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Jewish Agency launches 'safety net' for world Jewry

TALI FEINBERG

he Jewish Agency for Israel this week launched a support system to help Jews around the world handle the continuing coronavirus crisis and other emergency situations.

The aim of JReady – the Jewish Emergency Network is to ensure the long-term resilience of Jewish communities around the world, and for the Jewish Agency to assist wherever needed. It will connect us to other diaspora communities, and provide a basket of cutting edge courses, tools, and access to experts.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, we were approached to assist some communities, especially in Italy and Spain," Yael Raz, the director of emergency response at the Jewish Agency, told the SA Jewish Report.

"As the crisis evolved, more communities reached out and more challenges were brought to our table – from financial losses to mental health to the continuity of Jewish education."

While it offered immediate aid through a monetary fund, the Jewish Agency realised it also needed to provide long-term support. "This is the first time that all Jewish communities are facing the same challenges," Raz says.

JReady falls in her department, and she is positive about the possibilities it presents in a Jewish world that has been turned on its head by COVID-19.

Raz said that the ripple effect of the pandemic had been a "game changer". For example, the Italian Jewish community had always supported Israel, but is now reaching out to Israel for support. Even though so many communities are battling, on the positive side, they are able to connect and lean on each other like never before.

The Jewish Agency's mission is

to "ensure that every Jewish person feels an unbreakable bond to one another and to Israel no matter where they live in the world, so that they can continue to play their critical role in our ongoing Jewish story". In launching JReady, the agency piloted some of its projects in select communities around the globe, including South Africa.

South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Director Wendy Kahn says, "It's incredible as a diaspora community to know that the Jewish Agency is always there for us, especially at times of crisis. Knowing that we have such a supportive body is deeply reassuring."

Jewish Agency for Israel
Chairperson Isaac Herzog says,
"Our sages taught us that all Jews
are responsible for one another.
The Jewish Agency is harnessing
Israeli know-how and expertise
to realise this important Jewish
value, and to ensure the safety and
well-being of Jewish communities
around the world. JReady provides
an additional layer to the Jewish
Agency's security network."

The chairperson of JReady, former Knesset member Ayelet Nahmias Verbin, explains that, "JReady has been busy training emergency managers in South Africa, improving readiness for extreme fires in Australia, and bringing in experts who will help address economic problems in Italy and Costa Rica. The critical interfaces for building resilience exist, and JReady will work with Jewish communities to further strengthen their preparedness, including for future crises."

JReady's advisory committee includes prominent figures such as Haim Bibas, the mayor of Modi'in-Maccabim-Reut, who also serves as head of the federation of local authorities in Israel; and Professor Eli Waxman of the Weizmann Institute of Science, who headed

Israel's National Security Council's Committee on Combating the Pandemic.

Its first-of-its-kind digital toolbox includes dedicated courses for community emergency managers, webinars, and training with professionals, volunteer management, a chat forum, and access to advanced research and technologies.

Liat Amar Arran, the Jewish Agency representative and director of the Israel Centre South Africa, who has led JReady's pilot projects in South Africa, said, "We were asked to look at what the South African Jewish community needs now and where we could add value. We feel that deepening knowledge and assisting professionals to

manage crises is important."

Said Raz, "In South Africa, your education system was one of the first to reopen – I think only Canada and Israel had reopened at that stage." This provided an opportunity to test one of JReady's services, which works with school principals around the world to reopen schools safely. The Jewish Agency hosted a meeting between professionals from Israel and about 40 principals from all Jewish schools in South Africa in which the Israelis shared their experience of reopening schools. "It's not like South Africa and community leadership didn't have protocol in place, it was about sharing information and experiences." Similarly, the Jewish Agency

organised meetings between the directors of Jewish community aged homes in South Africa and aged homes in Israel to share knowledge and experience. "The Jewish Agency cares for about 7 000 elderly people, so engaging with aged home directors in South Africa was coming from this experience," said Raz.

The Israeli "Haggai" app is another tool offered by JReady, and Amar Arran encouraged the South African Jewish community to use it to streamline food distribution to those in need. The Cape Town Jewish community has utilised it since the early days of the pandemic when demand for food parcels increased dramatically.

Continued on page 3>>

Personal contact ends isolation



Rebbetzin Yael Kacev visits her father Itz Ginsberg at Sandringham Gardens on Wednesday. After eight months of seclusion, residents at Chevrah Kadisha facilities are finally able to see their loved ones again in person. The Chev facilitated more than 1 500 video calls with family following the early isolation of its residents on 13 March, but since August, 370 in-person visits have taken place in a strictly controlled environment, allowing residents to interact with people instead of pixels.



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www.sajewishreport.co.za

Hitler spoof makes light of kashrut concerns, but is it funny?

NICOLA MILTZ

spoof video which depicts Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein as Adolf Hitler has been doing the rounds on social media. Though it's intended to be funny, it raises questions about whether it's ever appropriate to compare anyone – least of all the spiritual leader of the South African Jewish community - to the man responsible for the Holocaust.

The video, which surfaced in the same week as the anniversary of

Kristallnacht, was created by local Jewish community members on the platform captiongenerator.com. The platform enables people to create memes using humorous foreign language or silent movie scenes using unique English subtitles.

The video is in response to the recent furore in the community over the cost of kosher food and kashrut certification fees. The public outcry was sparked by the



scrapping of local manufacturer Honeyfield's kashrut license for alleged non-compliance and non-payment of heavily increased kashrut fees, which opened a can of worms. It followed several weeks of intense scrutiny of the financial affairs of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues (UOS) and the office of the chief rabbi. It also led to the UOS re-examining its services, and making changes to improve the situation.

In a bid to make light of the serious communal issue, the spoof portrays the chief rabbi as the leader of the Third Reich and what appears to be members of the UOS and the kashrut department as his Nazi generals. The movie clip has been used before, and is intended to create humour from a serious

But is it funny?

Goldstein chose not to comment on the video. Neither did Tali Nates, the director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, nor Heather Blumenthal, the executive director of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

In this instance, the creator of the video used a clip from the 2004 German-language movie Der Untergang (The Downfall) showing an exasperated Hitler having a total meltdown in front of his subservient and cowering

The spoof comes at the same time as the Democratic Alliance was heavily criticised for

Continued on page 16>>

Biden says Israeli ties will remain close

President-elect Joe Biden assured Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a phone call on 17 November that the ties between their countries would remain strong.

"The president-elect noted that he expects to work closely with the prime minister to address the many challenges confronting our countries," Biden's transition team said in a statement following the call. "The president-elect expressed his determination to ensure that the United States-Israel relationship is strengthened and enjoys strong bipartisan support."

Netanyahu's office put out a similarly worded statement on Twitter.

Biden's conversation with Netanyahu and a separate one the same day with President Reuven Rivlin consolidated international recognition

Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:13	Johannesburg
19:15	20:12	Cape Town
18:15	19:11	Durban
18:15	19:28	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:43	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:31	East London

that Biden is the next US president, contrary to President Donald Trump's continued insistence that he won the 3 November election in spite of all evidence to the contrary.

Netanyahu, one of Trump's closest allies, had previously congratulated Biden, but Tuesday's tweet was the first time he referred to Biden as "president-elect".

The statements were also significant because Biden appeared to be going out of his way following the election to reassure Netanyahu that the relationship would remain close. Some Democrats, including a number of Biden's rivals during the primaries, have called for distancing from Netanyahu's government as it drifts to the right.

Netanyahu in particular would want reassurance that Biden would continue Trump's policy of confronting Iran - one of the "challenges" Biden alluded to in his statement.

Corbyn reinstated into Labour

Labour has decided to reinstate Jeremy Corbyn, the British party's former leader, as a member after his suspension for allegedly downplaying the party's antisemitism problem.

Five members on the national executive committee of Labour decided to reinstate Corbyn after meeting for several hours on 17 November, Sky News reported.

The decision came shortly after

Corbyn issued a statement apologising for his reaction to last month's finding by Britain's racism watchdog that antisemitism was present within Labour's ranks under Corbyn's

His successor, Keir Starmer, suspended Corbyn from the party after he said, "One antisemite is one too many, but the scale of the problem was also dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media."

In a statement on Facebook on Tuesday, Corbyn walked back those comments. "To be clear, concerns about antisemitism are neither 'exaggerated' nor 'overstated'," he wrote. "I regret the pain this issue has caused the Jewish community."

British Jewish groups, which dismissed Corbyn's remarks on Tuesday, protested against his reinstatement, which means he can participate in all party activities.

All briefs supplied by JTA

Torah Thought

Why it shouldn't be lonely at the top

while ago, I had the privilege of attending meetings with fellow rabbis. It was a mixture of business and retreat. There was so much to take away from our time together as leaders, some from the business sessions, some from the times of retreat, but a lot from just being around the table over food and relaxation time. Sometimes the best lessons we learn come from conversations had during coffee breaks.

Never underestimate the power of leading in a crowd. Leaders should do whatever it takes to get into a crowd of leaders, and learn as much as possible. When you meet a crowd of leaders, you learn that much of their struggle is also your struggle. If you are struggling as a leader, there's a good chance that someone in the crowd of leaders is going through the same struggle as you. It's a good reminder for us that we are all human beings with different backgrounds, lessons, and interpretations.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were three Judahite men that were thrown into a "fiery furnace" by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, when they refused to bow down to the king's image in Chapter 3 of the Book of Daniel. They were all leaders, given authority over provinces in Babylon. They had made tough leadership calls, and literally, they faced the

We learn that tough times don't last, determined leaders do. When you're in the dark and wondering if you're ever going to survive it, you realise that by the grace of G-d, you're going to make it. When you're leading in a crowd, you experience, through others, that the G-d who called you, the very same one who is allowing you to be shared by the fire, is the same one who sustains you and carries you when you are too weak to put one foot in front of another.

So, when we read Torah portion Tol'dot, we read about Isaac and Rebecca and their twin boys, Jacob and Esau. Sometimes we read this narrative and cringe. But maybe, this year, let's think differently. Let's think from a leadership point of view how this might have gone differently with the benefit of a little bit of

Rabbi Julia Margolis,

modern wisdom and insight. How can we learn from the example of our ancestors, the

good things they did, the way

they also loved and treasured their children and their community? Maybe we can also learn to be a little bit better as leaders of our families and our synagogues.

While it's tempting to believe that you are G-d's gift to your organisation, you realise that when you're leading in a crowd, the only reason you are able to lead and be present is because of the giants that have gone before you. You hear stories of legends that seem larger than life, that had it far tougher than you're ever going to have it. Stories of women who boldly answered the call of G-d to preach and be a leader in a patriarchal society, such as Rabbi Regina Jonas z"l.

This is when you learn the valuable lesson that if you decide to lead, you were never called to lead by yourself. You need others. As the old adage goes, the

Jewish Report

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Video comparing Malema to Hitler sparks dissent

TALI FEINBERG

video created by South African musician David Scott (known as The Kiffness) this week comparing the rise of the Nazi Party to that of the Economic Freedom Fighters

backlash, and a slew of antisemitic comments on social media.

At the beginning of the video, Scott shares a tweet where the Democratic Alliance last week likened the EFF "red shirts" to Nazi brownshirts. He explains that he took audio from a video which shows Hitler's rise to power, and "matched it up with Julius' rise to power, and it's actually quite scary how similar it is. So make up your own mind, and hopefully we can learn from history and make sure history isn't repeated here in South Africa."

Thousands of people on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram commented in response, including at least 15 comments on Facebook

praising Hitler and saying it was an insult to compare him to Julius Malema.

Bonginkosi Hoko wrote among other points, "Take out what Hitler did to the Jewish nation. He achieved economic success ... Adolf Hitler - I'm so in love with him, I only wear Puma brand because it resembles the Nazi salutation style ... I'm 100% sure those huge German brands do praise Hitler. They wouldn't have made it if it weren't for Adolf Hitler's ideas and ambition. Yes, maybe he was wrong for killing the Jews, but in my eyes, we are better without the Jewish people just like he believes."

Mary Kluk, the president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and the director of the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre, says, "The comment by Bonginkosi Hoko in particular is blatantly offensive and dangerous." The SAJBD has reported the issue to Facebook, and is investigating the best way forward.

Regarding Scott's video, she says, "All Nazi analogies are highly problematic, irrespective of whether they are made by politicians, the media, or anyone else. Not only are they disrespectful to

those who experienced the Holocaust and minimise a unique and unparalleled part of our history, they can also easily provoke pro-Nazi and antisemitic

But in an interview with the SA Jewish Report, Scott says, "I believe



David Scott, aka The Kiffness

there are very strong parallels between Malema and Hitler's rise to power. Left unchecked, it could have dire consequences for our already fragile democracy. I don't want to know what would happen to South Africa if Malema did come into power. All I know is that prevention is better than

"I disavow antisemitic comments of any nature. I find it deeply disturbing that anyone would make light of the Holocaust. I think any reasonable person would agree that the video was made with no intention of inviting any forms of antisemitism, and it's highly unfortunate that anyone would think that my video would invite such comments."

He says he made the video because he noticed in recent months that "basic freedoms are starting to be encroached on by the EFF, the ANC [African National Congress] and mainstream media. The white minority is a clear target, and ordinary white South African citizens are being made the scapegoat for a much bigger problem: government corruption. I couldn't help but revisit

what happened to the Jewish people in Germany during Hitler's rise to power. Germany's economy was bust, and it, too, found a scapegoat in Jewish people."

He believes that "the parallels to Malema's rise to power are self-evident. Disturbingly, the Human Rights

> Commission is doing nothing to protect citizens against the onslaught of attacks from Julius Malema, so if it's not going to do anything about it, then it's up to ordinary citizens to be brave and speak the truth. As Churchill once said, 'Those that cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

As a musician with a large following, Scott started commenting on social and political issues last year. "I realised that I could use my platform to affect real change. I figured I could merge my political views with music, which is when I started making satirical parody songs. That being said, satirical parody isn't always the correct medium, which is why I took this latest video seriously."

Regarding the backlash to the video, Scott says, "My content often deals with sensitive issues, so I'm no stranger to backlash. Many EFF supporters were offended. I found that among the Jewish community, there were many who agreed with me, but also those

who didn't. "There was a Jewish gentleman that I've worked with who lashed out at me online.

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He was upset that I would compare a man who was responsible for the killing of millions of Jewish people to Malema. I phoned him straight away and explained that my intention was to compare the two men in the context of their positions of power at the time – so in Hitler's case, prior to the Holocaust. We met up for lunch today, and had a very warm heart to heart.

"That being said, I understand that the truth is unfortunately not always as important as the person saving it. Someone shared a video of a black Jewish man [Sihle Ngobese aka Big Daddy Liberty] essentially saying the same thing I said, albeit far more eloquently, so I shared his video subsequent to mine. In hindsight, I wish I could somehow have made it more obvious that I wasn't comparing Malema to the man responsible for millions of deaths, but rather to the man Hitler was becoming before the Holocaust."

Milton Shein, emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape

Town and antisemitism expert, says, "While [Scott] cleverly draws similarities, the context is very different. This isn't to suggest that Malema and the EFF aren't dangerous, but Malema has said many things about an inclusive society of blacks and whites which Hitler would never have said about Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Germans. Fascism was a third way, with no wish to maintain Westminster parliamentarianism.

