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# south african Jewish Report

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## Reverend Frank Chikane at centre of anti-Israel storm

TALI FEINBERG

Reverend Frank Chikane, an icon of the anti-apartheid struggle, “declared war on Israel and its supporters” during a Zoom webinar on 6 February 2021, according to Dexter Van Zile of the online newspaper *The Algemeiner*. However, Chikane denies any malice.

“[Chikane] levelled a hostile and incendiary assault on the legitimacy of the Jewish state, and an implicit threat against those who support it,” Van Zile wrote.

*The Algemeiner* is an independent publication covering the Middle East, Israel, and matters of Jewish interest around the world.

Van Zile pointed to a statement made by Chikane to more than 300 Christians that, “We need to begin to say to those who support Israel to brutalise Palestinians that the blood of the people of Palestine will be sought from them, because they collaborate by allowing this system to continue.”

Chikane is a moderator of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), and vice-president of the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

The Zoom event opened with the showing of a film, *The People's Patriarch*, which profiles Michel Sabbah who served as Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The film praises Yasser Arafat, declares that “Gaza has been strangled by fire and siege”, and that “Palestine is being liquidated in front of our eyes in an unprecedented manner”.

“We must get to Europe,” Chikane said after the film. “Especially to our Christian brothers and sisters, to say to them, ‘You know the sins of the past which were committed against the Jews must not be used as a reason to allow more sins to be committed against the

Palestinians,’” according to Van Zile.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* in response to the article, Chikane said he was using theological terms when he said that “the blood of the people of Palestine will be sought from them”, and that he didn’t mean it literally. “I don’t support violence or terrorism,” he said. “I don’t believe in curses. What I was saying is that we can’t fail in our responsibility to others. I should have used simpler language. People can disagree with me, but they don’t have a right to distort what I said.”

He pointed out that his views aren’t those of the WCC or the SACC, and he takes personal responsibility for them. He said he had visited Israel and the Palestinian territories many times, exploring both sides of the conflict.

He supported the Oslo Accords and would still support a two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinians, and “thus I cannot be an anti-Jewish-state campaigner”.

However, “What’s troubling for me is that within Israel and in the illegal settlements in the occupied areas, there are discriminatory laws against Arab Israelis and Palestinians which are similar to what we experienced in South Africa. For me it’s apartheid in another name.”

To the South African Jewish community, he said, “No-one should threaten a Jew in South Africa. Whatever happens in Israel/Palestine, it shouldn’t affect our relationship here.”

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein disagrees that Chikane’s statements are harmless. “His unhinged attack on Israel is as

detached from reality as the medieval Christian blood libels,” he said. “Unfortunately, this kind of hardline anti-Israel fanaticism with no basis in truth remains a real impediment to the cause of peace and justice in the region.”

Goldstein, however, said it didn’t represent the view of the majority of Christians in South Africa.

But Chikane’s views do represent a growing divide among Christians, with one side strongly condemning Israel, and the other supporting the Jewish state. Both the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church in South Africa formally adopted the principles of the Boycott,

Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) organisation in 2019, much to the chagrin of many of their followers.

“This Zoom conference was an exercise in ‘group think’ of alarming proportions. No-one disagreed with any statement no matter how wild or unsubstantiated,” said Reverend John Atkinson after watching the webinar.

“Chikane made some wild statements. He said that ‘everybody is against the Palestinians’. In fact, global support for the Palestinians is reflected in aid relief in 2018 of more than \$1.1 trillion [R16 trillion] according to UNWRA [the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

**Continued on page 2>>**

## Pretoria doctor one of the first to be vaccinated



Dr Darren Joseph getting the jab on Wednesday

TALI FEINBERG

Around the same time that President Cyril Ramaphosa got his COVID-19 vaccination in Cape Town on Wednesday, 17 February 2021, an unassuming Jewish doctor was one of the very first healthcare workers to receive the jab, and possibly the very first Jewish doctor in the country to do so.

“At last! I was very anxious to get it,” Dr Darren Joseph told the *SA Jewish Report*. He is a special physician in the department of internal medicine at Steve Biko Academic Hospital in Pretoria, and is also a pulmonology fellow.

Joseph has been at the frontline of the COVID-19 war, and has lost colleagues, including a matron in his ward who passed away from COVID-19 this week. He also assisted the Jaffa Jewish Aged Home during its COVID-19 outbreak.

The first 80 000 Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines arrived in South Africa on 17 February, but Joseph never expected to get his dose so soon.

“It was quite a surprise. We knew the hospital was preparing to begin vaccination, but

today it asked for a few volunteers to take part in a ‘trial run’, and I was third in line. It’s exactly like any other vaccination, it’s not painful. It was a very pleasant experience, and everyone cheered!”

Other healthcare workers can’t wait for their turn. “We are thrilled. We have the champagne ready!” says Johannesburg general practitioner (GP) Dr Sheri Faranoff, who has a preliminary slot booked for her COVID-19 vaccination at 15:00 this Sunday, 21 February.

GPs have been able to book preliminary time slots to have the injection at government hospitals, but not all healthcare workers have been able to do so yet. The GPs will also have to wait for confirmation of their appointments, but if all goes to plan, Faranoff will also be vaccinated at Steve Biko Academic Hospital in a few days’ time. **Continued on page 13>>**

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# Jews around the world call for Moshiach

STAFF REPORTER

For 3 000 years, Jews have been praying for Moshiach (the messiah) to come, but this weekend, the Jewish world is upping its game with a communal prayer demanding that “G-d send Moshiach now.”

So says Rabbi David Masinter, who heads up Chabad House in Johannesburg, and who is behind the prayer to be said at 18:00 (South African time) on Sunday, 21 February.

“One thing COVID-19 has taught us is how vulnerable we all are,” says Masinter. “It’s been a time of introspection. It’s a time of realisation that we need Moshiach. This is how this worldwide Moshiach project was borne.”

According to Masinter, a businessman in Miami

The following prayer should be said at 18:00 on Sunday, 21 February:

“Master of the universe  
We, your beloved children  
United together around the world at this moment  
Are crying out to you in prayer  
Please accept this prayer with grace and kindness  
We sincerely thank you for all your daily blessings,  
But we implore you from the depths of our hearts  
To send Moshiach immediately to redeem us with mercy,  
From this long exile and suffering  
And to bring peace to the world  
We can’t wait anymore!  
We desire your great name to be revealed  
Your dominion in the entire world  
And your presence returned to the Beit Hamikdash – the Holy Temple – now!”

“SHMA YISRAEL AD-ONAY EL-O-HAYNU AD-ONAY ECHAD  
HEAR OH ISRAEL, THE L-RD IS OUR G-D, THE L-RD IS ONE”

came up with the idea, and a universal prayer was formulated.

“Two powerful ways to hasten the coming of Moshiach is through unity of our nation and charity. Therefore, we are encouraging everyone to stop what they are doing, say this worldwide prayer together, and give a little charity at the same time. When Jews all around the world band together for a shared goal, the power is immeasurable.”

Masinter says belief in the coming of Moshiach is a fundamental principle of the Torah, and that we have to yearn for him to come. “This is one of the fundamental principles of our faith,” he says.

“We believe that one day, Moshiach will come, and g-dliness will be revealed on earth. There will be no more war, no more suffering. There will be peace among nations.”

• For more information, go to [www.wewantmoshiachnow.net](http://www.wewantmoshiachnow.net)

## Reverend Frank Chikane at centre of anti-Israel storm

>>>Continued from page 1

Refugees]. So clearly, not everybody is against the Palestinians.”

Atkinson is one of the people who spoke out when the Anglican Church adopted BDS principles.

“What I found most concerning was the ease with which Chikane moved seamlessly between the South African apartheid struggle and the Israeli/Palestinian situation, a claim that has been shown to be false on numerous occasions,” he said. “One would expect that someone who was at the forefront of the struggle in South Africa wouldn’t devalue that struggle by such a comparison.

“Not surprisingly, the BDS line about the situation in Palestine being worse than apartheid was repeated, albeit in a new form,” Atkinson said.

On Chikane’s statement that, “the sins of the past committed against the Jews in Europe shouldn’t be used as a reason to allow more sins to be committed”, Atkinson notes, “What’s happening in Israel and the disputed territories isn’t comparable to the Holocaust in any shape or form. He conveniently forgets that the history of those sins goes back centuries in the European communities of the Christian brothers and sisters he has in mind. This insensitivity to the sins of one’s own religion seems to be a hallmark of anti-Israel activists in the church.

“The world knows that [Chikane’s] description of the Israeli treatment of Palestinians is a caricature of a much more complex situation,” Atkinson said. “It has become customary in discussions like these for the failure of Palestinian leadership to be ignored altogether. I would have thought that Chikane would have been capable of a much broader perspective. Clearly he isn’t.”

Reverend Rowan Rennie, who left the Methodist Church in November 2020 over its approach to Israel even though it cost him his home and job, said, “These are the rantings of a person who has a political and

personal agenda. I would assume his past clearly informs his ideological perspective, which is the reason we moved away from the Methodist Church, because you have this fusing of politics and spirituality. It’s a deliberate attempt by the church to rise up in political power and standing.”

Local political analyst Steven Gruzd said, “Chikane has a record of anti-Israel statements. Depending on the audience, his rhetoric changes. He is less measured when speaking to an audience likely to agree with him. Pro and anti-Israel Christian groups both vie constantly to influence government policy. Chikane’s standing in the African National Congress is likely to upset the former and embolden the latter. One speech won’t necessarily change policy, but there are many such speeches.”

