late parents and siblings could have shared in his glory. They all contributed greatly in allowing him to follow his dreams at the tender age of 17.”

Iron Dome: from ‘mission impossible’ to saving lives

TALI FEINBERG

The Iron Dome missile defence system is a part of Israeli life, especially in the south of the country, where it has shot down thousands of rockets terrorising Israeli civilians. However, few know the story of how this Israeli invention came to be, and how it was long seen as a mission impossible.

This was revealed on an *SA Jewish Report* webinar, “Iron Dome: The Untold Story of Israel’s Secret Weapon.” Among the panellists were the producer and director of the documentary series, *Iron Dome*, Nati Dinnar and Uri Bar-On; Iron Dome inventor Chanoch Levin; and Be’er Sheva resident Miriam Green.

“Most people only heard about the Iron Dome after its success. But the story actually started seven years before, and there was a high chance of failure. We talked to more than 100 people who played a role in the story,” said Dinnar. The documentary series is made up of three episodes that can be accessed on the new Israeli streaming platform, IZZY.

The series takes a deep dive into the politics around the invention of such a system, and “tells the story of how Israel works on all levels”, said Dinnar. Bar-On said it was “important to tell the whole story from a personal point of view. We didn’t want it to focus only on the

technicalities and engineering, but also on the lives affected by rocket attacks.” He said he shed many tears working on the film and watching it, even after seeing the same scenes a thousand times.

“I visited Sderot many times,” said Levin. “The motivation for us was to look at the children [who were] experiencing rockets every month for 20 years. How would this affect them in future? That was the biggest motivation for me and my team to accelerate the whole project.”

He said that former Sderot mayor and then defence minister from 2006 to 2007, Amir Peretz, was the project’s biggest supporter in the beginning. Peretz had visited children whose father died in a rocket attack, and one son told him he had done nothing to prevent it. While Peretz was torn between an American laser system and “an invention beyond anyone’s imagination”, he eventually signed off on the Iron Dome during his short time in the defence ministry.

But before that, “Almost no one believed we could do it. Not the army, not the government. Even I, who had developed many missiles, thought it was almost impossible,” said Levin. Many supported the use of the American laser system, and saw no point in Israelis wasting time and money to invent something new. Finding funding was a huge

challenge, and costs had to be kept low.

“Our first test failed. But then one of my engineers said that maybe the cables weren’t connecting properly. After fixing this, we tested it again, and it worked. When the Iron Dome intercepted that rocket, it was the first time I believed we could do something impossible,” said Levin with a smile. Indeed, a clip from the film shows the tension and anxiety of the test, followed by celebration when it succeeded – a scene reminiscent of a moon landing.

Levin said he realised his son’s remote-control car had many parts that could be used in the Iron Dome, and some of these parts were, indeed, sourced for the invention. “It’s the first missile in the world with parts from Toys ‘R’ Us,” he

quipped.

The panellists noted that while President George W Bush chose not to provide funding, it was President Barack Obama who signed off on \$80 million (R1.3 billion) for the project. His decision was possibly influenced by his visit to Sderot when he was a presidential candidate. Each Iron Dome battery costs about \$100 million (R1.6 million), and each missile within the battery costs \$50 000 (R825 716).

The filmmakers spent many hours talking to the families affected. One mother who lost a child in a rocket attack at first refused to be part of the project. But she eventually trusted them, and shared the senseless tragedy of her child’s death. When the film had its small premiere under COVID-19 lockdown, it was

held at her house.

They said it was also important to hear the Palestinian side of the conflict, but managed to find only one Palestinian who would go on record. He spoke of how the Iron Dome saves lives on both sides, because fewer Israeli casualties means fewer retaliations.

As a resident of Be’er Sheva, Green described the harrowing reality of living under the threat of rockets. “During Operation Cast Lead, my children slept in our hallway as it had a bit more reinforced concrete than the rest of the house, and we didn’t have a safe room,” she recalls. “During my son’s Barmitzvah, the sirens went off, and we had to usher the whole congregation to safety, including family from overseas. We now joke that ‘we had a blast at Hillel’s Barmitzvah’, but in reality it wasn’t funny.

“Another time, we were stuck outside in the middle of the night on the way to the airport, and we watched the Iron Dome shoot up and destroy rockets. The night was ablaze. Even though it was dangerous, it was amazing to see.” Green was born in London where her parents experienced the Blitz, so her children are the third generation to experience the threat of missiles. She hopes that with the invention of the Iron Dome, they will be the last.



Rabbis find perfect pitch for Rosh Hashanah

TALI FEINBERG

A video by the South African Rabbinical Association of 40 South African rabbonim and chazzanim singing *Avinu Malkeinu* is being shared around the world as a symbol of hope and harmony ahead of the high holy days, which so many people will celebrate alone or apart from one another this year.

The association's chairperson, Rabbi Yossi Chaikin, told the SA *Jewish Report* that this Rosh Hashanah, it was really important to send out a message of unity and faith in the future.

"I think one of the things that have happened over lockdown is that there is an amazing spirit of *achdut* [unity] and of working together among all the rabbonim in the country. Physical, geographical boundaries have fallen away, ideologies have fallen away, and we are working together to inspire our community, to give it hope, and help everyone get through this difficult time."

About a month ago, he got a message from Jonathan Birin of JB Recording Studios suggesting that they make a video of rabbonim and chazzanim singing together. Chaikin loved the idea, and they started working on it. He said the video includes rabbonim and chazzanim because they work together closely, and it "takes the concept of unity to a different level". A message from Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein and the blowing of the shofar are intertwined with the music.

