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South African Jewish Report

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Second wave surges over community

TALI FEINBERG

The second wave of COVID-19 is currently crashing over the South African Jewish community, leaving tragedy, despair, and fear in its wake. In Cape Town, one community member reported her relative's funeral this week was delayed as there were "too many bodies" that needed to be buried.

"We are entering into the peak of the second wave in Gauteng," says top Johannesburg pulmonologist

Dr Anton Meyberg. "Never in my wildest dreams did I believe that it could be worse than the first wave, but it is. G-d help us as we travel this road.

"Multiple people in our community are being quarantined or isolated. There are much younger, sicker people, and they are scared, anxious, and fragile. The wards are rapidly overfilling. Healthcare-worker fatigue is the new norm."

Eric Berger, the director of the Cemetery Maintenance Board in Cape Town, says, "We have seen a spike in the number of deaths over the past two weeks, and expect this to continue for the next five to ten days."

Meanwhile, in Johannesburg, Chevrah Kadisha (Chev) Chief Executive Saul Tomson says, "The total deaths in December were up 37% compared to the five-year average".

"The second wave seems to have affected our community with much greater force than the first," says general practitioner Dr Orit Laskov, whose practice is in the heart of Sea Point. "At our practice, we are seeing huge numbers of people contacting us daily with symptoms and testing positive, and increasing distress. People aren't able to care for loved ones. Patients are anxious about developing severe complications and needing to go to hospital.

"The virus is affecting almost all age groups and unfortunately, we continue to see irresponsible behaviour and choices resulting in 'pods' of infection among people in the community and whole families affected, with multiple deaths in one family now not uncommon," says Laskov.

"People need to behave like we are in level 4 or 5 lockdown to protect themselves and their families, and any onset of symptoms must be taken seriously. Don't be in denial. If it could be COVID-19 then it probably is COVID-19 at the moment," she says.

The director of the Community Security Organisation in Cape Town, Loren Raize, agrees that the second wave has drastically increased cases within the community. "In June, we were taking care of 53 patients on our COVID-19 wellness programme. In December, at one stage we had more than 200 active cases to manage, many of whom had to be hospitalised, and sadly there have been a number of deaths. During the first peak, by day 10 the vast majority of

patients were ready to come off the programme. This time around, we are taking care of patients for 14 days plus.

"On average, we service 90 calls per month, whereas in December, we had more than 360 calls. Over and above this, we sent a mobile logistics unit to service Plettenberg Bay and surrounds during this time, as well as assisting Hatzolah with cases of Johannesburg patients on holiday in Cape Town," says Raize.

In Johannesburg, Hatzolah volunteers and staff say they are too busy working in the community to respond to questions, but that the numbers recorded on their wellness programme "say it all". Just in the week preceding 8 January, they took on 225 new cases. Twenty-eight people were admitted to hospital, and 19 people were put on home oxygen.

the faint-hearted." She says her 10-year-old son has symptoms, and while an initial test came back negative, he will be tested again. "I wasn't able to love, hug, or be a mom to him. He was scared, and I couldn't comfort my precious child." She is endlessly grateful to Hatzolah for monitoring them both daily.

Tomson says there was a decrease in community deaths in October and November, which was down year-on-year, but compared to the five-year average, there was a 17% increase in community deaths in 2020.

Within the Chevrah Kadisha's residential facilities, "We have been blessed for many months to have no COVID-19 infections, which is miraculous. We are still being extremely vigilant with protocols. We've stopped in-person visitations, but digital visits remain very popular. Funerals have been very small.

committed in the face of danger. COVID-19 deaths present risk when collecting, preparing, and burying the deceased," he says. "Credit needs to be given to those brave people – volunteers and staff – committed to burying with dignity and compassion in spite of the challenges they face."

In Cape Town's Highlands House Home for Jewish Aged, two residents have been lost to COVID-19 in the past week, and two have COVID-19.

The disease has had a huge impact on the small but strong Durban Jewish community.

"Since the beginning of December, the community's Crisis Management Team has monitored 106 people, with 15 having to be hospitalised. We are aware of many others in the community that we aren't actively monitoring," says South African Jewish Board of Deputies KwaZulu-Natal Council President Jeremy Droyman.

"At one stage, we were actively monitoring 60 people simultaneously. Currently, we have 32 active cases. Sadly, there have been six deaths." Jewish aged home Beth Shalom has had two positive cases and one death during the second wave.

"One of the things that is probably under-reported is the impact of people not being able to see their loved ones when they're in hospital, and tragically when they die," he says. "This is having a big impact on families because normally they would have some time to come to peace with the passing of their family, and COVID-19 has meant the people are dying alone in hospital, which is awful."

Institutions continue to battle the effects of the surge. "It's been a really tough period," says Shelly Korn, the director of the Glendale Home for Jewish Persons with Intellectual Disabilities in Cape Town, which lost two residents to the virus in 2020. "We had many of our staff sick all at once. We have been working with skeleton staff and are really struggling. We are also

finding that people who have recovered and are coming back to work are battling with recovery. They can't work full days, and have issues with energy and breathing. In terms of testing and personal protective equipment, it has been an expensive exercise.

"Now everyone knows someone who has been in hospital. Everyone knows someone who has succumbed to this deadly virus," says Meyberg. "It's time to stand up and be counted – wear your mask, keep a social distance, be responsible," he pleads.

Vaccination station



Israel is well into the process of vaccinating its population against COVID-19. See pages 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11.

Considering the statistics that Hatzolah puts out on a weekly basis, SA Jewish Report Chairperson Howard Sackstein has worked out that an average of 34.3 people in our community in Johannesburg are contracting the virus daily at the moment.

One community member in Johannesburg, speaking on condition of anonymity, says, "The pain, aches, dizziness, nausea, and headaches are so bad that I cried. The isolation of being in a room alone for 14 days and the guilt isn't for

"We have seen tremendous trauma with families not being able to attend funerals, spouses not being able to attend because they're COVID-19 positive, and families overseas. Our bereavement counselling services have been there to support the community through this time, and it's been very difficult. In some instances, families have been brought in special vehicles to the funeral if they are COVID-19 positive," Tomson says.

"The Chev's staff and volunteers remain

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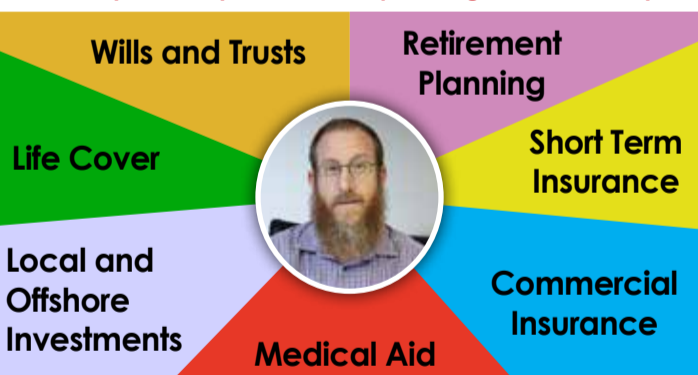
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Torah Thought

Don't lose your spirit

Imagine you've been working on the job for years and years. It's hard, manual labour and you're not simply tired but exhausted, demoralised, drained, and frustrated. And then, one fine day, some new fellow on the floor stands up and promises a whole new world of equality, rewards, and ultimate freedom. Do you believe him, or are you beyond hope? Do you dare hold out for a better tomorrow and risk being disillusioned, devastated, and cast into despair yet again, or do you simply accept your fate and give up dreaming?

So it was with our ancestors in Egypt. They were slaving away all those years, when a new face appeared and began making promises. Moses brought a message from G-d that they were about to be redeemed. There is a Promised Land ahead. All is not lost. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

The Jews' response? They didn't listen to Moses as a result of shortness of breath and

from hard labour.

One commentary explains that "shortness of breath" shouldn't be understood only literally. The Hebrew for breath is *ruach*, which can also mean "spirit". In other words, they weren't able to heed Moses' call not only from physical breathlessness, but because they lacked the spirit. Having suffered in bondage for so long, they no longer had the faith or hope to believe that freedom was still in the realm of the possible. It was simply beyond them. They had lost their spirit.

In the history of Egypt, no slave ever escaped. How could an entire nation ever walk free? Moses is a dreamer, they must have thought. It's just not realistic to hold out such high hopes only to have them dashed yet again. And so, the people were utterly despondent and spiritless and therefore, they couldn't hear – absorb – Moses' message.

It happens all too often. People become so set in their mediocrity that they give up

Rabbi Yossy Goldman,
Sydenham Shul



hope of ever achieving breakthrough. Marriages get stuck in the rut of routine, and the tedious treadmill keeps rolling along until we lose even the desire to dream. It takes an extraordinary degree of faith and courage not to.

I have often quoted a wise proverb in the name of legendary Chasid Reb Mendel Futerfas. "If you lose your money, you've lost nothing. Money comes and money goes. If you lose your health, you've lost half. You are not the person you were before. But if you lose your resolve, you've lost it all."

Moses brought new hope to a depressed, dreamless nation. He gave it back the spirit it had lost, and eventually, through the miracles of G-d, the promise was fulfilled, and the dream became destiny.

To be out of breath is normal. To be out of spirit is something the Jewish people can never afford. May we never lose our spirit.

How to create room to breathe while being constricted

OPINION

ADINA ROTH



There is no doubt that our community and wider country are starting 2021 in a *meitzar*, a narrow place, filled with fear and anxiety. Caught in a second wave which we hoped would never come, we are waiting with trepidation for schools to start, for numbers to drop, for vaccines to arrive. Would it help us to reflect that in Parshat Vayeira this week, we find the Israelites caught in their narrow place, the slavery of Egypt, *Mitzrayim*!

While the parsha this week describes the unfolding of the larger-scale events of the plagues, it opens with insight into the state of mind of "the people", *b'nei Yisrael*. Hashem asks Moshe to reassure enslaved people by telling them that He has heard their cries, and is going to save them. The people will be taken out of *Mitzrayim*, and will be allowed to pursue their destiny. Moshe brings this message of comfort and hope to the people. And we are told, "The

people of Israel would not listen to Moses, from shortness of breath and cruel bondage. (Ex, ch. 6, v 9)." Commenting on the words "they would not listen", Rashi creates an equivalence between "to listen" and "to receive", saying, *lo kibl'u tanchumin* (the people weren't able to receive words of comfort). It's a deep place of despair where a person isn't able to receive words of soothing and hope.

What stopped people from being able to be comforted? The *avodah kashah* describes the cruel bondage of slavery in which our people's individual liberties and freedom were removed. Indeed, it may feel as if there is

little agency or room to move when large forces of power are manipulating one's life, such as in a pandemic.

However, we are also told that the people weren't able to listen because of *kotzer ru'ach* (shortness of breath). The Midrash Aggadah plays on the words *kotzer ru'ach*, and claims that the people were "short on spirit" meaning *emunah*, and thus became involved in idol worship.

The Sefat Emet makes a startling interpretation of this midrash, suggesting that the Israelites weren't actually worshipping idols, but rather were so distanced from themselves and filled with the vanities of the world that they had no inner space to receive this message of hope. Rashi observes that both *Mitzrayim* and *kotzer* contain the root "tzar". He links the two, saying anyone who is in constriction (*meitzar*), will experience shortness (*katzar*) of breath. We might understand Rashi's *meitzar* or constriction as anxiety, a state of constriction that freezes a person, conjuring up Edvard Munch's terror-laden image of *The Scream*. When we are put under undue stress and pressure, we lose our capacity to take deep, long breaths. Thus, two factors prevent the people from receiving Moshe's *tanchumin*: external factors linked to oppression and enslavement (*avodah kashah*); and an inner state of mind linked to alienation, distancing from G-d, and distressing anxiety (*kotzer ru'ach*).

Like *b'nei Yisrael*, we find ourselves caught in the powerful currents of history, political power-plays, pandemics, and all sorts of circumstances over which we have very little control. This is our *avodah kashah*, the larger forces which play out across our world. However, according to the parsha, our constriction and redemption depend not only on external factors but also on the way in which we work with our own *kotzer ru'ach*. As we begin 2021 gripped by second waves of COVID-19 in many parts of the world, we might be inclined to feel hopeless. This

can lead to filling our minds and hearts with pessimism, negative projections onto the year, and anticipatory anxieties about what will be. If our mind is filled with *kotzer ru'ach*, it won't have the emptiness to be open to receive the whispers and ripples of hope when they come our way.

In the words of the Sefat Emet, "Hearing requires being empty of everything so that we can hear the voice of G-d." In times like these, if we are sufficiently attuned, we might be able to receive comfort, connect to feelings of hope,

or even feel moments of faith and upliftment. These moments may come as calm, as perspective, as wisdom, as kindness, in the form of poetry, Torah learning, or prayer. Perhaps, quite simply, we will feel less constricted by "shortness of breath", and more open to *neshimah*, breath, and expansiveness.

This is a hard time in our world, but we have a tradition of people going through very difficult times and being redeemed from them. We learn from *b'nei*

Yisrael that any redemption requires waiting and is subject to forces beyond our control. However, we aren't mere victims of circumstance. By working to heal our *kotzer ru'ach*, we create room for agency in our own narrow places. It might even be that our expanded ability to receive can help usher in the larger-scale transformation and redemption for which we hope and pray.

• Adina Roth is a Jewish educator at B'tocham Education, and a clinical psychologist in private practice in Johannesburg. She is studying online at Yeshivat Maharat in New York.

Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:39	Johannesburg
19:15	20:38	Cape Town
18:15	19:36	Durban
18:15	19:53	Bloemfontein
18:15	20:09	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:57	East London

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Dlamini puts “Hitler loving” past behind him

NICOLA MILTZ

Six years ago, infamous campus rabble rouser and Fees Must Fall student activist Mcebo Dlamini was a fiery, Israel-bashing antisemite prone to hurtful and divisive words, including his love and admiration for Hitler.

Today, he appears to be a different man. The erstwhile University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) student representative council president says he has had time to reflect on what he now admits was a shameful and misguided period in the impressionable springtime of his political career.

“I was naïve and overwhelmed by the space I occupied as a young leader. I lacked a role model and mentor to guide me,” a repentant Dlamini told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

Just two days before the Day of Reconciliation on 16 December, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) accepted a written apology from Dlamini and engaged in mediation with him, facilitated by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC). It was a poignant moment – many years overdue – that has been praised as an example of true

reconciliation.

The mediation took place at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC), where Dlamini was introduced to the horrors of the Holocaust and the Rwanda genocides following a facilitated educational engagement with the permanent exhibition at the JHGC.

“It made a huge impact,” he said this week.

“I felt a big sense of relief when my apology was accepted. I never thought this would end amicably,” said Dlamini who was “very nervous” the first time he visited the offices of Zev Krengel, the vice-chairperson of the SAJBD.

“He thought he was going to be arrested,” said Krengel this week, as the two men sipped coffee together in his office and recalled the day last year when Dlamini arrived at his office hoping finally to make amends.

What motivated the passionate Swaziland-born firebrand, who was found guilty of public violence for his part on the 2016 Fees Must

Fall protests, to apologise now?

“I found I was no longer in a position to be taken seriously,” he lamented this week.

“What I said weighed heavily on my shoulders and persistently blocked my growth in social-justice activism. I found I couldn’t touch lives because I had destroyed lives. I

want to be a human-rights lawyer, but how could I talk about love,

reconciliation, and peace when I had made these comments?”

The SAJBD lodged a formal complaint against Dlamini with the SAHRC in 2015. In April that year, Dlamini took to Facebook and wrote, “I love Adolf Hitler. In every white person there is an element of Adolf Hitler”.

