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We will not be publishing the newspaper next week, but will resume the following week (9 April).

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Israeli company turns SA water from toxic to drinkable

TALI FEINBERG

An Israeli company is assisting local government authorities to transform toxic water to healthy drinking water in what could be a game-changer for South Africa as a water-scarce country.

The company, BlueGreen Water Technologies, is a world leader in eradicating toxic algae from water sources, and has offered its expertise to South Africa.

With a branch in South Africa, the company started working at Setumo Dam on the Molopo River in North West province earlier this month. The project is in collaboration with Sedibeng Water, the company overseen by the Department of Water and Sanitation.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Germany where he is currently based, BlueGreen Water Technologies Chief Executive Eyal Harel said, “Toxic algae blooms are like a ‘global pandemic’ of bacteria. They infest bodies of water, and when that population of bacteria explodes, it makes the water toxic. You can’t use that water for drinking or recreation, it depreciates property, it makes that body of water too hostile for other life forms, and it creates health and economic problems.”

The company believes in the value of all people having access to quality drinking water, Harel said, and it’s doing the work in South Africa on humanitarian grounds. “At the Setumo Dam, it’s more like lots of bacteria with a bit of water in

between. But half a million people rely on it for drinking water. We came to help get good quality drinking water to these communities.” Local government departments and officials had been “extremely helpful ... everyone is working together”, Harel said. “Even in this time of pandemic and reduced budgets, they are doing an excellent job.”

He said the condition of the dam meant it was impossible to treat it from the ground, so they have had to deploy helicopters to distribute product from the air. “This is the first operation of its kind in the world. It’s new for us too, and requires lots of co-ordination with government officials, water boards, and locals.”

The company describes its products as “floating, slow-release formulations of market-approved algacides designed to prevent the intensification of cyanobacterial toxic blooms in freshwater bodies [also known as ‘blue green algae’].”

Harel said he was motivated to work with water as “water touches all people, no matter their differences.” With 22 March being ‘World Water Day’, he emphasises that “two billion people around the world only have access to poor quality water. About 99.9% is left untreated, and people think there is nothing they can do. We want to educate decision-makers that this isn’t the case anymore. Lakes can be treated, even much bigger lakes than Setumo Dam. In addition, algae blooms can actually be prevented.”

Harel got married in Cape Town,



Water treatment being deployed from the air at Setumo Dam in North West

and was there during the height of the drought in 2018.

“I remember the term ‘Day Zero’, and how frightening it was,” he said, pointing out that drought also contributes to algae blooms because with less water, “pollution concentrates and bacteria grows. It becomes even more toxic, less liquid, and makes the existing problem much worse. That could be the reason Setumo Dam was in such appalling condition.”

The company also assisted Roodepoort Dam, reducing toxic levels of algae in the water two weeks before a rowing competition in March 2020, just before the pandemic hit. However, Harel said Setumo Dam was in much worse shape. “It’s first and

foremost a drinking water source,” he said. “It’s in a rural area that borders Botswana, and the communities are about as poor as it gets. So it’s our small way of helping.”

He emphasises that the company is “completely non-political” and is simply trying to reach out to areas where it knows there is an acute problem. It has even reached out to other Middle Eastern countries that aren’t friendly to Israel. “We aren’t here to make a political stand but a humanitarian one, and any human-rights organisation should understand that.”

“Part of our agenda is to empower local communities to take responsibility for their local water source. We come as guests,”

he says. “In all likelihood, if the dam isn’t maintained, it will go back to the way it was. So, our ultimate goal is to train local communities to be able to assess water conditions. They will be the ‘boots on the ground’ and raise the flag that there is a problem. We work with real-time remote sensing capabilities and satellite imagery to assess conditions in the lake, so they will be part of that process.”

“We have established good relationships with the government. It sees the problem for what it is, and is taking a long-term approach. We are totally committed to improving water quality in South Africa, and

Continued on page 32>>



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Koleinu calls out horrific attack on London Jewish woman

TALI FEINBERG

A young, pregnant Jewish woman walks down a London street without a care in the world. Behind her, a man strides purposefully, quickening his steps as he gets closer. As he reaches her, he takes out a bag or pillowcase that he throws over her head. He then punches her four times in the stomach, throwing his full weight behind each blow. The woman somehow breaks free and runs away, and then man runs off in the opposite direction.

It sounds like something out of a movie, but this scene played out on a London street on the evening of 18 March 2021, in the neighbourhood of Stamford Hill, which has a large Haredi population. The assault was captured on surveillance cameras, but local neighbourhood watch group Shomrim has since deleted the video from its

Twitter feed, saying, "It's a very violent attack, and can be triggering for many victims."

The 20-year-old woman, who is about 28 weeks pregnant, was taken to hospital for

treatment for minor injuries. A man in his late 50s has been arrested on suspicion of grievous bodily harm, and is now in custody at an East London police station.

Rabbi Herschel Gluck, the president of Shomrim, said the woman was left "deeply traumatised". He noted that "[The perpetrator] followed her for about a mile. In other words, it was clearly premeditated. It wasn't an opportunistic incident." The brother of the woman later told the *Jewish Chronicle* that "It was because she was Jewish. She was wearing a Jewish headscarf at the time." He confirmed that she did not know her attacker, and he had followed her for almost 20 minutes before the attack.

Describing how over the past month, there have been seven similar assaults on women and girls in the area, Gluck said, "It has reached a new level of violence. It seems he wanted to kill her. It's a very shocking picture." He said the Jewish community was "deeply concerned".

The attack comes just weeks after 33-year-old Sarah Everard disappeared in South London on the evening of 3 March. On 9 March, Metropolitan Police Officer Wayne Couzens was arrested on suspicion of Everard's kidnapping and later her murder.

On 10 March, her remains were discovered in a woodland near Ashford, Kent. Couzens was charged with kidnapping and murder two days later.

South African organisation Koleinu SA, which supports victims of abuse in the Jewish community and runs education programmes to prevent it, said the attack on the pregnant woman was "a wake-up call that shows how vulnerable women are when they walk alone in cities all over the world". The organisations' founders, Rebbetzin Wendy Hendler and Rozanne Sack, said they were "shocked to see something so horrific and inexplicable".

"Pregnant women are much more vulnerable and less able to defend themselves, as they have a baby to worry about," Sack said. "That could be the reason he chose her as a target."

Continued on page 10>>

Yom Tov/Shabbat Times

26/27/28/29 March				
CL	CL/MS	CL	YTE	
17:54	18:42	18:41	18:40	Johannesburg
18:31	19:22	19:20	19:19	Cape Town
17:42	18:31	18:30	18:28	Durban
18:01	18:50	18:49	18:48	Bloemfontein
18:02	18:53	18:51	18:50	Port Elizabeth
17:53	18:43	18:42	18:41	East London

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

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Torah Thought

Going From I-llness to We-llness

Pesach is again here. Another *yom tov* under the confines of the pandemic, though this time, *baruch Hashem*, the end is in sight. We are on the cusp of healing and wellness. This Pesach can be an inspirational boost for our morale. Let's cast away our troubles, and rejoice!

G-d took the Jews out of Egypt 3 333 years ago, and ever since then, we are in the process of removing Egypt from ourselves. As thinking, feeling humans, we still struggle with an inner slavery, whose components include materialistic challenges, emotional disappointments, or spiritual setbacks.

Freedom is an expression of our unbridled soul. Poverty, illness, or prison walls, can restrict our ability to express the soul's organic freedom. So, too, with internal confinement. A person experiencing depression, loneliness, or feelings of futility, can feel equally shackled in spite of having no external restraints.

One of the rebbe's famous campaigns was his call to remember the "fifth son" at the seder. We are all aware of the four children mentioned: the wise, wicked, simple, and the one who doesn't know to ask. Yet there's a fifth one, the one who

doesn't know or care enough even to show up. It's our task to ensure that this lost Jew also attends a seder.

Yom tov this year is unique as it starts immediately on the heels of the departing Shabbos, a rather uncommon set up. Interestingly, this configuration is how it was the very first year after the original exodus, which meant that the Korban Pesach offering was prepared earlier in the day, while it was still Shabbos.

Ordinarily, in the Temple, only communal sacrifices were offered on Shabbos, not personal ones. Although the Pesach sacrifice is considered a personal, individual offering, it also contained an element of community, since everyone was doing the same thing simultaneously.

It reminds us that the individual and the community need to work together. Our beautiful community is made up of individuals who may be different from each other in many ways, but when we all come together, we form something far greater than just individuals.

As the population is vaccinated and life gradually resumes, let's make sure that everyone is remembered. Nobody should be allowed to fall through the cracks. This

Rabbi Ari Kievman,
Sandton Central Shul,
Chabad Seniors Programmes



year, we need to take extra care that there are no people who are alone, that social distancing doesn't result in more "fifth sons" who don't feel worthy of a seder. That even those unable to participate should feel cared for, and those celebrating alone still not feel lonely. We must look out for one another. The focus must pivot from I-illness to WE-wellness.

In the Zohar, matzah is called *michla d'mehaymna* (food of faith) and *michlah d'avasa* (food of healing). It reminds us of the faith in G-d that our ancestors had at the time of exodus. They were prepared to go into a barren wilderness without knowing how they would survive. When we eat matzah, it's like injecting "a jab of faith".

So, while we anticipate the means of freedom from the pandemic, we should also consider the feelings of others, and that they achieve inner liberation from worry and constraint.

Let's pray that when we sit down at our seders and eat matzah, we'll discover spiritual healing within ourselves fortifying our faith in G-d, and that faith will bring freedom, healing, and salvation to the entire world.

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Bibi or not Bibi – is there even a question?

PAULA SLIER

“Citizens of Israel – thank you!” wrote Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Hebrew on Twitter shortly after Israeli polls closed on Tuesday night, 23 March.

A few hours later, a delighted crowd welcomed him at his Likud party headquarters in Jerusalem. “Bibi, Bibi!” they shouted, filling a large hall with balloons, banners, and Likud COVID-19 masks.

But the excitement might be misplaced and premature at best.

As the hours ticked into Wednesday morning, the exit polls started changing their initial predictions. Only on Friday afternoon will the final tally be known.

What won’t alter is the fact that the prime minister’s Likud party won the most parliament seats by a large margin. President Reuven Rivlin will therefore task him first with forming a government. But then it gets tricky.

At the time of writing (at midday on Wednesday) exit polls predicted Netanyahu’s right-wing bloc fell short of the 61 seats it needed to secure a majority coalition. The kingmaker could well be the prime minister’s former ally and defence minister, Naftali Bennett. His Yamina (Rightwards) party won at least seven seats, and although Bennett avoided explicitly declaring who he would support, it’s widely expected he’ll join Netanyahu. In return, he’ll exact a high price in terms of ministerial positions and other powerful appointments.

This would bring Netanyahu closer than ever to a narrow government that would include the most extreme elements of Israeli society. Exit polls showed the Religious Zionist Party, that includes far-right and homophobic elements with roots in the overtly racist Kahanist party, receiving enough votes to enter parliament.

Yohanan Plesner, the president of the Israel Democracy Institute, warned that such a coalition could back Netanyahu’s attempts to find a political solution to his legal troubles. “In this case, it will be imperative that elected leaders from across the political spectrum, civil society organisations, and all those who advocate on behalf of a vibrant Israeli democracy, make it emphatically clear that the results of this election don’t constitute a license to promote radical proposals aimed at eroding

the legal system and curtailing the rule of law. The health and vitality of Israel’s democratic system could hang in the balance,” he said.

Meanwhile opposition leader Yair Lapid of Yesh Atid (There Is a Future), said he, too, would try to build a coalition to “create a sane government for Israel”.

Speaking early on Wednesday morning, he declared, “At the moment, Netanyahu doesn’t have 61 seats but the change bloc does. We’ll wait for the final results but as it stands, there won’t be a government based on the votes of the racists and homophobes.”

The anti-Netanyahu bloc is far from a homogenous group, consisting of left, right, and centrist factions. They have fewer options in forming a coalition than Netanyahu. Should neither side succeed, it will be back to the polls for Israelis – the fifth election in two years.



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

New South African *oleh* Terry Rendell casts his vote in Netanya this week

Which in part explains why Tuesday’s turnout was the lowest since 2013. Voter fatigue and apathy are starting to sour even the most ardent supporters of Israeli democracy.

The lack of enthusiasm was most noticeable in the Arab community. Many residents confessed they had lost confidence in their representatives and the two main Arab blocs – the Joint List and the breakaway United Arab List (Ra’am), headed by Mansour Abbas – warned of a “disaster” due to the low turnout.

In the 2015 election, the Joint List became the third-largest party in parliament after it

won 13 seats. In the 2020 election, it increased to 15, remaining the third-largest party until Yesh Atid split off from Blue and White to lead the opposition.

Earlier this year, Abbas quit the Joint List, indicating his willingness to join a coalition headed by Netanyahu. And the prime minister

violence and crime in the Arab community, economic issues, and the recent normalisation of Israel’s relations with several Arab countries.

As in the previous three rounds, this election was largely seen as a referendum on the tenure of Netanyahu. Personality politics has so overtaken the race that there has been almost no mention of the Palestinians after years of frozen peace talks.

The day before the vote, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh described the election as an “internal” matter for Israelis, but decried the effect on Palestinians living under Israeli occupation.

Netanyahu used these elections to once again portray himself as a global statesman uniquely qualified to lead Israel through its many security and diplomatic challenges.

But unlike the previous election held last March, he didn’t have the support of former American President Donald Trump smiling alongside him in campaign posters. Instead, Netanyahu made Israel’s coronavirus-vaccination campaign the centrepiece of his re-election bid, repeatedly stressing that he was personally responsible for Israel’s impressively fast rollout.

Only a few short months ago, it seemed that COVID-19 would kill his chances of winning another election, and his critics still accuse him of bungling the management of the pandemic for most of the past year. But most Israelis appreciate his efforts.

This was the first election held in the throes of the pandemic, and five thousand additional polling stations were set up to deal with the situation. Workers in hazmat suits collected ballots in hospital wards while buses were parked outside some polling stations to serve as remote ballot drops for coronavirus-positive or quarantined voters.

As things stand now, it’s unclear if four rounds of elections have resolved the longest political crisis in Israel’s history. The country remains as divided as it has been over the past two years.



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Africa at sea about growing terrorism

STEVEN GRUZD

Stretching from Libya in the north to Mozambique in the south, from Mali in the west to Somalia in the east, over the past two decades, Africa has become a theatre for terrorist activity.

Unemployed youth are being radicalised through modern technology and environmental degradation. Terrorist leaders provide seemingly simple answers to complex questions, such as, "Kill, and you will go to heaven." And states seem all at sea about what to do about it.

This was the key thread running through a dozen presentations in a Zoom webinar titled "New Frontiers of Terrorism in Africa". The virtual event was jointly hosted on 17 March by the Institute for African Studies (IAS); Russian Academy of Sciences from Moscow; the department of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State (UFS) in South Africa; and the Ezri Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies at the University of Haifa (UoH) in Israel.

Professor Theo Neethling (UFS) analysed the increasingly brutal Islamist extremism in northern Mozambique since 2017. There have been 800 attacks in the area, and 2 600 people have been killed, with 700 000 displaced. This insurgency is trying to impose Sharia law in southern Africa. The perpetrators have linked up with Islamic State (IS), and have been dubbed "the Al-Shabaab of Cabo Delgado". This area is rich in oil and natural gas, and has attracted massive investment from international oil giants amid a sea of poverty and underdevelopment. These investments are seriously threatened by the violence.

Mozambique's armed forces have proven too weak to counter the threat, opening the door for Russian and South African private security firms. They have also had no tangible success. Organised crime in the area – the smuggling of drugs, timber, rubies, ivory, and human beings – exacerbates the conflict as it boosts the coffers of extremists.

Professor Hussein Solomon (UFS) discussed terror in the Sahel region that cuts through the Sahara, describing the situation "a humanitarian catastrophe", with



thousands killed and millions forced to flee their homes. One reason is "poorly trained and equipped armed forces", Solomon said. In spite of intense training from the United States (US), "Mali's armed forces are no match for the Islamists, who have captured an area the size of France in northern Mali."

Solomon said the US and France failed miserably due to ignorance of local culture, the nature of the African state, and African armies. "Paris and Washington," he said, "fundamentally misdiagnosed the challenges of terrorism in the Sahel, viewing insurgents as part of global jihadists incorporated, the local franchises of Islamist extremist parent bodies." While appealing in simplicity, "to speak of a global war on terrorism in the African context is fundamentally wrong. The real challenge is domestically-based terrorism in fragile societies."

This builds on deep-rooted corruption, bad policies, and authoritarianism in the Sahel, as ethnocentric nationalism has been stirred up, reinforcing socio-economic cleavages and worsening poverty. The "politics of identity" is rife. The region needs more democratic and responsive governments, and more inclusive economic development.

Dr Anneli Botha (UFS) discussed terrorism in East Africa, saying the region had experienced a 141% increase in terrorist incidents between 2015 and 2020. The use of firearms increased 159% in the period, and explosives use rose 26%. Use of knives was up 111%. She also noted that the age of those radicalised was getting progressively younger. The solution lies, she said, in building specialised counter-terrorism capacity and fixing social welfare and education systems.

Professor Leonid Fituni (IAS) said that

terrorists had used non-government organisations and new charities to channel financing during the pandemic under the guise of relief. Cyber-fraud and funds from the African diaspora had increased. However, tracking mobile money is difficult.

Dr Sergey Kostelyanets (IAS) looked at Russia's growing counter-terrorism efforts in Africa since 9/11. Moscow had concluded 30 bilateral military co-operation agreements with African countries, and 20 since 2015. These entail regular counter-terrorism and intelligence sharing operations, weapons sales, and sharing Russia's anti-terrorism database.

These ties are related to geopolitical competition with the West, Russia trying to end its international isolation (after annexing Crimea from Ukraine in 2014) and protecting the security interests of Russia and African states. One weakness has been the lack of multilateral agreements in this area, for instance with the African Union. Another is the lack of transparency.

Dr Moshe Terdiman (UoH) explained why the environment is a tool for terrorists in Africa – for recruitment, funding, and promoting their agendas. Climate change and drought in the Sahel have increased suffering and created openings for terror groups. People displaced by environmental damage and governance failures have become recruits for groups such as Boko Haram in West Africa. Natural-resource revenue is a major funding stream for extremist groups. Al-Shabaab makes millions from elephant poaching and the illegal ivory trade. IS in Libya has launched attacks on energy and water infrastructure.

It's clear that terrorism in Africa isn't going away, and demands more serious attention and action than it has received thus far.

From Cairo to the Knesset – with a SA connection

STEVEN GRUZD

Albert Einstein said, "If you don't believe in miracles, you are simply unrealistic." This was a motto of late Israeli President Shimon Peres and is a mantra of his former advisor and now member of Knesset, Ruth Wasserman Lande.

Wasserman Lande – who lived in Cape Town from age nine to 17 – was hosted by the Western Cape Women's International Zionist Organisation in a Zoom discussion on 17 March.

She was approached by Benny Gantz, the leader of Kachol Lavan (Blue and White party) to be on its party list for the Knesset, and given 15 minutes to think it over. But she served just four days in January 2021, before being booted out by a former minister through the Norwegian Law. She soon regained her seat after another resignation from the Knesset.

Wasserman Lande showed a penchant for political organisation from a young age. When her father suggested moving to South Africa when she was eight, she corralled her third graders to demonstrate outside her parents' home, to no avail.

"When I first went to Herzlia in Cape Town, I knew no English," Wasserman Lande said. She grew up in a Russian-speaking family in coastal Ashdod in

Israel. At Herzlia, she unsuccessfully tried to avoid studying Afrikaans as she knew she would make aliyah after school. Today, she is fluent in Hebrew, English, Russian, and Arabic. She admits that her Afrikaans is poor.



Ruth Wasserman Lande giving her inauguration speech at the Knesset in 2021

Wasserman Lande got permission to study before she went to the army in Israel. She served for three years and became an officer. She then entered the diplomatic corps and asked to be posted to Cairo.

"I wanted to go somewhere that wasn't easy, but was strategic and where I could make a difference for Israel." She did a crash-course in Arabic over four months, but soon had to adapt to the patois of

the Egyptian street. "I was learning the culture and dynamics in a completely different world."

"As a young, unmarried Israeli woman in Cairo, in the minds of most Egyptians, I was a representative of 'the forces of evil' that would do G-d knows what to the Egyptians. It was a very challenging three years. There may be a peace agreement, but there is little normalisation."

Wasserman Lande said bringing Eli Amir, her favourite Israeli author, to Cairo was a highlight. She had to go over the head of the Egyptian minister of culture to the intelligence chief, and hosted more than

Continued on page 8>>

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As I prepared for our tiny seders last Pesach and we were just settling into this strange experience called lockdown, I told my sons it wouldn't last long. I said we would look back at the end of the year, it would all be long over, and we would be back to normal.

How wrong I was!

Now, we go into our second Pesach during the pandemic, and while the numbers are down, we still face a potential third wave that some experts say could surface after Pesach and the Easter weekend. I sure hope not!

We have so much more freedom than we did this time last year when we were still in the honeymoon stage of the pandemic. At the time, it was still fairly exciting to be at home all the time and there was a certain charm to the streets being so quiet and being able to clearly hear the birdlife.

There was something very special about spending all our time with our immediate family, eating and cooking every meal together. Zoom had its pros too. I mean, you really only had to dress the top half of your body for a serious meeting.

Now, I long for a board meeting in a real boardroom where I can actually look into the eyes of the person I'm speaking to. I long to hug people I care about. And more than anything, I would love to go to a dinner party where I don't know everyone and have a good chat with someone I've never spoken to before.

Who would have thought that anyone could miss these day-to-day experiences from our former lives?

I laughed the other day when a friend said she was going to go to the supermarket to get groceries, and her husband told her she didn't have to bother, she could order online. She was incensed that he would take away her freedom to get out of the house and be among strangers, albeit masked and socially distanced. I could relate to that.

I even look forward to getting dressed up to go to shul over Pesach. I don't get dressed up enough these days. How often I would want to find excuses not to go to functions in the past. Now, I would love the opportunity.

It's all about having the freedom to choose, freedom to do what we want, freedom to be who we are. Just plain and simple ... freedom.

And that's what Pesach is all about. Jews moving from slavery to freedom.

What's always so interesting is that when you have freedom, you often don't appreciate what you have until you don't have it. Think about it. When you are on holiday in Cape Town and you drive along the Atlantic Seaboard or over Lion's Nek, you appreciate the breathtaking beauty of the shoreline, the mountain, and the sea. When you live in Cape Town, do you enjoy the pleasure of what you have all the time?

Is this human nature? Are we always longing for that which we don't have, or can we be happy with our lot? And if you are happy with your lot, do you still create goals you can work towards? Or is being happy with your lot a case of giving up your freedom to grow?

This last year has brought monumental change for most of us. I'm amazed that almost everyone I know has gone through some kind of trauma. Just when I'm about to feel sorry for myself, I hear someone else's story, and realise how lucky I am.

It has been a year in which we have all had to draw on our strength, our internal flame, and keep moving forward.

On the radio recently, there was a discussion about how the numbers of people reaching out to helplines doubled within months of the pandemic hitting South Africa. Few of those people were directly affected by actual illness, but it was various traumatic offshoots that hit them.

We shouldn't underestimate how tough this year has been for us – and it's not over yet. In fact, there is no way of knowing what life will be like this time next year.

What I do know is that Pesach will still be a special time for our community. It will still be a time of family gatherings, a time to reflect on our freedom and those who don't have that luxury. It will be a time when we will once again read the Haggadah and remember who we are and where we came from. It will be a time when we remember how we witnessed miracles that saved our lives. There is such comfort in knowing that some things stay the same.

In our annual special Pesach edition, we bring you a host of phenomenal thought leadership pieces written by wise spiritual leaders. We also have a selection of other fabulous Pesach stories. A personal favourite of mine is the kneidel story, which you'll find on page 34.

We also bring you the latest news and features to ensure you have lots of exceptional stories to read over Pesach.

I'm proud to include in those stories our lead (page 1), which is so inspiring and uplifting. It tells of how a local branch of the South African government has welcomed help from Israel in improving drinking water in outlying areas. This humanitarian venture will save lives and help those in dire straits. Is this new relationship a miracle or a blessing to herald Pesach?

Whatever the case may be, it warms my heart that there are people in government that understand that you don't look a gift horse in the mouth, and if people want to help you and you need help, let them.

In my interview with former Democratic Alliance leader Tony Leon (page 15), he mentions how irritated he was when the African National Congress boycotted Israel's offer to help Cape Town in its water crisis, choosing instead to go to Iran to get help. I hope this new endeavour is a sign of things to come.

Shabbat shalom and chag Pesach sameach!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

PS: We won't be publishing the newspaper on *Chol HaMoed*, but will resume the following week.



Pretoria's Old Synagogue: from *simcha* to *shande*

OPINION

MADELEINE HICKLIN



On a recent visit to Tshwane, I was horrified to see the dilapidated state of the Old Synagogue on Paul Kruger Street in the city centre, which is a heritage icon for Jews and South Africans.

So many happy recollections of weddings, Bnei mitzvah, and Brit Milahs flooded my memory, and my eyes filled with tears. I thought of the significance of this majestic building that witnessed the start of the Rivonia Treason Trial of 1960 and 1964, as well as the inquest into the death of Steve Biko.

Today, the building lies in ruins, designated to the ash heap of a bygone era. The pain in my chest was acute as I looked at this wonderful monument that has been vandalised and abused instead of being cherished and preserved for generations to come.