Chaya Singer, the executive director of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) Cape Council, said, “While these comments add to voices driving an anti-Israel agenda, I don’t have reason to believe they will advance a shift in policy or have direct political consequences.”

SAZF National Chairperson Rowan Polovin said, “Unfortunately Chikane’s utterances aren’t new. He has been a vocal supporter of BDS for many years and has been particularly vociferous during his time in the SACC. He has failed to condemn any instance of BDS antisemitism, and recently signed a petition calling on the British Labour Party not to suspend Jeremy Corbyn for his role in the antisemitism scandal that infested the party.

“His position is at odds with a growing movement of Christians around the world who understand that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. Israel’s existence and prosperity stands as an important bulwark against the extremism that affects Christian populations in the Middle East and North Africa.”

## Torah Thought

Rabbi Julia Margolis, Beit Luria



## Blueprint for a holy society

In Exodus: 25:1-2, “G-d spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel and have them take for me an offering; from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take my offering.’” Exodus 25:8-9, “And they shall make me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst according to all that I show you, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its vessels; and so shall you do...”

Now if I was a real Israelite, my first reaction might be to roll my eyes and say, “Great! I just spent all of these years slaving in Egypt, toiling over all of these pyramids, and now I have to do more building?” And of course, G-d isn’t content to let the Israelites use their expertise at turning sand and dirt into bricks. G-d has more specific plans, asking those who act generously, and using only the best of materials.

You get the idea. The Torah offers so many specifics, right down to the details of the golden cherubs. The Talmud (BT Yoma 54a) describes the cherubs as a boy and a girl. Rashi writes, “Their faces bore the images of the

youth,” reminding us that the true custodians of the Ark and the Torah are our children, the sons and daughters of Israel, in contrast to the tradition’s literal count of the Israelites – 600 000 adult men, we are told. This portion reminds us that in all the institutions we build in accordance with G-d’s plan, our children, our youth count, and through them, we hear the voice of G-d.

This verse from Exodus 25:8-9 usually sparks discussion about the necessity of having a building in order for G-d to be present. We are so used to having a building as a symbol of G-d’s presence, but I believe we can find that sense of G-d in so many places. It may not be within a formal building. Perhaps it’s the fact, as it has always been, that we find G-d where we allow our souls to let G-d in, that the sanctuary within which G-d dwells must begin with our own soul. If our soul has been created to live with a foundation of faith and spiritual practice, then surely G-d will dwell within it.

But back to the tabernacle story. We have a G-d who can turn water into blood, sand into

lice, the very air we breathe into a thick darkness that makes it impossible for others to move. This is a G-d who split the Sea of Reeds, who saved the Israelites from a future of slavery. Why does G-d need to draw a blueprint and then ask us to complete the plan?

The text offers the answer. When G-d is placing this very lengthy, detailed order, G-d says “they will make me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst.” G-d didn’t build the tabernacle alone, nor assign it to Moses to build on his own. There was a blueprint and detailed instructions that were shared with everyone.

In my work as a rabbi, and indeed in our efforts as a Jewish community as a whole, we must be prepared to sit together, generate ideas, shape plans, and draw blueprints.

The future of the Jewish community is our shared responsibility. But if we are really involved in this, if we do it with all our heart, then by working together, we can build a magnificent holy society.

# Ivermectin trial shows positive results, but experts still wary

JORDAN MOSHE

Although a top Israeli professor revealed that Ivermectin had been successfully tested on COVID-19 patients in a SA Jewish Report webinar on Thursday, 11 February, South African experts warn it’s still too early to trust this drug.

Ivermectin has been hailed by many since last year as a potential wonder drug in the fight against COVID-19. Merck, the drug’s original manufacturer, has said that too little data exists to support the use of the drug on COVID-19 patients.

In the face of mounting pressure, the SA Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) announced last month that it had authorised a limited “compassionate and controlled-access programme” for Ivermectin to be used to treat COVID-19. Still, it stressed that only medical practitioners who applied to use the drug would be considered on a case-by-case basis, and wider access could be discussed only after large-scale testing and peer-review data became available.

The Israeli trial – like the others in South America, Bangladesh, and Egypt – was conducted in a small-scale programme.

Professor Eli Schwartz, the director of the Center for Geographic Medicine at Sheba Medical Center in Tel-Hashomer, is excited with the findings. “Ivermectin is an excellent drug that has changed many aspects of dealing with infections caused by parasites,” he says. “In many Western countries, they aren’t especially familiar with it, it’s not registered, and thus doctors are hesitant to use it.”

Schwartz shared the results of the test carried out last year for the first time on the webinar. They haven’t yet been reviewed.

“Our study looked at Ivermectin versus a placebo, using mild, non-hospitalised patients who had the virus,” he says. “Our objective was to reduce the viral shedding time and evaluate the drug’s efficacy in preventing progression.”

In a double-blind test, drug doses were determined according to the weight of each patient, and were given regularly over three days. A total of 90 patients were involved (45 in each arm of the study).

“With Ivermectin, the viral load was lowered much faster,” Schwartz says. “On day four, 57% of those who had received it were negative as opposed to 31% in the placebo group.

“From day six, more people on Ivermectin were negative, much more than in the placebo. It continued into day eight and 10. Ivermectin

really had an impact, and patients quickly became negative or non-infectious.”

He also noted that some of the patients were over 60 or had risk factors, yet none of those who had taken the drug deteriorated or required hospitalisation.

Schwartz believes that the results are promising, and suggests that patients can overcome the disease faster with Ivermectin, reducing the amount of isolation required while populations wait for vaccines.

“It could prevent clinical deterioration and the need for hospitalisation,” he says. “If it proves antiviral, it can be used as a prophylactic. We should do more studies on these aspects.” He stresses, however, that the drug is no substitute for a vaccine.



Local experts and doctors are more reticent.

“The trials in other countries have been imperfect, with small numbers, varied doses, and other drugs used in addition,” says Professor Barry Schoub, the chairperson of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19 vaccines. “We don’t really know if there’s efficacy or not, and there’s no peer-reviewed scientific evidence yet.

“It’s unlicensed, and not totally innocuous. If taken in high doses, it has the potential to be highly toxic. Unless a study is peer reviewed, it’s valueless. Until Ivermectin is tested in a proper randomised control trial, we shouldn’t use it.”

Professor Mervyn Mer, the principal specialist at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, says a balanced approach is needed.

“We have to question why a cheap drug hasn’t

been subjected to larger trials,” he said in a recent webinar. “Many of our own colleagues are trying to take the veterinary medication, something we cannot support. A senior colleague of mine said he had taken a suggested dose and felt as strong as a horse. Several weeks later, he was severely ill with COVID-19 in intensive-care on ventilation.

“The rationale is there, but we don’t have the

mild disease, all took Ivermectin in high doses, and they all demised. They all had pulmonary and neurological manifestations, and were extremely ill.

“We have to be very careful with these small studies,” Meyberg says. “When a study is done on 90 people, that’s a phase-one trial. You need a few thousand people to see the effects of the drug. Even in Israel, Ivermectin isn’t part of the arsenal of medication and isn’t being used to treat COVID-19.”

However, GP Dr Paul Freinkel argues that there’s little downside to using the drug, and probable benefit.

“If it doesn’t work, we’ve lost little other than hope,” he says. “If it does, we’ve saved a life and, in some cases, a lifetime of disability.”

Freinkel recognises that the data generated so far by smaller trials is incomplete but maintains that very few trials show that Ivermectin doesn’t work, and they are generally underdosed.

“Even though there are no large-scale trials, what’s the chance of all the trials [of adequate dosing] all showing a benefit to using Ivermectin?” he asks.

“Andrew Hill, a senior researcher at Liverpool University, reports that the chance of an error in his meta-analysis [of the trial studies] is one in 5 000. In other words, the chance of his assertion that Ivermectin appears to work when in fact it doesn’t is only one in 5 000. That’s a one in 5 000 chance that it doesn’t decrease the chance of people dying,” Freinkel says.

“As my patients get sicker, I wonder about the downside to using it versus the 4 999 in 5 000 chance that it has a benefit. Must I watch a patient die knowing there is so little downside of her taking a drug that may cure her? The law says so.”

Because recommending Ivermectin carries the risk of prosecution, Freinkel suggests that Ivermectin should be approved for human use on parasites, where the efficacy and safety data are incontrovertible.

“This would allow doctors to legally and ethically use the medication off-label, as they do in most other countries,” he says.

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# Cape Town baby makes it to Super Bowl

TALI FEINBERG

Michael Sarembock may have just turned one last week, but the Cape Town baby’s cherubic face was already known to millions when he was featured in a Huggies diapers Super Bowl advertisement released on 7 February 2021, a few days before his first birthday.

Super Bowl commercials, known as Super Bowl ads, are high-profile television commercials featured in the United States television broadcast of the Super Bowl, the championship game of the National Football League. Super Bowl commercials have become a cultural phenomenon of their own alongside the game, as many viewers watch the game for the ads.

Little Michael appears in an advert in which a narrator introduces newborn babies to the world and tells them about all the fun they will have. “You get to eat when you want, sleep when you want, and ‘go’ when you want,” says the narrator with glee, as a businesswoman on a plane turns up her nose when Michael clearly needs a diaper change. In the long form version of the advert, he then gives the camera a wink. “I don’t know how they got him to do that!” says his mother, Cassandra Sarembock.

So how did Michael go from Cape Town kid to Super Bowl star? Cassandra, who is married to Mark and has a daughter, Deidre, aged two and a half, says people would always comment on her daughter’s striking red hair and ask if she would sign her children up to a casting agency. The busy mom never had time, but when she finally got round to it, the first casting that was offered was for babies, so Michael was up.