"It wasn't very difficult to get everyone on board," Chaikin said. He sent a message on the association's WhatsApp group, and there was an immediate positive response. The participants were given instructions

about singing to a backing track and recording it. Not every Orthodox rabbi or chazzan in the country took part. "It was open to all, but some were more reticent," he said. He emphasises that Birin and JB Recording Studios didn't just initiate the idea, they brought it to fruition.

"People have been so warm and encouraging. We've had many calls and messages," said Chaikin. "The response exceeded my expectations. The video has had more than 20 000 views as we speak. I'm sure this will grow as we get closer to *yom tov*."

Avinu Malkeinu was the song chosen because, said Chaikin, "There is no other song or prayer that is as symbolic of and synonymous with the period we are heading into, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It's an easy tune, one that everyone relates to, and it conveys the dual messages of G-d being our father and our king, which is very much the relationship we are trying to strike with G-d over this time.

"At the height of the coronavirus surge back in July was the fast day of the 17th of Tammuz, and we say *Avinu Malkeinu* on fast days as well. So many lines of this prayer jumped out at me then: 'Hashem withhold plagues from us; Hashem send us healing.' The words jumped out of the pages of the siddur, as I'm sure they will from the pages of the machzor.

"We're not wearing masks as we're all in our own areas," said Chaikin. "It's fascinating to see how so many different people in different places are singing in perfect harmony.

"The message of unity and harmony conveyed to our community and the world is important, and we're going to get through the difficult months that lie ahead by sticking together and caring for one another, which is one of the most important things that corona[virus] has taught us. The way we behave affects anybody around us, in our community and beyond. We should remember the songs, the laughter, the happiness, and the growth as we move into a year of only *brochas*."



Sefardim do Rosh Hashanah with eastern flair

JORDAN MOSHE

If you thought that the Rosh Hashanah experience was universal and uniform, think again. While many Ashkenazi Jews may be used to eating a few traditional New Year foods, Sefardim partake in an uplifting and colourful *yom tov* experience that goes well beyond apples dipped in honey.

The rich customs of the Sefardic Rosh Hashanah experience that precede the main meal are in fact more important than the meal itself.

While Ashkenazim associate the term Seder with Pesach, Sefardim traditionally conduct a Rosh Hashanah seder service that adds another dimension to the New Year experience. Whether it's the head of a sheep or green beans, there's a spectrum of novelty foods spread across a Sefardic table.

According to tradition, the wide array of symbolic foods presents a number of themes aimed at either the elimination of negativity or the aspiration for blessing. Called the *simanim* (symbols), they form what many today refer to as a Sefardic Rosh Hashanah seder.

The tradition dates back to the times of the Talmud when the sage Abayeh advised his disciples to celebrate Rosh Hashanah by enjoying seasonal foods and dishes that represented prosperity for the coming year.

Among the foods named are pumpkins, rubia (a vegetable similar to green beans), leeks, beets, and dates. Later, commentators enhanced Abayeh's instructions, stating that the consumption of these foods should be accompanied by wishes and blessings for the year ahead.

The tradition of eating these symbolic foods on Rosh Hashanah dates back over 2 000 years, and while some Ashkenazim have maintained some of the practice, it remains especially prevalent among Sefardic Jews from Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries. Over the centuries, the tradition has evolved, and in addition to the five foods listed in the Talmud, Rosh Hashanah seder tables might feature carrots, fish, or the head of a sheep.

Communities in different parts of the Jewish diaspora added and removed foods based on what was available or meaningful to them, depending on region and context. In every instance, however, it appears that each of the *simanim* was chosen due to its potential for inventive word play, its physical structure, or its sweet flavour. Each item is engaged with in depth, relishing the opportunity to uplift the *chag* by enhancing its various facets of blessing.

For instance, numerous pomegranate seeds represent innumerable good deeds, whereas dates represent the end of hatred because their Hebrew name, *tamar*, is related to the Hebrew word for "end".

Another common sight is a leek, known in Aramaic as *karti*. Before the leek is eaten, seder participants say 'She-yikartu oyvenu' (May our enemies be cut off). The word *yikartu* (cut off), sounds like *karti*, hence the custom. The same holds true for the beets, known as *silka* in Aramaic. The blessing recited over these is 'She-yisalku oyvenu' (that our enemies disappear). Because *yisalku* sounds like *silka*, beets became the appropriate choice.

Pumpkin is another commonly used *siman*, and its Aramaic name is rather familiar to most, but in another context. Known as *kra*, the word also means 'tear up' in Hebrew, found often in the *yom tov* davening in relation to harsh decrees. Pumpkin is thus a fitting expression which reaffirms the request that Hashem deal mercifully with us in the year ahead.

Collectively, these *simanim* reflect a desire to begin a year without some of life's biggest personal challenges, including conflict, trials, and evil. Moving beyond such negativity, however, more positive symbols arrive at the table, articulating requests for goodness in the months to come.

Many Jews serve fish, representing abundance and fertility in relation to both good deeds and personal life. Additional customs include string beans, containing multiple small beans which also represent numerous *mitzvot*. Unnerving though it may sound, there are some who eat the meat of a sheep's head, asking Hashem that we enter the New Year as leaders, not followers, in our everyday lives.