"Malema appears [at least on the surface] to respect parliament as an institution, elections, chapter-nine institutions and so forth," he says. "Having said that, there are many worrying signs in Malema's language and the behaviour of the EFF. Ultimately, he is a racial nationalist with authoritarian tendencies."

Regarding the slew of antisemitic comments, Shain says, "We see these sorts of sentiments all the time on social media. Crackpots and fantasist have greater ability today to share their vile thoughts than ever before."

Jewish Agency launches 'safety net' for world Jewry

>>Continued from page 1

Arran said these initiatives weren't a "once-off event", so JReady approached a department of Tel Aviv University's medical school that deals with the management of crises and stress. "We built a course which we are now piloting in South Africa and its partner community, Bet Shemesh Mateh Yehuda in

"The course offers intensive practical and theoretical training with Israel's top experts on leadership and crisis management, and allows participants to discuss dilemmas and share knowledge," Amar Arran said. "Fifteen people are participating from each community, and at the end of the course, participants will get funding to build their own projects."

"Along with this digital offering, we are engaged in reaching out to communities, figuring out their core needs, and tailoring support," said Raz. "For example, in France just before Shavuot, the community was

debating whether to open its shuls. Local government said that it could, but community members saw what was happening with the virus and asked for further consultation with our experts. After speaking to them for two and a half hours, they decided not to open."

JReady is there to facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge, even in crises unrelated to the pandemic. "For example, in Australia, one of their recent issues has been bushfires, and we realised that experts with experience in San Francisco and Los Angeles could share best practice with the community in Australia, which they are now doing. Israel doesn't have to be in the middle, we can just be the connector," Raz said.

Amar Arran said that anyone from the Jewish community was welcome to engage with JReady. The goal is for all communities to share what they have learned in times of distress, creating a global network of support, expertise, resilience, and continuity.

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Harris' husband, Emhoff, about to make history of his own

RON KAMPEAS - JTA

nited States (US) Vice-Presidentelect Kamala Harris' Jewish husband, Doug Emhoff, has made history as he will be the first Jewish spouse of a president or a vice-president.

He spoke before the election about growing up Jewish and his Jewish involvement in a webinar organised by President-elect Joe Biden's campaign, offering revelations about the Jewish components of his first date with Harris, and his own current Jewish involvement.

The two-hour webinar, which drew at least 1 000 people, played up the themes Democrats used in their campaign to woo Jewish voters, contrasting President Donald Trump as less empathetic to Jewish concerns and countering Trump's pro-Israel policies with claims he makes the country less safe because of his isolationism.

There was a lot of Jewish trivia: he went to Cedar Lake, a Jewish camp in New Jersey, and excelled in tennis and soccer before soccer was popular in the United States, Emhoff said. As he did in another call he and Harris had with Jewish donors, he described the threepiece brown velour suit he wore for his Barmitzvah.

On their first date, Emhoff said Harris "reeled off her Jewish bonafides", including trips to Israel, fundraising for the Jewish National Fund as a teenager, and the fact that her mother worked for the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal, where Harris spent her teenage years.

Emhoff, an entertainment lawyer in California where Harris is the Democratic US senator, also spoke of his Jewish commitment, including his pro bono work with Bet Tzedek, which provides free legal services to the poor.

Emhoff embraced a central theme of the Biden Jewish campaign and the

campaign overall: Trump is unfit to be president in part, he said, because he coddles right-wing extremists.

"We have a president, right now, who has repeatedly used antisemitic dog whistles," Emhoff said. "But worst of all, when marchers in Charlottesville came out of the woods, carrying torches and spewing the same antisemitic vile that we heard in the 1930s in Germany, before the Holocaust, this president called some of them 'very fine people'."

He was referring to Trump's remarks in 2017 after a deadly neo-Nazi march in the Virginia city. Trump called the

Trump signed the guestbook at Yad Vashem like he was signing a yearbook, writing, 'how amazing it was to be here with all my friends'."

Lauren Alperstein, a lawyer who serves on the board of a number of Jewish groups in south Florida, said it was hard for her to explain Trump to her "It's been very hard - more so for

our son - trying to explain to him what a president should look like, what a president should be, and how a president should act, because this president doesn't embody those values, he doesn't



marchers "very fine people", but also condemned neo-Nazis and white supremacists in the same remarks.

Personal disgust with Trump was a recurring theme throughout the call. Anthony Blinken, a former top national security official in the Obama-Biden administration and a senior foreign policy adviser to the campaign, said Biden took his children to the Dachau concentration camp when they were old enough to understand the horrors of the

In contrast, Blinken said, "President

embody the values of tikkun olam, the Mishnaic precept of repairing the world, "he doesn't embody the values of ve'ahavta le'raecha kemocha – you love your neighbour as yourself," she said.

Representative Lois Frankel, whose congressional district includes Trump's residence, Mar-a-Lago, joked that she hoped to see Trump again, soon.

"I want you to know that I represent the president of the US in congress," she said. "I guess, to his chagrin. I hope this time next year he's back as my constituent."

Rachel Kolisi's connection to Judaism

el Kolisi

TALI FEINBERG

achel Kolisi may be a devoted Christian, but her connection to Judaism and Jewish history means that she feels a strong link to our community.

This became evident when she visited the Holocaust memorial in Germany before lockdown this year, and posted a photograph of herself on social media saying, "Memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe. I've watched every movie about the Holocaust, and it's been my dream. for the longest time to be closer to the history of it all."

It garnered a massive response. Kolisi told the SA Jewish Report that the visit was "one of my biggest dreams since I started learning about World War II".

She chatted to the SA Jewish Report in between supporting her husband, Springbok rugby captain Siya Kolisi, throwing herself into the important work of their Kolisi Foundation, raising four children, and running her own business.

Looking back on her visit to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, she says, "It's a sobering experience, and overwhelming, but I have a much better understanding of what actually transpired during the Holocaust. World War II - and

the extreme levels of hate and love that were demonstrated during that time - really captures me."

Her post received 12 263 likes on Instagram, and over 1 600 people responded to it on Facebook. "Thank you for visiting, and the post. Many people deny the Holocaust ever happened," wrote one follower.

> Kolisi says that her interest in the Holocaust and World War II developed watching the film The Pianist. "I wanted to know everything I could about that time. I'm sure

I've watched 90% of the World War II movies and documentaries." She hopes to one day visit the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre with her two older children.

"I was raised a Christian, and as I have grown and experienced different situations in life, I believe my relationship with the Lord has just grown stronger and stronger," says Kolisi. "I definitely feel connected to Judaism - my brothers and sisters. Jesus was a Jew."

She has a Hebrew tattoo on her back

which translates to 'this too shall pass'. "I got it on my back over my heart, because they are words I carry close to my heart. They remind me that bad times don't last, and good times don't last either, so make sure you live in the moment and have a real appreciation for the good ones," she explains.

"It's in Hebrew because it's the first language I believe Jesus spoke when he was here on earth."

As a role model for women, she says, "South African women have a hugely important role to play in building South Africa. We have been created to nurture and care for others, and I don't believe there is a more desperate time for that than now."

"I definitely don't have it all balanced all the time," she says. "I try to be open and honest about that on my social media platforms. Also, what's the definition of 'having it all' actually? My advice would be: remember, you are perfectly equipped for your purpose. And you're doing great, even on the really hard and tough days, remember that. And remember to prioritise yourself in all the craziness. You can't pour from an empty cup.

"I know sometimes South Africa seems like it's 'too messed up', it can't be fixed, and there's no way forward," she says. "But the reality is that if we all just took responsibility for our nation and did something - it doesn't need to be something huge and grand - then South Africa would be a much better place

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Jewish Report

Sense of humour crisis

aking light of a tough situation is mostly acceptable and, I guess, understandable.

Sometimes we need to find the humorous side to uncomfortable or unpleasant situations, and just laugh. Clever satire dealing with conflict or controversial situations can also be interesting and sometimes helpful. And we all need a good laugh.

However, I had to swallow hard when I received a video four times this week via WhatsApp that was, I guess, meant to be satire. It was a clip from an old German movie showing Hitler freaking out in front of his generals,



but it had farcical and bitchy subtitles referring to the recent outcry in the community over the cost of kosher food and kashrut certification fees. The references in the words make it sound like the chief rabbi is Hitler.

I felt quite sick watching it. Any humour was lost on me. Comparing the chief rabbi to Hitler is totally and utterly unacceptable and debase.

In fact, for anyone to be compared to Hitler, I would say, is defamatory, especially if they are Jewish. The man represents the murder of six million Jews. How can we compare anyone to him, not least of all someone who is our spiritual leader?

What was astonishing for me is that there were people in our community sending it around as if it was funny and worth watching.

It was clear from the subtitles that the person or people behind this version of the video were Jewish and very much a part of the community. They were clearly also knowledgeable about the kashrut debate.

If they weren't, and this had been made by someone outside of the community, we would be baying for blood. It would be the worst kind of antisemitism – comparing our spiritual leader to Hitler. Surely, you don't get worse than that?

But it was made by a Jewish person or people, so does that make it any better? Does it make it funny or acceptable? I don't believe it does. Have I lost my sense of humour, or have some of us gone to a place

where such ugliness is perceived to be acceptable?

I find it disturbing.

I have given my opinion on the kashrut debate a number of times, and I'm still clear that I see a genuine move on the part of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues towards improvement. I'm of the belief that we do make mistakes, and we aren't always right. We are all human. So, when a light is shone on something we may have done wrong, that's good. When we ignore it, it only gets brighter.

However, when people accept responsibility for something that has been shown to be imperfect, and commit to fixing it, it's honourable and a sign of real strength of character. It's not weakness, and it certainly isn't a reason to stab them in the back.

In the same week and also in our newspaper (page 3), we write about The Kiffness, who created a video comparing Julius Malema to Hitler. There were many in our community who were upset by this, not least of all because it attracted a lot of antisemitic comments on social media.

Help me to understand why it's okay for us to compare one of our leaders to Hitler, but we won't accept it from people outside the community. I don't get it.

Coming back to this distasteful video, I wonder what kind of person sought it out and did the voice over. What were they thinking when they did it? They obviously thought it funny to compare our spiritual leader to Hitler. I wonder if they still do. I would love to understand what was going on for them, and why they felt it was necessary or acceptable. I also find it interesting that they don't publish their names with the video but are happy to mock someone who has committed his life to our community.

I know I just said we are all fallible and human, but this was just cruel and nasty.

I'm no rabbi, nor am I an expert in morality, and I certainly have my failings. However, I would like to believe that as a community, we set moral standards for ourselves. We may gossip and be a tad bitchy at times, but I would like to think we don't set out to hurt people.

We are, after all, the people of the book, and have been called on to be "a light unto the nations". I get that there are some people who will disagree with me, and they are fully entitled to do so.

In fact, there were some who felt that we shouldn't touch this story in our newspaper because it would make us look bad. We do look bad, but sometimes we have to hold a mirror to ourselves to remind us of who we are and what we aspire to be.

I'm all for people making mistakes, genuinely apologising and righting their wrongs. I call on the people behind this video to do just that.

I wish you all a Shabbat Shalom! Peta Krost Maunder Editor

Birth pangs of the COVID-19 vaccine

nly 21% of Israelis reported that they would agree to be vaccinated against COVID-19 in the first round of a vaccine rollout, according to a study recently released by the Israel Democracy Institute.

Scepticism prevails in spite of a wave of excitement that has swept the world as the Pfizer/BioNTech alliance, a multinational pharmaceutical alliance, and Moderna, an American biotechnology company, released their phase-3 vaccine results, which have shown their vaccines to be more than 90% efficacious against COVID-19.

I'm, therefore, not surprised to hear this week from several of my own patients living in South Africa, where the public is perhaps far less educated about vaccine development than in Israel, that should the opportunity arise, they certainly wouldn't volunteer to be pioneers to receive a COVID-19 vaccine in early 2021.

One patient even asked for my confirmation that it is, indeed, a rumour that the COVID-19 vaccine rollout is Bill Gates' plot to get microchips implanted into millions of people. Interestingly, a YouGov poll of 1 640 Americans in May 2020 reported that 28% of Americans believe this rumour to be true.

The COVID-19 vaccine involves injecting viral RNA (single strain DNA) into the body. This has led to the misunderstanding that the injected RNA alters the body's DNA itself. "Don't inject the COVID-19 vaccine. It alters your DNA" was a tweet that came from Emerald Robinson, a White House correspondent, earlier in the year. Nothing could be more inaccurate. The Pfizer company spokesman, Andrew Widger, has made it clear that the vaccine "doesn't alter the DNA sequence of a human body. It

only presents the body with the instructions to build immunity."

Ambivalence exists because of the novelty of this vaccine. It's true that there has never been a messenger RNA vaccine that has been successful before. Messenger RNA is genetic material that gives the body instructions to produce proteins that are the same proteins present on the SARS-COV-2 virus surface. This enables swift destruction of the SARS-COV-2 virus should it present in the future.

Even though this is, indeed, new technology, there's no reason to shy away from it. All vaccines go through rigorous safety checks before they are tested on people. It's the result of unprecedented investment in this unique technology that we finally have measurable results in this exciting space.

How have the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines revolutionised the COVID-19 vaccine horizon in the past two weeks? First, both vaccines have released phase 3 results. Phase 3 is the last phase of testing before a vaccine's details are submitted for release on the open market. It involves reproducing the safety and effectiveness of stage 2 on a much larger scale.

Original predictions pitched the efficacy of

the COVID-19 vaccine at 50%-60%, optimistically at 70%. The Pfizer vaccine showed an overwhelming 90% efficacy in 43 000 participants, with no safety concerns. The numbers released by the Moderna vaccine even topped these results, with a 94% efficacy amongst 30 000 participants. In simple terms, the world has two vaccines that really work.

The Astra-Zeneca Oxford University vaccine trial, in which South Africa has been privileged to take part, will release its results soon, as will the Janssen trial in the United Kingdom. Reliving the experience of the 1960s space race, days after the Pfizer results were

released, Russia quickly rushed to release the results of its controversial phase 3 "Sputnik V" vaccine trial. It, too, claimed 92% efficacy.

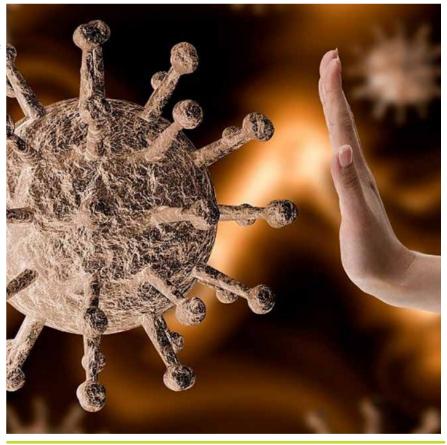
The controversy lies in the small relative sample size and the lack of transparency in the study design. Nevertheless, even here, the promise of success is high.

