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# south african Jewish Report

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## Dismissal of Verulam case a setback for fight against terror

TALI FEINBERG

In a defining moment that could give the “go ahead” for terrorism in South Africa, the case against 12 men accused of perpetrating terrorist activities in the name of Islamic State (ISIS) was thrown out of the Verulam Magistrate’s Court on Monday, 13 July.

“The dismissal of the Verulam case, in spite of overwhelming evidence against the suspects, is a major setback that will embolden those who seek to use terrorism and violence to harm us and our way of life,” says Community Security Organisation (CSO) director of operations in Gauteng, Jevon Greenblatt.

He says that since 2016, there have been at least three ISIS-inspired attacks or foiled plots in South Africa. “The first was the members of the Thulsie twins’ terror cell, which were arrested in 2016 in what was believed to be the advanced stages of planning attacks against Jewish and Western targets in Johannesburg.

“The second was Fatima Patel and Sayfudeen Aslam Del Vecchio, who were arrested for the 2018 murders of Rachel and Rodney Saunders. Although the initial murder investigation pointed to theft, it was later established that the stolen money was to be used to fund an ISIS-inspired terror training camp. It’s important to note that Patel was originally arrested with the Thulsies, but then released.

“Later in 2018, an ISIS-affiliated cell was arrested after carrying out this attack on a Shia Mosque in Verulam, KwaZulu-Natal, and planting incendiary devices around Durban. Radical Sunni groups view Shia Muslims in the same light as they view Jews, and see both as legitimate targets.

“All three of these are watershed cases that will set the precedent for countering terrorism and extremism in our country, and if not dealt with properly, will effectively give the green light to groups and individuals who wish to spread their extreme

ideologies through violence,” Greenblatt says.

“Rising levels of hopelessness, lawlessness, and radicalisation in South Africa, together with the rapidly growing ISIS-linked insurgency in Mozambique, are a dangerous formula that deeply affects the safety and security of our region, our country, and our community. Although Patel and the Verulam attackers ended up choosing non-Jewish targets, they could just as easily have chosen differently.

“The South African Jewish community is the largest on the continent, and will at least be considered – if not specifically chosen – as a legitimate target by radical Islamists looking to carry out terror attacks in the country. This isn’t conjecture. The motivation to carry out such attacks is very real, and is something we have to work against every day to ensure our community is properly protected.”

The case in question goes back to May 2018, when attackers entered the Imam Hussain Mosque near Verulam (north of Durban), shouting that they were going to kill people.

Abbas Essop was murdered. His mouth was taped shut, and his throat slit. Two other men were stabbed, and the library of the mosque was petrol bombed. A few days later, a device resembling a bomb was found under the chair of the imam, and worshippers were evacuated.

In the aftermath, President Cyril Ramaphosa and Minister of Police Bheki Cele visited the mosque, promising justice.

The suspects were arrested in October 2018. Out on bail a month later, the 12 accused faced charges arising from the placing of pipe bombs in Woolworths stores, at the Durban July race, and at the mosque, as well as murder, attempted murder,

arson, and extortion for the mosque attack.

They were also charged with furthering the aims of ISIS, violating the POCDATARA Act (The Protection of Constitutional Democracy Against Terrorist and Related Activities), and kidnapping, when a person was found chained in a dungeon at one of the houses where the arrests were made.

But on Monday, Magistrate Irfaan Khalil struck the case off the role. “I feel that this verdict was long coming because the state made some blunders along the way,” says Willem Els, senior training co-ordinator at the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria.

“The biggest of them was to replace a very competent state prosecutor in the middle of the case. Advocate Adele Barnard is a senior state prosecutor who specialises in the prosecution of terror-related cases. She was replaced with a novice in this field, and no reason was given for this. Apparently, the state requested more time,

but this was rejected. But all isn’t lost. Through the director of public prosecutions (DPP), the state can reinstate the case and appeal against the verdict.

“This case once again demonstrates that South Africa isn’t ready for terrorism. It also unravels the capacity of the criminal justice system to deal with such cases. It may also send the wrong message to radical elements that it’s safe to perpetrate these acts in South Africa. In order to restore faith, the authorities should demonstrate that they are able to fulfil their mandate to the South African public by pursuing this case and rendering a professional prosecution. ISIS would surely be laughing, and through this case, it can evaluate South Africa’s capacity,” Els says.

“With the Thulsie case still not resolved four years later, the Verulam case further illustrates how far we need to go to protect this country against terrorism. With Mozambique under fire, the authorities need to act now to put in place a viable system to defend our constitutional democracy against terrorist acts.”

Natasha Kara, the spokesperson for the DPP in KwaZulu-Natal, says, “The matter is being closely monitored and worked on together by the South African Police Service and the prosecutors of the organised crime office of the National Prosecuting Authority. Investigations will continue.”

Shaun Zagnoev, the chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, says, “We reiterate our abhorrence of attacks on places of worship, and continue to express our condolences to the victims of the Verulam mosque attack. We

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### Fighting a war on a new frontier



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

**Dr Karli Anavi takes a break from the COVID ward at the Helen Joseph Hospital this week.**  
**See story on page 3**



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# SA embassy in Israel downgrade still in limbo

TALI FEINBERG

South Africa’s planned downgrade of its embassy in Israel is still very much in limbo, according to statements made by Naledi Pandor, the minister of international relations and cooperation, at a department of international relations and cooperation portfolio committee meeting on 8 July.

This is in spite of the belief by many that the downgrade already occurred some time ago. “There are other countries that don’t have an embassy in Tel Aviv, which have an embassy perhaps located outside of Israel, which is set to service Israel. So these are all considerations that my department and ministry must put before cabinet so as to make a decision on the final model that will be utilised,” Pandor said in a Zoom meeting.

At the African National Congress’ biannual national conference in December 2017, the party unanimously passed a resolution to downgrade its embassy in Ramat Gan into a “liaison office” in an expression of support for the Palestinian people. It withdrew its ambassador from Israel in May 2018, but hasn’t yet officially downgraded its embassy.

Minister Pandor was responding to a question by the department’s chairperson, Tandi Mahambehlahla, who said, “I hear that there is a decision on downgrading our representation there [in Israel]. There is a view that the embassy must be closed. My question is, will that be viable, because in my view, our offices there also service Palestine, which we are told isn’t far from there. Do you think closing that embassy will do justice to the people of Palestine if we close it completely?”

Pandor responded, “What we have to do now that we’ve had experience of several months of downgrade where there is no ambassador assigned to Israel, we have to look in terms of international law exactly what form of South African office or embassy we should have in Israel.

“You’re correct with respect to the issue of Palestine. As you know, we have an embassy in Ramallah. If we don’t have an office in Israel, it may very well impact on our ability



Naledi Pandor, the minister of international relations and cooperation

to maintain the Ramallah office, which may [have an] impact on our ability to influence and support Palestine. But this doesn’t affect the downgrade that we are proposing.” She then went on to make the comments above.

After reviewing these comments, local political analyst Dr Ralph Mathekga told the *SA Jewish Report*, “I don’t think the downgrade will be done unilaterally. The two countries have strong trade relations, so they will mostly likely engage further on this. There will most likely be bilateral or even multilateral engagements between Israel and Pretoria regarding how this unfolds,” he said.

“South Africa is emphasising here that its presence in Israel is also for the purpose of supporting and influencing Palestine. Does this mean that South Africa will establish an office outside of Israel/Palestine? I don’t think it will get to that point, in spite of the diplomatic tensions that often arise between the two countries.”

Sara Gon, the head of strategic engagement at the Institute of Race Relations, said Pandor might be alluding to the fact that “most countries that don’t have ambassadorial relations with a country usually have an arrangement with a nearby country with which they do have relations to grant visas to the latter country’s people”.

“Certainly Ms Mahambehlahla’s question is asked on behalf of those who would like to see the embassy downgraded, although they realise that so doing might prejudice Palestinians. It probably would be kept open for that purpose alone. Arguably, if the South African

government only wants to serve Palestinians, it can do so through Amman or Cairo,” she said.

“It seems that Pandor is agreeing with this position, and that there is an intention to downgrade further, but she would prefer to have some international legal support for it. As far as I can see, South Africa can do what it wants with its embassy, but whether it’s allowed to maintain an embassy at all is Israel’s choice in terms of the United Nations’ Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961.”

Darren Bergman, the Democratic Alliance shadow minister of international relations and cooperation, believes that now is the time for brave steps from South Africa. “Instead of closing the embassy that services both Israel and the Palestinian territories, South Africa should identify a person willing to give South Africa a seat at the negotiating table and act decisively when it comes to representing South Africa in Israel, and should appoint that person as an ambassador.”

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) said it continued to engage with the South African embassy in Israel on issues of

Continued on page 5>>

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:16	18:08	Johannesburg
17:39	18:34	Cape Town
16:57	17:51	Durban
17:18	18:11	Bloemfontein
17:10	18:05	Port Elizabeth
17:03	17:58	East London

## Torah Thought

### Strength in diversity

The double portion of Matos/Massei deals with Moshe divvying up the land for the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Moshe didn’t choose land based on population size, demographics, or even agricultural usefulness, it was all decided through the casting of lots. Leaving such an arduous task in the capable hands of Hashem was the best way to dodge any *farribles*.

The Twelve Tribes, once settled in the Holy Land, could finally bring to fruition the mammoth task of being a light to the rest of humanity. As the prophet Isaiah foretells, “*Ki mitZiyon tetzei Torah* [Torah will come forth out of Zion].”

The harmonious unity of the Twelve Tribes in one centralised place was very much like an

orchestra, with multiple sounds coming together to form a beautiful symphony.

In fact, that’s how Hashem prefers things. He displays this to us through the diversity of nature. If Hashem wanted only one way of doing things, then nature would have sufficed with one type of fauna. For example, there would be only penguins around or zebras. Forget about the beautiful and intricate multitudes of glorious beasts, big and small, that inhabit our earth and deep seas. Hashem makes it obvious that He wants unity to thrive out of diversity.

The same is true of the tribes of Israel. Hashem wasn’t happy with Israel being represented by an Avraham figure, an Isaac, or

even a Jacob alone. And even though Jacob was called Israel, that wasn’t our legacy until we became *bnei Yisrael* (the children of Israel). Why? Harmony through diversity. The tribe of Yehuda was earmarked for kingship, Yosef were to be the politicians, Issachar could sit and learn Torah all day, Zevulun were the sea-faring merchants, Shimon were the educators, and Levi were the priests and temple workers. One man/identity couldn’t be all things.

And so it should be today. Our job is not to judge, and to be tolerant of the paths and journeys each person has in trying to make their legacy within the realm of Judaism and Torah.

Rabbi Ryan Goldstein,  
West Street Shul



South African

Jewish Report

The source of quality content: news and insights

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# Doctors fight war on the COVID frontier

NICOLA MILTZ

On Shabbos two Friday nights ago in the COVID-19 casualty ward of Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, Dr Joel Dave and his wife Dr Nicola Dave – both senior specialists – shared a look which needed no explanation.

It was there 20 years ago that the couple first met, having no idea that they would be doing night shifts together years later and seeing dozens of patients stricken with a disease named only seven months ago.

“I never thought at this stage of my career I’d be back in casualty,” said Dave, 53, an endocrinologist. He was

engulfed them. Exhausted and shell-shocked, they try to keep their composure, maintaining a sense of purpose to get them through the day.

As the wards of both private and state hospitals fill up, doctors are being redeployed into COVID-19 wards where the daily drama of the pandemic unfolds before their visor-blurred eyes.

Wearing full, constrictive personal protective equipment (PPE), doctors’ voices are muffled and their facial expressions obscured. Behind their masks, they strain to hear each other speak. “This gives new meaning to the healing presence of the bedside physician,” said Dr Carron Zinman, specialist physician pulmonologist at

pandemic-focused mini-cities in a bid to deliver the best quality medicine with healthcare teams working fearlessly together.

“My examination room is now a dressing room, re-usable masks are labelled with our names and placed on the windowsill to catch the sun. There is a washing machine to clean scrubs,” said Zinman.

There is a mindboggling ritual of doffing and donning PPE followed by meticulous hand washing and showering as doctors, nurses, and all hospital staff move between the COVID-19 ward and the Patients Under Investigation (PUT) ward reserved for patients displaying symptoms of the virus and awaiting test results.

Public health surgeon, Dr Eloise Miller, 38, of Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital switched to the intensive-care unit when she saw the need arise.

“Right now, it’s work, home, work, home. This isn’t a happy story. It’s like a war zone. I’m used to working with critical patients and unfortunately losing patients, but this is on another level. We are staring death in the face every day. It’s so sad.”