“Normally, parents would bring their children to a casting, but because of COVID-19, we had to put a home video together showing Michael around the house,” Cassandra says. In this video, he is shown giggling and toddling around, also with a dusting of red hair. He clearly charmed selectors from the start.

“We also had to introduce our family, and say what our favourite thing is about Michael. We then had to pretend the phone was a baby, and record ourselves pulling faces to make the baby smile!” she laughs. This was needed because the advert also shows parents pulling funny faces at their kids. To the Sarembocks’ relief, that clip didn’t make the cut.

Michael was selected for the next round, which meant he went to the casting agency’s location this time. Before every casting, his mother had to have a COVID-19 test. He eventually made it to the final cut, and was filmed doing what babies do in a special outfit selected by

the wardrobe team. “You don’t know if it’s even going to be used, but the next thing, I got a call from the casting agency saying that he was in the ad!” Cassandra says. The little boy’s face is also the first image one sees when searching for the commercial online.

Family, friends, even strangers were delighted to see the pint-sized celebrity on screen. Cassandra got a message from a woman in New York who follows her on Instagram saying she was so excited when she recognised Michael in the ad.

“The best part is that we’ll be able to show him this clip as he gets older and tell him that millions of people saw his face,” she says. The proceeds from the appearance all go into Michael’s own bank account.

One of the most amazing aspects of the Huggies Super Bowl ad was that it included photos of babies born on the very day it was aired – 7 February.

How did Huggies pull that off? Kimberly-Clark, which owns the Huggies brand, explained the “logistical mastery” needed to gather “day-of” photos of newborns to air during the Super Bowl broadcast.

“Huggies started doing outreach in late 2020 to its network of hospital partners worldwide, eventually signing on dozens of partners before game day,” the company said in a press release. The hospitals then co-ordinated with expecting parents, asking them to submit their own photos and video clips of their babies to be featured in the commercial. “All the footage of the game day newborns was submitted virtually, without the brand ever having to enter a hospital,” the company said.

Three of the babies featured were born in Tampa, Florida, where the Super Bowl took place this year. Another baby’s mother was coincidentally also born on ‘Super Bowl Sunday’ in 1986.

This is the first time a diaper brand has appeared in Super Bowl adverts, and the commercial was extremely well-received. It “stole the show and topped our list of most engaged ads”, reported Campaign, a leading media website. “How did [Huggies] do it? It celebrated

new babies being welcomed into the world. It didn’t need to stray into the context of COVID-19 and remind audiences of the loss and turmoil that has been experienced on a massive scale. Instead, it reminded us how adorable and hopeful babies are, and that life goes on – and it worked.”

For baby Michael, born on 11 February 2020 – just before the pandemic changed the world – his 15 minutes of fame will forever be a reminder that he brought a little laughter and light to millions when the world was in the grip of so much darkness and uncertainty.



Michael Sarembock in a screenshot of the ad

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# Pamensky attempts to clear his name at Zondo Commission



Mark Pamensky

## NICOLA MILTZ

Embattled former Eskom board member and alleged Gupta family insider, Mark Pamensky, is desperate to prove his innocence, but isn’t having an easy time of it at the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture.

He wants the Jewish community to believe he played no part at all in state capture involving the ailing power utility and the infamous Gupta brothers. This in spite of his once close association with the Guptas – the notorious family believed to be behind state capture – and his longstanding friendships with controversial Gupta lieutenants Salim Essa and Kuben Moodley.

At the Zondo Commission late last week, Pamensky attempted to explain his way out of his entanglements with the three Gupta brothers and Eskom which have plagued him for several years.

In doing so, he drew the Jewish community into the public domain by telling the commission that he had been ousted by the community. He said many believed he was involved in the highly controversial transaction between Gupta-owned Tegeta and Glencore’s Optimum Coal Mine (OCM) in spite of his persistent denials.

At the end of his testimony, he thanked Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo for the opportunity to explain that he “wasn’t involved” in spite of dubious emails written by him to the Guptas suggesting otherwise.

“I’ve waited five years to explain these emails,” Pamensky said. “I have been lambasted, I’ve been kicked out of the Jewish community. On these emails, people think I was involved in this transaction, I’ve never been involved in this transaction. So, at least I had my chance to come forward and tell it all today. For me, it’s a big, big thank you from my side.”

Pamensky didn’t respond to several requests by the *SA Jewish Report* for comment this week.

Eyebrows were raised last week, however, when he tried to explain how he came to attend the infamous and extravagant Gupta wedding in Sun City in 2013. At the time, he said he had never met the Guptas, who sent an invitation to his then employer Blue Label Telecoms.

“I don’t know why the invitation came. I took the invitation. And I went because I’m single, everyone else is married. No, they are all married, as I said to you. So they didn’t want to go. So I was happy to go because it was a free weekend,” he told Evidence Leader Advocate Pule Seleka and Zondo.

Except that Pamensky wasn’t single at the time. In fact, he got married in August 2012, the year before the Gupta wedding.

“He actually lied about being single at the time,” said one businessman who wished to remain anonymous.

Zondo seemed amused by the random invitation to the Gupta wedding.

**“I have been lambasted, I’ve been kicked out of the Jewish community.”**

“Are you suggesting that the Gupta family just sent an invitation to a company it [didn’t know] anything about?” asked Zondo. Pamensky responded with an emphatic, “Yes”.

“It just sounds strange that it would send an invitation to a company that it had never had any interaction with,” said Zondo.

Pamensky, who didn’t meet the Guptas at the wedding, said his first contact with a Gupta brother was a year later in June 2014, when “out of the blue” he received a call to “have a cup of tea” with Tony Gupta.

“Calls do come out of the blue. I got one. He said come over for a cup of tea and have a discussion,” said Pamensky. “We had the meeting, and he explained to me a bit about Sahara [Computers], his operation, where it was going, and his mining operations.”

Pamensky said “nothing came of that meeting” but three months later, Atul Gupta invited him to be a non-executive director of the Gupta-owned and Johannesburg Stock Exchange-listed Oakbay Resources and Energy (ORE). He accepted the invitation.

At the time, the Guptas were intent on acquiring Optimum Coal Mine (OCM), a company which supplied coal to Eskom. Pamensky was appointed an Eskom board member three months later in December 2014.

Pamensky has consistently denied being involved in the flow of privileged information between the companies. But emails between himself and Atul Gupta suggested the opposite.

He has steadfastly denied any involvement in the purchase of Glencore’s OCM by Tegeta which was owned by the Gupta’s Oakbay Investments. He denied he advised the Guptas based on privileged

information from Eskom. He denied he assisted the Guptas to get the R2.1bn penalty imposed on OCM withdrawn.

Pamensky’s presence on both boards simultaneously raised conflict of interest issues, as the Guptas stood to make billions by supplying coal to Eskom.

He told the commission he was already a board member when he sent an email to the Guptas congratulating them with a “mazeltov” on their acquisition of OCM. But he said he didn’t have insider information because as a board member of Gupta-owned ORE, he had recused himself from all coal-procurement decisions of the power utility in order to manage the conflict of interest.

In his email, he said he would meet the Guptas anywhere in India or Dubai to discuss the transaction, but he maintains he didn’t divulge privileged information to them.

He admitted that he advised the Guptas not to conclude the deal unless it was clear that they wouldn’t be liable for the fines imposed by Eskom. But he said this information was gleaned from the press not from Eskom.

“Where did you get the information you were talking about in the email communication to Atul about ‘acquisition of Optimum Coal’ in which you stated that you were ‘happy to get involved in this acquisition?’” asked Seleka.

“I met Mr Atul Gupta on 22 November 2015, and for the first time, he said they were looking to buy OCM. After I met him, I wrote the email to state what our discussions were and the discussion ended there,” he said.

But why did Pamensky send another email to Atul Gupta on 10 December congratulating him on the successful acquisition of OCM thanks to a R1.6bn prepayment assistance from Eskom?

This information, too, reached him through media reports and he had not used his Eskom position to lobby for the Guptas, the commission heard.

“This transaction was publicly announced and, again, I had never been involved in it. There is nothing untoward about me congratulating him based on what I saw in the press.

“I knew nothing. Everything I gained was from the press. I have never been involved in this transaction, fortunately enough.”

Pamensky went before the commission in 2019 to explain his alleged involvement in another Gupta-Eskom-linked shenanigan. He was called to testify about his alleged involvement in ratifying a dodgy sponsorship contract between cash-strapped Eskom and Gupta-owned newspaper *The New Age*.

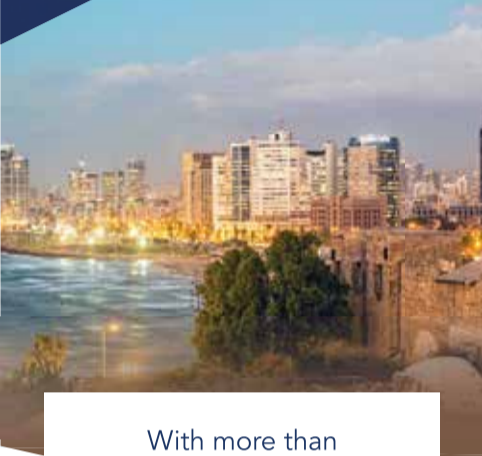
The Guptas owned TNA Media. The family’s close relationship to former President Jacob Zuma resulted in a lack of impartiality in the newspaper’s handling of controversial stories relating to Zuma and the ruling party.