Then, during a live interview on PowerFM in June 2015, he said of Jewish people, “They are devils. They are good for nothing. They are hypocritical ... they are uncircumcised in heart.”

There were other comments. Each time, he seemed to get more followers on Facebook.

“You get carried away in that process, and no one tells you that what you are doing is hurtful and dangerous and can damage your future career,” he said.

Much of Dlamini’s childhood was in Kamhlushwa in Mpumalanga, where his mother introduced him to politics from a young age. “She taught me about Pan-Africanism, and politics was part of our lives,” he said.

Dlamini became swept up in the heady induction phase of student politics. He rose quickly through the ranks of the Progressive Youth Alliance (consisting of progressive students of the South African Students’ Congress, the African National Congress Youth League, and the Young Communist League).

“Apart from many issues, the Middle East conflict always comes up for discussion. There is a dominant pro-Palestine narrative which I realise is biased and one-sided,” he said, admitting that he became “damaged” by it.

Following months of introspection and discussions on the Middle East, he now understands that it’s a multi-faceted, highly complex affair requiring empathy and understanding on both sides.

This journey, he said, made him realise that in order to pursue the noble fight for human rights, he had to acknowledge and make amends for his own ill-informed personal biases and prejudices.

Towards the end of last year, Dlamini asked his comrade, Wits

law graduate and Africans for Peace co-ordinator Klaas Masilo Mokgomole, to help him address this longstanding issue.

Mokgomole sided with the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions South Africa movement at Wits until he was encouraged to learn about both sides following

“My journey has made me appreciate that I was wrong, and there is no possible excuse for what I said and there can be no way to reverse how it affected others.”

an educative trip to Israel and an ongoing commitment to understand the struggle.

Together with student leader Cebolenkosi Khumalo, they arrived at Krengel’s offices in November in the hope of reaching an amicable outcome. Krengel told the *SA Jewish Report* he was intrigued by Dlamini’s visit after so many years of unresolved animosity between Dlamini and the community.

“I was interested to hear what he had to say,” said Krengel, who was pleased when Dlamini showed genuine remorse.

Following a process of mediation, Krengel said, “The sincerity with which Dlamini acknowledged the hurt that he caused our community was palpable. This understanding prompted him to make an unequivocal apology which was truly remorseful.”

He told the *SA Jewish Report* that Dlamini recognised that the

statements were antisemitic, hurtful, and offensive.

“This recognition together with his genuine apology enables us to heal from the hurt he caused. It’s important for us as a community and as South Africans to identify when genuine remorse is expressed. It’s equally important for us to accept a sincere apology of this nature as it enables us to move forward.”

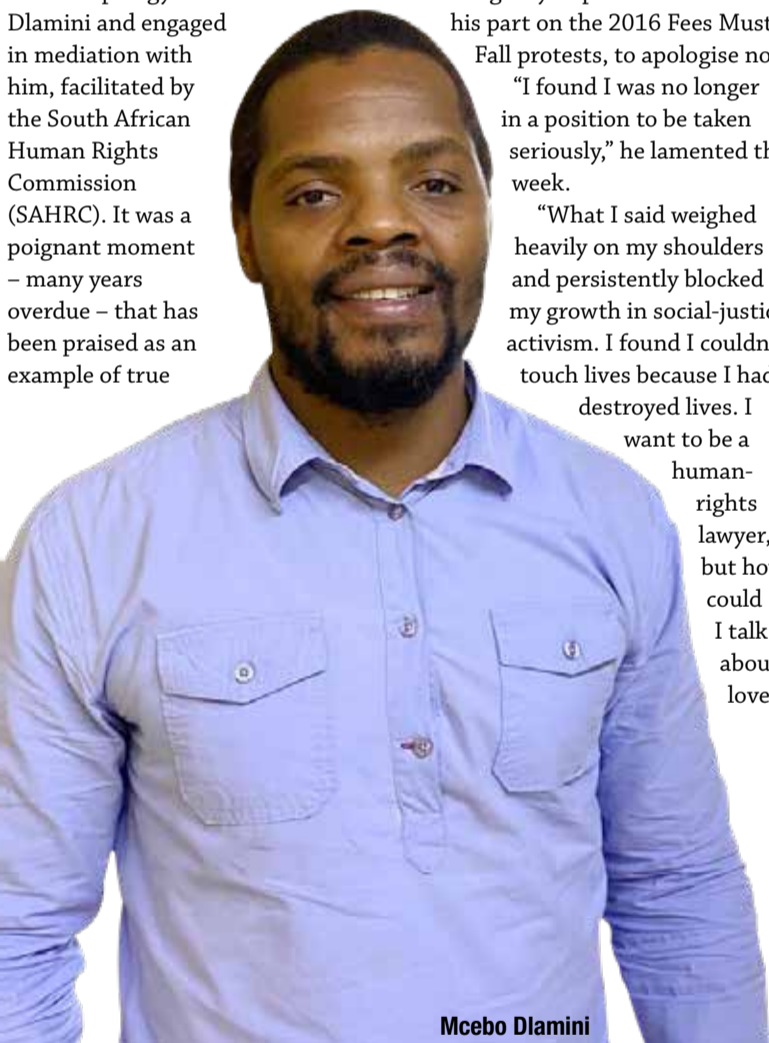
In his written apology, Dlamini said, amongst other points, “It’s only in retrospect that I began to appreciate how much my statements were ill-advised and to a certain extent dangerous because they ignored the kind of trauma that they caused. My journey has made me appreciate that I was wrong, and there is no possible excuse for what I said and there can be no way to reverse how it affected others. What I can do is supplement my apology with actions as testimony that I’m truly remorseful.

“I’m committed to engaging with literature that will assist me in learning about the history of Jewish and Israeli people to understand why my sentiments were offensive. Once I have this in-depth knowledge, I commit to teaching others about the knowledge I acquired.”

He said he wanted to travel to Israel to gain an understanding of how the Jewish people’s present is shaped by their past.

“I have thought deeply about the kind of leader I want to be, and it’s definitely not a leader that spreads hate and rejoices at the misfortunes of others.

“This marks a new chapter for me, and I’m hoping I can move forward.”



Mcebo Dlamini



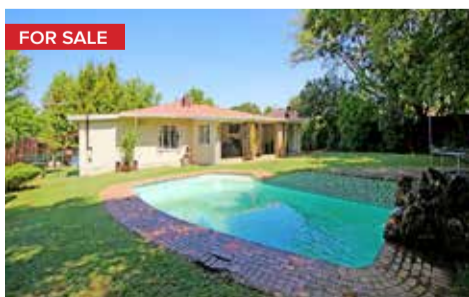
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Frustration over second shul shutdown in 10 months

JORDAN MOSHE

For the second time in 10 months, shuls have had to close their doors as COVID-19 rampages across the country.

While most within the community have accepted the restriction in the face of an overwhelming second wave, the closures have drawn some criticism from those not willing to give up their regular *minyanim*.

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced two weeks ago that the country would move to lockdown level three as infections rose sharply during the holiday season. This included the reintroduction of the ban on religious gatherings, closing shuls that had reopened in October last year.

Although the ban was initially set to end later this week, Ramaphosa extended it in his address on Monday evening.

The closure of shuls is a necessity in the fight against the virus, says Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein.

"With the introduction of regulations and the extension, the president is looking not just at shuls but all places of worship across the country," he told the *SA Jewish Report* this week. "His decision is driven by factors going way beyond our own community.

"We cannot judge the decision in terms of our own shuls, which have done amazingly well and remained as safe as possible," the chief rabbi says. "We need to recognise that we are citizens of this country and are committed to upholding the law so as to ensure that every person around us is safe.

"It's sad for us. We love our shuls. They are part of our lives, but we have a responsibility to promote health, safety, and support the

fight against this disease."

Goldstein commended the shuls and their rabbis for their commitment to caring for their members and adhering to protocols.

"They were incredible in their dedication to the protocols," he says. "People appreciated it, and many felt that, outside their homes, the shuls were the safest places to be."

The chief rabbi also paid tribute to Ramaphosa, saying that the president had given great consideration to the input from religious leaders from across the spectrum at an interfaith meeting held this past Sunday before Monday's announcement.

From a health perspective, the closure of shuls is imperative, says emergency medicine expert Professor Efraim Kramer.

"We should actually be in a level-five lockdown at this point," he says. "We can't do that economically because the country would collapse. This second wave is far worse than the first, and almost every other country has gone into lockdown with lower numbers."

Businesses, restaurants, and other hubs of economic activity are open only out of economic necessity, Kramer stressed.

"They aren't safe just because they're open," he says. "If you're not out working, you should be staying at home. People don't seem to understand that. The closure of shuls isn't about them being more or less safe. Unfortunately, they aren't economic spaces, and need to stay closed.

"You cannot complain about a measure that's in place to keep us alive. If we carry on the way we're going with the highest death rate we've ever seen, how can we go back to normal? We have no right to make such a demand, no matter how safe we feel our shuls are."

While most shuls have closed their doors, some disagree with the president's decision.

minyanim have been, I had to make the point that we cannot become accepting of change."

Goldman maintained that shuls are far safer than casinos, restaurants, and cinemas, which have been allowed to remain open, and said the ban on religious services shouldn't be a blanket ban.

"It's almost an inconsistency of the

"We're being challenged as rabbonim. We need to reinvent what shul means and change our approach to the relationship with congregants. The role of rabbi has shifted."

Not all *minyanim* have opted to shut down, however.

A *minyan* operating within the Glenhazel area has been operating since March 2020, and although it has moved a few times, it has operated consistently over the past 10 months.

At times held outdoors, the *minyan* usually has a maximum of 15 men. Those who attend maintain that the complete shutdown of a *minyan* is too drastic, relying on precedents found in rabbinic responses during previous pandemics in history to guide their decision.

"It never occurred to Rabbi Akiva Eiger that *minyanim* should be shut down," said a representative of the *minyan* who asked to remain anonymous. "It was always a matter of taking reasonable precautions and getting on with life.

"I'm not aware of any response that they wrote urging that life be shut down. There has never been a situation in which Torah authorities called for such drastic measures.

"Our members are resolutely determined to daven in a *minyan*. The response to COVID-19 around the world and in our community has been a fiasco. We have attacked a cockroach with a bazooka and seem unperturbed about the fact that the bazooka killed two people, injured 20 others, demolished the house, and started a fire next door, all while missing the cockroach."

He argues that the response of the Johannesburg rabbinate has been

Continued on page 8>>



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

This includes Sydenham Shul's Rabbi Yossi Goldman, who recently penned an open letter expressing support for the president but also maintaining that shuls should remain open as they are among the safest places because of their strict protocols.

"I felt strongly that there needed to be protest against the fact that shuls were closed down yet again," Goldman told the *SA Jewish Report*. I was bothered that our community, including our leadership, could be blasé about shuls closing. We've become nonchalant about it.

"It's become a new norm. Of course, you can daven at home, but the shul is the heartbeat of Jewish life. As special as Zoom

regulations," he says. "Also, psychological, spiritual, and emotional well-being are as important as economic well-being. We need our shuls more than ever before."

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin, the rabbi of the Oxford Synagogue Centre and chairperson of the Rabbinic Association, also worries that it will be challenging to encourage people back to shul when they reopen.

"We've done a good job of telling people to stay home and daven, but that's backfiring on us now," he says. "People have taken to staying home, and it's become a habit. It's getting progressively harder to get people back to shul. I hope we don't struggle in the long run.

MOST SA JEWS (BOTH OF ASHKENAZI AND SEPHARDI HERITAGE) ARE ELIGIBLE TO REINSTATE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND, ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT.

A common misconception is that European citizenship and EU passports can only be obtained if one has documents providing his/her lineage. The fact is that not having any documents proving lineage, doesn't lead to disqualification of eligibility. Jews of Ashkenazi heritage can rely on documents obtained in Lithuania or Poland.

Jews of Sephardi heritage need no proof at all!

In his experience, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived, and therefore they are entitled to reinstate it, and accordingly obtain an EU passport.



Adv. Horesh has been operating in SA market with the Jewish community since March 2018. He arrives regularly to South Africa, and can meet in person with Jews who are interested to do so.

Ashkenazi: This ad refers to Jews of Polish & Lithuanian heritage only.

The most important thing is the understanding that prior to the end of WW-I, the European map was very different than the one we know today.

Countries like Poland and Lithuania did not exist as independent countries, and until 1918 these territories were only known as Lithuanian or Polish regions/counties of the Great Russian Empire who ruled all of north eastern Europe. Accordingly, until 1918, residents of these territories were Russian citizens, as Polish and Lithuanian citizenships didn't exist. Therefore, since applications for reinstatement of these citizenships can only be based on whether one's ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen, whoever is a descendant of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 will not be eligible.

In addition, it is highly important to remember that since borders in Europe were shifted once again during and after WW-II, one's eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor hailed. Horesh explains: Shifted borders resulted in cities changing nationalities, and that the resultant effect for descendants of Jews left Vilnius is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined whereas a similar



Adv. Avi Horesh is an Israeli attorney, who lived in Poland for seven years.

Horesh is recognised in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship may very well be approved! Horesh has an in-depth knowledge and a full understanding of European immigration laws.

Sephardi: This ad refers to all Jews of Sephardi heritage – Jews who arrived from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, as well as many descendants of Jews who arrived from Holland and the UK.

Most descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are eligible to reinstate Portuguese citizenship and, accordingly, an EU passport. If applicable, Adv. Horesh will apply for (on behalf of the applicant) an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which, an application for Portuguese citizenship is most likely to be approved.

Adv. Horesh closely collaborates with professionals who assist him in tracing documentation in Europe required for successful applications of reinstatement EU citizenships.

My next visit in SA will take place in February 2021

You are most welcome to contact me on adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com or whatsapp +48783953223

As Israel vaccinates, South Africa negotiates

JORDAN MOSHE

While countries like Israel have already vaccinated many of its people, South Africa is still negotiating the procurement of vaccines in the battle against COVID-19.

The vaccine rollout is already in its second phase in Israel after a three week-long inoculation drive. More than 20% of the population has had its first shot of the vaccine (the highest percentage globally) and all Israelis could be immunised by Pesach, according to the *Times of Israel*.

Taking a selfie at a Tel Aviv vaccination station



South Africa is way behind, although the government plans to vaccinate two-thirds of the population by the end of 2021. The delay has drawn criticism from many corners, accusing the government and the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19 vaccines of being too slow to act.

“The initial negotiations utilised the pool procurement mechanisms of COVAX,” Barry Schoub, professor emeritus of virology at the University of the Witwatersrand and MAC chairperson, told the *SA Jewish Report* last week.

“We signed up for the vaccine for about 10% of the population. COVAX does the purchasing of the vaccine and tells us when to expect it, which is either at the end of the first quarter or into the second quarter of this year,” Schoub said.

In addition, South Africa also entered into bilateral agreements with vaccine manufacturers directly.

“The first tranche of a million AstraZeneca Oxford vaccinations are expected this month. They are being provided by the Serum Institute of India, the largest vaccine manufacturer in the world, and a further half million are expected in February,” said Schoub.

“This first tranche is a limited, emergency supply, essentially for use by our healthcare workers only.” Those who fall into this category will be further divided into subcategories, depending on how exposed they are to COVID-19 patients and other risk factors.”

The next phase targets a greater portion of the population, but is still limited to key personnel like security workers, retail workers, teachers, and other essential workers, according to Schoub.