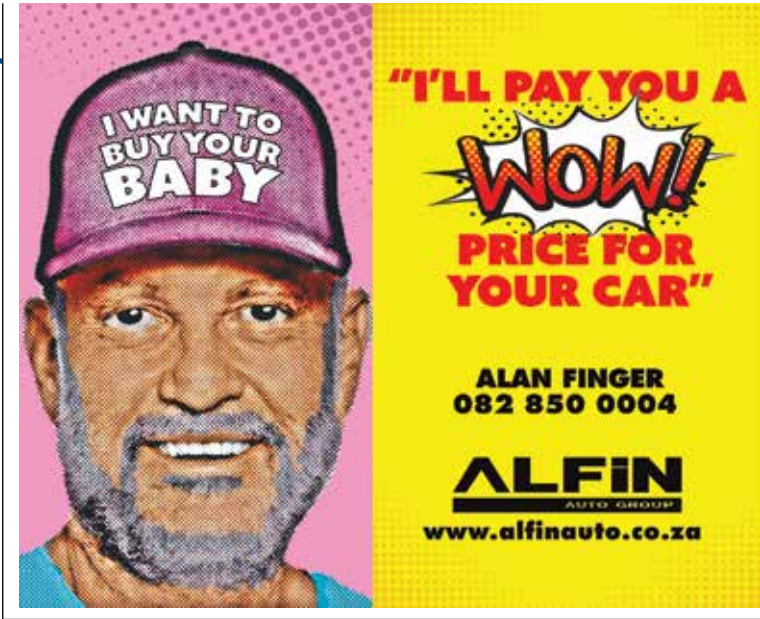
“The skills of our doctors and standard of care in ICU is similar to any private hospital. The problem is that by the time our patients come in, it’s often too late. Their lungs are completely infiltrated. Patients are profoundly hypoxic, and you watch them deteriorate before your eyes.”

She said that the majority of patients infected will survive, but once they are in hospital and are much sicker, the survival rate isn’t good. “This isn’t an ordinary flu, it’s a new frontier. We won’t all get to the other side. No one can understand the complete hopelessness and senseless loss of life, and it’s going to get a lot worse.”

Dr Gordon Kretzmer, 55, an intensive-care physician at Netcare Sunninghill Hospital, is recovering at home after contracting the virus. “I knew I had it. I had seen so many patients, it was obvious,” he said.

Fortunately, he had it relatively mildly, and is now preparing to go back to work.

“It’s a stressful time dealing with a very unpredictable disease. We have done everything to prepare ourselves. We’ve read every single article and yet everything is experimental, nothing is proven. People can deteriorate very



rapidly after presenting mildly.”

Father of two, Dr Lior Chernick, 33, is a medical registrar at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital. “Working in state health, you function on the edge at the best of times. Now we are pushing things over the edge. People are stepping up, they are committed, but sadly there is no shortage of colleagues who have fallen ill with it,” adding to the burden of all-round staff shortages.

The very nature of this novel virus “makes you engage with your own mortality”, he said.

“While the majority of patients are discharged, many experience fear and anxiety which is amplified when they see patients around them dying,” said Chernick.

Dr Barri Strimling, 33, a registrar in radiology at Charlotte Maxeke, moved out of home when he was redeployed to the COVID-19 wards last month to avoid potentially infecting his young family. He waved goodbye to his three-year-old twin toddlers, Kira and Jacob, who he said pray every night for “daddy to save the sick people”.

Strimling said he had been hugely supported by the community.

“My wife, Romy, posted a request on Joburg Jewish Mommies for accommodation, and we were blown away by offers,” he said.

He is currently staying at a bed and breakfast courtesy of Ubuntu Beds, an initiative that aims to unite empty hotels with healthcare workers on the frontline.

“It’s all hands on deck. Doctors have gone back to their roots to help each other. It’s not doctors versus COVID-19, it’s humanity versus COVID-19. There’s a complete ecosystem at play. We are all in this together. We become the patient’s family.”

Rabbi and Dr Shauli Minkowitz said as a training urologist at Baragwanath, it was difficult to offer the same level of care and compassion as before. “We are limiting face-to-face consultations to reduce patient risk, and are forced to delay many procedures that are deemed non-essential in order to keep people out of hospital and free up beds for COVID-19 patients,” he said.



Dr Sheri Fanaroff, GP, working from the safest place in her home – the driveway

part of a team of eight specialists who set up the COVID-19 service at Groote Schuur Hospital. They have been at the coalface of the surge in cases in the province during the raging pandemic which is now in full swing in Gauteng.

The SA Jewish Report spoke to doctors in the community, all of whom are making extraordinary sacrifices to save lives.

“Your emotions are up and down depending on what you are able to do for the patient. High flow nasal oxygen is saving patients’ lives, and this is incredibly rewarding. There are horror stories, but many lives are being saved,” said Dave.

Doctors are witnessing patients perilously ill, gasping for air in spite of the highest amount of oxygen flowing into them. In some hospitals, they barely have time to search patient records to catch a glimpse of who the patient was before coronavirus

Netcare Linksfield Hospital.

Doctors speak the language of war. It’s a bizarre time, when even breathing the same air as your patient is risky.

“Patients have a look of fear, worried that they might become another statistic in tomorrow’s death toll,” she said. “Normal life is on hold. Indefinitely. I feel like I’ve stepped into a surreal, completely different world where everything is the same but totally different.”

“Last year I had two cases which caused me untold stress. Now I’m having 20 to 30 cases a day,” she said.

Last weekend, she and her partner saw 90 patients a day, with 41 admissions. They have signed multiple death certificates. “It’s distressing not being able to contact the relatives of each patient regularly who you know are worried sick. There’s simply not enough time,” she said.

Hospitals have transformed into



Dr Karli Anavi is working in the COVID ward at Helen Joseph Hospital

Photos: Ilan Ossendryver

“It’s a trying time with our hands [scalpels] tied behind our back, but now more than ever, it’s incumbent upon us to be more empathetic and sensitive to the physical and spiritual needs of those who seek our help. If we as doctors find it hard, imagine how our patients feel!”

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# Jews counter #JewishPrivilege vitriol on Twitter

JORDAN MOSHE

The Twittersphere exploded on Monday after a flurry of antisemitic tweets was shared on the platform under the hashtag #JewishPrivilege. Since then, hundreds of Jewish users have responded to the assault, turning the hashtag around by exposing the lies, and sharing experiences of antisemitism.

Although many of the hateful statements appeared to be confessions of privilege from Jewish users, they were in fact nothing more than variations of the smear that Jews control the world.

One user wrote that he felt “guilty that our people’s role in slavery dwarfed Whites, but it’s important we pay for that dominant role that hurt so many millions of blacks. We jews are 1/3 of billionaires and MUST give

much more to blacks.”

Others didn’t identify as Jews, but called Jews out for benefitting from slavery, creating the pornographic industry, massacring Europeans, and other claims.

“#JewishPrivilege is being able to shape-shift to white when doing something shameful and then back to Jewish when doing something who whole tribe is proud of,” said one user. Another tweeted that “#JewishPrivilege is when you blame atrocities on Caucasians and not your own kind” accompanied by a collection of images depicting mounds of corpses under the heading, “Victims of Jewish terror”, including Germans, Armenians, Russians, and Palestinians.

It has since been discovered that the tweets originated primarily from far-right, white supremacist profiles and bots.

“It seems the hashtag was originally used this week by conspiracy theorists to spread antisemitic content,” social-media expert Sarah Hoffman told the *SA Jewish Report* on Tuesday. “It trended yesterday in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, when a lot of the same conspiracy theorists joined the conversation.”

She said, however, there had also been a significant rise in the number of Jews on Twitter using the same hashtag to counter the vitriol.

“Many Jews are flipping the hashtag, and using it to expose and share stories of antisemitism and the Holocaust within the broader context of racism,” she said.

“Content like this violates Twitter’s hateful-conduct policy which specifically prohibits promoting violence or threatening other people. Sadly, Twitter is slow to take action

even when it’s reported, so people are instead joining the ‘flip side’ by using the same thing to expose the truth and debunk the idea of Jewish privilege.”

**“#JewishPrivilege is being able to shape-shift to white when doing something shameful and then back to Jewish when doing something who whole tribe is proud of.”**

Indeed, by early Monday morning, numerous Jewish celebrities and politicians from around the world had made tweets of their own, sharing personal accounts of antisemitism and family who had perished in the Holocaust or otherwise suffered for

being Jewish.

Writer Hen Mazzig wrote, “#JewishPrivilege is when my grandparents were violently forced out of Iraq and Tunisia for being Jewish with only the clothes on their back. Along with 850 000 other MENA [Middle East and North Africa] Jews, they arrived in Israel with nothing, only spoke Arabic, and lived in a tent/tin shack for years.”

Personalities including producer David Simon, actress Sarah Silverman, and actor Josh Gad also spoke out.

Simon tweeted, “My #JewishPrivilege? Garden-variety stuff. Eleven dead relatives at Auschwitz and in the Russian woods, and a father who was a hostage and suffered PTSD years after the Jewish non-profit where he worked was stormed by angry dudes with guns & scimitars who threatened to behead him.”

Pro-Israel and Jewish advocacy groups also entered the fray, with parody account, The Mossad, sarcastically sharing photographs of oppressed Jews “enjoying” their privilege. One of their posts includes an image of a Jewish woman stripped to her underwear and fleeing from her assailants in Lviv in 1941, titled “Look at this woman enjoying her #JewishPrivilege”.

Veteran writer and journalist, Gus Silber, says that social media-hashtag campaigns can be a powerful way for people to share experiences, tell stories, and express their solidarity or support for a cause or movement.

“If a hashtag gains enough traction and momentum, it can win hearts and minds, and can even quite literally change the way the world works,” he says.

“In South Africa, the #FeesMustFall campaign brought about dramatic changes in the funding and structure of tertiary education. In America, the #MeToo campaign led to the downfall of major power-players in Hollywood, and shone a piercing light on the abuse and harassment of women in the film industry and beyond.

“The #JewishPrivilege hashtag is another example of how swiftly hashtag campaigns can take root and spread on social media.”

Because the hashtag was reclaimed by Jews, however, the phenomenon is markedly different, says Silber.

“The hashtag began to lose its negative power as a marker of hate, and instead turned into an affirmation of Jewish survival and resilience in the face of antisemitism and violence,” he says.

Silber explains that because no-one can claim ownership or authority over a hashtag, anyone who chooses can freely use the hashtag in their posts, whether their intention is to support a campaign or denigrate it.

“Because hashtags stand out in a post and are clickable, they have the effect of drawing attention and co-ordinating a stream of what might otherwise be unrelated posts. This is why hashtags can be so powerful. They are rallying cries that can be heard above the noise of the medium.”

This has certainly happened in the case of the #JewishPrivilege hashtag. “The hashtag has allowed people to tell their own stories, but it has also opened up a broader platform for discussion and debate.”

## Gesher – a lifeline in the storm

TALI FEINBERG

More than 60 South African businesses have been given a lifeline and almost 1 000 employees still have their jobs because of loans given by the Gesher Small Business Relief Fund (Gesher) since it launched early in May. A further 60 loans are at various stages of application.

“It certainly will assist my business as soon as international travel resumes and with the transition into a post-COVID-19 scenario. Your [Gesher’s] response and assistance was sympathetic to the difficult situation we find ourselves in the tourism industry,” said one borrower, the sole proprietor of a business with R1 million in annual turnover.

“It’s remarkable what Gesher is doing to keep business afloat,” said another business owner who has 12 employees and R5 million in annual turnover. “This whole process is overwhelming, and I have very mixed emotions – so much gratitude that this is available, but shattered that I’m in a situation in which I need to ask for help when I have always been independent. Having said that, by helping my business survive, I in turn can keep others afloat and pay it forward.”

Gesher (meaning “bridge” in Hebrew) was established in May 2020 to assist majority-Jewish-owned SMMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) across South Africa, which were intrinsically viable prior to the crisis and have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. An independent entity in conjunction with the Chevrah Kadisha (the Chev), its cornerstone grants are from the Donald Gordon Foundation and another foundation.

To date, it has received expressions of interest from more than 400 SMMEs across South Africa, with a total loan requirement of R120 million. These businesses employ about 5 000 individuals, and by extension, support roughly 50 000 dependants.

“People who have been in business for many years have seen a disappearance of revenue overnight. Even after being adaptable and creative to try to stay afloat, they have had to tap into savings to pay salaries, have maxed out their credit cards, have overdrafts at their limit, and have downgraded their medical aids,” said Gesher Fund executive Bernard Berger. “These are people who have always been independent, and have given tzedakah [charity] for years, and now need bridging finance to get to the other side of this crisis.”

While privately funded initiatives were established to try assist businesses, these initiatives were overwhelmed by applications, and their funds quickly depleted. Government initiatives such as the TERS-UIF have been slow to release funds, and many applicants have struggled to access the funds required.

It has also been reported that the government-backed COVID Loan Guarantee Scheme specifically targeted at SMMEs has to date advanced a very

small proportion of the R200 billion available, and many SMMEs have been unable to access these funds.

“The primary aim of Gesher is to ensure the long-term viability of majority-Jewish-owned SMMEs, provide a lifeline for their owners and employees, and ensure that they survive this pandemic and continue being productive members of the Jewish community and the wider South African society,” said Berger.

Interest-free loans of R50 000 to R750 000 are issued for 12 to 36 months to fund short-term, COVID-19-related working and operating capital requirements including staff salaries and wages.



“We have assisted businesses from most industries. These include medical, legal, architectural, and veterinary practices, electricians, mechanics, security, audio services, restaurants, accommodation, and manufacturing. Very few industries have been shielded from this pandemic. Even those which were able to operate through the lockdown faced a significant loss of turnover as businesses were closed, or in the case of, say, electricians, people didn’t want them coming into their homes,” he said.

“The real irony is that in the face of a health crisis, the medical profession has been particularly hard-hit as the sick have avoided seeing doctors unless absolutely necessary. I think the cases which stand out most are those businesses in events and tourism. Bookings have been cancelled and demand has disappeared. They now face a very uncertain future.”