Last week, Pamensky appeared sweaty and fidgety and at times broke into unrelated testimony. Even his advocate, Jonathan Blou, described him as “irrepressible”.

Pamensky is due to appear again at the Zondo Commission on a date yet to be determined.

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## The many inventions of war

War brings out the best and worst in humanity. And we are certainly living through a world war against a virus. The battlefield is different, the enemy is invisible, but humans are all on the same side in this conflict. That’s in spite of some differing views on how we fight the enemy.

One of the incredible things about the worst kinds of wars is the amazing invention and innovation that stems from these awful times.

I couldn’t help wondering about this when reading about the so-called “miracle drug” Israeli scientists have come up with, and listening to talk about other potential medication that might help against COVID-19.

It also struck me that in one year, there have been so many vaccines created against COVID-19, each of them different, but all said to be effective.

Then I thought about Ivermectin, which isn’t a new drug, but something used to treat parasitic infestations. Somewhere along the line, as medical experts got more and more desperate to save lives and protect people from this coronavirus, they found that Ivermectin might be helpful. In fact, there are some who swear it could be much more than that. Read our story on page 3.

Then, there is much talk about this new drug in Israel that has successfully passed its first clinical trial.

The EXO-CD24 inhaler treatment, developed by Professor Nadir Arber at the Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv, was tested on 30 patients with moderate to severe conditions. They all recovered, 29 of them within just three to five days.

This drug was initially formulated to treat cancer patients, and is meant to prevent a cytokine storm (when the body starts to attack its own cells). This reaction appears to happen in severe COVID-19 cases when patients develop acute respiratory distress syndrome.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis this week asked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu if his country could participate in clinical trials of the drug. But, the truth is that it’s a long way from being proven to be a miracle drug, in spite of Netanyahu dubbing it so.

However, this is just further evidence of the amazing innovation people come up with in a war. In other words, in times of need, people do phenomenal things. Or, necessity is the mother of invention.

Have you noticed those foot sanitiser pumps at the entrance to almost every shop, building, or office block? That certainly wasn’t around before COVID-19.

While inventions abound around the world, Africa has its fair share.

Students from a school in Senegal built a robot to lower the risk of passing COVID-19 between patients and caregivers. The robot is remote controlled via an app. It’s able to move around the rooms of quarantined patients, take their temperatures, and bring them medicine and food.

This is just one of many inventions, most of which we will find out about only long after the pandemic is over. It often seems to happen that the inventions created in wartime don’t see the light of day for many years.

During World War I, a material that was five times more absorbent than cotton was used for surgical dressing for the first time. Red Cross nurses saw its benefit for their own personal hygiene, and the sanitary towel was created. Once the war was over, there was no need for it as a surgical dressing, but its second use took off, and women have been using them ever since.

Tissues, sun lamps, wristwatches, stainless steel, and zips were also just some of the inventions that date back to World War I. So, too, do vegetarian sausages and tea bags.

A tea merchant started sending tea in small bags to his customers during the war. It’s not known if it was on purpose or by accident that one of these bags landed up in water, but it resulted in what we now know as tea bags.

As for soya sausages, they are attributed to an invention by Konrad Adenauer, who was the mayor of Cologne (Germany) during the war, and later became the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1949. He researched ways of substituting scarce food items, like meat, with other ingredients, eventually resulting in these sausages.

World War II gave birth to the ballpoint pen, radars, photocopying, jet engines, penicillin, satellites, superglue, and freeze dry coffee. Each has its own story.

My point is that as we are witnessing the scramble to find solutions to stemming COVID-19 and the crises created by the pandemic, we see people creating marvellous products.

Zoom – which has become our most common form of online communication since the beginning of the pandemic – wasn’t the result of the pandemic. It was invented before, but found its footing at the beginning of the pandemic.

However, I’m sure there have been many other more innovative variations on it since the beginning of this war. These will probably lead to some phenomena down the line that will take our technological prowess many steps further. We will then look back at the amazing inventions from this time.

I’m sure those who have challenged themselves on the medical and scientific frontier, which is the frontier of this particular world war, are coming up with much more than just vaccines.

For all we know, someone may have stumbled onto the prevention of the common cold and flu while trying to find a cure for COVID-19, or a way of preventing malaria or tuberculosis.

We will find out down the line...

I know every week we record history, but this week is special. Being able to capture a photograph of the first Jewish person to get vaccinated in South Africa is an astonishing coup. Down the line, people will always be able to see this history in the making. Dr Darren Joseph will always be remembered as the first person in our community to get the vaccine and we have visual evidence of this.

Shabbat Shalom!  
Peta Krost Maunder  
Editor



## Teen suicide – can it be prevented?

OPINION

MARION SCHER



Like most people, when I first started writing about mental-health issues 26 years ago and heard the word “suicide”, I’d picture someone taking their own life because they had such enormous problems there was no other way out. And I’m sure when you hear that someone who appears to have “everything” has taken their own life, your first reaction is to ask why. They had so much to live for – a lovely home, family, money. Sadly those practical elements don’t always play a role in someone who sees suicide as the only way out.

### Teen suicide

This week is Prevention of Teen Suicide Week, with the World Health Organization’s latest statistics showing that suicide is the third leading cause of death in 15-19 year olds – a shocking statistic and one that knows no distinction between race, culture, or class. The organisation’s research also shows that globally, depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents. The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), which receives 1 400 calls a day (up from the pre-COVID-19 total of 600 a day) will certainly back these statistics up.

And these days, suicide isn’t just something adults or even teens do. While the numbers of teen suicides are on the rise, so is that of younger children, with SADAG reporting cases from the age of six upwards. Yes, you read that correctly – six years of age. What could possibly make these children and teens do something so desperate, so final?

### WHEN SOMEONE IS THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE

<b>1. ACT ON YOUR OBSERVATIONS</b> If someone seems "not quite right" or they talk about death or suicide, take it seriously	<b>5. LISTEN, DON'T JUDGE</b> Let them express their feelings without interrupting. Give support and understanding.	<b>9. FIND OUT THE RISK</b> Ask about past suicide attempts or any recent loss or life crisis.
<b>2. MANAGE YOUR HESITATION</b> You can help. It is better to ask and be mistaken than not to say anything	<b>6. GET THEM TALKING</b> Ask them about their situation and feelings, without trying to fix anything.	<b>10. KEEP THEM SAFE</b> If they are at risk now, call SADAG or a mental health professional. Stay with them. Get them to hand over anything deadly.
<b>3. PREPARE IN ADVANCE</b> If you can, plan to talk in private and in person. Write down your concerns so it's easier to talk about.	<b>7. ASK THEM ABOUT SUICIDE DIRECTLY</b> To find out if they're suicidal, build the connection then ask them directly. "Do you think about suicide or ending your life?"	<b>11. ENCOURAGE THEM TO GET HELP</b> Help them to think of professionals, friends or family who might be able to help.
<b>4. START THE CONVERSATION</b> You can start by saying: that you're worried, and what's got you concerned. "I'm really worried about you, I've noticed..."	<b>8. ASK ABOUT THEIR PLANS</b> Find out if they're in immediate danger. Ask if they've thought about how or when.	<b>12. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF</b> Supporting someone can be emotional for you. Get help for yourself if you need it.

[www.sadag.org](http://www.sadag.org)Suicide Helpline: 0800 567 567SMS 31393

### One in three

This is the number of people who will suffer from mental-health issues in their lifetime. And, after seeing the reactions I got after publishing stories on mental-health issues, I knew it was time to do more, to help break the stigma and get people talking about this vital topic. So last month, my latest book: *Surfacing – People Coping with Depression and Mental Illness* (Bookstorm) was released featuring 11 people’s stories about depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. Many of the brave people who feature in the book talk about how their condition resulted in them coming close to or attempting to take their own life – some while still at school.

Did they come from bad homes? Were they mistreated? Not at all. But ask whether they spoke to anyone, really spoke to their parents, teachers, or friends, and you’ll almost certainly find the answer is no. But the stories aren’t all doom and gloom. The light comes shining through after they find help.

### The curse of bullying

A common theme that came out in many stories was school bullying. As Melissa du Preez, who suffers from clinical depression said, “Thank goodness being at school in the 90s meant we could go home and the bullying would stop. I’d hate to be at school today with social media.”

Daryl Brown never fitted in growing up in a small town in the Western Cape as a gay boy, and was constantly bullied, but thought, “It will get better at high school”, but it got worse. “It will get better at varsity”, but it didn’t. Finally a few years ago, he went to London to study further and his depression, which

he wasn’t aware he was suffering from, drove him to jump in front of an underground train. He didn’t lose his life, but he lost both legs. It was only in hospital that he saw mental-health professionals for the first time, and discovered there was medication that could take away not just his physical pain, but his mental anguish. Most importantly, he saw a therapist he could open up to about his life. This may seem strange given his disability, but Daryl today, with his mental health under control and friends and family accepting his lifestyle choices, is living his best life ever and is truly happy.

Diane Naidoo wasn’t as lucky as Daryl’s family. Her beautiful 15-year-old daughter, Tenniel, said goodbye to her mom as Diane left home one day to visit family, only to get a call a few hours later telling her that Tenniel was in hospital and she must come back. What she found when she arrived is every parent’s nightmare. Her daughter, the light and love of her life, had hung herself just after Diane left home. There was no note, but learning more since then and realising there were tell-tale signs she could – but was unlikely to – pick up, Diane gives her time freely to talk to school children and parents to create awareness.