Additionally, people who live in congregate environments (such as prisons and institutions) fall into this phase, as do people who are 60 or older, or older than 18 with co-morbidities.

“The last tranche targets the rest of the population at a time when we’re trying to achieve universal immunisation for as many people as possible,” said Schoub. “That will come later on.”

“There are ongoing negotiations involving the medical aid industry as well as the business sector to secure the funding needed for the additional vaccines for the entire population. Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize has committed to getting two-thirds of the population (more than 40 million people in total) immunised by the end of the year,” Schoub said.

“It’s a massive challenge, but the minister seems confident. It means administering almost 300 000 vaccines a day, so we’ll need to mount a huge campaign if we’re to do it.”

Schoub was at pains to rectify his misquoted statement regarding the efficacy of vaccines against the virus after it was said that he didn’t believe a vaccine would work.

“I wrote in *Daily Maverick* that the vaccine isn’t a magic wand that will make the virus disappear immediately,” he

said. “It will take time, but it will work. In the meantime, it’s imperative that we carry out the standard health precautions meticulously. They are the only tools we have to control the infection.

“Even when South Africa has the vaccine, a lot will depend on our behaviour.”

Schoub responded to the recent letter published by medical professionals in South Africa accusing government of bungling vaccine procurement. “Our colleagues ignore the fact that negotiations are underway and may have an agenda in going on the rampage to criticise. If you look at the epidemic, it has three consequences: conspiracy theories, miracle drugs, and the blame game.

“Unfortunately, the blame game is taken up by scientists, and is undermining public trust.”

On BBC’s *HardTalk*, Schoub said he blamed the system for any issues that have arisen in securing vaccines. “Vaccines shouldn’t be treated as a commodity. When profit drives the purchase of a vaccine, it’s a problem. Thirteen percent of the global population has bought up 51% of the production of vaccines.

“We aren’t a wealthy country, but a middle-income country with severe economic woes. We had a choice to put down R2.4 billion during trials on vaccines we didn’t know would work or not. High-income countries could afford to do that. Our advisory did recommend negotiating, but for whatever reason, the government couldn’t afford the deposit and the risk.”

Discovery founder and chief executive Adrian Gore told the *SA Jewish Report* that he felt positive about the government’s vaccine-procurement programme. Gore has been involved in the programme at government level, chairing a team tasked with securing funding and arranging the logistics of vaccine distribution.

“There has been a considerable amount of work done by government and business over the past two months to ensure funding is secure, that vaccines are accessed and procured, and a lot of work is going into distribution,” he said.

“The last speech by the president outlined a schedule, and if we can meet it, we should make good progress. Healthcare workers will receive the vaccine in the next couple of weeks and a lot more doses are in the pipeline.”



Tel Aviv residents get vaccinated

He said Discovery was doing whatever it could to help the government progress effectively, and felt confident in the progress made so far.

As far as matters in Israel are concerned, spirits are high as the vaccine rollout forges ahead.

“It feels almost festive in Israel right now,” said Ilan Ossendryver, a South African photographer currently in Israel. “In spite of being in another lockdown, there are banners flying everywhere and people are excited to be getting vaccinated, taking selfies with signs that say, ‘I got vaccinated’. It’s amazing.”

The holder of an Israeli passport, Ossendryver received a vaccination last Sunday after contacting Tel Hashomer Hospital in Tel Aviv to find out if he was eligible for the shot.

“I had a booking within 20 minutes,” he said. “I don’t have Israeli medical aid, but they gave me a time and I joined hundreds of other people on Sunday afternoon and had the shot within 10 minutes. They had me wait 15 minutes to check for side-effects before letting me go, and I’ll get the second dose later this month.

“It feels incredible to think that you’re carrying something that could help save you from getting sick. Nothing is certain, but you know you’re a step ahead.”

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Avoiding the blame game

COVID-19 has done so much damage to our world, and not just to the numbers of people who have contracted or died from it.

Nothing can be worse than someone you love dying from this dreaded illness. Having it hovering over you with long-term effects that have an impact on your life is also horrible.

Unfortunately, this pandemic has got to a stage in South Africa and in our community where we all now know people who have died from it and others who have been badly scarred.

We also know people who have been totally asymptomatic.

The point is this super contagious life-threatening sickness is like playing Russian Roulette – you don't know how it will affect you. And in this second mutation in South Africa, the young and fit aren't protected from the worst of it. Some are getting very ill or even dying. We don't know how our bodies will react to it or whether we will be susceptible to getting it twice. See Dr Carron Zinman's opinion piece on this page.)

In fact, there seems to be a number of different experiences of this virus. (See pages 10 and 11.)

When you go into certain public places, they take your temperature because that was originally believed to be a sure sign of someone with the virus. However, I have spoken to a number of people who have had COVID-19 but didn't have a temperature.

Even the tests don't seem to be 100% fool proof. There are many who get false negatives, which can have obvious dire consequences in spreading the virus.

This virus has caused so much animosity and anger between people. It's par for the course to play the blame game, either with people who underplay the virus or are sticklers about maintaining the protocols.

I have witnessed people looking down their noses at those of us who stick to the letter of the COVID-19 laws, believing we are overreacting. While others thumb their noses at those who underplay the virus and don't follow the protocols.

I believe we all have the right to what we believe as long as we aren't harming anyone else. However, if you get on a plane with COVID-19, you are likely to harm others. If you know you have symptoms or have a good chance of having contracted the virus, you are potentially going to harm people if you go shopping, visiting, or mixing with people (even those in your inner circle).

I imagine that nobody would purposely do that, right? Unfortunately, it appears as if there have been many such cases within and without our community.

There are people who, in spite of knowing there was a possibility that they might have had the virus, got on a plane home or even went to a party. In fact, they may well tell you that they have been super cautious...

That almost feels worse than those who underplay COVID-19 as a flu because you believe they are following protocols when they aren't. In such cases, you might just let your guard down a little with horrible repercussions.

I'm guilty of getting upset with people who put other people's lives at risk. That's the problem with this virus: when you take risks, they not only hurt you, they hurt others. In fact, they may kill.

If people didn't take such risks, surely we would be able to get a handle on this virus and stop it spreading so fast?

I resonated with Dr Anton Meyberg's comment (on a podcast with Howard Feldman during the holidays) about people who underplay this virus as a flu. He suggested they go and work in the COVID-19 wards without personal protective equipment (PPE). Obviously, they wouldn't need PPE if they don't believe it was a dire illness, why would they?

You see, I'm casting blame. And such sentiments have caused conflict between people, even within the same family. Even between best friends and life partners.

These conflicts are just more collateral damage from this horrific pandemic. So unnecessary!

It reminds me a little of how many of us were back in the apartheid days, when some of us supported apartheid and others didn't. There were families in which one person was a card-carrying African National Congress member and another would treat black people as lesser humans. I know this is an extreme example, but there is a similarity in the anger and fear expressed.

With this as the backdrop to this first edition of our newspaper in 2021, I was inspired by an open letter to President Cyril Ramaphosa written by Benjy Porter, a businessman, a community stalwart, and a board member of the SA Jewish Report. (See page 15.)

Instead of blaming or looking for fault in the government or anyone, he offered to help wherever he could.

Recognising the tough task the president and the government have in fighting this pandemic and keeping the country afloat, he suggested where he could be of service.

Meanwhile, there are so many of us who condemn or bad mouth the government for not doing enough, making terrible mistakes, or not doing things fast enough. Perhaps they are right, but running them down doesn't help anything or anyone.

What Porter is doing is an example to us all of what we can do, and if every one of us offered to help in some way, perhaps we really could make a difference.

We are a community of go-getters. We are a community who make things happen. We can also be a community in which individuals play the blame game and take unnecessary risks.

But if you turn that nastiness around and into positive action, we won't have time for the blame game, nor will we be interested in it.

I'm not saying it's okay to risk people's lives, I'm saying let's focus on helping and doing the right thing so we can get rid of this pandemic and killer virus as soon as possible.

You with me?

Let's make 2021 the year we made a difference in defeating the COVID-19 enemy!

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Second wave like a tsunami

OPINION

DR CARRON ZINMAN



We have emerged from the eye of the storm to confront a second wave that is significantly worse than we anticipated. It feels like a tsunami.

Once again, SARS CoV2 has proven to be unpredictable, and has mutated to a new strain which is more contagious, involves a higher number of people, and is less discriminating. We have easily slid back into our roles in a well-remembered dance.

Once again, we are working long hours and spending a lot of time on our feet. Stress levels are very high again, and there is a constant feeling of anxiety as one waits for the next crisis.

Last time, the patients were older, and it was easier to be more philosophical in accepting their deaths. In a complete deviation from pattern, this wave of COVID-19 has affected younger people to a much greater extent. They are often younger than us, and we all know a lot of people who have COVID-19.

As with the first wave, there are more men in hospital than women, with 60% of the patients being male and 40% female. This time, however, all population groups seem to be represented.

When looking at intensive-care units (ICUs), which are a critical resource under huge pressure, it's startlingly obvious that not only have we had to accommodate more patients in ICU, but that they are significantly younger and much sicker this time. Fifty percent of the ICU cohort are under the age of 60, and 80% are on more than usual oxygen therapy.



Our ICU is full, and we are using all our ventilators for one form of ventilatory support or another. It is a surreal experience to look around and see the vast majority of our patients with masks of various shapes and sizes strapped tightly to their faces in an attempt to keep their blood oxygen levels adequate. It's difficult to communicate, and all one sees are the eyes looking at you with fear, anxiety, distress, and sometimes calm acceptance.

The mood is sombre, and there's little humour this time around. Patients with comorbidities still raise a red flag in that they are more likely to have severe COVID-19 with a higher mortality rate, but this time around, there are significant numbers of young, fit, healthy individuals with no comorbidities who are desperately ill. The staff are more fearful because of this. After all, you can't allay your anxiety by listing the patient's comorbidities which have resulted in severe COVID-19 if there are none.

Another unique feature is the number of young individuals presenting with severe cardiac disease that has proven to be rapidly fatal. There are also a few confirmed cases of reinfection now, some far more severe than the initial episode of COVID-19.

In addition, we are called for far more acute deteriorations in clinical condition, and seem to be running to many more resuscitations than we ever dreamt we would be. Often, patients have young families, and a desperate desire to live for their children.

There is definitely a higher number of patients who require mechanical ventilation and as such, there is enormous pressure on ICU beds. We are contacted on a daily basis by hospitals looking for ICU beds for young patients with severe COVID-19 pneumonia.

It's not only the beds that are under pressure, but

the units are often understaffed as the healthcare workers contract COVID-19 themselves or simply burn out.

This past weekend, I was told of a physician who contracted COVID-19 and landed up on a ventilator in his own unit and was cared for by his friend and colleague. This is all very hard to deal with.

The fact that many of the patients in hospital are well into the pulmonary phase with significant inflammatory changes in their lungs means that it's a juggling act, with ICU beds being filled as soon as they are emptied and patients yo-yoing between ICU and the wards, and back to ICU.

There are times when ambulances wait patiently to offload their patients while space is made in emergency, or they are diverted to another hospital.

We are aware of private hospitals which have actually run out of oxygen for a time period. We are aware of hospitals in which they have started using anaesthetic machines to ventilate patients in their theatres.

We have seen photos from a hospital in Gauteng which has set up tents in its parking lot to treat patients with COVID-19.

Resources are limited, and a strict criteria for ICU admission will have to be implemented, a task we are dreading.

In the meantime, as we deal with this unprecedented surge in numbers, elective surgery has been cancelled and, other than COVID-19 cases, we are admitting emergencies only. People are scared to come to hospital and as such, are waiting until they can't wait anymore, being admitted in extreme conditions.

Our physical discomfort is worse with long hours in personal protective equipment in the summer heat with no air conditioning in the wards. Our fingers are cracking open again, and the emotional toll is huge.

This past weekend, we witnessed the compassion with which our staff cared for a patient with Down's Syndrome and how happy they were when it seemed that she would survive. We have taken wives to say goodbye to their husbands who are dying of COVID-19. We had to tell five patients that their parent/spouse had died of COVID-19 while they were lying in a hospital bed. I also had to call a lady who was isolating at home with COVID-19 to inform her that her husband had passed away on their 56th wedding anniversary. We also celebrated two birthdays here.

We are familiar with the vagaries of this disease, and write the treatment charts by rote, monitoring individuals intensively. We make therapeutic adjustments according to various clinical and blood parameters, desperate to prevent severe pneumonia or the cytokine storm.

We feel enormous relief if it looks as if the inflammatory process is reversing. And yet, in spite of all the knowledge gained over the past few months, there are patients who you know cannot pull through. At those times, kindness and compassion are all we can offer.

The stories are familiar. A minority of our patients (often the elderly) contracted COVID-19 through no fault of their own. But the vast majority know exactly where they picked it up – a dinner party, a function, on holiday, at a picnic, in a friend's home, etc. The equation is simple to me: socialising without respecting the COVID-19 rules of social engagement = COVID-19 (for yourself or some unlucky individual that you come into contact with).

If you're lucky, you get away lightly, and if you're unlucky, you become critically ill (with the attendant risk of dying) or you develop long COVID-19 or one of the unusual late complications.

It's going to get a lot worse, and we are going to run out of hospital beds, medication, and potentially oxygen. There's no magic cure, and the vaccine is on the horizon. It behoves everyone to be respectful of COVID-19 and behave responsibly, respecting the sanctity of life.

• Dr Carron Zinman is a pulmonologist at the Linksfeld Clinic.

Back to school – what to expect?

TALI FEINBERG

As Jewish schools across the country begin the year amidst a second wave of COVID-19 and a new variant of the virus, educators are confident that they can overcome the challenges that lie ahead.

Meanwhile, parents are divided over the delayed start of the academic year.

“While the new strain of COVID-19 does appear to affect young people, our clinical advisors have indicated that the interventions needed to prevent the spread are identical to that of the first strain. Mask wearing, social distancing, and hand sanitising are equally effective in curtailing this new strain,” says Rabbi Ricky Seeff, the general director of the South African Board of Jewish Education, which oversees King David Schools.

“As such, aside from being very vigilant in adhering to these protocols, the schools will rely heavily on families to remain at home if they present with any symptoms and not take chances,” he says. “This second wave has spread primarily through social events. We can have a successful school year if we stay vigilant under all circumstances.”

Regarding online learning, he believes “it’s very effective in delivering curriculum to students, however, this can be more difficult in the pre-primary schools. The challenge with online learning is not the delivery of content, although there is always room for growth. The challenge is creating and sustaining meaningful relationships and connection with pupils, and creating opportunities for socialisation, which is a critical part of our schools.”

“We are blessed to have such a dedicated and professional complement of teachers,” he says. “They dedicated themselves in 2020, and improved throughout the year, and we are confident now in our ability not only to teach but also to use ways to engage with our pupils more effectively. Having said that, there is no replacement for face-to-face learning.”

Andries van Renssen, the executive director of United Herzlia Schools (UHS) in Cape Town, says, “The way the virus seems to spread and the preventative measures basically stayed the same. The only thing that changed is the fact that younger children seem to be affected much more



now, so our approach to prevent the spread needs to be extra vigilant.” Regarding online learning, he feels it was “hugely successful for those pupils who had access to devices and were old enough to manage it or had help”.

However, one parent says she is “outraged” that online or hybrid learning wasn’t mentioned as an option when the UHS leadership communicated with parents about delaying the start of the year to 19 January.

“This implied that the hybrid/online teaching isn’t an option anymore as a choice,” she says. She won’t be sending her children back to school on 19 January because she feels it’s unsafe.