Will the average South African be booking a slot with his GP or pharmacist in early 2021 and taking off his mask in celebration of new-found immunity against COVID-19? I discussed this question with Professor Barry Schoub, who now heads up the Ministerial Advisory Committee to the government on the COVID-19 vaccine. Not so fast, unfortunately. There are significant obstacles that will prevent the man on the street from a quick COVID-19 immunity shield in South Africa.

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines make use of a lipid particle to enclose the viral RNA to protect it from enzymes in the blood that would otherwise destroy it. The lipid (nano) particle is stable only at exceptionally low temperatures. Pfizer's vaccine requires storage of -70 degrees centigrade, and Moderna seems a little warmer to success here, with stability at -20C.

Schoub remarks how a recent study demonstrated that 40% of normal fridge vaccines (stored at 4C) lost their efficacy due to unavoidable disruption in the cold chains from logistics challenges in South Africa. The National Institute for Communicable Diseases and Groote Schuur Hospital are perhaps the only institutions capable of freezing vaccines at -70C.

Professor Schoub, however, remains optimistic that new advances in technology will eventually enable normal fridge temperature storage, even with the COVID-19 vaccine.



Another real obstacle that will prevent the average South African from receiving a vaccine soon is the swiftness with which first-world countries have snapped up orders for millions of vaccines. The South African government has been slow to the mark and financially disempowered. It will take months to catch up.

How excited should the man on the street be? Very, I believe.

The speed at which vaccine development is taking place is unprecedented. The efficacy of the vaccines is impressive. The safety profile of the vaccines is remarkable. The synergy of societies and countries working together to vaccinate the world hasn't been seen since the times of smallpox.

We will surmount the obstacles. But in the meantime, we'll have to rely on our trusted masks and sanitisers, and eagerly keep our eyes on the horizon.

• Dr Daniel Israel is a family practitioner in Johannesburg.

by the police in the 1980s which cry out for justice. Some made it into the headlines, but none resulted in the prosecution of the policemen who committed these crimes. Not even in the case of Steve Biko were the police sanctioned for his death. It took years to

get Biko's doctors Benjamin Tucker and Ivor Lang to be censured by the deeply apartheid medical council.

The case of Ashley Kriel is no exception to this toxic and melancholy state of affairs. Ashley was an effective political organiser in the Cape, and his activities brought him to the attention of the security police. He was a wanted man.

One day in 1987, the police received information that Kriel was hiding in a house in Athlone, and they sent Sergeant Anthony Abels and Warrant Officer Jeff Benzien to survey the house, but not to take any

further action. Disobeying their orders, they knocked at the door, and when Kriel opened it, a struggle allegedly ensued.

During that struggle, according to the police, Kriel produced a firearm and, in the process of subduing him, a shot was discharged and Kriel was fatally

wounded. So much for the police version.

I gave evidence at the inquest. On the bench was inquest Magistrate G Hoffman and sitting as an assessor was Theo Schwër, who was the head of forensic medicine at Stellenbosch.

Crucial to the case was the fact that there appeared to be a contact wound on

Ashley Kriel

Ashley's back just alongside his shoulder blade. However, there was also a hole in the tracksuit top he was wearing. Herein lay the problem. The hole in the clothing was small, about three millimetres.

Tests done by me with the same weapon and the same type of clothing using

a dead pig as a backdrop, produced a significantly larger hole, about 30 millimetres in size.

Thus, the hole in the clothing didn't match up with the alleged contact shot that was central to the police version. The police brought in their ballistics "expert", one Willie Visser, who essentially found that a contact shot with

pig skin as a backdrop produced the massive hole. This was no problem for Visser. He went about manipulating his results until, by using a sandbag as a backdrop, he could achieve the size hole in the clothing that he desired.

My comment to the court was that the only thing that this proved was that the deceased was a sandbag – the so-called reductio ad absurdum argument (a method to disprove an argument by illustrating how it leads to absurd consequences). The state pathologist, the late Deon Knobel, was no better. He performed equally fatuous and scientifically illiterate experiments to prove the police version.

What actually happened was that Kriel was shot from some distance away and Benzien, realising that this would be difficult to explain, pulled up Kriel's tracksuit top and fired a second shot through the same entrance wound. This is the only explanation which can explain

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the discrepancy in the bullet-hole size in the tracksuit.

Of great sadness to me was the assessor. He should have known better. He sat through this parade of scientific nonsense without raising a question.

The failure to act fairly and to see to it that justice was administered will stand for evermore against the name of Theo Schwër, and rightly so. The magistrate, Hoffman, was typical of the apartheid apparatchiks who were all too common on the bench at the time.

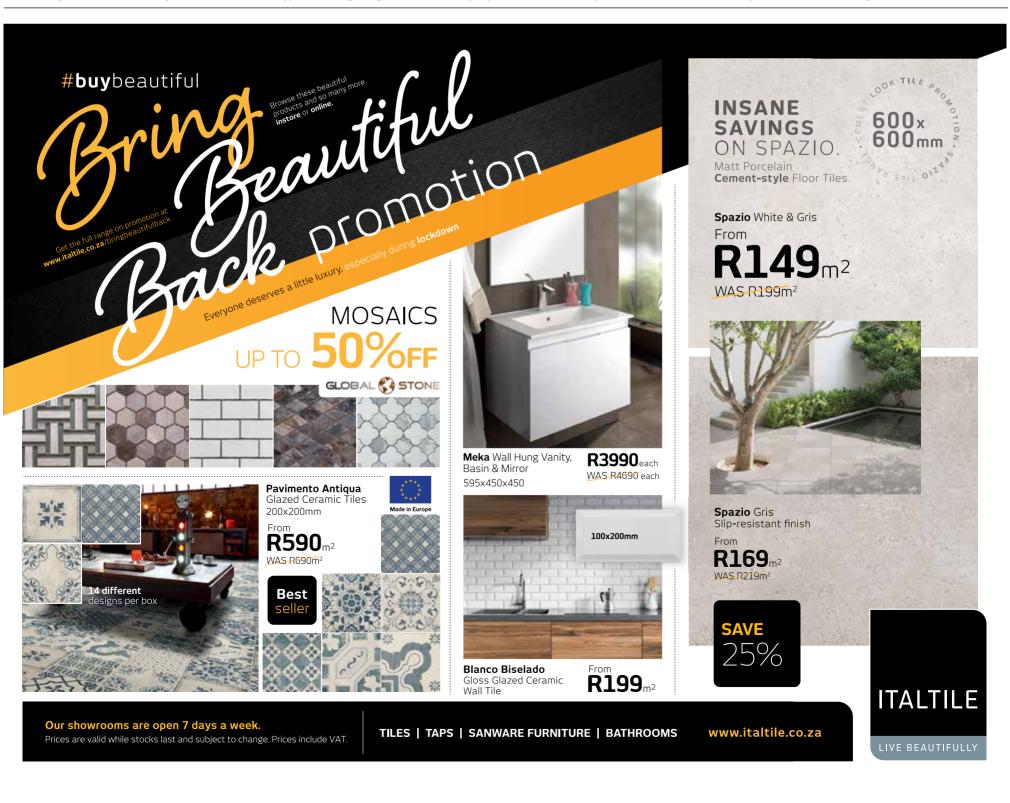
Thus, the take-home message of this whole parody of an inquest was that Ashley Kriel was murdered by Benzien and Abel, and the justice system let him down.

The application by Benzien at the amnesty hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was similarly a travesty as far as the truth was concerned. The person who represented the family never thought to properly prepare any cross examination for Benzien.

The result was that Benzien continued with his false narrative, and got away with it again. That lawyer now inhabits the Cape Bench.

The climate of our courts has changed, and the re-opening if the Ahmed Timol inquest and the inquest into the death of Dr Neil Aggett have set the scene for more investigation to find the truth and punish the wrongdoers. It would be a good example to set for the current crew of corrupt policemen.

 David Klatzow was one of South Africa's first private forensic scientists and was involved in most of the high profile cases of the 80s and early 90s, including the Helderberg plane crash, the attempted murder of Dr Frank Chikane and the murder of the Gugulethu 7.



JORDAN MOSHE

n spite of fears of COVID-19 and doctors pleading for it to be cancelled, the matric end-of-year Rage is going ahead as planned

The annual event typically attracts thousands of students, many of them from within the Jewish community. With experts warning about what could become a "superspreader" of the virus, parents are trying to balance their children's physical and mental best interests

"I'm going through a lot of mixed emotions," says Lindi Galun, whose daughter is in matric at King David Linksfield. "These kids have had a tough year, and have been robbed of so much. I don't want to take this opportunity away from my daughter, but I'm fearful of what may happen. There's a lot that can go wrong."

Annually, thousands of matric students converge in Ballito, Umhlanga, Jeffreys Bay, and Plettenberg Bay to celebrate the end of their school career.

Since 2019, there's even been a Joburg Rage Festival, with more than 5 000

of music, drinking, and all-night partying.

In spite of initial uncertainty, event organisers announced recently that the long-awaited festivals would be taking place on dates in November, December, and January.

Various measures aimed at keeping youngsters safe were also announced. Rage Festival group spokesperson, Marina Oreb, reportedly told *Times Live* that it's expecting about 60% to 70% of the usual turnout, that only 30% of a venue's capacity would be used, and only venues with high airflow had been chosen.

According to the festival website, other measures include the mandatory wearing of masks at all venues, pre-screening procedures, sanitisation, a no-touch policy, daily temperature checks, and more. Attendees are also expected to know their COVID-19 status beforehand, and to isolate themselves before arrival as per government regulation.

Of course, none of this is entirely guaranteed, leaving some parents anxious.

"Our kids have been wearing masks for months for fear of getting sick before systems are low, and they're going into an environment with people they don't know.

"My daughter is scared because she has been protected for so long and suddenly, she's going to be out with groups of people. No one wants to be the one wearing a mask, and there's peer pressure not to be the odd

Given the anxiety, Galun says few parents would be really upset if the event were cancelled. "We're all really nervous. What happens if it's your child that gets sick? They can't fly home, and I don't think the organisers have really thought that one through. They won't give you a refund if you cancel, so we're all just going with it. It's risky.

"As a parent, Rage is scary enough as it is. It's about letting go, and letting your child be responsible. The pandemic has added another element. We're going with it, and

hoping for the best outcome." Stephanie Urdang, whose son also happy that he has the opportunity to get away after an extremely tumultuous year.

Fear and misgivings about matric Rage

"Classes have been cancelled and then rescheduled, they've had the stress of online learning, getting ready for exams, staying healthy, and their lives being turned upside down," she says. "It's been a mad year."

A social worker by profession, Urdang believes that Rage offers an opportunity vital to youngsters' mental health.

"They've been wrapped in cotton wool for months, and haven't had the opportunity to develop normally as 18-year-olds," she says. "They need to get out and go back to living with caution. We can't smother them.

"Mental health is an overriding factor. Nothing has gone well for matrics this year - no licences, no events, no matric farewells. To deprive them of Rage will be another great disappointment for them, and will take another toll. Whether I'm right or wrong I don't know, but we have to look at this from a mental health point of view as well."

Still, Urdang says, "I can't say I'm not

anxious. I'm really hoping that the event won't be overcrowded, and that people behave responsibly. I'm going to send sanitiser and masks with my son, but there's only so much I can do."

The event has drawn much criticism from health experts, among them Shabir Madhi, professor of vaccinology at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits), who reportedly said that the organisers should be held accountable for a rise in infections.

Professor Barry Schoub, emeritus professor in virology at Wits, agrees that the event isn't a good idea, warning that such functions drive more than 80% of COVID-19 transmission.

"All precautions go by the wayside," he says. "Masks go down, people are singing, and there's less physical distancing. The virus spreads this way."

Schoub believes it unlikely that the safety measures will be strictly maintained.

"I would think it to be in the publichealth interest that these events be shut down unless a cast-iron guarantee can be made that precautions will be sustainably maintained.

"We know that people are getting tired of rules. This is where it will all break down and cause a second wave, which is exactly what has happened in Europe."

Community GPs agree. "As a parent of teenagers, I know how difficult it is to say 'no', particularly when all their friends are attending," says Dr Sheri Fanaroff. "Matrics have missed out on so much this year, it's difficult to deny them the celebration.

"Unfortunately, 18-year-olds, [particularly when alcohol is involved], tend to lose responsibility and judgement, and COVID-19 protocols will break down. There's no way of knowing which younger people will get more severe illness, so attending large gatherings comes with risks attached."

Dr Tracy Paiken says that she is concerned about all holiday makers, given that we all tend to let our guard down.

"The beaches will be popular, and safety measures will be negligible, if maintained at all," she says. "I understand that the Rage idea is a 'rite of passage', however it encourages somewhat reckless behaviour.

"This virus is such a new, scary phenomenon, no traditions should be kept until we have a better method of keeping everyone safe."

Dr Daniel Israel believes that the screening measures in place afford people a false sense of security, and aren't really that effective.

"Outdoor venues make a huge

difference, but realistically, I don't see people staying outside all the time," he says. "It sounds impossible. We're playing a betting game here, looking at probabilities and hoping that there are no large outbreaks. It takes just a few cases to create a super-spreader event."

youngsters gathering for the two-day event exams," says Galun. "Their immune attends King David Linksfield, says she's Kerri makes her marks on Mrs SA pageant

TALI FEINBERG

'erri Marks has never entered a beauty pageant before, but was recently chosen as one of the top ▲25 in the Mrs South Africa competition. Possibly the only Jewish woman to enter and reach this point, she has her eyes on the crown and big dreams of making an impact on the lives of women in South Africa and beyond. An alumnus of King David Linksfield, Marks is 37,

and has been a business development manager for an

inbound tourism publishing company for 11 years.

"I'm passionate about my career, which is selling Southern Africa as a destination to international leisure tourists," she says.

Mrs South Africa is specifically for married women between the ages of 25 and 50 According to the organisers, "It's not a beauty pageant in the traditional sense of the word, it's truly a life-changing journey for the women who enter this renowned empowerment programme.

"Mrs South Africa delegates are mature, driven, ambitious, and most of all real, relatable women who strive to be the best versions of themselves. They are wives, in some cases

mothers, some are entrepreneurs, and most are change makers, some are business women, and others home makers, but they all want the best for their family and their community. They are brave and bona fide women."

About 350 women entered the pageant in February. It was then narrowed down to the top 100, then the top 50, and now the top 25 finalists. The winner will be announced in February next year.

A mother of two children, Marks says she is a "beauty pageant novice". She felt ready to enter such a contest as "Mrs South Africa is the perfect platform. It's not a pedestal. It's a foundation for women to come together to speak their truth. I want to empower women and be a voice for neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) mothers, women battling with mental disorders, and women facing

These causes are personal. "My story isn't easy. I was in an abusive, toxic relationship, and I needed to get

> out of it, and did so. My mother has battled with mental disorders for the past 14 years, and I have been there for her in supporting her journey. It's important to recognise that mental health is the second biggest looming pandemic in this country.