As part of my oversight visits to buildings owned by the department of public works and infrastructure, I was asked by Councillor Wayne Helfrich and Candidate Councillor Leanne de Jager to come to Tshwane to investigate a number of heritage buildings. The belief was that while they had all been abandoned, they could be repurposed and reused.

It's of the utmost importance that buildings such as this magnificent shul should be preserved at all costs to tell the stories of a bygone era. It needs to serve as a catalyst to the birth of democracy in South Africa.

The first stone of the Old Synagogue was laid in 1897, and the shul was consecrated on 20 August 1898, making it the first permanent shul in Pretoria.

The view of the outside of the building from Paul Kruger Street



As a result of the end of the Anglo-Boer War in 1902, the community had financial constraints. In 1906, legendary philanthropist and businessman Sammy Marks settled the mortgage of the shul, and donated it back to the community. He had three strict instructions:

- The property couldn't be sold, ceded, or assigned to anyone, but was to be used exclusively for a shul in perpetuity;
- No mortgages, charges, or encumbrances could be applied or laid on the property; and
- The house on the property could be used only as the residence of the minister of the congregation (rabbi) or some official of the shul.

What would Sammy Marks be thinking today? He and his descendants would be horrified if they stood where I stood and saw – and smelled – the destruction that greeted us when we entered the building.

I can still feel the heaviness in my heart as I gazed up at the once ornate, beautiful ceiling and the galleries that had held so many faces smiling down on the *simchas* that marked this building's history.

But the building wasn't just a source of joy and miracles. In 1952, the growing Jewish community moved to another building in Pretorius Street, taking its *Aron Kodesh*, menorah, cornerstone, and stained-glass windows with them to their new home that could accommodate increasing numbers.

The site was then expropriated and transferred to the state with the intention of redeveloping the entire block on which the shul stood into a new Supreme Court.

In 1958, it was modelled as an annex of the Supreme Court for security-related cases. The striking sandstone façade of the building was neutralised by painting it cream. Two utility buildings for police accommodation, holding cells, and witness waiting rooms were added.

This further dehumanised this once magnificent vestige of Jewish life in Pretoria. These utility buildings were created with strict racial segregation, another painful reminder of our tragic past.

The area of the *Aron Kodesh* and *bimah* were converted into judicial benches, windows, were bricked up, the Magen David replaced by the South African coat of arms, and the seating converted to that of a conventional court.

The *neshomah* of the shul was removed in its entirety, but it started to have importance in our democratic life. The first treason trial was transferred to this holy building on 1 August 1958, and lasted until 29 March 1961.

Those who made their appearance in this building in the two treason trials (of 1958 and 1962) included Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni, and my late uncle, Denis Goldberg. Their sentencing in the infamous Rivonia Trial, however, took place in the Palace of Justice.

During the trial, one of the witnesses, M Mkalipe, brought his Bible into the witness box. To the surprise of the judges seated where the rabbi used to stand, Mkalipe read a few verses from the book of Daniel to his "assembled congregation". He said he did it deliberately to invoke the

rich history of the Old Synagogue – a religious space distinct from the Calvinist Dutch Reformed roots of the apartheid regime.

"We cannot allow such a magnificent, significant, and authentic piece of our history as Jews and as South Africans to disappear," says Helfrich. "We have to come together as a community to restore this once great symbol to its former glory. The Jewish community in Tshwane has expressed a deep sense of sadness at the demise of the building, and would love to see it restored as a Jewish and major South African heritage site."



"So many promises have been made to the community that this beautiful home will once again be able to teach and inspire our youth that they have given up hope of them ever seeing the light of day."

As Jews and South Africans, we need to change this. We need to restore hope that history has a place in our lives, that we can continue to celebrate the rich heritage that is housed in this building, and that we can free the voices that once rang out in this shul so that they can speak to us again.

Perhaps the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in conjunction with the Tshwane Jewish community can breathe life into this Grand Old Dame of Jewish heritage. Let's mobilise and make a difference. Let's revive this legacy, and let it be a historic museum, a testimony to the past, and an inspirational teaching space for generations to come.

• Madeleine Hicklin is the Democratic Alliance shadow deputy minister: department of public works and infrastructure.

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Holocaust educator takes message to the masses

TALI FEINBERG

Clive Mashishi is a man on a mission. A former construction worker, he left his job to educate local communities about the Holocaust, Israel, antisemitism, and Jewish history. Last year, he joined the World Jewish Congress' International Holocaust Remembrance Day initiative, #WeRemember, stringing banners across busy bridges and roads, opening up avenues of education for people who had never heard about the Holocaust.

So how did a man from the Vaal area of Gauteng who had no Jewish background or connection come to be the face of Holocaust remembrance in the region? He says that while his father called him Clive after his Jewish boss, and his grandmother worked for a Jewish woman, he had few interactions with Jews. In his community, stereotypes about Jews abounded, although he always had a fondness for the Jewish community.

It was only after a long journey through various political parties and movements, eventually finding a "home" at the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI), that he first realised the full extent of the Holocaust, and it changed his life.

"When [former SAFI director] Dr Gavi Sacks spoke to me about the Holocaust, I saw pain in his eyes. I've seen antisemitism at universities, and I've read a lot of books, watched a lot of movies. But it's not the same as speaking to someone connected to the history of the Holocaust," he says.

"Then, during International Apartheid Week, I spoke at the University of Cape Town and Wits [the University of the Witwatersrand]. I saw antisemitism and hatred there, even people saying the Holocaust was fake. After that, I worked with the World Jewish Congress on the #WeRemember campaign.

"Then last year when the pandemic started, I saw the hatred grow. Texts like *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were distributed around communities, and people believed that Jews had created COVID-19 to control the world. After seeing that and knowing what Jewish students were facing, I sat with my small team and we decided to dedicate this year to educating our communities [about the Holocaust]."

He aims to educate based on fact. Many people simply don't know about the Holocaust, he says, and their perceptions of Jews are based on stereotypes and a lack of knowledge and interaction as opposed to malicious intent. However, often political leaders buy into antisemitic ideas.

"Political parties are antisemitic, even if they try to hide it. They put it in the category of 'white monopoly', but you can sense it's there in their policies and ideological thinking. I used to hope I could make them listen, but I've realised I can't. So I would rather educate the masses. You can't trust politicians, but if you go to the people, the politicians will listen to them."

Mashishi says people welcome the information he shares with them. "There has been an amazing response. I thought the first #WeRemember banner I put up would be removed within a day. But it stayed up, people took photos, and wanted to know more. People called and asked me what we were remembering, and I explained about the victims of the Holocaust.



Clive Mashishi

Many were amazed to hear what the Jewish community had faced. People become invested, they want to learn more, they read up about it on their smartphones, or they borrow books. When they ask me more questions, I can hear they know more than they did before."

One result of his work is that people have asked to visit the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre. "People didn't have that education, and now they want to gain knowledge that they missed out on."

Mashishi has started his year-long campaign with an advert on Hope FM radio station talking about the #WeRemember campaign and linking it to Human Rights Month in South Africa. He says he expected people to question the advert, but there have been only positive responses.

His next step is to screen the film *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* on a projector screen in various communities.

"People can sit in their yards and watch it, but still keep a social distance. It will give people a little bit of information, then they can continue with their own research."

But he doesn't want to stop there. "My goal is to go to other provinces. More vocal antisemitism often comes from rural areas."

Mashishi often thanks the person who taught him the basics of what he knows, and he sees himself as continuing that chain. "I loved the Jewish community but I didn't know the history. He found me in a political party, fighting with people about being anti-Israel. He didn't tell me to leave, but after that, I realised that it wasn't the right movement. He motivated me to study more. And now I've met a kid in Mafikeng, and he's just like me. He's very interested. So, it's about educating the next generation."

Mashishi's work is supported by donations, but he emphasises that he has found his purpose, and will continue no matter what. He could benefit from having his own transport so that he can travel further and work with more people.

People don't see how much the Jewish community works to uplift others in the country, Mashishi says. His own work goes beyond education – he has worked closely with The Angel Network (TAN), distributing food and other urgently-needed resources during the pandemic.

"We first met Clive in 2019. He was a quiet, shy, unassuming young man," says Glynne Wolman, the founder of TAN. "At that time, he was trying to feed desperate people, and we tried to help where we could. Now he assists us in distributing a portion of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' R15 million food relief fund (of which TAN is the custodian), to those most in need. He is one of our biggest advocates, and we are extremely proud to be associated with him. He's done everything from helping people after a fire to mentoring drug addicts. He just wants to fix the world."

From Cairo to the Knesset – with a SA connection

>>Continued from page 4

200 brave Egyptians at his lecture.

At the other end of the scale was coming home to find her apartment door slightly ajar, a subtle warning from the Egyptian authorities that she was constantly under surveillance. She had been spied on during salsa dancing lessons in the Cairo Hilton Hotel lobby.

She served as an advisor on Jewish diaspora affairs for Shimon Peres before joining the Federation of Local Governments in Israel, where she used her Arabic skills to connect with Israeli Arab communities. "Twenty-two percent of Israel's citizens aren't Jewish, but they are part and parcel of this country. My huge love of Israel makes me work for inclusion, mutual respect, and a change in the discourse, uniting people rather than excluding and disrespecting them. For a vibrant and viable economy and country, we

need to include everyone."

Wasserman Lande describes the atmosphere ahead of the fourth Israeli elections in two years as one of fatigue. "The key issue isn't the economy, or the pandemic, or the conflict with the Palestinians. As it has been all along, it's about saying 'yes' or 'no' to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu." She said she hated to bear bad news, but a fifth election wasn't unthinkable, as many parties have already said they refuse to be in a coalition with Netanyahu.

Commenting on Israel's recent strained relations with Jordan, she said both small countries were huge strategic assets for each other. "A stable, Jewish Israel was a strategic asset to Jordan even before 1948." But relations have never been warm like those budding with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) under the

Abraham Accords. Jordan wouldn't allow Netanyahu to fly over its airspace, so he had to cancel a trip to the UAE.

"Israel hasn't paid enough attention to nuance, which is very important in the Arab world," she said. Jerusalem's unilateral closing of the Allenby Bridge border post with Jordan to clamp down on coronavirus upset Amman. Jordan retaliated by shutting down the Sheikh Hussein crossing, stranding hundreds in the West Bank. Wasserman Lande was instrumental in helping 500 Jordanians to return home.

She described the Abraham Accords as an "absolute game-changer" and a "huge strategic achievement, regardless of what people think of Netanyahu and Donald Trump".

Wasserman Lande is writing a novel titled *Unveiled in Cairo*, loosely based on her years in the Egyptian capital. It's sure to be a rollicking read.



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Czech Republic recognises Nates for Holocaust work

JORDAN MOSHE

Tali Nates, the founder and executive director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC), has received an international award for her part in South Africa's efforts to remember those who perished in the Holocaust.

An accomplished educator, Nates received the esteemed Gratias Agit Award, presented annually by the Czech Republic. The award was presented at a reception at the residence of the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to South Africa, Dr Pavel Řezáč, in Pretoria last Thursday, 18 March. She is the first South African to receive the award.

"I received an official email announcing that I was chosen to receive this prestigious award in May last year," she told the *SA Jewish Report*. She was invited to Prague for three days in October to receive the award, but because of the pandemic, it wasn't possible to go.

"I never expected to be recognised for the work done over the years of memorialising and educating about the Theresienstadt Ghetto and other aspects of the Holocaust in the former Czechoslovakia, as well as the role the Czech Republic played in trying to prevent genocide in Rwanda," she said.

"I'm honoured and touched that the work has been recognised."

The only statutory prize awarded by the Czech ministry of foreign affairs, it's becoming an increasingly prestigious prize for voluntary activities of people committed to working for the benefit of society, for the promotion of friendship among nations, and for the promotion of the good name of the Czech Republic in the world.

The Pretoria reception included several ambassadors who work closely with the JHGC, including the German ambassador to South Africa, Martin Schafer.

At the ceremony, Czech Minister Counsellor Alice Mžýková explained that the award had been presented annually since 1997 by the Czech minister of foreign affairs for promoting the good name of the Czech Republic abroad.

"It's an instrument which allows the minister to appreciate a prominent person or organisation for developing activities in non-government fields, as well as the increasing role of civic society," she said. "In the past 23 years, the Crystal Globe has been handed over to almost 350 laureates around the world, 12 in 2020.

"The Gratias Agit is becoming an even more prestigious prize, celebrating the voluntary activities of people committed to work for the benefit of the society as a whole. We thank Tali for promoting friendship between the nations, and for spreading the good name of the Czech Republic in the world."

Mžýková paid tribute to Nates for work including a unique remembrance exhibition at the Johannesburg centre dedicated to the Holocaust as it unfolded during World War II in the former Czechoslovakia.

"Special attention is paid to what happened in the concentration camp Terezín," she said. "Tali has presented the occurrences sensitively, using drawings and poems. These drawings and poems were created by the children of prisoners, and form a part of the new exhibition."

Said Nates, "The ceremony was emotional, with speeches, the award of the famous crystal ball, the certificate signed by the Czech foreign minister, and a beautiful bouquet of flowers. The



Tali Nates with Japanese ambassador to South Africa, Maruyama Norio (left), and Czech Republic ambassador to South Africa, Dr Pavel Řezáč (right)

atmosphere was wonderful in spite of the pandemic, social distancing, and masks. The food was delicious, and the singing in Czech of Dvořák was superb."

Being recognised for the work the JHGC is doing in the field of memory, education, and lessons for humanity is gratifying, Nates said.

"It also means that dedication to counter hate speech and working to strengthen democracy is recognised," she says. "My dream of creating the centre including the important stories of Theresienstadt, of children's poetry, music, and drawings, was recognised."

"Telling about the role of the teachers in the ghetto, highlighting stories of resistance

such as the creation of the children's magazine, *Vedem* and its 15-year-old editor, Petr Ginz, who was murdered in Auschwitz, is important not only for the Czech Republic but also for us in South Africa.

"I'm grateful for that recognition, and the partnership between South Africa and the Czech Republic in remembering and educating about the Holocaust and genocide."

"Being the first South African to be honoured with this prestigious award hopefully brings joy and pride to the country, especially the Jewish community, as this award directly honours the work in Holocaust and genocide memory and education we do."

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Jewish values central to SA democracy, judges say

JORDAN MOSHE

Jews continue to play a pivotal role in securing democracy in post-apartheid South Africa, their values and social consciousness central to the democratic project.

So say esteemed judges Albie Sachs and Dennis Davis, two towering legal giants who have become household names following years of furthering justice in South Africa. Last Thursday, 18 March, they reflected on the 25-year journey of the South African Constitution through the lens of their Jewish identity.

"His Jewishness is central to his being," Sachs said of Davis at the online event hosted by the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies. "He sees the world through Jewish eyes, not narrow eyes, but eyes filled with a sense of reason, idealism, compassion, questioning, and challenging."

"Dennis is one of the great parts of South African public life, with an energy and pungency of a vigorous mind."

Davis described Sachs similarly, stressing that it was impossible to encapsulate Sachs' career in a few minutes.

"This is someone who has almost every aspect that any person could be proud of," he said. "His early career was central to [the development of] non-racism, and he transcended all the atrocities that apartheid wrought upon him."

"You don't need to study Talmud to know it, but if you want to understand its two fundamentals of G-d's justice and compassion, just look at Albie's career. He encapsulates both of those with eloquence and power."

Indeed, Sachs said that in spite of his secular upbringing and not believing in G-d, his Jewishness resonated deeply within him, and informed much of his approach to the law.

"I was the youngest in my class during World War II. Half of the boys in the school were Jews, and one by one, they had their Barmitzvahs. I was the youngest, and as

they celebrated their Barmitzvahs, they would ask, 'Albie, when's your barmy?' I just kept quiet."

"My mom told me that if I wanted to have a barmy, she would support me as much as if I didn't. I grew up in a very secular home. My parents gave me the choice, and it was the hardest decision I had to make completely on my own."



"I thought that if I went through with it, I would be dishonouring myself and G-d, if he existed. I didn't believe in G-d, and I couldn't have a Barmitzvah if I didn't. It was painful being a Jew but being an outsider like that as well."

Nonetheless, Sachs felt a distinct bond with his Jewish identity, connecting with figures like Marx, Freud, and Einstein.

"These are my heroes," he said. "Jews who were displaced but very much part of the world. Theirs is my kind of Judaism. My parents gave me a sense of honour and integrity, and while these aren't exclusively Jewish, they are part of my Jewishness."

The judges reflected on the Constitution, agreeing that it remains one of South Africa's defining achievements.

"Years before the Constitution was brought in, I had a student who came into the library and gave me a crumpled copy of a document penned by Albie about

human rights in South Africa," recalled Davis. "It was extraordinary, and it showed a lot of thinking that went into the Bill of Rights later."

"What was unbelievable was that we didn't have a war here. The African National Congress had the stronger forces, but it didn't impose anything. The Bill of Rights was a negotiated settlement, and it fitted with what



Participants in the online event

Albie had captured years before."

This document offered the best possible hope for constitutional democracy in South Africa, said Davis.

"It wasn't a sell-out. We need to defend it and be proud of it. It

secured a social democracy which offers the best chance for all of us to live in peace and harmony."

Sachs agrees, saying that in spite of the corruption which plagues the country, we cannot lose sight of what the Constitution means for South Africa.

"It remains a huge achievement. Yes, so many things are bad, but we know about them in an open society, which owes itself to the Constitution. We have free and fair elections, something we take for granted."

"It doesn't make up for corruption and crime, but it gives us a framework to challenge, speak our minds, and feel free."

Both judges say that the Jewish community continues

to play a role in broader South African society.

"The Jewish community is well implanted, and has adapted better than many other whites," said Sachs. "This is partly because people like Dennis are in the community and remind other people of the wider issues."

"People respect ideas, values, idealism, and compassion. I see a strong presence of Jews, and while they are very diverse, they're also very coherent, with many networks and support."

Davis agrees. "Like many of my generation, when people like Albie were in exile, it seemed the values he espoused would never come to pass. I thought about leaving at one point, and even sat the Israeli bar exam and passed."

Davis then took to politics, however, and chose to remain in his native country.

"This was where I was born, and where I wanted to be," he said. "It was my struggle. It seems to me that right from those days, the right thing to do is to do the best for South Africa, and that remains the case today."

"I'm continually saddened by those who leave. We've lost so much talent, and I think how much it could have contributed to the betterment of our society."

"My Judaism is conflicted between Marxist tradition and studying Talmud. Central for me is what we say each day in the *Aleinu*, that our job is to purify the world in the image of G-d. It means to inculcate our foundational values into society."

"Judaism traditionally ascribed thirteen attributes to G-d," said Davis. "We need to apply these in South African society."

"We need to comport ourselves in line with those attributes. How much compassion, justice, mercy, and forgiveness should we have in order to recalibrate our society? We are really privileged to do this."

"If you want to go to Australia, be my guest. But if you want a moral challenge which comports itself with the values of our Jewish tradition, South Africa is the place. I want to throw in my lot with those who stay here."



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Koleinu calls out horrific attack on London Jewish woman

>>Continued from page 2

"We are desensitised as South Africans to violence against women as we are exposed to horrific acts of femicide on an almost daily basis. So it's interesting that we are still shocked to see something like this. And not necessarily because she's religious. As South Africans and Koleinu, we should be aware of the trauma and long-term consequences that such an incident can have on someone's life, no matter who or where they are."

Hendler notes that the man is full of rage, and said it was important to pinpoint why men were so angry, and why they would take out that rage on a woman.

"This incident is extreme," she said. "But we see thousands of daily incidents of a violent nature – verbal and physical. It highlights its prevalence, and how many women live in fear. This video shows how violence against women happens in every community, country, and stream of religiosity." She urges people to report any act of violence they witness or abuse they suspect. "We need to be brave enough to take a stand and hold others accountable."

"This seems to be yet another example of Orthodox Jews being physically and violently assaulted because of their Jewishness."

"The attack was totally frightening and just so awful, especially on a pregnant lady who was walking, minding her own business," said 37-year-old Talya Zwiers, who emigrated to London in 2007. "Attacking her in broad daylight shows that we are all vulnerable, in spite of us thinking it's safe to walk during the day."

"I left South Africa after my twin brother was hijacked and kidnapped, and as a result, lost all sense of safety and security in South Africa. I didn't have the naïve belief that attacks and muggings don't happen in London, but I most definitely went for a safer way of life, especially for my family," she said.

"This attack left me feeling vulnerable, exposed, scared, and actually quite worried. It has made me aware that as women, we need to be constantly vigilant, aware of our surroundings, and cannot let our guard down. We cannot just walk carefree, unaware of who

is behind us. I do feel much safer in London than I did in Johannesburg. I'm not on edge 24/7, but I have a heightened sense of awareness."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, another South African Jewish woman in her 30s who emigrated to London in 2019 said, "Obviously the attack on the Jewish pregnant woman is shocking as in South Africa, we weren't exposed to religiously-motivated attacks."

"It makes me more aware of not letting my son walk around in public with his *tzitzit* and *kippah*. Regarding Sarah Everard, this can happen anywhere. I haven't really had a false sense of security coming from South Africa. I've always been overly cautious where possible."

Another ex-South African woman who emigrated to London decades ago was shocked to hear of the attack as she hadn't seen reports about it in the mainstream British press. "The volume of violent attacks against women is really overwhelming. Perhaps it's because she 'sustained light injury' that it isn't newsworthy. Last year, a mother and daughter were murdered in a park and it didn't get the coverage that this most recent horrific murder [of Everard] received. The mother and daughter were black ..."

The attack on the pregnant woman was condemned by Shadow Justice Secretary David Lammy, who said on Twitter, "This hateful attack on a pregnant Jewish woman in Stamford Hill is absolutely gruesome. As a society, we have to do so much more to tackle antisemitism as well as violence against women."

Also on Twitter, author Professor Kate Williams wrote, "The footage from the #StamfordHill attack is so distressing. She looks so happy, walking and swinging her handbag. And then he attacks her and her unborn baby in a despicable act of antisemitism. And we are still being told that attacks on women in the street are rare."

"This seems to be yet another example of Orthodox Jews being physically and violently assaulted because of their Jewishness," said educator and author Ben M. Freeman, whose recent book, *Jewish Pride: Rebuilding a People*, aims to empower Jews to reject the "shame of antisemitism."

"Orthodox Jewish communities regularly endure violent anti-Jewish racism," he said. "It's our responsibility to stand with them in solidarity, and to condemn the normalisation of violence against Jews."

Youth movements get creative to keep in touch with their *channies*

JORDAN MOSHE

The past few months haven't been easy for our kids, with restrictions on in-person interaction severely limiting the range of youth-movement activities they are used to.

December camps, Shabbos gatherings, and casual activities that typically involve meeting others have had to be shelved, but Bnei Akiva, Habonim Dror South Africa, and Netzer have risen to the challenge, and the bonds between *madrichim* and *channichim* are strong.

"The pandemic has taken away personal interaction within our movement, which is core to how we run," says Aaron Sher, *mazkir klali* (secretary general) of Habonim. "Moving online in the beginning of the pandemic was challenging, but our *chaverim* understood the necessity."

Bnei Akiva's *rosh* (head) for Johannesburg, Jessa Marx, agrees. "Bnei Akiva is based upon connection between our *channichim* and *madrichim*," she says. "These relationships are unique and give them a platform for learning, inspiring, having fun, and solidifying values for life."

"In 2020, a year in which these connections couldn't be strengthened through face-to-face contact, we were called on to adapt, be creative, and find ways to keep relationships, our values, and our way of life alive."

As in most cases, the new reality demanded migration to online platforms, with Zoom learning sessions and events becoming the norm.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, all of our activities had to be taken into the virtual online world," says Jason Bourne, Netzer Camp head. "We have had to come up with new ways of engaging with our participants while still giving them the fun and educational environment they are used to."

"We have had to find a balance between engaging our participants while not overloading them with the number of activities available, especially when most of our participants spent a good portion of their week online at school."



Similarly, Bnei Akiva and Habonim went virtual, moving whatever activities they could into the online space.

Says Sher, "Our leadership in 2020 managed to move active events online to platforms such as Zoom, and released monthly or bi-weekly newsletters. Our social-media presence picked up, with many *chaverim* creating fun educational videos to share on our pages."

"We were forced to adapt to a changing world, and still managed to bring our *chaverim* together regularly to discuss current affairs in South Africa, Israel, and the rest of the world. We managed to incorporate the classic games we would play at camp by playing them online."

In spite of much effort, Habonim decided to cancel its end-of-year camp, substituting it as much as possible with other activities.

Bnei Akiva *madrichim* and *channichim* also connected online for some time (including a hummus making competition and learning sessions), though they were able to attend an in-person week-long day camp held locally in December.

"We hosted a morning *kollel* and *midrasha*, some fun events in the afternoons, and an evening learning programme," says Marx.

"In a world where in-person events were cancelled,

our values of connecting to our *channichim*, living a life of Torah, Zionism, and *chesed* weren't. 2020 was truly a year of taking the video call and making it holy."

The youth movements continued to be supported by *channichim* and their parents, the vast majority of them sympathetic to the enormous challenges they faced.

"None of these decisions were easy to make," says Sher, "That support definitely helped keep Habonim going."

Marx says there has been a gradual reintroduction of some in-person activities subject to strict COVID-19 protocols.

"We have been truly blessed to return our beloved Bnei bayit each Sunday for our EQT [Extreme Quality Torah] learning programme," she says. "We were also able to host a COVID-19-safe Purim event, with a laser tag event for Roim and Moledet and Megillah reading and Adventure Golf for Refael and Sinai."

"Parents have obviously had some reservations about their children coming to events because of the number of people there and the restrictions. However, since Bnei Akiva strictly adheres to all the protocols, the majority if not all the parents are happy for their children to attend our events."