### Speak and listen to your children

The one message that comes through in all these stories and the calls that SADAG receives, is that the single biggest problem today is communication. From the minute they get in the car or walk in the house, kids are on their electronic devices. That’s their world,

and it excludes parents. Meals are rarely eaten around a table where parents can see how their day went and pick up on the often subtle nuances of their kid’s emotional state.

I started to write this book in 2018 – pre-COVID-19 – and since then, there’s not one person who hasn’t been affected in some way by this frightening, still largely unknown virus. People’s livelihoods have been lost and futures feel uncertain. Children are returning to school causing families more distress. But how many people have spoken to a mental-health professional about their anxiety, fear, and worries. Why? Mainly because the words “mental illness” mustn’t be uttered. The stigma of anyone knowing you’re seeing a therapist or worse, that you’re on an antidepressant, is just that – a stigma. One that desperately needs to be broken. Are you shy to tell people you’re diabetic or have a heart condition? No, of course not. They are physical diseases of the body whereas mental illness is a physical disease of the brain – one that can easily be treated. Don’t suffer in silence and above all, watch your children and don’t be afraid to ask for help. It’s ok not to be ok.

**If you need help, please call the Cipla SADAG 24-hour mental-health helpline on 0800 456 789.**

• Marion Scher is an award-winning journalist, author, and media consultant who for the past 33 years has worked in print and electronic media. Her latest book, *‘Surfacing – People Coping with Depression and Mental Illness’* is available through SADAG and at all good bookstores as well as online through distributors like Amazon and Loot.

# Harvesting Brakpan Shul’s rich history

JORDAN MOSHE

**B**rakpan Shul was built in the East Rand almost a hundred years ago, and thanks to the efforts of Yakima Waner, it could stand for a hundred more.

At a time when several historic South African shuls have fallen into disrepair, Waner has committed to preserving the rich heritage of the Brakpan Jewish community by saving its shul from neglect.

Together with her organisation, The Harvest Project, she is in the process of securing its status as a heritage site so that it will forever stand as an icon of Judaism on the East Rand.

“This shul is an icon for Jews who entered South Africa from Eastern Europe during the early 1900s,” Waner told the *SA Jewish Report*. “The Jews that came to the East Rand were more labour-skilled [like merchants and cobblers], a community which used their hands and had some business skills. They weren’t as educated as the Jews that went to Johannesburg.”

Waner is the founder and chairperson of The Harvest Project, a non-profit organisation which aims to uplift vulnerable people in need (especially children) and help them to overcome the consequences of war, inequality, poverty, health issues, and abuse. The project’s main goal is to teach those in need the value of self-worth through the therapy of harvesting their own food.

According to Waner, Brakpan Shul was officially opened in 1931, although the community itself was established in 1918. It was designed by Wolseley-Spicer, a recognised English architect who designed many landmarks in South Africa.

“The United Hebrew Institute of Brakpan [UHI] is in fact much older than the building,” said Waner. “It’s the heart of the synagogue and has kept it going all these years. It also looks after the Jewish section of Brakpan Cemetery.”

It was through partnering with the UHI that Waner strengthened her family’s bond with the shul.

“The partnership came about when we were given the opportunity to open our Blessings Eco Preparatory School on the surrounding shul grounds after we were denied the right to open the school in the community,” she said. “At the time, the shul was still running, and my father, Ernest Waner, and uncle, Jeffrey Waner, had been looking after the synagogue since 2001.

“They opened their loving arms to our project in memory of all the children that were oppressed and executed during the Holocaust.”

Jeffrey played an integral role in maintaining Jewish life in Brakpan over 15 years, assembling a *minyan* on Saturdays by bringing residents of Sandringham Gardens to the shul, and maintaining the Jewish cemetery. Tragically, he passed away early last year.

“Brakpan Shul has been a great part of my life since I was a child,” said Waner. “I was never regarded a Jew because my mother wasn’t, but that didn’t stop my connection with this sacred space. I will always remember my aunt, Matilda Rosowsky, speaking of its healing properties. She said the shul had healed many souls, including her own.

“For years, the UHI wanted to open a museum and convert the building into a heritage site so it could be a permanent icon that celebrated all the Jews of the East Rand, not just Brakpan,” she said. “I was honoured to look after this building in memory and celebration of all my ancestors.”

The Harvest Project has created a presence on the grounds through the school and the Harvest Centre of Judaism & Equality, promoting equality and diminishing deterioration or vandalism, said Waner.

“We keep the space clean and safe, and will be making the UHI’s dream of a museum and heritage site a reality,” she said.

“Today, there is still a caretaker who makes sure the site is clean, something which isn’t the case with other sites in the East Rand. Some Jewish cemeteries on the East Rand and in other metros in the country where Jews have left are in very poor shape. They are nothing but eye sores.”

Few Jews remain in Brakpan today, among them 93-year-old Monica Ressel, the secretary of the UHI, who still calls former Jewish residents of Brakpan to see how they are and to remind them of upcoming *yahrzeits*.

“There are a few Jews left from the past, but no youth have remained here,” said Waner. “During lockdown and now, The Harvest Project offers services to the elderly Jewish residents of Brakpan, and though the shul will



**The children of Blessings Eco Preparatory School and the Harvest Project in front of the Brakpan Shul celebrating Rosh Hashanah 2020**

always be a part of the Waner family, it has become sacred and precious to others too.”

Indeed, during the first lockdown in

2020, about 19 000 meals were provided to those in need from the shul grounds.

“This is what has become of Brakpan Shul,” says Waner. “It’s now a place of salvation and hope for all in the name of G-d.”

The plight of immigrants to South African and the less fortunate, often treated with hostility,

isn’t unlike that of Jews who entered this country in the 19th century, Waner said.

“The Harvest Project sees every life as equal, and protecting this landmark is a step to promote equality for the formerly oppressed and the children who are oppressed today,” she said. “As long as this building stands, we won’t give up on the community which looks to us for salvation.”

With plans in place to secure status as a heritage site, Waner hopes to celebrate the building’s centenary by planting 100 fruit trees in the community via “The Harvest Plant a Tree Project” when the time comes.

“We encourage people from the East Rand to donate any artefacts to the shul



**A symbol of equality of the children of The Harvest Project**

museum,” she said. “Many Jews don’t understand the important of having a presence. They take it for granted. Many have criticised the UHI for keeping the synagogue open because they don’t see eye to eye with its open-mindedness.

“At the end of the day, the UHI looks after the forgotten ones. That’s a great honour in the eyes of Hashem.”

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Danlee 08/13/01/020

# Social activist says it’s time to reclaim the term “apartheid”

NICOLA MILTZ

It’s not often a young black man and former supporter of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement in South Africa stands up for Israel in the media.

Klaas Mokgomole of Africans For Peace has done so on several occasions, the most recent being this month on Eyewitness News (EWN). In that opinion piece, the young LLB graduate called on black people globally to reclaim the term “apartheid” and end its “cultural appropriation”.

Mokgomole sees advocating for Israel as a personal responsibility. He feels obligated to educate and inform people about certain truths, however unpopular they may be amongst his contemporaries.

His EWN article was in response to Israeli human-rights group B’Tselem calling Israel an “apartheid state” for the first time in its 31-year history. B’Tselem began using the word “apartheid” last month when describing Israel, a term long seen as taboo even by many critics of Israel. It’s also a term that has been vehemently rejected by Israeli leaders and supporters worldwide.

B’Tselem released a report in January which said that while Palestinians lived under different forms of Israeli control in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and within Israel itself, they have fewer rights than Jews in the entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

“One of the key points in our analysis is that this is a single geopolitical area ruled by one government,” said B’Tselem Director Hagai El-Ad. “This isn’t democracy plus occupation. This is apartheid between the river and the sea.”

Mokgomole flatly rejects this description. Like many international pro-Israel lobbyists, he says the B’Tselem claims are “anti-Israel” and a malicious attempt to grab newspaper headlines. While accepting that the conflict has created social issues in Israel that need to be addressed, calling it apartheid grossly diminishes the suffering of millions of black South Africans under the real apartheid regime, he says.

“As a young black South African, I’m reminded that for our parents and grandparents, the apartheid years were a source of deep personal trauma. Their generations were compelled to live under that viciously discriminatory system and those of us who have



Klaas Mokgomole

grown up in post-apartheid South Africa can clearly sense its lingering legacy,” Mokgomole wrote.

“Precisely because we South Africans know intimately what apartheid involved, we have a duty to question whether it’s an appropriate term to be used outside of its continental context, such as by B’Tselem in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

“Apartheid was about race, not religion or nationality. In South Africa, the primary issue was the domination by one race over another. By contrast, Arab citizens of Israel enjoy the same rights and freedoms as Jewish Israelis.”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* this week, Mokgomole said he felt it was necessary to air his views publicly.

“I decided to write the article because I see the need in this country to educate the youth about this narrative which has been hijacked by certain anti-Israel groups trying to perpetuate hatred.

“I watched a segment on CNN regarding B’Tselem’s apartheid announcement, and it provoked me. Here was a world news outlet publishing neo-fake news about Israel, and I just thought people were going to watch this and believe it. I needed to try do something.”

Mokgomole has come a long way from his heady student representative council days when he admits he sympathised with student movements supporting BDS at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). He was part of the controversial Wits 11 who were disciplined after

disrupting an Israeli-funded concert on campus in 2013. The protest included a number of anti-Israel activists chanting “*dubula e Juda*” (shoot the Jew).

He was expelled from Wits for the part he played in the protests, something which came as a blow to the then final-year law student.