For those who find the thought of a sheep's head adorning the table a bit much, relief can be found in substituting it for the head of a fish or something even more creative. In fact, it is not uncommon to see fish head-shaped marshmallows, fish crackers, or even a head of lettuce replacing the traditional animal's head, the symbolism meaning more than the item itself.

While many incorporate the foods into the evening's menu, this is not necessarily essential. Some have a tradition to use the various items to decorate their dinner tables. Others may eat them before the meal begins, and certain families use the foods creatively in serving their various courses.

A Moroccan tradition, for example, involves eating an abundance of sesame seeds mixed with sugar, and another custom sees the apples and honey prepared together in advance as a jam to serve with the meal.

Regardless of how they choose to present them, Sefardim perpetuate a rich heritage which, despite appearing odd to some, represents the multiple layers of significance which surround the auspicious holiday.

So, whether you're game for a sheep's head or would rather opt for Haribo gummy fish, there's a way for everyone to tap into this unique set of customs over Rosh Hashanah.



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THE HIGHLANDS HOUSE

Please note the official notice of meeting below. It is essential that you register early so that you have a chance to study the amendments, which have become necessary as a result of changes in the Tax Act, as well as to update the Constitution to reflect the current operations and governance of Highlands House.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING
Highlands House also known as The Cape Jewish Home

Notice is hereby given that a SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING, in terms of Clause 10.2 of the Constitution, of members will be held via electronic video conferencing (ZOOM) on 30 September 2020 at 13h00 to approve and adopt a new constitution.

You are invited to register your intention to attend this Special General Meeting by contacting Highlands House at residents@highlandshouse.co.za. Once your membership has been verified, you will receive an electronic copy of the proposed revised Constitution together with the current Constitution for comparison, as well as the link to the meeting. Registration closes on Wednesday, 23rd September 2020.

PLEASE NOTE: In terms of Clause 5 of the Constitution, the following are entitled to vote: Honorary Life Members, resident members, being persons resident at the Home, ordinary members – any Jewish person over the age of eighteen (18) years who has contributed to the United Jewish Campaign (UJC) in Cape Town.

Michael Novos, President

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The successful applicant would ideally begin on 11 January 2021

Closing date for applications: 25 September, 2020

The school reserves the right not to make an appointment.
Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

Fire and rebirth

OPINION

HOWARD N. APSAN



This will be a high-anxiety Yom Kippur. Even the wave of relief from the shofar blast signalling the end of the fast will be short-lived. The pandemic, with its face coverings, social distancing, hand washing, and isolation, has been with us for many months, and will still be there when the fast is over. And because Yom Kippur is also a day of prayer and self-reflection, it will be hard not to lament the lousy hand we've been dealt. For me, as always, it will remind me of another high-anxiety Yom Kippur, and I hope this one also leads to better times.

The sirens calling Israeli reservists to battle on 6 October 1973, turned that Yom Kippur from a day of prayer to a day of emergency mobilisation. Ironically, because so many Israelis were at services, officers were able to enter synagogues and dispatch reservists to their units as the country transformed from peace to war.

But this story is about the next Yom Kippur.

Living in Brooklyn, I was concerned about friends and family in Israel, but I had some draft-board obligations – the Vietnam War was winding down but not over – and I had just begun my studies at Brooklyn College. After the spring semester, I bought an open-ended student ticket, meandered through Holland and Belgium, and then

caught a flight to Tel Aviv. I had no plan whatsoever, but a high school friend met me at the airport and invited me to crash at the kibbutz where he had been living. They liked him at the kibbutz, and they were happy to house and feed his American friend for a few days. By day three, though, they suggested that I start working or find alternative accommodation. I opted for the former.

I discovered quickly that farming is hard work. Whether you are working in the fields or tending to the livestock, nature dictates the rhythm, and it's relentless. The typical day starts before sunrise, and ends when it ends. The work is physically demanding, and the summer heat oppressive. I thought about quitting, but then fate smiled on me.

The kibbutz had plenty of hands to milk the cows and pick the cotton: it had other volunteers; it had students in an *ulpan*, a Hebrew-language immersion course; and it had a unit of soldiers detailed to it. However, because reservists were cycled back and forth from civilian life to the front lines, there weren't enough licensed drivers to operate tractors and combines. I had a valid New York State driver's license. The fact that I had never driven a car with a manual transmission, much less a twelve-gear tractor or a massive cotton combine, didn't deter me from offering my services,



or the kibbutz from accepting. Somehow, I managed to learn without any serious incidents.

I often worked alone in the fields on the midnight shift, and I learned to appreciate solitude. The roar of the tractor is incessant, but you don't shut off the engine unless a plow blade, a hydraulic line, or some other mechanical emergency requires immediate attention. When I did shut it off, I felt enveloped by the darkness and the silence. The sensation didn't last long because of the pressure to get back to work, but I still remember those moments of stillness.

Which brings us to the high-anxiety Yom Kippur of 1974.

Most synagogues have a cantor for the high holy days. At the kibbutz in 1974, services were led

by the kibbutzniks, many of whom were Holocaust survivors and most of whom were veterans of Israel's wars. Services were utilitarian because even on Yom Kippur, the cows must be milked, the chickens must be fed, and those on guard duty must be relieved.

But when the cantor recited the soulful lines of the *Unesaneh Tokef* prayer, "Who will live and who will die ... who by fire and who by the sword", you could feel the emotion. (This standard of the Yom Kippur liturgy is attributed to Rabbi Amnon of Mainz in the 11th century. Many now recognise the lines as lyrics from Leonard Cohen's dirge-like classic *Who by Fire*.)