"The other reason is because I struggled to fall pregnant with my second daughter. We put our life savings into in-vitro fertilisation and fell pregnant with twins. But at my 13-week scan, we had lost one twin. I then went on to give birth to Isabella at 32 weeks. She was merely 1kg at

birth - the size of a block of butter. She spent the first seven weeks of her life in NICU. So I want to be a voice for those struggling to fall pregnant and also to empower NICU moms, to give them encouragement, upliftment, and support."

Marks hopes to be a role model for young girls, and a voice for women of all ages, colours, creeds, and body types. "There is no one-size-fits-all. Everyone is included.

We are an inclusive, beautiful nation. I also want to be a role model to girls and women in our own community," she says.

Reaching this level of the competition has required strength and fortitude, and an "attitude of gratitude to always appreciate this amazing opportunity". While the women are competing against each other, they are first and foremost a "sisterhood" that cheer each other on and treat each other with kindness and respect, she says.

Mrs South Africa delegates immerse themselves in its non-profit organisation, Women4Women, focused on female empowerment, community upliftment, and youth education. Its main goal is to improve the lives of less fortunate and previously disadvantaged girls of South Africa by providing access to life skills and education.

Marks says she is passionate about children, and wants to fight for equal healthcare for all children as well as harsher punishment for the gender-based violence that plagues South Africa.

Somehow, balancing it all, she wants to encourage women to be strong, no matter what life throws at them. "You can be a mother and wife, have a career, and juggle it all with a smile."

If she wins, she will hold the crown for a year, attend Mrs World, and immerse herself in Women4Women and the causes she holds close to her heart.

There have been extra challenges for the pageant this year in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, with some judging taking place virtually and fewer sponsors on board, but Marks has taken it all in her stride.

She is grateful to be part of the South African Jewish community, and for all the support, kindness, and guidance shown to her on this journey. She hopes to work with businesses as an influencer or brand ambassador.

"Whether I win or not, my ultimate goal is to set the tone for women. To encourage them to accept themselves for who they are, and to be adaptable and resilient, because life is going to challenge them," she says. "We need to rise up and tackle these challenges; all while being kind and being there for other women going through the same struggles."



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Jewish Report







THE KIRSH FOUNDATION

Harber dissects the downfall of sensationalist journalism

JORDAN MOSHE

"We need a return to journalism not as a commercial enterprise but as a sustainable public service. That's what gives it importance and value in our society."

So said veteran journalist Anton Harber in an online interview hosted by the Jewish Literary Festival on Thursday, 12 November. Harber discussed his new book *So, For the Record: Behind the Headlines in an Era of State Capture* with

journalist Sam Sole, the managing partner of the AmaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism.

The book brings the media into the spotlight, and aims to achieve something for journalists and consumers of news, Harber says.

"We need greater media understanding and literacy in this country," he said. "People need to understand what journalists can and cannot do, the dilemmas they face, their importance as well as their limitations.

"That's why I try to spell out how the process works, how news comes together, and the decisions made by journalists."

People think that an editor sits and says, "put this in the paper" or "don't put that in", Harber says

"It's much more complicated and there are many subtleties. As journalists, we have to be aware of each of the decisions we make. We are taught to make them in an unconscious way, but I think there is a need to be absolutely conscious of the words one uses, the headlines, and the choices

one makes

"It's not about the stories one does, but how one does each story. There is a great need for journalists and non-journalists to be much more aware of that process."

Harber illustrated this by differentiating between "leak journalism" and investigative journalism, explaining how leaks have become a dominant force in the South African media.

"Investigative journalism isn't the same as leak

journalism," he said.
"Investigative

journalism takes a leak, investigates the context, and verifies the story before using it as a foundation for a piece of

journalism.
"In South
Africa, because we have a dominant party which has splits within it,

the leak has become a major tool of political battle, and journalists are critical to how that leak is received."

The rise in social media has made this process far more complicated.

Said Harber, "Social media has changed the relationship between a source and a journalist. The source used to badly need a journalist as a gatekeeper who controlled access to the public. Because there are many more outlets and ways to get the information out without journalists, the source has become more powerful.

"That's one thing that has tempted many

journalists to deal with leaks at face value." This, in spite of knowing that a source may have a nefarious agenda.

"In the *Sunday Times* story that the book unravels, one of the things that really surprised me was that they knew that the people who were feeding them information had agendas," he said.

"Sources often do have their agenda and it doesn't mean the information is necessarily not important, but the journalist's job is to scrutinise the source and find others to back it up.

"Because of time and financial pressure on the *Sunday Times*, they were too quick to go with stories of dubious origin. Many people were offered many of the leaks. But why did the *Sunday Times* fall for it?"

Harber said he traced this phenomenon to a longstanding culture that had developed over many years.

"The *Sunday Times* was very powerful, wealthy, and a key agenda setter in South African news," he said. "It developed an arrogance in that time, and a practice that worked. When you came with a story, it went through many editors who saw their jobs not as verifying but as sharpening the story.

"The Sunday Times' treatment of a story was that it could have no more than 800 words, that it needed people at its centre, and a simple narrative. It took a position that said clearly if it thought people were guilty or not. It proudly called it the 'Sunday Times' treatment'."

With time, however, the newspaper began cutting corners.

Said Harber, "It would take out all the qualifiers in a story. It wanted one narrative, a fundamental distortion of journalism which is deeply misplaced.

"Great stories don't have one narrative but complex, nuanced, conflicting ones. Our job is to

provide conflicting narratives. It doesn't mean we believe one over the other, but we tell readers that there is more than one at play."

"The *Sunday Times* chose one, went with it, and would stick to it at all costs."

Harber said that the rise of the internet undermined this culture, however, and the newspaper didn't realise that it didn't have the standing to hold this position when people could challenge it on social media within minutes of publication.

"The Sunday Times didn't catch up until it was too late," he said.

Consequently, it has become clear that the traditional newsrooms are under too much pressure.

Said Harber, "They've shrunk enormously in recent years, and their capacity, by and large, to do the kind of time consuming, complicated investigative work is much diminished.

"The good news is that what we've seen is the rise of independent, non-profit specialist units which often have less pressure of time and money and are producing some of the most important work across the world.

"The real surprise is that non-profit journalism is looking more sustainable than the traditional commercial model."

Harber's key message is that, "The *Sunday Times* mess ups are perfect examples of how when you go too fast, don't verify properly, and just see yourself as being on a single track under pressure to produce front-page splashes, you'll get it wrong.

"Accuracy, context, and detail are more important than speed. When journalists take a breath to verify the story, it's more vital than speed. The speed of social media is causing enormous pressure, and I'm afraid that it's putting us on very dangerous path."

Finding your Jewish beshert online

TALI FEINBERG

websites, Jewish singles wanting to get married still struggle to meet their beshert (soul mate) who is on the same page as them. South African-born Derek Saker saw the gap, and created JWed, which has already had numerous successes, including matching up a number of South Africans.

Saker was born and grew up in Cape Town. He began his career in the hospitality industry, and was even a kosher chef for the South African Defence Force. He moved with his wife and two children from Israel to New Jersey after 9/11. His foray into Jewish matchmaking began when a friend who was a member of the website, Frumster.com, approached him and said he believed they could turn it into a profitable business.

"Frumster.com was started by a guy in Israel as a labour of love, but he was a programmer and not a business person," says Saker. "He flew to New York, and we negotiated and purchased the website, which at the time had about 2 000 members." Today, in its new incarnation as JWed, the site now has thousands of members from all over the world, and recently passed the milestone of 3 500 members getting married. "This is an averaging of eight marriages a month!" Saker says proudly.

But in those early days when it was still Frumster.com, success was a distant dream. The first thing Saker and his business partner did was to "completely re-launch the service internationally. We also introduced a tiered membership charge. Initially, the site was for only Orthodox, observant

Jewish singles seeking to get married, and it was created as a reaction to the growing and multifaceted problem of Orthodox Jewish singles struggling to meet," he says.

"It was a pioneering service in the observant world, as many still had an aversion to going online, and many singles themselves were suspicious of the whole set-up." But the reality – that this was a platform that actually led to successful matches and marriages – meant that those fears were soon set aside.

Saker says that within the Jewish dating world, especially the *frum* world, women are often left waiting for that phone call or knock on

the door, and taking the initiative is often frowned upon. Women also might have very particular ideas about what they are looking for, and often this is based on looks. Men also often have a list as long as their arm about the right woman for them, also often based on looks.

Tal and Aviva Dinur

JWed obliterates these obstacles, allowing women to reach out to men, and showing men and women that once they connect with someone with

whom they have a lot in common, their sometimes superficial criteria might not matter so much. In fact, 65% of successful matches on the site were thanks to women reaching out to men.

"This is a website that enables singles to take charge of their dating life.

They can search profiles, decide who to contact, decide who to reply to, and so on," says Saker. "Members know who they are and what they're looking for."

He notes that looks are obviously important, but "we didn't want to create

a dismissive environment where users just 'swipe' based on looks". Navigating this tension

between the first impression and the person behind the picture is an important part of the site's ethos.

In addition, Saker says, "When we say 'marriage-minded', we don't mean only people who want to get married 'tomorrow' should join. Each in their own time. It's about having that mindset, that you want to marry Jewish, whether that's soon or not."

The site became JWed when "we realised that there was a huge market of single Jews who while not necessarily Orthodox observant,

wanted to marry someone Jewish. As such, in 2008, we changed the name to JWed, to leverage a much more widely-appealing brand that spoke to all types of Jewish singles."

The process of joining is easy, but also in-depth. This isn't your typical

'swipe if you don't like' dating app. "Singles sign themselves up, and complete a comprehensive profile. Members have to be Jewish and marriage-minded. How do we check? With questions and profile reviews. All profiles are first reviewed before being approved. Once approved, members can conduct their own searches based on criteria such as age, location, and religious level. Members can send an email through the system to someone they are interested in. That member can choose to reply."

Saker emphasises that the main difference with other dating apps is "a very large and

unique pool of thousands of singles throughout the world. They are halachically Jewish singles, observant and not. They are all marriage-minded Jews, of all ages. Our proprietary technology ensures genuine communication and users."

While the site now has an app, called JWed Match, it still has the same comprehensive, detailed profile to complete.

Saker says there have been more than 100 successful matches that included a Jewish South African. "In many cases, the South African single moves to get married to someone overseas. I cannot deny that many Jewish singles probably see JWed as an additional vehicle to finding their soulmate abroad."

He says South African Jews are popular on the site. "South Africans are

He says South African Jews are popular on the site. "South Africans are highly regarded in the Jewish world. They are traditional, genuinely warm, friendly, and unassuming."

Regarding the particular challenges facing South African Jewish singles,

Saker says they are twofold. "One, there is the universal challenge of dating and meeting someone Jewish and marriage-minded, especially if they don't frequent bars or nightclubs – both before and after COVID-19.

"This is especially the case with traditional Jews. They aren't necessary religiously observant, but want to meet someone who is proudly Jewish, wishes to find a Jewish soul mate, and wishes to get married." What's unique to South Africa is that it's a small community, so it's difficult to meet someone 'new', and some Jewish South African singles are very particular about what they are looking for.

Aviva Dinur (formerly Amy Levin), grew up in Cape Town, spent a year in Israel after school, and then moved to Johannesburg. "I signed up to what was then Frumster.com because I wanted to date and find a Jewish husband, and because a friend wanted to see who was 'out there' but was too shy to sign up! At first I didn't take it too seriously, but then after some unsuccessful dates, I decided to actually try to find someone who was a good match.

"I saw that my now-husband, Tal, had sent me a message six months before, which I had ignored, but he had messaged again. I asked a friend if she knew him, and it turned out he was her brother's good friend. She thought we would make a great couple."

With those assurances in mind, she responded to his message, "and the rest, as they say, is history. We dated for three or four months and got engaged. We were married in Johannesburg in June 2013, and our first child was born a year later. We moved to Israel where we lived for five years, and our two other children were born there. We then moved to Cape Town in January to work in the community. So we have really come full circle!"

She thinks the website is best for those who are thinking about marriage, and that people should be honest with themselves about this. "It definitely helps to be able to see someone's background and interests. I didn't expect to meet my husband on a website, but that was Hashem's plan!"

Saker says that in spite of COVID-19, "membership has actually grown. The fact is that in distressing times, the challenge of being alone is compounded for many. This only further motivates those who are marriage-minded to find their soul mate."



ADL warns of rising extremism even during Biden presidency

TALI FEINBERG

representative of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has warned of a rising trend of extremism and hate in the United States (US) and across the globe in spite of the incoming US administration's focus on unity.

"We monitor chat rooms and listen to extremist groups. We don't them see stepping back, if anything, they are leaning in," said Dr Sharon Nazarian, the senior vicepresident of international affairs for the ADL. Nazarian, an Iranian-born American social activist, academic, and philanthropist, was speaking on a webinar hosted by the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies

"The US election campaign was bitter and divisive. It truly felt like a global election and a pivotal moment for the global community," she said. The ADL's assessment is that it was a clear win for the Biden/Harris ticket, and that a major task of their administration will be combating extremism.

The ADL was established 107 years ago with two clear missions, she said, namely to fight against antisemitism and defamation of the Jewish people, and for just and fair treatment for all. This work continues today through its 25 offices across the US and in working with Jewish communities and minorities worldwide.

"Antisemitism is a concern in the US and internationally," said Nazarian, pointing out that President-elect Joe Biden had stated that he chose to run for president after the

horror of the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017. "Fighting hate and extremism and for racial justice was a prime issue of his campaign, and we hope he will continue to pay close attention to it as he forms a government," she said.



"During the campaign, numerous examples of antisemitism and extremism seeped in. For example, [President Donald] Trump telling the white supremacist group, Proud Boys, to 'stand down and stand by' was very impactful. We monitor sites of extremist groups, and their reaction to that phrase was that they saw it as a vote of confidence. It energised them, as if the president was messaging that he was aligned with them," said Nazarian.

"Then, just recently, former Republican speaker of the house, Newt Gingrich,

pushed a conspiracy theory that Jewish billionaire George Soros helped to finance and 'steal' the 2020 election for Biden. Spreading such conspiracy theories enables and emboldens extremist groups. They feel their job is only just beginning."

She noted that a specific extremist group that came to prominence in this election cycle was QAnon, an online movement peddling conspiracy theories that has deeply antisemitic roots.

"It started on the fringes and is now mainstream, seeing Trump as its leader." This group has footprints in Germany and the United Kingdom, and the ADL

is "monitoring the internationalisation and export of American extremist ideology to the world", said Nazarian. "Hate no longer knows any borders. These groups use every means available to them to connect, coordinate, and partner with likeminded

"The internationalisation of extremist ideology is a global threat to all of us," she said. "We no longer have the luxury of only worrying

about groups in our own country. They're continuing to collaborate, mimic, and livestream attacks. Their writing becomes a manifesto and inspiration to others. We saw this in Christchurch, Charlottesville, and Pittsburgh."

As most people know, "The tool that has enabled extremist groups to amplify their hateful message is social media. The ADL is at the forefront of working with social media companies. We established our Center for Technology and Society in Silicon Valley five years ago," said Nazarian.