"With each event we take on, we realise the responsibility we are shouldering. Parents and

channichim trust us to create a safe and socially distanced environment. We take this very seriously."

Madrichim have also adapted to the changes with aplomb, remaining committed to inspiring their *channichim* in spite of the limitations.

"*Madrichim* most definitely still want to be involved," says Bourne. "While the pandemic may have posed some limitations on face-to-face activities, the use of online platforms has meant that there is greater ease of access for our *madrichim* to join up and plan activities online."

"*Madrichim* who maybe wouldn't have had as much time to give before the pandemic find that their time is utilised a lot more effectively, and those who weren't sure about wanting to take up a more serious leadership role within the movement now feel more comfortable doing so."

"The *madrichim* of Habonim Dror have been incredibly supportive during the pandemic," says Sher. "They are bringing in new initiatives to help keep Habonim active. We haven't seen a decline in their involvement since the pandemic began. We have even been able to bring more [*maddies*] into the movement."

Says Marx, "*Madrichim* can no longer rely on models of what was done in the past. They are called on to adapt, take initiative, and to be more creative than ever. While this is an incredible opportunity for growth, it calls on them to take responsibility."

"Their commitment to the movement and the values we stand for pushes them through the difficulties. Every *madrich* and *madricha* in the movement has exceeded everyone's expectations in spite of the challenges we are experiencing."

While the road ahead is less than certain, Netzer, Bnei Akiva, and Habonim remain positive about maintaining engagement with their *channichim*, and are open to rolling with the punches

"The pandemic as a whole may have brought new challenges that we have had to learn to adapt to, but the opportunities it has brought us are just as many – maybe even more," says Bourne.

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Bobba granted dying wish to be buried on Mount of Olives

NICOLA MILTZ

The late Flora Hovsha, 95, didn't ask for much when she was alive, her family said. But she had a lifelong wish to be buried next to her beloved late husband, Eliezer, who died more than three decades ago. Sounds reasonable.

However, throw into the equation the fact that her husband is buried in the Mount of Olives Cemetery in Jerusalem, one of Judaism's holiest sites, add to that a worldwide pandemic, and it becomes a little more complex. And when a person's death is as a result of COVID-19, it complicates matters even further.

However, nothing was going to stop Flora's devoted grandchildren from trying their best to help realise their *bobba's* dream.

Their *bobba* and *zaida* were well-known members of the Rustenberg Jewish community. Their popular jewellery store, Rustenberg Jewellers, stood in the centre of town. Flora kept a strictly kosher home, and went out of her way to instil a deep love of *yiddishkeit* in her three sons and grandchildren, the family said.

"I left Rustenberg when I was 11," said granddaughter Nicole Salkow. "I attribute my knowledge of Judaism to my *bobba's* love and dedication to the religion. We were one of the few remaining Jewish families left in Rustenberg when I was a little girl, but this never stopped my *bobba* from keeping a meticulously kosher home and following all the rich festivals."

Flora, a resident of Sandringham Gardens, succumbed to COVID-19 on Shabbos towards the end of February. Her funeral was set for Sunday 21 February, at 11:30. When her son, Joseph, who also lives at the retirement home, mentioned to the Chevrah Kadisha that his late mother had a plot reserved for her in Israel, it threw a local spanner in the works.

Joseph, worried about COVID-19 and the costs involved in transporting his mother's body, prepared himself mentally for the burial to take place at West Park Cemetery. His determined daughter had other plans. "I simply asked the Chevrah Kadisha what it would take to do this, and then I said, 'Let's see if we can make it happen'," Salkow told the *SA Jewish Report*.

With those words, she set the

ball rolling for what turned out to be a Herculean effort by the Johannesburg Chevrah Kadisha, and Flora's family here and abroad to help realise this dream.

Chevrah Kadisha Funeral Director Phillip Kalmonowitz helped with the

possible," said Kalmonowitz.

They confirmed that the plot existed, and got on to securing a flight. "Not many airlines are operating at this time, and most won't transport a COVID-19 body," Kalmonowitz said.



repatriation. It included having to obtain multiple letters of permission, permits, and certificates from doctors, the health department, and the Israeli embassy.

"We needed to act fast so that her funeral could take place as quickly as

They eventually secured a space on Turkish Airlines. "About 19 pages of documentation went with her," he said.

After two days of intense planning, Flora's body left South Africa on the night of 24 February. It arrived at Ben

Gurion Airport on Purim on the night of 25 February after a long layover in Turkey, where she was transferred from a passenger carrier to a cargo plane.

The Jerusalem Chevrah Kadisha was on standby. So too were Flora's two granddaughters in Israel, Shana Hovsha and Leigh Chazan and her husband Idan.

Family from around the world watched as the livestreamed funeral procession made its way through the streets of Jerusalem until Flora's body was laid to rest near the gravestone of her husband.

"It was a sight to behold," said Salkow, "My *bobba* would have been dancing had she seen the journey she took through the streets of Jerusalem with the city lights flickering below."

The ancient Jewish cemetery, which overlooks Jerusalem's Old City, is the holiest place, being closest to the Temple. It's the most ancient and most important Jewish cemetery in Jerusalem.

With an estimated 150 000 people interred there, including those of famous rabbis in Jewish history, there is barely any space left. Flora's plot was reserved after the late Eliezer was buried there in 1985.

According to David Weber at the Johannesburg Chevrah Kadisha, there were requests from about four families to repatriate loved ones to Israel during the hard lockdown, but it wasn't possible. Their bodies will be exhumed at a later stage. There have been three repatriations to Israel in the past six months.

Jonathan Fox, the rabbi of Sandringham Gardens, said, "This is an incredible story of how one determined family managed during a pandemic to get this special woman to her final resting place. It took enormous effort and determination."

He described the late Flora as "a lovely, friendly lady" who was "very committed to Torah in such a quiet and modest way".

"She loved attending shul services on Shabbat and during the week. She also enjoyed *shiurim* and never failed to compliment the rabbi. She was incredibly proud of her children and grandchildren."

Joseph, said his late mother often expressed her wish to be buried next to his father in Israel. "She told me and my two brothers that this was her wish. Knowing she is there is a big comfort," he said.

Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, rabbi of the newly-established small Jewish Communities Association, said, "The Hovshas were well known, active members of the Rustenberg Jewish community."

"My special *bobba* has been reunited with my *zaida* in the holiest place on earth," Salkow said. "Some very special people including David Weber and Phillip Kalmonowitz from the Chev and Hashem made this possible. She asked for so little in her life, and this was something she really wanted. There is a huge amount of comfort knowing that her wish came true."

Flora is survived by her two sons, seven grandchildren, and six great grandchildren.

Teen's heartfelt book helps others conquer their fears

JORDAN MOSHE

She underwent a heart operation at the age of four, so Lily Senior knows the meaning of courage. Now 13, she is helping other children conquer their fears by sharing her story of bravery in a book that's all heart.

Titled *Grace's Hospital Journey*, the book is based on Lily's experience at Sunninghill Hospital almost 10 years ago.

"I suffered from an atrial defect, which basically means I had a hole in my heart," Lily told the *SA Jewish Report* recently. "I had a narrowed artery as well, and the doctors took skin from around my heart and put it over the hole.

"In the first few years of school, I didn't think about it at all. When I got to Grade 6, I started becoming more aware of it, and realised how grateful I was that I could have a normal life."

Although not an emergency, the procedure prevented future complications, said her mother, Regi.

"The doctor said that when she became a young adult, she would have possible heart complications," she says. "It was suggested that the sooner we did it, the sooner we could prevent issues later in her life."

"Like any parents, my husband and I were fearful of what open-heart surgery meant for our little girl, but the doctor explained that Lily's was a simple case in comparison to others."

This became especially clear after the operation. While Lily's recovery was straightforward, a fellow patient called Tiffany, a girl a little younger than Lily, passed away almost a year after the two met at the hospital. The book was conceived in Tiffany's memory.

"We were sitting at the dinner table on the anniversary of Tiffany's passing last year, and Lily announced that she was going to write a book and dedicate it to Tiffany," Regi said. "She wanted to tell children about her experience and inspire them not to be scared of the unknown."

"In September, I sat down with my dad and we wrote down some ideas about the things I could incorporate into the book. I started writing the book itself a little later," Lily said.

"It was interesting to relive the memories. It did take some time for me to get into the process and actually write it. I went online and found an illustrator, Peet Nieuwenhuizen, at Creature of Habit, and I emailed him.

"We started chatting, he gave me some ideas, and I guided him through what I wanted to do. He sent me a final product, we made some changes, and we created the book. It was amazing."

The book was completed in November, and trademarked soon

thereafter.

"It was truly a dream come true to see it printed," said Lily. "I was overwhelmed to see the end result. It was really the best feeling I could have imagined."

"My husband and I cried when we saw it," said Regi. "Lily really came up with an unbelievable idea. In the story, Grace wakes up after a scary operation and sees the scar on her chest, her badge of honour for her bravery. This was what Lily had."

The narrative captures Lily's experience, but makes it accessible to children.

"The doctors like to get you up and walking after the operation, and I remember seeing Lily and Tiffany with their IV drips attached walking through the hospital," she said. "They roamed the corridor, and I followed behind them with Tiffany's mom."

"Lily created the idea of her and Tiffany being glitter girls and going for rides in wheelchairs down the corridors. She took a scary moment, and wrote about it in a way that other children could relate to."

Although the book hasn't been published, a Cape Town-based printer has produced 150 copies so far. The Seniors hoped to deliver copies to children in the wards at Sunninghill Hospital, but COVID-19 complications prevented them from delivering them in person.

"The idea was to give books to children in the wards going through the same experience," said Regi. "Unfortunately, we couldn't do that, so we gave some copies to Lily's cardiologist, Dr Jeff Harrisberg, who thought it was absolutely incredible."

A copy was also given to Tiffany's family, as well as other family members, friends, and some schools.

"Tiffany's parents were very grateful to know we were thinking of them," said Lily. "I've had so many supportive responses so far. It's been a dream come true."

"I never would have thought I would write a book. If my parents had asked me this a few years ago, I would have thought they were mad. Now that I've done it, I've seen how much I can take from it and give to others."

Lily hopes that other children will draw inspiration from her experience, bravely facing whatever procedure they may have to undergo in a hospital.

"You mustn't be scared," she concludes. "I want other kids to feel they can do anything. Whatever the surgery or procedure, they must feel positive, hopeful, and grateful that they can get it. You can conquer your fears."

• Copies of *Grace's Hospital Journey* are available for purchase from Regi Senior, who can be contacted at 082 852 3485. The proceeds will go towards helping other children in need of heart surgery.



Lily Senior

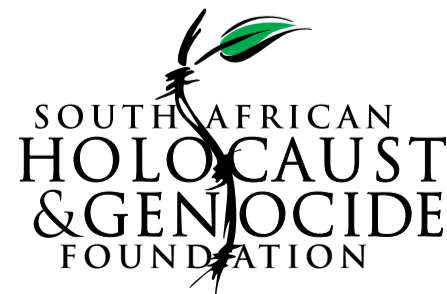
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Legendary pilot tilts his wings at scribing

JORDAN MOSHE

"I never set out to achieve things or make a name for myself. Whatever happened, happened by good fortune," says Captain Selwyn "Scully" Levin, whose name is synonymous with flying in South Africa.

This legend has blazed a trail across the aviation industry as a commercial and show pilot in an astonishing career spanning 56 years.

"I'm a very enthusiastic guy who makes things happen, and when I rushed ahead and did things, I sometimes created a vortex behind me," Levin says.

Now retired, the 74-year-old flying ace has penned *Punching Holes in the Sky*, a collection of anecdotes drawn from his years as an aerobatic pilot.

"My daughter, Hayley, is in the media business," Levin told the *SA Jewish Report*. "I had done a fair amount of writing for some aviation publications she had put out, and she said I should write my own story."

"I wrote my memoirs and realised that no one would be interested in my life story besides my family, so I put it aside for my kids and grandkids who may read it one day. I changed tack, and reorientated the book towards my air show career instead."

Levin qualified as a pilot in the South African Air Force in 1964, inspired by the example of his father, also an accomplished pilot.

"All I ever really wanted to do was become a pilot," says Levin. "My dad bought an old plane for me to play in as a child. He had an enthusiasm for aviation which was catching, and he has always been a hero in my life."

"Another hero was Dr Max Muscat from Vryburg, a flying dentist who would go all over, fixing people's teeth in really out-of-the-way places across the country. He'd land on the side of the road, farmers would come, and

they would have their teeth attended to.

"He and my dad were pals at university, and because he flew and was a dentist, I wanted to be one too. I thought I would be a flying dentist like him."

However, after completing three years of service in the airforce, Levin joined the ranks of South African Airways (SAA), and became a commercial pilot.

the aerobatics flying. I competed in and won a few championships and started the aerobatic team. Later, I found myself doing demonstration flights for SAA at air shows. What could be better than that?"

Levin even performed in the United Kingdom (UK), making a name for South African aviation in a country which takes flying very seriously.

"The British are far more air minded than any other nation," he says. "England hung by a thread when Germany wanted to invade, and everybody owed the Royal Air Force a debt of gratitude for what it did."

"The British are air-crazy, with air shows drawing 90 000 people. We arrived with a Boeing 747 and did what other display pilots had never done, showing a monstrous airplane, and we won the award for the best display. We stole the show."

Levin scored a win for South Africa again in Reno, Nevada, in the United States (US) when he flew in the national air races.

He recalls, "I arrived in my *veldskoene*, rugby shorts, and t-shirt. The Americans didn't take me seriously, saying I'd probably need a lot of help and I should ask if I was unsure. I thanked them, and who came first? I did."

These were some of Levin's memories when putting his book together, giving readers a sense of the thrill of taking to the skies.

"There are so many followers of air shows in South Africa, no matter where you go," he says. "Our shows are smaller compared to those in the US and UK, but they have a hell of a following."

"I figured that people would enjoy the opportunity to understand what it's really like. I decided I'd take them into the cockpit and show them what it's like through writing this book."

There were also highlights in his career that didn't make it into the book, Levin says.

"I realised only afterwards that I had forgotten certain things and really should have included them," he laughs. "I flew in 56 movies, and forgot to put them in. I met people like Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone, and Herbert Lom, and did a lot of work doing stunt flying."

Nonetheless, the book has given Levin the opportunity to reconnect with many people and establish new friendships.

"As I went along, I remembered certain people, how they had helped me, how good they had been to me, and sent books to them because of what they had done for me."

"I've also heard a lot from people who have read it, especially pilots. I sent a batch of books to Israel with a friend and suddenly, one guy who had been a top pilot in the Israeli Air Force and with El Al wrote to me to say he couldn't put my book down. It makes me feel good."

Levin also reconnected with his father through the book.

"Every time there was cause to mention my dad, I had a tear in my eye thinking about him," he says. "Nothing will bring him back, but I dedicated the book to him. I wrote a lot about him, and my wife proofread it and reminded me that it wasn't a book about my dad, but about flying."

"Still, the book helped me get in touch with him again."

Although he believes readers need a slight knowledge of aviation to really appreciate the book, Levin feels that almost anyone will enjoy reading it.

"When it became a little technical, my wife struggled a bit with it," he laughs. "But she has no problem reading a recipe or knitting pattern, and things like that baffle me."

"I hope that my book gives aspirant fliers the message that if they want to do it, they must just go out there and give it their all."

• *Punching Holes in the Sky* can be ordered at <https://bit.ly/3ngr25r>



Selwyn "Scully" Levin

"I couldn't believe my luck," he says. "I'd sit in the cockpit and pinch myself because I couldn't accept that it was true. Up until very recently, I've been pinching myself every day."

Levin progressed rapidly, becoming a flying instructor for the airline, and later holding positions in flight operations management. However, he wanted to do more.

"I loved it," he says, "but it wasn't quite enough, hence

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Tony Leon pulls no punches in new book

PETA KROST MAUNDER

Tony Leon has never been one to mince words. Ever since he became involved in politics in the Progressive Federal Party, the former leader of the Democratic Alliance (DA) has had strong opinions and has fearlessly made them known.

Some thought they were inspired, while others despised him for them, but most people took notice when he said something.

So, when publisher Jonathan Ball suggested that he write a book about South Africa, he wasn't suggesting Leon write the consummate guide to the country. He wanted a view of where we are through the eyes of the founder of the DA and the longest serving leader of the official opposition.

"Apparently, people wanted to hear the views of someone who was actually in the trenches," Leon, who retired as leader of the DA and from mainstream politics in 2007, told the *SA Jewish Report* last week. Two weeks after the meeting with Ball, COVID-19 struck and South Africa went into lockdown.

"I then realised this book would be my sanity," said Leon. "I would have an afternoon project and every day to work on it. Even if it was rubbish, I would have been productive during lockdown."

Leon is executive chair of Resolve Communications, an advocacy company for reputational management and strategic communication, but spends much time giving his political opinion through writing, speaking, or interviews.

And his book, *Future Tense – Reflections on My Troubled Land* tackles issues including why the African National Congress (ANC) is bad for business, problems in the DA, and revenge economics. He even addresses the Jewish community.

Leon, however, doesn't long to be back in the political playing field. "I don't miss it one bit. I'm not short of platforms to express myself now, but when I was leader of the DA, it was all-consuming and that sucked all the oxygen from me. By the time I left, I had really done and had enough."

At the time, a few people in power asked him when he was retiring, but it was his late father-in-law who made it quite clear. "He called me, and said, 'You are like Alexander the Great, your party has done what it can do, you have no more kingdoms to conquer, what are you going to do now? You aren't going to become president and you have been there for 30 years.' I realised he was right, so I resigned and went to Harvard without a career plan," said Leon.

While he lives happily in Cape Town and believes in a future here, he's not happy with the status quo in the country.

At the end of 2019, South Africa's borrowing costs were a billion rand per working day. "When I finished this book, we were borrowing R2 billion rand a day, so debt-service costs doubled in a year. We have a big problem," he said.

"All our essential policies are wrong, the people we have implemented to manage them aren't performing, and we need to change both. Unfortunately with Ramaphosa, he just appoints another committee, usually headed by the wrong person, and then diddles around and doesn't make decisions."

Leon said that although there was talk about course correction, he had seen little sign of it. "If you keep going in the same direction, doing the same thing, you are going to go over a cliff. And we are pretty much on the cliff's edge at the moment."

He insists the country's saving grace is the private sector, which has "stepped in to mind the gap that has been left by the state" and those within it do it willingly and with world-class standards.

"These are people who want to contribute to this country and have the skillset and right political views, yet they are debarred because they are white," he says. "When a country throws away its knowledge base, that's just ludicrous. These people want to help and contribute, but can't."

"They then leave and go overseas, but the country suffers, the tax payers suffer, the young kids who would have had a better education with an inspired university suffer. You then live in a mediocre place, lead and governed by mediocre people, not because of a racist view, but from a knowledge-based view."

But Leon is confident that "change will happen". He

makes a comparison between the ANC and the Israeli Labour Party. "They [Labour] lost power after being arrogant, and that's what happens with time. What will replace the ANC is another question, but there will be a South Africa that won't be governed by the ANC. Whether its successor is better or worse, or corrupt, I can't guarantee."

Being married to an Israeli woman, Leon is very aware of the ruling party's sentiments about Israel, and he finds it distressing. "When Michal and I got married, the word in the ANC was that I was marrying a Mossad agent," he said. "Posters went up in Athlone [in Cape Town], which is a very Muslim area, and they said a vote for the DA is a vote for Israel. It had barbed wire and blood printed on it."

"The ANC is fundamentally anti-Israel, anti-Zionist, and there is a fair amount of antisemitism. In the book, I mention an extraordinary headline that was in a national newspaper in 2019: 'Cyril's in the pocket of the Jews'. There is all that recognisable negative narrative going on in the background."

What really riled him was when Cape Town was running out of water and Israel was offering to help. "South Africa took pride in boycotting this, and the minister of water affairs went off to Iran to get water," he said.

He insists that too often, the ANC's argument isn't about the borders of Israel, which are worth negotiating, it's about the very existence of Israel. "And on that, it removes any room for any conversation."

South Africa makes as if it's an important global player and Israel is irrelevant, but it's not like that anymore, Leon said. "This world view is simplistic and counterproductive for our country, but deeply ingrained. They could do this posturing under Mandela because he was a world icon, but South Africa has fallen so far that nobody

is really interested in us shouting these sentiments about Israel."

He doesn't pull his punches in regard to those within the party he represented either. Leon said he thought at one stage that the DA was in serious trouble, and told Mmusi Maimane, then DA leader. Maimane called him in to sit on a panel of three to help guide them forward.

"They were a victim of their own success. They had done so well in the 2016 elections, but this had happened because the folk in the township stayed home rather than voting, while the suburbanites went out in their masses."

Leon said the DA's mistakes included not factoring in Ramaphosa coming in, the party soft-peddalling what it stood for, getting involved in internal fights, and alienating Afrikaans voters. "They made the mistake of thinking they [the Afrikaners] had nowhere else to go, and the truth is that voters always have choices. If politicians think for a single second that they have a captive market, they are in the wrong profession."

He spoke of having a "complex relationship with his successor, Helen Zille, whom he recruited to the party". Admitting to having had a number of disagreements, he said her record as a leader was "crowned with great success". Although "she was purpose-driven and governed well", he isn't sure about "second and third acts in politics".

As for Maimane (who took over from Zille), he said, "He is a great chap, but evidence of his leadership was profoundly absent." He referred to him as "conflict averse" and "pointing in two directions at the same time" at the helm, which didn't serve him as leader. Under Maimane, Leon said, "There was an overwhelming sense that the party was *parev*, not really one thing or another."

However, he has confidence in the present leader of the opposition, John Steenhuisen, with whom he has a close relationship.

He identifies strongly as being Jewish, but said he wasn't "a great practitioner". However, he believes that the future of the Jews in South Africa "will be no better or worse than the rest of the white people in the country". He spoke of being taken with how the Jewish community was "exemplary at looking after its own" and other communities.

"I'm really impressed with the fact that there are people who have incredibly busy lives and still insist on giving back," Leon said. "Provided there is that kind of leadership and generosity, this community should be okay."



Tony Leon

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Let's start talking about Pesach

OPINION

CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN



For the past few weeks, my family and I have been doing something really special. We've been getting together every Sunday night, sitting around the table, and going through the Pesach Haggadah.

It's just me, Gina, and our children – our eldest, Mordi, his wife Avigayil, and Levi, Shayna, and youngest Azi. We have supper together, and then we get stuck into the Haggadah, discussing, debating, sharing as a family, covering everything from the four sons, the four questions and the ten plagues, to matzah, maror, and the four cups of wine.

It has been a truly memorable experience. We started this family tradition a few months ago, setting aside the Sunday night slot to connect as a family and share Torah ideas. It's an open forum, a space for every member of the family to express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions. We've covered the Rambam's 13 Principles of Faith and the weekly parsha, and now, most recently, the Haggadah.

Going through the Haggadah, which tells the story of the Jewish people and goes to the very heart of who we are as Jews, has been particularly special. We've fine-tuned our understanding of the story, and gained so many new insights and ideas. Just as importantly, we've grown closer as a family, and feel more connected to each other and Hashem. Now, as we head towards Pesach, we all feel that this is going to be a dramatically different seder experience. Our mindset is different.

The Pesach seder is perhaps the formative



Jewish experience. The seders we had as kids seem to stay with us. Even as we grow older, we recollect them fondly and vividly. It's so much more than a ceremony, a procession of rituals, it's the rich soil in which our families and our very Jewish identity are formed.

Of course, as we grow older, there's the temptation, given how familiar the story is, to slip into autopilot on seder night. But if we prepare, we can avoid this and enter the seder charged with inspiration and filled with rich new perspectives. In doing so, we can transform it into an incredibly powerful spiritual and

emotional experience that changes us, that truly frees us from our tired routines and habits and brings us closer to one another, to G-d, and to our true selves. A rebirth in the deepest sense.

That's why I would like to call on all of us to start these meaningful family conversations in preparation for Pesach, to discuss the ideas and themes and get a deeper understanding of the seder itself. Of course, we need to prepare our homes – cleaning and cooking are incredibly important because they help us to fulfil all the *mitzvot* of this special *chag* and ensure we have a proper, kosher Pesach. But the seder, too, needs

preparation, and the more we prepare for it, the greater the experience is going to be.

There's something that can help you get the process started. My family and I were so excited and inspired by our Sunday night learning sessions, we decided to record our Haggadah discussions. We've turned these recordings into a special Pesach series, called *The Goldstein Family Podcast*, which you can access via my website or wherever you get your podcasts. The sessions have been cut and edited into eight episodes ranging from 10 to 30 minutes each to make them as accessible as possible.

There's not much time left before Pesach, but I would like to encourage you to devote some time to preparing for the seder, and our podcast can be a good place to start. Even just a couple of hours can make all the difference to your seder.

Especially at this time, after a year of being battered by a pandemic, we need the healing, the meaning, and the deep inspiration of the seder more than ever – the message of faith in Hashem, connection to generations past, the sense of rootedness it gives us in an uncertain world.

Let's take this opportunity to prepare so that we can connect with the ancient words of the Haggadah – with the great origin story of our people – in ways we've never done before.

Gina and I wish you all a *chag kasher v'same'ach* – a beautiful Pesach – and deeply meaningful, enriching seders.

Is antisemitism good for the Jews?

OPINION

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN



One of the traditional songs from the Pesach Haggadah which has become hugely popular in recent years is *Vehi Sheamda*. An original version composed by Yonatan Razel was turned into a mega hit by Yaakov Shwekey, and was named Song of the Decade in Israel.

The passage in English reads, "And it is this that has stood by our fathers and us. For not just one alone [Pharaoh] has risen against us to destroy us, but in each and every generation they rise against us to destroy us and the holy one, blessed be He, saves us from their hand!"