Says Van Renssen, “We have learnt that face-to-face teaching is by far the best experience. Full online works well, but also creates tremendous challenges for many parents and especially younger pupils. A hybrid system is where the teachers have pupils in front of them and pupils at home who are trying to follow what goes on in the class via their computers. For that to be a good experience, specific hardware is needed. We did hybrid teaching towards the end of 2020 with limited success, and we will be doing that again at the start of this year. We are also looking at systems that can enhance the user-experience. It’s costly and not easy to get in place quickly, but we are working on it.”

“We will make the hybrid option available as best as we can, and support parents if they feel they don’t want to send their children to school yet.”

Says another parent, “I’m happy with the delay to 19 January. It gives more time for everyone to stay safe and be ready for the new year without

any glitches.

“I’m totally for kids going back to school 100%. Our children need social interaction, the mental stimulation of proper teaching, and physical activities. They had a very challenging year, and will most likely do a lot of catching up. I can see from my youngest who is going to Grade 2 that he has fallen behind. I’m not a teacher. I would much prefer my child to be taught by a professional. Plus working from home and trying to assist two young boys with online learning puts a lot of strain on family dynamics. Having said this, I’m fully aware of the nastiness of COVID-19, and would trust that our school provides all the necessary checks and personal protective equipment.”

Rebbitzin Natalie Altman, the director of kodesh and ethos at Yeshiva College, says in light of the new variant, “We are going to be even more vigilant knowing that the kids can get sick and ensuring the highest standard of COVID-19 protocols. We will be doing more spot checks and ensuring that teachers are even more vigilant.”

She believes that online learning was very successful last year, “however we learnt

that children with learning difficulties in general found Zoom very difficult. Almost all children had ‘Zoom fatigue’, even if they were strong academically. We also learnt that online learning requires a different pedagogical paradigm and approach, and we are in the process of giving our teachers training from experts in the field.

“There needs to be a strong balance between independent and live learning,” she says. “Flipped classrooms [students learning independently and the class becoming about analysing issues, debating further, and giving individual attention] is a much better way to teach online. We learnt how our teachers and students can be incredibly resilient and flexible. Necessity brought innovation.”

Says Rob Long, Yeshiva College’s director of academics, “We also learnt the importance of ongoing student evaluation and continuous staff development.”

Aimee Chiat, the principal of Salisbury House, a new progressive Jewish school in Cape Town, says “Since we’re a small school and have less exposure because of it, we’re starting on 13 January. At the same time, with the new strain becoming more prevalent, it’s imperative that schools remain vigilant.”

Describing a number of safety measures at the school, she says, “Children emulate their parents’ actions. If a parent goes in public without a mask and complains about restrictions, so too will their children. It’s important for everyone to understand that this is a community problem.”

Looking ahead, Seeff says, “Educational institutions are being forced to re-evaluate our pedagogy, and when the dust settles from this terrible pandemic, I believe we will have gained tremendous skill and insight to better prepare our students for the future.”

US ambassador in ICU for 10 days

TALI FEINBERG

The United States of America’s ambassador to South Africa, Lana Marks, has described the frightening experience of contracting COVID-19 and landing up in the intensive-care unit (ICU) of a local hospital for 10 days. She spent another three days in the general COVID-19 unit, and is now at home, on the road to recovery.

In a statement released on 11 January 2021, she said, “I share with you my story in order to further de-stigmatise discussions around COVID-19. Only through sharing information about the virus can we understand how to prevent its spread and treat it.”

Talking about how medical professionals “had my life in their hands,” Marks said she “will forever be grateful for the excellent level of care that I received from the South African doctors and nurses who tended to me in the hospital”.

It all began on Boxing Day, 26 December 2020, when she started to experience fever, chills, a sore throat, and fatigue. “A family member simultaneously began to experience similar symptoms, and, though we had been vigilant about mask-wearing and social-distancing, suspecting that we had become infected with COVID-19, we immediately began to isolate at home. Prior to this, with our residence staff on holiday, we had been by ourselves for several days,” she wrote in the statement.

She started to experience shortness of breath and extreme weakness, and as her symptoms worsened, she was admitted to hospital like thousands of other South Africans fighting for their lives in the face of the virus.

“Upon the advice of our medical team at the United

States Embassy, I was admitted to seek supplemental oxygen and therapeutic treatment. Shortly after admission on 28 December, I was moved to the ICU, where I remained for 10 days before spending three more days in the COVID-19 unit. Late last week, I was discharged and continue to receive care at home. My condition is improving, and the doctors are confident that I will eventually make a full recovery,” she wrote.

She described COVID-19 as a “tremendously serious and unpredictable illness. It has been the most physically debilitating thing I have ever experienced.” She noted that she is “just one of tens of thousands of COVID-19 patients that South Africa’s healthcare workers and hospitals have treated with the utmost professionalism, putting their own lives at risk in order to practice their calling. Having seen them on the frontlines of this battle

for nearly a year, I will always remember their heroism and dedication and all that they sacrifice and risk as they fight this dangerous illness on behalf of their countrymen.”

Her message is to ask people to maintain the non-pharmaceutical interventions that are the only weapons we have in the war against COVID-19. “Wash your hands, maintain physical distance, wear your masks, and abide by the rules of lockdown. These regulations are in place to save lives and to keep hospitals available for those who truly need it. I’m fortunate to have had a bed and a medical team available for me in my time of need. We must all do our utmost to give that same opportunity to those who need it.”



Photo: Ilean Oseff/SAJ

Lana Marks

Operational & Fundraising Director:

United Jewish Campaign (UJC), Cape Town



OUR COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

The UJC ensures the well-being, sustainability and progression of the Cape Town Jewish community through various philanthropic, community development and fundraising initiatives for over 30 communal organisations.

They are looking for a strategic and community-driven individual to oversee the overall day-to-day management of their team, building and sustaining effective relationships with their donors and ensuring ongoing performance to strategic objectives.

- **Location:** Gardens, Cape Town
- **Reporting to:** Executive Director
- **Hours of work:** Full time (negotiable)
- **Salary:** Market-related and competitive salary (commensurate with skill and experience)
- **Benefits:** contribution towards pension and medical aid, all Jewish holidays off, parking, performance-based 13th Cheque.

Interested?

Email Loren Kolevsohn for an application: loren@ctjc.co.za

Closing date for applications: 26th January 2021

If you have not been contacted within 2 weeks of submitting your application, kindly consider your application to have been unsuccessful

STAFFWISE
EMPLOYMENT · CONNECTIVITY · CONTINUITY

From Cape Town to Cairo to the Knesset...briefly

TALI FEINBERG

As Ruth Wasserman Lande was sworn in as Israel's newest member of the Knesset (MK) on Monday 11 January, it was the culmination of a long journey from growing up in Cape Town, where she attended Herzlia School.

However, just 48 hours after being sworn in, she was forced out of the role when former science and technology minister Izhar Shay of the Telem party returned to the Knesset as part of the so-called Norwegian Law, according to the *Jerusalem Post*. She said that while she was extremely disappointed, "there is certainly more than a chance" that she would be back in the Knesset at some point.

She has served as an advisor to late Israeli President Shimon Peres, been a deputy ambassador at the Israeli Embassy in Cairo, and the deputy director-general for international affairs at the Israeli Federation of Local Authorities, but in her inaugural address, she looked back on her formative years as a vital part of what brought her to that point.

Born in Israel, she came to South Africa when she was eight years old, and made aliyah at the age of 17.

"Growing up in Ashdod, I played with children of all backgrounds. So it was strange when I came to South Africa and saw children playing separately under apartheid. It definitely had an impact on my identity."

In addition, her education at Herzlia was an important part of her becoming the diplomat she is today. "Herzlia is an amazing institution, value-orientation is a characteristic of the school. It definitely influenced me, as did the Jewish community in Cape Town in general. It made me realise the importance of having a viable Jewish community in the diaspora, which I feel is key to the continuation and resilience of Jewish peoplehood."

"I joined the Blue and White party at the request of its chairperson, Benny Gantz, particularly on the basis of its inclusion of Israeli minorities, particularly Arab minorities. This connects to the work I have been doing for the past two decades, which is to integrate all citizens into mainstream Israeli society," she



Ruth Wasserman Lande giving her inauguration speech at the Knesset on Monday 11 January 2021

explains.

Looking back, she describes how, straight after her training as a diplomat, she asked to serve in Cairo. "My superiors were surprised, but I felt there was no better way to serve my country than to represent Israel in Egypt, which has a very important peace agreement with Israel but no normalisation between people. As a young, Jewish, Ashkenazi woman, I felt I could help in that context."

In preparation, she spent eight

hours a day learning Arabic with two private teachers, and she still speaks it fluently today. As MK, she hoped to focus on "the greatest issues in the Arab sector: a tremendous rise in violence and crime. It requires multiple ministerial attention. Police, legislation, an education – formal and informal. There has been much research, but now it needs to be implemented and budgeted. It's a huge problem that I'm passionate about. As a small country, it affects Israel's internal dynamics. Integration of minorities and strengthening people-to-people relationships is a vital part of it. This is my passion, and I will continue to work towards it."

This work extends to engaging intensively with Israel's minorities as a way to make it a more integrated society. "To my mind, the picture is clear: 22% of Israel's population isn't Jewish. They are citizens, and we need to aspire to the concept of *tikkun olam*, respect for the other. Working towards cohesion will make our country more viable, more progressive, more successful, and more prosperous. It's not easy and not clear cut, but it needs to be done to make Israel even better than it already is."

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she feels that peace is crucial for Israel's well-being. "Ramban would say we need to make peace not only with our neighbours, but with ourselves. Rashi would say without peace, there is nothing. We don't need to be naïve, close our eyes, or turn our backs. But we need to leave no stone unturned to try to make it happen. This isn't out of naivety. It's challenging, without a doubt. But look, we didn't believe in the possibility of something like the Abraham Accords two or three years ago. We thought it was a naïve dream. And now here we are. It's astounding."

She is at almost at a loss for words at how excited she is about the Accords. "It's amazing and hugely strategically important. It's like the Berlin Wall has fallen, and now even

more countries will follow."

She has already travelled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where she celebrated the agreement on the rooftop of the Emirates Towers Hotel in Dubai. "Shiri Maimon's beautiful voice singing *Hallelujah* in Hebrew on this rooftop is the epitome of this burgeoning peace," she wrote on Facebook. She also attended the Gitex Conference in Dubai, which she says was "an amazing platform for co-operation, innovation, and technology", and met the Canadian ambassador to the UAE, Marcy Grossman.

Writing about her time in Dubai on Facebook, she described how she "experienced, breathed, smelled, and tasted from the scents and flavours of the magical desert and Gulf. More than anything, I was enthralled with every meeting with people from different nationalities with whom we, as Israelis, had almost no contact in the past. The complete security I felt while walking its streets was remarkable."

"Flying over Saudi Arabia, my heart stopped as I saw that our Israeli aircraft was permitted entry into Saudi airspace ... astounding! Meeting journalists, investors, businesspeople, and entrepreneurs – both Emirati and foreign – was a truly unforgettable learning experience for me."

While she served as advisor to late Israeli President Shimon Peres, she emphasises that, "Peres was actually my advisor in all respects! I learnt so much from him. He taught himself languages and had huge knowledge. He was a remarkable leader and visionary."

She believes Israel is "the sanctuary of the Jewish people throughout the world", but she also emphasises the importance of a strong diaspora. To the South African Jewish community, she says, "Be strong and resilient. You have a very important role to play in the continuation of the Jewish people. I am very proud to come from such a community."

Farewell to an architectural giant

TRIBUTE

IRWIN MANOIM AND MELINDA SILVERMAN

Historians of South African architecture divide their field into two periods: BC and AC. BC is "before Chipkin". AC is "after Chipkin".

Clive Michael Chipkin was a major intellectual force in reshaping how South African architects thought about their practice, in particular their roles during apartheid.

Chipkin died last Sunday aged 91. After seeming to have won a brave, month-long battle against COVID-19, he died of a heart attack a few days after returning home, surrounded by his family.

His most famous moment was at the beginning of his career: designing the layout for the legendary Congress of the People at Kliptown in 1955, where the Freedom Charter was signed. Chipkin had only just graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), and was working for architect and anti-apartheid activist Rusty Bernstein, who charged him with turning a dusty soccer field alongside a railway line into a venue suitable for a mass gathering. Chipkin would later write, "In retrospect, the most momentous project of my career turned out to be the gum-pole and hessian single-seater privies at the Congress of the People."

Chipkin grew up in Yeoville, Johannesburg, during the depression era, and attended the nearby King Edward VII School before entering Wits to study architecture. In the late 1950s, he went to London, working first as a teacher, then as an architect in the huge social housing department of London's city council. He returned to South Africa via a visit to India at a time when Le Corbusier's grand post-independence vision was being constructed.

Aged only 30, he set up his own firm, Clive Chipkin Architects, in 1958. A small practice with never more than two or three associates, it took on assignments Chipkin felt had integrity. He described his design philosophy as "modern vernacular", mainly based on brickwork. He decried fussiness and believed in expressing directly the materials he employed.

But his real influence was as a thinker. He wrote two seminal books, *Johannesburg Style: Architecture and Society 1880s – 1960s* (1993) and *Johannesburg Transition: Architecture and Society from 1950* (2008), as well as more than 50 essays on South African architecture.

The paradigm change he brought was to view South African architecture not simply as a list of buildings and their dates and styles, but located within their social milieu. His beautifully written essays located the development of cities, building

projects, and property speculation within local and global trends: the movement of gold prices on the London Stock Exchange, pronouncements by National Party ministers, and even trends within jazz and the arts. His were also the first architectural history books to pay equal attention to the skyscrapers of Johannesburg and the impoverished matchbox houses of Soweto, and how both were intertwined products of the same social system.

He was a frequent critic of fellow practitioners who built the segregated institutions of apartheid, and he refused all work for government, provincial, or municipal



Clive Chipkin

institutions. In 1986, he was a founding member of the pressure group Architects Against Apartheid, who challenged their colleagues to support radical changes to the Architects Act of 1970 and the Code of Conduct of the Institute of South African Architects.

He was awarded an honorary doctorate in architecture from Wits. The citation noted that "no other work on the subject of Johannesburg's architecture comes close to matching Chipkin's reach across so many disciplines ... his breadth of scholarship is such that he enables the reader to see the city and its buildings with a fresh understanding".

Charming, modest, and kindly, always with a wicked twinkle in his eyes, Chipkin remained fit and intellectually engaged into his 90s, walking briskly and without help, with the energy of a far younger man. He was married to the late Valerie Chipkin, a patient supporter of her husband's less-than-lucrative career, and whose expressionist art works adorned the walls of their much-admired home in Craighall Park. He is survived by children Peter and Ivor Chipkin and Lesley Hudson, by five grandchildren and one great-grandchild, and by his companion in his last years, Professor Marcia Leveson.

Criticism for second shul shutdown in 10 months

>>Continued from page 4

posed by COVID-19".

"Last year, when South Africa moved to level three, and religious gatherings were permitted, there was no justification whatsoever for keeping shuls officially closed. One need not be an epidemiologist to know that simple mechanisms can be put in place to ensure people's safety.

"There is no medical reason – and certainly no religious reason – to suspend *minyanim*. That decision was motivated by fear and ignorance rather than prudence."