"Being on the ground, we felt we needed

to work together with all major social media companies and come up with solutions to combat hate online. We looked at machine learning, artificial intelligence, code design, and engineering. But we reached a point in 2020 that we felt 'enough is enough' and the need to change our posture into a much more aggressive, offensive posture. This was because we realised that after almost a decade of advocacy, we didn't see enough

In 2020, the ADL started its first campaign targeting Facebook called "stop hate for profit".

"We did an advertising pause, asking more than 1 000 companies and corporations to hold off from purchasing advertisements from Facebook for one month. The goal was to say that algorithms that push extremist groups and ads that include extremist language and ideology can no longer continue," she said. "Just because there is a first amendment, doesn't mean that they have to include hateful rhetoric and language on their site. They are private entities, and just like any sector of economy, safety measures are expected for the protection of citizens. So they too need to put safety measures in place so people aren't exposed to or 'fed' extremist ideology."

The campaign was successful, and "we saw it hit their bottom line". It was a wakeup call to other social media companies who took notice, and soon after, Facebook banned Holocaust denial from its site. However, "there is still so much work to do".

Regarding hate or extremism on the left, Nazarian said that "the extremism we monitor at the ADL comes from all sides. We go wherever we see it. Since 9/11, this has mostly shifted to white supremacists. We

have found that threats of acts of violence emanate mostly from right-wing extremist groups."

She said the ADL's assessment of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was that it is "a movement of social justice". The ADL monitors antisemitism on the left closely, and there are examples of antisemitism or rhetoric and actions "crossing a line" into anti-Israel and antisemitic language. "However, regarding BLM as a whole ... antisemitism is minor and secondary to its goal. We try not to compare, but the bottom line is that the ADL sees physical threats and violence primarily from right-wing groups more than any other sector." The antisemitism that manifested in the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn was also a major concern.

Nazarian said that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the chance of Jews and Israel being blamed for being "behind the virus", and being made scapegoats for the economic mayhem it has unleashed.

Asked if Biden's message of unity could end divisions in the US, Nazarian said, "No. We know that over seven million Americans voted for Trump, and extremist groups and their views of what America should look like are still there. If anything, they are emboldened, and will continue their efforts on the streets, in communities, and everyday life to say that 'we still feel our ideology is the right one'. Their fear of being 'replaced' by minority communities and loss of power will only get stronger and become more mainstream."

She and Cape SAJBD Director Stuart Diamond said that every individual can and must play a role in combating hate wherever they find it.





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Rooibos tea's Jewish roots run deep

JORDAN MOSHE

staple in any self-respecting South African kitchen, rooibos tea hasn't always had the widespread popularity it enjoys nowadays.

Once considered an inferior substitute for black tea, the "red bush" of the Cederberg was actually raised to prominence thanks to the efforts of an immigrant Jewish family, securing its place as a much sought-offer drink of choice.

"The Ginsberg family has always been about facing the world," says tea mogul Bruce Ginsberg. "We've always been strong and proud of our identity, proud of who we are intrinsically but always feeling the need to go beyond ourselves. We believe in playing our part." For the Ginsbergs, that part is tea.

Ginsberg is from the Western Cape, and is the founder of major British tea brand, Dragonfly Tea and its sister brand, Tick Tock Tea. Today a resident of Newbury, England, he has spent the past 40 years promoting the rooibos tea of his native South Africa across the world, following in the footsteps of his pioneering ancestors.

The family's connection with rooibos began in the Cape, when Aaron Ginsberg (Bruce Ginsberg's great-grandfather) arrived



from Dvinsk, Russia, in the 1880s. He and his wife, Elke, came in search of business opportunities, soon establishing a respected trading post as a general dealer. His son, Benjamin (Barend), would follow in 1903, joining his father's business before going on to marry in 1912 and moving into the district of Clanwilliam.

"My grandparents integrated

automatically into the society of Clanwilliam," Ginsberg says. "They were city people – not outsiders – but strong personalities who became part of the community. They were well-educated and enterprising, trading with farmers who lived in remote areas."

Back in Russia, tea had occupied a central part of Benjamin's life, having lived there with a maternal uncle who worked in the tea trade. It was therefore no surprise that he turned his attention to the tea industry in South Africa, discovering the plant about which few outside the rural areas had ever heard: Aspalathus linearis, more commonly called rooibos.

"My grandfather always had a samovar boiling," says Ginsberg. "He had a passion for tea, and he applied it to the Cape. He was the first to put rooibos into packets, making a consistent quality tea, and he carried out experiments using old Chinese tea curing techniques on this wild plant.

"In the 1920s, a shortage of wild teas [which grew only in the Cederberg coastal ranges inland from the South Atlantic coast] led to Benjamin driving a project to get rooibos, which has a difficult seed to propagate, into cultivation."

His undertaking was extensive. With Benjamin's encouragement, farmers across the region began harvesting the plant on a major scale, delivering them to Ginsberg's store on Victoria Street in Clanwilliam. Under his watch, the previously crude methods used to harvest and process the plant became streamlined, setting standards of uniformity and quality that quickly boosted the previously humble rooibos to new heights.

Anecdotes exist about Ginsberg's early attempts to promote rooibos tea in Cape Town, says Russian writer and researcher, Boris Gorelick, who has studied closely the history of the Ginsberg family's tea enterprise.

"They say, for instance, that he used to drop small packs of rooibos on pavements to be picked up by curious Capetonians," he says. "His other [more conventional] approach was to put up stalls in Adderley Street and hand out free samples with instructions for making the tea.

"Although he was a trader not a producer, he had the knowledge and social skills to give momentum to the industry. Somebody, Clock

Colock

EXPORT

QUALITY

B. GINSBERG

20 CRITERBURY ST. CRPETOWN

he realised, had to set quality standards for

Rooibos tea became a priority for Benjamin's company, and he launched his own brand of the product, Eleven O' Clock, still enjoyed in South Africa today. According to Gorelik's research, Benjamin devised the product's iconic watch face when he "pulled his watch from his waistcoat pocket, put it next to a piece of paper, and drew a dial with the hands at 11 sharp".

"You will still find that image on the packs of Eleven O' Clock, the oldest existing brand of rooibos in the world," he says.

Benjamin's son, Henry Charles, inherited the family enthusiasm for rooibos, taking over the brand in the 1940s with his father's death, and laying out the first dedicated large-scale rooibos plantations on Die Berg, Moreson, and Stillerus farms. By the early 1950s, he was the biggest grower, buyer, and marketer of rooibos tea.

Says Ginsberg, "My father was a major figure in the North West and was obsessed with farming. He grew everything on his model farming estate, and was a real driver of the rooibos enterprise. By 1950, he was growing half of the rooibos tea cultivated in South Africa."

Thanks to Henry Charles, the obscure plant from the Cape reached the major city of Johannesburg, and rooibos became available at every grocer across the country. Following in his father's stead, Ginsberg advanced the cause of rooibos in his own way, promoting the tea in Britain in the 1970s.

"I came to England in 1976 to open the market here," he recounts "Until then, rooibos had been sold as a cheap, 'poor man's tea', much cheaper than the Ceylon people were drinking. I thought it was something hugely special – caffeine free and something few people really knew much about.

"My wife and I sat in London with packets of the stuff, the two of us pasting labels onto the packages late into the night.

No one wanted what they thought was a horrible African drink, but we promoted it as something truly special, and more people started buying it."

Ginsberg has promoted the once obscure drink across the world, championing his home country's brew at upmarket stores and fairs across Europe and the United States, and has travelled far to perfect the art of proper tea making. He remains deeply attached to his South African roots (rocks from the Cederberg mountains adorn his desk at home), and he believes that Clanwilliam made him the man he is today.

"It's a delight to me to think that all this started in Clanwilliam," he says. "I feel privileged to have done my small part to continue my family's legacy.

"I owe a huge debt to all the people who have been part of my journey. A tender part of my heart still belongs to the people of the Western Cape, and I have an emotional debt to people of every race who lives there

"No matter what, I'm a child of 'Die Kaap'."

Helping one man make the long journey home

TALI FEINBERG

ews instinctively know what it's like to be a wandering people, longing for home, and travel agent Vanessa Frankal recognised this when she encountered Gabriel Mambe Kasonga living on the streets of Cape Town. What started out as raising funds and rallying others to help him eventually led her to help him fulfil his dream of returning to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) two weeks ago.

"I met Gabriel on my daily morning walk – his gentle demeanour stuck out for me, as did the sweet way he would always smile and say, 'G-d bless you' in a French accent every time I gave him a little money or food," says Frankal.

She has faced tough times herself thanks to COVID-19's impact on the travel industry, but she still wanted to help Kasonga get off the streets.

He told Frankal that when war broke out in the DRC, he travelled as an asylum seeker from Lubumbashi to Zimbabwe and eventually to South Africa in 2008. "Unfortunately, he landed in the thick of xenophobia in South Africa," she says.

"Although he was a third-year medical student back in the DRC, in South Africa he worked in security for years. In 2015 he got sick, took off too long from his job, and ended up losing it. As a result he couldn't afford his rent. After struggling to extend his asylum papers, and having no income, he lost his rented room and found himself on the street."

Kasonga last had contact with his family in 2015, and street living became his way of life. "He worked for R20 a day helping vendors push their carts to and from work – this after earning R5 000 a month in security. At night he would stay safe by standing up against a wall outside the Caledon Police Station, and then

sit on a bench all day to rest his legs."

While extremely humble, Frankal says she has assisted other refugees before. "In 2008 when the xenophobia crisis hit, I was absolute devastated by the hatred shown to foreigners. When I heard they were all sleeping outside Caledon Police

Station, I got in my car at 20:00 to get donations of food.
Checkers filled my car to the brim with cakes, food, and anything else expiring over the next few

Gabriel with new shoes



days. I drove to the station and handed it all out.

"As I was leaving, I saw a woman standing on a street corner looking lost. I said I'd take her to a church to sleep. It turned out she had a husband, so we got him in the car. They ended up staying in my flat for weeks. He has since left her, but she and I are great friends and I help her and her now nine-year-old daughter. Ironically, it was her Congolese tenant who located Gabriel's family in the DRC."

Frankal was just planning to "feed Gabriel and find him shelter, but it kind of developed a life of its own. I'd lost all my income since March and by July, was aware that I wasn't in a position to help financially as I couldn't even afford my bond. So I asked for help on Facebook and in my complex.

"People I had never met before found the story on Facebook and offered to help, giving shoes and clothes. Dana Lazerson fed him a vegetarian meal daily. Brittany Potgieter got him a colouring book, Koki pens, and underwear. Teresa Zive gave him food and toiletries, and

Gabriel struggled with his sight so she paid for him to have an eye test and get new glasses from Leon Hattingh at Atlantic Vision Optometrists. He gave

her a special price for the test and glasses. I got him into a soup kitchen night shelter called Youth Solutions – they were so kind to him. I also got him a MyCiTi card to give him a sense of dignity and belonging.

"When the soup kitchen shelter closed on 28 September, I knew we had to find a solution, as its night shelter let us down and said they no longer had a bed. I found accommodation for R163 a night, so I booked him in for five nights and he had his first hot

shower in five years! When we met with a social worker and Teresa offered him a security job, we were surprised when he said, 'I just want to go home.' Then everything took an about-turn."

She asked him why he wanted to go home. "He said, 'My hands are empty after all these years, I have nothing'. He hasn't seen his friends and family in 12 years! We found out that his mother has since passed away, as has his uncle, who was his primary caregiver. So I think this made him realise how life has passed him by, and I think he felt isolated, alone, and very lost in South Africa."

Frankal and other supporters set up a crowdfund on BackaBuddy, raising R30 000 to sort out his travel documentation, get a COVID-19 test, his flights, and money to help him resettle in the DRC. "We will be staggering these funds so that he's not taken for a ride or suffers any unforeseen financial losses," she says.

Miraculously, making contact with his family happened quickly. "Annociata, my Burundi friend, rents her rooms out and her Congolese tenant contacted his wife in Lubumbashi to go looking for the family. Within 24 hours, we found his sister, Alpho, and his cousin, Keran. I booked him on Ethiopian Airlines from Johannesburg to Lubumbashi."

As his documents had expired, the DRC embassy said it would give him an emergency travel document after 48 hours of appearing in person. "Brittany told us that her father in Pretoria would put Gabriel up and drive him around for three days while he got his COVID-19 test, documents, and so on. They took him to a church meeting, sightseeing, and for dinner, and they got friends to donate dollars to him. I've never seen such kindness from pure strangers. They gave him suitcases, gifts for his family, and fed him so well."

When Kasonga finally got on that plane, "I sobbed all the way home," says Frankal. "I became quite attached to Gabriel. He's a wise, humble, gentle soul."

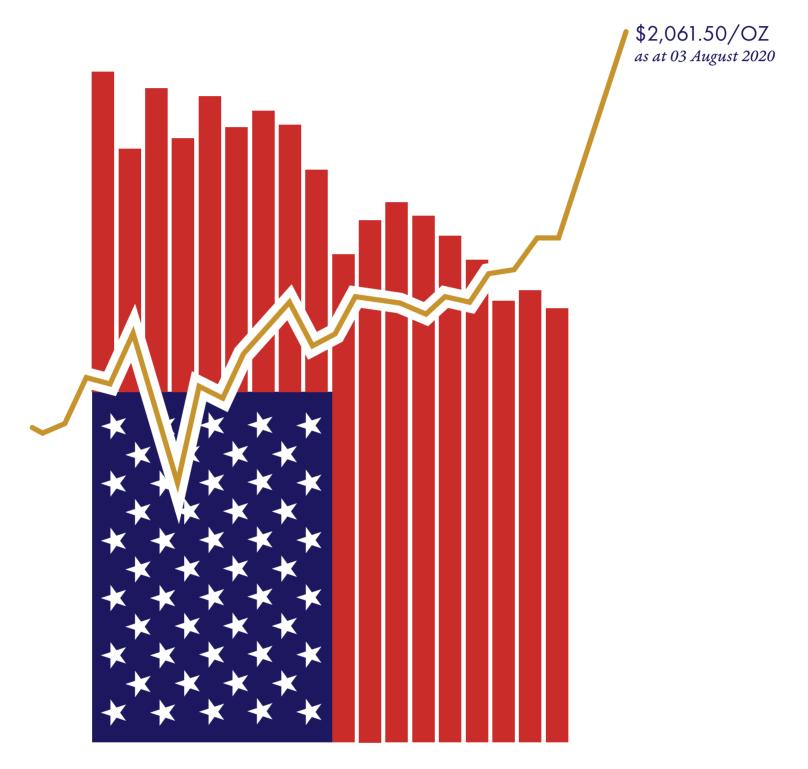
He is now safely in Lubumbashi, staying with his family. "He has \$150 [R2 309] initially, and I'll stagger his funds. I pray he goes back to finish his degree as he'd love to be an ontometrist"

She often thinks of the Jewish teaching, "To save one life is to save the entire world", and says, "My late parents brought me up with kindness in my heart, and that kind of *yiddishkeit*. My dad always teased me and called me 'Mother Teresa' my whole life."

There are hundreds of people on our streets, and many don't have sympathy for them, but Frankal says, "Everyone has a story. Gabriel had a full life before he was homeless. When we fetched his possessions, I saw bags of clothes, shoes, an alarm clock, a Tintin book, a dictionary, his payslips, and bank statements. He had dreams of a better future.