He notes that some Jewish businesses aren’t utilising what Gesher offers even if they qualify for a loan. “It’s very difficult for us to pinpoint why this is. We believe it has been well-publicised, but given the disruptions to our lives, the stresses so many people face, and the complete information overload we all have around COVID-19, there are certainly business owners who aren’t aware of Gesher.

“Some people have also been overwhelmed by the application process, and/or the information requirements, but we are here to help, and have worked with applicants to understand their businesses and how we can work around any gaps in their information,” he said.

“I certainly hope that pride doesn’t play a part in a decision whether or not to apply. This isn’t a ‘black swan’ event, as they described the 2009 global financial crisis, it’s a flock of black swans!

No business had anything like this in its scenario planning. At Gesher, we are keen to ensure that every viable business survives this disruptive period.

“By supporting these businesses, we have helped to fill a funding gap, and hopefully, we have provided the business owners with the financial resources required to see this through,” he said. “But that’s just one aspect. These businesses employ 1 000 people [more than 10% of whom are Jewish], who support 10 000 dependants. That’s a lot of people being fed, clothed, housed, and schooled. Almost every business has been faced with the difficult choice of retrenching employees as one way to stem their cashflow crunch. Businesses which have approached Gesher now have the resources to hold out that much longer.

“And then there’s the tax generated by these businesses, from VAT, to payroll, and income tax, so the economic impact can be measured on multiple levels. If you know of a business which might meet our criteria and is at risk as a result of COVID-19, it should be encouraged to consider Gesher.”

The organisation operates with just two part-time executives and a team of more than 50 volunteers. Every application for funding has to be properly assessed to ensure that it meets the terms of Gesher’s mandate.

“The time and effort invested by these volunteers is substantial, and there’s no way we could have achieved anything near this level of activity without this support base,” said Berger. “We also work closely with the Chev, which has provided our administrative and financial backbone, allowing us to get up and running in record time.”

Gesher has had to turn away applicants which didn’t meet its requirements. “In some instances, these were businesses which we assessed as not viable pre-COVID-19, already facing significant difficulties, and needing further capitalisation or other measures. This isn’t part of our mandate. Some were start-ups with no meaningful track record. Others weren’t viewed as businesses. Anyone declined the opportunity to progress at Gesher was referred to the COVID-19 relief programmes of the Rambam Trust, the Chev, or Jewish Community Services.

“We also turned away applicants for whom Gesher wasn’t last-resort funding. We have assisted a few applicants in obtaining bank funding, in doing so releasing our resources for applicants for whom bank funding isn’t available.

“Given the funding structure of the South African Jewish community, including schools, welfare, aged care, medical, security, and shuls, it’s imperative to ensure the continuity of these SMMEs, their owners, and employees,” Berger said.

“The pressure has somewhat eased, but the hard work now begins,” said a borrower with 10 employees and R1.5 million in annual turnover. “Business will never be the same, and to adapt in the right direction will be the challenge.”



# Young, healthy and on a ventilator: coming back from COVID-19

TALI FEINBERG

“The doctor told us that my brother was the most serious case in the intensive care unit (ICU),” says Justin Sandler, whose sibling, 36-year-old Glenn Sandler, almost lost his life to coronavirus, even though he is young and has no comorbidities.

Over the past month, the Sandlers stood by helplessly as their son and brother lay in a coma and on a ventilator in a Cape Town ICU, battling to survive. “We were told by a doctor that he had a 50/50 chance of surviving. The doctor said he had never seen such bad lung damage in a patient his age in his whole career,” says Justin.

He wants to share his family’s story to emphasise that the virus can viciously attack young, healthy people, and that they need to take as many precautions as those in high-risk categories. He also wants to be a source of support for others who may have family members fighting to survive.

It all started when the family’s domestic helper, Nomhle ‘Beauty’ Nxokomba, arrived on Glenn’s doorstep at the beginning of June. She had worked for the family for 37 years, and loved Glenn and Justin like her own children. In turn, they saw her as their “second mother”, and she continued to work in their homes when they grew up.

While the brothers told her to stay home and continued to pay her salary, she missed them terribly, and when lockdown restrictions were loosened at the beginning of June, she decided to visit Glenn. When she arrived, she wasn’t feeling well, and Glenn said she should stay at his home that night. He then sent her home in an Uber with a promise that she would see a doctor.

But she never did. “Two days later, her son Vuyo called me, and told me she had passed away. I was blindsided – it was so sudden. I loved her as much as my parents,” says Justin, who soon realised she had succumbed to COVID-19. “She had hypertension and diabetes. When we saw how the virus later attacked my brother, we realised she hadn’t stood a chance.”

As his family grieved the loss,

Glenn began to feel ill. Within a day, he had crackling in his lungs, a clear sign of pneumonia. He developed a fever, and lost his sense of taste. But most of all, he was struggling to breathe.

Justin took his brother to the hospital in the middle of the night, but after hours of tests, they sent him home. Scans of his lungs were clear, and his oxygen levels weren’t low enough. His age and health meant he wasn’t considered at risk of declining.

His COVID-19 test came back positive. After another night of struggling to breathe, the brothers returned to hospital, but were again sent home. “Essentially, they can’t admit you unless you are on death’s door because there are so few beds,” says Justin.

By now, Glenn had acquired an oximeter, which showed that he was borderline hypoxic. For the third time, he went to hospital, and was finally admitted to a COVID-19 ward.

“It would ebb and flow. He would say he was feeling better, but then at night, he felt like he was drowning. He went from oxygen prongs, to an oxygen mask, to a ‘re-breather’ bag attached to the mask,” says Justin. When Glenn had to go to the bathroom, he had to remove the device and felt like he was holding his breath underwater. Essentially, he couldn’t breathe without assistance.

Then, within a 12-hour period, his oxygen levels declined further, and his body went into a “cytokine storm”, where it was essentially attacking itself. X-rays showed his lungs were in a “whiteout”, filled with fluid and breaking down. He now had acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) and was rushed to the ICU. “The doctor told me he was

now extremely worried, and hadn’t seen this level of COVID-19 trauma before,” says Justin.

Glenn had a test to evaluate the



Glenn Sandler and his late domestic worker Nomhle ‘Beauty’ Nxokomba

level of blood clots in his lungs. “A level of ‘1 000’ is bad, and his was 2 000,” says Justin. “He was put on a higher dose of anti-coagulation medication, and then, in a gasping voice, he told me that they were going to put him on a ventilator. We told him we loved him,” says Justin, his voice filled with emotion.

“The doctors said there was a high chance he might not survive. I had hope, but it was like a slow-motion car crash. He had been drowning slowly for a week. I wouldn’t wish it on my worst enemy,” he says. Glenn says he has no memory of this time.

Now on a ventilator and in a coma, Glenn continued to decline. There was discussion about putting him on ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation), which uses a machine to oxygenate blood outside of the body, taking the strain off the lungs. As a young and healthy individual, Glenn had the right criteria for ECMO. There was only one ECMO machine available in Cape Town, and it would be extremely dangerous to move him, but the family were willing to risk it to save his life.

Then, in a miraculous turn of events, hours before he would have been moved to go onto ECMO, Glenn began to stabilise. The doctors had started to treat him

with an experimental steroid, anti-coagulant, and immunosuppressant drug. They also put Glenn in a “prone” position (on his stomach) for 22 hours a day, to allow the blood to move towards the less damaged front section of his lungs.

Together with the drug, it prevented further decline. But Glenn wasn’t out of the woods, possibly needing a tracheotomy to help him breathe. This was because extended use of a ventilator can permanently damage the trachea. Yet no doctor in Cape Town would perform a tracheotomy because it causes a “virus explosion” that makes it much more likely the doctor will contract COVID-19. “It was scary and sad that no doctor would risk this,” says Justin.

Just as quickly as he declined, Glenn began to improve. He was soon taken off the ventilator, and woken from the coma. He was given oxygen prongs, and moved to a general

ward. Within days, he was feeding himself and talking. He says he has a long road to full recovery, which will include rehabilitation and physiotherapy. He still has a cough, his voice is hoarse, and he is very weak, but he has no long-term physical or neurological damage. He attributes his recovery to his family, his medical team, the nursing staff, and even his colleagues. “It really was a team effort.”

The brothers hope Glenn’s story will make other young, healthy people aware that COVID-19 can attack their bodies just as badly as older people or those with comorbidities. “Please take it seriously,” says Justin.

“You may not be as lucky as he was to actually get a bed. Glenn is you. This couldn’t be any closer. Every time you visit a friend or see your parents, you are playing the lottery with your life,” he says. “There isn’t much we can control, but do your part in what you can control. Yesterday [Thursday 9 July], he was allowed to go home. It’s so surreal. We will be forever grateful that he survived.”

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# SA embassy in Israel downgrade still in limbo

>>>Continued from page 2

great importance to the community. “Last year, the embassy supported our efforts in repatriating a deceased young Jewish community member who passed away in Israel to ensure that his return was expedited for Jewish burial. Last month, the SAJBD worked closely with the South African embassy in the repatriation of South Africans who had been waiting to return home during COVID-19,” says SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn.

“It’s of great comfort and importance for Jewish and other South Africans to know that at times of crisis, our government has the ability and capacity to support all South Africans irrespective of our religion. To not have a functioning embassy in a country regularly frequented by all of our citizens, be they Jewish, Christian, and other is detrimental to us all,” she says.

“The SAJBD reiterates its stance that an embassy downgrade is a punitive measure that will in no way impact the Israeli-Palestinian issue and neither will it bring the two parties closer to a sustainable peace. All it will do is give a clear message that the rights of South African citizens are less important than the rights of Palestinians.

“We see it as hypocritical, as it’s inconsistent with the way in which the ANC seeks to engage with other countries.

Practically, it would also affect South Africa’s trade, cultural, educational, and economic growth,” said Kahn. “There’s no upside to a downgrade. All the downgrade will achieve is to further harden positions and exclude us from peace-building at a time when our experience of dialogue and negotiation is needed globally.”

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, said, “It’s vital that South Africa retains her embassy in Israel in order to affirm her international credibility in the Middle East alongside her fellow BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa] partners, as well as to be seen to be a role player in discussions between Israel and the Palestinians.

“Closing the South African embassy ostensibly to show support for the Palestinians will only harm South African interests, and will be of no assistance to the Palestinians. On a practical level, South Africa’s political posturing should not prejudice the tens of thousands of Christian and Jewish South African citizens who travel to Israel each year and require consular assistance.”

The *SA Jewish Report* sent questions to the minister, but they weren’t answered in spite of repeated requests for a response over a number of days.

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# Beth Din puts decision to donate organs in our hands

JORDAN MOSHE

The South African Beth Din is about to change its law concerning organ transplants, making it possible for people to donate organs in a way that satisfies Jewish law.

Until now, the Beth Din forbade Jewish people from donating organs, but it has spent almost a year deliberating and consulting with doctors across the community to change its policy.

The Beth Din will neither support nor oppose live organ transplants, but it will from now on assist those wanting to donate organs halachically.

“The Beth Din has taken a historical decision to allow the community to make the choice,” said Dayan Rabbi Shlomo Glicksberg on Wednesday evening last week. “Our role is to supervise the system, and help people when they make the decision for themselves.”

Glicksberg joined surgical gastroenterologist Dr Dean Lutrin in an online presentation about carrying out organ donations in South Africa within the framework of halacha. The session was facilitated by the Academy of Jewish Thought & Learning.

It marks a significant shift from the Beth Din’s previous approach, said Glicksberg.

“The fact that we did something for the past 50 years doesn’t mean we need to do it for the next 50 years,” he said. “Rabbi Kurstag and our other dayanim made the decision to give people a choice.

“We consulted leading rabbis in Israel, and reached a decision based on the needs of our community within the South African context.”

Because life is considered sacred in Judaism, organ transplantation has frequently inspired controversy where live transplants of an organ like the heart is concerned. Determining when

a person is actually dead forms a central part of the discussion.

“There’s a spectrum of what it means to be dead,” said Lutrin.

He said that the 19th century innovation of artificially keeping a heart beating demanded that medical science devise a way to determine the point at which a person is deemed dead. This led to the development of the concept of brain death.

**“The Beth Din has taken a historical decision to allow the community to make the choice. Our role is to supervise the system, and help people when they make the decision for themselves.”**

“The development of this concept happened in parallel to development of organ transplantation,” said Lutrin. “The first kidney was successfully transplanted in 1954, and a heart in 1967.”

“When Chris Barnard removed that heart, he waited for it to stop beating before he touched it. This led to a lot of debate about what dead actually meant. Is one with a beating heart considered dead? Asked differently: is one who is decapitated with a beating heart considered dead?”

Lutrin said severe head injury which causes brain death created a discussion which established death according to neurological criteria and tests. These include a neurological function test using electrodes to detect brain activity, as well as an angiogram to determine whether blood is

flowing to the brain. If neither of these show activity, a person is medically considered dead.

“Brain death means brain-stem death,” said Lutrin. “The stem is the most basic part of the brain which controls breathing, reflexes, and heart rate. We want to establish that the stem is dead, that a person isn’t breathing or reacting to stimuli.”

Because certain organs require a live donor in order to remain viable for transplantation, determining whether a person is dead is a concern.