What is meant by the opening words, "vehi" as in "it is this that has stood by us"? What does "this" refer to? The simple meaning seems to be that it follows on the previous paragraph in the Haggadah where we read, "Blessed is He who keeps His promise to Israel."

It refers to G-d's promise to redeem the Children of Israel from Egyptian exile. According to commentary,

it also refers to G-d's ongoing promise to redeem us from all our exile and persecution, including the final redemption at the end of days.

This promise has sustained the Jewish people throughout all the

dark and difficult days of our long and tortuous history. We have always believed and trusted in G-d's promise that, in the end, it would all come right.

That's the simple meaning. But a few years ago, I had a brain wave of a rather alternative interpretation. Later, I was gratified to see the same idea in the writings of earlier rabbis much more learned than I.

What occurred to me was that the Haggadah may have been giving us another message as well. The very fact that "in every generation they rise against us to destroy us" is itself what has stood by us and given us the strength to persevere. Antisemitism, and the fact that in spite of all the existential threats

marvelled at our miraculous survival. Over 300 years ago, King Louis XIV of France asked the philosopher, Pascal, to give him proof of the existence of G-d. Pascal famously replied, "Why the Jews, your majesty, the Jews!"

Our tiny nation's survival while all the greatest empires of the world have come and gone remains powerful confirmation that there is a higher power ensuring our continuity and destiny.

Indeed, there is a strong argument to suggest that antisemitism has been good for the Jews. The French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, made that point in his book *Anti-Semite & Jew*. History records that under regimes that persecuted us, we

remained steadfastly Jewish, whereas under more enlightened, liberal forms of government, we became comfortable in our newfound freedom, gradually embracing a welcoming but dominant culture and forfeiting much of our own.

Back in the early 19th century, Napoleon was conquering Europe and promising liberty and equality for all. When he squared up against Russia, many

Jewish leaders sided with him, hoping he would finally bring an end to Czarist persecution and extend to Russian Jewry full civil rights. However, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad, thought differently. He actively opposed Napoleon, and even had his Chassidim assist in intelligence gathering for the Russian army.

When his colleagues challenged him and questioned his apparent lack of concern for the well-being of his own people, he argued that while Napoleon might be good for the Jews materially, his victory would result in spiritual disaster. Tragically, the record proves him correct. Minus the Little Emperor, Russian Jews remained staunchly Jewish, while French Jewry virtually vanished.

How many Jewish Rothschilds are left in the world? G-d knows we could have used them. Most of French Jewry today hails from North Africa. The originals are few and far between.

And the American experience confirms beyond a shadow of a doubt that freedom, democracy, and equal rights, while wonderful blessings for Jews for which we should be eternally grateful, also present a profound challenge to our Jewish identity and way of life. In the melting pot of the United States, Jews have integrated so successfully, they are virtually disappearing!

Back in the 1970s, when I was working with Jewish university students, we were struggling to break through a wall of icy indifference towards Judaism. It was so frustrating, that my colleagues and I even considered

going onto campus in the dead of night to paint a few swastikas on the student union building!

Maybe that would jolt them out of their apathy. Of course, we never actually did it, but the fact that the thought crossed our minds demonstrates how external threats have a way of making Jews bristle with pride and righteous indignation.

We see it today as well. Outside many shuls around the world, you will find young men and women who volunteer to do security duty. Many of them are never seen inside the shuls they protect. Going to shul and praying isn't their thing. But when enemies of Israel threaten Jews, these brave young people respond as loyal, committed Jews.

It appears that as repugnant as antisemitism may be, in a strange, perverse sort of way it may have contributed to the stubborn determination of Jews over many generations to stand up for their convictions and live by the principles of our faith no matter what.

So, when you sing *Vehi Sheamda* at your Pesach Seder this year, instead of bemoaning our enemies' hatred for us, find the positive side. *Vehi* – this very hostility and the never-ending attempt at our annihilation – has only served to strengthen our resolve to remain steadfastly Jewish. Indeed, it has stood us well!

• Rabbi Yossy Goldman is the rabbi at Sydenham Shul, and the president of the South African Rabbinical Association.





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In tribute to modern-day Miriams

MIRAH LANGER

At the heart of the story of Exodus lies the bond between sister and brother. Indeed, "Miriam nurtured Moshe and Moshe, later in life, prayed for her healing. It's a beautiful relationship," says Rebbetzin Tamar Taback.

"At the age of seven, Miriam had a prophecy that her mother would give birth to the redeemer of her people. She nurtured that prophecy, trusted it, and did her part all the way through," says Taback, the world-renowned founder of Nexus, a school of Torah study for women.

"When Moses was born, her father celebrated Miriam's prophecy coming to fruition. However, circumstances in Egypt became so dangerous for the Jewish people, that the family elected to send Moses down the river in the bassinet to try and save his life. Now, her father rebuked her prophecy.

"Of course, Moses was well on his way towards fulfilling it, for he would soon be found by Pharaoh's daughter. Her father could see only on the surface of the disaster; Miriam had the capacity to dig deep into the reservoir of faith and keep on believing."

As such, Taback says, "Miriam embodies the symbol of the well: when the earth is dry and parched, you don't see anything. The well is from deep within the earth; it's a hidden reservoir."



Raelene Tradonsky with her sons and Cecil at her daughter's Batmitzvah

"This is the secret of Miriam. Even when the situation is dire and the earth parched, she is able to send a bucket, a cord into the deep wells of her soul, her *emunah*, her invigorating hope and capacity to see beyond the immediate constraints to a future."

To Dr Franklin Kessler, his sister, Vivian Anstey, is the embodiment of a modern-day Miriam. Six years ago, she donated her kidney to him.

"My sister and I were very close from early on. So, when she decided that she wanted to donate one of her kidneys to me to improve my quality of life – actually to save my life – that relationship became even closer."

Anstey, too, remembers a close childhood, growing up together in Bellville, Cape Town, with Kessler, who is three years older than her.

Even when he made aliyah about 30 years ago, they remained strongly connected and in constant contact as her brother continued to experience kidney deterioration.

Then a few years ago, he told her that his condition had reached the point that he would have to go on dialysis or find a donor.

Although he didn't ask for her help, Anstey decided that that she would research the possibility of being a match.

"In retrospect, I realise that even entertaining the idea clinched the deal right there," Anstey says.

A turning point in understanding this was when she had a conversation with a



Vivian Anstey and Dr Franklin Kessler in Israel before the operation

friend who is a doctor. "The first comment he made to me was, 'Do you realise that your brother will be living with a life sentence?' Not a death sentence, a life sentence, which basically meant that my decision would influence his life."

It made her realise that, "I wouldn't have been able to live with myself watching him struggle being a doctor himself and having to go onto dialysis a couple of hours every single day of his life."

"The pain and suffering that he would have gone through and which I would have endured as a bystander, wasn't an option. Being a sister, I had a sense of responsibility."

Anstey was also motivated by the Jewish teaching that the question regarding organ donation of this kind is no longer whether one should offer one's assistance, but the risk of doing so.

"Am I my 'brother's keeper'? The reality is that if families are close and there's a connection, then, yes."

Anstey underwent numerous tests, and it emerged that "many of the prerequisites aligned".

She made plans to go to Israel to undergo the procedure with her brother. The operation was a success.

She remembers how after the operation, the hospital wanted their families to be

involved in the recovery; so with two extra mattresses, she and her brother, along with his son and her husband, all stayed in the ward together.

Since then, her brother's health has improved remarkably. "He started on about 30 to 35 pills a day. Now he visits for check-ups once a year, and is fully back to work. It's an absolute blessing."

For Kessler, Vivian is the core of this blessing.

"I feel like I'm carrying with me a part of an angel that is my sister. That sums up every aspect of her character and her giving nature. I'm thankful to her, and full of love for her," he says.

Reflecting on the Torah lessons drawn from Miriam's life, Taback says, "Miriam teaches us to have an expansive perspective: a big mind and a big heart. Although her name comes from the Hebrew root letters for



Cecil Shapiro

the word 'bitter', this is in fact a celebration of her attribute to turn the bitterest of times into those of hope, knowing that through the powers of compassion and faith, all in fact

will be revealed as sweet in the end. It's the deepest level of transformation."

The relationship between Raelene Tradonsky and her brother, Cecil Shapiro, is a tribute to finding the sweetest joy in connection.

Shapiro is physically and mentally disabled. Growing up together in Johannesburg, Tradonsky's memories are of a very close bond. "Where I went, my brother went. We shared everything. I didn't know any different. I thought it was a privilege."

"I literally brushed my brother's teeth

every single night until I moved out of home when I got married. Cecil was just such an enormous part of my life."

Tradonsky says her parents were fiercely dedicated to her and her brother. They ensured that Shapiro received the affection and nurture of his family at all times. "My father used to say to me, even when I was a little girl and didn't quite understand, that 'Cecil is our responsibility; he isn't yours'. He never laid guilt on me. That allowed me to do what I do with love. It wasn't a sense of burden or responsibility."

She is indebted to the Chevrah Kadisha and Selwyn Segal, where Shapiro now lives, for the love and care he has been given. She even previously served as treasurer in support of their work.

While her father passed away some time ago, her mother died only recently of COVID-19. It's a loss that has made her connection to Shapiro feel even more poignant. Time spent together, even when bringing him his favourite treats of biltong, cold drinks, Flings, and popcorn, brings equal joy to them as siblings.

"I love speaking to him, as much as

he loves speaking to me. It calms me," Tradonsky says. His experiences have shown her the "simplicity of life, but also the reality of life".

Over time, she has come to realise the gift that she has been given by her experience of being Shapiro's sister. While for many, there's an element of discomfort when going to a place like Selwyn Segal, for her it's different. "It just comes naturally to me to be able to talk, hug, and love them because it's all I have known. It gives me empathy and a sense of compassion."

She says her parents' example taught her that "if you can get siblings to love each other, then your job as a parent is done. Not just in our case, but even between siblings with different personalities. It's about tolerance, acceptance, and mostly just loving the person for who and what they are, not necessarily what you want them to be."

The deep sense of love between the two is evident in Shapiro as well. When it comes to talking about Tradonsky, he simply declares, "I love her very much. She is my sister, my only sister."

The tale of Hitler's Haggadah in Morocco

JORDAN MOSHE

If you're looking to add some novelty to your Pesach seder, why not consider bringing Hitler's Haggadah to your table?

Before you express outrage, rest assured that the Nazi dictator didn't own or publish his own Haggadah. This unique volume named after him was in fact penned by a Jew, and while it may not be a traditional Haggadah, it adds a meaningful dimension of salvation to the timeless account of Jewish redemption.

Called *Hitler's Haggadah*, this supplemental text has garnered considerable attention in the press in recent years. It's believed to have been written by a Jew called Nissim ben Shimon, also called Simon Coiffeur (Simon hairdresser) in French on the book's cover, in Rabat, Morocco, in about 1943. It followed the 1942 Allied invasion, Operation Torch, that brought about an eventual Allied victory against the Axis powers in French North Africa.

In a novel spin on the Pesach story, the text recounts the events of that invasion, and frames them within the familiar narrative. Writing under what is probably a pseudonym, the author presents a wartime Pesach narrative in Judeo-Arabic, inserting large pieces of the original Haggadah text while injecting certain novelties into the narrative.

"He does actually what the sages have told us for generation upon generation: to see ourselves as if we are part of the exodus," Jonnie Schnytzer, a PhD candidate at Bar-Ilan University, reportedly told American Jewish news outlet, *The Forward*, earlier this month.

Schnytzer discovered the text in 2019, and has since worked on translating and adapting it for re-publication this year under the title, *The Hitler Haggadah: A Moroccan Jew's Wartime Retelling of the Passover Story*.

"[The author] suddenly sees 'wow this is happening today,'" Schnytzer says. "The Allied forces, instead of G-d, are the ones that bring plagues upon Hitler, instead of Pharaoh. He's retelling a story, the story of his generation, which is the Allied forces beating Hitler and Mussolini."

While the text's format is familiar, names and locations are often altered, with Rabbi Joseph Stalin asking how Berlin suffered 10 plagues and Hamburg a whopping 50; the Royal Airforce named as a plague; and Mussolini cast as the son who doesn't know how to ask.

The Axis forces are treated similarly in the text, which poses the question: "This Italy that we are fighting, for what reason?" It goes on to explain, "Because of Mussolini, who stuck to Hitler, saying, 'Be careful not to betray me.' And He brought upon them Montgomery, and their dough didn't even have time to turn into macaroni. And then the Eighth Army appeared, and they immediately fled."

Comically, the writer adds that "they baked the dough and made spaghetti. When they kicked them out of Egypt, and they didn't have time to shape [the dough]. Nor did they even have time to fast."

Schnytzer writes in his blog at *The Times of Israel* that the text is "deep, dramatic, and sometimes comical". "Above all, it carries an inspiring message of Jewish unity, solidarity, and a shared fate."

"One might think it's tasteless to have chosen such a title, but bear in mind that Hitler's Haggadah wasn't a traditional Haggadah but more of a supplement, giving a rewritten take, a modern reading of the Magid section."

Beyond that, the text is also a crucial window onto the oft neglected experience of North African Jewry during the war, addressing what Schnytzer calls a "black hole" of awareness. According to the Jewish Museum of Berlin, Jews living in North Africa were constantly threatened by the Germans during the North African campaign from 1940 to 1943. In the German-allied French colonies of the Vichy regime, racial laws and forced labour camps had already been established for the Jewish population.

Moreover, Nazi forces occupied Tunisia for a time, establishing labour camps in which Jews perished from disease and lack of food. Morocco, too, faced the grim reality of anti-Jewish laws and ghetto confinement in some cases. Fortunately, the tables were turned by the Allied victory, a miracle and inspiration for the Haggadah's author.

"It's important for each of us to understand the narratives

and stories of different groups, and ideally, for it to become part of how we see ourselves as Jews," Schnytzer reportedly told *The Forward*.

"There's an incredible message here, an inspirational message of Jewish solidarity, because he's a Jew living in Rabat, in North Africa, and yet he's worried about what's going on with his brethren in Germany, in Poland."

Thanks to Schnytzer's efforts, the text has become widely available internationally, featuring unique artwork and an accessible translation. The project was initially backed and funded on the Headstart funding platform, but is now available for purchase on Amazon.

"When I first read *Hitler's Haggadah*, I fell in love with the work," Schnytzer writes on the Headstart page. "Not only because of its charm, but also because it opened a window into a whole new world for me, another piece of the diverse mosaic called the Jewish people."

"*Hitler's Haggadah*, in spite of its name, is an opportunity to catch a glimpse into the part of the narrative of North African Jewry, precisely on a night whose sole purpose is to tell the story of our people – a people originally from one place, in time scattered across the globe and now, many generations later, which has a homeland once more."

• *The Hitler Haggadah* can be bought on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Hitler-Haggadah-Moroccan-Retelling-Passover/dp/1951324013>

Photo: Jewish Museum of Berlin

Hitler's Haggadah



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Following in the footsteps of children



RABBI YOSSEI CHAIKIN

OPINION

One seder practice has always held a special mystique for me. It's the point when Prophet Elijah's cup is filled and the door is opened to welcome him.

As a very young child, the challenge was to stay awake until that late hour to witness the arrival of the special visitor. As I got older, I hoped to be chosen to go to the front door, candle in hand, and stand sentry until instructed to close and return to the table.

Equally exciting, however, was to remain seated and watch the level of the wine dip imperceptibly (in fact totally imperceptibly), convincing myself I had actually seen Elijah drink some of the liquid.

This year, I will be looking to Elijah to answer a question that has been weighing heavily on my mind: how do I get my community back into shul one year down the line?

It has been a long and hard year. For everyone. For rabbonim, it has been about ministering to our communities with shuls closed by law, or health concerns, for more than half of the past 12 months.

To our distressed congregants, eager to gather in prayer during these difficult times, we patiently explained that G-d listens to our entreaties from

anywhere, and that one must daven at home, alone, when it isn't possible to do so in shul.

It seems our argument was convincing – too persuasive in fact. Hence, though places of worship are now allowed to be open, our attendance is nowhere near pre-April 2020.

We have tried in every way to draw our people back, through public announcements and private pleas, but we still have a long way to go. We can preach again and again about the value of communal prayer over individual prayer. We can repeat that our shuls have set up strict health guidelines – beyond what the law mandates. But, people have learnt to enjoy praying at

“Involve the youth in the services, call them up to the Torah, let them open the Ark, chant Haftorahs, sing Anim Zmirot.”

home.

So, I will turn to Elijah the prophet, always referred to in the Talmud as the one who will resolve an issue when an impasse is reached and no halachic conclusion is possible.

This Shabbat in shul, on the eve of Passover, we read in the Haftorah the very final of all prophecies. It's drawn from the last of all Books of the Prophets, Malachi, and refers to Yom Hagadol (the big day) of the final messianic redemption, one reason why this Shabbat is known as Shabbat Hagadol.

And what are the last words of the last prophecy of all? “Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet, ahead of the big day. He will turn the hearts of parents by means of their children and the hearts of children by means of their parents.”

Before the dawning of the messianic era, the generation gap will have to close and Elijah's job will be just that, to ensure that the hearts of children and parents are at one. This is why this prophet is invited as guest of honour on the night of Pesach, so that he can watch firsthand the cross-generational experience of the handing over of tradition.

This is the night when children, parents, and

grandparents interact, the former asking the questions and the latter responding, passing over the torch of the fundamentals of our faith. It's also why a special seat is provided for Elijah at circumcision ceremonies, so that he can be there as a new generation is inducted into the faith of the fathers.

I have a suspicion that this is the answer Prophet Elijah will give to my burning question. He will tell me that we must invest in our children, and draw them to shul with innovative and exciting activities.

“Involve the youth in the services, call them up to the Torah, let them open the Ark, chant Haftorahs, sing Anim Zmirot,” he will say. This will bring their parents and grandparents to listen to them quicker than any beautifully crafted, compelling sermon, a chazzan with an amazing voice, or a melodious choir.

Kinderlach, come to shul this Pesach! Grab your parents by the hand, stop off on the way to collect your grandparents. Elijah is watching! We want him now.

• Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi of the Oxford Synagogue Centre, and the chairman of the South African Rabbinical Association.

Breathing new life into an ancient Pesach ritual

OPINION

RABBI DR RAPHAEL ZARUM



As a child, the seder is about staying up really late, but for many adults, it's about how quickly you can get to bed. Youthful wonder is gradually replaced by disenchanted parenthood, and every year it can get harder to be inspired by the same old story.

Trying something new can get dampened by the weight of family tradition – “we've always done it this way” – but I think we all want our home recital of the Haggadah to be a more memorable experience provided we don't overly extend it.

Too much discussion invariably frustrates the one or two who constantly ask, “When are we going to eat?”

But all is not lost! Here are four (for Pesach, it has to be four) creative ideas to spice up your seder without overstressing it. They will take a little pre-Pesach preparation, but might be more satisfying than cleaning out yet another rarely used cupboard that never had *chametz* anywhere near it in the first place.

1. Have a sofa seder

Why sit at the dining room table for five hours while not dining? It gets uncomfortable, and children fidget then droop. So why not do your seder in the lounge, and then move to the table for the meal? Our family have had sofa seders for many years, and it has had a transformative effect. Pillows and throws ensure everyone is comfortable; side tables can be used to hold wine glasses and bottles; and your coffee table can become the centre-piece seder plate.

The *Ma Nishtana* ends with the words, “but on this night we recline”. The Talmud (Pesachim 108a) tells us that lying on your back is going too far, but surely a soft sofa is more in the spirit than an upright chair? Children

(and adults) may drop off for a surreptitious nap and then re-engage later without disturbance.

Pesach is *zman cherutainu* (the moment of our freedom), and that freedom is symbolised by reclining. We are encouraged to ditch the formality of the dinner table and take a more relaxed approach, at ease with ourselves, comfortable with being Jewish.

2. Dip all night long

Early in the proceedings, we dip the *karpas* vegetable in saltwater and make the blessing. Following many rabbinic opinions, this tantalising little appetiser is all we eat until the matzah than opens the meal. However, some have the ancient custom of eating crudites, with a whole host of different tangy dips, throughout the reciting of the Haggadah, not so much to ruin your appetite for the meal, but enough to stop you yearning for it.

You could also give sweet treats to the children as a reward for a word-perfect *Ma Nishtana*, asking their own questions, or correctly answering some simple Pesach-related teasers you have thought up. Vegetables and sweets are foods that don't require grace after meals (benching), so they are fine to eat before the meal, although it's best to add the *boreh nefashot* (after-food blessing) if you do.

3. Create an Egyptian feel

“We were slaves to Par'oh [Pharaoh] in Egypt...” (Deuteronomy 6:21) quotes the Haggadah. But which Pharaoh and when? According to TC Mitchell's *The Bible in the British Museum*, the “Hebrew Par'oh is derived from Egyptian 'pr- [great house] which was used from at least the 14th century BC to refer to the king.” So the Torah uses the authentic Egyptian term and not just

Melech Mitzrayim (King of Egypt).

Though some archaeologists question the historicity of the exodus, many are persuaded by a whole host of data that suggests that the Pharaoh who enslaved us was Sethos I, and that it was his son, Ramesses II (1290-1224 BCE), who wouldn't let our people go.

For instance, there is the Stele of Merneptah, who was Ramesses II's successor, now in the Cairo Museum, made up of a 28-line hieroglyphic text which concludes with the triumphant poem, “Plundered is the Canaan with every



evil; carried off is Ashkelon; seized is Gezer... Israel is laid waste, his seed is not...” Canaan, Ashkelon, and Gezer are written with the determinatives for “land” whereas Israel has the determinative for “people”. In *Exploring Exodus*, Nachum Sarna writes that this is “the first mention of the people of Israel to be found in any extrabiblical source, and the only one, so far, to occur in any Egyptian text”.

So why not adorn your seder with Egyptian imagery? Pyramids, statues, ancient temples, maps, and

hieroglyphics. Google Images will lead you to numerous online pictures which you could print. Essential is a bust of Ramesses II which, along with many other Bible-related treasures, is on the British Museum website.

Or you could create an “edible Egypt” scene as a feature on your table. Pat some charoset into pyramid shapes; palm trees of parsley or spring onions (bathe them in water and their ends will curl); and sand dunes of matzah meal or desiccated coconut.

All this isn't to glorify ancient Egyptian culture, but to bring to life the story of the exodus and give realism and texture to your seder.

4. Let freedom talk lead to action

Why, asks Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks in his Haggadah, do we begin the night with the invitation, “This is the bread [matzah] of affliction... Let all that are hungry come and eat?” Matzah, he says, also symbolises freedom, and the matzah of affliction is transformed to the matzah of freedom only by “the willingness to share it with others. Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. In reaching out to others, we bring freedom into the world.”

So let your discussion about freedom at the seder prompt action. Encourage everyone around the table to commit to doing some acts of *tzedakah* (charity) or *chesed* (kindness). Freedom is truly tasted only when we act upon it rather than just talk about it. Then the lessons of seder night really will take us beyond that night, to freedom for all.

• Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum is dean of the London School of Jewish Studies. www.lsj.ac.uk

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ChevrahKadisha

The wheels of the bus

OPINION

REBBETZIN AIDEL KAZILSKY



I'm sure many of you remember the childhood song, "The wheels of the bus go round and round, round and round"? It's one of my favourite tunes, and I still sing it with my grandchildren. It has the beat of repetition. Its tune elicits a sense of predictability, a trust that, come what may, the "wheels will go round and round, the door will open and shut, and the bus driver will say, 'Move along, please'". I smile because isn't this a song about life? In fact, the analogy is unbelievably relevant.

While most of us perceive that our life is linear, that we start off in one place and land in another, in truth, it has a more cyclical quality to it. We are born and then we die, we come into this world, and then we leave, and in between that space of 120 years, we cycle through life events. More so, Judaism strongly believes in reincarnation, and so we cycle in and out of lives too. What is the

purpose of the wheel going round and round? Some might even ask: is there a purpose?

Chassidic philosophy teaches us that we come into the world to make a dwelling place for G-d - meaning that we transition through this crass, materialistic world in order to find the sparks of G-dliness embedded in it and release them back to their source. We are miners, so to speak, on a mission. Our lives on this planet are transient, we're merely passing through. But in that journey, we seek to find that which is eternal, that which has lost its way, and return it back to its rightful owner - G-d. It's not only

about returning the world back to a G-dly existence, it's also about returning ourselves to who we really are - a *chelek elokai mima'al mamosh* (a veritable part of the divine).

So, our motion on earth is cyclical - we measure our progress at every birthday. How did we grow, what did we become? What did we achieve? We also experience it at every Jewish holiday. Every year, we revisit the same time and space, the same energy,



and we ask ourselves, did I take the *yom tov* message to heart, and did I grow? Did I change myself, and did I effect my sphere of influence?

Even more, this experience isn't a solo one, it's a collaboration of many people, places, and times. We aren't alone when we board the bus. There are many passengers, each on their own ride, going to a place unique to them. Remember - "The babies on the bus go 'waa waa waa', the mummies on the bus go 'shh shh shh'." What's important, though, is that they are all on the same bus, and for everyone, the wheels of the bus go round and round.

We've just closed a wheel - the month of Adar - a time for joy when we were taught to serve G-d from a space of positivity and gratitude. Each day, we tried to look at this world through a positive lens and see how G-d does good and bestows so much blessing in our life. Simply put, we were challenged to practice the art of focusing on the glass half full not half empty.