"I would love to help every lost and needy soul, but it does become quite emotionally taxing. I will always give on a daily basis, as I believe there's more than enough to go around. We all just need to share a little bit of what we have. Give a little, and you get a lot back."

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Suzanne Belling: storyteller, networker, community connector

TALI FEINBERG

or many years, word had it that if journalist and author Suzanne Belling didn't know you, you weren't part of the Jewish community. Such was the networking prowess of Belling, who passed away on Friday, 12 November, at the age of 72.

She was the "consummate communicator with her finger on every pulse", according to journalist Moira Schneider, who Belling mentored. She also came in on the ground floor of Jewish newspapers and, until her last days, was part of the world of Jewish news.

Her only sibling, Barry Barron, who lives in Australia says that her creativity was part of her personality from a young age. "She was five years old when I was born and from the outset, being Suzanne, she naturally assumed that it

was her duty to teach me everything

about life," he wrote. "Spurred on by her vivid imagination, Suzanne used to make me utter a few magic phrases and this would take us off to a faraway, make-believe world. I used to take this very seriously, and my dear parents, Hettie and Hymie, would tell me to stop scrubbing the stoep with a bucket of soapy water and come inside for dinner. I would ignore them because my name

wasn't Barry and I

wasn't scrubbing

the stoep. I was

mucking out the

stable to prepare

beautiful horses in

for the herd of

best friend for 67 years. "We met on the first day of Grade 1," Stern says. "I was a bit shy, and she always drew me in to her wonderful world of imagination and excitement. When we were nine or 10 years old, our school ran a competition to write a new school song. Needless to say, Suzanne was wildly enthusiastic. I, not so much. We

Hilda Stern, now living in Israel, was Belling's

Suzanne's make-believe world," he recalls.

was wildly enthusiastic. I, not so much. We were walking home and suddenly she flung her schoolbag down in the road and said, "Let's write the school song now! And we'll do it together!" I knew better than to argue and sat down on the side of the road, and added in a word or two. In a short while, she had produced a jolly good song. She insisted on putting both our names down as co-writers. And guess what, 'our' song won, and we each got 10 shillings."

This kind of *chutzpah* defined Belling as she began to shape her career as a journalist.

"At the age of 16, Suzanne boldly knocked on the door of the editor of *The Cape Times* newspaper with a sample of her work," recalls Barron. "She said the newspaper had been remiss in ignoring teenagers, and proposed that she write a regular column in the Saturday morning

Saturday morning magazine section. To

Suzanne Belling

everyone's amazement, her proposal was accepted, and Suzanne's 55-year career in journalism began. The column was called *Including You*, written exclusively for teenagers by teenagers. Suzanne's career progressed to her becoming an accomplished newspaper editor and the author of a number of books."

Her first book was written with Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft about his experiences as the "travelling rabbi". When delivering the hesped (eulogy) at her funeral on Sunday, the rabbi remembered a humorous moment from this period. "She and I undertook a number of road trips when she was writing the book. While she was a delightful and insightful companion on these journeys, she could also be exasperating.

"I recall the time we were in Greyton. As we had a long day ahead, we agreed to leave no later than 07:00 the next morning, and I warned her that if she wasn't ready, I would be moving on to the next town with the CSO [Community Security Organisation] chap, who was travelling with us. This meant she had to be up at 05:00 to say her prayers, have a bath, do her hair, file her nails, patzke around, and have breakfast within a two-hour period. And all of you who knew Suzanne are aware that this was about as likely as Jacob Zuma pleading guilty to the Zondo Commission.

"Seven o'clock came, but Suzanne didn't appear, so the CSO chap and I left Greyton as I had threatened to do. Well, you can imagine her reaction at 07:35, when she finally came out to the car, and realised that it – and we – were gone! Her performance was so good that the owner of the hotel agreed to call us to come back and fetch her. Needless to say, from that day on, she was never late again on our trips."

Schneider recalls, "I first met Suzanne when we found ourselves as mothers in the same nursery school lift scheme. At some point, I told her that although I was a law graduate, I was thinking of changing direction to psychology or journalism. In her inimitable way, she pronounced, 'You're too sensitive to be a psychologist – you'll take

everything to heart.'

"And that was that. Remembering this conversation some time later, she commissioned me to write four profiles of very prominent individuals in the community for a magazine that she was editing. Of course, it was terrifying as I had no formal training. In the event, my 'training' took place over the course of several Joburg to Cape Town phone calls between us.

"When the Cape Town correspondent for the SA Jewish Times that Suzanne was then editing left unexpectedly, I received a call from her asking if I'd please stand in until they found somebody else. Well, I 'stood in' for 16 years, having migrated to the SA Jewish Report when that paper was established. I also started writing for the international Jewish press, and I owe it all to Suzanne. I wouldn't have interviewed some incredible people, among them the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, were it not for her faith in me. I will always be grateful to her for elevating my life."

Silberhaft says, "She was also a woman who had the courage of her convictions. She stood up and spoke out against injustice, within and without the Jewish community. She took considerable risks during the apartheid era, giving aid and shelter to activists in hiding, attending gatherings which were being watched by the security police, and refusing to 'kow-tow' to anyone – either inside or outside the community – who tried to shirk their moral, Jewish responsibility to champion the oppressed."

Her brother recalls, "When Nelson Mandela met the press at his home in Johannesburg, Suzanne was introduced to him and for the first time in her life, she was at a loss for words. All she could blurt out was, 'You are so tall, and I am so short!' Mandela gave an amazing reply, he said, 'You are wrong my dear, your contribution to this country makes you very tall.'"

Belling leaves her husband, Michael, children Evan and Tarryn, and grandchildren Jaxon, Chase, Piper, and Ruby.

SA teen curates LA Holocaust exhibition

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

oungsters who have seen David Labkovski's paintings of the Holocaust say the artworks are much more raw and emotional than the black and white images we have come to know so well.

"It really hits home. You get the feeling of what these people went through," says a student commenting on the artist's work.

Now, Labkovski's works have been combined with the stories of famed Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem in a new online exhibition titled "Recalling a Lost World – David Labkovski brings Sholem Aleichem stories to life", hosted by the Holocaust Museum Los Angeles. One of the curators of the exhibition, which opened on 28 October, is 14-year-old Eva Trope in Grade

Eva Trope

9 at Yeshiva College in Johannesburg.

In the exhibition of about 30 artworks, Labkovski's depiction of the world of Eastern European Jews prior to, during, and after the Holocaust, is combined with the writing of Aleichem, who Labkovski thought of as his muse. Though Aleichem's characters were created decades earlier, they are so true to life, he could have been describing the people of Vilnius - or Vilna as it was then known in Lithuania, Labkovski's

childhood home.

For Labkovski, reading Aleichem's stories brought him back to his childhood. He wanted to commemorate the Jewish world that was, not just how the Jewish people died, but how they lived for centuries before the Holocaust.

The exhibition has a dark side, moving from paintings with bright colours and Aleichem's fairytale-like settings to increasing scenes of destitution. Some place their subjects in the Vilna ghetto with Jewish stars on their clothing, and the exhibition culminates with an image of the destroyed Great Synagogue of Vilna after the war.

The exhibit includes audio tours which share Labkovski's illustrations of Aleichem's stories with the audience along with teacher educational lesson plans combining the art and literature.

The combination is a powerful way to educate viewers, particularly youngsters. "I could stare at the works for hours," Trope says of the exhibition. "The placing of the people, buildings, the colour of the sky ... many of the Holocaust stories I found unrelatable before have come to life."

Trope, who "loves art in all its forms", got involved in the exhibition through a poetry competition organised by the David Labkovski Project (DLP) earlier this year. The DLP uses Labkovski's art to improve youngsters' understanding of the Holocaust and promote tolerance and acceptance.

The competition brought her in touch with Stephanie Wolfson, director of education at the DLP, and Trope joined the DLP's six-months-long International Student Docent Programme with students (Grades 8 to 12) from around the world who learn how to educate others about Labkovski's art. From this, she was asked to join the team curating the current exhibition.

Curating is a "big job", she says. She worked on the layout, narratives, translations of interviews and story summaries, among other things. Trope was even required to attend meetings at 01:00 at times because her co-workers in the United States were nine hours behind her. "It was a bit stressful with school work and



Painted by David Labkovski: Sholem Aleichem and friends

exams," she admits, but it was worth it.

At 14, she was the youngest member of the team by far, "but we had sophisticated discussions, and listened to each other", Trope says.

Michele Gold, the president of the Holocaust Museum Los Angeles, describes Trope's involvement as "remarkable".

"Eva is wise and professional beyond her years," says Leora Raikin, the founder and executive director of the DLP. "She has shown dedication not only towards the creation of the virtual exhibit, but the translation of movie footage. She was also part of the official speaking panel for the launch of the international exhibit along with the Israel consul general to Los Angeles, Dr Hillel Newman."

What's next for this budding art historian? She aims to get involved in other exhibitions, and to help expand this project by, among other things, assisting in bringing the exhibition to South Africa.

The mystery and mayhem of Cape Town's Czech Torah

RABBI GREG ALEXANDER

very Torah scroll is a work of sacred artistry created by a sofer (scribe) whose work takes about a year to complete. ■ With all this labour and expense, it's not destined for a museum or library, but for a community, which is where it really finds its purpose.

What brings meaning to the work of the sofer isn't the scroll being looked at or admired, but the fact that it's read. You and I, the community that become the custodians of a Sefer Torah, give it life. Although every Torah scroll is far from an ordinary thing, there are certain scrolls that have a fascinating history that make them even more extraordinary. One of these sits in our ark in our Green Point, Cape Town, campus.



It originated in central Europe, and was rescued from the terror and destruction of the Shoah. It's one of the more than 1 500 Czech Memorial Sifrei Torah which constituted part of the treasures looted by the Nazis from the desolated Jewish communities of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. They are, in most cases, the last remnants of the communities that lived there, in spite of the fact that Jews lived there for more than 1 000 years and developed a rich Jewish history and culture.

By 1800, Prague had become a major centre of learning and scholarship as well as Hebrew printing, and for 100 years before 1939, the Jews of the area were free and prosperous. According to the 1930 census, there were 117 551 Jews in Bohemia and Moravia, and 356 830 in all of Czechoslovakia. The Jewish community had become religiously and culturally diverse. Many were highly educated and cultured. Some of the greatest Jewish thinkers, artists, architects, poets, musicians, and composers of the time came from this region.

From 1938, there was systematic persecution of Jews in Czechoslovakia. Boycotting Jewish shops, segregating Jewish people from the rest of society, limits on their freedom and basic human rights were enforced. Eventually, violent terror and the destruction of Jewish culture began. Synagogues were burned together with Jewish books and books by Jewish authors. As time went on, Jews were ordered to leave their homes which had fallen under German authority, and were sent away. Most never returned.

About 81 000 Jews were deported to the Terezin Ghetto, and then onto death camps. About 10 500 survived.

The number of children murdered was 15 000. In some towns, it's hard to see any trace that a Jewish community once lived there. In other towns such as Prague, the old Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, and museum remain. The scrolls could tell us so much couldn't they? It really makes one stop and wonder. They could tell us what they witnessed, about the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, who brought them to Prague, and what happened next? But, for now, they are silent.

One of the greatest mysteries of these scrolls is how and why they survived the war at all, in spite of their synagogues being burned and communities destroyed. One theory is that the Nazis wanted to create some sort of museum of the Jews which would include an exhibition of their Judaica. Another

is that the Nazis wanted to keep the population calm, and so invited a group of Czech Jews to gather Jewish objects from all over the area, implying that they would be restored after the war. Either way, more than 10 000 artefacts were brought to Prague including 1 800 Torah scrolls. Once in Prague, a team of expert Jewish curators received them, catalogued them, and labelled them with meticulous detail, precision, and loving care.

The scrolls were identified by the town they came from and, in many cases, the age of the scrolls, though the dates may have been based on educated guesses by the curators. The curators witnessed the tragic scene of their own families being deported, and then finally their turn came too. Most of these brave curators were eventually sent to Terezin, and died there or were taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau or another camp and murdered.

> The scrolls survived, yet they were devoid of the life of the community they served. After the war, they were transferred to the ruined synagogue at Michle, three to four kilometres south of Prague, where they remained untouched until they were brought to London 20 years later. How did that transpire?

In 1963, Eric Estorick, a London art dealer, was informed that there were 1 564 Torah scrolls stored by the museum for sale. He contacted a client, Ralph Yablon, who in turn approached Harold Reinhart, the rabbi of Westminster Progressive Synagogue in London. Together, they asked Chimen Abramsky, a Hebrew scholar, to go to Prague and examine the scrolls. Yablon's generosity made the purchase of the scrolls possible, and they were transported to the synagogue in

They arrived on 7 February 1964, many damaged without beautiful covers (although they each would probably have had one once), and with no adornment of any sort. Some had beautiful binders that held each scroll together, others were wrapped as if in haste with a tallit, a belt, or an odd material. The ink was crumbling in many cases, and they were particularly fragile to handle. They were a tragic but eloquent monument to a brutal past.

The new custodians embarked on the job of restoration. One day - out of the blue - there came a knock on the front door of the synagogue. Ruth Shaffer, the head of the restoration committee, opened the door to David Brand, a sofer, who asked in Yiddish, "Do you have any Torahs to repair?" She replied, "We have 1 564 - come in!" Nearly thirty years later, he was still working there, bringing the scrolls back to perfection so they could "relive" and be used in synagogue services.

Rabbi Thomas Salamon, then rabbi of the Westminster

Synagogue, visited sofer Brand in Jerusalem in December 2013. Brand was then 95 years old. When asked how he felt as an Orthodox sofer, working on damaged Torah scrolls in a progressive synagogue, his reply was, "I was doing holy work."

The vast majority of scrolls are now loaned out to communities throughout the world, and that's how Temple Israel in Cape Town came to be the steward of Czech scroll number 128. We know precious little about this Sefer Torah except that it came from the small town of Golcuv Jenikov near Caslav in the Central Bohemian Region of today's

Czech Republic. It had a significant Jewish quarter of about fifty homes to the south of the town's central square. The Jewish congregation was founded there in 1870, and it numbered about 300. There is a synagogue building from 1899 still standing, and a Jewish section (since 1884) in the municipal cemetery, but there's no functional Jewish community there today. The Memorial Scrolls Trust estimates that our Torah was written in 1870 at the time of the community's founding.

Today, it sits proudly in the Aron haKodesh (ark) in Green Point, and is brought out at Bnei Mitzvah and every Simchat Torah. But what happened to the Czech people who loved and cherished the scroll? Where are they? Where are their children

and grandchildren now? Every time we read from that scroll or dance with it around our shul, we honour their memory. Am Yisrael Chai (the Jewish

• Rabbi Greg Alexander is part of the rabbinic team at the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation.





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David and Rosalie Serebro were married at the Emmerentia Shul on the 20th November 1960.