“Certain organs can be taken even after the heart stops beating, including skin and even corneas,” said Lutrin. “However, the most lifesaving organs need to be taken from one whose heart is still beating.”

For this reason, it has previously proven challenging to reconcile the procedure with Jewish law.

“Whether the donation of organs after death is allowed is a controversial halachic argument”, said Glicksberg. “It’s prohibited to benefit from the deceased, and to disgrace a body after death.”

However, not even these prohibitions stand against the precious mitzvah of saving a person’s life, he said. This makes determining the moment of death a crucial point from a halachic perspective.

“Authorities have discussed the question for decades,” Glicksberg said. “Does the heart or brain determine the moment of death?”

“If it’s the heart, then that’s the end of the conversation, and it can’t be used once it’s stopped. But if it’s the brain, once the brain stem has collapsed and we can confirm that, then you can still use the beating heart for transplant in an acceptable way.”

Glicksberg said that when heart transplants were first developed, rabbinic leaders Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and former

Israeli Chief Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman forbade the procedure, arguing that it was a double murder of donor and recipient.

The position has changed considerably since then, with the halachic argument stating that death is determined when a person stops breathing. This, said Glicksberg, can be determined by proof of total brain death, including the brain stem, which controls independent breathing.

Subsequently, a council of Israeli rabbis and doctors took a decision in 1987 that what determines the death is the brain, not the heart. Still, little changed in practice.

“It was a historical decision in 1987, but nothing really changed,” said Glicksberg. “Israeli hospitals were instructed to conduct certain tests to ensure that someone is truly dead. The council also said that they needed to ensure that a rabbi was involved in the decision, but the hospitals refused, and everything collapsed.”

In 2008, the law was amended, forcing hospitals to accept the involvement of three rabbis (one of them a licenced doctor) to decide whether a person was dead before proceeding with a transplant.

Glicksberg visited Israel to consult numerous authorities, among them Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg (a member of the 1987 council) to ask for guidance on the subject within the South African context.

“Many religious figures continue to oppose the ruling of 1987, holding that the use of organs from a person whose heart is still beating is forbidden,” said Glicksberg. “This means that there are two approaches that the diaspora can adopt.”

Consequently, the Beth Din took the decision not to rule in favour of either side of the argument, and instead opted to allow South African Jewry to make the decision on an individual basis.

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# From the pens of the second generation

The influence of the late President Nelson Mandela is felt by all in South Africa. Children of his close friends and comrades speak about his impact on their lives.

## Encounters with Nelson

PERSONAL STORY

NIC WOLPE

11 February 1990. We are sitting in the lounge watching the release of Nelson Mandela from prison on TV after serving 27 years of a life sentence for believing in the ideals of a free, non-racial, non-sexist, just, and democratic South Africa for all.

As Mandela with Winnie alongside him take those final few steps to freedom, the world is witnessing a seminal moment in 20th century history and a seismic shift in South Africa’s political landscape and order. A change that, just a few years earlier, appeared highly improbable.

We applaud, and my father and mother are radiant with happiness. The struggle they both dedicated their lives to in their own way had born fruit. Mandela’s release represented the beginning of a new era in South Africa’s long, contentious, and painful history.

While we exult in the moment, the thought of what next hangs heavy in the air. The conversation turns to it. What does this mean for the family? My two sisters, Peta and Tessa, both have apprehensive looks on their faces. The reality of what it means sinks in without having to be said.

It’s a bitterly cold February evening, darkness has descended, and as I open the front door, I see my mother on the phone and hear her say with elation in her voice, “Oh Nicholas has just walked in from work, would you like to say

hello?” and thrusts the phone into my hand. I put my hand over the mouthpiece and with a look of bewilderment, ask who it is. My mother mouths, “Nelson”. I feel my body freeze and I become extremely nervous, and I wonder whether I’ll be able to speak. I hear myself say hello, and ask Mandela how he is, which seems such a frivolous, idiotic, and banal thing to say to a person who has just been released from prison after serving 27 years.

He doesn’t respond, but says, “How are you? I remember you were very ill as a baby. You caused your mother many hours of anguish. Tell me what you’ve been up to.” As I’m telling him, I feel a sense of bewilderment and amazement. He’s interested only in hearing about me. After a few minutes, I say, “It was an honour talking to you,” but Mandela responds by saying, “The honour was all mine.”

I pass the phone back to my mother, and literally in a daze, go through to the kitchen where my father is standing. I say in a stunned tone, “I have just spoken to Nelson.” My mother follows a moment later, and we sit down to dinner as if nothing out of the ordinary has just happened.

At work the next morning, a colleague asks what I was up to the night before, to which I respond, “I spoke on the phone to my leader, Nelson Mandela.” There is silence for a moment, then one of my colleagues

quirks back, “So did I, I spoke to President Bush.” They all laugh, and dismiss my comment as a joke.

Years later, when I’m well into running Liliesleaf, my cell phone rings when I’m in Cape Town. It’s Jakes Gerwel. He informs me that Mandela will be coming through to Liliesleaf to see the place and hear more about the Liliesleaf Legacy Project.

Mandela’s visit to Liliesleaf is going very well. We have spent the first hour or so along with Andrew Mlangeni sitting in the lounge of the main house, where I briefed him on the project and our plans for the site. He is extremely attentive and interested in what we are planning to do.

As we are heading up the path to the “museum room”, Mandela suddenly stops and in an excited and expectant voice, turns to me and asks if I have found his gun. I’m surprised and caught off guard by his statement.

Without thinking I say, “I’ve been meaning to ask you where you hid it.” He turns back to face the house and with both hands, gesticulates towards the back of the main house, saying, “Somewhere over there.” It’s obvious from the tone and enthusiasm in his voice that the gun has significant meaning. As we start to make our way up to the “museum room”, he turns to me and says I must find it, as if it were a command.

To date, the gun has yet to be discovered.

• Nic Wolpe is the son of Harold Wolpe who, along with Nelson Mandela, was one of the leaders

of uMkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress, arrested at Liliesleaf farm in 1963. Nic is the chief executive of Liliesleaf farm.



## Nat and Nelson, friends in law

PERSONAL STORY

ADINA BREGMAN

Nat (Bregman’s) *yartzeit* on the 19th of Tammuz and Nelson Mandela’s birthday are a few days apart. My father passed away in July 2011, a sad day for my family. Reflecting on his memorable achievements, I begin to understand his enormous compassion and generous spirit, which nurtured an enduring friendship.

Dad, when we were youngsters, enthralled us with stories of a fighter for the freedom of his people. Mandela was locked away in a far-off-prison and promised Nat that on his release one day, he would become the first black prime minister with my father in his cabinet.

In those apartheid days, Madiba was a mystery, and only on attending the University of Witwatersrand in the late-1980s did the realisation dawn as to the significance of Nat’s jailed friend.

On visiting our New York family In 1975, Nat arranged a private audience with the Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, in Crown Heights. The

visit would affirm his newfound commitment to Judaism, countless hours studying and attending shiurs, learning Hebrew, and reading Torah.

The former communist was intent on learning more about *yiddishkeit*. Nat, mom, brothers, and sister all met the Rebbe, and each received a dollar to give to charity with the instruction for my dad “never to retire”. Nat practised law for 59 years, working until the day he passed away.

A few years later, my father, asked to do so by the Rebbe, led an initiative as a representative of the Chabad community, when he wrote to Mandela on 25 October 1994, by then president of South Africa.

The Lubavitch Foundation throughout the world has, for many years, presented a menorah, the symbol of freedom from oppression, to the leaders of a number of countries and enclosed “please find” photographs and comments depicting the presentation of the menorah to various heads of state.

Chabad made the gift of a menorah to Presidents Bush and Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, as well as the governor-general of Australia. Chabad offered Madiba the same: the gift of a menorah In 1994.

This was the opportunity to rekindle their friendship after a 40-year hiatus. As youngsters, they spent time together

as articulated law clerks at the same law firm. Nat, a young man of 19, and Mandela, slightly older, sat at adjacent desks studying and practising law.

Their friendship grew during the war years. They would discuss the war looking at maps and recording the planes shot down in the Battle of Britain. Mandela honoured my father, calling him his first white friend.

He recalled sharing a sandwich with Nat, and dad’s efforts to sway him to join the Communist Party. Nat explained to his attentive friend that communism was where everything was fair and equal like half the sandwich he offered him. Madiba was sceptical, as he was quite religious at the time, and was wary of the atheism of the communist movement.

Soon after his release, Madiba called my dad three times to ask him for a reunion dinner for their old law firm. Nat arranged the dinner across the road from the Carlton Hotel in a private dining room after locating Laz Sidelsky and Anita



Adina Bregman and her dad, Nat, with Mandela and Anita Goodman, a typist who worked with them at the law firm

Goodman. I was fortunate to have the honour of accompanying my father to the reunion. It delighted dad that Mandela, on entering the room, cried out, “Natie!” and gave him a huge hug. The dinner was an incredible experience, with all the waiters paying homage to Mandela sitting at the head of the table.

He retained fond memories of his colleagues, and his experience of sharing meals and idealism with Nat. Calling Sidelsky “boss”, and joking with his friends, the three-hour meal passed as if it were minutes.

Then, as quickly as he had arrived, he was off to another meeting, and a flight to Holland the next day. Nat paved the way for Madiba’s enduring affection for the Jewish community, and the belief in a South Africa for all its people.

• Adina Bregman is a respected architect and the daughter of Nat Bregman who was Mandela’s “first white friend”, having met as young legal clerks at Witkin, Sidelsky and Eidelman.

## David and me

PERSONAL STORY

PAUL GOLDBREICH

I first met David (aka Nelson Mandela) when my family moved from the Joburg suburb of Parktown to the sprawling farmland of Rivonia. Liliesleaf was the name of the farm, and it was to be used by the banned African National Congress high command as a hideout for its most senior members and ultimately the birth place of uMkhonto we Sizwe, the ANC’s armed wing.

My father, Arthur Goldreich, was a designer and an artist of some regard and repute; my mother was a nursery school teacher. I had an older brother, Nick, and I was known as either “Pape” or “naughty boy” by Mandela, whom I knew as David.

We moved to Liliesleaf farm in 1961. In July 1963, the farm was raided by the South African security services and the ANC high command, including my parents, was swept away and imprisoned. Until that moment, Liliesleaf served as an idyll for our family, and at times for the Mandela family too. Madiba described Liliesleaf in 2005 as unique and “significant because it was a place of intellectual, ideological, strategic military discourse and engagement”.

Of course, to me and my brother Nick, David and his wife, Winnie, and their children were nothing other than friends and accomplices in our vast and exciting world. David was always on call to us, other than the times when he was surprisingly meeting with my father and other grownups, both white and black. He seemed to carry himself in a way that led the other men and women to treat him as if he were the boss of the farm.

There were times when I heard him shout, and other times when I heard him laugh with the other people on the farm.

There were very special moments we spent with David alone without any other grownups. In the afternoons

after school, he would take us away from the farmhouse, walking through the fields and down to the river at the bottom of the farm. He always carried a rifle with him, and we would spend what seemed like hours trying to shoot snakes and other bothersome animals. He taught us lots about animals, particularly snakes, which he didn’t like. He told us about his childhood, and the hunting he did with his friends.

On one occasion, he stood with my mother and me under one of the many trees in the garden, and raised his rifle to his shoulder and pulled the trigger. The pellet hit a little bird in the tree, and it fell to the ground. I was very upset, and chastised him for his actions. I said, “David you shouldn’t have shot that bird. Its mother will be very sad”. At the time he laughed, and then tried to comfort me.

I was very angry with David, but it didn’t last long. He was so kind to me, and played so many games with me. He was a wonderful friend and then on one day, Nick and David’s son, Makgatho, were routing through some magazines in the lounge and they found a magazine called *Drum* with David’s picture on the front. They showed me, and I was speechless. It said his name wasn’t David, but someone called Nelson Mandela. They took it to David/Nelson, and he took Nick and Makgatho for a walk, and when they came back, they seemed to have suddenly become much more grown up.

• Paul Goldreich is the son of Arthur Goldreich, and artist and designer who was in the leadership of the ANC’s armed wing, uMkhonto we Sizwe, arrested at Liliesleaf Farm in 1963. Paul is a Jungian psychoanalyst working with trauma survivors.





# Maisels and his ‘most famous client’

PERSONAL STORY

HELEN MAISELS TRISK



It was to my late father, IA (Isie) Maisels QC, that Mandela turned to when he was released from detention in February 1990. Mandela wanted to reach out to the Jewish community because he was concerned that the African National Congress’s (ANC’s) approaches to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation might have offended the Jewish community.

My father’s response was simple. “This was not the case at all,” he said. It was understandable that a movement fighting for democracy in its own country would go where support was offered. This was Isie’s response to Mandela on the telephone, and he then arranged a meeting for Mandela with the leadership of the Jewish community. That meeting led to a relationship of mutual co-operation and respect.

After it – and unquestionably it was historic – the *Washington Post* published an interview with Isie in which he told the newspaper, “Mr Mandela assured those present that neither he nor the ANC had sought to cause offense to the Jewish people and [he asserted] his own, and the ANC’s unwavering opposition to antisemitism and their appreciation of the efforts of many Jewish people in the common effort to bring justice and peace to all peoples of South Africa.”