And now that this wheel has closed its cycle and we have internalised that lesson, we enter the month of Nissan and the energy of freedom beckons to be discovered. Now is the time to work on freeing ourselves from the shackles of our idol worship. No, no. I'm not delusional in thinking we live in biblical times and are bowing down to molten, graven images! You see, we have even cycled through the annals of history. We now have developed into "sophisticated", 21st-century idol worshippers - we worship fashion, status, money, and the pursuit of honour. We worship our egos, our selfish inclinations, and the incessant need to be something.

Comes the month of Nissan when we celebrate our nation's release from the shackles of Pharaoh, and we are challenged to get out of our personal Egypt, to move beyond that which is shackling and holding us back from who we can truly be.

The one - most important - key, though, is to understand that true freedom doesn't mean an abrogation of your responsibilities. It sadly doesn't mean just lying on a beach with a pina colada watching as the world goes by (though it sounds unbelievably tempting when contemplating the cooking and cleaning we need to do before the holiday starts). True freedom is throwing off the

shackles of self-imprisonment and reuniting ourselves with our true existence - a connection to G-d and his world.

This past year, more so than other years, we have been in bondage, physically and socially distanced, quarantined, and isolated. It's undeniable that Mrs COVID-19 has been a very harsh taskmaster to us all. But at the same time, we have started to taste a deeper, truer level of freedom. We have been challenged to throw off the shackles of peer pressure, of keeping up with the Joneses, or was it the Cohens? We have been pushed to look inside and ask very real and relevant questions about our purpose, who we are, and why are we here. We've questioned our lifestyles, our modes of work, the style of education we offer our kids, and this is just the tip of the iceberg.

This year, our bus certainly went on a detour into uncharted territory, but the journey showed us that there is more to life than wandering around aimlessly accumulating things and living empty lives. The bus driver on high is chiding us with a "move along please, move along please". No, we are not going back to "normal!" Let's seize the energy of redemption, and start living redeemed! Let's reconnect to our original selves, take on a good resolution in the realm of spirituality, another small *mitzvah* which will add to the goodness and kindness the world so desperately needs. You'll then be able to start seeing the enormous change this life cycle has brought, and you'll be on the bus that will bring this world to its final destination, with the arrival of moshiah and a world filled with health, happiness, peace, and prosperity. Wishing you all a redemptive Pesach and a chag sameach.

• *Rebbetzin Aidel Kazilsky is a radio and television host, and an inspirational speaker who teaches the wisdom of Torah and applies it to contemporary times.*

The audacity of hope in 2021

OPINION

ADINA ROTH



We will soon be singing the songs of Hallel at the Passover seder. Although we sing Hallel many times in the year, the line from Psalm 118 will hold particular resonance, "*Min heMeitzar karati, Anani bamerchavya*" (From the narrow place, I called out to G-d, G-d answered me with expanse).

The resonance of this line for Passover is that Mitzrayim (Egypt) shares the same linguistic root as Meitzar (the narrow place). On Pesach, when we sing: "Egypt our place of slavery and the experience of constriction are one", it seems as if freedom occurs dramatically and suddenly. We cry out to G-d from places of tightness, and G-d answers with expansion, we are free.

This might be how we tell the exodus story thousands of years later. However, if we study the story of exodus, we can see that it was a case of stops and starts until we actually arrived at freedom.

From the first time that G-d announced to Moses that he would respond to the cries of the Israelites until we finally sang the Song of the Sea was a long road filled with ten plagues, increased suffering, and glimmers of hope, an interplay of light and dark.

This year marks exactly a year since South Africa went into its first hard lockdown. Indeed, it was announced a week before Passover. By Pesach, our entire world had changed. We had entered the narrow place.

Some of us had a seder alone, others were fortunate to have immediate family. Yet, we all felt the pain of being isolated from the ones we loved dearly and we were all confronted by the terror of not knowing how the fabric of our known lives would be touched by the virus.

As we contemplated our own fate, we realised that this would have devastating consequences for the most vulnerable in our societies.

One year later, many of us have lost beloveds. Many have lost their livelihoods. The inequalities in our society have deepened, and we shall have to work with this trauma for years to come.

At the same time, we are now in an interplay of light and

dark. There is hope on the horizon. The vaccine has arrived. It's being administered around the world and in South Africa. People are chanting prayers of gratitude.

Just this past week, I went to buy groceries and an elderly woman wearing a mask made a joke to me as I passed by. I looked at her with appreciation and awe to be able to connect with older people again, to have moments of togetherness.

Writer Mari Andrew characterises it well when she says, "For now I want to embrace this finicky in-between season when one day feels like a setback and the next feels like a leap forward. Growth and decay, hand-in-hand, with delicate flowers on the path."



How do we "do" in-between? In the deepest time of despair in the exodus story, the Midrash tells us that the men lost their desire to procreate. But the women resisted. They would go down to where the men worked. Then they would take out their copper mirrors and look into them with their husbands. She would say, "I am more attractive than you," and he would say, "No, I am more attractive than you." In this playful manner, the women would awaken desire in their husbands, and procreation resumed.

Clinical psychologist Leanne Zabow suggests that this idea of looking into mirrors is about re-awakening and re-constellating the idea of potential. Mirrors became a portal

to reflect not only on what is, but what could be. The men might have felt undermined, oppressed, and despondent. But the play of reflecting and reflection in these mirrors reminded them of the selves they were and they might become. Perhaps the width of expanse begins not with G-d saving us in an outright gesture of redemption, but with our persistent and audacious hope.

Just before Pesach 1939, on the eve of World War II, the Hassidic Rebbe Kalnymus Kalman Shapira (writer of the *Esh Kodesh*) wrote a letter to his community. He had exhorted them to leave Poland but as the year rolled on, it became almost impossible for many to leave. In this letter, knowing that the reality ahead for his people was grim and that evil huddled at the door, he instructed his followers to be joyous on Pesach.

He wrote, "Your joy should so exalted that you feel that you can barely hold yourself back from breaking into an ecstatic dance, leaping from the earth to the heavens. When you sit at the seder table, you imagine yourself sitting down to a festive meal in Gan Eden itself, participating in the celebration of the final redemption."

It's not my intention to compare the hardships of our pandemic to the monstrous atrocities of the Holocaust. But I'm struck by the rebbe's radical resistance to despair. He knew what his people faced, yet he invited them to feel joy on Pesach night. It's deeply moving!

This year, we are still betwixt and between. We aren't yet freed from our experience of the narrow place. Yet, how we long for it! We can sense its possibility.

We may still have to deal with the ups and downs of this time. But on Pesach night, the *Esh Kodesh* invites us to become radical imagineers of possibility. We have a responsibility to hold up the copper mirrors of the Israelite, and remind ourselves and each other of the expanse, the possibility of lives fully lived.

For seder night, we enter into joy and sing our redemption song. The time is a coming.

• *Adina Roth is a clinical psychologist in private practice, and a teacher of Jewish Studies.*

CHAG SAMEACH

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Not just a story, but a healing journey

TALI FEINBERG

Narrating the tale of the exodus from the Haggadah at the Passover table is at its essence a ritual of storytelling, which psychologists say can be a force for healing, continuity, and sustainability especially during difficult times.

“The motif of sitting around the fire while the leader of the group tells a story to children and adults has deep psychological value,” says psychologist Hanan Bushkin, the owner of the Anxiety and Trauma Clinic.

“Hearing stories allows people to attach themselves to mythical journeys, something we are all hungry for. People have always gravitated towards storytellers. Even if we’ve heard it a million times, we want to hear it again. The predictability of a beginning, middle, and end can give a sense of healing and closure.”

At Pesach, we not only tell the story, we put ourselves in the story, essentially bending time and space. Bushkin says this is a powerful tool.

“By doing this, the story becomes a metaphor for our own lives. As we live out stories of wandering and coming home, we can relate in a very real way to getting through obstacles, the hope of making it to where we want to be, and the resolution that it’s going to be okay. There’s something magical about putting yourself in the role of the characters so that your own individuality resonates with them.

“Human beings are order and pattern-seeking machines,” Bushkin says. “The seder is full of order and structure, with the same pattern repeated year after year. It’s almost

like the rhythm of beautiful music that can put you in an hypnotic state. It helps us to transcend the moment and ‘live’ in that space. This is why it’s so engaging year after year, and we want to know what happens next, as if hearing it for the first time.”

Looking at storytelling as a foundation of a nation or family, Bushkin says such “founding narratives” are “are an anchor point to hold onto. There is something very powerful in a ritual that’s so familiar and predictable. It creates a sense of security.”

Thinking about how Jews went to great lengths to have seders while suffering



persecution, he says it was “something unwavering that could be held onto. In the same way, wherever we are in the world, at any time in our lives, we can tell the story. This is unifying and comforting, tying us to *klal Yisrael*. We realise we aren’t alone, even at times like this, under lockdown.”

While Pesach may look different this year, Bushkin emphasises that “our world may be

upside down, but our stories are the same. This continuity is very important.”

Professor Joseph (Yossi) Turner, a lecturer in Jewish Thought at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, takes this point even further. “The continuity of Jewish existence is dependent upon the success of Jewish parents in every generation to convey the story of its past to its children. Should it ever happen that the parents no longer have a story to tell; or if the children are no longer interested in hearing the story of their past, the existence of the Jewish people will then come to an end,” he writes.

Bushkin explains that attaching objects or foods to the story, in the way we do with the seder plate, is also a powerful means of transcending the moment and immersing ourselves in the origins of the story. “To hold something like matzah, the same object that was held thousands of years ago when the story played out, is incredible. Tying taste to the story, and using all our senses, almost

takes us to another ‘planet’ of experience.”

Clinical psychologist Sarit Swisa says, “The maror, the matzah, the symbols aren’t gimmicks, they give us empathy for what our ancestors endured. It also changes our picture of what liberation is – we leave, but it’s not over. Becoming free isn’t just the act of leaving a confined space, so much more healing needs to happen. By telling the story, we continue the healing.”

“One of things we do in working with trauma,” Swisa says, “is to try to get the person to hold in their mind the image or memory of what happened, while being fully focused on the present. That helps you to heal because it makes you realise that it’s a memory and you won’t forget it, but you have moved on from there. There’s something beautiful about the duality of holding in mind the memory of where we’ve come from, but knowing where we are now.”

Bushkin notes that the vital role children play in the seder is a crucial part of passing the story down from generation to generation. “They aren’t the audience, they are part of the show. In fact, they have a leading role. It’s also wonderful that this is an opportunity for an 85-year-old and a five-year-old to talk about the same story. It transcends age, life experience, and temperament. Having the opportunity to ‘walk the journey’ together is so rare in our modern lives.”

While it has been a traumatic year, Bushkin says Pesach can help us to “transcend the moment” and “reflect on a different reality of hope, identity, and belonging. While the ‘here and now’ might be painful, the story shows we won’t be stuck here forever, and we are all connected to one another,” he says.

A time to de-chametz our lives

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

What do *chametz*, COVID-19, and Netflix tidying guru Marie Kondo have in common? They’re all contributing to the current cleaning craze. As we comb our houses for *chametz*, it’s the perfect time to sweep away our physical and psychological clutter.

Not just the season of our freedom, Pesach is also (unofficially) the festival of cleaning. Not only do we rid our homes of *chametz*, but the word “seder” literally translates as order. “Cleaning for Pesach is a good springboard for looking at all the aspects of your home,” says Leanne Mendelow, a cleaning expert who is one of the first certified KonMari™ consultants in Africa.

“When one starts a project like the cleaning of *chametz*, it sparks an excitement to carry on and get one’s home in order,” says decluttering and home-organisation expert Mandy Cohen.

Pesach cleaning offers an opportunity to give every room a spring clean, bringing order to our lives and freeing up space for us to focus on the things that really matter.

It’s not only Pesach that’s made cleaning up a hot topic. Largely confined to our four walls during the various levels of lockdown, we’ve also faced unprecedented uncertainty during COVID-19. That’s why many of us have tried to create order inside our homes as the world outside seemingly spins off its axis.

“Cleaning during COVID-19 has allowed us to relieve anxiety by taking action,” says clinical psychologist Amanda Fortes. “This makes us feel like we’re doing something about the problem. It gives us a sense of being in control of a situation over which we have none.” Although we can’t control COVID-19, we can control the mess. And there are numerous experts who can help us to do so.

“Turning chaos into calm has always been a passion of mine,” says Mendelow. When she discovered renowned Japanese organising consultant and author Kondo’s Netflix show, *Tidying Up With Marie Kondo*, Mendelow decided to channel her passion into a business. She travelled to the

United States shortly before the COVID-19 crisis made such endeavours impossible to train with Kondo and her team.

Kondo’s method of tidying is rooted in the idea of keeping only items that “spark joy”. This idea is the final element of her six steps to decluttering. These steps include committing to the process; cleaning by category and not by location, for example, organising the books in every room; and discarding items first and then organising what’s left.

Everything, be it toys or foodstuffs, is then arranged into categories, the root of efficient tidying. “Everything goes back in its place and has a place to go back to,” says Mendelow. That’s what makes the method so sustainable. There are no more family arguments over where things go or stress about lost items. There’s a sense of peace that comes with instilling order in your home.

“Cleaning up has been proven to make you feel lighter and calmer,” Cohen says. Ultimately, it’s about what suits your specific needs. “I don’t use a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach when it comes to organisation. I customise a system that will work for each individual, which should help them keep their spaces organised,” she says.

“When I start the decluttering process, I always ask my client which room in the home is causing the most distress. That’s where the cleaning up begins. It’s rarely a simple process. Whether or not you’re a hoarder, you’d be forgiven for feeling a good dose of Jewish guilt for getting rid of your things, whether they be clothes, kitchenware, or sentimental items.”

Throwing items away involves a heavy dose of decision-making, which can be daunting, says Cohen. “Uncertainty makes us keep things that in all probability we won’t use or need in the future.” She guides clients in deciding what to get

rid of, and whether to sell or donate items.

“If something doesn’t bring you joy, don’t feel guilty about it, just say goodbye to it with gratitude,” suggests Mendelow. Be mindful of how it once served you, but recognise that it no longer has a purpose in your life. By being honest about whether the things you’re holding onto are bringing value and upliftment to your life, you free yourself from the weight of unneeded possessions.

While it’s rooted in a practical prohibition, clearing the *chametz* in your home before Pesach also has psychological and spiritual implications. It inevitably brings us closer to G-d and to our purpose in life. “*Chametz* – in comparison to matzah – represents the ego, the inflated ‘I’, the sins and wrongdoings that I tend to commit because of my sense of entitlement, self-dependence, and so on,” says Rabbi Yehuda Stern of Sydenham Shul.

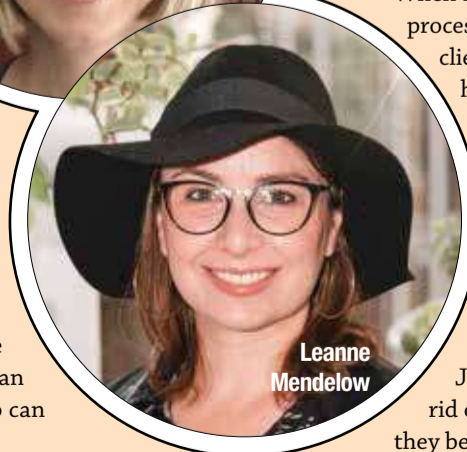
“Today, we aren’t living in Egypt, but we all still experience a sense of slavery and addiction to elements, character traits, and social pressure that we know is not ‘us,’” he says. “Every year, as we clear out the *chametz*, we are able to release ourselves again from the negativity it represents, and to return to our true selves which will be free to behave as we choose based on the morals and values that Judaism teaches us.

“The theme of Pesach centres on the ideas of spiritual freedom, overcoming personal limitations, and ridding our homes of *chametz*,” says Fortes. “These ideas have so many connections to the psychological concept of letting go. For many of us, bondage represents the mental and emotional ties to the past from which we long to break free. Decluttering and discarding outdated objects creates space, induces the letting go process, and brings a sense of freedom and openness for what comes next.”

By ridding ourselves of the vanity *chametz* presents, and by letting go of the clutter in our homes and by extension, our lives, we attain the kind of freedom that cannot be confined by anything – even a pandemic.



Mandy Cohen



Leanne Mendelow

“Decluttering and discarding objects creates space, induces the letting go process, and brings a sense of freedom and openness for what comes next.”



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Dreaming of a gorgeous, traditional seder

Uncertainty about what Pesach entertaining holds for us this year has detracted from my normal plan-400-weeks-in-advance personality type. Last year, it was pretty much "let's all wear pyjamas to the seder, and sit in the kitchen". However, this year, there is a longing within me for a gorgeous, traditional seder with a tablescape to match. Perhaps it's this nostalgia which has resulted in me hauling out all my *bobbas'* recipes. It's important to remember that there were no metric measurements in those days, so use your intuition. Taste for seasoning, and add extra matzo meal to the gremzlach if they feel too soft.

LAUREN BOOLKIN

Gremzlach to eat with your chicken soup

I mince the meat from my soup to use in the gremzlach. Mincemeat is a good second choice. Ask your butcher to mince round bolo. It works particularly well. These freeze well, and are lovely to keep for an emergency Pesach meal. (Makes 16)

Ingredients for the meat

- 500g mincemeat
- ½ onion chopped
- 1 carrot chopped
- 3 Tbsp sunflower oil
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper

Gremzlach to eat with your chicken soup



Ingredients for the potato crust

- 15 potatoes roughly quartered.
- 1 onion cut in quarters
- 1 packet of Rakusen's matzo meal (about 375g)
- ½ tub schmaltz

- 1 Tbsp salt
- ½ tsp white pepper
- 6 jumbo eggs

Method

Soften the chopped onion and carrot in the oil until it is translucent. Add the mincemeat and brown gently. Add the salt and pepper and taste for seasoning. Set aside to cool.

Preheat your oven to 200 degrees. Line three quarter baking sheets with baking paper, and grease lightly with sunflower oil. In a large bowl, place your lightly beaten eggs, matzo meal, schmaltz, salt, and pepper. Working quickly, whizz your potato and onion in the food processor until chopped. Do this in batches. Transfer the mixture to a strainer and over a basin, squeeze the water

out of the potatoes. Tip the squished potatoes into the waiting mixture. Continue until all the potatoes have been added to the mixture. Mix well, and taste your potato batter for firmness and saltiness. Be brave, it's just raw potato and egg!

You will probably need to add extra matzo meal in small increments.

With wet hands, place about half a cup of the mixture in the palm of your hands and flatten to about 2cm thick. Place a heaped teaspoon of your

meat in the centre, and wrap the potato around the meat. Place on the waiting baking sheet and continue.

Bake for 40 minutes until golden, flipping over when the bottoms are brown.



Potato and leek kugel

Potato and leek kugel

(serves 8)

It's important to read the entire recipe first as some of the ingredients get divided. You may want to do this before starting. Double it if you want it to fit your rectangular casserole dishes.

Ingredients

- 9 potatoes peeled (2 kg)
- 3 medium leeks (cut off dark green part) / ½ packet checked leeks from Freshellas
- 7 Tbsp oil
- 1 onion
- 2 jumbo eggs
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme if you like it (we didn't)
- ¼ tsp pepper
- 1 clove garlic crushed

Method

Preheat the oven to 180 degrees, and place the tablespoons of oil in your casserole dish.

Heat two tablespoons of oil in a large pan. Add the leeks, and season with a pinch of salt and a quarter teaspoon of pepper. When the leeks are soft, add the crushed clove of garlic. Remove from the heat, and allow to cool.

Place the casserole dish in the preheated oven for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile whizz seven of the potatoes and the one onion in the food processor. Squeeze the water out in a strainer. Stir in the leeks, garlic, eggs, one tablespoon oil, thyme, one teaspoon salt, and the pepper.

Thinly slice the remaining two potatoes and toss with the remaining one tablespoon oil, pinch of salt, and quarter teaspoon pepper.

Carefully remove the casserole from the oven and transfer the potato-onion mixture to the dish. Layer the potato slices on top overlapping. Bake for one hour, and then turn your oven to grill and grill the top for a minute or two, watching carefully.

Chocolate pecan tart with lemon curd topping

The combination of chocolate, lemon, and berries is amazing! And, you get to use up the left-over egg yolks. Don't forget to add the berries for garnish to your ingredient list.

Ingredients

- 2¾ cups pecans
- 3 cups icing sugar
- ½ cup plus 3 Tbsp cocoa
- ½ tsp kosher salt (not normal salt)
- 4 large egg whites (at room temperature)
- 1 Tbsp vanilla

Spoon into the tin, and leave to stand for 30 minutes. Bake for 20-25 minutes until the top is glossy and lightly cracked. Cool and store. These also work magnificently as biscuits, just don't bake as long.

Lemon curd

Double the quantity as leftovers are wonderful to have in the fridge. It tastes wonderful with chocolate cake, meringues, or even on its own.

Ingredients

- 3 egg yolks
- Juice and rind of 2 lemons
- 1 cup of sugar



Chocolate pecan tart with lemon curd topping

- Pinch of salt
- 2 Tbsp potato flour
- 1½ cups of boiling water

Method

Mix the water, sugar, and potato flour. Beat the egg yolks with the lemon juice

and lemon rind. Very slowly, add the water mixture to the yolks so as not to curdle them. Transfer the mixture to a pot and cook on the stove until it thickens. Cool in the fridge.

To assemble

Place the biscuit base on a cake stand. Just before serving, top it with the lemon curd, mixed berries, and grated chocolate. You could do a double layer to add grandeur.

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Pesach, sweet potatoes, and lots of love

Romi Rabinowitz comes from a large, close Jewish family, and learned how to cook and entertain from her mom, mom-in-law, grannies, and aunties. Cooking and stylish presentation of food is very important to her, and brings her joy. Here are a few of her favourite recipes for Pesach.

Sweet-potato pizzas

These sweet-potato pizzas are a wonderful, healthy substitute for pizza. They can be enjoyed the whole year, but are especially fabulous for Pesach if you are craving the real thing.

Slice sweet potatoes very thinly, lengthwise, using a sharp knife or mandolin. Brush with olive oil, sprinkle with salt, and pepper.

Bake at 180 degrees centigrade until slightly crispy.

Remove them from the oven, spoon over tomato puree (such as the Tuscanini brand, which is kosher for Pesach) or marinara sauce. Sprinkle with grated cheese and a shake of dried basil. Add toppings of your choice such as olives, red onions, or garlic.

Place back in the oven, and bake for a few minutes until cheese is melted.



Sweet-potato pizza

Sweet potato chips

These chips are just off the charts! Perfect as a side, absolutely mouth-watering, and more-ish.

Using a mandolin or sharp knife, thinly slice the sweet potatoes using the long side of the sweet potato to get the length of the chip.

Drizzle with a little olive oil, salt, and pepper. Bake on a lined baking tray at 180 degrees centigrade until crispy (you may have to take out some chips earlier and let others cook for longer).



Sweet potato chips

Chargrilled lemon and herb chicken

I am one of four sisters, and my third sister, Steph, is generally my first phone call of the day (and then about 10 times after that). Often, we speak all the way home from the early school lift, yet we never run out of things to say. There is something truly unique about a sisterhood. It's one of my life's treasures. Steph loves finding healthy, wholesome recipes that are great for the whole family. She shared this absolute gem with me, and my family was also totally mad about it, as I'm sure yours will be too.

Ingredients

- 8 butterflied chicken-breast schnitzels
- 3 lemons
- A handful of fresh basil
- A handful of Italian flat leaf parsley (available at Woolies or Freshfellas)



Poached salmon with citrus mayo

- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- A good grind of salt and black pepper

Method

- Grate the zest of the lemons, and then squeeze the juice out.
- In a Magimix or using a hand blender, blend herbs and garlic, half of the squeezed lemon juice, all the lemon zest, olive oil, salt, and pepper.
- Pour the marinade over the chicken, and let marinade for about an hour.
- Heat a griddle pan on the stove, and grill the schnitzels until chargrilled and cooked through. Drizzle with the remaining lemon juice.
- Serve with thinly sliced sweet potato chips (recipe to follow) and a crunchy, green salad. Delicious!

Poached salmon with citrus mayo

This is a perfect Pesach dish using fresh herbs and citrus to season and flavour. As I always say, this is how I like to cook all year round using fresh and healthy ingredients. This dish can be served warm or cold, and is great for a *yom tov* or Shabbos lunch.

Ingredients

- 1 side of salmon, skin removed
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1/2 cup freshly squeezed orange juice
- Freshly ground salt and pepper
- 1 handful of chopped dill
- 1 orange, 1 lemon, and 1 lime thinly sliced

Method

Place fish in a roasting pan, pour over white wine and orange juice. Cover the salmon with thin slices of orange, lemon, and lime. Sprinkle with chopped dill, ground salt, and pepper.



Chargrilled lemon and herb chicken

Preheat oven to 180 degrees centigrade and bake for about 25 minutes. Watch that you don't overcook your salmon. Serve with a citrus mayo:

- 1/3 cup mayonnaise
- Zest of 1 lime
- Zest of half a lemon
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp honey
- Mix the above ingredients together, and serve with your salmon.

Quinoa salad

Is quinoa kosher for Pesach? Yes, it is!

This lunch idea is quick and easy to prepare and delicious to eat. Boil one cup of quinoa according to directions on the packet.

Dice:

- One English cucumber
- 2/3 tomatoes
- 1 red onion
- A handful of olives
- Add the above to the cooled quinoa.

Crumble over feta cheese. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and the juice of two lemons.

Season with ground salt and pepper to taste.

This is also wonderful during the year, when I like to add sun-dried tomatoes in olive oil and toasted pine nuts.

Watermelon granita

I love the watermelon at the moment, and this watermelon granita is the perfect dessert to end off a heavy meal like a seder. I make this throughout the year, and it's perfect for Pesach, with very simple ingredients.