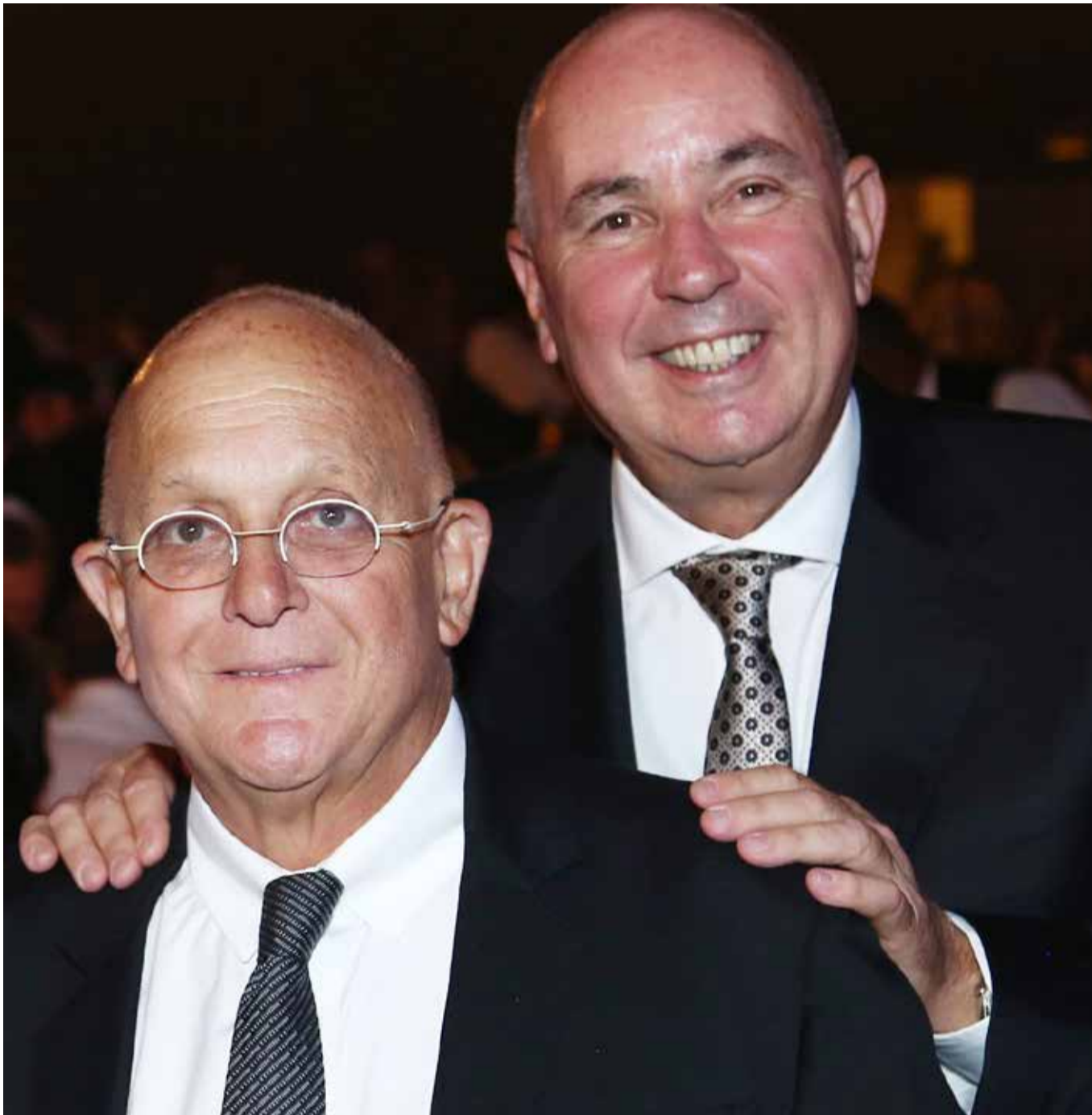
He was equally critical of the government's latest announcement, saying that it made no sense to ban religious gatherings while keeping other facilities open.

"It doesn't take a genius to realise that there is no rhyme or reason to this," he concluded. "Whether the government's move is a deliberate attack on religion or simply another instance of ANC [African National Congress] stupidity and incompetence is immaterial. We will continue to daven in a *minyan*."

— IN H O N O U R O F —

NORMAN STEIN

NOCHUM BINYAMIN BEN MICHAEL ע"ה



Norman Stein passed away on Shabbat 11 Tevet 5781 corresponding to
26th December 2020.

He was a dear friend, dedicated volunteer and a loyal and generous
supporter of the Chevrah Kadisha who truly loved the organisation.

He will be deeply missed by his loving family and all his friends at the Chev.

MAY HIS MEMORY BE A BLESSING

I will never forget

PERSONAL STORY

DALYA ABROMOWITZ



It was a hot summer evening on 6 December when I felt the first chill. Surely it wasn't COVID-19? My husband and parents had it two months earlier, and surely the combination of close contact with them and my short, mild symptoms, albeit me testing negative at the time, meant that I was already exposed?

Well, 39+ degree relentless temperatures and two days of agony later, I landed up at Netcare's Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital's casualty unit, having just received my positive COVID-19 result.

Not even allowed to walk me in, my husband had to watch his wife and the mother of his two young kids – the youngest 16 months old – shivering and hunched over in pain, enter the "red COVID zone" triage shipping container. I didn't look back.

I was classified "yellow" – my sats (oxygen saturation levels) were in the mid-90s – so my wait in casualty was only a few hours long. Every casualty bed was full. The on-call doctor and nurses were fluttering between patients. This was early December, before the height of the second wave, before the festive season, and before hospitals were officially declared full.

According to the second physician who looked after me – the first tested positive for COVID-19 on my second day – COVID-19 can attack almost anything in the body. And although the lungs are ground zero, it can reach many organs. For me, it started with kidneys, head, sinus, chest, and finally lungs.

Just about everyone in the ward, including me, had COVID-19 pneumonia and was on oxygen. Why would it have such a devastating impact on a 30-year-old who has never had health issues, never smoked, whose lungs have conquered many cycle tours, dancing and sporting events, including the ironman 70.3, whose lungs have never known pneumonia or never had difficulty breathing?

Doctors, if you were lucky to see them every day, had long lists of patients, and if you weren't in intensive care, you were fortunate to get a five-minute slot with them before 17:00. The ward I was in had capacity for 12, but had 20 patients.

Nurses, kitchen staff, and doctors were sweating behind their heavy PPE (personal protective equipment) and they were probably dehydrated and in need of a break.

On my fifth night in hospital, I recognised a nurse from the maternity ward from a year and a half earlier. She had moved into the COVID-19 ward that day because they needed extra hands. This was her first time wearing heavy PPE. She was feeling vulnerable, and was worried about getting COVID-19. If things took a bad turn, who would look after her child? We spoke. We cried.

I will never forget the reshuffling of beds and rooms to make space for more patients and to adequately "team" up those of similar prognoses.

The switchboard phone was ringing off the hook to find space in our ward for admissions from ICU, from casualty, and from the "non-COVID" ward.

I moved rooms once, and I had three different roommates during my stay, all of whom had a profound impact on me. The emergency buzzers sounded constantly. I tried not to press mine too often for fear that a nurse would attend to me over someone who couldn't breathe. Except for one night...

On night three in hospital, things took a turn for the worse. The medication through the IV drip didn't work to drop my fever or ease my intense body pain, so after no response to the emergency buzzer, I found myself throwing up on the floor next to the bed.

My chest had started to close and I couldn't get air in. I felt overwhelmed by pain, panic, sadness, and loneliness, and it was at this moment that I wasn't sure I was going to make it.

When eventually I was given more drugs after a nurse came to assist and had a piece of toast that tasted like cardboard, I was inspired by non-other than my roommate at the time, a

38-year-old cancer patient who got COVID-19 during her third round of chemotherapy. She told me that since her diagnosis three months earlier, she had turned to G-d for healing and light. She was at peace with the fact that he had a path for her, and she trusted him with this path. We spoke for many hours about faith, the meaning of life, and appreciating what we have.

I decided, via WhatsApp, to give my husband and my parents all my passwords, instructions, and documents to make things swifter in the event that I didn't go home.

That night, I thought about how devastated my parents, husband, and children would be. I thought about my brother, whose wedding I wouldn't be able to witness. I thought about my close friends, my special cousins, and my work colleagues, all of whom would struggle with me being gone, let alone

reel over the premature loss of a young person.

I didn't think about the aspirations that I hadn't fulfilled, I thought about the people I would leave behind.

My husband collected me from the shipping container eight days later. Sadly, not everybody was that lucky.

I will never forget,

The fireball that was trying to escape through my head and sinus, a burning that I've never felt before,

The 40-degree temperatures that made me shake and shiver until my jaw locked.

The back pain, from my kidneys, that felt like two balloons were going to pop under my rib cage.

The night that I couldn't breathe while I was throwing up next to my hospital bed, and proceeded to give my family my passwords and my will.

The constant sound of emergency buzzers and loud coughing escalating through the nights.

The lady named Mrs A who literally flew out of ICU after the man opposite her died. She spent a night in my room with me, and we spoke most of the evening.

The sweat on the forehead of the nurses and doctors, their tired but determined eyes, their thick and heavy PPE, their stories.

The dread of the anti-clot injections, the blood tests, steroids, change in drips, arterial vein draws, scans, x-rays, sats ... did I say sats ... all day, every day, for eight days.

Waking up at 03:00 on my first night back from hospital, trying to reach for oxygen in a panic, only to realise that I was in my own bed, and I... Could... Breathe.

My first breath of air outside the hospital in eight days, the sun on my skin, the wrap that I ate in the car on the way home, the first hug I got from my girls.

The seventh night of Chanukah that I spent at home in 2020 with my family by my side, a fridge and freezer full of food, feeling so, so, so blessed.

COVID-19, I'm not sure why you came into my family multiple times this year, why you gave these healthy, fit, 30-year-young lungs pneumonia, and made me very, very sick. What I do know is that I'm going to take this gift of life and do great things with it.

• *Dalya Abromowitz is an investment analyst and mother of two based in Cape Town.*

I survived COVID-19 twice

PERSONAL STORY

NICOLA DATE



I'm Nicola Date, a 32-year-old arts manager, comedian, and costume designer, mother, and two-time COVID-19 survivor. I have had a rare behind-the-scenes glimpse through hospitalisation.

When COVID-19 hit South Africa, it felt like a fictional character, but I soon realised the gravity of what was ahead of us. In April, I started trying my best to avoid this horrible illness.

I was fit then. Running brought me immense joy, and grocery shopping was my only other

albeit a broken one.

I developed post-COVID-19 fatigue, and it took me three months until I was somewhat myself again. I started to jog again, and I was slowly rebuilding my fitness levels.

The COVID-19 numbers were decreasing, and everything felt bright again. I was finally able to do some work in the arts. I think many of us believed the end was in sight and COVID-19 would die with 2020.

At the beginning of December, I developed flu-like symptoms and went to the doctor thinking that I had something mild, but to my surprise, she sent me for a COVID-19 test. Once again and five months later, the test was confirmed positive. The moment I got the results, I panicked, and post-traumatic stress disorder kicked in. I began to remember the trauma of my first COVID-19 experience. Little did I know what was about to hit me.

With my second bout of COVID-19, my oxygen levels were stable, but the pain was worse than anything I had ever experienced. My body felt like a mess, I was bleeding, and I could hardly walk or talk. I felt like my body was running at 10% capacity; a shell of my former self.

An ambulance was eventually called, and the next challenge was to find a hospital bed. After about 30 minutes, they found a bed at Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital in town. By the time I got there, the bed was gone, and the process continued for what felt like an eternity, before they found me a bed at Cape Town Mediclinic.

The medical unit was completely full, and the nurses told me they had about 20 patients to tend to. In my two days of hospitalisation, three people left my room and were replaced. One went home, and two went to the intensive care unit (ICU). The nurses had to wear their uniform, an apron, a mask, a shield, and also had to scrub up and then down, every time they entered our room.

These incredible, overworked, exhausted, and boiling hot humans were so kind, patient, under immense pressure, and yet did their job with a smile. Everyone in the unit was somewhat critical, and it wasn't even an ICU. You need to be extremely sick to be hospitalised for COVID-19.

Once I was stabilised, I was sent home to recover, making room for the next person who needed a bed. Being in hospital without visitors was a wild experience. There were no friends and family members to take you to the loo or help you wash, the nurses being responsible for it all.

I'm once again suffering from post-COVID-19 fatigue with brain fog, a lingering headache, and my body is stripped of vitamins, for which I'm being supplemented. I'm totally burnt out, but on the road to recovery.

During my recovery process, I sadly lost a close cousin who had been on a ventilator for a month and the adults in my family had to experience the trauma of a COVID-19 funeral. For my precious daughter, the evil and scary illness that she learnt about at school is a big part of her reality.

Please stay safe, and try to socialise only outside and untouched. Parties aren't worth it. Alcohol isn't worth it as the hospitals are full and it causes you to let your guard down. We will get through this only if we are safe and vigilant. I urge you.

• *Nicola Date is a Cape Town based designer, comic, theatre entrepreneur, wife and mother to a six-year-old girl.*



A nurse donning PPE

activity. In June 2020, I developed the worst headache of my life, this coming from someone who has suffered from migraines for most of it.

Soon after, I could no longer taste or smell, I became lethargic, had aches and pains, a sore chest, and a low-grade fever. It was time to go to the doctor.

When I arrived at the doctor's rooms, the nurses gave me a COVID-19 form, and I ticked every box. I was immediately sent to sit in the isolation waiting room before being sent for a COVID-19 test. When filling out my contact form, I was thankful that I had seen only members of my household, but I also had to put my local Spar and my daughter's school as contacts.

While waiting for the results, I began to get sicker and sicker. I could feel my breath entering my body with great difficulty.

I tested positive. The government sent me an SMS to stay in quarantine, and my doctor called me with the news. I was told to stay indoors, take vitamins B, D, and C, and paracetamol (anything stronger can cause clotting in a COVID-19 patient) and to call an ambulance if I could no longer breathe. Eventually, I got so sick that I could barely walk, talk, or watch TV as my brain was foggy and I couldn't handle stimulation.

I cannot thank the Community Security Organisation's Assist program enough for supporting me throughout my journey, and guiding me in moments of oxygen loss. I know that not all South Africans have had this privilege, and I can't begin to imagine the fear of facing this alone, without solid support. I can't imagine going to a testing station, getting a government SMS, and then having to experience COVID-19 without having the money to buy the required tools and medication.

Eventually I came out the other side. I could watch TV, and began to feel like a human again,

I never get sick ... until COVID-19

PERSONAL STORY

HEDDA BAXTER



I'm hardy, I'm a traveller. I climb mountains and hike for weeks in remote forests. I never get sick.

But I did.

2020 what have you done? My dog, my partner John, and I bunkered down for eight months for you. We had a UCOOK farmers box delivered every week. We, the "egg on toast is okay" kind of couple, cooked with strange new ingredients. We laughed and ate and cuddled, blissful in our isolation, in love with the new pace ... the silent nights, the slow mornings.

Re-calibrated, re-evaluated, revised priorities. We saw no one, insular and safe. And the curve flattened. I hankered for the wild, we headed out in November for a road trip, just a small one mind, paragliding, hiking my beautiful mountains, surfing the wild waves. Ecstatic to be free to roam in the sunshine.

Home, excited and exhilarated. Feeling tired and with a stomach bug. No worries, it will pass in 24 hours.

My friend Kath has COVID-19. We chat on WhatsApp, swap stories, giggle at the photo of her husband in a boiler suit and shield handing her a toastie with the extra length braai tongs. The next day, she's in intensive care.