Isie’s relationship with Mandela dated back to the mid-fifties, when Isie was leader of the defence team in the celebrated Treason Trial (1956-1961). Mandela was one of 156 accused in the trial, and Isie quipped, “He was my most famous client.” All of the accused in the Treason Trial were acquitted of high treason.

Africa. In later years, he became the first South African to be appointed a governor of the Jewish Agency.

Mandela knew of Isie’s commitment, both to the South African Jewish community – something he shared with my late mother, Muriel – and to broader Zionist ideals, hence his telephone call to Isie in February 1990.

Our family treasures a Rosh Hashanah card signed by Mandela (on behalf of the Treason Trial accused) in 1960. It goes alongside two other unique pieces of memorabilia: a 1961 letter signed by all the Treason Trial accused when they heard that Isie had accepted an appointment to Federation (of Rhodesia) Bench, a reproduction of which hangs in the lobby of Maisels Chambers in Sandton, and while in Pollsmoor Prison, Mandela sent Isie an 80th birthday card saying, “Take it Easy Isie!”

At a dinner for Mandela that took place at my parents’ house in early 1994, at which my husband and I were present, Isie, at Mandela’s request, introduced him to the then Israeli Ambassador Alon Liel and his wife.

It was on that night that Isie, then 88 years old and about ten years after he left active Jewish leadership but still influential, arranged for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Botswana and Israel.

It was a fascinating evening, and I asked Mandela how he knew that one day he and the ANC would triumph. His answer was simple, “History taught me that!”

Mandela exuded an extraordinary aura. In his presence, you knew that you were in the company of a great leader. Much like my late father, he was an austere man, but kind and courteous with a dry sense of humour and a twinkle in his eye.

Isie died in December 1994 aged 89. Mandela came to prayers at my parents’ house, where my husband gave him one of Isie’s yarmulkes. He could not attend the funeral (Sisulu attended in his place), and sent apologies to my mother.

Some years later, Mandela spoke about that yarmulke. Our family continued to have contact with Mandela through a book launch of the late Rabbi Cyril Harris’s biography, at which Mandela told our son, Simon, then aged five years old that he wanted to tell him all about his famous grandfather.

The naming ceremony of the advocate’s chambers in March 2002 to Maisels Chambers was performed by Mandela who said of Isie in his speech to the large assembled crowd of dignitaries, judges, advocates, and attorneys, “He defended us at considerable cost to himself. He was a giant of the legal profession, respected and admired as a great lawyer. Let us honour him for his leadership and courage and generosity of spirit ... only someone of the calibre of Isie Maisels could help us go forward. He served justice with distinction. His name will always be remembered by all our people.”

- *Helen Maisels Trisk is the daughter of Isie Maisels, who headed up the defence team during the 1956-1961 Treason Trial. She is a consultant and the vice president of WIZO South Africa.*



President Nelson Mandela unveils the plaque at the dedication of the new Maisels Chambers in 2002

As a very young child, I remember Mandela coming to our house at 52 Young Avenue, Houghton. He came regularly with Albert Luthuli, ZK Matthews, Walter Sisulu, and others of the ANC leadership to consult Isie, often over lunch at home. My father spoke of them all with great admiration. These were formidable men who would lead the country one day, he said.

Growing up as the youngest of four siblings, we were all exposed first-hand then and for many years to come to the iniquities of the apartheid regime that these outstanding leaders and the people that they led had to endure.

This awareness coupled with both my parents’ active involvement in the Jewish community was a unique privilege.

Mandela had a history of dealings with Jewish lawyers, but none of them was as actively engaged in the Jewish community as my father was. Isie, at the same time as running not only this trial but an extraordinarily busy practice as the pre-eminent advocate of his day, still managed to become the leader of every single major Jewish organisation in South

# The Mandela I knew



## BENJAMIN POGRUND

A few days ago, a friend in London reminded me that statues of two South Africans stand in Parliament Square: Nelson Mandela and Jan Christiaan Smuts. The latter was a renowned statesman on the international stage during the first half of the 20th century; at home, as prime minister, he was a racist upholding white rule. As things are going these days, Smuts’ statue might not remain long. But Mandela will endure as a universal statement of freedom and bringing people together.

No words, big or small, can adequately convey the immensity of his life. Think of a man brought up in a system where the colour of his skin doomed him to inferiority and insult; who was persecuted for striving for human rights, and while serving the punishment of life imprisonment, suffered cruelly from his white jailors.

Yet, after 27 years, this man emerges, not weakened, but strengthened, with forgiveness in his heart and a glittering belief in a colour-free land.

Much is written about this singular man. On the 102nd anniversary of his birth, let me offer a few personal memories which go back to 1957, when I first met him after moving from Cape Town to Johannesburg. He was head of the then Transvaal province of the African National Congress (ANC). But not in the government’s eyes, because he was banned from membership of the ANC, and not allowed to speak or write in public. The ANC’s policy was, “We stand by our leaders”, so he was a leader behind the scenes.

I went to speak to him at the sparse lawyers’ offices he shared with his partner, Oliver Tambo, on the first floor of Chancellor House at the bottom end of Fox Street. Our meetings were short because he was an accused in the Treason Trial, which ran from 1956 to 1960, and he spent many weary days attending court in Pretoria, with little time left for his attorney’s practice.

The next year, I was on the *Rand Daily Mail* (*RDM*), and reported on Mandela as a lawyer in the Magistrate’s Court building across the street from his office. White magistrates visibly struggled to maintain basic civility – some couldn’t hide their hostility – as they confronted the shocking – to them – unusualness of a black lawyer, especially one who was self-confident and imposing. They didn’t know how to deal with his courtesy.

In 1961, he went underground to organise a country-wide “stay at home”, so called because strikes by black people were illegal. While the police hunted him, we met regularly – usually sitting in my car at night in a dark street on the edge of the city centre – as he briefed me about his plans, enabling the *RDM* to keep the public informed.

The strike was only partially successful. Government and business intimidation forced black people back to their jobs. The *RDM* contributed to the failure with inaccurate coverage. That morning, I sat in my office, filled with misery about what my newspaper had done. The phone

rang: it was Mandela, warm and cheery as always, to say he knew it hadn’t been my fault. After months of dangerous work, only to see his hopes and plans dashed, his call was an act of astonishing generosity, and I have never ceased to marvel at it.

That night, he phoned again to tell me that the ANC despaired of non-violent opposition to apartheid. Armed resistance was to come.

What followed is well known. Later in the year, he escaped from the country, returned, was betrayed and arrested, and tried for seeking to overthrow the government. The death sentence loomed because of the atmosphere created in the court by the prosecutor, Percy Yutar. Only international pressure saved Mandela’s life.

What’s usually overlooked now is that for long afterward, he was a forgotten man in the world. The year after his highly reported trial, the *New York Times* carried only one article with the name “Mandela”, about his wife, Winnie. He was a distant hero to black South Africans, but any time the government and most whites thought of him, he was a dangerous terrorist who should have been hanged. To be known as a friend of his (and also of Robert Sobukwe, held in solitary confinement on Robben Island) made me a pariah to many white people.

I gradually learned from prisoners released from the island that Mandela was emerging as the undisputed leader, not only of the ANC but acknowledged to be so by many hundreds from rival anti-apartheid movements.

This was significant because previously, while certainly a leader, he had been seen as rather a playboy: good-looking, charming, married to the glamorous Winnie, living well (or as much as any black person could in the townships), well-dressed, a lawyer, and even owning a car, which few black people did.

Eventually, I saw the change in him for myself. At first, the prisons department barred me, so my contact with Mandela was sporadic and roundabout. But I kept asking to visit him, and finally, early in the 1980s, I was given permission to see him at Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town. There was a condition: I could visit him as a friend, not as a journalist, and had to promise not to write anything. I was the *RDM*’s deputy editor, and had to tell my colleagues that I was going to be Mandela’s first non-family visitor in many years, and it had to be kept secret. They took it well.

The man I met, with a large glass panel between us, was the Mandela I remembered, grey-haired yes, but with the same friendliness, direct speaking, and clear mind. And he was a man of gravitas. I understood the stories about his rise to leadership.

He was also in charge. It was so obvious. The security warder in the room spoke to him with respect. Mandela’s body was in prison, but his mind was free.

- *Benjamin Pogrund’s latest book, ‘Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe: New Reflections’, was published by Jonathan Ball Publishers in November.*



# Novick to launch jets of new airline

PETA KROST MAUNDER



When maverick entrepreneur Gidon Novick, the creator of kulula.com, left the airline industry in 2011, he had no intention of going back. That’s in spite of aviation being in his blood, having grown up as the son of the late Dave Novick who headed Comair, a leading independent South African aviation company, for 51 years.

The airline industry was dinner-table conversation in the Novick household from as far back as Novick could remember, but he left it with no regrets.

Now, almost 10 years later, he’s gearing up to launch a new local airline while the rest of the industry is floundering. As he makes plans for his new brand, South African Airways (SAA) and Comair are in business rescue and may not survive the year. Also, around the world, airlines are battling to survive.

Novick is well aware that it’s a big risk, but he believes “this is the perfect time to start an efficient, flexible airline with shock absorbers and limited overheads”.

Truth is, while it may be risky, there is conviction in the local industry that if anyone can do this, Novick can.

He has a deep understanding of what it would take, having launched the then innovative airline kulula.com in 2001 as a part of the Comair stable. This was the first low-cost airline in South Africa, and was seen to be an exciting disruptor in the industry.

The idea behind launching a new airline, he said, was opportunistic. “The circumstances are such that it’s appealing and timely,” he told the *SA Jewish Report* this week. “Right now, there are a number of unwieldy airlines with lots of inefficiencies and massive overhead and debt. So, they can’t be flexible, and are huge monsters to feed.”

He cites SAA and Comair as two of these. As he watched the two of them imploding, he saw unmistakable opportunities. “SAA isn’t commercially driven, and there are lots of labour inefficiencies, massive debt, and leveraged burdens it cannot support when things turn bad. It has no shock absorbers.”

Meanwhile, the current environment is very attractive, according to Novick. “There are many planes available at great prices to buy or lease, and there are lots

of quality and experienced airline people available and willing to work on a much more flexible and variable basis,” he says. “Also, there are maintenance facilities that are underutilised, and then you also have all the necessary resources available on a flexible basis.”

Add to that Novick’s extensive network of relationships that, he said, surprised him. “I found I had an instant connection and common understanding with people I haven’t spoken to in 10 years.”

He’s aware that airlines will shrink, and there will be a smaller market for a while, but people will eventually want and need to fly again.

There are two main elements to his model. First, keeping things efficient with the cost of production competitively low, with relatively low ticket prices, and then maintaining flexibility to withstand global downturns.

He intends to limit fixed overheads and commitments so that when the organisation doesn’t fly, it doesn’t spend money. “We fly when there are enough people to fly, and we ensure there aren’t lumbering overheads,” he says.

He’s in no rush to launch as right now, few are flying. “We’ll wait most likely until the summer.”

In the meantime, he is spending 20% of his time on this, while running Lucid Ventures, the Section 12J venture-capital fund behind the Home\* Suite Hotels boutique brand. He started this after leaving Discovery, where he was chief executive of Vitality and head of digital for three years after leaving Comair.

As the chairperson of SA Harvest, he is also passionate about the food rescue and distribution platform’s aim to enable all South Africans to have daily access to adequate nutritious food.

And until his airline is up and running, he’s thoroughly enjoying doing the puzzle, and pulling the right pieces together for it. “I’m still unclear about what it will look like exactly, but it will cost less money than most assume,” Novick says.

“Yes, it’s scary, but I guess I’ve become more in tune with managing risk as I get older. I see it as positive. I have a sharper focus and understanding of where things can go wrong, so I’ll spend time and effort in

mitigating this.”

He resonates with the philosophy of Herb Kelleher, the legendary founder of Southwest Airlines, which is to be “flamboyant marketers, but financially conservative”.

At the same time, he taps into the philosophy of another great business leader, Warren Buffett: “Be fearful when others are greedy, and greedy

when others are fearful”.

There are many who are fearful in the travel and tourism industry right now. “We need to have the context that the world isn’t going to end, we will need all these services again, and it’s a good time to take advantage while people’s focus is diverted,” says Novick.

He has secured investment from family and friends particularly because he doesn’t want to ask strangers to take this risk. The reaction of those he approached for funding, he says, was first surprise and, once they had thought it through, they bought into it. “It’s a matter of not being overly bold and mindful, and not throwing too much at it,” he says.

Novick predicts that business travel is going to reduce and become more deliberate, with people opting for online meetings where possible. However, he is bullish about tourism in South Africa drawing people onto flights. He also believes that after lockdown ends, there will be a huge pull to travel again. “One of the biggest desires of the entering middle class is to experience things rather than spend money on products, and that won’t go away.”

Novick says his late father, Dave, who passed away in September last year, is a huge inspiration for him

in this and other ventures. “My dad was always entrepreneurial, but conservative. He would think of the worst-case scenario and work back from there, which is a great way of managing risk. You confront the low road, park it, and build on it. He hated debt, and stayed away from it wherever he could. He believed it was the killer of businesses and personal wealth,” Novick says.

He also realised when his dad died and so many attended his funeral that his business relationships had become personal relationships, and he had managed to build such a breadth of strong long-term relationships. “This is the ingredient to life, and in building a business,” Novick says.