The young activist was forced to get a job after losing his student funding following the disruptive protest. But he began educating himself about the Middle East and looking at the complete picture to form a different view on the troubled region.

A visit to Israel in 2015 as part of the South African Israel Forum helped to inform him further. Youth leaders from the African National Congress Youth League, the Progressive Youth Alliance, and the South African Student Congress went on the tour.

“I was still part of BDS at that stage, but I started to realise that politically active students on campuses were brainwashed into believing one pro-Palestine narrative, and that students were inclined to believe only one side of the story.”

Upon returning from the study tour of Israel and Palestine, he and several students were lambasted by BDS for attending the sponsored tour. He was criticised for being a “sell out”.

What followed was a process he terms “unlearning to learn”.

“The trip opened my eyes,” he said, and led to the formation of Africans for Peace, a collective of independent students, scholars, and activists

who bring an African lens to global debate on peace and stability on the African continent and around the world.

He has written many articles and given many media interviews. He has also made several appearances on news channel Newzroom Afrika debating the Middle East issue with pro-Palestine activists.

In his latest opinion piece on EWN, he argues that there is little comparison between apartheid South Africa and Israel, concluding, “While the challenges that face Israel and its neighbour, Palestine, may result in one group feeling discriminated against by the other, it’s different to the legally-based racism and white supremacy that once reigned in our country.

“It’s time the international community recognised this fact, and helped build bridges of trust between people in the region necessary to find a lasting solution to the conflict. This would be the true way to use the legacy of apartheid without stealing it from the real victims.”

## Russian-Israeli tennis player makes history at Australian Open



Aslan Karatsev plays against Grigor Dimitrov at the Australian Open in Melbourne

EMILY BURACK – JTA

Aslan Karatsev, a Russian tennis player with Jewish heritage who lived in Israel for nearly a decade, is making history at the Australian Open.

It’s his first appearance in a Grand Slam tournament, and now Karatsev, who was ranked 253rd in the world after play resumed last year following a pandemic break, is in the semi-finals.

He’s only the second qualifier in history to make it to the Australian Open semi-finals, the fifth qualifier to reach a Grand Slam semi-final in the so-called Open Era (beginning in 1968), and the first male player to reach the semi-finals in his Grand Slam debut.

Along the way, the 27-year-old upset Argentine-Jewish standout Diego Schwartzman, who is ranked in the top 10, in the third round; top-20 Canadian youngster Felix Auger Aliassime in the fourth; and veteran Grigor Dimitrov in the quarterfinals.

Next up is Novak Djokovic, the No. 1 seed and defending champion, in the semis.

Karatsev has soared to 114th in the rankings and no matter the result against Djokovic, he will break the top 50. “It’s an unbelievable feeling,” Karatsev said after this win.

Karatsev was born in the North Caucasus region of Russia. His maternal grandfather is Jewish.

“I moved to Israel when I was three years old with my family, and then I started to practice in Yafo, Tel Aviv-Yafo,” he said at a recent news conference. “I grew up there, practicing there until 12 years old, and then I moved back to Russia with my father.”

Karatsev said the Israel Tennis Association’s lack of funding was a major factor pushing him to leave. His mother and sister remained in Israel.

He moved to Rostov, Russia, for better training, then Moscow. From there, it was on to Halle, Germany, and Barcelona, Spain, before finally ending up in Minsk, Belarus, where he lives today. Karatsev still has an Israeli passport, and speaks fluent Hebrew.

The *Australian Jewish News* reported that in September, Amir Weintraub, an Israeli tennis player, and Avi Peretz, the chairperson of the Israel Tennis Association, tried to convince Karatsev to play internationally for Israel. But Karatsev had already signed on to compete with Russia in the Davis Cup tournament, which pits teams of players representing different countries against each other, Olympics style.

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# SA-born hero’s murder resonates 52 years later

TALI FEINBERG

Fifty-two years ago this week, student and Israeli army paratrooper Edward “Eddie” Joffe, who had recently made aliyah with his family from South Africa, was senselessly murdered by terrorists when 5kg of explosives hidden in a biscuit tin at a Jerusalem supermarket exploded. It killed him instantly, together with his friend, Leon Kanner, who had recently made aliyah from Uruguay.

More than half a century later, the tragedy still resonates through the generations. “Our lives were forever changed,” his brother, Harold Joffe, told the *SA Jewish Report* this week from his home in Ra’anana.

“My mother went white overnight, and got diabetes from the shock. My father was shattered and died at the age of 64. At the far-too-young age of 21, Edward was laid to rest in Har Hamenuchot Yerushala’im.

“He was strong, handsome, smart, a decent and fantastic young man. Full of hope, ambition, and plans. Edward, where would you have been today? Who would you have married? How many other cousins would our children have had?” Joffe asks.

These “what ifs” show the heart breaking ramifications of terrorism, and the thousand questions it generates about whether things could have turned out differently. While it may feel like something that happened long ago and in a different time and place, the story will forever be linked to South Africa, where Joffe grew up.

“Edward completed his schooling at SACS in Cape Town in 1964. He did his military service in South Africa, and at the beginning of 1966, my parents, sister, and Edward came on aliyah. He joined the *garin* in Kibbutz Tzora, and then went to Gedud 50 of Nahal,” says his brother.

“Edward was known for his outstanding physical abilities coupled with gentleness and a smile. A friend related to us ‘there was no hike in which he did not lend a helping hand to the weaker ones; there was no task that he did not accept without a smile’.

“Eddie didn’t expect any prizes, but he was unable to hide his pride at being a fighter in the paratroopers,” his brother says. To a friend in South Africa, he wrote, “I must admit that this is the greatest pleasure of my life. I don’t know if the fame of the Israeli paratroopers has reached you, but I have now joined their ranks. I now wear the red beret known for its glory, and on my breast are found the famous wings.”

“At the outbreak of the Six-Day War, Eddie found himself on the flank of Northern Sinai. He was injured in the neck by shrapnel which missed his jugular vein by a small fraction of an inch,” Joffe says.

A friend wrote, “I knew him as a soldier and a leader who never stopped smiling and infecting those around him with his joy of life. I saw him wounded, and I picture him thus: Eddie, the tall and powerful paratrooper, wounded with blood flowing from him, but his mouth open with a wide smile.”

The late Joffe wrote to a friend from the hospital, “It was an honour to have fought at the front and while blood flowed from me [I was conscious all the time], I thought that even if I were to die, it would have been



Edward Joffe



Leon Kanner

worthwhile.”

He was injured again during his service, during the Karamah offensive in March 1968. Towards the end of October 1968, he was accepted at Hebrew University. He moved to Jerusalem to start his studies in the faculty of agriculture, and befriended Kanner. They attended the same lectures, and eventually boarded together in the same small apartment.

“On Friday, 21 February 1969, they went to the Supersol in Rehov Agron Jerusalem to make some purchases for Shabbat and an upcoming excursion. As they approached the meat counter, an explosive device – a biscuit tin filled with 5kg of dynamite – which had been placed in the store by two cowardly female Arab terrorists, was detonated, and Eddie and Leon were both killed instantly,” says his brother. A huge funeral in Jerusalem followed, attended by Yigal Allon and many other Israeli dignitaries.

“We were and are very private about this life-changing episode,” says Joffe. “However, in May 2014, my niece saw an article regarding the trial in the United States of Rasmea Odeh, Edward’s murderer, who had been found guilty of immigration fraud after serving 10 years in an Israeli jail and then being freed during one of the many prisoner swaps of the 1970s. All we wanted was closure. Unfortunately, the matter continued with extensive and mainly anti-Israel and pro-Odeh publicity, until she was finally deported to Jordan at the end of 2017. I’m grateful that my mother never lived to experience this vile tirade.

“Stripping Edward and Leon of their lives didn’t chase us away, and it did nothing to further peace. Edward will always live on in our hearts, and we will forever keep his memory alive,” he says.

Like Joffe, Kanner’s family also made aliyah, and he joined them after studying abroad. In November 1968, he started agriculture studies at the Hebrew University, where he met Joffe. He was 20 when he was senselessly killed. After the bombing, the family developed photographs from his camera that was found at the scene. One photo shows a smiling Kanner with the Jerusalem hills behind him and the world at his feet.

A Joffe family friend, Michael Jankelowitz, launched a campaign for the municipality and the supermarket to erect a memorial plaque, but today there is still nothing to commemorate the tragedy

that happened there. “There is a park across the street. It would be appropriate to place a memorial there,” says Joffe. “It should have been done.”

Most of the Joffe family live in Israel. “My parents are buried next to Edward. My mother was extremely Zionist, and the terror attack never broke her Zionism, but it broke her spirit,” says Joffe.

Two weeks before she died, on 23 September 2009, their mother, Roslyn Joffe, recorded a video saying goodbye to her family, and spoke of the impact of her son’s death on her. “I’ve been blessed with wonderful children, grandchildren, and fantastic great grandchildren. Not everyone has that blessing in life. What’s overshadowed all my pleasure has been the loss of Edward. I could never get over that. It’s overshadowed all my joy.”



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## A BRIDGE TO BETTER DAYS

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to devastate the economy, an increasing number of Jewish owned businesses are struggling. The Gesher Small Business Relief Fund offers last resort, flexible term, interest-free loans up to R750,000 to appropriate Jewish-owned businesses in South Africa. We have funds available to continue to be able to support small businesses and professionals where they broadly meet the qualifying criteria set out on our website.

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# Jerusalem empty and masked in silence

ILAN OSSENDRYVER

**W**alking down the alleyways of Jerusalem's Old City, the Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Armenian Quarters are so quiet, you can actually hear your own prayers.