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup white sugar
- 3/4 cup of water
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 4 cups of chopped watermelon

Method

Make a light syrup by boiling together the sugar and water for a few minutes until slightly thickened (not too long), then add your lemon juice. Allow to cool.

Process the watermelon in your Magimix until smooth.

Add to the cooled syrup and freeze in a shallow Tupperware. After a few hours – don't wait until it's too frozen – scrape with a fork to make a slushy mixture, and then place back in the freezer.

Chag sameach and love!

You can follow Romi on Instagram @eversolovelysa or on Facebook @Romi Rabinowitz

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To master time is to be truly free

OPINION

Celebrating Passover, I've been reminded of a very odd feature of the biblical story.

Jews read the books of Moses not just as history but as divine command. The question to which they are an answer is not, "What happened?" but rather, "How, then, shall I live?" And it's only with the exodus that the life of commands really begins.

According to Jewish tradition, the first command the Jewish people ever received was the line in Exodus 12: "This month is to be for you the first month." We interpret this as the command to establish a calendar, with its Sabbaths, holy days, and special seasons.

Let's study this the way Jews do, which is by asking awkward questions. Here is the obvious question. Why was this the first command? The Israelites were still slaves in Egypt. They were longing for freedom. They were about to begin the long journey across the desert. Why did they need a command about calendars and holy days? What has a diary to do with liberty?

To this, one Jewish scholar offered a brilliant answer. What, he asked, is the difference between a free human being and a slave? We tend to think that it has to do with labour, toil, and effort. A slave works hard. A free person doesn't. But in actuality, some free people work very hard indeed, especially those who enjoy their work.

The real difference, he said, lies in who has control over time. A free human being works long hours because at some stage, he or she has chosen to. A slave has no choice, no control over time. That, he said, is why fixing a calendar was the first command given to the Israelites. It was as if G-d was saying to them: if you are to be free, the first thing you must learn to master is time.

It's a fascinating insight, and one that still seems to hold true. Some years ago, there was a study to discover the most stressful occupation.



It turned out not to be the head of a large business, football manager, or prime minister, but rather, a bus driver. In 2011, the list was headed by airline pilots, fire-fighters, and taxi drivers. These are people always struggling with time against factors not under their control. The least stressful? Bookbinder. Binding books soothes the soul.

Without arguing the point in detail – we all think ours is the most stressful occupation – it's an insight we often overlook. When I was studying economics in the 1960s, the received wisdom was that with automation, we would all be working 20-hour weeks, and our biggest problem would be what to do with all our leisure. In reality, the working

week has grown longer, not shorter. And with emails, texts, smartphones, and the like, we can be on call 24/7. In terms of stress and control over our time, are we freer than we were, or less so? My guess is, less so.

Part of the beauty of Judaism, and surely this is so for other faiths also, is that it gently restores control over time. Three times a day, we stop what we are doing, and turn to G-d in prayer. We recover perspective. We inhale a deep breath of eternity. Nor do we rush our meals. Before eating and afterward, we say a blessing. That, too, allows us to focus attention on simple pleasures, turning our daily bread into momentary epiphany.

Ask any time-management expert for the most important distinction, and she is likely to answer: the difference between the important and the merely urgent. Under pressure of time we tend to ignore the things that are important but not urgent. That's why the Sabbath is a life-saver. It's time dedicated to the things that are important but not urgent, like eating together as a family or celebrating together as a community or simply giving thanks. These are the things that flood a life with unexpected happiness. On the Sabbath – unless you are a rabbi – stress has no chance at all.

Religious ritual is a way of structuring time so that we, not employers, the market, or the media, are in control. Life needs its pauses, its chapter breaks, if the soul is to have space to breathe. Otherwise, we may not be in Egypt, but we can still be slaves.

• *Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks served as the chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from 1991 to 2013. He was an international religious leader, philosopher, award-winning author, and respected moral voice. The article was taken from a collection of his writing before he died.*



RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

The great marathon of destiny

OPINION

One could find fewer more appropriate metaphors for the story of the Jewish people than that of a long and rigorous marathon in which the baton is passed from runner to runner as each generation concludes its distance and a new stretch begins.

The marathon of the Jewish people started 3 533 years ago, and is destined to continue onto the finish line – the coming of Moshiach. Then, great rewards and accolades will be meted out for the incredible feat of seeing through this longest and hardest marathon in all of history, and a new epoch will begin.

Scholars, historians, and philosophers are all at a loss as to how to explain the continuity that is the marathon of the Jewish people. They are baffled at how extraordinary it is that the baton hasn't been dropped, and how the run through history continues.

Even more remarkable is how at intermittent stages in the race, other runners of supreme physique and athletic prowess joined in the marathon and, bragging of their might and muscle and domination of the track, drummed in the message that they would easily be the victors. Many of these tried forcibly to cut down the Jew and eliminate him from the marathon using all kinds of threat, menace, and brutal and savage attack. But these attempts proved futile. History shows that each of these formidable runners eventually fell out of the marathon while the Jew continued.

There were those runners who entered the race who realised that they couldn't forcibly eliminate the irrepressible Jew out of the race, and who decided to use guile. Their method was to lure him with promises of bounty and pleasure, with showers

of love and adoration, and with offers of prestige and prominence. "Just leave the marathon, drop the baton, you'll have it so good!" But the Jew waved them off, and said, "Thanks, but no thanks."

And so, the saga continued for millennia, and continues today. The baton hasn't been dropped. The Jew's march to the finish line is uninterrupted.

So, what's the unique formula of the Jew that has enabled this seemingly inexplicable outcome of endurance and continuity?

We will touch on one fundamental component – Pesach. The birth of the Jewish people was unique among nations in

crumbled, falling like a house of cards.

From being an oppressed, broken, and trapped bunch of slaves, this people was raised up by the Hand of the almighty Himself, taken to Him to be a people, and elevated to the highest heavens to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation".

Once a year, on the very same date that this birth into nationhood took place, the Jew sits down and *v'higadta l'vincha* – he tells the story to his children of how they became a people. He speaks of the uniqueness of their marathon run, and the imperative that the baton is never



history. They came to be a people not of their own gathering and becoming, but were gathered and became, as no other, by the Hand and doing of G-d. Their appointment as a people took place amidst great wonders and miracles. It was done in full view, out in public, open for all to see. It happened in spite of the efforts of the mightiest power of the day's attempts to prevent it. Pharaoh and Egypt didn't want to let this slave people go, and tried to defy its happening. But G-d's people had been chosen, and so Pharaoh and Egypt

dropped. He tells of how they were forged in the miraculous, and of their destiny being intertwined with the very purpose of creation.

The Pesach seder is the annual event that deals with the story of the birth of the Jew in particular detail. The message at the seder comes from a runner in the marathon that received the baton when he/she was young, and is now passing it on through the seder. In doing so, they are strengthened in their continued stretch of the race, re-affirming their commitment to their part in the

marathon, as well as preparing the next generation to do their part.

To be clear though, the retelling of this event, which essentially summons the Jew to recognise his mission and destiny, cannot suffice with only annual gathering and telling. We are bidden to "remember the exodus from Egypt all the days of your life". It's mentioned in our daily prayers. We also recite it twice a day in the Shema, morning and night.

The conscientious athlete knows that in order to challenge for victory – and especially if it's the coveted championship race – he needs to be in prime condition and must keep focus and commitment throughout. He cannot afford to drop the baton on his watch. So, too, we cannot rely only on an annual retelling of our peoples' founding and this incredible start to the cosmic marathon. Rather, we need to "remember the exodus from Egypt all the days of your life".

So as to the question, what's the Jew's unique formula that has enabled this seemingly inexplicable outcome of endurance and continuity? One vital component of it is, indeed, the Pesach seder, but perhaps an even more important component is carrying the seder and the message of this birth of our people into the year ahead so that the stretch of the marathon that's run each day is done with fresh knowledge, renewed pride, and clear and immediate conviction. Then, we can be sure that the baton will be held firmly and passed on assuredly, reaching all the way to the finish line with the coming of Moshiach.

• *Ilan Herrmann is the rabbi of Soul Workout shul, publisher of 'Soul Sport' magazine, and the founder of Soul Workout outreach organisation.*



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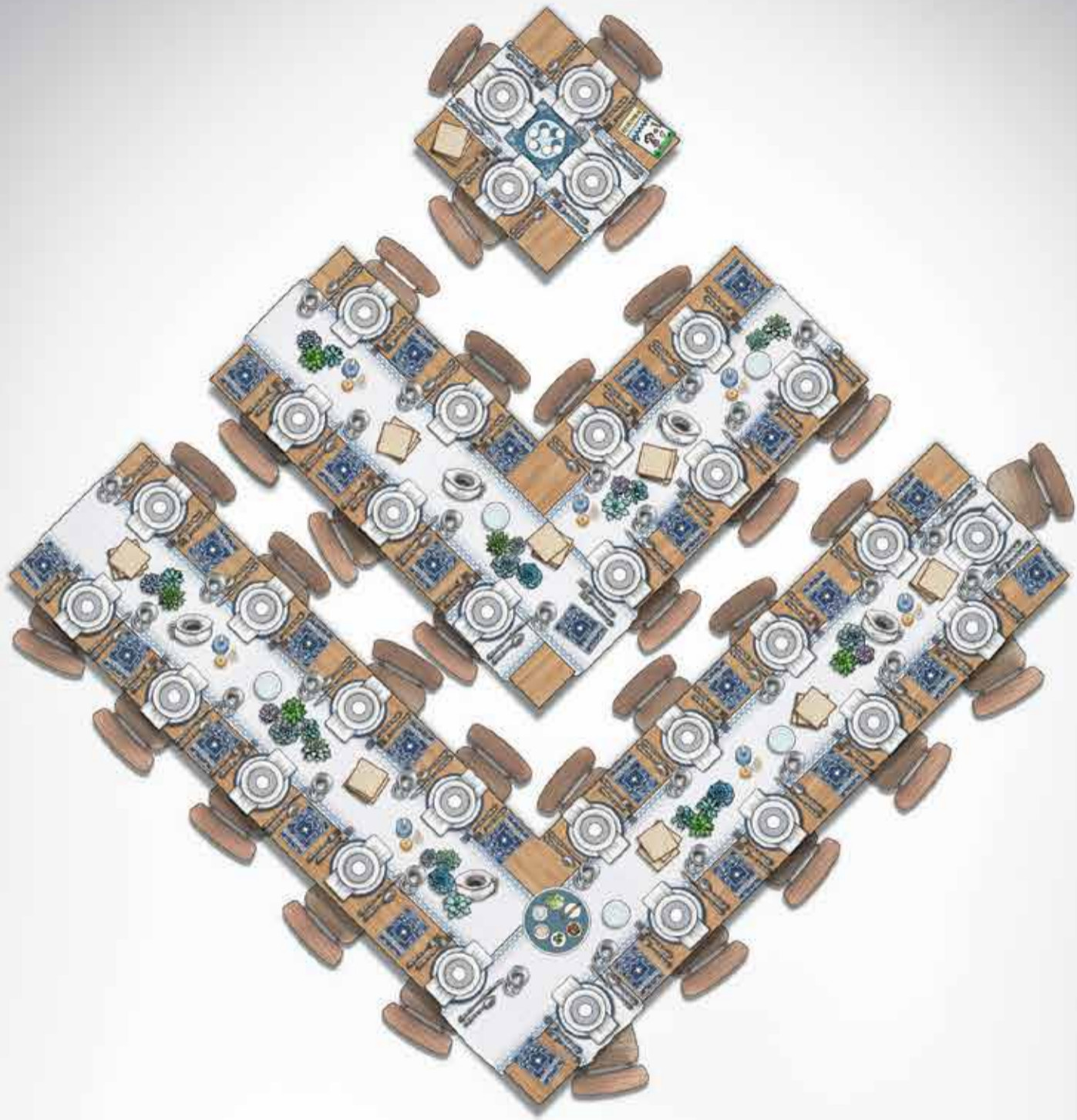
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Let's fill Miriam's cup

OPINION

RABBI GREG ALEXANDER



wrote before Purim about the masks that we wear. Not just the COVID-19 ones, but the permanent ones that hide our true selves. And I wrote about the precarious and fraught position that Esther, the hiding heroine of Purim, found herself in, not just through the Megillah, but beyond.

In so many ways, that fragility remains today. Do you have children or grandchildren in nursery school? Did they dress up this Purim? Did your daughters want to be Esther? Gorgeous! Or is it? When we dress our daughters as Queen Esther, what are we saying to them?

We tell kids that Esther won the beauty pageant (which is already a problem – you want your daughter to aspire to beauty pageants?) But the Megillah tells us that she was trafficked into a prospective-wife-to-the-king competition and then forced to enter a harem to await her chosen night with his majesty. And if she tried to fight against her situation, well, we saw what happened to Vashti.

Yes, she is the heroine of the story, and in spite of her impossible position, she manages to save the Jewish people, but her position (even at the end of the story) remains a fraught one, and G-d forbid any of our daughters should have to walk in her shoes.

Now that Purim is long-past and Pesach is on the doorstep, let's pause and ask a similar set of questions about your daughters' and granddaughters' role models. Who leads your seder, and who

cooks the food? Who cleans out the *chametz*? What do your Pesach gender roles tell your daughters? And your sons?

In your Haggadah reading and telling, do you mention Moses? I'm sure he comes up, even though he's not even mentioned in the Haggadah (well technically his name does come up once in a *droshah* of Rabbi Yossi, but blink and you'd miss it).

Any telling (the *mitzvah* of the seder is to tell the story, after all, not just to read the Haggadah) will naturally include Moses, the leader, teacher, interpreter of the exodus, and perhaps might make mention of Aaron's role alongside him.

But do we talk about Miriam at our seder? How often does her name come up at your table on seder night? After all, Miriam, with her brothers is the eldest of the "big three", a woman who the Torah called a *nevia* (prophetess) (Ex 15:20) and who the Talmud tells us is one of the seven major female prophets of Israel (BT Megillah 14a).

The prophet, Micah, tells us that G-d sees the three siblings as equally responsible for going out of Egypt. "For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt and

redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." (Micah 6:4). After all, there would

the wilderness. When Miriam dies, the next verse describes the Israelites complaining about a lack of water (Num. 20:1). The Talmud notes that this was

because it was only in the merit of

Miriam that a miraculous rock followed their journey, providing water for all the twelve tribes (BT Ta'anit 9a).

Why isn't she discussed and celebrated at Pesach? Is it because she's a woman? And for that matter, what about Shifrah and Pu'ah, the midwives who courageously saved the Israelite boys from being drowned in the Nile, without

whom there would have been no Israelites to free.

In fact, the opening stories of Exodus are all about the courage of women, women who have largely been dropped from the narrative.

So here's a custom that many have started to include on their seder tables. Decorate a beautiful cup for Miriam and give it a place of honour at the centre of the table. At a suitable moment in the evening, tell a few Miriam tales and explain the *midrash* that

Miriam provided the well of water that sustained the Israelites in their 40-year trek around the Sinai Peninsula.

Ask everyone to pour a little bit of water from their own glasses in turn into Miriam's cup in celebration of the unsung female heroines of the exodus, and of women since. As they pour the water, let them name a female ancestor (recent or ancient), who has inspired them.

Declare "*Zot kos Miriam, kos mayyim chaim* [this is the cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters]" and place it next to Elijah's cup on the table.

And if yours is the kind of seder that you can take a bit of time to expand and discuss the texts and rituals, why not take time to reflect on the role of women in the world today.

Ask everyone to say how they think we can be part of the process of freeing the world from the slaveries of gender – of trafficking, professional glass ceilings, objectified bodies, and rape and abuse. Those are more worthy questions than, "When do we eat?"

This Pesach, may we commit to raising wise daughters and sons, and may we all come out of it freer.

Chag sameach!

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



be no Moses without Miriam. It was she who watched him down the Nile River and negotiated with Pharaoh's daughter to get Yocheved, his mother, to be his wet-nurse. And it is Miriam Ha-Nevia alongside her more famous brother who leads the Israelites in song and dance after the parting of the Sea of Reeds (Ex 15:20).

It's none other than Miriam that our tradition understands was responsible for the entire supply of water in the desert as the Israelites wandered through

Flooding, beating – seder customs you won't recognise

JORDAN MOSHE

If you thought that the Pesach seder experience was universal and uniform, think again. While many of us may be used to a standard routine, communities around the world partake in a colourful *yom tov* experience that goes well beyond matzah and maror.

For many of us in South Africa, a seder typically follows the same procedure every year. After returning home from shul, we hasten to the table to begin the evening, moving through kiddush, hand washing, and telling the exodus tale. Each person adds an insight ("that was deep, Shirley"), little Joshy sings *Ma Nishtana* at the top of his voice ("he's going to be a chazzan when he grows up"), and, after some wine and matzah sampling, we (finally) come to the meal itself.

For many families, however, vibrant and unusual customs enliven the evening. In Gibraltar, for example, the sweet charoset paste contains not only apples and wine, but a dash of brick dust as well. Although it shouldn't affect the taste of the spread, the dust serves as a more realistic reminder of the mortar which the Jews produced in Egypt while making bricks.

Some people made this more literal by using actual bricks at their seder. Such was reportedly the case during the American Civil War, when Union soldiers sought out the resources to hold a seder in 1862. Unable to produce charoset, they used a brick, which, as one Jewish soldier wrote, was "rather hard to digest, [but] reminded



us, by looking at it, for what purpose it was intended".

Some communities focus on each individual at the seder using the seder plate. A custom that reportedly originated in Spain is for the seder leader to walk around the table three times with the seder plate in hand, tapping it on the head of each guest. Many North African Jews adopted this tradition, which is said to bless those whose heads are tapped, and each time this is done, the leader says, "In haste, we left Egypt." Every person is thus made to feel as though they are personally redeemed from slavery.

With some theatrical flair, many Sephardi communities have the tradition of putting on a short skit to illustrate the story of redemption. A seder attendee (usually the host) poses as an Israelite who experienced the exodus. Carrying the afikoman in a bag

over his shoulder (and perhaps sporting a staff for support), he enters the room and a dialogue follows.

The table asks, "Where are you coming from?" "Egypt," comes the reply, sometimes followed by a brief story of the Israelites following Moses out of slavery. "And where are you going?" someone at the table asks, to which the traveller responds, "Jerusalem." Finally, the table asks what the bag contains, and is informed that it contains matzah.

Another Sephardi custom which departs from the norm takes place when the ten plagues are recited. Unlike many Ashkenazim, some Sephardim don't dot a plate with wine drops, but instead pour from their cups into another vessel. Because this wine is associated with plagues and is therefore "cursed", it must be flushed down the drain and the vessel used to

hold it thrown away. For this reason, some use either a disposable cup or their least favourite bowl that won't be missed if thrown out.

If you'd like to add some bling to your table, perhaps emulate the custom of the Hungarian Jewish community. In line with the verses in Exodus that say that the Israelites received gold and silver from the Egyptians, Hungarian Jews had a tradition of placing their gold and silver jewellery on the seder table. If that's too showy for you, you may want to bring some humble scallions to the table instead. These were traditionally used by Jews in Afghanistan, who reportedly used scallions or leeks to represent Egyptian slave drivers' whips, and used them to beat one another lightly on the back at the seder table.

If the splitting of the sea is something you've always wanted to experience, perhaps give a Polish custom a try. Gerer Chassidim who hail from the Polish town of Góra Kalwaria had the custom of bringing the sea into their homes, reportedly draining a barrel of water across the floor and re-enacting the crossing of the sea by lifting the hems of their coats and walking through the pool. Traditionally, they would name the towns they would typically travel through in the region while "crossing", toasting each destination and thanking G-d for helping them to reach their destination.

So, whether you want to pour water across your dining room floor or beat your guests with vegetables, you can enact some less than usual seder customs at your table this year rather than keep up with the Cohens.

Seeing beside the seaside



RABBI SAM THURGOOD

OPINION

It's no coincidence, our sages say, that much of the story of the exodus revolves around water.

Jewish babies are cast into the river Nile, and even the one who survives (the infant who will become Moshe) is saved, ironically, by being placed in that river. Years later, when asking Hashem at the burning bush for proof that his mission is, indeed, divinely sanctioned, Moshe is given three signs: his staff becomes a snake; his hand becomes leprous; and water turns to blood. This is an obvious allusion to the first plague that is shortly to strike Egypt, as the river Nile itself becomes blood.

Rabbi David Forman points out that this is more than simply a punishment for the Egyptians or even a demonstration of Hashem's power, it's recognition of the pain and trauma suffered by the Jewish people for so many years. They were all witness to their beloved children being swallowed by the river while the Egyptians pretended that all was normal; now the murders committed by Egypt have come back to haunt it.

Well, that took an unexpectedly dark turn! But the story of the exodus – like all stories in the Torah – needs to be understood in terms of real human experience beyond the childlike way in which we first learn it.

Water returns as the source of the frogs in the second plague, but comes finally as the coup de grâce when the Jewish people cross the Sea of Reeds, the Egyptian army is washed away, and they sing to Hashem of his might and their freedom. The Maharal of Prague teaches us that this is the moment in which

the Jewish people were born as a nation – the Sea of Reeds being the metaphorical birth canal.

Why does water play such a central role? One reason is a Kabbalistic one – water represents *chesed* (kindness and giving) and the theme of Pesach, the festival of the exodus, is Hashem's *chesed*. The Jewish people (our sages teach) didn't "deserve" redemption, lacking as they were in spiritual merit, though they sorely needed to be saved. To help someone in such a situation isn't justice but kindness and compassion – surely some of the most precious attributes Hashem has given us?

It's human nature to be hopeful – even expectant – of kindness towards us, but to want to weigh others on the scale of justice. "You want a favour from me? After the way you treated me? I'm sorry, if I would help you, I would have to help everyone like you."

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks taught us that *chesed* is "love as deed", love not as a feeling in the heart but as a living expression of that feeling. Living in Cape Town, by *die see*, I enjoy the magnificent and ever-changing water of the ocean. We know, but need sometimes to be reminded, that with all that we are going through, Hashem is so very kind to us. This Pesach, may we all deeply feel Hashem's love for us and for all of His creation, and may we all merit to channel that love on towards others.

Chag sameach!

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

Why this year isn't like all others

NICOLA MILTZ

As South African Jewry gather around the seder table to commemorate the exodus from Egypt this Saturday night, it will also be a poignant reminder of the passing of the country's first COVID-19 patient who died on this exact day a year ago.

A lot has happened in the year since last Passover, when coronavirus derailed everyone's Pesach plans. Families hunkered down and held miniature stay-at-home sederim.

Grandparents, usually the guests of honour, were concealed in protective cocoons, deprived of the annual delight of grandchildren regaling them with ancient tales of slavery and redemption.

As sad as we were to be away from friends and extended family, it was a worthwhile price to pay for having a Passover together this year – or so we believed. Little did we know.

Although there was a certain amount of foreshadowing typical of a horror movie, last year, South Africans still had scant idea of what lay in store for them.

There were petrifying scenes coming from hospitals in Europe battling to cope with patients gasping for breath, but they remained far from our backyard.

No one would have believed it then that the death toll would rise from one to more than 52 000 a year later. Or that the number of infections would go from 927 cases (this time last Passover) to the staggering 1.53 million confirmed cases today.

During last year's Passover, barely two weeks into the novelty of a nationwide lockdown, the country was in a sort of honeymoon stupor of unity and solidarity. It was only later that the lockdown's devastating, ripple-down economic effects and the seemingly catastrophic impact on people's livelihoods began to be felt.

For generations Jewish families have gathered for the first night of Passover to recount the 10 plagues – blood, frogs, pestilence, death – and to remember how Hashem delivered the Jewish

people from bondage in Egypt thousands of years ago. This Saturday in homes across the country, families will once again ask why this night is different from all other nights. This year, the plague element of the Haggadah story feels even more real than it did last year. That extra plague – the 11th one – has stealthily crept into our age-old story, adding an unwelcome modern touch – as if one were needed.

Feelings of anxiety 12 months ago have now been replaced with a hollow despair and emptiness after a year of death and dying, isolation, and too much change. While there may be a few extra people around the seder table – given the recent drop in the number of infections since our last COVID-19 surge – we approach this night with a false sense of security.

This COVID-19 yoyo has taken us from one panicked surge to the next sweet lull, making nutcases of us all. As the number of those infected with the virus tapers off, so too does our vigilance and caution. However, there is a looming third-wave cloud on the horizon.

And a fourth and maybe a fifth. Lately, our joy and gratitude has overflowed at weddings, Barmitzvahs, and other simchas that have been hurriedly taking place around the country before the Omer (and the next wave of infections).

That blissful sense of almost normality as music fills the air, is reminiscent of days gone by. But no one can deny it, it's a joy tinged with foreboding and unspoken dread as winter approaches.

Last year, we were stockpiling toilet paper, this year we wish we could stockpile vaccines – something we hadn't even dreamt about.

Names such as AstraZeneca, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson weren't part of our everyday vocabulary as they are now. We were still obsessed with phrases like social distancing, hand sanitising, and mask wearing.

We've become armchair experts about variants and vaccine rollouts (or the lack thereof!).

Who knows what next year's Passover will look like.

One thing's for sure, as we move from micro-seders to slightly more guests this year, it's the enduring power of this story of freedom and the favourite table-banging melodies of the festival that will give us hope.

Maybe next year in Jerusalem. We just need the airports to stay open.

That extra plague – the 11th one – has stealthily crept into our age-old story, adding an unwelcome modern touch – as if one were needed.

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.

Horesh resides in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – enabling him to travel to Poland and Lithuania, as well as to Portugal, where he collaborates with local professionals who assist him in tracing documentation required for successful applications of reinstatement of European citizenship.