“Business is difficult when addressing hardcore commercial issues, competitors, and other selfish capitalist factors, and it’s hard to be altruistic,” he says. “However, the way forward is to do business, constantly thinking about how to protect and give the customer the best deal. People have a right to demand that companies are better and fairer. While we can’t be naïve, we can be fair, authentic, and open. This builds relationships and trust.”

The new airline will, without doubt, be built on this.

## Motivational singing hits a high note

JORDAN MOSHE

Motivational music videos have become synonymous with the COVID-19 pandemic. From doctors to teachers, song and dance has become a way to raise morale in the face of the dreaded virus.

But how much of an impact do these videos really have? Last Wednesday, the South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE) released #CountOnYou, a music video starring 33 teachers from across the 11 King David schools in recognition of their efforts.

“There are unsung heroes in this pandemic who need to be recognised,” says Daniella Nerwich, SABJE executive head of talent management. “The reopening of schools brought a whole new reality for all teachers, and the way they’ve adapted and taken to the challenge needs to be acknowledged.”

The video was released as a culmination of the SABJE’s campaign to celebrate its educators and acknowledge their tireless efforts. For almost a month, Nerwich and her co-producer, Nikki Richard, worked on the project, scouting out potential singers amongst the staff and compiling the final video.

“They’ve given of themselves and transformed themselves as teachers and people,” says Nerwich. “In the video, there’s a message about honouring teachers for their courage and compassion, something they’ve shown from day one of the pandemic.

“We had a diverse group of participants. Zulu teachers, maths teachers, even Grade R teachers came together in a complex process and produced something special. They were all given the song, and tasked with filming themselves within a teaching scene to recreate the feeling of their environment, and record themselves individually at home.”

To date, the video has had more than 7 400 views, and has garnered tremendous support from the King David community and beyond.

“People are expressing their appreciation for teachers. We’ve spread a positive contagion of acknowledgement,” says Nerwich. “We’ve been inundated with messages

from principals and teachers thanking us for the acknowledgement. Parents have also been very moved, and appreciation for teachers is enhanced in the community.

“Negative things have been replaced with positive sentiments. The video has been shared so many times and has created such a boost for teachers and the broader Jewish community.”

Experts say that the trend of supportive music videos has cultural and psychological underpinnings.

Trend expert Bronwyn Williams says that videos like this are a natural evolution of the physical “celebrate essential workers” trend where people cat-call and parade in the streets and from balconies to “welcome home” essential shift workers.

“Natural evolution is that in our hyper-visual age, we film everything, and we share everything we film to improve our social status,” she says. “Social belonging and sharing



King David teachers united in song

videos supporting essential workers not only makes us look good, but also makes us feel good, like we are doing our bit, even if we are furloughed or working an obviously ‘inessential’ job.”

While they may all seem alike, she says most of the videos are viewed – depending on who posts them – and do have a positive impact.

“[The trend itself] may do less good than actually supporting healthcare workers financially and physically [by engaging in socially responsible behaviour], but the videos do make people feel valued. Depending on the message, some can serve a social good by raising awareness of social issues like the importance of mask wearing or raising funds for a cause, but the social-good component depends on the individual creator and content.”

Continued on page 12>>



**Gesher Small Business Relief Fund** is an independent non-profit company offering medium term interest free loans to majority Jewish owned SMMEs in South Africa. Run in conjunction with the Chevrah Kadisha, and led by over 50 volunteer professionals, the Fund aims to enable viable businesses to endure and survive the Covid-19 pandemic, saving thousands of jobs and sustaining countless families.

## EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Expressions of interest received	Loan value indicated
+400	+R120M

## LOAN APPLICATIONS

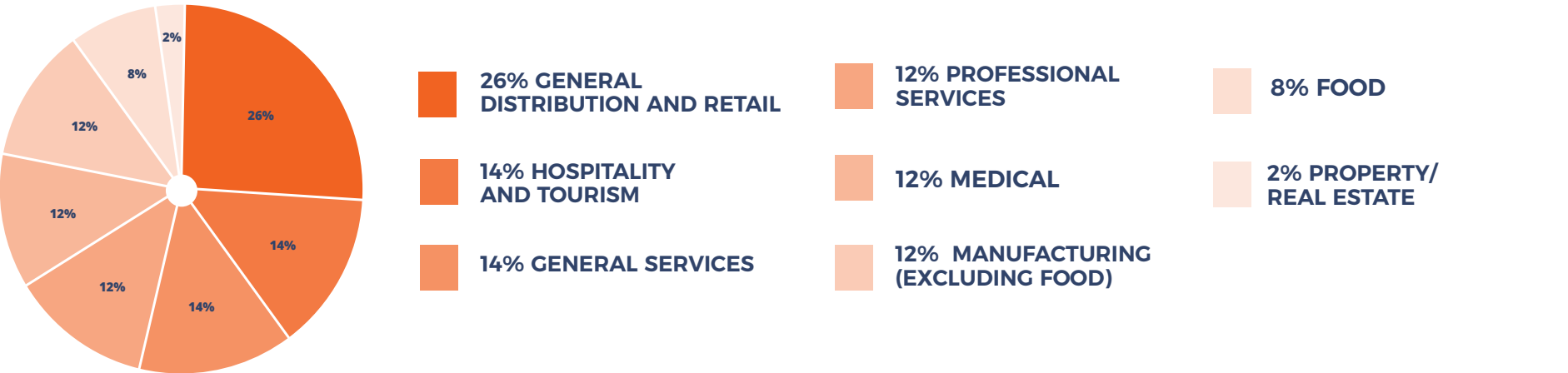
Applications received	Average loan request amount	Average turnover per applicant	Average number of employees per applicant
+140	R300K	R7M	12

## LOAN APPROVALS

Loans granted	Loans currently in evaluation	Maximum loan amount	Employees directly impacted by loans granted	Direct dependants benefited
60	20	R750K	1000	10 000

6%	of loans between R50K - R150K	62%	of loans between R150K - R250K	32%	of loans between R250K - R750K
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28 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	
Average loan term	Average repayment holiday	Nationally representative



Of those surveyed who had not yet sent an application, more than 50% said they intended to still apply.



# Call for Lithuanians to admit role in Holocaust

JORDAN MOSHE

“I want to tell all people whose ancestors left Lithuania how lucky you are. I love my country, but it’s dotted with 234 mass-murder sites. As a Lithuanian, I want to apologise. I’m happy you’re alive, and believe my country should finally recognise what our ancestors did to you.”

With these words, Lithuanian writer and journalist Rūta Vanagaitė addressed more than 200 viewers in a virtual lecture on Tuesday evening this week.

Hosted by the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, she and Nazi hunter and historian, Efraim Zuroff, recounted their quest for the truth about the Holocaust in Lithuania, and the true extent of atrocities committed on Vanagaitė’s native soil.

“Countries are trying to change the narrative of the Holocaust to deny their own roles,” said Zuroff. “This isn’t a matter of Holocaust denial, but distortion. It’s happening around the world, and we have to deal with the truth of collaboration with the Nazis.”

Authors of *Our People: Discovering Lithuania’s Hidden Holocaust*, Zuroff and Vanagaitė make an unlikely pair. Vanagaitė was motivated by her recent discovery that some of her relatives had played a role in the mass murder of Jews. Zuroff has for years worked to bring Lithuanian war criminals to justice

and compel local authorities to tell the truth about the Holocaust in their country.

Together, they have travelled across Lithuania and Belarus in search of neglected graves, interviewed eyewitnesses, and discovered the lost history of hundreds of Jewish communities.

Zuroff said that in every country occupied by or allied with Germany during World War II, the Nazis typically rallied the local population and enlisted its help with carrying out systematic extermination.

“Every person they could convince to join them freed up a German somewhere where they were needed more,” he said. “They were

preparing to launch a mass-murder operation and when they came to Lithuania, they didn’t know the language or the geography.

“Sadly, they often found willing and zealous helpers. These people played a crucial role in implementing the Final Solution and helped to annihilate Jews.”

Collaborators from countries in Eastern Europe differed from those beyond it, he stressed.

“Outside Eastern Europe, locals mostly helped the Nazis by implementing the initial stages of extermination, but their roles ended when the Jews got to the train stations. Within Eastern Europe, however, local

helpers were incorporated into the system of mass annihilation.”

When these countries were liberated by Russian forces and became part of the Soviet Union, communist ideology sought to manipulate certain facts about the war and the genocide.

“Within Eastern Europe, it was never referred to as a world war, but as a great, patriotic war of ideologies,” said Zuroff. “The Soviets had helped the Allied forces defeat the Nazis, and as a result, they got away with making little information about the Holocaust available, and never acknowledging the tragic fate of the Jews.”

Where mention was made of victims who had been murdered, Jews were added to other figures and categorised as victims of fascism.

Said Zuroff, “What does this hide? It conceals the identity of Jewish victims and hides the perpetrators. Not just the Nazis, but locals who collaborated with them.

at sites near their homes, while only 10% were sent to camps later on.

Said Zuroff, “Most of them were killed by Lithuanians, something hard to deal with. On the other hand, countries had to start recognising the Holocaust in order to gain access to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and protect themselves from the Russian Federation. They had to “make nice” with Israel.

“How could they deal with the Holocaust and avoid the truth?”

Sadly, this remains a conundrum today.

“Holocaust-remembrance ceremonies in Lithuania will lament how tragic it was that Nazis came and murdered Jews,” said Zuroff. “The aim is to minimise or hide their own crimes, create false symmetry between communists and Nazis, and insist that killing under communism be called genocide.



Efraim Zuroff and Rūta Vanagaitė

“What we found in Lithuania is sad, disheartening, and infuriating.”

This is why Vanagaitė is determined to continue her work with Zuroff.

“Sometimes Jews think that we Lithuanians are antisemites,” she says. “The truth is we’re indifferent. For almost 65 years, I didn’t care. My children don’t care, nor do my friends. I made it my mission to fight indifference.

“We Lithuanians believe that any one of our people who murdered Jews must have been a degenerate. I learned that they were normal people. I need to write these stories so that people know.

## Israeli minister outlines challenges for safe and just state

STEVEN GRUZD

“Israel is 72 years old, and we can say loud and clear that it’s a much stronger and safer state. We are no longer in 1948, when Israel faced fundamental existential threats from its Arab neighbours and had to fight them to survive. But to maintain the miracle, we need to understand the challenges.”

This was the view of Dr Yoaz Hendel, Israel’s communications minister. He was speaking in a Zoom meeting on the topic, “The reality of the state of Israel in relation to its neighbours.” The event was co-hosted by the Yeshiva Mizrachi Community and the South African Zionist Federation. It was moderated by Dayan Shlomo Glicksberg.

Hendel is a military historian, a well-known media commentator, and a former spokesperson for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He is now the co-leader of the newly-formed Derech Eretz faction (literally “the way of the land”, but it means “proper behaviour”) under the Kachol Lavan (Blue and White) umbrella.

“Today, we are in a different phase, and we are trying to define ourselves,” Hendel said. “What does Zionism mean today? There are huge debates about what it means to be a Jewish state, a democratic state, a safe and just state. I want to feel that what I’m doing, the choices made, and the roads taken are based on justice. The challenge is to find political common ground.

“While Israel faces no external threat, still enemies surround us. Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, and Iran – these aren’t democratic countries we are dealing with. We are on the frontline of a clash of civilisations.

“In terms of peace, I prefer to see it as ‘conservative risk management’. I don’t think I’ll see a peace



Dr Yoaz Hendel

agreement in my lifetime. You have to understand the limitations. Dropping back to the 1967 borders is a disaster for the state of Israel. We have to find a way with the Palestinians to live side by side, without heavy declarations. I believe in annexation of the settlements and the Jordan Valley. But if we annex any part [of the territories], those inhabitants – Arabs and Jews – would have to become full citizens.

“After 52 years, almost half a million Jews live in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]. The settlements, the villages are there to stay. There is huge discussion about the two million Palestinians living there. We don’t want responsibility for Jenin and Ramallah; they must take care of their educational and municipal needs.”

Although not bordering on Israel, Iran is seen as its biggest enemy.

“Iran is responsible for the majority of instability in the Middle East today – in Syria, Yemen, Gaza, and other places. We need to have a strong army and protect ourselves. It’s a big concern for the Israeli cabinet,” Hendel said.

“The nation is preoccupied with how to keep the economy growing in the context of coronavirus. We also had three elections in a year that were all about Netanyahu and his legal problems. I was one of those pushing for a unity government [joining the two major blocs of Likud and Kachol Lavan] for the good of Israel.”

In his portfolio of communications, Hendel is at the centre of efforts to spread information and communications technology (ICT) – including fibre and 5G – throughout the length and breadth of Israel. This will ensure that everyone is well connected even if they live on Israel’s borders. “Technology is a way to spread Zionism and values,” Hendel said. And, telemedicine has been used extensively to treat patients with COVID-19.

Hendel’s message to the South African Jewish community is to take care of one another, make aliyah if possible, and strengthen connections to Israel.

“Why didn’t they want to tell the truth? They didn’t want to acknowledge the Jews, nor do anything to recognise Jewish peoplehood.”

Any acknowledgement of guilt would also undermine the bonds created by socialism, a union with which many Jews were affiliated.

“If they were bound through communism, how could Ukrainians murder their Jewish neighbours?” asked Zuroff. “It didn’t fit the narrative, so it was only in 1989 when the Soviet Union collapsed that the truth of what happened could be revealed and countries could face the reality that their own people had been among the murderers.”