You can almost hear the sounds of breathing from shop owners, some of whom have their doors open hoping for some desperately needed sales. Otherwise, many have shut their businesses because of COVID-19. Nobody knows when they will reopen for business.

At the Kotel, (Western Wall) the area in front of the wall that was once open and full of life is now a puzzle of blocked-off squares to allow a *minyan* of only 10 people to pray at a time.

Those praying are caged in, in the hope that their fellow worshippers will be wearing a mask. In and out they come, with someone shouting, "I need one more person to make the *minyan*!"

At the Al Aksa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, people are also praying, but without prayer blocks.

The usual vibrancy of Jerusalem has been subdued by masks and fear. There is hope that once the virus has been tamed, people will return to welcome the Sabbath, pilgrims will walk the Via Delarosa, remembering Jesus, and Muslims will return in their numbers for Friday prayers, bringing hope to the world.

And, once again, shop owners will be able to sell t-shirts saying, "I got stoned in Israel" and "Don't worry America, Israel is behind you!"



## WHO DO YOU REMEMBER?



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Send us the names of **any family members** you **lost in the Holocaust** and we will include them in our online Yom Hashoah ceremony.

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# Jews should be “inspired by gay pride”

TALI FEINBERG

You’ve heard of the gay pride movement, but have you ever considered that a similar concept could be applied to Jewish identity?

Internationally renowned educator Ben M Freeman’s first book, *Jewish Pride: Rebuilding a People* is inspired by his experiences with the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) pride movement. It aims to educate, inspire, and empower Jewish people to reject the shame of antisemitism imposed on Jews by the non-Jewish world, as well as non-Jewish perceptions of what it means to be a Jew.

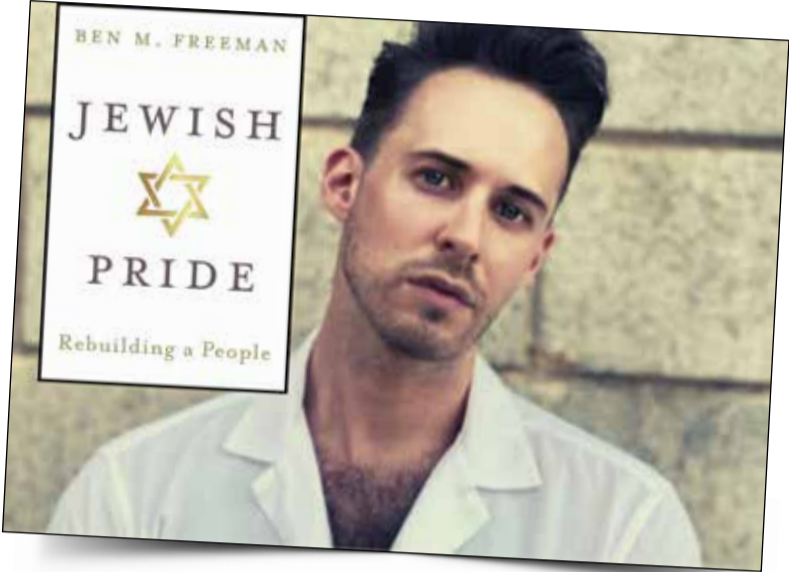
The book was launched in South Africa at an online event hosted by the South African Jewish Museum and the Jacob Gitlin Library.

Freeman is head of humanities at The Harbour School, an international school in Hong Kong. He is also a freelance lecturer at schools and universities, and leads educational webinars focusing on antisemitism to Jews and non-Jews alike from all over the world, helping them to understand the rise in antisemitism. He also works with companies and educational institutions, providing training and consultancy on issues related to inclusion and diversity.

Freeman was in conversation with Richard Freedman, the former director of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre and the South African Holocaust & Genocide Foundation.

Freeman described how he grew up in Glasgow, Scotland, one of only 5 000 Jews in the country. “My parents made a real effort to raise us as proud Jews. We went to the only Jewish primary school, and observed Shabbat and *chaggim*,” he said in his strong Scottish accent.

Meanwhile, realising he was gay, he has travelled “a long road to come to terms with that identity, and this book is based on that journey. If it wasn’t for that journey, I wouldn’t know the importance of the concept of pride, and the damage that shame can cause. I look at the pride movement, and I see the conversations that we need to have in our own community.”



The fallout around former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn also galvanised him. “It was a moment of reckoning. I saw two responses in the British Jewish community: one was really impressive and embodied pride – rabbis put aside their differences to write letters to the press together, and people unified. But the second was the hangover of the ‘keep your head down’ syndrome. This has always been the unofficial policy of the Jewish community in Britain – don’t complain about antisemitism. [Community members] understand it’s wrong, but they have been socialised to keep their head down, so when it comes to it, they can’t advocate for themselves.”

One could say that the same “keep your head down” syndrome could be applied to the organised Jewish community during most of the apartheid era. Freeman feels strongly that Jews need to engage with our past, educate ourselves, and acknowledge that we have experienced generations of trauma that inform our actions every day. However, he notes that this isn’t about being victims. Rather, by understanding it, we can shake off shame and fear, and act in a more positive and proactive manner.

“We need to have public discussions on epigenetic trauma, generational trauma, and what it means to be a Jew in a post-Holocaust world,” he said. “We understand antisemitism intellectually, but often this is an emotional discussion, about our individual and collective self-esteem and mental health.” It’s a long journey, and it’s not going to be easy – each of us have to work on it every day.

Looking back, Freeman notes that when he was younger, he consciously tried to hide his Jewish identity. For example, when he was 16, he dyed his hair blonde. “When I went to university [in Scotland], it was a nightmare. I heard the same rhetoric as Corbyn. The difference was it was on the fringes, not in the mainstream British political system.”

He said the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements

should inspire Jews. “We need that too, a version that fits our context. We need to be raising our voices and demanding to be heard. The black community isn’t asking to be heard, it’s demanding it. It’s the correct course of action, and we need to see it in our community too.”

He emphasises that when it comes to Zionism, “We need to reclaim both the concept and the word. I believe the non-Jewish world has appropriated and bastardised it. If you look at it, it’s a movement of self-determination for the Jewish people based on progressive values. As Jews, we understand that, but non-Jewish people describe it as white supremacy, colonialism, imperialism, and so on.” As Jews, we can disagree and debate what we want Zionism to look like, but “the non-Jewish world doesn’t get to tell us what Zionism is. It’s not their movement. It’s a Jewish concept defined by Jews.”

Freeman said Jews who have a white skin are often demonised by both the extreme left and right. “The extreme right see us as ‘shape shifters’ who look like them, can ‘infiltrate’ them, and bring them down from within. The extreme left say we symbolise whiteness. For them, that’s colonialism, oppression, and white supremacy. Both sides are framing us as what they see as the problem in the world or what they hate in the world.”

Others may accuse Jewish pride of being white supremacy, he said, but it’s not about taking others down, demonising or blaming others, and it’s about including Jews of every stripe.

The book includes stories from seven very different Jews. We must celebrate this diversity, but we can also note the similarities between our stories, Freeman said, emphasising that Jewish pride will come about when we heal our divisions from within. “We need to look at our racism, misogyny, and homophobia. I’ve seen Orthodox Jews ‘erase’ Reform Jews, and I’ve seen Progressive Jews demonise the Orthodox.”

Those who have a Jewish father, but not a Jewish mother, “are erased a lot”, Freeman said.

“Part of this healing is educating ourselves instead of picking arbitrary points in Jewish history to define our identity. I’ve called the book ‘rebuilding a people’ because we were a civilisation, a culture, a people, a nation before religion emerged – and the matrilineal definition of Judaism emerged even later,” he said.

“I respect the Halacha, but we also need to recognise this past. Just having this conversation is healing. I see the solution as our Jewishness. All Israel is responsible for each other, so we need to do better. And, the only people who get to define Jewish identity are Jewish people.”

## Yeshiva gets party hat on for Rosh Chodesh

Yeshiva College Primary and Girls High School celebrated Rosh Chodesh Adar with music, movement, delicious food, and lots of fun. The primary school was filled with the tunes of Hallel, a sea of colours, hot chips drenched in sauce, and boxes of Smarties. The Girls High School played laser tag, did Zumba, drank smoothies, and had paint fights organised by YID and led by the school’s amazing Grade 11s. What a way to start this special month!



## PJ Library raises literacy through bedtime stories

The PJ Library programme was officially launched at all King David pre-primary and junior primary schools in 2021. Founded by American philanthropist Harold Grinspoon, PJ Library caters for Jewish families with young children. It aims to encourage learning through Jewish bedtime stories hence the “PJ” in the title, short for “pyjama”.

Every month for the past three years, Jewish children around South Africa have received a free, magnificent, brand-new book themed with Jewish ideas and concepts.

The programme, which is now in more than 30



**Josh and Emmy Waks at King David Pre-Primary Linksfield are excited by the launch of PJ Library**

PJ Library is open to all Jewish children ages three to eight years old. If your child doesn’t belong to one of the many participating Jewish schools, you are welcome to sign them up by clicking on the following link: [www.pjlibrary.org.za/enrol](http://www.pjlibrary.org.za/enrol)

Letters

PRICE OF KOSHER MEAT COMES DOWN TO PRODUCTION COSTS

Rather than being a stiff-necked people who complain a lot, it’s better to be a “light unto the nations” and glow with goodwill. Unfortunately, holding on to *faribles* (resentments) is more common in the South African Jewish community than it is elsewhere. This includes petty grudges.