My body aching (from the hiking no doubt). Nauseated and endless diarrhoea. John is fine, off to the doctor for a routine visit, jokingly says, "I have a slight cough, maybe I have COVID-19." Hazmat suit on, red alert, doctor furious, takes the swab. He's positive. Two days later, I test positive. Not possible! We were so careful. Not us, no! We did everything we could, we didn't see our children, we never went out, we practically bathed in sanitiser, sterilised our masks, washed our hands.

Now my head is caving in, this isn't happening. I can't stand up, I can't get out of bed, I want to vomit. I want to run away, I want to die. I feel like

I'm in a Thai jail, the rats are crawling over me, people are stepping over me. I'm lying in a passage, no one sees me. I'm crying, I'm dying. I've been poisoned, no one knows I'm there. I am in a foul mess, my breath stinks, I can't breathe. My head is being kicked in. I'm crying, and no one sees me. I can't lift my arms. The meds are toxic, I stop taking them, I can't have any more poison. My body is liquifying, can't move. My body is dissolving. I'm terrified.

My friend Kath is now in a coma on a ventilator. John wants to take me to hospital. I won't go - I'll never come back. I promise if the oxygen level falls below 90, I'll go.

The angels from the Community Security Organisation supplied us with information, oximeters, and thermometers. The sweetest, kindest voice calls me every day, forces me to do the readings. My temperature never went over 40, and my oxygen never fell below 90.

I stayed home, crawled from my bedroom to the bathroom, slept and slept and slept, every day slightly better. Curtains closed, light too bright. Seeing flashes of neon purple, coral shapes. Best to keep still, eyes shut tight. Apartment looks strange, nothing is in focus, a zombie like voodoo land. Very scared. Everything is very slow.

Kath died. My friend Kath is dead. I'm alive. I'm shattered and heartbroken.

The miasma is lifting, I can drink a cup of tea. Suggest we order some soup. John orders from Woolies and presents me with my favourite kale and broccoli soup. It's green. I can't swallow green, it's bile, more poison. I cry, he has tried so hard, and I just go back to bed, sobbing. Fearful, fragile, and sad.

Every day pretty now much the same, sleep, wander around the apartment, feeling stronger. Vault forward to day 16, and

I'm skinny. Never been skinny! Head isn't clear and I'm forgetting things. Mid-sentence, I clam up, cannot fathom where the conversation is going.

I find myself in the kitchen with a knife in hand not knowing why. Load the tumble drier and never switch it on, smelly mouldy wet washing in there for days. I lock my phone and have no idea of the password, no idea at all, it's my son's birthday; same password for decades.

First day out, and I'm brave. Leave the building with some trepidation, but I'm good, I'm strong. Walk around the block and the neon purple shapes appear on the pavement, I try and sidestep them, but they are always there, bouncing along in front of me. It's unnerving. People coming towards me and I panic, I'm going to infect them, I'm going to kill them - what am I doing out here? I must get home as fast as possible, I'm a killer.

In a state, I can't breathe, anxious. Hands are shaking, and I don't know what to do. They are coming, I'm paralysed, trembling, and crying. A lovely lady stops and empties her shopping bag and I breathe into the packet, in and out. She leaves me there.

Out of isolation now for three weeks, and I'm back on the mountain with my dog. I'm happy and safe there. The streets scare me, I still have irrational fears, forgetfulness, and anxiety.

It will pass.

• Hedda Baxter is the mother of two grown-up children and lives in Cape Town.

Choosing the end to their love story

PERSONAL STORY

LEE-ANNE SINGER



COVID-19 has taken many community stalwarts in the past few weeks. Just two are my in-laws Barney and Esther Singer, who celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on 27 December 2020. It was the last *simcha* they would spend together.

They passed away five days apart - Barney on 31 December 2020 and Esther on 5 January 2021.

Barney, a chartered accountant, was a travel industry stalwart and a fierce Zionist who won numerous awards here and in Israel. Amongst his many achievements, he was life vice-chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation Cape Council, he won the prestigious Jerusalem Award, the Yakir Award, and the Colleagues of Virilist Award, awarded by the World Zionist Congress.

Born in Keetmanshoop in Namibia, he was also a staunch socialist who actively participated in the fight against apartheid and its injustices. I have on occasion met political leaders who tell stories of secret, late-night meetings, and Barney's levelheadedness, kindness, and insistence on fairness.

We've all heard the "Jewish moms and their sons" jokes. And then there's the standard mom and daughter-in-law quips. Add an Afrikaans girlfriend and a last-born son to the mix, well, needless to say, I was slightly apprehensive when I was invited to Shabbat dinner at Esther and Barney the first time.

But, whether it was the covert training by her sisters, the fact that she could see I was smitten with her son, or simply that she and I complemented each other so well, Esther made me part of the family from that moment on.

Twenty years have passed, and we've shared only love, warmth, generosity, and the mildly obsessive belief that if there's music, there has to be dancing.

A few years ago, we decided to keep our parents living comfortably in their apartment in Sea Point at the sunset stage

of their lives. It had been their home for the past 27 years. Esther and Barney had in-home carers who looked after them lovingly. We were extremely strict about visitors, and tried our best to keep them safe. They were both well and healthy for their ages - Barney was 97 and Esther was 92.

It's likely that during a change of shift, the virus entered their space. When the carer started showing symptoms, we brought in new staff and monitored Esther and Barney's health carefully. We were astounded that after a couple of days, they weren't showing any symptoms. In fact, we

Due to the fact that Esther was COVID-positive, she was unable to attend the funeral. She sat in the car at the cemetery, masked, with her windows closed, as we buried her life partner.

It was during this time that Esther started showing mild symptoms. With expert advice from friends, her doctors, and the care of her children, we managed to keep her stable at home. We joked that we ran a very effective in-home intensive-care unit.

Perhaps the realisation of the passing of her beloved Barney and the thought of living without him increased the impact of the disease on her body, and we made a decision to call the CSO, which sent a Netcare ambulance. When it arrived, they suggested that she be admitted as the oxygen levels in her blood were dropping.

Again, there was concern about the availability of hospital beds, and again, with the help of friends and our doctors, she was admitted to Cape Town Mediclinic. She spent the first night there, and medical staff were pleased with how well she responded.

On her second evening there, we called her to say goodnight, she sounded strong and said she was waiting for her tea. When we received the dreaded call 45 minutes later, it came as a terrible shock. We were expecting her to pull through. Perhaps the thought of spending her remaining days without Barney was too much to bear. Esther was buried next to her beloved the following day.

Barney and Esther are survived by their children Leon, Jill, and Brian, and their families, including five grandchildren. Ultimately, they chose the ending to their love story. They were inseparable in life and now in death. We find peace and grace in the Igbo quote, "When death finds you, may it find you alive."

• Lee-Anne Singer is marketing director at the Singer Group



The late Barney and Esther Singer surrounded by their children and grandchildren

used the words "dodged a bullet".

A few days later, on 29 December, Esther's birthday, we popped in to say hello, and noticed that Barney was lethargic, feverish, and his breathing was shallow. After a few hours, we called the Community Security Organisation (CSO), which arrived within minutes. After giving him oxygen, they suggested that he go to hospital.

An ambulance arrived shortly, it drove around to various hospitals which diverted them as they were full. They managed to secure a bed for Barney at Somerset Hospital, where they stabilised him and took good care of him. Sadly, his body wasn't strong enough to fight the virus, and he passed away after two days. It was heartbreaking to tell Esther that her partner of 65 years had died two days after her birthday.

Barney's funeral took place the next day.

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Jewish groups turn on Trump

RON KAMPEAS – JTA

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) hardly ever pronounces on any issue that doesn't relate to Israel. It's also loath to criticise a sitting president.

But the preeminent pro-Israel lobby did both last Wednesday, after rioters supporting President Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol to stop the count of electoral votes that would formalise Joe Biden's win.

"We share the anger of our fellow Americans over the attack at the Capitol, and condemn the assault on our democratic values and process," AIPAC said in a statement posted to Twitter. "This violence, and President Trump's incitement of it, is outrageous and must end."

The statement, crafted during an emergency meeting of the lobby's executive committee, was among a host of extraordinary comments on American democracy by Jewish groups, many of which typically steer clear of partisan politics.

AIPAC wasn't the only mainstream Jewish organisation to speak out on an extraordinary day that resulted in what once was unthinkable: police spiriting into safe havens hundreds of legislators while marauders roamed and looted the Capitol. Trump invited protesters to Washington DC, and earlier on the day, urged them to march on the Capitol. As the situation grew tense, he simultaneously urged his supporters to disband and told them that he "loved them".

The Anti-Defamation League also named Trump. "The violence at the US Capitol is the result of disinformation from our highest office," it said in a tweet. "Extremists are among the rioters in DC supporting President Trump's reckless rhetoric on America's democratic institutions." ADL chief executive Jonathan Greenblatt called on social

media to suspend Trump's accounts and a number of platforms eventually heeded those calls.

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the umbrella body for Jewish public policy bodies, also named Trump. "This was a direct assault on our democratic process, and nothing less than an attempt to disrupt the peaceful transition of power in a presidential election and an act of sedition," it said. Two legacy groups were cautious and condemned the violence while not directly blaming Trump. The American Jewish Committee called on Trump "to call for an immediate end to the riots and respect the certification process currently underway", without

order must be restored, and the peaceful transition of administrations must continue."

B'nai B'rith International "strongly urged" Trump "to publicly condemn the rioters". Ronald Lauder, the president of the World Jewish Congress, called the attack on the Capitol a "brutal onslaught on our nation's integrity and historical traditions".

The Orthodox Union weighed in at first by endorsing the presidents' conference statement, but on 7 January, issued a statement pointedly aimed at Trump with a tone of relief at the prospect of Trump's term ending. "There is no place for the kind of outrageous incitement that fed that assault on the

Cohen said. "It's the true house of the people and the home of democracy. It's the hope of the nation. You feel it when entering its doors and walking its halls. Today, it was a place of shameful violence and tyranny. Stop or we are lost."

The Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly called on Trump "to defend and uphold the constitution of the United States", but did not blame him for what it called an "attack on democracy and its institutions".

The Reform movement's Religious Action Center was less shy, saying, "The fact that today's events were encouraged by the president of the United States who has refused to accept his electoral loss is equally terrifying and heartbreaking."

J Street, the liberal Jewish Middle East policy group, said, "The president repeatedly incited far-right thugs to subvert our democracy, and now they're trying to do just that."

Morton Klein, the president of the Zionist Organization of America, a group known for its support for Trump's Israel policies, said on Twitter that the marauding in the Capitol was "thoroughly unacceptable and intolerable" but went on to cite an unsubstantiated report that a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent reported a claim that a busload of the marauders belonged to Antifa, a catchall term for leftist protesters.

The Republican Jewish Coalition last Thursday morning congratulated Biden on winning the election, and in its statement included a plea for a peaceful transition to power.

The statement made no mention of Trump. The Jewish Democratic Council of America was scathing. "President Trump has abused his power, endangered American lives, and undermined our democratic institutions," it said.



Riot police push back a crowd of supporters of United States President Donald Trump after they stormed the Capitol building in Washington DC on 6 January 2021

noting that Trump started the fire, as many others had, including some leading Republicans.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the umbrella foreign policy group for the Jewish community, didn't name Trump at all, although its statement was forceful. "We are disgusted by the violence at the US Capitol, and urge the rioters to disperse immediately," it said. "Law and

pillars of our democracy. It must stop," the statement said. "We call upon President Trump to do all that is in his power – and it is indeed in his power – to restore that peace."

Agudath Israel of America posted on Twitter a statement by its long-time Washington director, Rabbi Abba Cohen.

"The US Capitol is more than a majestic building,"

'Camp Auschwitz' just one of hate symbols on display at the Capitol

LAURA E. ADKINS AND EMILY BURACK – JTA

The sweatshirt, spotted amid the mob that stormed the United States Capitol, seemed designed to provoke fear.

"Camp Auschwitz", it read, along with the message, "Work brings freedom" – a rough translation of the message that greeted Jewish prisoners at the infamous Nazi concentration camp.

A photo of the man wearing the sweatshirt was just one of the images of hateful symbols that have circulated from the mob, whose violence led to four deaths and wreaked havoc on Congress. Confederate flags and nooses were among the overt hate signs that the insurrection brought into the Capitol.

Other slogans – on flags, clothing, or signs – were code for a gamut of conspiracy theories and extremist ideologies. Here's what you need to know about them.

QAnon slogans

Several members of the mob wore or carried signs invoking the pro-Donald Trump QAnon conspiracy theory, which is laced with antisemitism. QAnon, which began in 2017 and has gained millions of adherents, falsely alleges that an elite cabal of paedophiles, run by Democrats, is plotting to harvest the blood of children and take down Trump. Trump has praised the movement and espoused its baseless ideas.

Here are some of the QAnon symbols present in the Capitol last Wednesday.

"Q"

"Q" represents the purported high-ranking government official who shares inside information with QAnon followers through cryptic posts on fringe websites.

Trust the plan

As Q's supposed predictions have proven false over the years, including the election of Joe Biden, which Q predicted wouldn't happen, many QAnon followers became disillusioned. Others told them to "trust the plan", and place their faith in QAnon's theories.

Save the children

Messaging related to saving children is a core tenet of QAnon. In a photo, a woman is seen carrying a sign saying, "The children cry out for justice", referencing children who QAnon conspiracists falsely believe have been abducted by Democrats and progressives, including Jewish billionaire financier George Soros.

Neo-Nazis

Prominent Holocaust deniers and neo-Nazis were part of the Capitol mob. A far-right activist known as Baked Alaska livestreamed from inside House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office. Another extremist, Nick Fuentes, a white nationalist who leads the far-right Groyper Army, was said to be in the room with him. Fuentes denies this, but was outside the Capitol last Wednesday.

The Neo-Nazi group NSC-131 also joined the insurrection, according to reporter Hilary Sargent. NSC stands for Nationalist Social Club and has small regional chapters in the US and abroad. The 131 division is from New England.



A noose hung by pro-Trump insurgents, and a man wearing a "Camp Auschwitz" jacket

Confederate flags and nooses

Other flags on display were also associated with long histories of white supremacy. At least one protester carried a Confederate battle flag into the Capitol building. Meanwhile, nooses – a prominent symbol of racist violence – were placed outside.

In one instance, after members of the mob started destroying camera equipment from the Associated Press, they made a noose out of the cords, according to BuzzFeed News reporter Paul McLeod.

Anti-government militia symbols

Flags bearing the phrase "when tyranny becomes law, rebellion becomes duty" (a version of a quote dubiously attributed to Thomas Jefferson) and the Roman numeral III were also seen.

"III" is the logo of the Three Percenters, also known as the III% militia, an anti-government militia founded in response to the election of President Barack Obama. The ADL defines the Three Percenters as "extremists who are part of the militia movement".

Another symbol favoured by militias is a coiled snake above the phrase, "Don't Tread on Me", known as the Gadsden flag, which symbolises support for gun rights and individual liberties. The symbol, emblazoned on a flag, has been used as well by the Boogaloo Bois, a loose affiliate of anti-government militias.

The Oath Keepers, an anti-government group like the Three Percenters, according to the ADL, were in DC and at a similar protest in Arizona last week.

Proud Boys

Members of the Proud Boys, the violent far-right group that Trump told to "stand back and stand by" during a September presidential debate, wear black-and-yellow Fred Perry polo shirts along with red "Make America Great Again" caps.