More than 220 000 Jews lived under Nazi occupation in Lithuania, 212 000 of which were killed. Ninety percent of them were shot

## Motivational singing hits a high note

>>>Continued from page 10

The psychological impact of these videos is also considerable, says psychologist David Abrahamsohn.

“The situation we all find ourselves in is complicated and filled with anxiety and uncertainty,” he says. “These music videos are about creating happiness in people’s lives, a moment of togetherness, even though we are physically apart.

“It’s clear that music is a powerful way to boost mood and foster a sense of community. The sense of community and togetherness is one of the most important factors that’s going to get us all through this.”

Abrahamsohn says that most people have an intuitive understanding of the power of music, and there is now considerable scientific research to confirm this. “Music can be a powerful resource for the human spirit,” he says. “Music connects us, and moves us physically and emotionally. It gives us strength in difficult times, and inspires us in times of challenge.

“Music provides a medium for personal expression that can enhance healing and empowerment. It allows individuals to express themselves, gain awareness of their emotions, and make

connections with others”.

It’s no surprise that at this uncertain time we are turning to music to make ourselves feel better, says Abrahamsohn, with numerous studies showing that music has the power to boost our mood, even to raise our pain threshold.

“Listening to music has the power to release endorphins and dopamine, neurotransmitters which are responsible for helping us to experience pleasure and enjoyment,” he says. “It’s not just the mood boosting benefits of singing which are fuelling the rise of the communal singing movement in the coronavirus period. Music has a long history of bringing people together and promoting a sense of community.

“Singing can make us feel closer, even in large groups where people don’t know each other well.”

Abrahamson says singing in groups (even when apart) has even more beneficial effects because of the social interaction which comes with it, which results in feelings of togetherness.

“It reduces the feelings of isolation,” he says. “So, it’s no surprise that the trend has spread all over the world.”



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# The day the music died

PERSONAL STORY

CINDY ALTER

I’m a survivor. I’m a thriver. I’ve been through some pretty challenging things in my 63 years, and I’m still here. But, I’ve never experienced anything like this. This COVID-19 thing came down upon us with its mighty sword, and I, like most people around me, was incredulous, shocked, and in denial.

I’m actually a loner. I love being on my own, in my peaceful space, pottering around my tiny garden, writing songs or poetry, and keeping my business going. However, as there is a yin, there is a yang, and I love my life as a singer-songwriter, performing in front of thousands or hundreds of people. It has always fuelled my fire. Suddenly, I was forced into global seclusion, and what I craved more than anything was to be with people.

1 April 2020 was the day the music died. I wasn’t allowed to work. My career, one that I have been blessed with for the past 45 years, came to a grinding halt, and that was that. It boggles the mind. It alienates oneself from self, and unleashes a war of conflicting emotions on the stormy seas of helplessness and hopelessness.

I’ve survived being the front woman in one of the most successful South African bands in music history, selling 17 million

albums to date, and having several number-one hit records across the globe. All this during the politically and socially conflicting years of apartheid.

I survived when our manager siphoned off all our money, and left us with nothing, after all the years of hard work and global fame. I had to pick myself up, dust myself off, and get back out there, because if I didn’t, I would be damned to a life of misery and pain. Performing gave me the guts to get back on the horse.

I survived an eight-year abusive relationship at the hands of a man who nearly took my life. My career saved me. My passion for singing pulled me out of a living hell, and pushed me into my future, eventually settling in Los Angeles, California, to continue my career as a singer-songwriter, and to find some peace. I got married, became

an American citizen, and lived my life full of music, as always.

In 2002, I was diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukaemia, and went through a year of hospital treatment, chemotherapy, and radiation, finally undergoing an autologous stem-cell bone-marrow transplant.

I survived the cancer, and moved back to South Africa to resume my career and embrace my healing journey. I have been fortunate enough to have had a career that has taken care of

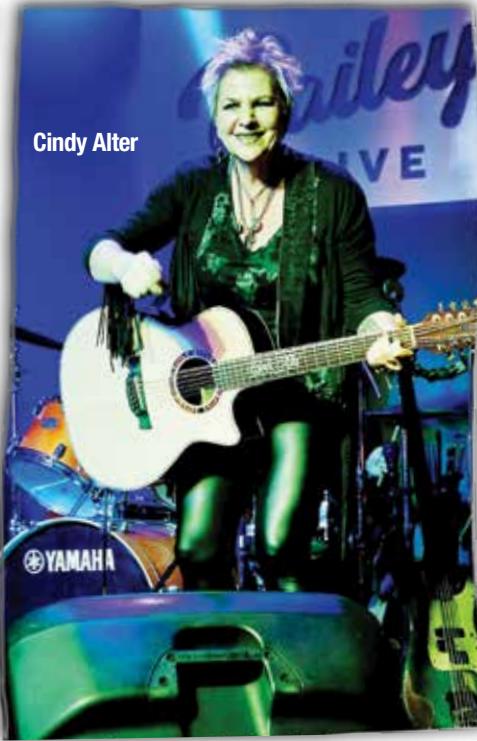
me, enabled me to live the way I love to, support myself, and take care of my needs. I have worked nationally and internationally with major artists, as well as doing motivational talks at schools and corporate presentations, and I’m still passionate about what I do. And now, it’s gone.

Everything shut down, people were ordered to “stay at home”, and poof, just like that, the age of live-music went up in smoke, and along with it, my career.

I’m bereft. I’m grieving for something I’ve lost and don’t know how to find again. But, surprisingly, I have faith that venues will open again and the musicians of the world will be able to take to the stage.

I have faith that I’ll survive this, I’ll thrive through this, and, out of the ashes of this global pandemic, the music will rise, like a phoenix, and I’ll be there to take my place once again. Faith is really all I have right now, and it has to be enough.

• *Cindy Alter is an award-winning singer and songwriter, author and motivational speaker who may be best known for being the lead singer of Clout, an all-woman band in the 1980s.*



# Not just a little flu

PERSONAL STORY

ZEV KRENGEL

It began on the first day of July, when I awoke with an unusually severe cough. Six months ago, I would most probably have made light of my condition, and gone into work as usual, but of course, everything has changed completely since then, and I lost no time in contacting my doctor.

After being tested, I immediately went into quarantine while awaiting the results. They came through 48 hours later, and officially confirmed that I had joined the ranks of almost 300 000 South Africans to date who

normal.

I would stress that I was lucky enough to have fairly mild symptoms of the disease, and in the end, was able to recover at home. Many tens of thousands of other South Africans haven’t been so fortunate.

Through the Hatzolah Wellness Programme, in which infected community members are wherever possible treated in their homes, my oxygen levels and temperature were monitored on a daily basis during the entire two weeks I was in quarantine.



have contracted COVID-19. What had for so long been a potential danger had become an immediate reality.

The diagnosis didn’t come as a surprise. By then, my condition had worsened considerably, with severe headaches, bodily aches and pains, and an almost total loss of taste and smell (even now not fully restored) adding to the original symptoms.

I was also often abnormally fatigued, so much so that I was unable even to watch TV, let alone do anything mildly strenuous, and I lost a great deal of weight. In subsequent days, it got so bad, I was unable to get out of bed at all.

Things became particularly bad, not to mention frightening, when I found myself battling to breathe, and required a hasty dose of cortisone to approach something approaching

In spite of the staunch and unstinting support I received from them and from the community in general, I nevertheless found myself having to cope pretty much on my own.

Indeed, it’s that enforced solitude quite aside from the actual physical ailments that makes COVID-19 so very difficult to deal with. One has also to continually deal with feelings of anxiety and despondency, to try always to maintain a sense of perspective and not start imagining the worst.

Always present is the concern that things might deteriorate to the point that one will require hospitalisation.

Much has been said and written about how vital it is during those times to take whatever steps the medical experts recommend to minimise contracting and spreading the virus, and I can only endorse that.

As for those who, like me, do end up becoming infected, my advice is to listen to what your body is telling you, and don’t try to be a hero.

COVID-19 isn’t just a little flu. It’s debilitating, dangerous, and of course highly contagious. Don’t play around with it, because it certainly isn’t going to play around with you.

• *Zev Krengel is the national vice-president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.*



# Nightmare on ‘ecommerce street’

PERSONAL STORY

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

My husband has a bee in his bonnet. “We must order everything for delivery – including groceries,” he says after reading the infection statistics for Gauteng. I don’t respond. The prospect of ecommerce for *everything* looms. And it’s not one I want to embrace.

It’s not that he’s wrong. We would be much better off staying at home altogether and ordering everything in. As the adult who does the shopping in a household with three hungry teenagers and one hungry toddler, I spend a lot of time at grocery stores. However, my recent experiences with ecommerce haven’t been good.

It started with Cotton On. I needed to buy my aged mother some clothes. “She needs vests, pajamas, and warm jerseys,” the aged home shrieked. I hopped online fast, and ordered and paid for them. Nothing happened. After two weeks of silence, I went onto Cotton On’s chatline. “I ordered winter clothing for my aged mother in a home and they haven’t been delivered. Can you please advise what’s happened to my order?” Silence. I tried again. I waited. Nobody answered. My chat timed out. I tried calling them. Silence. After three weeks, I got desperate. I went onto Twitter: “Does this company still exist?” I asked. Silence.

After three weeks, my order arrived. It had “got lost, and was returned to the depot”. I was ridiculously grateful.

Then, my husband and sons needed winter clothing. Their clothing from last winter was, quite simply, shredded and riding up their ankles. I’ll try Woolies, I thought, (trying to restrain myself from going into an H&M store and actually picking out some supplies). For some reason, H&M has no online presence. Maybe it knows something?

I ordered and paid in full. I heard nothing. Two weeks passed. The delivery eventually arrived after two and a half weeks, but not before we had forgotten all about it and grown a few inches.

My sons were celebrating their birthdays (within a month of each other). “I’ll get them some trendy winter clothing from Zara,” I thought – and moment of honesty here – I had my eye on some boots. I ordered, and paid in full. Nothing happened.

This time, I knew that I should be patient. After three weeks, I went onto Zara’s chatline. “My purchases haven’t arrived,” I bleated. “Give us 24 to 48 hours to investigate,” the chatline said. Nothing happened. After three days and counting, I went back online. “What’s happening with the enquiry about my missing purchases,” I asked. “Give us 24 to 48 hours to investigate,” Zara said. “That’s what you said three days ago!” I yelled (if it’s possible to yell online). “Is there anything else we can help you with?” Zara replied.

After four weeks, like a delivery by stork, Aramex arrived with a parcel. It was my Zara order. In disbelief, I crept up to the box, opened it, and found that my boots were missing! This time, it seemed that even the Zara machinery couldn’t believe what it was hearing. “Give us 24 to 48 hours to investigate. Is there anything else we can help you with?”

My ecommerce journey hasn’t been all bad. Yuppiechef delivered a veggie cooker in four days. Needless to say, it used a different courier. At least now I have another way to let off steam.

• *Julie Leibowitz is the sub-editor of the SA Jewish Report. When she’s not doing that, she’s mom to two teenage boys, and the manager of various domestic crises. Service standards are close to her heart.*



# Dismissal of Verulam case a setback for fight against terror

>>>Continued from page 1

acknowledge that the alleged perpetrators of the crime are entitled to a fair trial and the principle of ‘innocent until proven guilty’ must be upheld. We are deeply concerned that there may have been tardiness by the investigators, resulting in the inappropriate dropping of the charges and the release of highly dangerous criminals with the resolve to attack places of worship.

“We would welcome investigators prioritising this matter, and obtaining the evidence required for it to be properly dealt with in court. Should they be proven guilty, we cannot allow for perpetrators of this type of crime to escape justice and sow fear among religious worshippers.”

Dr Taj Hargey, the founder of the Open Mosque in Cape Town says, “The decision to throw out the case sets a devastating precedent in South African law. A successful prosecution would have put on the brakes on embryonic violent extremism.

“While South Africa has so far been spared the worst excesses of Islamic fanaticism, the dismissal of this case will only foster greater sectarian intolerance and denominational bigotry. Minority groups will now be far more vulnerable to the jackboot mentality of foreign-inspired Sunni fanatics. Certainly, the Open Mosque, with its inclusive philosophy and interfaith outreach is also susceptible to this frightening new local Sunni militancy.”

Where to from here for the 12 accused? Says Greenblatt, “We have to accept the fact that in the eyes of the law, people must be treated as innocent until proven guilty, but if this group is indeed guilty of what they have been charged with, they will certainly be emboldened to commit more atrocities now that they have been shown there are no consequences for their actions.”

• *Zev Krengel is the national vice-president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.*



# Sixty-six years together, and still going strong



John and Gwen Hurwitz celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary recently. The couple, who live at Our Parents Home, are in good health, good spirits, and still in love!

Gwen says the recipe for success in their marriage is her husband’s patience and tolerance. She also credits her late in-laws, Solly and Minnie Hurwitz, who set a wonderful example.

The couple met at Huddle Park, and were married on 27 June 1954 at the then Wolmarans Street Shul in downtown Johannesburg. They have three children and eight grandchildren. Ruben is married to a Sabra, and lives in Israel with his three children; their daughter, Michelle Glaser, lives in Johannesburg and has three sons; and their son, Hedley, also lives in Johannesburg and has two children.