A year earlier, Israelis raced into battle, spending weeks, sometimes months, under fire in bunkers and

tanks, and many were now missing from the pews.

Because services were quicker, there was a long break before the closing *Neilah* prayer and the concluding shofar blast. Most people remained subdued, in part because they were fasting and in part because of the solemnity of the day. But on this Yom Kippur, they were also anxiously praying for the sirens to remain silent.

I've been to Israel many times since, and I always try to visit the kibbutz to reconnect and recall those nights in the field and that long, anxiety-filled Yom Kippur afternoon. I haven't visited this year because of coronavirus restrictions, and I suspect that Yom Kippur services worldwide will be subdued because of the many empty seats, mostly as a result of social distancing, but some for those who succumbed to this awful disease. It can be argued that the seeds of Middle East peace were planted on that fateful Yom Kippur. Hopefully, good things will come from this one as well.

• Howard N. Apsan PhD is an executive at The City University of New York, a faculty member at Columbia University, and the founder of Apsan Consulting, specialising in environmental and risk management.

Blasting our way out of our tears

OPINION

RABBI ARI KIEVMAN



When you think of Rosh Hashanah, what comes to mind? While there are so many customs, rituals, and traditions associated with this holiday, no doubt the shofar stands out as the featured highlight.

Although this year's high holidays will undoubtedly be very different to what we're used to – no long shul services or tables full of guests – still, the piercing blasts of the ram's horn, which very much epitomises this festival, is still the main *mitzvah*.

Many reasons are given for blowing the shofar, ranging from heralding G-d's commandments to accepting the divine will upon us to repent

for our past sins. The name Rosh Hashanah, though, is nowhere in the Torah. It's biblically called Yom Teruah, the day of teruah sounds.

Traditionally, we blow three types of sounds with the shofar: tekiah, shevarim, and teruah. We begin with the tekiah which is a long straight blast. Shevarim is an intermediate, broken set of three sounds,

and teruah is nine short, fragmented ones resembling groaning. Like following a template, we blow multiple sets of this sequence of blasts, concluding with tekiah gedolah, a final extended, unbroken blast.

Of all names to represent this *yom tov*, why does the Torah call it Yom Teruah, a moniker for the broken sounds? Why is the

Jewish new year highlighted by these broken *kvetches*?

Consider the past six months since lockdown in its various stages. It has had an impact on so many of us, literally affecting people emotionally, financially, and psychologically. Who isn't struggling in some way?

One symbolism of the teruah sounds is the weeping sobs that so many feel deep inside. But the repeated sequence of shofar sounds reminds us that the clouds can't remain overcast for too long. The sun will soon re-emerge. Growth is possible only when there is a shortage, when something is

should be our way of pushing ourselves to rectify whatever warrants our sobs. Tekiah symbolises our pristine core essence, our soul, a part of G-d. Perhaps this is why we never blow shevarim or teruah on their own. They are always preceded and followed by the wholesome, unbroken tekiah, acknowledging that we are whole in our essence, and nothing can truly break us. From our broken hearted shevarim and teruah can emerge a new tekiah, complete wholesomeness.

A Chassidic adage says, "There is nothing so whole as a broken heart."

Like seeds that decompose before they sprout and blossom, we, too, experience challenges and pain in life from which we grow and prosper. Great things never come from comfort zones.

During these past months, we have been wearing masks for protection and prevention of transmission. A mask is an opportunity to see beyond the skin, to look deeper inside ourselves and those around us. Rosh Hashanah is when we are empowered to embrace all our struggles and rebound from them to the reality of a new year with brand-new opportunities. As we tune into and internalise this message of the shofar, may G-d

answer each of our prayers to be inscribed and sealed for a sweet new year filled with an abundance of health, prosperity, and happiness!

• Rabbi Ari Kievman is the rabbi of the Sandton Central Shul at the Kirsh Goodness & Kindness Centre.



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

lacking. Groaning is our way of remembering that it's time to grow. It's a way of reminding ourselves and others that something requires repair. The broken sounds are consistently followed by complete and triumphant blasts.

Of course, moaning alone is insufficient. It has to be followed up by action. *Kvetching*

SA silent on historic Israel-Bahrain agreement

>>Continued from page 5

"It's symbolic of growing reconfiguration in the Middle East," says Silke. "If more Arab countries join the accords, it will put immense pressure on Iran to soften its stance. These accords have decoupled the broader Middle East from the Palestinian question, enabling the establishment of relations. In turn, the Palestinians may have to soften their hard-line attitude to negotiations."

Bahraini King Hamad bin Salman al-Khalifa's senior advisor stated that the normalisation deal sent "a positive and encouraging message to the people of Israel that a just and comprehensive peace with the Palestinian people is the best path and the true interest for its future and the future of the peoples of the region".

Bahrain and Saudi Arabia said they would allow flights from and to Israel to fly through their airspace, and the agreement will allow for the establishment of flights between Tel Aviv and Bahrain's capital, Manama.

The Palestinians recalled their ambassador from Manama and Abu Dhabi as a sign of protest. Closer to home, Africa4Palestine (formerly Boycott Divestment Sanctions South Africa) held a protest against the Abraham Accords outside the UAE embassy in Pretoria.

Meanwhile, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, the European Union, Germany, Greece, Kosovo, Latvia, Oman, Romania, the UAE, the United States, and the United Kingdom, have all expressed support for the agreement between Israel and Bahrain. The Palestinian leadership, Iran, Turkey, Yemen, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah condemned the move. It's clear that South Africa must decide which side it's on.