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Both are in their 80's and are blessed to be able to lead active



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Bridging the gap: SA champ appointed to global body

JULIE LIEBOWITZ

elen Kruger, an expert South African bridge player and teacher, was appointed to the World Bridge Federation (WBF) executive council earlier this month. This is the first time a South African has been appointed to this position.



The appointment, valid until 2022, was made on 3 November, following a vote by delegates of the WBF's 182 member countries around the globe.

It took Kruger by surprise. "I was encouraged to put in my CV," she said, "and I did it grudgingly, not expecting to be nominated. I'm surprised and excited. It's an honour."

Currently based in Lausanne, Switzerland, the WBF is bridge's international governing body, responsible for the laws governing bridge and for world championship competitions.

Kruger was voted to the position by delegates after three new positions became available on the council.

She will find out her portfolio at the council's first three-day exco meeting

Kruger started playing bridge more than 50 years ago, and has been playing seriously - at times for South Africa - for 20 years. She's also in great demand as a teacher.

> She was involved in the creation of the Links Bridge Club, which describes itself as "the home of bridge in Gauteng", based in Linksfield, Johannesburg. This club had more than 70 tables going before the COVID-19 pandemic.

She plays and teaches bridge for up to eight hours a day, and has had the same bridge partner, Kit Gilmour, for 24 years - partnership being an asset in bridge. "It's a long time not to

fight," she comments wryly.

Kruger says bridge is a wonderful game that has taken her all over the world and changed her life. Bridge has also been a life saver for many who have been isolated and stressed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and have continued to play online.

Kruger believes people should start playing bridge younger in South Africa, where it's still regarded as a game for older people. "They teach bridge at school in Israel," she says, and as a result, a lot of young people play the game. "The earlier you start the better - your brain just works better when you're younger. It's that simple."

Multiculturalism 'a shot in the arm for Pfizer'

GABE FRIEDMAN - JTA

hen Mikael Dolsten, the head scientist at Pfizer, heard the news last week that the COVID-19 vaccine that he has been helping to develop for the better part of a year was more than 90% effective, he and his colleagues literally leapt with joy at a corporate office in Connecticut.

"This may turn out to be one of the biggest medical advances of the past 100 years," Dolsten said by Zoom from his home office last week, the emotion clear in his voice and on his face.

He was pointing not only to the historic need to combat a virus medically that's again ravaging the world particularly the United States (US), which is setting case records by the week – but also the fact that the Pfizer product is part of a groundbreaking new type of vaccine made quickly from synthetic versions of the virus' genetic material.

But when Dolsten took time to reflect on the development, he also saw it as a proud moment for Jewish immigrants like himself who have contributed to American scientific innovation.

"A lot of the great breakthroughs in America have come from people that immigrated," he said, pointing out the example of Albert Einstein and others. "There has been a strong Jewish tradition around contributing to humanity and a strong tradition within medicine."

Dolsten, who moved to the New York area from Sweden in 2004, is far from the only Jewish immigrant in his field. In fact, Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla is a Jew from Thessaloniki, Greece. The chief medical officer for Moderna, a competing drug maker that announced on Monday that its COVID-19 vaccine is nearly 95% effective, is an Israeli immigrant named Tal Zaks.

The German biotech company that Pfizer teamed up with to create the vaccine, BioNTech, was founded and is still led by Turkish immigrants Ugur Sahin and Ozlem Tureci. Sahin told the New York Times that he and Bourla bonded over "their shared backgrounds as scientists and immigrants".

Dolsten is wary of taking that kind of multiculturalism for granted. He says he grew up in a very different era, post-World War II, when opportunity and security was guaranteed to all in Sweden,

and the US was a beacon to immigrants looking to make world-changing innovations. Both countries now face political and social tensions that threaten those traditions.

"I do hope we can heal as a nation, and again be a shining sun and bring people together rather than move back from the world," he said. "I do hear a lot from Europeans who miss seeing the US as the image of the future, and now see the US as isolated." Dolsten took a winding

path to end up as a leader in pharmaceutical development. Born in 1958, he grew up in the

> Mikael Dolsten, Pfizer's chief scientist. is a Jew from Sweden

small Halmstad municipality on Sweden's western coast, the son of a Jewish father with pre-war roots in the country and a Jewish mother who escaped to from Austria in the early days of World War II - a "mix", he said, of second-generation Swedish heritage and direct trauma from the Holocaust.

His home wasn't very religiously observant, but he visited Israel several times growing up, something that helped to inspire him to spend nearly a year of his doctoral studies at the renowned Weizmann Institute just south of Tel Aviv. He trained as a physician and began his career on the medical faculty at the University of Lund, but his experience in Israel learning about cutting-edge immunology helped to inspire his turn to pharmaceutical science.

He went on to work for Sweden's two largest drug companies at the time -Pharmacia, where he was asked to build a new institute to develop medicines, and then Astra AB, which would later become part of the British company AstraZeneca, which is in the process of developing its own COVID-19 vaccine. He developed a top reputation in the industry, and was approached by Boehringer Ingelheim, the world's largest private pharmaceutical company, to run global research. He

worked at its Frankfurt headquarters for a short period, then agreed to work for it in the US. His wife, also Jewish and also a physician, was enthusiastic about the idea.

"She was keen to experience a bit of the American melting pot, particularly the New York area," he said.

> research and development at Wyeth, an American company known for manufacturing ubiquitous drugs such as Advil. Wyeth was bought by Pfizer in 2009, and Dolsten stayed on, working on research and development

Dolsten eventually led

Photo: Pfizer/Getty Images Pfizer's biological divisions, then for the entire company. Today, he occasionally gets time to "roll up the sleeves" on

oversees other scientists and takes the "wide-angle perspective" to help form the company's goals. "I take part and discuss the big

research projects, but more often

problems we are addressing in cancer, genetic disease, inflammation, vaccines, and in diseases like diabetes and obesity, and make sure we focus crisply on a few things that translate into medical breakthroughs," he said.

Growing up in Sweden, Dolsten said he benefited from the country's large social safety net, which included universal health care and free education and an overarching sense of solidarity, or "caring about your neighbours". But he was always conscious of Sweden's sense of cultural homogeneity. His accent was perfect because he was born there, but he recalled that others who didn't speak Swedish perfectly were looked at differently.

Dolsten said he never felt any explicit antisemitism, but that has become an issue in Sweden in recent years along with several other European countries amid an influx of largely Middle Eastern refugees and a surge of farright nationalism. He said he sees how his three children — one of them former JTA reporter Josefin Dolsten could have had a very different experience from him growing up in Sweden.

So Dolsten looked forward to his move to the US, which he also saw as the world's scientific and entrepreneurial "frontier".

"I do think there's something historically unique in New York and some other places where the melting pot has led to this tremendous success," he said. "Like the success of biotech and pharma ... so many of the big discoveries have come from here, from this diversity of people coming here all feeling a chance to contribute."

He and his family live in Westchester County, north of Manhattan, where his Swedish accent gets noticed – but not in the way he ever expected.

"In the US, people tell me, Wow, you have such a nice accent'," he said. "And they make [jokes] - 'Are you from Brooklyn?"

Hitler spoof makes light of kashrut concerns, but is it funny?

>>Continued from page 2

comparing the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) to Nazi brownshirts on the anniversary of Kristallnacht following the EFF's clash with residents in Brackenfell. In addition, CNN international anchor Christiane Amanpour this week said she regretted recently comparing the Trump presidency to the Nazi's Kristallnacht, admitting she "shouldn't have juxtaposed" Hitler's evils with the United States president.

The satirical clip shows Nazi generals sheepishly engaging with an enraged Hitler with newly created English subtitles which are unconnected to the original movie script. The generals explain to Hitler that they have had to remove the kashrut license of yet another manufacturer because the certification costs too much. Hitler hears this information and seethes with rage saying, "for a vershtunkende kashrut license, suddenly nobody will pay?!"

In an absolute froth, he complains that one complaint by manufacturer Honeyfields has resulted in everything "going to the dogs".

David Saks, an expert on antisemitism and the associate director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), explained that the video originated with a community member as comment on internal issues in the Jewish community.

"It's meant to be humorous. I find it guite funny, actually. Hitler and his cohorts are made to look so ridiculous, that it can't be regarded as Nazi propaganda. Nor can the equation of the chief rabbi with Hitler while his cowering cohorts are likened to quivering members of the UOS be seen as anything more than a bit of cheeky satire."

In April, the same video was posted showing Hitler ranting to his generals about not being able to get a coffee from local Johannesburg coffee shop Loof in Norwood during lockdown.

Speaking to the SA Jewish Report at the time on condition of anonymity, the creators said, "It was just a way to bring some humour and light-heartedness to these stressful lockdown times. We certainly wouldn't want to offend anyone in our community deliberately."

It's unknown whether the same people were involved in this latest spoof.

Saks said of the two videos, "Not offensive – shows Hitler as a ranting madman and his supporters as cowed humiliated sheep."

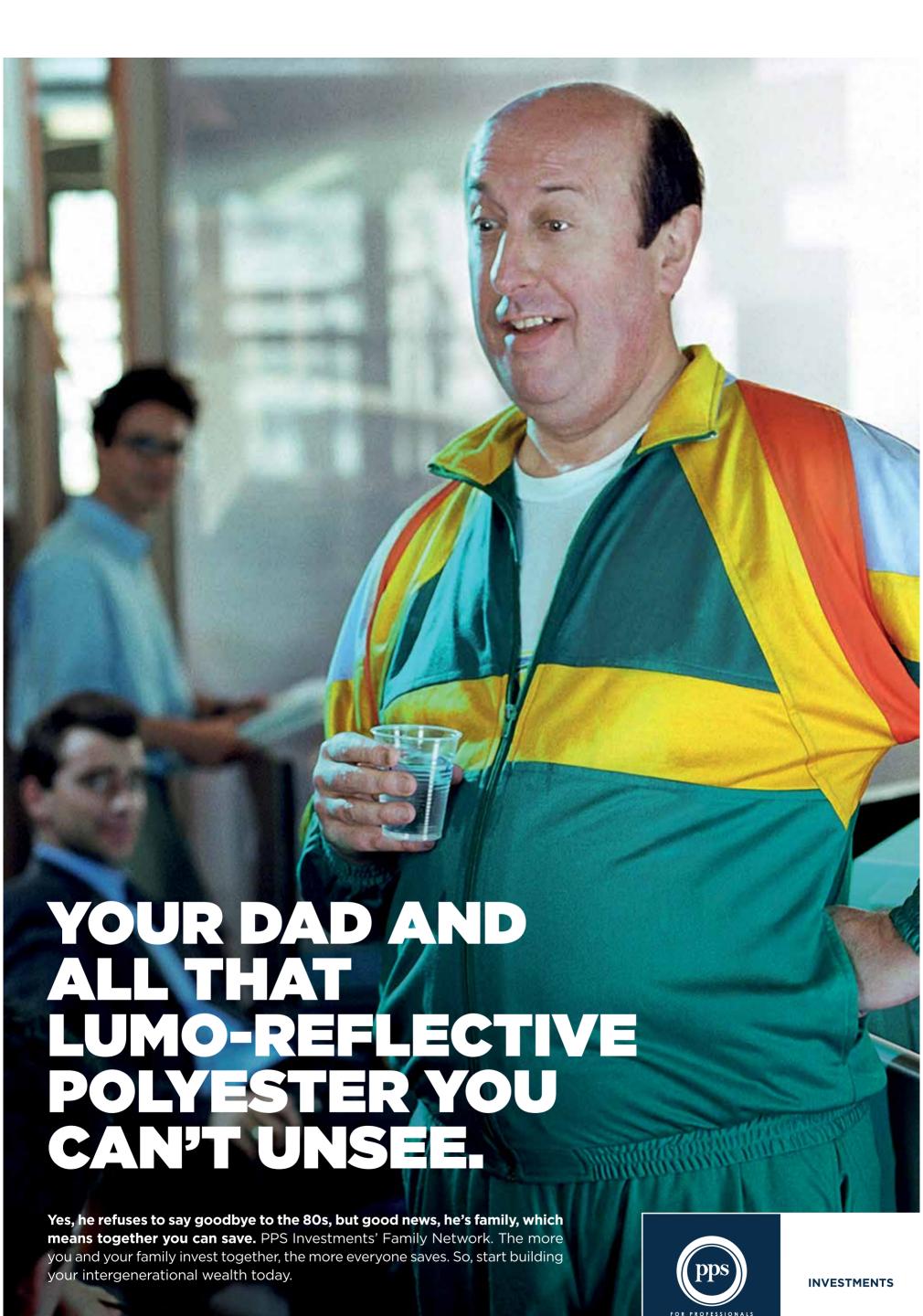
Mary Kluk, the director of the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre and president of the SAJBD, told the SA Jewish Report, "It's clear that the intention of the video is

satire. There are, however, many in our community for whom any kind of humour associated with the Holocaust can never be funny. After all, these images represent the most shameful period in the story of mankind. The fact that in this case, the chief rabbi was the object of the joke, may have caused further offense for many in the community".

Milton Shain, a local antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town, said he recalled April's similar show with Hitler on another topic.

"I fully recognise that even though it's a satire, anything with Hitler is too close to the bone – and, of course, the subject matter is raw. It's commonly believed - rightly or wrongly - that Jews can satirise or make jokes about Jews. I doubt that's an open invitation to say what one likes, but it may be a factor in this complex debate."

In response to the Loof video earlier this year, Shain said, "Satire can be fine, and I think the [video] clip is meant in that sense. I doubt it's driven by antisemitism of any sort. But it's insensitive insofar as Hitler still evokes - understandably and correctly – horror, and arguably shouldn't be parodied in this way. There are still many people directly affected by Hitler's actions. Survivors especially wouldn't take kindly to this, and should be respected."



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UJW Pretoria helps Hoopstad farmers

DIANE WOLFSON

embers of the Pretoria Union of Jewish Women (UJW) recently travelled to Hoopstad in the Free State with more than 100 crates full of food, toys, and medicine for 300 farmers whose land and cattle were destroyed by fire.

The crates were collected and packed by chairperson Ciska Lewis and vice-chairperson Tracy Myer, who spent weeks collecting funds for the farmers. They were accompanied to Hoopstad by Martin Bester of Jacaranda FM and rugby player Bakkies Botha.

"Our phones haven't stopped ringing with more offers of donations," says Lewis. "Even the residents of Jaffa, Pretoria's aged home, gave money. I'm so impressed with the generosity of people in Pretoria. "It has been an emotional day," Lewis said of meeting the farmers, who she



Ciska Lewis, rugby star Bakkies Botha, and Tracy Myer assist farmers in Hoopstad in the Free State

described as "die sout van die aarde".

"Oom Hennie", the farmer where the goods were delivered, asked Lewis and Myer to return for a weekend so that they could hear about the work of the UJW.

On his breakfast show, Bester expressed his amazement at Pretoria's Jewish ladies, who not only gave so much, but came personally. He gave the UJW "a big mazaltov" for its work.

Movies under the Stars drives thousands to Huddle Park

Chevrah Kadisha fundraiser drew more than a thousand people in the Joburg Jewish community into their cars to relive the days when going to the drive-in was a regular family outing.