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

My travel schedule has been postponed due to COVID-19, at the moment I plan to arrive in May. I'm offering to review and advise your case for free. You are most welcome to contact me on adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com or whatsapp +48783953223

Nothing Norman about this seder

PERSONAL STORY

STEVEN GRUZD

Pesach is a time of miracles, matzah, and memories. It's also a time for families to come together, and the seder is one of the most-observed Jewish *mitzvot* and practices. About 81% of South African Jews attend a Pesach seder, according to a 2019 study by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research and the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town. As we enter the second year of peculiar pandemic Pesachs, here are some of my seder recollections, including the Norman invasion.

My earliest memories are of the seders conducted by my paternal grandparents, Charlie and Minnie Gruzd in the 1970s. The whole family gathered at their little house in Walter Street, Fellside, in Johannesburg. Grandpa Charlie seemed to know the entire Haggadah by heart, and intoned it in his thick Lithuanian accent, even when his eyesight had faded. Granny Minnie would serve soup that barely wet the bottom of the plate, topped with delicious knaidels. Chicken pieces sometimes came with tiny feathers. Minnie would meticulously count her knives, forks, and spoons after the meal, and placed them in velvet-lined little boxes. Did she think we would steal them?

My cousins and I would, however, steal the afikoman from the wrapped towel besides Grandpa Charlie before he could hide it. We would then ransom it back to him so the seder could continue after dinner. His song tunes are engrained in my head as the correct ones. I still find alternative renditions jarring.

A dozen years ago, we were at my brother-in-law, Steven, for the seder. Yes, we share the same name. It was very much in vogue in the Johannesburg Jewish community from about 1968 to 1974. My cousin, Kevin, born 10 days after me, would have been a Steven if he had been born

first. He once told me he planned to push his younger brother David out first, if need be, to prevent that from happening.

Steven II has a house in Oaklands, and more than 30 people were attending the seder that year. I had settled myself into a comfortable couch and was teasing my niece Hannah by calling her "Denise", a joke that never gets old. Well, not for me anyway.

In walked a couple in their sixties, looking slightly disorientated. They went around the room shaking hands (this was BCE – Before the Covid Era) and said, "Hello, howzit? Good *yontif*" to everyone. The man sat on the couch next to me. After a minute of silence, he asked, "Where's Norman?" People had begun whispering.

I said, "Who's Norman?"

He looked like a sheep caught in the headlights. He blushed instantly.

"Doll!" he bellowed to his wife, "I TOLD you it's the wrong house!"

Sheepishly, the couple rushed for the door, on the way out reclaiming the wrapped present they had handed to my sister-in-law, Marilyn, on their way in. Her bemused look was precious.

We later discovered that Norman had previously owned the house. The couple had, in fact, been invited to friends of their children who lived across the road.

2020 was the saddest seder of all. South Africa was still in Level 5 lockdown, and big family gatherings were banned. So it was just me, my wife, and my two teenage daughters – very lonely and surreal. We connected by Zoom to my brother in Cape Town to hear his children sing *Ma Nishtana*, but it most definitely wasn't the same as being together.

This year, we will have small, socially-distanced, and sanitised seders.

I guess we have to get used to the new Norman – I mean normal.

Steven and Mandy Gruzd, and the Fine family



Israeli company turns SA water from toxic to drinkable

>>Continued from page 1

we see the same from government."

The company's director of operations in South Africa, Jurgens van Loggerenberg, told the *SA Jewish Report* that he had worked in water-treatment processes throughout South Africa for the past 20 years.

"Over the past two decades, I've seen a decline in the management of infrastructure and water quality. It's a big problem as it affects people's lives. So, when I saw BlueGreen's technology and what it could mean for the improvement of water quality, I was fascinated." He joined the company soon afterwards.

He believes the technology could "be a game-changer for South Africa. Toxic bacteria means that humans suffer.

And it's never been looked at this way before. Water has been treated only at the treatment facility. I don't think the team has ever treated water of this poor quality before, but it has a strong strategy. We have the support of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, and the Department of Water and Sanitation. They are standing behind it. They believe in the technology and what it can do for the environment. They know it can help them achieve their goals.

"One thing we observed is that there are so many shops in the area that sell bottled water," he said. "The day the community can open the tap and have safe drinking water will be a big day for the country."

The mezuzah that saved a life

PERSONAL STORY

YOSEF KAUFMANN

"And you shall inscribe them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates in order that your days may increase and the days of your children..." (Deuteronomy 11: 20-21)

The mezuzah has long been associated with protection. It has been compared to a helmet which a soldier wears in battle in order to protect him from enemy fire. The Torah states that in the merit of mezuzah, your life and the life of your children will be lengthened. I can definitely say that I wouldn't be alive today if wasn't for a mezuzah.

A mezuzah is traditionally placed on the doorframe of your home. However, there is an ancient custom mentioned in the Talmud that people would place a mezuzah in their walking sticks for additional protection while on the road. This is a story of one such mezuzah.

Ray J. Kaufmann was a short, quiet, and intelligent man. He was a civil engineer, had worked at NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration) and Boeing, and was a World War II veteran. He was also my grandfather. I don't remember much about him. By the time I was old enough to remember, his Alzheimer's had already set in, and he generally didn't say much.

As a kid, my family would go to visit Bubby and Grampy every Sunday. I would often go into his office to play while he was sitting at his desk, usually painting. There was a frame hanging on the wall of his office. It housed a large picture of his army battalion, the 87th Acorn Infantry Division, as well as various medals and stripes he had received for his service during the war.

One of those medals was a purple heart. The purple heart is a medal that is given to a soldier wounded in action. We all knew the story behind it. It was one of those family stories that was told and retold countless times.

In 1944, my grandfather was living in a small apartment in Staten Island, New York, overlooking the New York Bay. He would watch from his living room window as ship after ship was loaded with soldiers and would disembark for war-torn Europe. In early 1944, he enlisted to join the United States Army. He was sent to Fort Benning in Georgia for basic training. Upon completion, his unit was sent to Camp Kilmer with orders to embark for England. Camp Kilmer was close to Staten Island, so he received permission to visit his family once more before heading off to war.

It was October of 1944, and it had been quite some time since he had seen his parents. They were surprised and thrilled to see him. Before he left, his mother, Nana Helen, gave him a mezuzah on a chain, and told him to always keep it with him. They weren't a religious family, but they were very proud that they were Jews.

Grampy said his goodbyes and hung the mezuzah around his neck with his dog tags. It was a tiny mezuzah, no more than two to three centimetres in length. It was in a silver case and the small "shin" on the front was embellished with three little coloured gems.

My grandfather shipped out, and made it safely to England. From there, his unit was sent to the small French city of Metz. The Germans were just beginning their last offensive of the war, the Battle of the Bulge. They were to make their way to Luxembourg via the small French city of Metz.

The journey was treacherous, and his unit had to make its way under constant fire from the Germans. They reached Metz safely, and after a short rest, pressed on. After a few days of marching, they reached a forest and were able to make camp.

At about 01:00, my grandfather was woken up by two soldiers. One of the soldiers had fallen ill and they needed help getting him to the aid station. Grampy was the platoon runner, so this was one of his responsibilities. They started down to the aid station, and after about 10 minutes en route, he heard a tingling noise coming from around his neck.

He reached his hand inside his jacket to



Frame with Kaufmann's medals

feel his dog tags and mezuzah, and passed out. He woke up in the field hospital in Metz. The doctor informed him that a piece of German shrapnel had hit him directly in his chest. It would have gone into his heart, killing him instantly, but there was this little metal charm that deflected the shrapnel into his lungs, saving his life. The shrapnel remained in his lungs until the day he died.

There was a second incident in which Grampy was miraculously saved.

After months of recuperating in various hospitals, he was re-assigned and sent to a camp outside of Nancy, France. In April 1945, his unit received orders to prepare to ship out to the Pacific front, as the war in Europe was nearing its end. The weekend before they were to ship out, my grandfather and a couple of friends decided to go into Nancy for one last night on the town. They hitched a ride and spent the night drinking at various pubs in town. There was a midnight curfew for soldiers. With midnight approaching, they hitched a ride back on a truck carrying other military personnel.

As my grandfather described it.

"It was raining, and the road was slick, but we were too intoxicated to care. Suddenly, I was sober and standing in the middle of the road trying to flag down passing cars. I heard moans and groans all around me. I soon realised that the driver had lost control and skidded off the road right into a tree. There were 12 soldiers in the truck. Three of them were dead, two had serious head injuries, and everyone else besides me had broken bones and serious internal injuries. I had a few scratches and a mild concussion."

My grandfather spent the next two weeks in hospital, and while he was there, his unit shipped out for the Pacific.

I remember seeing this mezuzah when I was a kid. It had an almost mythical aura to it. This was the mezuzah that saved Grampy's life. In a way, it's fitting that today, I spend my time writing mezuzahs. Unfortunately, the mezuzah was destroyed in Hurricane Katrina. However, although the physical mezuzah is no longer, its legacy will live on forever

• *Yosef Kaufmann is American import, a sofer, children's author, and most importantly, a father and husband.*



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LIVING THE EXPERIENCE

The kinship of kneidlach

MIRAH LANGER

Don't you dare open the pot while they are boiling; use a *kochleffel* (traditional cooking spoon) and a bit of this and a bit of that; talk softly, and take off your shoes; play music while cooking.

There might be divergent opinions on the best method to use when making the perfect kneidlach, but one ingredient is always the same: the love with which this tradition is passed from generation to generation.



Three generations of kneidel queens and the littlest chefs Kayla Moore, Gilad Moore, Mish Berkowitz, Liya Moore and Pam Tauby

The first time Mish Berkowitz, now aged 81, made kneidlach was in 1961. She was newlywed, and got the recipe from a fellow teacher at King David school.

"[My colleague] promised to teach me to make the best kneidlach in the world, so she gave me the recipe, and I went home and tried it."

What was her husband's opinion of her first attempt? "Oh, he said he loved them! But we had been married for only three months," she says with a smile.

Indeed, they must have been truly delicious, for they have been passed down four generations.

Berkowitz's daughter, Pam Tauby, relishes this sense of continuity, recalling how as a little girl, she shared the privileged duty with her sister of being designated as the pot lifter for this prestigious preparation.

In her own married life, Tauby continued the kneidel tradition, albeit in slightly different circumstances.

"We swapped to the Chabad tradition of having matzah balls only on the last day of Pesach," she says. This is a Chassidic "stringency, rather than a

rule" that is related to the modern matzah manufacturing process.

The Chassidic practice is to ensure that the matzah doesn't get wet in order to mitigate against pockets of flour within the matzah possibly turning it into *chametz* (foods not permitted on Pesach).

As such, their tradition is to make kneidlach on the eighth night, when the Torah *mitzvah* of keeping the seven days of the festival have been fulfilled. They also make a point of eating it during this last part of Pesach rather than afterwards to show unity with other Jewish people who do eat

it for the whole *chag*. "It's to show that we don't think we are holier than you; we just have a different convention."

Tauby, herself the mother of four daughters, says it took her sons-in-law, who didn't come from a Chabad background, some adjustment to get used to this waiting period.

However, Brendan Moore, who is married to her daughter, Kayla, says it has

Bobbie Mish's flop-proof kneidlach recipe

- 1 egg
- 1 Tbsp schmaltz
- Pinch salt
- Matzah meal

• Beat egg, schmaltz, and salt together. Add enough matzah meal so that you can just roll into balls. The mixture must be quite sticky. (You can place the mixture into the fridge and roll the kneidel balls when the mixture is cold and slightly hardened.)

- Cook in salted boiling water for 20 minutes.
- Each batch makes six kneidlach.

Secret tips from Bobbie Mish

- "The water has to be boiling from before you even think of starting to make them."
- "Place the kneidlach in the pot one at a time, closing the lid in between."
- "Don't touch that pot again for 20 minutes; don't you dare!"
- "Don't put too many kneidlach in the pot; you need to give them room to swell."



The late Mattie Halpern, a meticulous matriarch

actually brought a special dimension to the *chag*. "While it was strange when I first experienced it, actually now the build-up to the last day is like a beautiful send-off to Pesach," he says.

Kayla says she started making the recipe only a few years ago, nervous to live up to the gravitas of its reputation. "It was this big moment! Here was something that has been passed down, and now I had better make it properly. The first time was perfect. I was so proud of myself, I even have a video of serving it!"

Now, the family revel in the newest generation's engagement with the *chag*.

"I love seeing Pesach through my children's eyes. We see it in a whole new light," says Kayla.

Indeed most recently, "Bobbie Mish" taught her recipe to two of her 14 great-grandchildren, Gilad, aged five, and Liya, three. The pair have self-styled themselves as "gourmet chefs" complete with personalised aprons and a homemade cooking vlog!

The final verdict after their latest episode featuring Bobbie and her kneidlach? A definitive "yummy" from Gili, and a big thumbs up from Liya.

When it comes to the great big customary cook-off of Pesach, Mary Kropman, 83, also revels in the involvement of younger generations, which in her case consists of 13 grandchildren and more than 30 great-grandchildren.

Following the tradition of her own mother, who arrived in South Africa as a young woman from

Belarus, Kropman doesn't just make her own kneidlach, but also homemade *chrein* (horseradish), *ptcha* (jellied meat), even wine.

"I love it when my grandchildren and now great-grandchildren come and help me. About six weeks ago, they helped me to make the wine and the great-grandchildren were laughing all the way through. It was great! We were four generations making it together."

Her granddaughter, Rochie Isaacson, has warm memories of her time with Kropman. It's an experience now passed down to her own children, who flourish under Kropman's mentorship.

"Days before Pesach, I would go to *bobba* and wash hundreds of eggs to 'clean' them for Pesach," reminisces Isaacson. "Thereafter, I would help *bobba* make about 200 kneidlach for the whole family. *Bobba* cooks with love and *simcha*. She blares Jewish music and dances around the kitchen preparing food for all of us to share and love."

Monty Fleisher's late mother, Mattie Halpern, certainly should be lauded for the most meticulous of methodologies in her culinary kneidel pursuits.

Fleisher's daughter, Debbie, recalls how her father used to tell stories about his childhood memories of this Pesach preparation. "When my *bobba* used to make kneidlach, the whole house had to be quiet because [according to Mattie] any loud or sudden noise would cause the kneidlach to flop. So they all had to take off their shoes and tiptoe around the house. They also had to open and close doors very quietly."

The ironic outcome of this military matzah-meal drill: the kneidlach turned out "flat", confesses her son.

Meanwhile, for the late Sonia "Shoshki" Saven, making kneidlach was a craft for which she had her own magic implements: an imposing black pot and two gleaming *kochleffels* brought all the way from the Mir shtetl in what was then Belarus.

Today, etched with the wear and care of more than half a century of kneidlach cookery, these items retain pride of place in the households of the generations that follow.

Indeed, her granddaughter, Jessica Goodman, recites the exact instructions Shoshki would give about their use: "The

bigger the pot, the bigger the kneidlach" and "never measure with a table spoon, only an authentic *kochleffel* will do."

Even as a teenager, Goodman would ask her grandmother to show her the recipe. It was an elaborate internship, for "there were never any precise measurements. It was always 'use this size spoon, use a little bit of



The living legacy - Bobba Mary Kropman, her daughter Ingrid Weber and granddaughter Rochie Isaacson

this, a little bit of that; feel the right texture! It wasn't just 'follow the recipe and hope for the best'. It was a very tactile experience."

The result was always so delicious that after the seder, "I used to eat her kneidlach for breakfast because they were so good," laughs Goodman.

Another highlight of Shoshki's culinary creations is one that resonates with the Chabad tradition. On the last day of Pesach, she would make "milk kneidlach", a tradition the family still follows. "We make them in



Three generations - Jessica Goodman, her mother Beverley Schneider and grandmother, the late Sonia 'Shoshki' Saven

butter and in a milk broth. It's actually really delicious," Goodman declares, adding a caveat that perhaps it's "only something an Ashkenazi Jew could love!"

Ultimately, no matter the variation, the kneidel has its own symbolic power in celebrating a legacy.

As Goodman suggests, "If you had to make a Jewish grandmother's love tangible; if you had to associate it with an object, it would be a kneidel ball. It's so *hamish* and traditional."

The Gospel about wandering Jews and wicked stereotypes

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

The Jews may have wandered through the desert for 40 years after escaping slavery, but that's not where the term "wandering Jew" originates. In fact, it's an antisemitic trope that's been used throughout history to justify the persecution of the Jewish people.

Now advertising guru-cum-author Lynn Joffe has used her novel, *The Gospel According to Wanda B. Lazarus* to collapse the myth of the wandering Jew. While she has spent most of her life in South Africa, Joffe grew up in Scotland.

"There weren't enough Jews even for a *minyana* where we lived," she says. "It was a very secular upbringing, and I wasn't sure what being a Jew was." So, when a classmate asked her, "Are you a Jew?" little Lynn had to go home and ask her mother.

Just seven years old at the time, Joffe was traumatised when the same classmate told her, "You killed our Lord." A confused Joffe replied, "I wasn't anywhere near your Lord!"

The myth of the wandering Jew, in fact, goes back to this – the crucifixion of Christ. On his way to the crucifixion, legend has it that Christ was taunted by a Jew who was then cursed to walk the earth until the second coming. And so, this mythical immortal man, the wandering Jew was conceived. It soon became an integral part of medieval folklore.

In later years, the figure of this solitary wandering Jew began to be associated with the fate of the entire Jewish people as they sought freedom and fought to live in the promised land. Yet while the myth has undergone various iterations over the centuries, at its core it's a damaging depiction of the Jewish people. It's been used to garner support for some of the greatest atrocities our people have ever faced, even becoming a part of Nazi propaganda.

"This myth of a smelly, hook-nosed outcast who was eternal and wandered around infecting the crops, poisoning the wells, and killing babies was like a horror story," says Joffe. "It's been re-engineered, going backwards and forwards in time to blame the Jews for every ill in the world, including the crucifixion itself."

The antisemitism underpinning this legend bothered Joffe, who decided to tackle it when she began her Masters in Creative Writing at the University of the Witwatersrand. "I've always been sensitive to the antisemitic jibes that happened throughout my childhood," she says. "When I did the Masters, I wanted to tackle a big theme, and I thought that this idea – what if the wandering Jew was a woman – would have changed the whole picture."

And so, the foundation of what would eventually become *The Gospel According to Wanda B. Lazarus* was conceived. Spanning almost 2 000 years, the book tells the story of a foul-mouthed, free-spirited outcast,

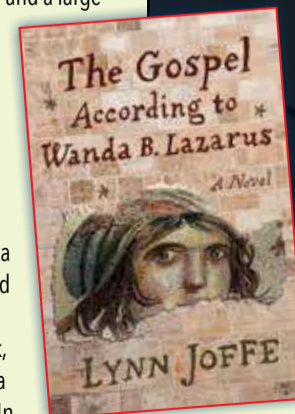
Wanda. Cursed with immortality, Wanda travels through seminal moments of history in pursuit of her goal of becoming the tenth muse – a reference to the nine muses of Greek mythology.

"I wanted to take a very serious theme and deal with it in a very light way," says Joffe. "In a sense, the wandering Jew is a universal antisemitic symbol. As a Jewish person I wanted to satirise this to reveal its utter ridiculousness."

Sprinkled with laugh-out-loud humour and a large dose of Yiddish, the book has resonated with readers, Jewish and non-Jewish. "Ironically, my first chapter is set during Pesach," says Joffe. "The whole idea of the original sin, of having singled out the Jews for killing Jesus, came in the story of Pesach because that was when he was crucified." Here she writes of Rov Yossi (aka Jesus) and "his chevras" who were "invited over for that last supper".

Joffe aims to make people laugh, think, and feel while reading what's essentially a disintegration of dangerous stereotypes. In presenting a feminist take on the wandering Jew, Joffe also reflects on the way that women have been blocked from fulfilling their destinies and blamed when things go wrong, from thousands of years ago to today.

Lynn Joffe



She may shock and at times upset sensitive readers, but it's all in pursuit of a greater goal. "Laughter is a form of recognition," says Joffe. "I'm telling a fictional female character's story of the most dreadful scapegoating in history," she says. "I'm using fiction to expose a fiction."



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Diamond blazes trail for new leadership at Cape Board

TALI FEINBERG

Stuart Diamond has been the executive director of the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape Board) for only two and a half years, but in that time, he's taken the organisation through rapid change.

As he heads to the United Kingdom, he calls on the community to continue to encourage young people to "put their hands up" to take on professional and lay leadership roles in communal organisations, which will assist continuity, sustainability, and succession.

"There are many challenges facing young professionals today, but they need to see the community as an exciting and dynamic place to build their career," he says. "We need to continue to professionalise the sector, as can be seen overseas."

He doesn't like the expression "big shoes to fill", and thinks it's important for fresh leadership to come to the fore. "I prefer the idea of 'leaving footprints in the sand'. Then, the water washes over those footprints, and there is another opportunity for someone to fill the gap and leave their imprint and vision. It's important that we keep creating opportunities for talented young people to come in, grow and develop."

Diamond worked for the Democratic Alliance (DA) as a city councillor in Cape Town for a decade before joining the Cape Board. He says that although it seemed like a big change to go from there to working for the community, in reality he was well-suited to the political nature of his new role, which required internal and external political engagement.

In addition, "the time was right for a life change, and I was assessing not only my value system, but who I was. Through the DA, I had

aimed to make the City of Cape Town a better place, and now I was focusing closer to home but aiming to do the same as I had set out to do with the city. The Cape Board was also questioning its identity, and I could play a role in that."

He is most proud of the recent Cape Board election, which "led to a more diverse and inclusive board, allowing more people to have a voice around the table and to debate a wider range of issues".

He believes that over the past few years, the Cape Board has been able to "re-align into its lane and deliver on its mandate". Through more open dialogue and forums, people feel heard and problems are resolved in a community-centric way.

Diamond believes that "relationships with government, the media, academia, and affiliates are the healthiest they've been in long time, and work with country communities, interfaith, advocacy, and combating antisemitism have strengthened".

He pays tribute to current Cape Board Chairperson Tzvi Brivik and immediate past Chairperson Rael Kaimowitz "who have worked incredibly hard to get the Cape Board to where it is today".

However, challenges lie ahead. "There are

always going to be governmental challenges, and those relationships need to remain strong. We can never take our foot off the pedal. Then there is the challenge of being a shrinking community with fewer donors and lower birth rates, as well as emigration. This needs to be monitored and tracked."

He points to much work being done behind the scenes to ensure that the Cape Town Jewish community remains viable, with leadership programmes like the Eliot Osrin Leadership Institute and succession planning across all communal organisations.

Antisemitism and the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement are "real challenges that require attention and focus", Diamond says.

Regarding his own decision to emigrate, he emphasises that it's not out of disillusionment or fear.

"South Africa is like a ship in the sea.

Sometimes it tilts to the left or the right, but essentially it balances out in the centre.

"Through my work at the Cape Board, I was privileged to become a Schusterman Fellow [member of a highly selective leadership-development programme hosted by Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, for exceptional Jewish leaders from around

the world], and I got to see another side of professional Jewry and Jewish life," Diamond says.

"My wife, Lindy, and I have lived in the City Bowl of Cape Town our whole lives, and its only one viewpoint. We got an opportunity to move, travel, and see the world, and we don't want to regret not taking up the opportunity. We've always loved South Africa, and we're going on an adventure. We're certainly not disillusioned or frustrated; we're just taking the next step on our journey."

Diamond is joining Moishe House as international grants manager. Moishe House is an international non-profit organisation made up of a collection of homes throughout the world that serve as hubs for the young adult Jewish community.

"I'm excited to take up a role that is more 'behind the scenes'. For 12 years, I've been on the frontlines of work for the city and the community, so this is a bit of a sabbatical, but it's still community-driven. It will give me time to give back to my family, who have made a lot of sacrifices up until now. It's a chance to see the world, and I believe you're never too old to grow and learn." He emphasises that he's not cutting ties with the South African Jewish community, and will always be there for advice and discussion.

"There are so many South African Jews overseas, working in international organisations, who are highly skilled and internationally respected. For a small community of 14 000, the level at which we continue to contribute is world class. It's been an absolute privilege to serve the community, and I am thankful to everyone with whom I interacted."



Stuart Diamond

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Building a career the 'Gen Z' way

TALI FEINBERG

In a rapidly changing world, careers aren't what they once were. Although there is certainly a place for getting a degree and working your way up the career ladder with a nine-to-five job, there are now many other avenues to financial success and living a more flexible life.

Talya Goldberg, 31, is a successful freelance creative director and social media strategist based in Cape Town. "The jobs that exist now didn't exist ten years ago. They're not things you can go to university and be taught," she says. "There's no older generation teaching these things, so there's a big gap. For example, who's creating content for brands on TikTok? They hire people in their teens or early 20s. There's so much opportunity, and there are many more people working in a 'nomadic' way, not tied to an office," she says.

Chad Nathan, 27, better known as @gingerwithagopro, defines himself as "a digital nomad with a wild passion for travel, adventure, and storytelling through the lens of a camera". He reflects that "at school, I had this mentality that I would take a gap year, go to varsity, and do a BCom like every other Jewish boy in King David [schools], and then maybe join my father in his business".

But while doing the gap year and the degree, he "fell in love with storytelling and capturing memories on camera", which he would post on social media, and people loved it. The result is that he has now built a successful career as a filmmaker, photographer, and digital marketer.

He taught himself everything he knows while travelling to 34 countries and "hustling" to make it in the social media game. He has more than 26 000 followers on Instagram, and more than 34 000 on

TikTok – both accounts reaching an estimated two million people a month. He employs people in a number of cities.