There is no South African representation in Bahrain, but the South African ambassador to Riyadh is accredited to Manama on a non-resident basis. Bahrain has no representation in South Africa.

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, said, "The SAZF welcomes the announcement that the Kingdom of Bahrain will be normalising diplomatic relations with Israel. Such improved diplomatic, economic, and bilateral relations between Arab nations and Israel are of great importance and work to the benefit of Israel, the Arab states, and the region. Increased dialogue and engagement leads to a path of greater stability, prosperity, and peace in the Middle East, and between Israel and the Palestinians. We urge South Africa to react positively, and encourage these momentous developments and changes for good in the Middle East."



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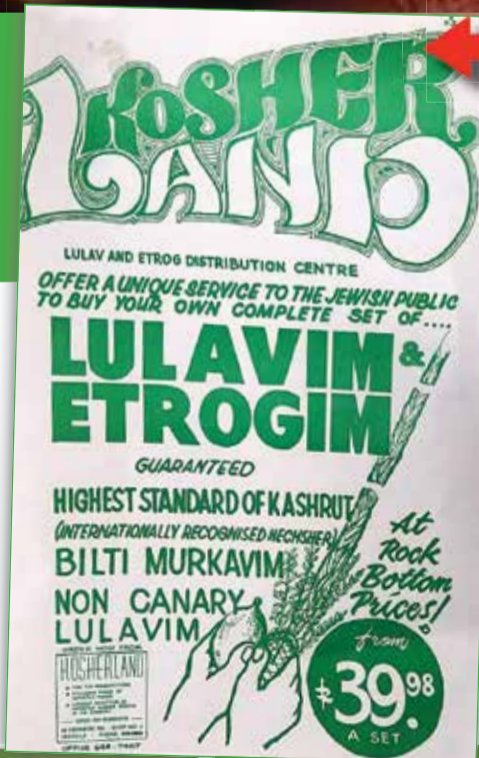
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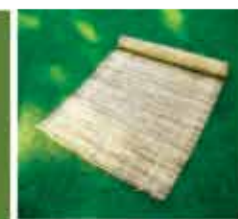
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Doing Yom Kippur alone

OPINION

RABBI SAM THURGOOD



I'd like to tell you an idea about Yom Kippur, but to do so I must explain a lesson from my childhood.

If you had a traditional South African Jewish upbringing similar to mine, you may recall a song, one that resonates in my mind as a defining experience of the Judaism of my childhood: *"Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow. Don't walk behind me, I may not lead. Just walk beside me, and be my friend. And together we will walk in the ways of Hashem."*

When I was older (and more observant), I learned that there was another verse to this as well: *"Love your fellow as yourself, this is a major principle in the Torah."*

I knew the words in Hebrew before I ever understood what they meant, or the implications of this approach to teaching, leadership, and friendship. As a slightly older child, I remember being confused: should we never lead? Should we never follow? Is friendship the only way?

When I became a rabbi, this song challenged me even more as suddenly people, often decades older than me, came to me with questions they wanted me to answer. I could tell them what to do with their milk spoon that they used to stir their meat stew, which prayers were the most important to say in the mornings when they had limited time, or whether it was *lashon hara* to tell your spouse something about your boss, but how could I tell them how to repair their relationship with their father? Or how to deal with the challenges of their teenage children? (When at the time of that question, I was a proud first-time father of a three-month-old!)

It's not simply a question of wisdom and experience – which certainly help in such situations, and can be possessed by both young and old – but

that such questions are generally so personal and contextual, how can any outsider hope to truly answer them? I recalled the words of the song: "Don't walk behind me, I may not lead." Not because I didn't want to, but because for me to do so wouldn't be the best thing for either of us.

In my own journey to grow and learn, I was blessed with amazing role models and teachers. They were never reluctant to accept the role, and taught me through their words, wisdom, and actions, how to be better. Why shouldn't I want to walk behind them?

But the answer to that, too, I found as a new parent. Is there any person in the world who receives

as much advice as a new parent in the Jewish community? And while a great deal of this advice was, of course, terrific, much of it was also inapplicable. The way in which others experienced and related to their baby didn't always relate to us.

"This is the most important thing to know about being a father ..." was a sentence that could end one hundred different ways, and often turned out to be

honest friend? To share what I have learned and what has been helpful for me in the knowledge that it may not be so for you, and to be open to hearing your experience of what you love and find meaningful? Truly, I ask that you walk beside me and be my friend, so that together we can walk in the ways of Hashem.

This is a personal account of some of my own journey in life and in the rabbinate, but it's also something that relates to our high holidays this year, more than ever.

So many of us will be spending Yom Kippur alone, and so much of what makes it Yom Kippur is the way in which we help one another to experience it. There is something magical about being surrounded by people we know and love, standing in shul together, dressed in white, greeting one another with wishes for a good year; opening the pages of the machzor as the Torahs are taken from the Ark and we all hear the sonorous tones of Kol Nidrei.

It will be difficult to do it alone. But it's also a chance to remind ourselves that the most important and profound journeys in our lives are profoundly personal, are ones in which we cannot have leaders or followers, but only friends.

That this year we will be taking responsibility for the meaning of our Yom Kippur, that we will be learning, preparing, trying, fumbling, failing, and succeeding to experience it in a new context. And that both before and after, and more importantly in future years to come, we will be able to come together in friendship. And together, we will walk in the ways of Hashem.

Shana tova!