Not only does it make us unhappy and result in people avoiding us, it’s contrary to our religion. The Torah says, “Do not bear a grudge.”

Unfortunately, there are extra costs involved in producing kosher food, especially meat. Some might be tempted to be suspicious about them.

Many kosher butcheries have closed down over the years, with Nussbaums being the latest casualty. If they were so lucrative, that wouldn’t be the case.

It’s true that many have left the country, reducing the demand, but many have also become kosher, increasing the demand.

South African Jewry has the highest proportion of *ba’alei teshuva* (newly religious people) in the world. By far. What was once a

secular community has become a strong centre of Torah. Our community is respected internationally for this, whether Chabad, haredi, or modern Orthodox.

In the early 1970s there were only five *shomrei Shabbos* families in Glenhazel, and that included rabbis. My father reports that 60 years ago, there was no such thing as someone wearing a yarmulka.

Along with this revival, there has been a huge increase in the availability of kosher foods such as cereals, biscuits, canned food, and so on, making it much easier to eat in accordance with the traditional ways. Since they are mass produced, the prices are low.

Nevertheless, it’s admirable that so many are prepared to pay the extra costs of buying kosher meat, especially those who are struggling financially. – Martin Zagnoev, Johannesburg

LOOKING FOR CONTACTS FROM SALANT, LITHUANIA

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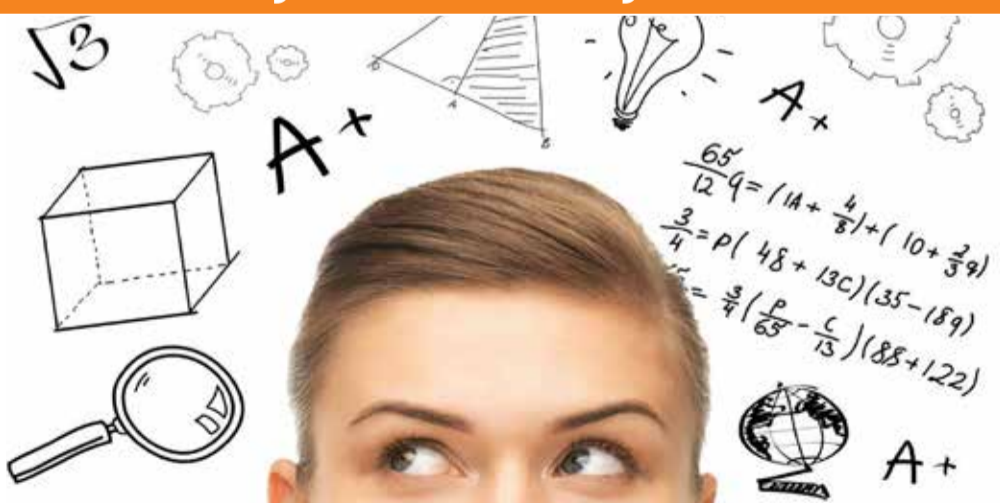
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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Online Yom Hashoah focuses on youngsters

Last year's COVID-19 lockdown rendered impossible the traditional Yom Hashoah commemorative gatherings. Instead, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), working with the South African Holocaust Foundations, survivors, and other stakeholders, organised a single national virtual Yom Hashoah ceremony for the entire country. This was a signal success, with more than 17 000 people participating. While we are no longer subject to the hard lockdown conditions that prevailed in 2020, the COVID-19 threat is still far from over, hence this year, we will once again be hosting a combined online ceremony. The event is being organised by a national Yom Hashoah planning committee, once again headed by SAJBD National President and Durban Holocaust Centre Director Mary Kluk, and will take place on 9 April at 12:00.

As can never be stressed enough, each victim of the Shoah wasn't a statistic but a distinct, unique individual, one whom others loved, esteemed, and cared about. For this reason, the practice of preceding Yom Hashoah gatherings with reading out of some of the names of those who perished is now commonplace throughout the world. For this year's ceremony, we have launched a campaign to encourage community members to send through the names, place, year of birth and, where known, the year of death of family members lost to the Shoah. This will feature in the online programme. In line with the emphasis on passing on the torch of remembrance to the next generation, we encourage younger community members in particular to participate by providing us with these details, even (or perhaps especially) though they won't personally have

## ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



known the people whose memory they are helping to perpetuate. To send through these details as well as for further information on the event, write to yomhashoah2021@gmail.com.

### COVID-19 and interfaith activism

Confronting the COVID-19 threat is inextricably bound with adapting everyday behaviour to minimise contracting and spreading infection. The leaders of various faith communities have a vital role to play because of their ability to guide and influence their respective constituencies, and hence they have been identified as an important resource by governments around the world. Mary Kluk continues to represent our community on the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Social & Behavioural Change, and our leadership has been participating in several other interfaith forums, including the president's meetings with religious communities. For the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week, our Cape Council held a webinar titled "Coping with COVID-19 – thoughts of the interfaith community". Speakers included representatives of the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Baha'i communities, as well as the Western Cape government interfaith team. The event was fully subscribed, attracting many from other faith communities and nongovernmental organisations with others participating via Facebook. We commend our Cape colleagues on this most worthwhile initiative.

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

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

# Cancel or at least postpone Purim

I'm not sure we need Purim this year. I felt the same about the high holidays back in 2020, when we were much younger, thinner, and fitter. Back then, I argued that we had had months of contemplation, introspection, and focus on who would live and who would die. In spite of my sensible suggestion to cancel it, they went ahead pretty much as they always did.

Only with a greater focus on those who would die by plague.

I will try my luck once again, but this time, I will motivate for the cancellation or at least postponement of the festival of Purim, which is due to take place next Friday. My reasons aren't because I have abandoned my faith and no longer walk on the path of the righteous – assuming that I ever did. It's not because I no longer see the hidden miracles and had of G-d all around us.

Rather it's because I do.

I would argue that to celebrate the festival of Purim next Friday, when each of the last 363

days of lockdown felt exactly like Purim, seems a little pointless. Because the month of Adar and the festival of Purim is about an "upside-down world", and the past year has been the most topsy turvy of all.

But that speaks to the general. It's in the specifics that it becomes even more interesting.

Especially the drinking part. At a time when we can access alcohol.

And the part about not being able to tell the difference between Mordechai and Haman. Mordechai and Haman? Let's be real. Most of us find it hard to tell if it's Tuesday or Wednesday on any given Monday. Those two characters will be a cinch when it comes to muddling them up. I hardly even need alcohol to aid the confusion.

Further, because hypothetically, one's 16-year-old daughter who has little access to her friends, except by way of technology is now at home most the time, it, hypothetically, becomes important to learn the names of the main characters in her megillah.

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



At 52 years old, I have trouble remembering which one of the Purim characters Esther was, let alone trying to distinguish modern-day Mia from Olivia from Amelia or Isabella. Haman and Mordechai are practically the "Maths Lit" of the mix-up challenge.

I don't even need to mention masks, because that's too obvious. Or money for the poor.

In 2020, in both the United States and in Israel, Purim was the start of the first wave. Our timing is good in that we have ended the second one. Whereas I don't really want to cancel one of my favourite festivals, it's not a time to abandon caution and revel in the day. Perhaps, rather, we can continue to look for the hand of G-d in all the places that we least expect to find Him.

A column of WIZO South Africa

# WIZO SA's new president rallies women across the board

"If you want this, or are doing this now, then you need to join me," says Shelley Trope-Friedman, the new president of WIZO (the Women's International Zionist Organisation) SA.

Trope-Friedman takes her recent appointment seriously. A good leader is one who communicates effectively, encourages a sense of urgency, shares knowledge, and is passionate about what she does. She adds to that the ability to listen, to quantify, to act, and to engage. As president, she intends to do just that. She is deeply thankful for the opportunity to serve at the helm of this exciting organisation, one that has the ethos of equipping individuals with the skills they need to transform their lives. As she puts it, "We do what matters most!"

One of Trope-Friedman's primary goals is to ensure that all women are represented in WIZO.

"The work we do and ideals we stand for carry no age restriction, and I hope to inspire women of all ages who feel passionate about being part of this powerful and transformative organisation," she says.

She believes that young women bring energy and excitement to WIZO's projects, and older women bring history and the experience to assist and direct the youth. This combination of young and old is pivotal to the growth and success of the organisation's endeavours.

"At WIZO, we seek to provide women with all they need to live fruitful and safe lives. In Israel, we try to provide direction and education to the young. We also provide assistance to abused women while offering anger management and support to abusive men. We are actively concerned about all in society," says Trope-Friedman.

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein described WIZO SA as "an amazing sisterhood, a group of talented, bright, and caring woman who dedicate themselves to the holy work of building a better world through extraordinary generosity of spirit, selfless volunteerism, and committed ideals".

Trope-Friedman's vision is to encourage



Shelley Trope-Friedman



all women to be part of this ideal. "Together, we will shine brightly and be a beacon of hope. At WIZO SA, we hold our own because of the generous people in our community who help us to save those women and children who need us most".

Following in her late parents, Bob and Adele Trope's, footsteps, Trope-Friedman spent many years involved with charitable institutions including the South African Zionist Federation, ORT, and Glendale Home.

"My parents supported and helped me to discover the essence of giving, donating, and working to build a better future for all. This is the truth of what we do, and I look forward to steering WIZO SA in this direction. I feel privileged and humbled to have been given this great honour to lead as president. I welcome you all to join me in my exciting new journey with WIZO."

- To contact Shelley Trope-Friedman, email wizosouthafrica@gmail.com.

This column is paid for by WIZO SA

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