Kek flags

"Kek", a phrase that has roots in online gaming, has taken on new meaning on the far-right. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Kek is the "deity" of the semi-ironic 'religion' the white nationalist movement has created for itself online". The word is used alongside the meme of Pepe the Frog, a cartoon character that has been appropriated as a mascot of white nationalists. The Kek flag resembles a Nazi war flag, with a Kek logo replacing the swastika and the colour green in place of red.

Crusader crosses

The shooter who committed the 2019 massacre at a New Zealand mosque appropriated symbols of the Crusades, and they've become popular with other far-right, ethnonationalist groups. The symbols, such as medieval-style helmets or Templar and crusader crosses, are meant to harken to an era of white, Christian wars against Muslims and Jews.

The Punisher

The Marvel comic anti-hero, The Punisher, has been adopted in recent years by white nationalists and neo-Nazis, to the dismay of its creator.

Intactivists

Anti-circumcision activists, also known as "intactivists" support banning all forms of circumcision. The intactivist movement often features anti-Jewish imagery. Last Wednesday's demonstration featured protesters carrying anti-circumcision signs reading "circumcision is the mark of the beast of satan" and "outlaw satan's circumcision".

Jewish student denies saving US ballot from mob

RON KAMPEAS – JTA

Brennan Leach wants you to know that the caption on the viral photo of her taken inside the United States Capitol building last Wednesday was wrong.

The Jewish college student wasn't rescuing the august leather boxes carrying the electoral votes that would let Congress certify Joe Biden's election from the mob of Trump supporters trying to stop that process. The photo was from earlier that morning, when she and other assistants brought the boxes into the US House of Representatives chamber, before the mob stormed the Capitol and drove legislators and staffers into hiding.

"It was a great honour and excitement, it was like a political-science nerd's dream come true," Leach told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency about being asked to partake in the ritual.

Leach, 19, is a student at Northwestern University majoring in political science who returned to the Capitol this week to assist with the certification process because the programme that usually supplies high school pages is suspended because of the pandemic. Someone snapped a picture of her at work last Wednesday morning, which morphed into a story of heroism

on social media that afternoon.

"Here are the women – Senate aides – who had the presence of mind and courage to transport and keep safe the electoral votes before fleeing the Senate," said @RaeMargaret61, a Twitter user whose posting garnered more than 360 000 likes by last Thursday evening. "There will always be

the door," she said.

"We can hear them outside. We're able to pull up social media and see literal pictures of people on the other side of the wall. We had Confederate flags in the back hallway, we had dozens and dozens of people pouring in through the Rotunda and so, you know, to see those images and know that



United States Senate staff carry boxes containing state Electoral College votes at the US Capitol on 6 January 2021. Brennan Leach, a Northwestern student whose photo went viral, is second from left, partially obscured.

Photo: Cheriss May/Getty Images

villains. There will always be heroes."

In an interview, Leach recounted her experience.

"The scariest part of all of this was just how quickly things escalated, and it went from one minute kind of looking out the window and laughing at like 'look at the crazy people outside' to all of a sudden we're locked in the chamber and people are banging on

kind of the only thing that stuck between us and them was the wall of the Senate chamber. It was an intimidating and, in a lot of ways, utterly terrifying moment."

Her terror was compounded when Leach realised that she had left her phone in the chamber. She soon found a way to reach her family and reassure them that she was secure. Her father, Daylin Leach, a Democrat who served

for years in both chambers of the Pennsylvania state legislature, couldn't contain his pride, posting the viral photo on his Twitter feed.

Brennan Leach said the experience cast the contributions that elected officials make for their constituents in a new light for her.

"It's moments like this where you're really kind of in the thick of the work that these people do and are forced to recognise how much they really put themselves at risk, how much they give for the work they do," she said.

Last Wednesday's photo wasn't the first time that Leach, who lives in suburban Philadelphia's Montgomery County, has landed in the spotlight. In October 2016, at a televised town hall in suburban Philadelphia, Leach asked then-Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton about the potential damage to young women being caused by then-Republican nominee Donald Trump's disparaging comments about women.

Clinton naturally appreciated the question, but soon Leach was in the middle of a political firestorm when she told a reporter that she had run the question by her father. Conservatives decried her as a plant, which she denied then and does now.

The elder Leach was outspoken as a legislator in calling out what he saw as antisemitism, and

centred his politics on *tikkun olam*, meaning "repair the world" that has become a rallying cry for American liberals. ("Donald Trump isn't a *tikkun olam* kind of guy", he said at the 2016 Democratic convention in Philadelphia. "He's more a destroy *olam* kind of guy.")

Brennan Leach said she didn't like to mix religion with politics, but as she worked and studied politics, her Jewishness was on her mind. She was proud to meet Jewish senators, she said.

"It's great to see Jewish leaders in the Senate," Leach said. (Chuck Schumer of New York is poised to become majority leader, the most senior position ever held by a Jewish person in US government.)

Leach said she wouldn't count out a career as an elected politician, but her sights were set elsewhere.

"My dream job is White House press secretary," she said, explaining that it combines both her academic disciplines, political science and communications, and also offers a kind of political might on its own. Last Wednesday's riot, which came after Trump told his supporters to move to the Capitol, made that painfully clear.

"Being press secretary" Leach said, "is the ultimate liaison between the president, who's obviously extremely consequential in their message, and the rest of the world, the press and public."

MOST SA JEWS (BOTH OF ASHKENAZI AND SEPHARDI HERITAGE) ARE ELIGIBLE TO REINSTATE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND, ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT.

A common misconception is that European citizenship and EU passports can only be obtained if one has documents providing his/her lineage. The fact is that not having any documents proving lineage, doesn't lead to disqualification of eligibility. Jews of Ashkenazi heritage can rely on documents obtained in Lithuania or Poland.

Jews of Sephardi heritage need no proof at all!

In his experience, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived, and therefore they are entitled to reinstate it, and accordingly obtain an EU passport.



Adv. Horesh has been operating in SA market with the Jewish community since March 2018. He arrives regularly to South Africa, and can meet in person with Jews who are interested to do so.

Ashkenazi: This ad refers to Jews of Polish & Lithuanian heritage only.

The most important thing is the understanding that prior to the end of WW-I, the European map was very different than the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania did not exist as independent countries, and until 1918 these territories were only known as Lithuanian or Polish regions/counties of the Great Russian Empire who ruled all of north eastern Europe. Accordingly, until 1918, residents of these territories were Russian citizens, as Polish and Lithuanian citizenships didn't exist. Therefore, since applications for reinstatement of these citizenships can only be based on whether one's ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen, whoever is a descendant of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 will not be eligible.

In addition, it is highly important to remember that since borders in Europe were shifted once again during and after WW-II, one's eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor hailed. Horesh explains: Shifted borders resulted in cities changing nationalities, and that the resultant effect for descendants of Jews left Vilnius is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined whereas a similar



Adv. Avi Horesh is an Israeli attorney, who lived in Poland for seven years.

Horesh is recognised in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship may very well be approved! Horesh has an in-depth knowledge and a full understanding of European immigration laws.

Sephardi: This ad refers to all Jews of Sephardi heritage – Jews who arrived from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, as well as many descendants of Jews who arrived from Holland and the UK.

Most descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are eligible to reinstate Portuguese citizenship and, accordingly, an EU passport. If applicable, Adv. Horesh will apply for (on behalf of the applicant) an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which, an application for Portuguese citizenship is most likely to be approved.

Adv. Horesh closely collaborates with professionals who assist him in tracing documentation in Europe required for successful applications of reinstatement EU citizenships.

My next visit in SA will take place in February 2021

You are most welcome to contact me on adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com or whatsapp +48783953223

A December of COVID-19, paranoia and cancelled plans

JORDAN MOSHE

"For the first time in my life, I was so relieved to be home after the December holidays. It felt like we had run the frightening gauntlet of COVID-19, and managed to make it back to where we are safe," says a Johannesburg mom who had been holidaying in the Western Cape.

The holidays that South Africans had been looking so forward to after a year of hardship became nerve-racking for families, with tough laws to adhere to and the need to do what they could to avoid the fast-spreading coronavirus.

How did they brave their annual pilgrimage to Plettenberg Bay, Ballito, Umhlanga, or Cape Town in the face of the second wave of the pandemic?

Long-awaited and meticulously planned getaways were drastically adjusted at a moment's notice, introducing stress to a time that was expected to be stress-free. Whether they chose to press ahead with their holiday plans or opted to remain at home, families experienced a December break unlike any other.

For Steve Crouse and his family, the holiday demanded a considerable amount of last-minute adjustment.

"We arrived in Plett on 14 December, the day the president announced the closure of the beaches on the Garden Route," Crouse told the *SA Jewish Report*. "Everything would close on the 16th. We had a few hours on the beach on the day we arrived,

and didn't know what was coming. We squeezed as much beach time into the 15th as we could, and had to make new plans from the next day."

He continues, "We stuck to our guns and opted to stay. We knew we were in for a very different holiday."

The changes proved difficult for Crouse's three children to accept

lagoons in the area, went on hikes, bike rides, frequented the complex pool, and enjoyed the permitted outdoor spaces as much as possible.

Says Crouse, "You kind of felt punched in the gut. There was an endless amount of open space on the beach, but we couldn't use it.

"However, the worst part was the

An empty beach in Umhlanga



at first. "The kids were in tears and absolutely devastated," he says. "My six-year-old said that she hated the president. We were really stunned when we heard that Plett's endless expanses of beaches would be closed but that Durban would stay open in spite of drawing huge crowds. Still, as parents, we felt we had to make the most of it."

The family took to exploring the

sense of morbidity in town. Our complex had only 40% occupancy at its peak. Locals had taken a knock, clawed their way through the year, and prayed for a bumper season in December. There wasn't much trade, and they were devastated. It was gut wrenching to see.

"In spite of our challenges, we certainly weren't the worst done by this year. People really suffered."

The virus added stress to travel as well.

"We flew back home, which was more than a tad nerve-racking," says Crouse. "It was our first time on a plane in almost a year, and we didn't know what to expect. The plane was half empty, passengers were all spread out, and you felt a heightened sense of stress as you ensured your mask was on and you sanitised regularly."

"Still, we felt quite safe during our holiday, and took the necessary precautions. It was a good break."

In the face of beach closures, other families opted to change their holiday plans altogether. Nicky Levitas, who had also booked to go to Plettenberg Bay with her husband and children, decided to stay put.

"We were packed and ready," she says. "Ramaphosa then announced the beach closures. My husband and I looked at each other as we watched the announcement and said, 'You've got to be kidding!' What would we do with children in Plett for more than two weeks without the beach? There was no point."

The couple deliberated over holidaying in other locations, including St Lucia, but the thought of hundreds of other holidaymakers converging on the same spot wasn't encouraging.

Says Levitas, "What if we landed up in hospital? There would be thousands of people around over Christmas and New Year's, and the risk would be huge. We gave up, and decided to stay

put and make the most of being at home.

"We didn't get out much, but we did go strawberry picking, went to Rush, and got some takeaways. Luckily, we have a pool at home, so we spent a lot of time in the water. My kids were initially devastated, but they ended up having a jol at home."

Levitas describes their holiday as bittersweet. She says, "I felt like I was cooking, cleaning, and running after the kids all the time. My husband and I were busy the whole holiday and went straight back to work recently. It doesn't feel like we've really had a break."

However, she welcomed the opportunity to spend time away from the office and with her family.

"It wasn't the holiday we anticipated, but we spent quality time together," she says.

For other families, the holiday was a difficult time of loss and endless quarantine. Ronit Sarakinsky's family holiday took a turn for the worst when her husband, Laurence, contracted COVID-19 after travelling to Cape Town for his aunt's funeral.

"We had booked to go to Plett as we do every year," she says. "Although I was very stressed about it, we flew down in early December and actually had a good week.

"Sadly, my husband's aunt passed away in Cape Town from cancer," she says. "He travelled there for the funeral, and while flying back to Plett, a cousin who had also attended notified him that he had tested positive. My husband would have to go into isolation."

Sarakinsky scrambled to prepare for her husband's arrival, designating a room and bathroom in their small holiday apartment for his exclusive use.

"We met him at the airport," she recounts. "We kept our distance, I threw him the car keys and he drove around as we prepared the room for him. I was in contact with Hatzolah to get advice on what to do, and we got him into isolation. The whole family who had been at the funeral had to do the same."

Laurence, his mother, and seven other family members all tested positive for the virus. To make matters worse, Sarakinsky's son also had to go into isolation after having contact with a friend who had tested positive.

"We had two rooms left in our holiday apartment, and we couldn't isolate my son properly as well," she says. "The rest of us quarantined with him, and fortunately, he later tested negative. When my husband came out of isolation, we cancelled our flights and drove home.

"What happened was beyond what we could have contemplated or planned for. We took each day, each hour, as it came. There was a lot of stress, plenty of anxiety, and a difficult *shivah* period for the family.

"We thought we were going on holiday, but we experienced something very different. We're all well and healthy now thankfully, but we've lost family and COVID-19 made it that much more challenging.

"You can't really have a holiday under the circumstances. Expectations had to shift quickly, and you have to take these experiences as they come."

Why it must be cool to be a Jew on campus

OPINION

My first year at the University of the Witwatersrand was in 2017 and it was a strange year.

There was no Jewish establishment. Each student came with a radically different background and perspective, almost none of them had ever met a Jew, seen a Jew, or even heard of a Jew. But many had heard of "apartheid in Israel".

I remember how 500 people filled the lecture hall. There I was, a naive 18-year-old Jewish guy sitting with my new Muslim friends. The professor was running 15 minutes late. We were all chatting

until one girl, Akeela, came to the topic of Israel, and that's when things start getting heated. With a slight hiss in her voice she whispered, "You're not a Zionist, are you?"

Shocked and intimidated, I looked away and didn't know what to say. She pressed me, and repeated "Are you?" Without thinking, I quickly mumbled "no" just as the lecturer walked in and began the class. I begin questioning who I was, and what I believed.

I can tell you countless stories of antisemitic/anti-Israel attacks, but this vignette sums up what Jews are dealing with on campus in some shape or form. Students feel unsafe to express themselves. There is no sense of pride in being a Jew, only fear or even shame. Like a friend of mine in her Philosophy 101 module who was literally laughed out of the class when she said, "Of course I believe in G-d! I'm a Jew".

Internationally, Jewish students and their leaders are insecure about what they stand for, be it their unique cultural values or their indigenous homeland. At every corner, there is external

pressure, which has created a deep sense of doubt about who we are and what we represent.

Throughout the Book of Kings, the g-d Ba'al plays the foil of the Jewish nation. King after king, they each fall to this Ba'al. It's like a cycle. A new king of Shomron (modern-day Samaria) takes over, he is fair and good, next he gets too close to Ba'al, and loses everything. His throne, friends, family, and eventually his life. Out of the 19 rulers of Shomron, this sequence happens a lot. What does this mean?

The simple understanding is that the leaders



at that time were serving the idol Ba'al. But our sages saw a more relatable message, and explain that translated literally, the name Ba'al means master. So the problem was that those generations were allowing a Ba'al-master, in other words a force other than their own internal set of ethical guidelines, to dictate their actions. Or it could be thought of as external pressure – this "master" was forcing a foreign lifestyle on the kings.

SHIMSHON FISHER



It was only when the leaders of the time rejected the false g-d and embraced their natural moral compass that they succeeded in ruling.