John and Gwen settled in Johannesburg after they married. John had a factory making car-seat covers and motor accessories. Gwen grew up in the Free State. She lost her parents at a young age, and was taken care of by her sister who was 14 years her senior.

Not many couples are blessed to celebrate such a wonderful milestone. Mazaltov!

# Get involved on Mandela Day

*This Saturday is Mandela Day, and though we are still under lockdown and COVID-19 is rife, there are a number of ways to get involved this year. Here are some ideas:*

**Union of Jewish Women:** The UJW is collecting school bags and shoes to deliver to schools. Together with KosherWorld, it will be doing a drive-by donation. People can bring school bags, school shoes, and non-perishable items. They are looking for volunteers to help pack. Contact: 082 885 0800.

**ORT SA:** ORT will hold three different webinars: an introduction to Coding (STEM Academy), a work readiness course or similar (Skills Academy), and an ORT Jet business-orientated webinar – Kevin Factor on How to Sell Yourself. Contact: 084 355 0826. ORT SA is also partnering with Computerlab which, together with HP and other partners, has launched a device programme for the underprivileged. It will draw on expertise across these organisations to repair devices, as well as install software and sort out licensing. Donations can be made at [www.ortsa.org.za/](http://www.ortsa.org.za/) donations. Those who wish to donate digital devices can call Nelly at 011 728 7154, or email [nelly@ortsa.org.za](mailto:nelly@ortsa.org.za) to arrange drop off.

**Yad Aharon & Michael:** The organisation is honouring Mandela Day with a “drop and go” from Monday, 20 July to Thursday 23 July. On those days, drop any kosher tinned food off with security (21 Main Street, Rouxville). All food will be given to Jewish families in need as part of Yad Aharon’s Free In-House Supermarket project.

**Afrika Tikkun:** Afrika Tikkun will be packing and distributing food parcels. You can prepare food parcels or cooked meals, and Afrika Tikkun will pick up and distribute them. It is also collecting blankets, scarves, and beanies for distribution. Contact: [karabos@afrikatikkun.org](mailto:karabos@afrikatikkun.org), 072 153 5936 in Johannesburg, or [anels@afrikatikkun.org](mailto:anels@afrikatikkun.org), 079 582 5026 in the Western Cape.

**Jewish Women’s Benevolent Society:** The JWBS is collecting knitted squares to make blankets which are given to Warm the World to distribute. To donate squares or for more information, contact 011 485 5232.

**Mensch Network:** Mensch is holding an International Mandela Day Cook-A-Long Fundraiser. Join it on a South African flavour journey, cooking together to support hungry South African families who have been impacted by COVID-19. Cook with us, or just watch and enjoy! Sunday 26 July at 11:00. Bookings link: [www.mensch.org.za/mandeladay](http://www.mensch.org.za/mandeladay)

**The Angel Network:** The Angel Network is packing cosy comfort packs which include a sleeping bag, pillow, blanket, and porridge to be distributed to the homeless on Mandela Day. Each pack costs R300, and people are encouraged to donate. The banking reference is cosy pack. The Angel Network is also selling a four-pack of vegetable seeds for R23, and asking for donations so that they can be distributed to beneficiaries who are establishing vegetable gardens to become self-sufficient. The banking reference is surname/veggie. It’s running a sanitaryware drive, asking people to donate sanitary pads which will be distributed to thousands of young girls. The banking reference is surname/pads. A soup drive in which people can buy a 5kg soup mix for R66, and then make up 15 Ziplock bags which include a cup and a half of the soup mix with a soup cube and a packet of instant soup will be handed out on Mandela Day and beyond. The banking reference is surname/soup. The bank account for all these donations is: The Angel Network, FNB, 62726312391, code 250655, reference: surname/appeal.

**SA Harvest and Chefs with Compassion:** Are hosting a Mandela Day Cook-A-Thon, calling on all South Africans to join them in an incredible Mandela Day journey by helping Chefs with Compassion continue its work of providing meals to poverty-stricken communities in South Africa. Follow the #67000litres journey from 06:00 to 14:30 on Saturday, 18 August, on <https://www.facebook.com/chefswithcompassion> using the hashtags #67000litres #MandelaDay #chefswithcompassion #saharvest. All it takes is a donation of R10 per meal, less than the cost of a cappuccino. To donate R10 per meal, go to <https://chefswithcompassion.org.za/67000-litres-for-mandeladay/>.

**One Bag Full:** You can get involved in one of four ways. **First:** Sarmie and fruit challenge: spend 67 minutes making peanut butter and jam sandwiches for us to distribute in Langa on Sunday, 19 July. **Second:** Cupcake challenge: we are aiming to hand out 2 000 cupcakes. Handmade or store bought, we’ll take ‘em all. **Third:** Take part in our live workout with Springbok flyhalf Damian Willemse on Saturday, 18 July. **Fourth:** Donate: contribute to One Bag Full’s purchasing of meal packs and other essential items by donating at [www.onebagfull.com/donate](http://www.onebagfull.com/donate). Contact: 081 043 1719 or email [hello@onebagfull.com](mailto:hello@onebagfull.com)

# Bikkur Cholim helps families source computer equipment

As online school continues indefinitely, and parents work from home, many families and teachers don’t have sufficient equipment to meet their needs.

Bikkur Cholim, the Jewish society for visiting the sick, is calling on corporates and technology suppliers in the community to assist it to source suitable equipment to help our kids ‘go to school’ effectively at home.

Bikkur Cholim has been serving the local Jewish community for more than 100 years. Its primary role is to visit the sick in hospital. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented it from fulfilling this mission. For this reason, the organisation has set up the Home School Gemach, a fundraising and support initiative to source the best equipment at the most affordable prices. To date, it has helped 30 families to source laptops, printers, routers, and any other equipment needed.

The Gemach aims to source suitable used equipment from companies in the community; refurbish and upgrade it to home-schooling

standard; and distribute it to the community. It also partners with suppliers to source equipment at preferential prices. The Gemach is also a fundraising initiative for the refurbishment and supply of new equipment.

If you are a corporate, you can donate redundant equipment to Bikkur Cholim, and it will be collected and refurbished to be used by school children. If you are a supplier of computer equipment, the Gemach is requesting equipment for the community at a reduced price, or the parts required to refurbish this equipment.

Bikkur Cholim is also calling on the community to donate towards the purchase of equipment or parts. Donations can be made to Bikkur Cholim, First National Bank, account number: 62769624844. Reference HS Gemach plus your name. Email proof of payment to [rolene@bikkurcholim.co.za](mailto:rolene@bikkurcholim.co.za) to receive a Section 18A tax certificate. For further information, email [dani@techwise.net.za](mailto:dani@techwise.net.za) or send a WhatsApp to 082 602 3197.

## Letters

### DIG DEEP TO SUPPORT HATZOLAH’S SELFLESS WORK

“The challenges every day are immense,” said a Hatzolah worker. “Most people are running and hiding away from the danger that lurks, but we walk straight into it.”

As a regular reader of your paper, I have often read about the work of Hatzolah. In my voluntary capacity as convenor of our apartment block’s COVID-19 task team, I have encountered the selfless spirit, the professionalism, and admirable commitment of Hatzolah to the Jewish community and its most vulnerable and frail members.

It’s an amazing and efficient model of caring and availability for those in need. Only Hashem can intervene between life and death, but Hatzolah ensures everything in between that’s humanly possible to make this inevitable transition a dignified one, and that the bereaved family (and carers of those who pass on) are cared for so that the bereaved can actually have the space to mourn.

I can only add my voice to those who urge that the community digs deep into their pockets and extends – even accelerates – their support for these instruments of Hashem to ease human suffering. – **Professor Farid Esack, University of Johannesburg**

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# Tower of Babel has clear message for COVID-19 world

I'm not certain what to make of the famous story that appears towards the beginning of the book of Genesis. It tells of people who got together to build a tower that could ultimately reach G-d. Whether the intention was to challenge or to honour is unclear. Whether it was literal or a fable is equally opaque and equally unimportant for the lesson it might foretell. A lesson that is well worth contemplating in a 2020 COVID-19 world.

In case you weren't paying attention to that school lesson, the tale is rather simple. The people got together to build this tower that would reach the heavens. They were doing absolutely splendidly until, for some reason or another, they started to speak different languages.

At that point, their failure to communicate had a major impact, resulting in the whole thing pretty much falling apart. If one lacks imagination, I guess a reference to the Medupi Power Station could assist – if one ignores the corruption element that's unique to the South African story.

It doesn't take a biblical or literary scholar to make the connection to the link between clear communication and success. When people speak so that others can understand we are able to reach "amazing heights". Without it, we will destroy what we have tried to build and render all our efforts useless.

COVID-19 requires us to communicate clearly. Governments need to have a unified message with little ambiguity. The medical fraternity has the responsibility to impart accurate and reliable information. And, finally, citizens need to make sure that they do their bit in not promulgating fake news just because they have a device that allows them to.

We started so well in South Africa. The transparent, straight-talking messages from President Cyril Ramaphosa garnered

**INNER VOICE**  
Howard Feldman



support that it's unlikely the African National Congress has seen in years. Opposition parties stood behind him and contributed positively to the dialogue as much as they were able to.

But then, much like in the tale of Babel, language became confusion, intention and agendas were hidden, and the tower of trust began to crumble. Maybe it was the smoking ban. Maybe it was the funding. But either way, the more they spoke, the less we understood.

The responsibility doesn't lie just with them. It sits with us as well. The passing on of dubious information, the repeating of stories that even our late grandmothers would recognise as being rubbish, the suggestion of improbable cures and prophylaxis, all add to the noise. It creates chaos and confusion around the essential communication, and in doing so, dilutes the message and information we need. While the pandemic peaks in South Africa, this is something we can ill afford.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks sees the Babel story as being one of responsibility and of arrogance. He sees it as a battle against the acceptance that there is something larger than us at play. This is striking in its relevance to the COVID-19 pandemic. It's greater than the individual. It's bigger than anything that most of us have seen in our lifetime, and probably greater than we ever will.

What it means is that we all have the responsibility to communicate clearly and hold those who don't do so to account. Lest it all come crumbling down.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Up to us to ride the storm



**ABOVE BOARD**  
Shaun Zagnoev

President Cyril Ramaphosa on Sunday announced the latest measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. In stressing the gravity of the situation facing the country, he also rebuked those who, in spite of escalating infection rates, continue to disregard basic safety procedures and thereby endanger themselves and those around them.

The long-awaited "big storm" had arrived, he said, but we weren't helpless in the face of it, and could and must do what we could to minimise its impact. This includes wearing a cloth mask covering the nose and mouth whenever leaving home, keeping a safe distance of at least two metres from one another, and washing hands with soap and water or sanitiser. In view of emerging evidence that the virus may also be carried in the air in crowded places, especially those with poor air circulation, the indoor environment of public places must also be improved, including cleaning and sanitising all surfaces.

The president's cautionary words are largely reflective of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' #InOurHands initiative, aimed at driving home the message that we must be responsible for our own health and safety. As Dr Joanne Abrams reiterates on our Facebook page, health workers will do whatever they can to help, but they need the community to play its part as well.

Throughout this period, the Board has also been carrying out its core work on behalf of the community. Encouraging progress has been made in resolving the problem of University of South Africa exams being set on Shabbat, which this year has been made even

more complicated because of the way online learning has had to be introduced.

This week, we also extended condolences on behalf of the community on the untimely passing of Zindzi Mandela, the youngest daughter of Nelson and Winnie Mandela. A much loved and respected figure, she devoted her life to serving South Africa, both in the anti-apartheid struggle and in the post-democracy era, including as South African ambassador to Denmark. On the passing of her mother two years ago, Board representatives Wendy Kahn and Charisse Zeifert remember how warmly they were welcomed by her when making a condolence visit to the family home in Soweto.

Staying with the Mandela legacy, this Saturday is Mandela Day, which since its institution, has been used as an occasion to do additional good work on behalf of the needy. The Board in this regard continues to support the outstanding work of the Angel Network through its Food Relief Fund, bringing desperately needed aid to destitute communities in seven provinces.

There is surely no more meaningful way of perpetuating the great work of Nelson Mandela, who perhaps more than anyone else deserves the title of father of our democracy, and who throughout his life devoted himself to furthering the well-being of all of South Africa's people.

• 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

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I&J DEEP WATER HAKE PRIME STEAKS 500G

**9<sup>99</sup>**

CLOVER SUPER M BANANA & CREAM SODA 300ML EACH

**7<sup>99</sup>**

NESTLE MILO 200ML EACH

**R54<sup>99</sup>**

Tray of 6 Cheese Blintzes

**R55**

Branded masks BUY 2 FOR

**173<sup>99</sup>**

GENUINE FOODS CHEDDAR CHEESE 1KG

**23<sup>49</sup>**

HARVESTIME POTATO CHIPS STRAIGHT CUT 1KG

**23<sup>99</sup>**

BLOSSOM CANOLA LITE TUBS 500G

**12<sup>49</sup>**

CHANMAR'S WHOLE MUSHROOMS 200G

**47<sup>99</sup>**

ANAT BAKERY PIZZA BASES 4'S

## KOSHER AT EVERYDAY PRICES

Actual offers may differ from visuals shown. We reserve the right to limit quantities. While stocks last. E&OE

Offers valid till 22 JULY 2020 or while stocks last

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CONCIERGE SHOPPING SERVICE:  
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