Goldberg followed a similar path. She did a business science marketing degree, and at the same time started interning, doing social media for a company that eventually hired her, as it urgently needed someone who knew how this new thing called social media worked.

No-one ever taught Goldberg the ins and outs of social media. She just loves it, and has spent so much time online, she has become a self-taught expert. "The best way to teach yourself something is to do it. If you do it enough, it eventually becomes second



Chad Nathan

nature," she says.

She began working with brands, meeting people who would become part of her extensive network. She then built a tech start-up with business partner Lucas Adams, which allowed users to print Instagram photos in various formats, as well as "social printing" for brands at events, which was

extremely successful.

"To be honest, we didn't know what we were doing! But it shows that you have to trust your instincts and try something," says Goldberg. "The worst is when people 'over-think' themselves out of something. It's about trusting your gut and if it feels right, say yes to it."

Nathan echoes these sentiments. "At the beginning, I had no idea what I was doing. At the time, content wasn't a big thing. But during my gap year, I saw someone using a GoPro, and it sparked my imagination – the idea that you could strap a camera to your head and record your life. As a kid I had always loved making

home videos, and now I could do something similar. People would say, 'This is amazing, can you do it for our business?' I didn't know how to edit or write an invoice or anything, but it was very much a case of 'fake it till you make it!'"

Goldberg built Nifty250's Instagram account into a much-loved online community. "It was about playing around and responding to what worked best. I loved the engagement." They sold the business after four years and she went freelance, but eventually decided to take up an opportunity as a creative director. Within 18 months, she had transformed that company's branding and social media offering.

She now works for herself, assisting a number of companies on a retainer basis, and doing consulting work. "I'm really enjoying the freelancer lifestyle and flexibility. I think work/life balance is almost impossible to achieve if you work a nine-to-five job. There's not enough time for life," she says.

Goldberg says that in careers these days, age is just a number. "I have a friend who is



Talya Goldberg

21 years old and her very successful business is already more than six years old! And it's all powered by the internet. It's about marketing yourself and having *chutzpah*."

Building a career these days is about following your passion, whether it is photography, knitting, graphic design, or dance. "In fact, it's good to be as 'niche' as possible, and to stick to your niche," says Goldberg. "The more random and unusual your work is, the better. The best content always rises, because people find and share good content."

Goldberg advises matrics to use their first few years out of school to build a portfolio and online following. "When you finish matric, you probably don't have a lot of expenses, you may still be living with your parents, and you're not expected to earn a huge income. So you may have a year or two to figure things out."

She emphasises that you don't need expensive equipment, and people engage more with 'natural' photos taken on a smartphone.

However, Nathan says drone photography and videography is "huge" at the moment,

and is only going to get bigger. "People always want to sit by the window seat on a plane because they're mesmerised by a top-down image. You know as a kid you wondered what it's like to fly? Well, the drone has given me that ability, and to show people art from the sky. Ten years ago, no-one was doing videography. Now, every kid wants to do it."

Goldberg says it's important to network. "It's definitely about making the effort to meet the right people. In South Africa, people prefer to work with their friends or people they know. In addition, being thorough, on time, and easy to work with can get you far."

She says this kind of work isn't for everyone. If you prefer the structure of a regular salary and an office job, then it's best to stick to that. You need to be motivated and disciplined but also able to go with the flow, work hard, and be passionate and knowledgeable.

To the matrics of today, she says, "It's an exciting time. I recommend interning. Not only do you find out what you like, but what you don't like. It's much easier than studying the wrong degree and then finding out that you hate the work at the end. So have *chutzpah*, use this time to network and gain experience, and take every opportunity that comes your way."

Says Nathan, "You can't be shy – you need to be okay to put yourself out there on social media. You need to be the person who has the drive to succeed no matter what. You have to have creativity and passion. You're not necessarily taught your passion – it comes to you. You can't expect everything on a silver platter, but start a hobby, and you might just be able to create a career that suits your personality, and to do what you love. Follow your passion, and success will follow you."

Birthday twinning project brings light to dark times

TALI FEINBERG

They experienced unthinkable tragedy, but Bat-Galim Shaer and her husband Ofir continue to live with optimism and a desire to make the world a little brighter by connecting Jews from around the world.

Their son, Gil-ad, was one of the three Israeli boys kidnapped and murdered in the summer of 2014. Their organisation, Sunshine – Brightening the World in Their Memory, was founded to celebrate his life and legacy, and as a way to bring people across the world together in spite of so many divisions.

"When my son was kidnapped and murdered six and a half years ago, we felt a huge embrace from Jews around the world," says Bat-Galim. "The inner strength that we found during the 18 days of searching for the boys, as a nation and as individuals, and the optimistic attitude that we chose [to have] after learning the boys' fate, forced us to return to daily life and offer support to all Jews wherever it's needed."

Before the pandemic, Bat-Galim travelled around the world, realising the unity and connection she felt at the time of her family's tragedy was something she found wherever she went. "It was meaningful. We realised that when we speak of *am Yisrael*, we are speaking of people that aren't only in Israel, but Jews around the globe, whose hearts are here. We wanted to maintain that connection."

Bat-Galim has a surprising South African link. She was born in Middleburg, Mpumalanga, where her father was the rabbi of the community for six years. The family returned to Israel when she was four, so her memories of South Africa are hazy. "But my parents loved that period of their lives, and they always told us lots of stories about the community, which was very meaningful for them," she says.

Now, her organisation has launched a project that aims to increase this connection in a simple, light-hearted, and meaningful way by matching Jews who share a birthday, encouraging them to wish each other well on their

special day, and continue their conversations throughout the year.

"There are about 14 million Jews in the world today, only half of whom live in Israel. In recent years, the bond between Israel and the Jews in the diaspora has been weakening. The coronavirus pandemic has increased the importance of the connection between us. Strengthening the bond between Israel and the Jews of the world is one of the significant challenges facing the Jewish people in the 21st century," she says.

"The initiative, called Happy Birthday Two You, is one of those projects.

It's our hope that this global, digital initiative can bring about welcome change and create surprising connections. The idea came about when we launched a competition with 50 other organisations asking people to come up with ideas for projects that can strengthen the bond between Jews in Israel and the diaspora.

There were about 700 entries, and this idea was thought of by someone in Canada, someone in America, and someone in Israel."

They decided to go with it, and the results have been exciting. "It was launched on 3 January 2021, and we already have 1 600 people registered. With everyone sitting at home, people are really looking for connection."

Taking part is easy. The website, mazelto.v world, is available in a variety of languages.

You just enter your email address, followed by prompts to enter your name, surname, and date of birth. The system then scans its database for your "birthday buddy", and you get an email introducing you to each other. Then it's up to you to build your connection to this stranger who shares your Hebrew birth date. The email addresses are stored by the project and aren't exposed to outsiders. If you wish to share your personal details, you can do so as part of a secure correspondence.

The more people who join, the more "birthday buddies" there will be, so it's worth taking a minute to sign up and then see who you connect with and what you have in common.

Bat-Galim says that the time since the loss of her son has been "hard and complicated".

"We try to get strength from our five amazing daughters, and we have one beautiful granddaughter who is three years old. We try to look at what



Bat-Galim Shaer and her late son Gil-ad

we have with a "cup half full" [attitude]. We don't ignore the pain, we feel it, and we miss Gil-ad. But we choose to live and be positive. And yes, I've 'fallen down a lot'. You have to work at it. But a project like this makes me so happy."

Happy Birthday Two You isn't the only initiative by her organisation to bring a little brightness into the world. For example, just before Purim [before the pandemic], volunteers distribute *mishloach manot* to travellers leaving Ben Gurion Airport. They literally and symbolically spread joy in the world.

"Students from religious and secular schools enthusiastically work together preparing thousands of baskets. In the past two years, packages were delivered to more than 80 countries, reaching a total of several thousand people. Jews living abroad were excited to receive the gifts, and felt connected to Jews living in Israel," says Bat-Galim.

Meanwhile, through the Sweet Heart project, hundreds of thousands of people all over the world mark Gil-ad's Hebrew birthday, the 19th of Tevet (which usually falls in January), with one of his favourite hobbies: cooking and baking. People share recipes, prepare food, and bring treats to people they don't know.

The Shaer family created the Facebook group Sweet Gilad and the Instagram account @sweetgilad, where anyone can upload and view video clips from this project. It has led to religious and secular youngsters working together to deliver delicacies to nursing homes; families bringing food to soldiers; and students baking and bringing confectionaries to hospitals to cheer up patients.

"This project has a tremendous number of participants in Israel and abroad. Especially on Gil-ad's birthday we choose to increase optimism and joy for what we have and to help others."

Prior to the pandemic, a musical event called Shiru Achim featured performances by professional musicians from across the religious spectrum. "It emphasises what unites us rather than what divides us and encourages hope through a genuine connection with music," says Bat-Galim. The first event had more than 5 000 participants.

There are a number of other initiatives that spread joy, love, and light in simple but meaningful ways. Bat-Galim has also written a book which has just been released in English on Amazon, called *Expecting My Child*. "It's a hard story, but also optimistic. It's about the good deeds of *am Yisrael* during those tough days. It makes me feel proud to be a Jew," she says.

• Visit <https://mazelto.v.world/En> to find your birthday buddy.



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From Fresnaye to Langa, expat tells 'tale of two cities'

TALI FEINBERG

At first glance, Jason Woolf seems like any other 27-year-old American expat enjoying everything Cape Town has to offer. That is, until he starts speaking in fluent Xhosa, or when he describes living in the shack he built for part of the year that he spent in the sprawling township of Khayelitsha.

"I lived in Khayelitsha for a year, in 2014 and 2015. For part of that time, I lived in a house in Ilitha Park. Then I had to move, so I was hosted by the family of a friend's girlfriend in Makhaza. But after a time, it got a little crowded, so I built a shack onto the side of their house to live in," he explains.

"Living in a shack was fine – you can actually make it quite nice. I put rhino board inside, and painted it lime green. You don't really feel like you're in a shack, it's just a small room really. If you have the heater on at night it stays warm enough. And I wasn't hanging out there all day, so it was nothing major."

Woolf holds dual American South African citizenship: "My sister was born in 1990, my parents migrated to Boston, Massachusetts in 1991, and I was born in 1993. I grew up in a suburb called Dartmouth south of Boston." He studied at New York University at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study, with a focus on social entrepreneurship and cultural revitalisation. He would also spend summers with his grandparents in Cape Town, and got to know that in many ways, it's a tale of two cities, with the extremely affluent and the impoverished living side by side.

After graduating, Woolf moved to South Africa to work full-time on his non-profit foundation, Umbiyozo ('celebration' in Xhosa). He started it in 2011 as a high school student after seeing how local township youth would form dance troupes and perform in public spaces across the city.

His decision to live in Khayelitsha was motivated by a desire to get closer to the people he wanted to work with and understand their reality. He aimed to incentivise youth to participate in these community-based troupes, hoping to help prevent gangsterism, drug usage, teenage pregnancy, social isolation, and disempowerment. With a background in music, endless energy and enthusiasm, and the ability to interact with people from all walks of life, Woolf was perfectly placed to do this work.

On a tiny budget, he made a DVD capturing the performances of 14 independent dance troupes, allowing participants to sell the DVDs to tourists for a greater profit than they would get by performing on the streets. He

also organised large-scale events and a yearly dance competition. After giving it his all, he eventually had to close the foundation, but it inspired his next venture: Side by Side Experiences, which provides meaningful tours, experiences, and interactions for tourists in the townships. With this in mind, he decided to move to Langa township for a year as a way to further immerse himself in the environment.



Jason Woolf with Yoli Nocanda and Siyabulela 'Sabu' Nocanda, co-owners of Zone 17 in Langa

Before he made the move, he was staying in the upmarket suburb of Fresnaye on the Atlantic Seaboard. On social media and with clever use of technology such as Google Earth, he has shown the short distance but vast difference between the two locations.

He considered staying in a shipping container, but eventually moved into a newly-built hostel called Zone 17, a space created by two Langa entrepreneurs with the aim of desegregating Cape Town. It has ten rooms, and he is currently the only resident. He recently hosted a COVID-19-safe braai and housewarming event, hoping to put the place on the map and bring together people from South Africa's different communities.

While COVID-19 has thrown him a few curveballs, Woolf is continuing with his walking tours in Langa. "Walking tours are important ways to reduce 'poverty tourism'. They allow for interaction, and they slow tourists down to really experience the environment," he explains. He chose Langa because it's

well-suited to walking tours, is closer to town, "and I've met some amazing movers and shakers that I felt I could really partner with".

Woolf is also focusing on content creation, using his social media channels to "bridge gaps and start interesting conversations". He hopes to open up dialogue between sectors of society and highlight organisations and entrepreneurs involved in fascinating and meaningful projects.

He says he feels safe in the community – people are warm, welcoming, and look out for each other. He felt the same when he lived in Khayelitsha. "People cooked meals for me, welcomed me into their homes, and gave me an intimate window into their life. They helped me with anything I needed, talked through their problems with me, and were eager to teach me the language. Kids were so eager to interact, and I enjoyed little moments, like jokes when buying street food. Those moments really lift the spirit."

What he loves most about South Africa is "the spirit of the people. It's a complicated country, but people generally seem accepting of one another. The 'default' relationship one of kindness and cordial behaviour, unlike other places where the default is 'stranger culture' and 'Why you talking to me?', that attitude of 'stay in your lane, mind your own business'. Here, people like chatting and there's a feeling that you can make friends with a stranger, which isn't a feeling you get in places like the United States (US), by and large."

"Then there is the extremely precious exquisite natural environment. And it feels like there's a meaningful national project of trying to become 'a people'. Everyone has their own unique relationship to that nation-building project. It's intriguing to see how diverse people approach that project and respond to it."

"The only reason I would possibly go back to US is if I have children and it feels like they may get better opportunities there. But if I had a child today, I would prefer to raise it in South Africa than the US. Their development would be more holistic here than in the US."

Finally, he says, "We need to recognise that as a Jewish people, we don't exist in isolation. We're inextricably linked to the fates of others in our country and the world. We need to build bridges to have a collective future where we all thrive. We can start at home, in our own backyard. Spend some time in a township, and see with your own eyes the way things are, rather than what the media might be telling you. Be brave enough to step in, find someone who can make you feel welcome, and do yourself that service of learning and unlearning. It's hugely important for this country."



Wishing you and your family a Happy Passover



DriveThru Egypt to the Holy Land in Glenhazel



It isn't easy to imagine what the Jews went through in getting out of Egypt and wandering the desert for 40 years, but the Chevrah Kadisha made it easier for us with its Greatest Pesach DriveThru on Sunday, 21 March.

Although the event was 100% COVID-19-proof, it was an immersive experience with camels, plagues, and all that you imagine from the Pesach story, as well as Passover-related entertainment. More than 1 000 cars drove through the Chev's facility.

"It shows an institution reimagining the world, and doing it with inspiration, drive, and fun," said a communal leader. "It was an amazing experience. It's inspiring in that as leaders, our responsibility is to re-imagine a new world, not complain about our lot."



Photos: Tande Weisberg

KDVPP packs bags for newborns

Grade 7 pupils at King David Victory Park Primary School recently packed 80 bags for mothers and their newborns to be delivered to the Edenvale Hospital. The outreach project was conducted in collaboration with the Baby Ethan Foundation, a non-profit organisation founded in 2010 which supplies hospitals including Edenvale and Rahima Moosa Mother and Child with baby bags and essentials. All items were provided by the Baby Ethan Foundation.



King David Victory Park Primary School pupils Ricky Koton, Joshua Woolf, Lior Hyman, Maxem Radford, and Daniel Segal pack bags for new mothers

KDL pupil wins Chapman competition



Shiri Kaplan

King David Linksfield pupil Shiri Kaplan has won the Chapman University of California's annual Holocaust Creative Writing Competition in 2021 for a poem submitted while the school was learning online.

The competition requires participants to respond creatively to Holocaust-survivor testimony on the "1939" website, using art, dance, poetry, song, or an essay.

Chapman University receives entries from more than 50 countries worldwide, and the first prize is a week-long trip to Chapman University for the pupil to attend an internationally-acclaimed Holocaust course.

Yeshiva fundraiser has parents flocking

Yeshiva College's parent-teacher association has started a fundraising campaign which has the entire community laughing out loud.

School moms leave home early each morning and pick a house of a child enrolled in the school. They then place a flock of pink wire flamingos on their front lawn, and remove it only once the family has made a donation to the cause.

The fundraiser has been running for the past two weeks, and there is one week to go. Anyone who has not yet been flocked, be warned, birds are probably coming your way.



A Yeshiva College mom getting "flocked"

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1939 = R500 Up to R30 000
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Beware Pesach Madness Syndrome

blame my mother-in-law. She is the one that started all this, and it's thanks to her I was placed in mortal danger when making a cup of coffee on Tuesday morning.

My crime? I nearly (according to my wife), put my "chametz cup" down on a recently koshered-for-Pesach kitchen surface.

To be clear, I had no intention of committing this horror. I was aware of the regulations (they had been pasted on the fridge) as I balanced my cell phone on my shoulder, my cup in one hand, the Starbucks sachet in the other, and tried to not burn myself in the process.

I didn't know that my wife could move so fast. But she flew into the kitchen at seriously impressive speed in testimony to what yoga can achieve. In a flash, she was next to me in the kitchen, fully expecting to find that I had singlehandedly returned the kitchen to its pre-Pesach state of 21 March 2021.

"But you could have!" was her (weak) defence. And then, even weaker, "I wasn't checking up on you. I just thought I would come and help you." Yeah, right. Like I don't know where she comes from.

And I blame my mother-in-law.

Which makes me think that "Pesach Madness Syndrome" might well be genetic. And that it's passed down from mother to daughter without skipping a generation.

If I have to consider this in newly-acquired virology terms, it could be accurate to say that sufferers of Pesach Madness Syndrome are likely to be asymptomatic for most of the year. It might be that it lies dormant, but following the festival of Purim, something

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



triggers it and causes a sudden onset.

It's then that seemingly perfectly sane and rational people uncontrollably make pages and pages of lists, get involved in excessive buying, cleaning, and even paranoia. In the worst cases, victims confuse their husbands and children and, in their place, simply see walking "chametz" carriers.

There is no cure. It rarely results in death, aside from a few husbands and children who might have crossed the sufferer at the height of an attack, and symptoms ease or "pass-over" after a period (sorry).

Travel restrictions aren't helping either. Which would have been an option for me following my brush with mortality this morning. It also might explain why I haven't seen my children for the good part of a week. They could well have moved out. And the only thing I blame them for is not taking me with them.

With all of this, after having spent many a Pesach festival away, there is something special about the preparation in the run-up to the holiday. The process of "change", the sense of rebirth, and even the pages and pages of lists undoubtedly all contribute to the texture, warmth, and appreciation of the time.

Assuming, of course, that one survives the week before.

Pesach Kasher Ve sameach!

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Israel Apartheid Week turned into Israel awareness week



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

At the beginning of each year, Jewish university students are confronted with the challenge of responding to Israel

Apartheid Week (IAW), a malicious and mendacious anti-Israel propaganda campaign run by the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement and its fellow travellers.

We have just come to the end of the latest round of IAW activities, along with the counter-campaign run by the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) with the support of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and South African Zionist Federation, Israeli student activists from the organisation Stand With Us, and our Christian allies.

This year's SAUJS campaign was again thoughtful, innovative, and exceptionally well run. It revolved around the theme of people claiming back their narrative, as encapsulated by the hashtag #OwnYourTruth/#OwnOurTruth, showing the diversity of what Zionism means to different people. SAUJS also turned the standard BDS "Zionism = racism" canard on its head by running a #unitedagainstracism initiative. This generated a large number of tweets showing the reality of Israel's diverse, multi-faith, racial, and ethnic society.

IAW isn't about fostering education and debate, but rather demonising and defaming the Jewish state. It also seeks to silence, sideline, and discredit anyone attempting to put forward a different perspective. SAUJS hasn't engaged in such smear tactics in response. Instead, it has developed a campaign which emphasises dialogue and education over boycotts and intimidation, the aim of which isn't to delegitimise other points of view but to understand the realities of the situation and discuss possible ways forward. This has proven to be strikingly effective, and such was the case this year. Clearly the average student is

more responsive to an approach based on nuanced, informed discussion as against one portraying one side as being so irredeemably evil as to make any debate unnecessary. This receptiveness was also evident in the positive response to the SAJBD's recent webinar on the United Arab Emirates-Israel Abraham Accords. Because of all these efforts, IAW this year was again largely a non-event, for which SAUJS and everyone else involved can be warmly commended.

Timeless lessons from the Haggadah

While the biblical story of Exodus focuses on the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery and their birth as an independent nation, its underlying themes are universal and have specific resonance for South Africa. In 2014, the SAJBD Gauteng Council held a special Freedom Seder, bringing political and religious leaders, members of the media, and civil society together to celebrate 20 years of South African democracy in the context of the Pesach narrative. Since then, a number of such events have been held countrywide, providing a distinctively Jewish vehicle through which we join fellow South Africans in celebrating the attainment of freedom in our country. At the time of writing, preparations were being finalised for a national, virtual Freedom Seder to take place on Wednesday evening, 24 March.

I take this opportunity to wish you all a *chag* Pesach *kasher v'sameach*. May we all enjoy being with family and friends at a time when we rejoice in our heritage and pass those traditions on to the next generation.

• 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

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.

Horesh resides in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – enabling him to travel to Poland and Lithuania, as well as to Portugal, where he collaborates with local professionals who assist him in tracing documentation required for successful applications of reinstatement of European citizenship.

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

My travel schedule has been postponed due to COVID-19, at the moment I plan to arrive in May. I'm offering to review and advise your case for free. You are most welcome to contact me on adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com or whatsapp +48783953223



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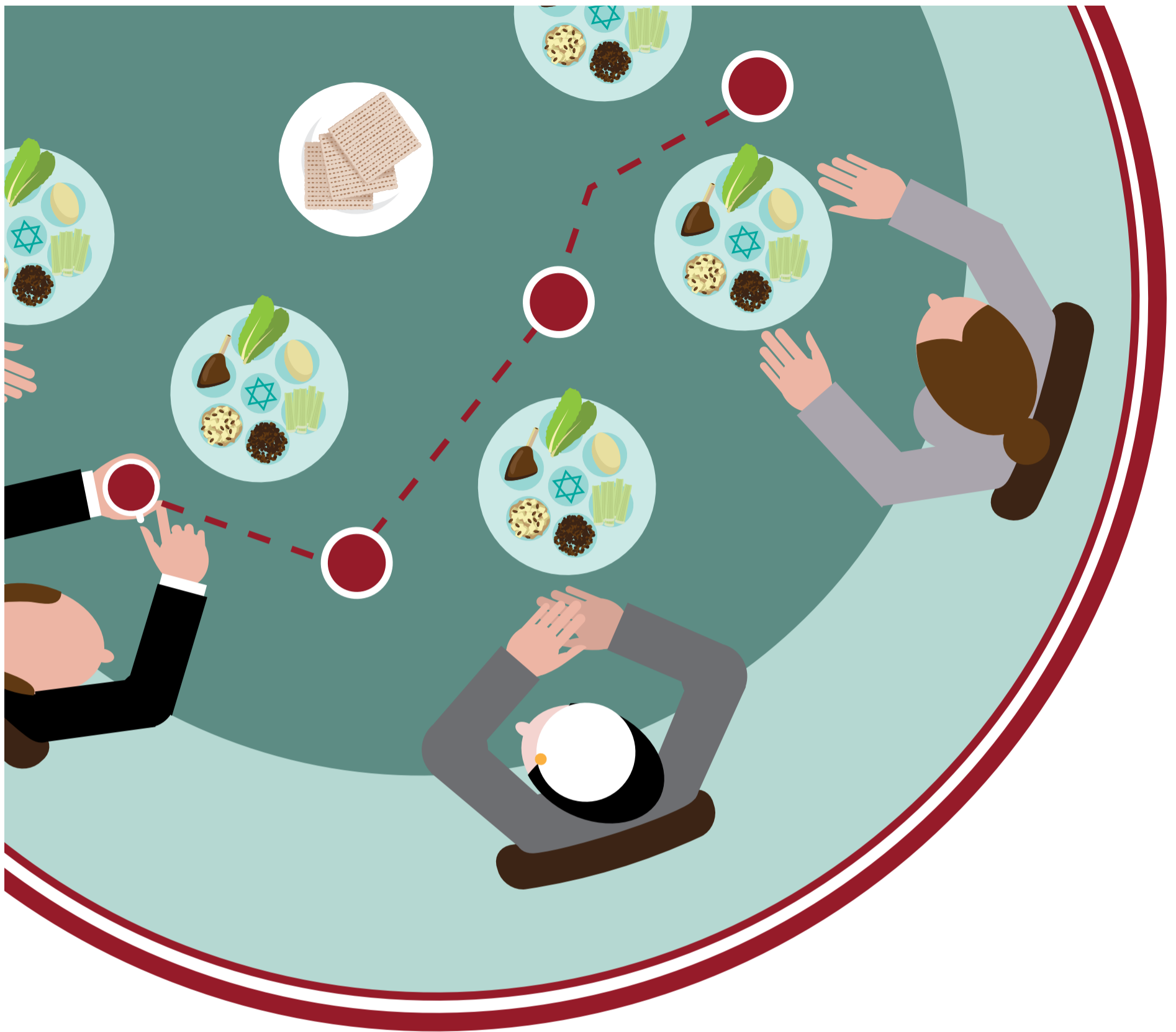
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**THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF WISH
YOU JOY AND MANY BLESSINGS AT
PASSOVER AND THROUGHOUT
THE YEAR!**



Chag Pesach Kasher ve Sameach





Chag Sameach

May the year ahead be
**a good one for you
and your family**