• Rabbi Sam Thurgood is the rabbi at Beit Midrash Morasha @ Arthur's Road.



Jonah's whale of contemplation

OPINION

ILANA STEIN



If we didn't know the book of Jonah so well, (or have vague memories of it on Yom Kippur afternoons – pre-COVID-19, of course), the second chapter would catch us by surprise.

Think about it: the first chapter is filled with movement and excitement: Jonah running away, the ship and the sailors and the storm, with a grand conclusion as we see in our mind's eye Jonah being thrown off the ship into the heaving waters.

Then it all stops in chapter two. Suddenly, there's no movement. One could say that Jonah is in lockdown. In a fish. While the *dag* is called a whale in children's stories and there are arguments about what sort of fish it is, whatever marine species it was, it couldn't have been very pleasant. As a Biblical narrative, we need to consider what the reason for this chapter is.

escape from reality. So being in a still, dark place – even if it smells fishy – is where Jonah prefers to stay, away from the turbulent waters and the demands of a G-d who he doesn't agree with.

But then something changes, and he begins to pray. What sort of prayer is this?

Given his position, one would think it's a request – and in fact, most people assume that this is so – as we said, it's rather fishy, so it would be logical that he prays to leave the belly of a fish. But if we read it carefully, we see that isn't so. Let's take a look at some of the wording.

He said, "In my trouble, I called to the Lord, And He answered me; from the belly of *sheol*, I cried out, and You heard my voice."

And then, "When my life was ebbing away, I called the Lord to mind; and my prayer came before You, Into Your holy temple."

Notice the past tense, as well as the theme. It resembles many of the thanksgiving psalms found in the book of Tehillim. But how is it possible that while he is still in the fish, Jonah is giving thanks for being delivered?

Some modern scholars feel that this chapter was placed here from elsewhere in order to fill out the story. But this doesn't make sense, after all, if you're going

to choose a psalm, you'd choose one that asks for deliverance, to fit your story. Therefore, it seems more reasonable to assume that this is part of the narrative, and we must ask rather, what is he thanking G-d for at this point in the narrative?

To answer this, we must consider Jonah as a character.

unimportant to me. At such times, I understood the words, "Don't walk in front of me – I may not follow."

A related phenomenon I discovered in education and the community rabbinate is that there are people who expect the rabbi or teacher to somehow do the work of spiritual growth for them; who count on the rabbi to "make Rosh Hashanah meaningful" or the teacher to "make my child love being Jewish". Can I really "walk in front" in such situations? Surely my best option, and the one that I have always attempted to pursue, is to be a true and

When Jonah asks the sailors to throw him into the sea, he is asking to die. He'd rather die than go to Nineveh, it seems, and then the story could end there. But it is possible that, while he was prepared to give up his life (for reasons that are unclear in the book), now as he thrashes in the water, struggling to breathe, he realises the stark fact of death that stares him in the face, and perhaps it doesn't seem as great an idea as before.

Suddenly, Jonah is swallowed by a fish. There's air, silence, darkness, and he sits there, hour after hour, waiting to drown. Three days and three nights pass, and finally it dawns on him that he is, in fact, saved. At this point, he realises that G-d hasn't given up on him even if he gave up on himself. At this point, he sees G-d not as a strict commander of prophecy, but as a saviour and a G-d who cares about creation and creatures, something that G-d says directly in the last verse of the book. But it takes time alone, time without movement,

to contemplate and reach this conclusion.

Each stanza of this poem reflects this reality, as Jonah speaks of a yearning to return to the presence of G-d. The poem then is one of thanksgiving, at his joy in being saved and being given the chance to return and begin again.

This then is the chapter perfectly positioned to inspire us on the afternoon of Yom Kippur when we may feel a little dwarfed by the immensity of the distance between mortal and creator, wondering if our teshuva has been enough. It's then that we are called upon to consider that even someone who actively ran away – to the bottom of the ocean – can change and is forgiven. It becomes our own thanksgiving for the opportunity to rebuild a relationship with the almighty.

• Ilana Stein is head of education of the Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning, where she also lectures on Tanach and Jewish environmental ethics.



The first two verses have Jonah sitting in the fish for three days, before he begins to pray. Why does it take him so long? Israeli bible scholar Nechama Leibowitz explained that this fits with what we know of Jonah up until now. He is running away. He gets on a ship, descends into the hold, and goes to sleep. Each of these movements constitutes an

The low-down on everything culinary in lockdown

I'm aware that not only our lives, but most discussion has been about COVID-19, and it does seem as if it is far from over.

We are still going through a time of uncertainty, financial strain, new work and home environments, continued shopping restrictions, and most important, the need to stay healthy.

Here are some nutritional and culinary tips to keep your body strong, maximise "bang for your buck" when it comes to food purchases, minimise exposure to the grocery store, and avoid wastage.

These tips aren't only useful and important at this time, but are good to know *all the time*.

Herbs and spices

These come first as they're not always on our shopping list of "essentials". However, when it comes to a nutritional return on investment, herbs and spices contain some of the most concentrated forms of anti-inflammatory and antioxidant agents and are regarded as the cheapest natural supplements.

When researching food sources with the richest content of polyphenol, a naturally occurring chemical which promotes the body to produce its *own* antioxidants, spices and herbs always come out on top. Raw cocoa, cloves, mint, star anise, coriander, parsley, oregano, rosemary – the works. Fresh ginger, high in gingerol, can also easily be bought and kept in the fridge for a while and offers excellent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.