Using modern technology, the Chev brought back this once-favourite night out to Huddle Park over a number



of evenings, showing a mix of golden oldies and newly released movies. Its Movies under the Stars gave people the opportunity to have safe nights out with (or without) the children, free of COVID-19 concerns, and a kosher

Every movie had a different menu and caterer, from burgers and pizzas to meze boxes and chicken schnitzel, with snacks and soft drinks (naturally) added to the mix. Student waiters and waitresses served the pre-packed meals to cars, and were grateful for the part-time work.

To date, a total of 1 477 guests have attended in 559 cars, and 1 254 meals have been served. Now that its popularity has been established, the community can look forward to Movies under the Stars becoming the new, old normal.

For more information, visit www.jhbchev.co.za/ movies or drivein@jhbchev.co.za



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Hundreds pay tribute to Tanzer

Hundreds of people from across the world paid their respects to the late Rabbi Avraham Tanzer, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva College, at a memorial tribute held on Wednesday, 11 November.

Broadcast live over YouTube, the event followed the end of the shloshim mourning period, and included the recitation of tehillim, candle lighting, and pre-recorded eulogies delivered by Rabbi Tanzer's family and friends.



Writing up a storm in a pandemic



Emma Fittinghoff

stop aspirant young writers from pursuing their dreams. Seventeen King David High School Victory Park students from Grades 9-12 entered the South African Council for English Education (SACEE) Creative Writing competition this year, producing 21 entries between them.

ot even a pandemic car

Jessica Matheson The entries ranged from short





Santosh Singh



stories to poems, monologues, and flash fiction. Emma Fittinghoff (Grade 9) won a gold award (second place) in the Junior Poetry category; Levi Lipschitz (Grade 9) won a silver award (third place) in the Junior Short Story category; Jessica Matheson (Grade 9) won a gold award (second place) in the Junior Monologue category; Liora Scop (Grade 10) won a silver award (third place) in the Senior Poem category; and

Raising givers and entrepreneurs



King David Sandton students participate in Entrepreneurs Day. From left: Shani Katz, Michaela Jacks, Raquel Meyerowitz, Matt Buhai, Jesse Mayers, and Zev Leeb.

rade 7s at King David Sandton ended their primary school year on 12 November by holding a market day that met the needs of COVID-19 safety, teaching adaptability, teamwork, and

As well as taking the initiative to decide what they sold, how they advertised 'Entrepreneurs Day', and how they co-ordinated the order process, the Grade 7s had to maintain COVID-19 protocols, which included ensuring social distancing and keeping sanitiser on

Dean Witz, the director of Safety Solution Hub, the official consultant for the South African Board of Jewish Education regarding COVID-19 safety, helped to ensure that all pre-orders and sales were done so safely and with no potential harm to pupils.

A whopping profit of R19 641.20 was made, which will benefit the following charities: Hatzolah; Kitty and Puppy Haven; Selwyn Segal; The Angel Network; Thuthuzela Aid Community Centre; DL Link; Impilo Child Protection and Adoption Services; and Arcadia.

Yeshiva appoints Rabbi Zaiden as kodesh principal

eshiva College Boys High School has appointed Rabbi Meir Zaiden as menahel at the school. Zaiden is tasked with professionalising the limudei kodesh curriculum, providing clear leadership for limudei kodesh staff, ensuring appropriate standards across grades and levels, and reigniting the co-curricular kodesh

A proud alumnus of Yeshiva College, Zaiden will focus on creating an atmosphere of positivity, growth, and excellence at the school.



KDL whizzes to final of Wits maths challenge



King David Primary School Linksfield finalists in the Wits Maths Competition: Middle Primary. Back: Joshua Fainstein; Brett Wiskin; Jessica Defries; and Kaylee Goldblatt. Front: Adam Sack; Gabriel Kadish; Saul Cohen; and Matt Kaplan

ixteen King David Senior Primary School Linksfield students got through to the final round of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) Mathematics Competition last month, which aims to promote maths at all levels.

They were among 70 from the school who voluntarily entered the competition. They joined 3 300 entrants from Grade 4 to university level across nine provinces, including entrants from a school in Botswana.

Special mention goes to Eitan Greenblatt for ranking seventh in Gauteng in the upper primary division.

King David Linksfield also performed extremely well in the middle primary (Grades 4 and 5) category, coming fourth in Gauteng, and fourth overall; and in the upper primary category (Grades 6 and 7), coming third in Gauteng, and fourth overall.

Crawford student set on making a difference in Joburg

hiraz Bodinger, a student at Crawford College Sandton, has been selected as a representative to the Johannesburg Junior Council in 2021. She will serve her term in her Grade 11

Shiraz will work with a diverse range of passionate students from various schools around Johannesburg striving to create awareness and make a difference in underprivileged communities. Crawford College Sandton is extremely proud of Shiraz, and wishes her everything of the very best for the year ahead.



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Getting the Jewish community BACK 2 WORK So many in our community have lost their jobs since onset of lockdown. We have



Education: Matric (King David High School Linksfield); BA Fine Arts (Wits); VEGA Diploma

Experience: Photographer, Cinematographer, and Graphic Design

Looking for a position in: Food and Product Photographer, Wedding and Event Photographer, Commercial and Portrait Photographer, Videography, and basic Graphic Design

More information: I am a Videographer and Photographer, specialising in conceptual, fashion, glamour, corporate, food, beverages, fine art, and events of all kinds. I shoot for the love of film, photography, people, the conceptual and special events, and am fully dedicated to helping you with shooting all the content needed for you or your

Current location: Johannesburg Willing to relocate: Yes

Email address: glennbloch1@gmail.com



Stuart Kolman Education: Matric (Eden College)

Experience: Sales, customer care, or willing to learn new things

Looking for a position in:
Sales, customer service, or
willing to learn new things

Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No

Email address: stulisa@mweb.co.za

Marcelle Bloom Ravid Education: BA Honours Archaeology (Hebrew University); first year Communications (Unisa); Certificate in Journalism

(Damelin)
Experience: Communications
Specialist

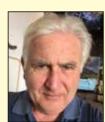
Looking for a position

in: Full-time position in communications and/or

clientele for full-service communications agency
More information: I am an experienced
communications practitioner with many years of
wisdom in the corporate, government, and non-profit
sectors, both locally and internationally. I also run
my own agency, serving clients with the full-house
of communications. I have extensive writing skills,
landing press coverage for clients in print and
broadcast outlets, globally. Fourteen years as a City
Councillor have honed my inter-personal skills.

Current location: Johannesburg Willing to relocate: No

Email address: ravidmb@gmail.com



Barry Cohen

Education: Matric (SACS); Law degree (UCT)
Experience: Management,
NPO, Marketing, Sponsorship,
Event management, Law
Looking for a position in: CEO,
Managerial, Marketing, or
Consulting

have lost their jobs since the onset of lockdown. We have invited people in this position to send in their details so we can help them find work. Here is our fourth group:

More information:
Developed overseas
video chain,
headed divisions at
SuperSport and the
Rugby Board, CEO

CANSA, Museum operator, Author Current location: Cape Town Willing to relocate: Yes Email address: bjcohen@mweb.co.za



Harrold Nochomovitz

Education: Career was as a professional photographer Experience: Harrold is a gentlemen that is sober of habits, fit, and reliable. Looking for employment as a driver, or any other type of

work. Seeking employment desperately.

Looking for a position in: Office, admin, transport

More information: Photographer for many years, and
also a driver with a valid PDP licence.

Current location: Johannesburg Willing to relocate: No

Email address: hnochomovitz@gmail.com

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Brenda Miller
Education: Matric (Anchor
College); Dale Carnegie
course; MAG computer course

Experience: Sales
Representative for different/all products.

Looking for a position in: Sales Representative
More information: Thirty years experience in selling
9-carat and sterling silver jewellery, cufflinks,
and fashion accessories. Very determined, hard
working, loyal, and service orientated. Good working
relationship with customers. Will go the extra mile for
them. Honest and willing to learn new products to sell.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No

Email address: brendamiller128@gmail.com

The information contained in these advertisements has not been verified. The *SA Jewish Report* is simply advertising people's information as it was received. If you have found yourself unemployed since lockdown and would like help to find a job, go to http://bit.ly/jcomback2work to fill in your details.



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The Kirsh Foundation ----- A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

The danger of casual Nazi/ Holocaust comparisons

very so often, hackles are raised when those seeking to discredit their political or ideological opponents resort to making factually incorrect and insensitive analogies with Nazism and/or the Holocaust. Indeed, two high-profile instances of this phenomenon occurred only recently, one on the local front, and the other on the part of a senior political figure in the United States (US). Suffice to say, in both cases the references to Nazis-era atrocities amounted to gross exaggeration and therefore serious misrepresentation of the historical record.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) was amongst those who objected when the issue surfaced last week. One of the points we stressed was that casual and factually unsupported analogies with the Nazi regime, which was an exceptionally evil and destructive tyranny responsible for some of the worst atrocities in human history, not only overstated the alleged misconduct of the party being criticised, but by implication, inevitably diminished the true gravity of Nazi crimes. Such rhetoric was therefore flippant and insensitive, and particularly hurtful to those – including survivors of the Holocaust – who experienced Nazi barbarity first hand.

The problem, of course, isn't limited to South Africa. Our US counterparts, the Anti-Defamation League, have likewise come out strongly against the use of Nazi terminology by political officials and parties to demonise the other side, no matter how legitimate the issues over which they are disagreeing.

What we also see from such ill-considered analogies is how easily it can provide forums for closet admirers of Nazi Germany to play down or relativise the atrocities of that regime, and sometimes even justify them. It's unsettling to see the frequency with which comments lauding Hitler's supposed vision, organisational ability, and nation-building qualities appear, even when Jews

aren't being specifically defamed. This is one of the

consequences of making statements that misrepresent

what's happening in the present while simultaneously

trivialising what occurred in the past. In memoriam: Suzanne Belling, o"h

Shaun Zagnoev

The untimely passing last week of Suzanne Belling is another sad loss for South African Jewry. An experienced, highly capable journalist, editor, communal professional, and respected author, she knew the Jewish community back to front and top to bottom, and devoted her life to serving it in multiple ways. For much of the first decade of the present century, she was executive director of the SAJBD Cape Council, and her involvement with the Board continued thereafter with her valuable role on the editorial board of *Jewish Affairs*. We salute her for everything she achieved, and extend our sincerest condolences to Michael, family, and friends.

• 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

When tolerance is intolerable

onday was International Tolerance Day. It was apparently borne in 1996, when the United Nations General Assembly invited UN member states to observe the day each year on 16 November. The decision followed the United Nations Year for Tolerance, 1995, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly.

On first blush, perhaps because the word "tolerance" is included in the name, the idea behind the day is wonderful, and speaks to the side of us that knows that we aspire to be accepting and inclusive of others. But, in my view, the day sounds a lot more heartwarming than it is in reality.

This was echoed by the first message of the day that I received on my show. At 06:10, before most people had the opportunity to brew their first coffee let alone drink it, a listener, buoyed by the knowledge that I'm not sensitive, wrote, "Howard Feldman is too catty to be tolerant." They might not have been wrong, but it hardly elevated the conversation I was hoping to have.

To me, the concept at its core is problematic. The very idea of "tolerating" someone or something, or some group, implies an incredible amount of arrogance.

Who exactly does anyone think that they are to "tolerate" someone else? It implies that they would be, were it not for the effort that we exert, "intolerable". The premise is offensive in and of itself because it hardly should be for us to tolerate anyone.

The second problem is that I'm not even certain that "tolerance" is always – or should be – aspirational. So often, when having a meal with my family, I'm reminded or reprimanded by my very "woke" children for being too judgemental.

The refrain of "Dad, we don't judge!" is a constant companion to our time together. And irrespective of the

SCHOOL SAVVY

Dani Sack

INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

fact that each time I'm censured, I counter with, "We do! We do judge!" they continue with the refrain. So engrained is the "non-judgemental" conviction.

We "judge" because that's one of the ways we select our path in life. We "judge" because multiple times each day we are called on to make a decision about our behaviour.

And whether we like it or not, so often our choices are made relative to others. We might think that we have an internal moral compass, or that as Jews, Christians, or Muslims, we might, to a greater or lesser extent, find ourselves guided by those principles.

The reality is that the influence on us by our environment requires us to make decisions as to what works for us and what doesn't. Indeed, we judge, because we have no choice but to do so.

Judgement and tolerance are connected. Although both are imperfect in isolation, together they provide us with a potential solution to the quandary.

Whereas we might judge the behaviour of others in order to determine our own choices, the tolerance for others speaks to our ability to separate behaviour from the person, and to acknowledge that we are all imperfect.

16 November, International Tolerance Day, wasn't a day that was easy for my listeners. It was a day that seems to have brought out the worst in them. The day seemed to press all the wrong buttons and gave them permission to be less tolerant than normal. Not that it's for me to judge.

Matric 2020: the good, the bad, and the blessed

s matric starts to draw to a close, I could describe how difficult it was adjusting to writing exams while wearing a mask, or how I had to scream excitedly across a field to my friends at break due to social distancing. I could even complain about online school, how it affected my mental health and my marks, or I could describe that incredible feeling of seeing friends at school for the first time after lockdown.

It seems, on thinking about it, that this year can be categorised by emotions. Happiness: that Purim party I went to, which ended up being the last party I'd go to for a long, long time. Exhaustion: trying to stay awake during online classes, and the difficult adjustment process. Excitement: going back to school in June, roaming the empty campus with my friends, smiling behind our masks.

Disappointment: hearing that all the usual matric events were cancelled, and then elation: hearing that we were getting some form of matric dance. And finally, anticipation: the feeling that dominates this time of final examinations – counting down the days until the end of this hellish year.

I hit a roadblock when my greatgrandmother passed away quite suddenly during the first week of finals. As those who have experienced loss know, it comes with a whirlwind of emotions – from disbelief to anger, denial to heartbreak.

In fact, on a much larger scale, every one of us has experienced some form of loss this year – the loss of loved ones, loss of normality, of routine, of physical touch, and the comfort of friends and family.

In spite of these losses, most of us have tried to find the good in our situation. And so, while I allowed myself to cry about my dear granny, I also chose to see the blessings that emerged from her passing.

I got to spend time with extended family I hadn't seen for months. I thank Hashem every morning for waking me up healthy and content, reminiscent of my granny's last words to me – to be "well and happy".

Matric 2020 is finally at its end. Everything we have worked for has led up to that exam hall, a camera live-streaming us to Independent Examinations Board HQ, sweating from the heat, and desperate to be done with the paper – forever.

It's the best feeling walking out of that hall, knowing you'll never (please G-d) have to write that exam again. It's that feeling that makes all those emotions – happiness, sadness, excitement, and exhaustion – worth it.

There's a lesson in all of this. This year has been gruelling, to say the least. It has pushed our limits in every way possible. But we have the opportunity to look back and see everything we've achieved in spite of its challenges.

We have the chance to acknowledge the varied emotional states of 2020 – the good, the bad, and the ugly – and thank G-d that we got through them. I can't wait to wave this year goodbye, but I'm also grateful for it.

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