A similar idea might be applied today. It's unpopular to be a Jew/Zionist. It's hard to stand your ground when the world is blaming and shaming you. And it's easy to give in to all the negative rhetoric which is thrown at you. But we cannot compromise our moral and ethical high ground to please the external pressures of pop culture.

We must fortify ourselves by embracing what makes us unique – our Jewish heritage. Students shouldn't feel ashamed to say they are a Zionist or believe in G-d. We should be confident in who we are and what we represent.

We must empower the global student community by reminding it that it's cool to be a Jew and do Jewish things, to stand out as a proud member of our supernatural nation.

That's a future worth fighting for.

There couldn't have been a better place for this work than the 47th annual World Union of Jewish Student (WUJS)

Congress that took place in the

last week of December as we said goodbye to 2020. No flights necessary, no headaches or hotels, we simply signed up on the website and were amazed by the inspiring sessions, broad networking capability, and a fair dose of fun. WUJS Congress 2020 – "inside your home & outside the box".

• Shimshon Fisher is the vice president of the South African Union of Jewish Students.

Could vaccination save Netanyahu's political life?

BEN SALES – JTA

In about two months, Israelis will vote in a national election.

Seem familiar? It is.

Israel will be holding its fourth election in just two years, the latest sign that in a country known for volatile politics, the government is more unstable than ever.

Like the past several votes, this one is mainly a referendum on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been in power for more than a decade. But unlike in previous elections, most of Netanyahu's chief rivals this time are on the political right too. The two top performers in polls behind his Likud party are former close allies.

This is the first Israeli election amid a spiking COVID-19 pandemic. The most recent vote, in March, took place as cases had only begun to rise in Israel and worldwide. This one comes after a year of sickness, death, lockdowns, and economic crisis, but also as Israel is racing to vaccinate a large portion of its population.

Why is Israel having another election? Will Netanyahu win again? Who's running against him? And how might COVID-19 factor in? Here's what you need to know.

Israel is voting again because the "unity government" wasn't actually that unified.

Across three separate elections, from April 2019 to the one in March, the conservative Netanyahu and Likud ran neck and neck with a centrist party led by Benny Gantz, a former general whose main campaign promise was to unseat the prime minister. Gantz nearly succeeded.

But the system in Israel requires prime ministers to assemble a majority coalition from the mosaic of parties in its parliament, the Knesset, and neither candidate could get it done. The unclear outcome kept triggering new rounds of voting with similar results – and similar deadlock.

Last year, facing the prospect of a fourth election with no end in sight, and COVID-19 cases rising, Gantz reneged on his promise and agreed to unite with Netanyahu so that the government could confront the pandemic in earnest. According to an agreement signed by both men, Gantz was supposed to take over the prime minister role from Netanyahu late this year.

But none of that happened. The "unity government", comprised of parties that distrusted each other, bickered as COVID-19 cases spiked to record highs. This year,

Netanyahu stymied the passage of a government budget, which triggered another round of elections and brought the dysfunctional attempt at co-operation to a close.

Could Netanyahu lose this time?

Maybe. Netanyahu has now won – or survived – seven elections over the 15 total years he's served as prime minister. (He was in power from 1996 to 1999, and returned in 2009.)

Netanyahu's main pitch has been that he's an able steward of Israel in a tough neighbourhood. Until the pandemic, Israel's economy was performing well, even as inequality and rising housing prices remained festering issues.



Photo: Marc Selzer/Pool/Haish90

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visits at a vaccination centre in Jerusalem

While many international observers criticised Netanyahu's offensives in Gaza and his treatment of West Bank Palestinians, his right-wing base believes that he's been able to hold the line against pressures to end Israel's West Bank occupation and been an articulate advocate for Israel on the world stage. The recent normalisation agreements Israel signed with nearby Arab countries could serve to bolster that image.

But Netanyahu has been on trial for corruption since last year – a first for any serving Israeli prime minister – and has faced street protests outside his home calling on him to resign. Israelis have also chafed at rising COVID-19 numbers and a struggling economy.

In the past, Netanyahu has beaten back criticism by demonising what he calls the Israeli "left", even when

his opponents, like Gantz, aren't all that left-wing. And this time, his main opponents have actually been to his right on policy.

Two opponents with the strongest polling numbers now are former Netanyahu aides who broke away and started their own parties. Naftali Bennett, a religious Zionist politician and former Netanyahu chief of staff, could receive the second or third-most seats in the next Knesset behind Likud. Gideon Saar, once a top Likud legislator, just formed a new party called New Hope and also could finish second or third.

If Bennett and Saar unite with other right-wing and centrist parties, they could cobble together a majority. And Netanyahu will have a hard time branding them "leftists".

The Zionist left has all but disappeared

Wondering where Israel's left-wing parties are? You won't find much. For its first three decades, Israel was governed by the socialist Labor Party. For most of the following three decades or so, Labor and Likud were the two largest parties.

Since the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in 2001, the Israeli left has shrivelled. Amazingly, Labor may not even get enough votes to be represented in the Knesset, an ignominious end for a former powerhouse. Gantz's centrist Blue and White party also is expected to plummet after his attempt at governance sputtered and party members abandoned him.

Netanyahu's biggest opponent not on the right is Yesh Atid, a centrist faction that was allied with Gantz until Gantz joined with Netanyahu. Yesh Atid's leader, Yair Lapid, has become more assertively critical of the prime minister. But the party isn't commanding enough support in polls to have a realistic shot

at leading the next government.

Meretz, a staunchly left-wing party with a small but dedicated base, is projected to win a handful of seats. So is a new party launched by Ron Huldai, the long-time mayor of the liberal city of Tel Aviv.

The largest party on the Israeli left is likely to be the Joint List, a unified Arab-Israeli grouping that has been among the leading vote-getters over the past several years. Outspoken in favour of Palestinian rights and opposed to Netanyahu, the Joint List may emerge as the loudest opposition voice in the next Knesset, whoever wins the election.

COVID-19 could sink Netanyahu's chances – or save them

Just like in every other country, the pandemic is an urgent issue confronting Israel. The nation's record – and thus Netanyahu's – is decidedly mixed. Israel performed well in the early months, keeping COVID-19 numbers low with a strict lockdown, but then let up and saw cases skyrocket.

Now, after a few subsequent lockdowns, Israel is facing competing trends: it's getting vaccines to its population faster than any other country, but again has one of the world's highest infection rates.

The question is which of those trends will compel more voters. If Israel can manage to secure more doses and get shots in more of its voters' arms, those voters may reward Netanyahu as the guy they can trust (again) with their lives.

But if the vaccine rush slows while case numbers continue to soar, Israelis may look at their country, getting sicker as the economy continues to struggle, and conclude that after so many years, it's time for a changing of the guard.

An open letter to President Cyril Ramaphosa

Dear Mr President

We know you have so much on your plate, and that you have tried to look after the people of the country as if they are your own children. We are so thankful for the way you have led our country.

However, there is an act that requires immediate execution, an entrepreneurial flair, and a passion and vision last seen in 1994 when we extricated the country out from under the oppressors and fought for a free and fair South Africa.

We have another moment that beckons like that, Mr President. We need to distribute the vaccine in record time.

In 1994, ballots reached every city and farm, rural settlement, kraal, or pondokkie. We stood together, patiently, in queues that snaked around streets and hills. We opened schools, churches, each and every available building and space. It was an astonishing achievement.

We are ready to do the same.

We cannot be dismissed from the world's attention as a poorer country. We are the homeland from which Nelson Mandela became an icon for good across the globe. We are the Rainbow Nation that rises again and again from the darkest storm clouds.

We know you know all this. But it's time to tell you what perhaps you didn't know: you aren't alone. The government isn't alone.

I'm not a spokesperson for any group, nor do I hold any significant office. Moreover,

I'm aware that the big issues of sourcing and financing the vaccine stand as critical challenges. However, I have no doubt that within the magnitude of the task, we, the people of South Africa, stand ready. We want to help in any way we can. We offer our services. We're ready to take action.

Practically, it would be my greatest honour and privilege to assist through my organisation in the following areas:

1. Any administrative support;
2. Accounting and booking assistance;
3. The provision of call-centre infrastructure, including staffing; and
4. Any "menial" task to free up time for the experts/specialists.

We are willing to do whatever it takes to bring South Africa to safety. Whether it's the big-picture logistical and administrative tasks, offering the use of communal spaces, or the smallest of gestures of gratitude to frontline health workers.

I have no doubt that we can assist, and that our willingness to do so is pervasive. Our diversity here is truly our greatest strength, for together, we can offer every imaginable skill needed.

We did it in 1994. We can do it again.

We are your army of volunteers.

Thuma mina – send me.

May G-d bless you, your family, and all the people of South Africa.

Benjy Porter, Johannesburg



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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Second waves and second chances

ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



The closing weeks of 2020 brought with them the long-anticipated onset of a second wave of COVID-19 infections in South Africa. Over the December period, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) continued to co-ordinate meetings between the communal leadership and medical experts to assess the situation and plan and advise the community accordingly.

We have since participated in several national initiatives aimed at co-ordinating the efforts of civil society and faith communities in responding to the serious challenges of the day. Last week, SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn participated in an African National Congress civil society engagement with President Cyril Ramaphosa, Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize, and other cabinet members titled "COVID-19 response and vaccines: the role of progressive civil society". On Sunday, together with Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, Kahn, and SAJBD National President Mary Kluk, I attended a meeting with Ramaphosa to discuss how the religious leadership can assist government, particularly in terms of the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out.

It hardly needs to be emphasised that all members of our community need to continue to do their part in minimising risk to themselves and anyone they come into contact with. Once again, I urge people to make full use of the guidelines and regular updates by Professor Barry Schoub, Dr Richard Friedland, and other medical experts on the SAJBD Facebook page and website to ascertain how best to conduct themselves in terms of vigilance and safety practices.

Restorative justice

Last month, we were able to resolve

a long-standing hate-speech case between ourselves and former student leader Mcebo Dlamini for remarks he made at the University of the Witwatersrand, on PowerFM, and social media in 2015. Successful mediation was facilitated by the SA Human Rights Commission at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre. We are satisfied with the outcome of this matter. As SAJBD National Vice-President Zev Krengel put it, Dlamini's recognition that the statements were antisemitic, hurtful, and offensive, together with his genuine apology, enables us to heal from the hurt he caused.

It should never be forgotten that South Africa's transition from an authoritarian, bitterly divided, and conflict-ridden country to the robust multiracial democracy we have today was accomplished because South Africans, without forgetting the injustices of the past, were prepared to work together in building a better future. Expressing regret for one's previous conduct, sincerely apologising for it, and undertaking to mend one's ways going forward has thus assumed a great deal of importance in our society, and this is particularly true when it comes to racist behaviour. Once said, offensive words cannot be unsaid, but a heartfelt apology goes a long way towards removing their sting, and makes reconciliation possible.

Our Gauteng Council chairperson, Professor Karen Milner, stressed the importance of taking a restorative approach to justice wherever possible whereby the offender acknowledges what he or she has done wrong and expresses genuine remorse. Dlamini met these criteria, and was a successful example of what's possible with this approach.

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

But he is good for Israel

The happenings at the Capitol building left most sane people winded. And whereas many were quick to blame 2021 for letting us down so spectacularly and so early into the year, it clearly had little to do with the calendar and everything to do with the former president of the United States, Donald Trump.

Instead of accepting his loss with a hint of dignity and a smattering of grace, Trump chose to cry "Foul!" In doing so, he set off a chain reaction that would not only result in the death of four people but would give his detractors the perfect opportunity to say, "I told you so." Which they wasted no time at all in doing. And who could blame them, given that they had spent the past five years screaming that this was going to happen.

And happen it did. Soon after the events, I found myself in a public argument with journalist Richard Poplak, who tweeted, "Yes, but he's good for Israel", referring to Trump. I responded with, "You have to be pretty obsessed to try and turn the focus towards Israel. Besides, I'm pretty sure that those white males dressed as Vikings aren't Zionists." Whereas I loved the smartness of my

answer, the point that he was making was a valid one.

He knew that too, which is why after a series of tweets he wrote, "My tweet points out a prevailing moral failure of many in our community during the Trump era. If this is a time for reflection, no one is better poised to lead it than you."

I'm uncertain that "no one is better poised to lead" than me, but I will nevertheless give it a try. Because maybe some introspection is required. Although I wasn't a Trump supporter and publicly stated that I wanted both Biden and Trump to lose, I still hoped that Trump would lose less badly (in other words, to win). It might have been more to do with my thoughts on Biden, but it would nevertheless be disingenuous not to own it. Whereas I have also mentioned numerous times that I abhor many aspects of Trump's personality and a lot of what he stands for, indeed, he was good for Israel as well as the Middle East (in my view).

I respected how he tried to engage with North Korea as well as his stand against Iran. Although he might not have succeeded in terms of China, I do think his effort was a decent one.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



What I liked most about Trump was that I didn't. Like him. To me, he represented a rare opportunity for nuance and complexity, something that's largely absent in the world of politics.

Over the last while, we have distilled our view of politicians. We either love them or hate them. We either see no good or we see only bad. Trump awarded us the opportunity to see both in one politician. Through his behaviour, however, he has robbed us of even that.

Whereas I don't agree with some of Poplak's views on Israel, he nevertheless raises a point that we should consider. Did Trump's support for Israel indeed blind us to the reality of what he always was? And if this is the case, what does it say about us and how do we treat the next one that comes along? Whereas I have no clear answer, I know that it is worth thinking about.

The holiday that couldn't happen

OPINION

DANI SACK



I was fortunate to go to Umhlanga in the last week of November on a celebratory holiday after finishing matric. For the few days I was there, I walked on the promenade, saw friends, and spent time relaxing after weeks of hard work. Admittedly, my friends and I felt invincible although still quite shocked at the amount of people walking on the beaches without masks. Even so, our numbers were dropping, we felt safe, and things finally seemed a bit normal.

However, the week after I came home, things began to change. Following the general complacency that overcome our country, case numbers began rising. My friends contracted the virus, holidays were cancelled, and a lockdown was imminent. Our desired invincibility proved false. It was, for lack of a better word, a disaster.

It's not natural for us South Africans who haunt the Cape Town and Umhlanga promenades for weeks every December to stay home. We are used to holidays filled with

parties, dates with friends, chills on the beach, and a general social jaunt that goes on into early January.

Those plans were put on hold when the president broke down on television, announcing new lockdown regulations and begging South Africans to act responsibly in these life-threatening times. We were forced off the beaches and into bed by 21:00, with no alcohol or late-night takeaways to keep us going.

Those fortunate enough to experience a bit of a holiday before the implementation of the lockdown rules should consider themselves lucky to have been able to visit a beach or sit at a bar for sundowners.

Those who didn't get to escape their homes remain bored, scared, and honestly, a bit jealous. And who wouldn't be? We've had a hard year, the least we deserve is a bit of a getaway.

Unfortunately, our desire to escape reality for a bit left us in a desperate situation. Instead of hotel pools and lunch dates with friends, we have Netflix shows and FaceTime calls. Instead of walks on the promenade and braais with family, we have socially distant teas and early nights. New Year's Eve was spent in our homes, many of us barely staying awake before the clock struck 12 to ring in what is hopefully a better year (it wouldn't take much, really).

To ensure that 2021 is better, it's imperative to act responsibly. As young people, it's often in our nature to do what we want, regardless of the repercussions. We search for the next bit of fun, and are determined to get it, no matter what gets in our way. We can't act that way now.

We must act responsibly to ensure that in December 2021, we can have a happy holiday.

• Dani Sacks matriculated from Yeshiva College in 2020.

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