Don't forget to add fresh herbs to your shopping list. You can also plant some herbs for a long-lasting supply and a good excuse to get out the house for a bit.

Worried about herbs going off in your fridge? Don't. Here are some ways to keep them fresher

for longer and get the best use out of them:

- Remove them from their original packaging, place them in a re-usable bag with a paper towel and store them in the fridge;
- Chop off the bottom tips of their stems and place them in a jar of water in the fridge, with a bag over their leaves;
- Chop up the herbs, put them into ice-trays with water and freeze. These can then be used later in stews or curries;
- Make a herb oil, pesto, vinegar, or flavoured salt with herbs that aren't being used; and
- In the oven, dehydrate herbs that aren't being used, then store in a tight spice bottle.



Fresh versus frozen

Is fresh better than frozen? Although the answer to this is complex, it's an important one to understand, especially when our aim is to limit shopping time while optimising nutrition.

We have the perception that fresh is always best, but how fresh is fresh? The fruit and vegetables we predominantly purchase at the shops have been picked, washed, or treated, packaged, transported in temperature-controlled vehicles, and stored on shelves in the stores.

Answering our question, though, depends on the product and the nutrient you are looking at. Research shows that frozen food, depending on the cooking technique used after thawing, *can* often supply a better nutritional landscape than fresh.

Now is a great opportunity to explore how to cook with frozen fruit and vegetables. It's often more economical too.

Here are some tips when using frozen produce:

- Don't just pick any bag out of the freezer section. Choose a bag where you can feel the individual pieces as this is a sign they're still in their original flash-frozen state as opposed to vegetables or fruits that may have thawed and refrozen during distribution;
- Frozen vegetables are usually blanched then flash frozen. This means they have already been partially cooked and must be added to dishes later in the cooking process to avoid overcooking. This is especially important if some ingredients in the dish are fresh as you want them to cook uniformly; and
- To keep your frozen vegetables crisp when roasting, while you heat the oven up, preheat your roasting tray with a drizzle of oil. Make sure to crank up the heat to 230°C so that you release the water immediately and caramelize the vegetables instead of steaming them. Also coat the vegetables with olive oil before throwing them on the roasting tray to ensure a crisp result.

Menu planning

Menu planning as well as a detailed shopping list has never been more important. The goals are to increase variety, spend as little time as possible in the shops, spend wisely, and reduce wastage. A simple menu plan as well as a very

ON NOURISHING NOSH

Hilit Milner



detailed shopping list, in the same order that the food products are found in the shops, will help you greatly.

Get creative

Maximise the use of your vegetable or fruit. Use the leaves of your root vegetables, such as beetroot, in smoothies, soups, pesto, or stir-fries. Once you have juiced your lime or lemon, zest them, and freeze the zest to use it to flavour your food when don't have lemons or limes around.

There should be no concern about produce going off in your fridge. Get your creative caps on. How many different dishes can you make with one left-over ingredient? A simple carrot can be used to make carrot and turmeric soup, carrot chips in the oven, spiced carrot humus, carrot gnocchi, carrot spiralled pasta, carrot cake, or carrot and date energy balls!

Now is the time to see what meal you can pull together with the odds and ends of your fresh, frozen, or tinned produce at home. Think of a vegetable frittata; lentil coconut curry soup; chickpea stir-fry with rice; cabbage leaves stuffed with frozen mince, tinned tomato and rice; or a frozen pea, white bean, and artichoke dip.

Let's cook like we've never cooked before!

• Hilit Milner is a registered clinical dietitian who runs a private practice, works in a top private hospital, and has founded a wellness blog called 'Sunrise by HM'. She views health holistically, starting from a cellular level and working her way out.

KDVP claims Israel Quiz trophy again

King David High School Victory Park (KDHSVP) pupils have won the Israel Quiz nine times since its inception in 2004, with five runners up over the same period.

This year, they did it again, with Amira Karstaedt taking the prize in the competition – held online for the first time – on 10 September.

Named the Shimon Peres Israel Quiz in honour of the late Israel President Shimon Peres, the competition requires an in-depth study of the history of Zionism and Israeli current affairs.

Morah Ben Moshe, Head of Hebrew at KDHSVP, and her team of Hebrew teachers, has been responsible for preparing participants since the quiz was launched 16 years ago.

Competition winners from KDHSVP over the years include: Ori Dittrich (2004); Dan Ginsberg (2005); Shaun Croock (2006); Romy Wulfsohn (2009); Saul Maserow (2011); Joshua Arenson (2016); Tzipora Krawitz (2017); and Liron Krawitz (2018). Runners up include Joshua Eliason (2007); Daniel Katzew (2008); Jonathan Croock (2010); Oren Karstaedt (2011); and Yosef Bank (2014).

The school is extremely proud of all its participants and winners.



Amira Karstaedt

Letters

LEAVE A LEGACY OF KINDNESS EVERY DAY

We all want to have an impact on the world. Yet we don't often realise how we influence those around us. Our moods and emotions ripple out to others with strong effect, and from them, they extend out to more people. Even – or especially – those who are very quiet have an impact. Their silence stands out.

Even a seemingly small gesture can go far. A kind word or gesture could be the very thing a depressed or suicidal acquaintance needs. We all know how powerful words can be.

According to the Kabbalah, every time we do a kind act, an extremely beautiful angel is created. If we could see it in this life, we would want to do good things all the time.

Before his final stroke, the Lubavitcher Rebbe was asked by CNN what his message to the world was. He asked for more acts of goodness and

kindness.

We could also learn from the African tradition, in which treating others well is part of the culture. This is known as ubuntu, meaning that we are worthwhile because of others.

Greeting strangers on the street is a part of it.

When we treat a person from another group or skin colour well, it reduces racial tension and helps to improve the world.

If you drive a car, it gives you many opportunities to allow trucks or other vehicles in when they need a gap, and reduce tension on the road.

When someone accidentally cuts us off, we tend to take it personally, when it's nothing like that. The other driver doesn't know us personally.

Goodwill is a good legacy to leave. – **Martin Zagnoev, Johannesburg**

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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Prof Schoub in national demand



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

becoming the third Middle Eastern country to normalise relations with Israel, a second Gulf State, Bahrain, has followed suit. On Tuesday, the United States-brokered agreements between the three countries were confirmed in an historic signing ceremony at the White House. It's another major step forward in terms of Israel's acceptance in the region, and creates many opportunities for future co-operation. Once again, die-hard anti-Israel voices, led as usual by Iran, deplored this latest breach in the diplomatic wall that the Arab-speaking world has maintained against the Jewish state since its inception. Increasingly, the tide of history appears to be against them.

On the threshold of the Jewish New Year, we hope that this breakthrough will help usher in a positive new era. On that note, I take this opportunity to wish you all a *ktiva ve chatima tova*. May we all be inscribed and sealed with a year of success, happiness, peace, and good health. Now that lockdown conditions have been eased, we will thankfully be able to celebrate *yom tov* in our shuls at last. That being said, things are far from being completely back to normal, so I urge everyone to abide strictly by the regulations that are in place to minimise the risk of infection.

Finally, congratulations to our newly Cape chairperson Tzvi Brivik, vice-chairpersons Glen Heneck and Adrienne Jacobson, and treasurer Lester Hoffman. I wish them and the Cape Council all success in their term of office, and look forward to working with them going forward

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

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

This week, Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize announced that a Ministerial Advisory Committee has been created to focus on coronavirus vaccine development. This body will advise the health department and government on vaccine development and rollout, and keep them kept abreast of all critical developments. We were gratified to learn that Professor Barry Schoub has been appointed to chair this new committee. Schoub has been at the very forefront of those medical experts who have helped the Jewish community get through these unprecedented, difficult, and stressful times. From the very moment that the pandemic reached our shores until today, he has unhesitatingly placed his globally-recognised skills, expertise, and experience in the field of communicable diseases at the community's disposal.

Also rendering particularly outstanding service over this period has been Netcare Chief Executive Dr Richard Friedland. He and Schoub have devoted innumerable hours to advising and educating people about the virus, participating in multiple communal leadership meetings, webinars, media presentations, and one-on-one engagements. Friedland further took a personal interest in those community members who contracted the virus, and on a practical level, did all he could to assist them, in spite of the formidable demands made on him with the public and private-health systems under such enormous pressure. We are indebted to these two individuals, as indeed we are to all the other health professionals in our community whose ready assistance has done so much to help the Jewish leadership negotiate these exceptionally challenging times.

Bahrain breakthrough

Within a month of the United Arab Emirates

Be patient with SA media

By Wednesday morning, South African media had failed to acknowledge the historic signing of a peace agreement between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. Instead, in the international sections, there were headlines like "Trump accuses Biden of taking performance enhancing substance."

It took until sometime on Wednesday before the peace agreement was acknowledged. News24, as an example, republished an AFP piece with an insert of a video link that showed Israel bombing Gaza.

It neglected to mention that Hamas had launched a barrage of rockets to protest the signing of the accord.

South African media, and most likely media around the world, are deserving of our patience. To date, they have been bombarded with a narrative that depicts Israel as the aggressor and the Palestinians as the victim. The narrative required them to ignore incidents that showcased the Palestinians in a negative light by simply neglecting to report on it.

This wasn't a challenge given the magnitude of negativity of reporting emanating from the entire Middle East region. The Arab world was united until now in its disdain and contempt for the Jewish state. This meant that aside from Israeli media and perhaps some publications in the United States, the message and viewpoint was consistent and uniform.

But that has changed. With the UAE and Bahrain, with talk of Saudi and Oman as well as Morocco, the message from now on isn't going to be a simple and uniform one. Already, since the signing, Bahrain has issued a statement on Israeli TV condemning the rockets fired by Hamas into Israel.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



The UAE is embracing all things Israel, indicating that this isn't going to be a cold peace, but rather a warm and real relationship. In no time at all, we can expect to see Israeli salespeople scattered throughout Dubai shopping malls selling Dead Sea products to poor and unsuspecting shoppers.

The signing of the accords will change how the media perceives and reports on Israel. But it will take time. As Hamas aligns itself closer with Iran, it will move further into obscurity. And as Israel friendly Arab media reports become more balanced and fairer, so we can expect the Palestinians to be exposed to information that they wouldn't have been exposed to until now. Hopefully, this will add further pressure on the Palestinian leadership to consider peace with Israel as a viable option.

The other factor that might have contributed to the South African media approach is the fact that Donald Trump was a key player in the story. Acknowledgement means recognition that he has done well in this situation – something the local press will find very difficult to do.

As we end the Jewish year 5780, it's worth noting where we are today in terms of media and revisiting this again as we end 5781. I believe that we will see a change in the right direction. We need to be patient and watch it happen, as it undoubtedly will.

Wishing you a Sweet & Happy New Year

שנה טובה ומתוקה

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